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Marching into View: The Tibetan Army in Historic Photographs 1895–1959

Alice Travers

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Alice Travers

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the Tibetan Army in Historic Photographs
(1895–1959)**

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Impressum Alice Travers
 Marching into View: the Tibetan Army in Historic Photographs (1895–1959)
 This publication is issued in conjunction with the travelling exhibition
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Cover photo The Bodyguard regiment and its band marching in the annual procession
 to accompany the Dalai Lama from the Potala to the Norbulingka palace (1948–1950)
 Detail / full photo see page 6
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative or cellulose acetate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich
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The Bodyguard regiment and its band marching in the annual procession to accompany the Dalai Lama from the Potala to the Norbulingka palace

1948–1950

Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative or cellulose acetate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,

Inw.- No.VMZ.400.08.01.160

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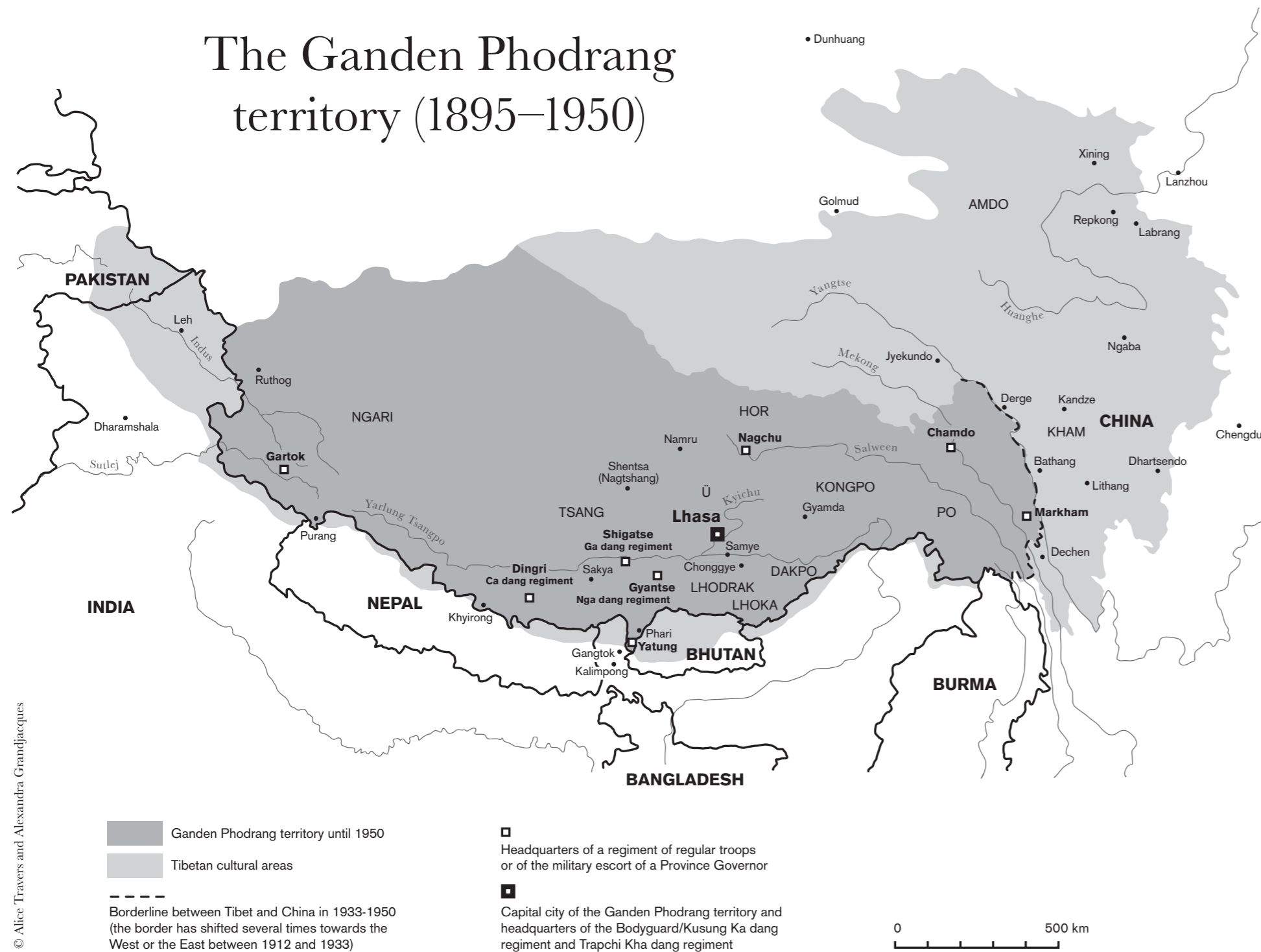
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The Ganden Phodrang territory (1895–1950)



© Alice Travers and Alexandra Grandjacques

The significance of archival photographs and films in the historical study of the Tibetan army (1895–1959)

The present volume seeks to shed light on Tibet’s military in the modern era prior to 1959, a little-studied chapter of Tibetan history, by utilising archival photographs, a largely neglected historical source. Public imagination still associates Tibetan civilisation almost exclusively with its large monastic population, the predominantly religious form of its government, and the spiritual achievements of Tibetan Buddhism. That an organised army (*bod dmag*) existed in pre-1959 Tibet remains little known outside the inner circle of Tibetologists, as too does the fact that Tibet was heir to a great military tradition dating back to the Tibetan Empire (7th-9th centuries CE), when Tibet was one of the main Central Eurasian powers, able to shape the geopolitics of the region and rival Tang China. Several reasons for these facts being now almost completely forgotten are related to past and present trends in Tibetan studies (from which the wider collective knowledge of Tibetan civilisation derives), where there has always been more interest in religious aspects of Tibetan culture and history than in any secular features.¹ Contemporary geopolitical issues also play a part: the history of the Tibetan army has been discreetly set aside in both Chinese Tibet and the Tibetan community in exile because for

both it is a sensitive issue. In the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the fact that Tibet had its own army for centuries is a strong indication of the existence of a sovereign Tibetan state, which contradicts the PRC’s official narrative, in which Tibet has always been an integral part of China. In the Central Tibetan Administration (formerly the Tibetan Government-in-Exile) based in India, a preference to emphasise a policy of non-violence has until recently made this difficult to reconcile with the memory of Tibet’s former army and the historical significance of Tibetan martial culture.²

Photography, for its part, has been little used as a source by historians, despite their evident fascination with it.³ Historians often lament the absence of photography before the 19th century, but still rarely use it as a source even when it is available.⁴ As About and Chéroux note, this is partly due to the difficulty of any kind of critical analysis of such a source, but also because of the very strong “effect of reality” (as formulated by Roland Barthes)⁵ produced by photographs, which leads historians to simply illustrate history through photographs rather than compiling history through them. The present book is thus not an attempt to illustrate the Tibetan army’s history through photography,⁶ but rather to focus on archival photographs as an important historical source, and to show some of the unique lessons afforded by photography in uncovering the Tibetan army’s history. Sources are taken, of course, from when they became available in the region, i.e. not from the invention of photography

itself (1839), but from its appearance in Tibet, towards the end of the 19th century—the first photograph of a militiaman or of a soldier found to date was taken by the Prince Henri d’Orléans (1867–1901) and is dated 1890—up to the end of an independent army in Tibet in 1959, dates which correspond to the reigns of the Thirteenth (r. 1895–1933) and Fourteenth Dalai Lamas (r. 1950–1959) and the intervening period of regency of Reting (Rwa sgreng, r. 1934–1941) and Tagtra (Stag brag, r. 1941–1950).

This relatively recent and short historical period (spanning only around sixty-five years) should be understood as being part of a longer history, in particular the key period during which this army was first created, i.e. the period of a government based in Lhasa, inaugurated by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) with the military support of the Qoshot Mongols, and called the Ganden Phodrang (Dga’ ldan pho brag, 1642–1959). During the three centuries of its existence, this government presided over the first appearance of a corps of permanent troops, in the 18th century, who worked alongside various types of temporary soldiers, the most important of which were the regional militias, who guarded the borders and were summoned by the Lhasa government alongside the regular troops whenever circumstances dictated. Since the Ganden Phodrang was based on a unique alliance of religious and political (*chos srid zung ’brel*) constituents, its army operated with the express aim of defending the Buddhist government. Despite the gradual integration of Tibetan

territories into the Qing Empire as a protectorate from 1728 to 1911,⁷ during this time the Ganden Phodrang government maintained its own army, which operated alongside (and, after 1793, under the supervision of) the Sino-Manchu Higher Command and garrisons. After the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, during the period of so-called “*de facto* independence”, the Tibetan army operated entirely on its own for around forty years (1912–1951), until it was defeated by the People’s Liberation Army of the PRC in the autumn of 1950. During the following decade, a small number of Tibetan regiments were maintained under appendix clauses (*zur ’dzar gros chod*) related to the “17-Point Agreement” signed in May 1951, before the Tibetan Army ultimately ceased to exist in 1959, in the aftermath of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s escape to exile in India.

From among the materials available to historians, and alongside a vast trove of written sources that are being utilised more generally in the TibArmy project, the framework for the research behind this volume,⁸ photographs of Tibetan soldiers and militia have proven to be a particularly rich, original and significant source material for the study of the Tibetan army in the early 20th century. There are three key reasons for this. First, the sheer number: over the course of the last seven years, around 700 photographs of the Tibetan army were collected, which are scattered across thirty different institutions, including various museums, public and private archives in Europe (the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland and Germany), North America, and Asia (India and Japan).⁹ Archive films have also been used, when these have become available and include extracts featuring the Tibetan army, which is the case from 1930 onwards with the films by Sonam Wangfel Laden La (Bsod nams dbang ’phel legs ldan la, 1876–1936), and up to the last film that is available to us, dated 1954, by Jigme Taring (Jigs med ’Phreng ring, 1908–1991).¹⁰ In some cases, they were the only evidence to support a hypothesis or to answer remaining questions. In such cases, still images from these films have been included in the present volume.

It has to be noted that the term “Tibetan army” used in this volume encompasses both the soldiers of the regular troops *and* the regional militia (*yul dmag*),

a choice that resulted from recent research based on Tibetan sources.¹¹ Briefly, the historical reasons why the militia should be regarded as a distinct but integral component of the overall Ganden Phodrang defence system and thus of its army are mainly based on the fact that: (a) both types of troops, either regular or militia, served as military tax or *corvée* (*dmag khral*) to the Ganden Phodrang government (contrary to other types of temporary soldiers, such as the soldier-monks, the volunteers, and the rarely levied “18 to 60” [years old] soldiers, i.e. any members of the male population who were summoned if the Tibetan government declared a state of emergency); (b) before 1913, it seems that militia were levied and served in central areas *in alternation* with the regular troops there, not as a reinforcement, in addition to being levied and serving in border areas; and finally (c), after the gradual extension of the number of regular troops from 1913, i.e. when the militia became a border reserve only, the militia remained at the disposal of the Ganden Phodrang government and was integrated within the structure of command of the regular troops and of the regional representatives of the central government in Lhasa in case of war.

The second reason why photographic sources are a rich, original and significant source material is the diversity of viewpoints that results from the varied nationalities and backgrounds of the photographers. During the period under scrutiny, the practice of photography was not yet widespread in Tibet, and there was no institutional photographic project undertaken by the Tibetan government for its own army. In fact, even Western countries, where photography was more widespread, initially failed to understand the value of photographic records of their armies as a propaganda tool in war efforts, and most of them would only start photographing their respective armed forces from World War I or World War II onwards, depending on the country. However, it should be remembered that, along with up-to-date firearms in the late 19th century,¹² photography was among the first modern technologies to be introduced to Tibet (known and in use possibly as early as the late 19th century and certainly in the first years of the 20th century by a few Tibetan hierarchs and aristocrats).¹³ It is significant for the present study

that there were individual attempts, on the part of the Tibetan military personnel, to photograph the army: some Generals in the eastern provinces are known to have had their own Kodak cameras in 1917–1918—as testified by the British consular officer in Chengdu, Eric Teichman (1884–1944)¹⁴—and to have taken their own photographs of the Sino-Tibetan War in order to record their victory.¹⁵

The vast majority of the photographs considered here, however, were taken by observers external to Tibetan society. The result is what could be called a “kaleidoscopic approach” to the object in question, combining images made by a great variety of photographers. Among them are individual travellers, explorers, missionaries and diplomatic representatives of the foreign powers (British, Austrians, Germans, French, Swedish, Czechs, Americans, Russians and Japanese) who were either present in Tibet itself or maintaining diplomatic relations with Tibet during this period, as well as a few Tibetan and Sikkimese photographers.¹⁶ This diversity (altogether thirty-five photographers are represented in this volume) allows for a variety of “visual discourses” on the Tibetan army which is rarely seen with other topics. We see work from observers caught in the throes of the imperial and colonial gaze on Tibet (notably the British), as well as that of observers from countries in a more neutral position vis-à-vis Tibet; and last but not least, work either authored by, or collected by,¹⁷ a few people who were personally involved in the various Tibetan military institutions, such as Aoki Bunkyō (1886–1956), Yajima Yasujirō (1882–1963), Tsarong Dasang Dadul (Tsha rong Zla bzang dgra ’dul, 1888–1959) and his son Tsarong Dundul Namgyal (Tsha rong Bdud ’dul rnam rgyal), aka George (1920–2011), and Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (Bkras mthong ’Gyur med rgya mtsho, 1890–1938). Such a diversity of viewpoints prevents us from becoming overly influenced by the agenda of a single photographer or group of photographers, and thus helps us to reposition the Tibetan army at the centre of our enquiry, as seen under a number of spotlights. Another aspect that we should keep in mind is that, with very few exceptions that will be discussed further in this volume, nearly all these photographers were amateurs who wanted to bring back images of their

sojourn in Tibet and, in this context, took only a few photographs of the Tibetan army alongside images of many other aspects of Tibetan society.

Finally, the third reason why the material collected here is rich, original and significant, is because in many instances these photographs are the only historical sources remaining that document crucial aspects of the Tibetan army’s history during the period under scrutiny. The images also allow us to supplement or bridge the gaps left in other contemporary sources, and compare witness accounts given by soldiers serving during this time with what can be seen in the photographs. Photographs are of course of central importance for any research into Tibetan military history, including its institutional, political and social aspects, but the most significant contribution of photographic sources remains the material aspects of military history, which scarcely appear in the written sources, if at all.

The external appearance of the Tibetan army, such as the soldiers’ clothes and uniforms, emblems such as insignia, military banners and flags, and weapons cannot be properly researched without the help of photography.¹⁸ Far from being mere anecdotal evidence of the material aspects of a country’s history, military uniforms and emblems also fulfil a prominent symbolic function,¹⁹ which allows us indirect glimpses into the broader institutional and political aspects impacting Tibetan military history of the time. This volume is thus an exploration of how the changes undergone by the Tibetan army between 1895 and 1959 in its external appearance and material culture reveal larger trends in both Tibet’s domestic and international political life.

The critical analysis of photographs

Because visual evidence, when properly employed, is crucial for the explication of certain aspects of history, photography is a particularly relevant form of testimony for otherwise forgotten or ignored historical subjects, such as the Tibetan army. However, photography can become a useful historical source given the proviso that it is presented with a full reflection on the possible conditions that contextualise the images, along with a thorough historical analysis (based on both an internal and external criticism), and insofar as it is always understood, like any other historical source, as a representation.²⁰ Therefore, wherever possible,²¹ we have personally viewed the original material in the archives and collections where they are housed.²² This was necessary because the majority of these collections were not available online. In addition, and of great importance, is that Tibetan soldiers and militiamen are often not identified as such in the photograph’s captions or accompanying data, and so a perusal of the entire collection was often required. For this very reason, it was decided to create new captions for a number of images included in the present volume, ones which would describe more accurately what can be seen in each image, and express more directly the reason why the photograph was of interest to the present study.²³ Lastly, direct access to a photographic collection is the only way a historian can assess the image in its full materiality, including the back of the image and any annotations on or around the image, and thus read the multiple pieces of information essential to its historical contextualisation, such as the identity of the photographer or the person who commissioned it, the date, place, precise historical context, various handwritten annotations on the photograph and the album in which it is or was kept.²⁴

A critical approach to photography is now well established in the field of Tibetan studies by specialists of visual anthropology and, in particular—but not only—as far as photography in the British colonial context

is concerned. The study of photography pertaining to traditional (i.e. pre-1959) Tibet has led to major exhibitions and the publication of numerous books over the years, especially in the United Kingdom, where there are a large number of photographic collections kept in museums and public libraries. We owe a great debt to the pioneering specialist in this field, Clare Harris, for her work, presented in three volumes, the first of which is co-authored with Tsering Shakya and details the photographic collections related to Lhasa that are held at the Pitt Rivers and the British Museums.²⁵ The second volume analyses photography in the wider framework of museum practice, with an assessment of the consequences of the imperialism environment in which these collections were produced. It provides an illuminating reflection on the way photographs of Tibet have been used and reused outside their original contexts, leading to the fact that today, “digital avatars of historic photographs have become active agents in the debate about the representation of Tibet”.²⁶ The third volume is a fascinating exploration of the historical links between photography and Tibet in general, as well as other contemporary developments, and goes well beyond the colonial framework.²⁷

One exhibition in particular was a source of inspiration for this project: *Capturing Tibet: Colonialism and the Camera during the Mission to Lhasa*, curated in 2017 by Emma Martin, featuring photographs from the Museum of Liverpool, taken by John Claude White and Gerald Irvine Davy during the Younghusband Mission of 1903–1904. Simeon Koole has undertaken an analysis of photographic practices during this British Mission,²⁸ when British soldiers were armed with not only weapons but also cameras. Koole proposes a departure from the existing interpretation of the “event of photography” as a mere instrumentalisation of Tibet and the Tibetans by the British, who reified the country and created its autonomous existence in the imagination, attempting to sever it from China while annexing it to the British imperial project. Rather, he has proposed to take into account the agency of the subjects who were photographed, i.e. the Tibetans, and to see in the “event of photography” itself a moment where Tibetans’

relations among themselves and towards their country could be negotiated, positing that participants in photography could themselves choose to make it a disempowering or an emancipatory event.

This analysis of photography as an empowering event has been particularly inspiring for an understanding of how Tibetan militia and frontier soldiers voluntarily escaped the focus of the camera—obliging explorers to return with no more than drawings of them—or, on the contrary, how they agreed to enter the camera's field of view (Chapter 1); and how, from the time of the first modernising reforms of the Tibetan army in 1911–1913, Tibetan militiamen increasingly came into the camera's focus, showing their numbers in large group photos (Henry Martin's photographs); and finally, how soldiers came to use the camera as an empowering tool even more clearly after the Tibetan army had subscribed to the British model in 1916, in numerous studio and group portraits, as well as photographs of military inspections and parades, until 1951 (Chapters 2 and 3).

Regarding photographs taken outside the particular context of the British Empire, a number of exhibitions and their catalogues have been dedicated to major collections, and these have helped in interpreting the photographs of soldiers found there. These prior works include an exhibition of the photographs of Henrich Harrer in 1991,²⁹ another of the Ernst Schäfer collection, "*Tibet in 1938–1939. Photographs from the Ernst Schäfer Expedition to Tibet*", curated in 2006 by Irun Engelhardt,³⁰ and a third on Lowell Thomas and Lowell Thomas Jr.'s photographs, "Journey into Tibet", curated by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in 2015. All of the above-mentioned works were invaluable in helping contextualise and analyse the thousands of photographs examined in the search for images of Tibetan soldiers and militia members, and in raising our awareness of the representations and the visual discourses at work in these photographs.

In our attempt to better understand how the material culture and external appearance of the Tibetan army had evolved over time between 1890 and 1959, we encountered methodological obstacles that appeared to be intrinsically related to the nature of the

sources. Despite trying to consider all data available in the material context of conservation of the collected photographs, the available information often threw up lacunae (for instance when the person who made or collected the photographs did not provide any caption or indication of a date) or were even occasionally misleading (for instance, when information added by others at later stages of the conservation or transmission process proved to be incorrect). This is inevitable, however, for the simple reason that photographs are objects that live their own lives once they have been taken. The original or the various prints and copies of the original can be gifted, bought or exchanged between travellers: photographs thus travel in sometimes unexpected ways and end up in surprising destinations and collections, most of the time in very discrete ways.³¹ As a result, duplicates of the same photograph exist in various collections. The sometimes heterogeneous information given on the different copies needed to be examined in order to trace the original source of the image, to understand the different layers of metadata attached to them, and to refine the identification of the subject; despite all of these efforts sometimes questions were still left unanswered.³² What is more, while most of the collections preserve only photographs taken by one single and identified photographer, with all accompanying detailed captions and data, occasionally some photographs related to entirely different periods or places and taken by different people end up in the same collection or are pasted side by side in the same album, without any information on the history of the images' itinerary. This is the case, for instance, of the photographs taken in Central Tibet by Henry Martin between 1908 and 1914, which were discovered not only in an identified collection in Oxford (at the Pitt Rivers Museum), but also in Dignes-les-Bains (France), where they also form part of a collection brought back by Alexandra David-Neel in 1924 or earlier. Some of them are duplicated in the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, and also in Vancouver (Canada), where they are part of a collection brought back to Europe by the British officer Eric Parker around 1923.³³ The same happened with photographs by Tse Ten Tashi (1951), partly preserved at the LTWA in Dharamshala (India),

and also in Newark, New Jersey (United States), where they were gifted by a former American CIA agent who trained Tibetan resistance fighters, and who must have collected them in the course of his mission. The elaborate paths these images have travelled are the source of endless questions and doubts for any historian who tries to make sense of the ensemble and to establish an understanding of broad chronological changes in the Tibetan army's appearance.

Nonetheless, once a clearer understanding had been established of who the photographers were, where and when they went to Tibet, along with a more precise chronology of the military material culture's evolution from 1890 to 1959, it became possible in a number of cases to either correct the contextual data or to propose hypotheses for the correct interpretation of the date or content of the photograph.

Also related to the somewhat autonomous paths some of these photographs have taken is the rare occurrence of the misuse of images, sometimes incorrectly reproduced a great many times. One of the now best-known examples of the misuse of Tibetan photographs is actually related to Tibetan military history, and has been exposed by Fredholm and Harris. This involves a photo entitled "two Tibetan soldiers", featuring two men who appear to be Tibetan soldiers wearing armour, and holding a shield and a matchlock musket. It was used by Waddell, the medical officer attached to the Younghusband Mission in 1903–1904, to illustrate soldiers of the contemporary Tibetan army encountered during the Mission. In his desire to show how backward the Tibetans were, he neglected to say

Pl. 1. Civilians dressed up as 17th-century Mongol-style cavalry of Gushri Khan

1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-11-08-32
Photographs of civilians dressed up as 17th-century cavalry and infantry and taking part in the Mönlam festivities in Lhasa until the 1950s are often mistaken as illustrating the state of the actual Tibetan army in the early 20th century.

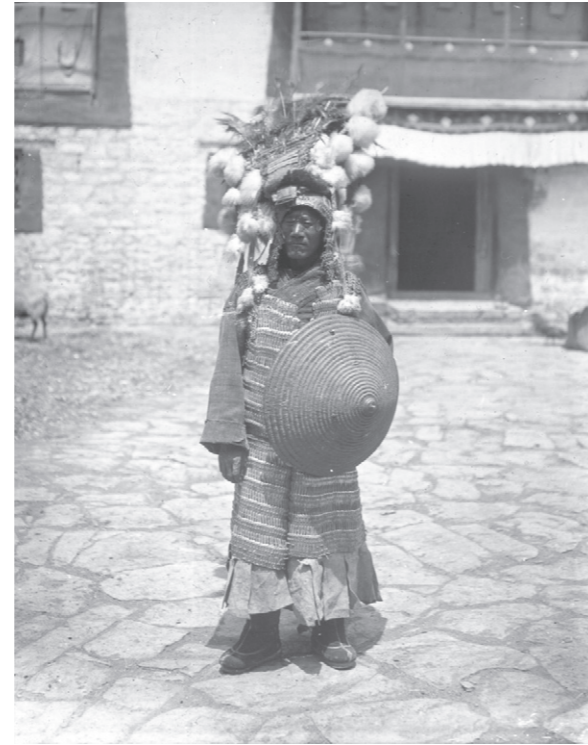


that these costumes were not in fact those of the soldiers the British troops fought, but ancient arms and equipment preserved in a temple in the Chumbi Valley as votive objects, which had been borrowed for the staged photo.³⁴ Matchlock muskets, which had been first introduced to Tibet in the course of the 16th century,³⁵ were still widespread and in use in the first years of the 20th century, but were already being replaced by bolt-action and breech-loading guns. The armour, however, was clearly anachronistic. As a result of other deliberate ambiguities in the British sources, on which such a significant part of our perception of “traditional Tibet” is now based, it has become clear to me through the course of this work that contemporary observers of famous photographs, for example of the cavalry and infantry corps in armour, taking part in the Lhasa State Ceremonies in the period up to 1950,³⁶ were often unaware that what they saw had nothing to do with the actual 20th-century Tibetan army, but instead were processions of civilian “reenactors” who were temporarily dressed up in the guise of 17th-century cavalry (Pl. 1) and infantry (Pl. 2),³⁷ as part of the annual New Year pageants and festivities commemorating the Great Fifth Dalai Lama and his Mongol patron Gushri Khan (1582–1655).³⁸

The present volume offers the results of research undertaken on these historic photographs over the last years and includes a selection of 168 photographs.

Photographs were selected based on three criteria: the first was the significance of the image in relation to the chosen angle of analysis, i.e. an understanding of the changes in the Tibetan army’s material culture and external appearance (its uniforms and emblems, and to a lesser extent, weapons), and our chosen research framework: understanding how this external appearance was a powerful visual representation of the internal and external politics affecting the Tibetan military institutions during the period. The second criterion was the originality and aesthetic quality of the photographs, as this research on photographic material as a historical source is related to the preparation of a photographic exhibition aimed at presenting the material to a wider audience.³⁹ Finally, the third criterion was to highlight collections that were neither already well-known nor available online.⁴⁰

It is thus hoped that this sample of 168 photographs, taken during the reigns of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Dalai Lamas, will prevent any further misunderstanding as to what constituted the Tibetan army and what it looked like in the period from 1895 to 1959. It is also hoped that this selection, in both its variety of provenance and clarity of focus, will contribute to further deepen our awareness and understanding of photography in Tibet and to stimulate future research into photography from and about Tibet based on lesser-known photographs.⁴¹



Pl. 2. A *simchungpa* footsoldier, representing the 17th-century guard of the 5th Dalai Lama

6th February 1921

Photograph by Rabden Lepcha?

Coll. Sir Charles Bell

Lantern Slide, 81 x 81 mm

Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford,

1998.285.69.2

The *simchungpa* (a hereditary status and duty) wear high headdresses with peacock feathers and fluffy white balls made from the soft down of vultures. During the Mönlam Torgya, they notably performed the “coiled snake” dance.

A multifaceted force: the ever-changing and highly heterogeneous appearance of the Tibetan army in photographs

While searching for and examining photographic images of Tibetan soldiers and militia members of the Ganden Phodrang,⁴² it became clear that focusing on the external characteristics (uniforms, emblems, flags) of Tibetan troops was indeed a key tool in understanding the history of the Tibetan army. One particularly striking feature is the heterogeneous and ever-changing appearance of the soldiers seen in the images from this relatively short period, encompassing only around sixty-five years. In our view, this heterogeneity made it difficult for any casual observer to appreciate the Tibetan army in its continuity, unity and extent over the years, and was thus well worth being examined in detail. Indeed, the appearance, emblems and uniforms of the various components of the Tibetan army have varied greatly over the years in question, with differences depending on whether the soldiers were regional militia (with their civil regional dress, mostly from Northern or Eastern Tibet) or regular troops; and then, within the regular troops, depending on which regiment they belonged to and the rank of the soldiers, whether they were officers or enlisted men.

Even when considering solely the regular troops, their external appearance (uniforms and emblems) also varied widely over time depending, first, on the various foreign influences at work in Tibet between 1895 and 1959. In the course of the Ganden Phodrang period, Tibet came under a variety of foreign influences, mainly Mongolian from the 17th to the early 18th centuries and Sino-Manchu from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, both of which directly impacted the evolution of its military institutions and culture.⁴³ After 1912, wanting to strengthen and modernise its permanent army in the light of repeated threats along its border with China, Tibet was exposed, as we shall see in this volume, to other models of armies, as it opened up to Russian, Japanese and mainly British military influences, the latter

becoming the main source of influence after 1916. Second, even during the period of *de facto* independence, in a highly unstable political context, the Tibetan army’s appearance, emblems and uniforms also varied over time depending on whether the “military project” was considered a priority and thus whether or not it was well financed by the Tibetan government at the time, or on diplomatic relationships with British India.

This volume’s aim is therefore very much a didactic attempt to reassemble the scattered pieces of a puzzle, in order to show how they fit together over time and space, since all individuals shown in these photographs, be they militia or permanent troops, soldiers or officers, were serving under the Ganden Phodrang government. This reassembled puzzle shows chiefly that the Tibetan army was in a process of continuous (re)construction.

The army’s appearance over this sixty-five-year period, connected to the larger Tibetan political context, both external and internal, can be divided roughly into four chronological sections, which form the bulk of the structure of this book. In the first period (Chapter 1), until 1913 and the fall of the Qing Empire, the soldiers and militia of the Tibetan army are scarcely visible in photographs. Having no standardised and recognisable uniform, they remained either unseen or else seen but not fully understood as being part of the Ganden Phodrang’s army. In the very last years, and possibly even up to 1916, a very short-lived attempt at creating a standardised uniform is visible in a limited number of photographs, showing either a lasting Sino-Manchu and/or Japanese influence. In the second period (Chapter 2), from 1913 until the late 1930s, the Tibetan government created a new military visual identity for its army, which was largely based on the British model after 1916, with the incorporation of specific Tibetan and Buddhist cultural elements. In the third period (Chapter 3), the Tibetan government sought to develop a visual identity that would be more clearly Tibetan, with the inauguration of new Tibetan-style uniforms from the late 1930s, and their generalisation in the 1940s, in contrast to the former British influence and at a time of increasing threat on the eastern border. In the fourth part (Chapter 4), after the signing of

the 17-Point Agreement, the Tibetan army remained separated from the People’s Liberation Army, but Chinese-style uniforms and emblems were gradually introduced after 1955. Two additional thematic sections serve to illustrate the chosen methodology, and the value of using photographic sources. Chapter 5 demonstrates that photographs allow a renewed historical understanding of Tibetan military flags, which show significant variations, but also a striking continuity in the use of Tibetan and Buddhist symbols such as lions and *vajras*. Chapter 6 ends the volume “with much fanfare”, by exploring images of the Tibetan military music bands.

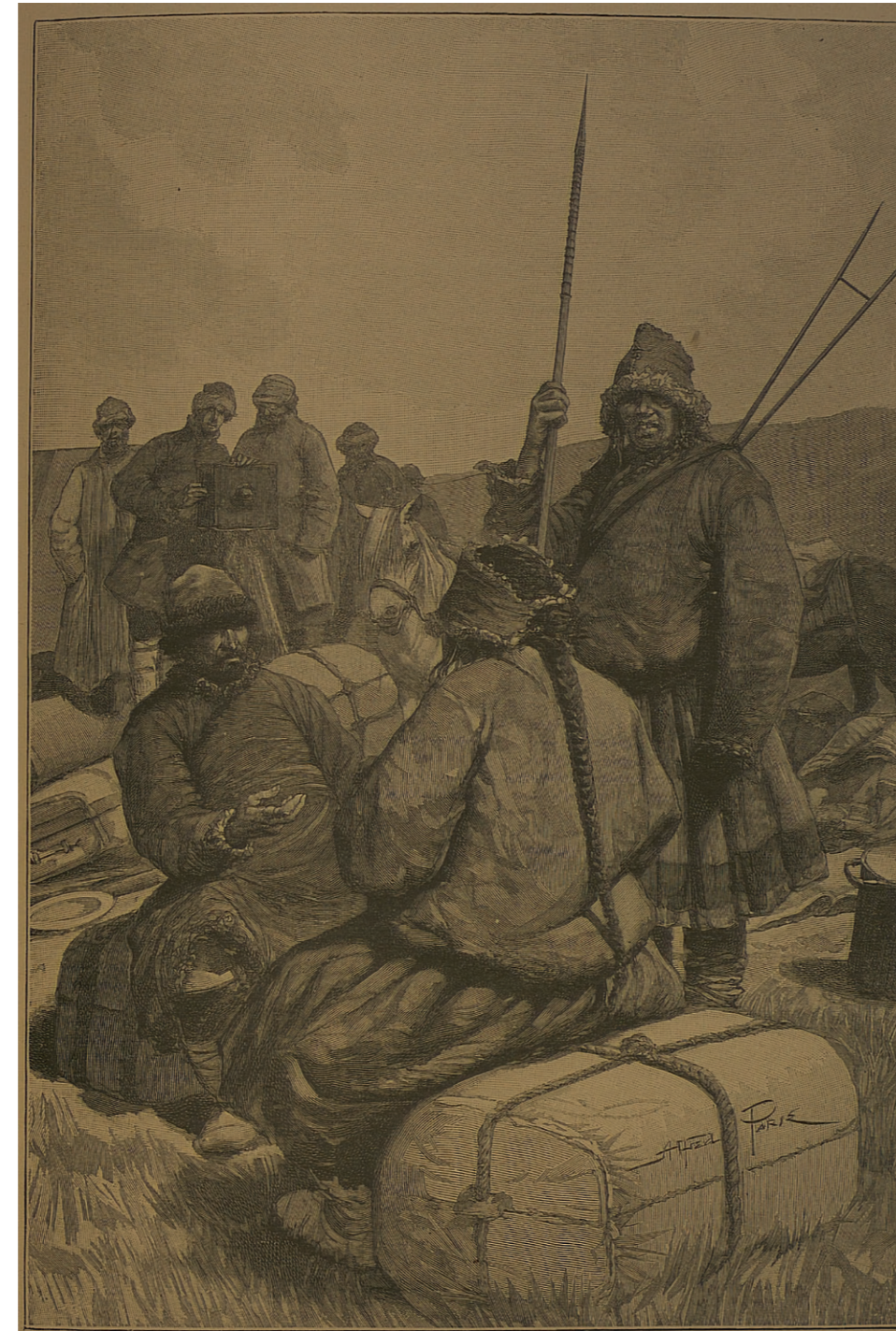
Endnotes Introduction

- 1 For a thorough reflection on “The Challenges of Presenting the Warlike Side of a Peaceful Culture”, see La Rocca 2008. Donald La Rocca curated a 2006 exhibition on Tibetan arms and armour, with its related catalogue *Warriors of the Himalayas. Rediscovering the Arms and Armor of Tibet*. This ground-breaking work has paved the way for further investigations into the field.
- 2 See for instance Carol McGranahan’s work, which shows how the memory of the armed resistance to China’s occupation in the 1950s had been “arrested” in Tibetan society in exile until the 1990s, when it was finally authorised and released to the public (McGranahan 2010).
- 3 In theory, photographs have always been considered a preferred source by historians, first by positivist historians, because it corresponded well to their attempts to record facts objectively, and then, in a curious reversal of its interpretation, by the historians of the “New History” (i.e. the third generation of the Annals school in the 1970s); see About and Chéroux 2001: 4.
- 4 About and Chéroux 2001: 4.
- 5 Barthes 1968.
- 6 And even less to illustrate the general Tibetan history of this period. The political and military history of the period 1895–1959, which provides the historical context for the present research, is one that has been the object of prolific scholarly production, in particular, for the whole period by Shakabpa (2010) and Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue (2010 and 2012); for the period 1913–1959 by Melvyn Goldstein ([1989] 1993, 2007, 2014 and 2019); and for the period 1947–1959 by Tsering Shakya (1999). The historical and military context will thus be referred to only to the extent that it is needed to understand the content and historical value of the photographs, and insofar as the photographs allow a reassessment of what we already knew.
- 7 Petech 1950.
- 8 The ERC-funded “TibArmy” project (<https://tibarmy.hypotheses.org/>) was initiated in 2016 with the objective of studying the military institutions in Tibet during the entire Ganden Phodrang period. The present volume is to be understood in relation to other aspects of Tibetan military history that have been dealt with in the framework of the TibArmy project, and which have resulted in a series of collective volumes: the first focused on the Buddhist context in which the Tibetan army operated and on the implications this context had for Tibetan military institutions (Travers and Venturi 2018); the second is a study of the way other Asian military cultures have historically influenced Tibetan military institutions (FitzHerbert and Travers 2020); the third is a pluridisciplinary exploration of weapons and armour in Tibetan history and culture (Venturi and Travers 2021); a fourth and last collective volume is still in progress, and is dedicated to wars fought during the Ganden Phodrang period (Kobayashi and Travers, forthcoming). Lastly, a monograph by this author on the social history of Tibetan officers and soldiers during the 19th and 20th centuries, based on Tibetan sources, is in progress.
- 9 The list of all photographic collections that have been consulted appears in Appendix 1. The collecting of photographs certainly did not result in an exhaustive study of photographs of the army. A few collections in the USA and Russia in particular were inaccessible due to the global health crisis.
- 10 The list of all archive film collections that have been consulted appears in Appendix 2.
- 11 Travers forthcoming.
- 12 On which point, see Travers 2021b.
- 13 As discussed in Jamyang Norbu 2005 and commented upon in Engelhardt 2007: 39–40; see also Harris 2016: 122–136.
- 14 Teichman [1922] 2000: 163; see also Harris 2016: 131–132.
- 15 See for instance one of these early “army photographs” from Jamyang Norbu’s private collection, featuring General Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (1890–1938), posing with his men and two mountain guns that they had just seized after defeating the Chinese troops at Riwoche in 1918 (also reproduced as photo 9 in Tsarong 2000 and available online <https://www.jamyangnorbu.com/blog/2018/04/29/celebrating-the-centennial-of-chamdos-true-liberation/>, last accessed 30th January 2022). At the very end of the period under scrutiny, in 1958–1959, Jhanhup Jinpa, considered to be the first Tibetan war photographer, started covering the activities of the resistance fighters; Jamyang Norbu 2014.
- 16 The total collection of around 700 photographs gathered for this research, which feature soldiers and militiamen, includes photographs taken by the British (comprising one third of the collection), alongside others taken by Germans and Austrians (accounting for another third) and by Tibetans, Sikkimese, Japanese, French, Czech, Swedish and American individuals (forming the remaining third of the collection): see Appendix 1 at the end of the volume for a list of the collections consulted for this research and where photographs of soldiers and militiamen were found. This should not be confused with the sample selected from this collection and reproduced in this volume.
- 17 A number of photographs are part of collections that include images either taken by the collection holder or featuring the collection holder (and therefore photographed by somebody else), or else collected from other persons. The authorship of the image is thus not always very clear, but we have nevertheless tried to present the reader with all available information. This is the case in particular for the collections of Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969), Eric Parker (1896–1988), Tsarong Dasang Dadul and Tethong Gyurme Gyatso.
- 18 Since the topic of Tibetan weapons has already been covered in great detail, and accompanied by historical photographs (see La Rocca 2006; Venturi and Travers 2021), these are not the main focus of the present volume. In a recent contribution, based on written as well as visual sources and covering the same period as the one under scrutiny here, I have retraced the rapid evolution of firearms in the Tibetan army “from matchlock to machine guns”, Travers 2021b. Interestingly, photographs allow us to trace the evolution of small arms and artillery up to the 1940s relatively comprehensively (with the successive imports and use by the Tibetan army of the Lee Metford rifles (.303), Short Magazine, Lee-Enfield rifles (.303) in the 1920s and of Lewis guns, mountain guns and Vickers machine guns in the 1930s), while their evolution from the 1940s onwards (with the import of Bren and Sten guns, for instance) are not documented in photographs at all, but only in written sources; see Travers 2021b.
- 19 For a thought-provoking comparative analysis of the evolution of the military uniform in the West, of both its functional and symbolic qualities and of the milestones that marked the development of European military elegance, see Mollo 1972.
- 20 About and Chéroux 2001: 15.
- 21 Out of all collections listed in Appendix 1, there was a small number to which I could unfortunately not obtain direct access, for a variety of reasons. I am therefore extremely grateful to those who helped in collecting the material and the metadata related to these collections: Lars Larson and Håkan Wahlquist for the Sven Hedin collection at the Stockholm Ethnographical Museum; John F. Ansley for the Lowell Thomas, Jr. collection (Marist Archives); Luboš Bělka for the Vladimír Sis, Josef Vaníš and Augustin Palát private collections; Jamyang Norbu for the Tethong family collection, and Komoto Yasuko for the Yajima Yasujirō and Teramoto private collections. The Ernst Schäfer and the Eric Parker collections were available online (I had worked in Parker’s archive in 2010, which helped for the contextualisation of the photographic collection, but not on the photographic material itself). Finally, the selection of photographs by Demo *trulku* were accessed only through a publication (Gao 1998).
- 22 However, as far as the related exhibition was concerned, only reproductions of photographs instead of originals were included. This choice was made in view of the primary aim of the exhibition, which was to showcase the photographs as historical documents (as opposed to as art, for example), and also due to the often very small size of the originals, which makes it difficult to see important details with sufficient clarity, and finally, for practical reasons, because of the great number of institutions currently holding the various collections.
- 23 The original captions, where relevant, are quoted in the comments to the photograph, and are also available in Appendix 3 of this volume.
- 24 Since I am no specialist of the history of photography, the technical aspects of the production of the presented photographs, despite their undoubted significance, have been provided when known, but left aside in the analysis.
- 25 See the exhibition *Seeing Lhasa, British Depictions of the Tibetan Capital 1936–1947*, organised in 2013 and its connected book (Harris and Shakya 2003). See also the online *Tibet Album. British photography in Central Tibet, 1920 to 1950*: <https://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 26 Harris 2012: 14; see also Chapters 3 and 4.
- 27 Harris 2016.
- 28 Koole 2017.
- 29 Harrer 1991.
- 30 Engelhardt 2007.
- 31 Photographs continue to change hands: at an early stage in the hunt for photographs of Tibetan soldiers, in 2015, I learnt that a part of the Tse Ten Tashi collection was held in a French public institution (the Conservatoire régional de l’image in Nancy). Upon further enquiry, however, I found out that the collection had actually been sent back to India, where it ultimately proved impossible to trace. Fortunately, a part of the Tse Ten Tashi collection is also kept at the LTWA and Newark Museum and was thus partly available for research.
- 32 In this process the holders of private collections, as well as the archivists and others in charge of the public collections have been of invaluable help, generously sharing their detailed knowledge or their own research on how the photographs had reached their institution, who had been involved in classifying and commenting upon each image, and what information was available to them. I would like to thank them all here.
- 33 See the last part of Chapter 1 for more on this.
- 34 Fredholm 2007; Harris 2012: 130–135; 2016: 9–10. I have discussed elsewhere the “backwardisation trend” of Tibetan society which is, for various reasons, still deeply entrenched in a number of works on Tibet; see Travers 2021b: 982–983. For an instance of incorrect reuse of another of Waddell’s photographs, featuring a soldier on a horse, both equipped with antique armour, in order to illustrate the army faced by the British in 1903–1904, see Taylor 1985: 189.
- 35 La Rocca 2006: 198. Their first mention in Tibetan written sources dates back to the early 17th century; Josayma 2021: 874. See also La Rocca 2021, Venturi 2021 and Travers 2021b: 987–993 on the imports and local production of small arms and cannon before 1895.
- 36 Recorded in a series of beautiful photographs reproduced in Richardson 1993.
- 37 The social status of the infantry known as the *simchung* (*gzim chung*) differed from that of the cavalry. The latter was composed of servants from aristocratic families, while the *simchung* was a hereditary group.
- 38 A quick internet search confirms quite how often the Younghusband Mission was inadvertently illustrated with photographs of the New Year’s ceremonies. On these festivities and for more photographs of the Annual State Ceremonies, see Richardson 1993; for more photographs of the *simchungpa*, see Tung [1980] 1996: Plates 98 to 101. This latter book is a perfect example of a deliberate choice not to include, from more than 130 photographs in the Tolstoy and Dolan’s archive, a single one showing the Tibetan army at the time of the photographers’ visit to Lhasa in 1942–1943 (except a close-up of a regimental flag, see Tung [1980] 1996: Plate 33), while reproducing several images of “fake soldiers” in 17th-century style military costumes during the State festivities.
- 39 All the selected photographs were part of the exhibition “Marching into View: The Tibetan Army in Historic Photographs (1895–1959)”, that took first place at the University of Prague in July 2022 at the special occasion of the 16th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. For reasons of copyright, the Shephard collection was included in the exhibition but could not be reproduced in the present volume.
- 40 For this reason, most of the photographs of Tibetan soldiers taken by the British after 1920, already well-known and accessible through the “Tibet album” website, have not been included here, even if they have informed our research. However, if the images were already published and well-known, but were important in relation to our first criterion, they were still included in the final selection (as is the case for the well-known set of images related to Neame’s report in 1936; see Chapter 2).
- 41 These lesser-known photographs are those related to the early (up until 1913) and later years (1950s) of the period, i.e. those which are unrelated to the main period of British influence.
- 42 The territory considered in this research comprises only the Tibetan regions directly administered by the Dalai Lamas’ Ganden Phodrang government, i.e. the central regions of Ü (Dbus) and Tsang (Gtsang), the western region of Ngari (Mnga’ ris) and the western part of Kham (Khams), in modern day Sichuan (see the map page 8 of this volume).
- 43 On this topic, see FitzHerbert and Travers 2020.

Camouflaged: looking for Tibetan soldiers and militia in early photographs (1890–1913)



Premiers Hommes



As shown by Clare Harris, the first photographs ever taken in Tibet show desolate, rocky and icy landscapes in Western Tibet, captured by Philip Egerton in 1863.¹ It would be another forty years, i.e. until the beginning of the larger-scale British presence in Tibet, inaugurated by the Younghusband Mission in 1903–1904, before we see a drastic increase in the number of photographs taken by the British of Tibet, and in particular of Tibetans. Most British photographs of so-called “Tibetans” taken before this were actually shot in India.² This being said, a number of individual travellers from various Western countries did manage to enter the country in the late 19th century and, if they were unsuccessful in reaching the capital of Lhasa, they did at least manage to bring back rare photographs of the border areas. Not surprisingly, the Tibetans featured in these earliest

Pl. 3. The armed cavalymen who stopped Gabriel Bonvalot and Prince Henri d’Orléans near Namtso Lake
January 1890
Photograph by Henri d’Orléans
Archives de la Maison de France administrées par la Fondation Saint-Louis, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte, AP/300(III)277

Pl. 4. Gabriel Bonvalot and Prince Henri d’Orléans in discussion with the armed cavalymen who stopped them near Namtso Lake
January 1890
Unknown author
Engraved drawing published in Bonvalot’s 1892 account

“border photographs” include not only nomads but also Tibetan guards from the militia as well as regular soldiers, both forming the army of the Ganden Phodrang government.³ Both the militiamen and regular soldiers are therefore among the very first Tibetans ever to be photographed on Tibetan soil. These photographs were taken in the 1890s by foreign explorers who were travelling without official authorisation, as the country was practically closed to Westerners during the second half of the 19th century.

Given the circumstances, research into the first photographs showing the Tibetan army before the opening of Tibet to British photography in 1903–1904 is intrinsically related to the photographic collections left by the early explorers of Tibet. In the late 19th century, Tibet found itself caught in the turmoil of the “Great Game”, the commercial and political rivalries between the British, Russian and Manchu Empires. Russian, Indian and British explorers attempted incursions into Tibetan territory in an effort to create maps of it. Travellers would usually enter Tibetan territory from either the West or the North and were able to cover some distance until they reached populated areas, where they would be spotted by the local people, border guards or spies,⁴ and ultimately stopped or sometimes even arrested, thanks to the intervention of militia and regular soldiers sent by local authorities or directly sent from Lhasa, as we shall see in this chapter.

Since at least the 18th century and up to 1912, the main corps of Tibetan regular troops amounted to 3,000 soldiers.⁵ In addition, the militia,⁶ whose nature

and function was also to be affected by the military reorganisation in 1913, was in these early times (according to Sarat Chandra Das) levied both in central areas of Tibet, where they served as an additional reserve of 3,000 for the regular troops,⁷ and also in border areas, where they were in charge of the border defence and could be summoned when needed by Tibetan government officials appointed there as District Commissioner (*rdzong dpon*)⁸ or Province Governor (*shyi khyab*). Thus, regular soldiers photographed in these faraway places were either serving as escorts to these Tibetan officials, or had arrived in response to notification of the presence of intruders. As we shall see, those first encounters of the Western camera with Tibetan militia and soldiers took place in sometimes quite tense contexts. In such moments, it would not have been safe to set up a camera, it being better for hands to rest on guns. In general, drawings were made after the fact from memory to illustrate these remarkable encounters (this is the usual course of events recounted in most travellers’ accounts described in this chapter). However, sometimes these encounters would take place in peaceful contexts, in which case a camera could be set up and photographs taken. We can say that this first set of early photographs was taken during a period of shift in the power balance between Western photographers on the one side and the Tibetan “subjects” of their photographic enterprise on the other. Indeed, before the Younghusband Mission, unauthorised travellers to Tibet were in a sensitive position and had to negotiate with great delicacy any opportunities to photograph members of the

Tibetan army that were stopping, escorting and guarding them. The British in particular were identified as being enemies of the Tibetan government since the Lungtu incident in 1888 (which took place on the Tibet-Sikkim border and was the first war between Tibet and British India) and were obviously considered to be a greater threat than French or Swedish travellers, even if the latter were not allowed any farther into Tibetan territory. The British finally imposed their claim to Tibet when they fought their way towards Lhasa during their invasion of the country in 1903–1904 (euphemistically referred to in sources as a “Mission”, and until recently as the “Younghusband Expedition” by historians), killing thousands of Tibetans in the process, and forcing the Ganden Phodrang government to sign a trade agreement (the *Treaty of Lhasa*, 4th September 1904). A second ensemble of photographs in this chapter is thus related to this moment of violence, when the *rapport de force* shifted in the Westerners’ favour, who consequently were able to use their cameras at leisure: the British “Opening of Tibet”⁹ in 1903–1904 would set the colonial framework that was to define the British photographic enterprise in Tibet for the next half century. The intrinsic link between photography and colonialism (or rather a situation of “semi-colonialism”, as far as the presence of Great Britain in Tibet can be considered) in Tibet is not an exceptional one: as has been amply demonstrated by Daniel Foliard, based on the examples of the French as well as the British Empires, modern colonialism has been one of the most effective contributors to the “visual collection” of the world.¹⁰

The search for photographs of Tibetan soldiers and militia prior to 1912 proved a challenging task, not only because of the scarcity of available images from these early days, but also because of the difficulty in identifying soldiers and militia with any precision, due to their resemblance to other, non-military Tibetans, in particular in the border areas, where many Tibetans were armed as a normal part of their everyday lives. We have very little information on the clothes and equipment of the Ganden Phodrang army before 1912, but it seems that they did not wear a specific uniform that could visibly connect them to their military function

(this will change in the period after 1912).¹¹ This absence of clear uniforms is even clearer for the regional militia, but this would continue to be the case even after 1912. For the same reason, it proves very difficult in this period, both to identify soldiers in photographs and to differentiate regular soldiers from militia. Moreover, the absence of colour in the photographs (until the late 1930s) makes it impossible for further distinctions to be made. The Tibetan army is thus itself “camouflaged” among other Tibetans in these early photographs, with only a few visual characteristics to guide us. Particularly useful are the written comments made by travellers on the people they met or on the photographs they took, where published or unpublished accounts are available. They often help us “see” these black and white photographs in colour.

Many ordinary Tibetans in these remote areas possessed a horse and a matchlock musket.¹² It is therefore not the presence of these two items alone that identify any armed riders featured in a photograph as being a soldier or a member of the local militia. The original captions of the photographs themselves often lack precision, as can be seen, for instance, with the recurring use of the term “warrior”, which gives no indication as to the origin and status of the individual represented, or on behalf of whom or for what cause he is fighting. We observe in the travellers’ accounts and captions, as the years pass and their understanding of the organisation of the Tibetan government increases, that this term becomes less used, giving way to the more precise appellations, where relevant, of “soldier” and “militia”. As a matter of fact, as the travellers’ diaries and accounts always specify, the “warriors” featured in these photographs did not stop the Westerners in order to defend their local territory from intruders. They did so because they had received orders, which they always explicitly refer to in oral or even sometimes written form, from the Lhasa government, that no foreigner (sometimes, the written orders mention that particular traveller by name) was to be allowed to enter Ganden Phodrang territory, the borders of which were apparently clearly demarcated in all the accounts that we were able to find.¹³ Unauthorised travellers near the border were systematically turned away or, if

they had managed to enter the territory, were escorted back across the border.¹⁴ The Tibetans were acting on behalf of the Lhasa government, as escort or armed protection for one of the local representatives of the Lhasa government, such as a District Commissioner or a Province Governor, either because they were soldiers of the regular troops or because they were members of the regional militia. In both cases, as mentioned in the introduction, their military service was levied as a *corvée* tax to the Lhasa government. It is thus only through observations made by the explorers in their accounts that it is possible to determine whether these armed riders were either local nomads, hunters, village people, chiefs, even sometimes highway bandits and robbers, or militia and soldiers of the Ganden Phodrang government. It is only in this latter case that their images have been included in this research project. The photographs and comments from these travellers’ accounts make it possible to ascertain the recurring colours of the *chuba* (*phyu pa*) worn by soldiers and the militia, for example, which were commonly described as being “dark red” or “cerise” when in woollen material, or white when in sheepskin. In addition, even in black and white photographs, it is possible to appreciate the recurrence of other material elements on these soldiers and militia: the wearing of scarves or small turbans (a headdress typically worn by Chinese soldiers) and conical white hats (for the Northern militia), the presence of small flags added to matchlock muskets, and of other weapons, such as swords and lances¹⁵ in general is striking, though not necessarily distinctive from other non-military Tibetans.

From “warriors” to “soldiers”: armed riders in early borderland photographs (1890–1903)

The Indian pundits employed by the British Survey of India who travelled extensively and incognito to Tibet after 1865 were the first explorers to visit the country after photography was invented, but it was impossible for them to carry the cumbersome cameras of the time with them, given the secret nature of their task.¹⁶ The first photographs recording the Ganden Phodrang’s territory and its inhabitants were taken by Russians in Northern Tibet, during Nikolai Przhevalsky’s fourth expedition to Tibet in 1883–1885 (by his field photographer Roborovsky), by Mikhail Pevtsov in 1889–1890 or by Vsevolod Roborovsky and Petr Kozlov in 1895.¹⁷ However, there are no photographs currently known of the Tibetan militia and soldiers they might have encountered during their trips.¹⁸

The first trace of a Ganden Phodrang Tibetan soldier or militiaman in a photograph is, for the time being, attributed to the French explorer Prince Henri d’Orléans (1867–1901), who reached Northern Tibet with his fellow countryman, the geographer Gabriel Bonvalot (1853–1933) towards the end of 1889. When approaching the area to the North of Namtso Lake in the early days of 1890 (they were the first Western foreigners to set their eyes upon it, after the Indian Pandit Nain Singh), they reported having seen armed cavalymen on numerous different occasions. These riders had apparently alerted the capital to their presence, since the two French travellers were finally stopped by a party of officials who had been despatched from Lhasa with the Manchu *amban* to meet them, accompanied

by several hundred riders. They are described in rather generic terms in Bonvalot’s published account as local “chieftains” and “platoons of riders”.¹⁹ However, in his unpublished travel diary, Prince Henri d’Orléans is more precise about their function, as he points out that these cavalymen were armed and that they seemed to be “half-chief-half-soldiers”.²⁰ At least three photographs of these alleged cavalymen or militia seem to have been taken by the prince. Only one photograph, entitled “First men” (“Premiers hommes”), or the first men that they “encountered”, is available to us as such (Pl. 3), while the two others have been passed down to us in the form of engravings. Based on the prince’s photographs, these engravings were published in Bonvalot’s account.²¹ Two of them, one originally

captioned “Conversation with the first Tibetans we met” (translated from French, Pl. 4) and “Tibetan Cavalryman” (translated from French, Pl. 5), show a group of armed riders carrying matchlock muskets and lances in the first engraving, and only matchlocks in the second. The two militiamen featured in the photograph are clearly recognisable as those who are also depicted in the two engravings. They all wear dark coloured *chubas* and some of them have their head covered with a fur-trimmed cap. Prince Henri d’Orléans also made an interesting observation in his diary, that some of these armed riders had red or yellow flags attached to their guns, a detail that cannot be seen on the men represented in these photograph and engravings, but one which is mentioned in later written accounts and which



Pl. 5. Armed cavalymen who stopped Gabriel Bonvalot and Prince Henri d’Orléans near Namtso Lake

January 1890
Unknown author
Engraved drawing published in Bonvalot’s 1892 account and modelled on Prince Henri d’Orléans’ photographs

can be seen in photographs or drawings by other travellers. This detail, in addition to their carrying lances, may indicate that these men were indeed militia, as we will see below.²²

Other travellers of these early years who reached the Ganden Phodrang's border areas stayed in uninhabited areas and did not meet Tibetan militia and soldiers, or else they did encounter militia or soldiers, but did not take photographs of them for posterity.²³ There is one photograph taken by the American diplomat William Woodville Rockhill (1854–1914),²⁴ and reproduced in his *Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892*, which, while it is impossible to be certain, could also be one of a militiaman. During this trip,²⁵ the goal of which was to study Tibetan customs and material culture, he travelled and took photographs of Tibetans on the northern border. He definitely met militiamen along his way: in his diary,²⁶ he describes how, trying to reach Tashi Lhunpo (Bkra shis lhun po) directly from the North without entering the territory under direct Lhasa rule (which was apparently under the highest levels of border watch at this time), he actually found himself among the Namru nomads (based near Namru Lake), twenty miles North of Namtso Lake, i.e. in the territory of the Lhasa government, or Depa shung (*sde pa gzhung*), which was another way to refer to the Ganden Phodrang government at this time.²⁷ A photograph captioned “Sub-Chief of Drupa Tibetans” shows a nomad chief armed with a sword,²⁸ and illustrates his encounter with the Namru nomads on 8th July 1892 (described at the end of Part 3 of his account). There is, however, no clear relation in his account between this particular photograph and the armed men he describes as coming to stop him the next day on 9th July 1892 (at the beginning of Part 4 of his account), which are also said to belong to the Namru tribe and described as wearing purple *chubas* and “great Korean shaped hats covered with white cotton and lined with red cloth”.²⁹ These armed men who belonged to the Namru nomadic tribe were joined the next day by a big party of lay officials who had come from Lhasa and were without doubt a regional militia: “Besides their own chief or Déba, they have residing among them officers sent from Lhasa.”³⁰ They showed

Rockhill “the greatest kindness and politeness”, and ten of them, under the orders of the first headman that had arrested him, escorted him back towards the road to Nagchuka (along the border with the Chinese territory) on 14th July:

“My escort looks very picturesque, the prettily shaped, though very undersized ponies nearly disappearing under the big saddles and bright saddle cloths, the riders in purple gowns and cloth-topped boots reaching to the knee, which sticks out bare above them. Their long hair falls around their faces, and their white hats (*shara*) are cocked on one side to shade them from the sun or wind. Long matchlocks swing across their backs, the stocks and locks wrapped in pieces of bright *pulo* or perhaps a marmot skin (*chyi pags*). At their waists hang red leather bullet bags, pouches for powder and priming-horns, needle cases and short knives, and each one has a long, straight sword passed through his belt, the right hand resting constantly on its hilt.”³¹

The specific white hats described here³² were also, as we will see, worn by the militia who would turn away several travellers such as Henry Savage Landor and Sven Hedin just a few years later. Just after they had parted with their militia escort, on 22nd July, on the road to Nagchuka (Nag chu ka), Rockhill and his party met two “soldiers” of the “Sang-yi” clan, who were under the orders of the “Governor” of Nagchuka (then a “*khen-po*”, a title for monk officials) and who refused to let him continue towards Nagchuka.³³ A secretary of the Governor of Nagchuka then came to meet him and helped him cross towards the territory of the Péré Pönbo (outside the Ganden Phodrang territory), towards “Mer djong” (where he encountered Tibetans who had met Bonvalot on his expedition) and Riwoche (Ri bo che). Crossing districts on both sides of the Lhasa territory's border, he reached Drayab (Brag rgyab) in September (then under the nominal jurisdiction of Lhasa), where he was once again, this time for his protection against

bandits, put under an escort of “six Tibetan soldiers bristling over with matchlocks, spears, and swords”,³⁴ some of which were regularly renewed along the way towards Bathang and Lithang, and among which were soldiers sent by the Governor of Markham (Smar khams tha'i ji).³⁵

The next Tibetan military individual was photographed in the autumn of 1896 in Western Tibet by the Irish explorer Captain Henry Hugh Peter Deasy (1866–1947), who served as a British army officer in India between 1888 and 1897, and his companion Arnold Pike, during their joint exploration of North-western Tibet. Deasy and Pike had entered Ganden Phodrang territory from Ladakh after leaving the last village there in June 1896. After five months of travelling, they finally reached Tibetan-inhabited lands. This photograph bears the handwritten caption reading “Some of our Tibetan escort” (Pl. 6). It shows half a dozen riders mounted on small ponies, all carrying matchlocks, with the man at the head of the group having not only a flag attached to his gun but a long lance as well. Deasy's account of this episode helps to confirm that the men in the picture are Tibetan border guards who stopped and escorted them back to the Indian border: when they reached the Tibetan locality of Gerge (Dge rgyas), a local “chief” (*dpon po*) visited them along with “companies of mounted men, armed with guns and swords”; “there was a considerable display of force within 100 yards of our tents”; they estimated the forces to number more than two hundred, which “presented a rather formidable appearance”; the travellers were persuaded to go back and thus made their “return journey to Ladakh, under the guidance of an armed and well-mounted Tibetan escort.”³⁶ Given that these photographs were taken during these early years, it is not possible to conclude whether the armed riders were soldiers or militia. They could well be militia, but we do know that regular soldiers could also be posted in these areas and called upon as reinforcements in cases of foreign intrusion. Furthermore, we know that Tibetan militia were often placed under the orders of military officers appointed from among the government officials.³⁷ Given the striking resemblance of these cavalymen to later examples who have been

conclusively identified as being either militia or regular soldiers, there is little doubt about their belonging to the Ganden Phodrang military defence organisation.

Around the same time, in 1897, another British explorer, Arnold Henry Savage Landor (1865–1924), also entered Western Tibet from Ladakh without authorisation and was stopped around Taklakot by Tibetan regular soldiers, in this case clearly identified as such. Savage Landor had brought a camera with him but made almost no use of it while in Tibet.³⁸ His original account includes a mixture of photographs and sketches claimed to have been made either on the spot or from memory. This process was very common at the time, as we have previously seen with Bonvalot's use of Prince Henri d'Orléans' photographs, and as we will see with the later publications by Sven Hedin, and thus the drawings in themselves should not cast any doubt on the veracity of the testimony. Indeed, during the late 1890s, and until the 1920s, it was common for publications to include only lithographs, engravings, etc., to reproduce images, instead of the photographs themselves.³⁹ Despite the absence of photographs of soldiers, Savage Landor's account is of interest for our analysis, since the drawings provide, along with the account itself, further information about the early Tibetan soldiers' outward appearance.

The torture the explorer underwent at the hands of the Tibetan authorities may well have been exaggerated.⁴⁰ However, the accuracy of both the written and drawn parts of his account which give descriptions of Tibetan military officers and regular soldiers points to other parts of his account being obviously authentic. The author is quite precise in his depiction of Tibetan soldiers posted at the small “garrison” at “Gyanema

Khar” (Rgya nyi ma mkhar), a fort near Manasarovar Lake, with descriptions of an officer that he referred to as the “magpun” (*dmag dpon*; lit. a “military officer”) and defines as being the “General-in-Chief” or the “chief officer in charge of the Gyanema fort”; Tibetan soldiers were equipped with “clumsy matchlocks, long spears, and jewelled swords and daggers”; they inspired Savage Landor “more with admiration for their picturesque appearance than with fear.”⁴¹ He then witnessed the arrival of a large contingent of other soldiers serving as an escort to the Barca Tarjum,⁴² who was a local Tibetan representative of the Lhasa government, equivalent to a District Commissioner, in charge of a large territory including Mansarowar Lake up to the

British border, and responsible for postal arrangements between Gartok and Lhasa.⁴³ After Savage Landor pretended to go back to India, he was followed and spied on by several soldiers from this detachment:

“Half-a-dozen sepoy [name of the rank and file soldier in the British Indian army] with matchlocks, to which were attached red flags, slung over their shoulders, were cantering gaily up the hillside only a few yards in front of us. [...] To be sure, these horsemen could only be soldiers despatched by the Tarjum to guard this track.”⁴⁴



Pl. 6. Tibetan border guards who stopped and escorted Captains Deasy and Pike in North-western Tibet

1896
Photograph by Henry H.P. Deasy and A. Pike
70 x 95 mm
Royal Geographical Society, London,
PR/072986

He wrote about soldiers he met later on:

“They were quite a picturesque sight in their dark-red coats, or brown and yellow skin robes and their vari-colored caps. Some wore bright-red coats with gold braiding, and Chinese caps. These were officers. The soldiers’ matchlocks, to the props of which red or white flags were attached, gave an additional touch of color to the otherwise dreary scenery of barren hills and snow. The tinkling of the horse-bells enlivened the monotony of these silent, inhospitable regions.”⁴⁵

Having taken no notice of the soldiers’ repeated requests to stop or turn back, Savage Landor was finally captured by village people and delivered to the Tibetan army, with a detachment of 200 regular soldiers having come from Lhasa and Shigatse (Gzhis ka rtse) to arrest him under the command of an officer designated as a “*rupon*” (*ru dpon*) or Colonel. Being on friendly terms with the latter, Savage Landor gathered information on the organisation of the regular army and their officers’ ranks, observations which reflect information which is only generally recounted in later sources.⁴⁶ His drawings show that some of the “guards” wore white conical hats, exactly the same as those worn by the militia who had arrested Rockhill and who would arrest Sven Hedin later.⁴⁷ On one occasion, he observed that some of the Tibetan soldiers placing prayer flags on a mountain pass were armed with a sword or matchlocks, one with a red flag attached to his matchlock (Pl. 7).⁴⁸ At the time of the publication of Savage Landor’s account in 1898, the description and images of the small white, yellow or red flags attached to the matchlocks of the guards, also found in the unpublished notes of Prince Henri d’Orléans, had not appeared, to the extent of our knowledge, in other publications which would then have been available to Savage Landor (Deasy’s account, which contains his photographs, would only be published in 1901, and Rawling’s photographs only in 1905, as will be seen below).

Just a few years later, the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin (1865–1952) attempted several times to reach Lhasa from Northern Tibet and was arrested on his way by various types of Tibetan armed riders of whom he took photographs and made numerous drawings of, most of which were included in his original published travel accounts, with a few of them reproduced in modern publications.⁴⁹ Some of these characters were merely travellers, brigands, or chieftains accompanied by their own soldiers, who were on good terms with the Lhasa government. But some, according to Hedin’s detailed accounts, were soldiers or militia who had been summoned by the Lhasa government or its representatives and were serving as escorts to government officials. Hedin’s photographs and illustrations, along with his comments, are the best example that, in the northern border areas at least, there was almost no visible difference between a regular government soldier, a militiaman, a local chief or an armed traveller (only Lhasa officials wore distinctive costumes, earrings, etc.), and that only a concerted effort to inquire as to the identity of the men could clear up any confusion. Hedin’s first encounter with soldiers and militia took place during his second expedition (1899–1901) in Asia, recounted in *Central Asia and Tibet*.⁵⁰ He was arrested with his companions in August 1901 by an envoy of the Nagchu District Commissioner (Nag chu rdzong dpon) and guarded as a prisoner by between 50 to 70 militiamen/soldiers—though they were always treated in a very amicable way, being well fed and cared for—after they passed “Black Lake” (Tsho nag) in the valley of “Jallok”. He wrote about their appearance:

“There was a small group of tents about half a mile away, and from every direction we perceived little bands of horsemen approaching them, each man armed to the teeth with spear, lance, sword, and long black musket, with a forked rest to fire it from. Some of them wore tall white felt hats, with brims, others had scarves round their heads, and all were enveloped in cloaks, brown, red, black and

grey. They looked more like bandits or highway robbers than anything else; but they were evidently soldiers, mobilised to meet the threatened invasion of southern Tibet. Where had they come from with such amazing suddenness? They seemed to have sprung like mushrooms out of the ground.”⁵¹

The Nagchu District Commissioner and his escort managed to make Hedin’s troupe turn back, and sent him away accompanied by a Tibetan escort of three military officers and fourteen soldiers, plus six civilian men in charge of the horses. Hedin showed them the Verascope camera he had brought with him,⁵² and tried to buy some of their muskets and lances to take on his journey back. He was told, however, that these weapons were property of the government and therefore could not be sold.⁵³ The escort parted with the travellers after crossing the river “Sachu-sangpo” on 15th August 1901, which marked the border of Nagchu district and hence, according to his escort, the northern border of Ganden Phodrang territory, leaving Hedin and his men to supposedly head back to Ladakh.

Nevertheless, a month later, Hedin made another attempt to turn South towards Lhasa. He was stopped again, in September 1901, this time first by a chief sent in advance by the District Commissioner of Nagtshang (Nag tshang) and his guard, soon joined by a whole troop of around seventy armed riders, near a river called Yagyu Ragpa: “they were very picturesque in their variegated attire and white hats, their ornamental saddles, silver-mounted scabbards, and red flags fluttering from the forked rests of their muskets”; Hedin witnessed their manoeuvres (some of which, such as riding at full gallop straight towards his tent, were carried out with the express purpose of frightening him and would be reproduced in drawings made by Hedin)⁵⁴ and target shooting (Pl. 8).⁵⁵ The tall white felt hats point to these particular guards being members of a local militia of Northern Tibet, possibly the group known as the “Four Northern Tribes” or Changrig deshi (Byang rigs sde bzhi),⁵⁶ whose domain included the area of Nagtshang.

The chief was then joined by the two Nagtshang District Commissioners in person, who had been ordered by the Lhasa government to stop the travellers, accompanied by 500 troops, along the eastern shore of Lake Chagut-tso. During his days spent under their firm but friendly watch, Hedin had ample opportunity to make use of his camera, and this moment is immortalised in a series of photographs of the same group (Pl. 9 and 10):⁵⁷

“At noon on the 19th September the Tibetans provided a magnificent spectacle for our entertainment. I had told Hlajeh Tsering [the senior District Commissioner of Nagtshang] that I wished to photograph him and his colleague, and after that the whole of his force of cavalry. They complied with my request with the greatest pleasure, and at once called out 200 or 300 of their men. They drew them up in rank and file, but it was anything but an easy thing to get them to stand still. When I asked them to raise their swords and lances into the air they obeyed instantly; but the action awakened their warlike instincts, the horses grew restive, and the whole troop burst away as if charging home in an attack, uttering the fiercest war-cries as they galloped. It was in truth a wild sight to see them racing across the steppe, their accoutrements jingling, their weapons flashing in the sun. My photographic ambitions had per force to rest until their warlike ardour subsided, and they were made to understand that when it came to photographing, there was no need for them to make such a display of energy or shout so desperately loud.”⁵⁸

According to Hedin’s commentary, there seem to have been a mix of militia under the command of officers (one of them being apparently the District Commissioner’s own brother, thus in all probability an aristocratic lay official)⁵⁹ with regular soldiers likely making

up the District Commissioners’ troops, a practice which remained very common as far as militia organisation was concerned up to 1950. However, at a time when regular soldiers seem to have had no specific uniform, it remains difficult to make a definitive statement regarding who was or was not a soldier or a militiaman in the photographs. Hedin finally headed back to Ladakh accompanied by a small escort taken from the assembled Tibetan troops.

Staying with Hedin and his images of contemporary regular soldiers on film, we will fast-forward here to make a short incursion into the next section of this chapter, which takes place after the Younghusband Mission.⁶⁰ During Hedin’s third expedition (1906–1908), details of which were recounted and illustrated with photographs in his books *Trans-Himalaya* and *Southern Tibet*, the explorer made another and this time successful attempt to gain access to Lhasa and Shigatse



Pl. 7. Tibetan soldiers binding prayer flags, 1896. Lithography published in Henry Savage Landor’s account (Savage Landor 1898, vol. 2: 37)



Pl. 8. Target shooting by the militia at Yagyu Ragpa
1901
Photograph by Sven Hedin
Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography,
Stockholm, 1025.0286

Pl. 9. A troop of 500 men arriving with the Nagtshang District Commissioners (Dzongpön) at Chargut-tso to force the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin to turn back to Ladakh
September 1901
Photograph by Sven Hedin
Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography,
Stockholm, 1025.0442



Pl. 10. Troops of the Nagtshang District Commissioners posing cheerfully in front of Hedin's camera at Chargut-tso
1901
Photograph by Sven Hedin
Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm, 1025.0209n



Pl. 11. Troops from Shentsa Dzong sent by the Nagtshang District Commissioner to stop Sven Hedin at Targo Gangri
1907
Photograph by Sven Hedin
Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm, 1027.0067

from the South. He was met on 26th April 1907 near the Targo Gangri by “a troop of twenty horsemen armed to the teeth” sent from Shentsa Dzong (Shan rdza/ rtsa rdzong), by his old acquaintance the Nagtsang District Commissioner, in order to stop him going further South (see Pl. 11).⁶¹ One of the two leaders of the troops was the very same Lundup Tsering who had stopped Dutreuil de Rhins and Grenard in 1894. Hedin complied with their request and describes them in detail, confirming the aforementioned red colour of their *chuba*:

“Before we took leave of our troublesome friends they were photographed on horse-back. They all wore roomy, dark cerise-coloured mantles, and [...] a bandage round the head, in many cases drawn through silver rings like bangles. One had a tall white hat like a truncated cone, with a flat brim, a head-covering I remembered seeing in Nakchu. Their guns, with the military pennants on the forks, they had slung over their shoulders, and their sabers stuck out horizontally from their girdles in silver-bound scabbards decorated with three pieces of imitation coral. Over the left shoulder some carried a whole bandolier of *gao* cases with glass fronts, through which were visible the little innocent gods which bring their wearers good fortune on their journey. Their fat little horses stamped and snorted, longing for their old well-known pastures on the shores of the Kyaring-tso. They also were decked with needlessly heavy but dainty ornaments. The white horses with red riders on their backs made a particularly striking picture. It was a varied scene in the blazing sunshine, with the snowy summits of Targo-gangri as a background and Nain Sing’s lake to the north.”⁶²

The next year, in April 1908, he was stopped again, this time in a more south-western part of Tibet, by “Dorche Tsuen”, the District Commissioner of “Saka-dzong”

(Sa dga’ rdzong),⁶³ who asked him to turn back to Ladakh and, to ensure his safe return, lent him ten soldiers from the garrison of Saga Dzong⁶⁴ (to be paid for, however, out of Hedin’s private funds). The party was placed under the orders of the “Commander of the government escort” named Nyima Tashi, of whom a watercolour sketch is provided in Hedin’s account (see Pl. 12),⁶⁵ beautifully showing the outfit of a regular soldier of the time: posing in a proud posture, he is wearing traditional Tibetan boots, a warm sheepskin *chuba*, a red turban, and carrying a sword and a matchlock.



Pl. 12. Nyima Tashi, “Commander of the Government escort”
Watercolour by Sven Hedin, 1908
Sven Hedin Foundation at
the Museum of Ethnography,
Stockholm, 952.56.x002_Teckning3

If we now go a few years back in time, after Hedin’s first arrest in Tibet, we find that Captain Cecil Godfrey Rawling (1870–1917) also brought another set of photographs of militia and soldiers back from his excursion around this time. Having previously undertaken short expeditions to Western Tibet merely “for the sake of sport”,⁶⁶ he decided to follow in the steps of Deasy and Pike and attempt to continue mapping the western regions of Tibet, during an exploration in 1903 (that happened prior to and was unrelated to the Younghusband Mission).⁶⁷ Having left Leh in May 1903, Rawling’s party was first stopped by armed riders eight days away from the western Tibetan locality of Ruthog (Ruthog) in July.⁶⁸ The first pair of photographs (a close-up and a wide-angle photograph), shows a standing group of armed men who were most likely members of the militia, with the respective captions of “Tibetan warriors” for the one reproduced in this volume (Pl. 13) and “Our Tibetan captors” for the other.⁶⁹ In his later published account, where one of the photographs is also reproduced,⁷⁰ we learn that fifty such armed men had come to “put an end to [their] further advance”, following the orders of the District Commissioner (*rdzong dpon*) of Ruthog: “They were all armed to teeth, each man carrying a long matchlock, either in his hand or slung across his back: swords were stuck through their girdles, and all carried long spears, while some had in addition bows and arrows”.⁷¹ Rawling boasts of having nevertheless managed to photograph the Tibetans: “We succeeded in photographing our opponents, much against their will; the illustration hardly does justice to the extraordinary specimens of humanity collected before the camera, for cunning, bestiality and ignorance were stamped upon every face.”⁷² The party agreed to wait for the arrival of men sent by the District Commissioner to help the British, along with transport and food provisions for their return journey to Ladakh.⁷³ A second set of photographs features those “Men of

Pl. 13. Guards, probably militia, sent by the Ruthog District Commissioner (Dzongpön) to stop the advance of Capt. C.G. Rawling
July 1903
Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling
Royal Geographical Society, London, PR/073324



Rudok sent to assist us,”⁷⁴ as labelled in the book, or next to the photograph itself, with the caption “Tibetans in Western Tibet, a pony merchant, a soldier, and a village headman” (Pl. 14).⁷⁵ Among them stands a man identified in the caption of another photo as a “Tibetan soldier in Ruthog” (Pl. 15), wearing a dark *chuba* and a cap, mounted on a pony decorated with bells and carrying a matchlock on which a small, seemingly white or at least light-coloured, flag is attached. The soldier distinguishes himself from his fellow countrymen in the photographs by his carrying a matchlock with a flag, as well as a large protective amulet (*ga’u*) around his neck. Though certainly not the sole preserve of the military, this kind of amulet may be considered a common

adornment for soldiers of the time, not only because others feature in photographs but also because they are described in British accounts as hanging around the neck of all dead soldiers killed during the Younghusband Mission, some of which were even brought back to England and later entered museums’ collections (see Pl. 16).⁷⁶

Pl. 16. A protective amulet (*ga’u*) taken from a dead Tibetan soldier following fighting around Dongtse monastery

1904
© World Museum, National Museums Liverpool, E2022.029



Pl. 14. A group including a soldier on the left
July 1903
Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling
Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073319



Pl. 15. Tibetan soldier in Ruthog
July 1903
Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling
Royal Geographical Society,
London, rgs073347

Photographing the enemy: violence and absence in British colonial images during the “Younghusband Mission” (1903–1904)

Photographs of soldiers have so far been shown to be among the very first photographic images of Tibetans to be taken in Tibet, but they remain rather rare. The Younghusband Mission in 1903–1904 certainly heralded the dawn of a new era of British photography, with a marked increase in the quantity of photographs being taken from this point onwards. From a general photographic point of view, Clare Harris has shown how the majority of the photographs in the five full-length accounts subsequently published by Younghusband

Mission members were mainly aimed at presenting Tibet as a beautiful place; and how the creation of aesthetically pleasing photographs could be seen by some of the mission’s members, along with the collecting of “Tibetan art”, almost as providing a respectable justification for the mission⁷⁷—John Claude White (Assistant Commissioner to the Tibet Frontier Commission) even going so far as to create what Harris labels the “Tibetan sublime”, the aesthetic model of a new photographic style, one which showed mainly traditional buildings and landscapes, thus conveniently avoiding the more brutal aspects of the mission—a style which would last for many years to come.⁷⁸

From the specific point of view of the history of photographs of Tibetan soldiers, however, the Younghusband Mission is an episode marked by absence and violence, and can therefore offer us only a limited understanding of the contemporary Tibetan soldiers’

general external appearance during this important period of confrontation and photography.⁷⁹ Given the clear warmongering that was at the heart of the mission, this should come as little surprise, for it is always rare and difficult to photograph one’s enemy, and so very few Tibetan soldiers, except for the wounded or dead or tortured,⁸⁰ feature in the photographs of the mission’s album, which bears the title of the “Tibet Mission Force Album”.⁸¹ These photographs should be understood as belonging to the category of images showing the physical constraint and suffering imposed on local populations for the purposes of enforcement by foreign hands, which is one of the categories belonging to the phenomenon of photography connected to organised violence in the colonial context that has been studied in detail by Daniel Foliard.⁸²

The few exceptions which do exist, where we can see Tibetan soldiers alive, were taken in the moments before the first battle of the mission took place, or else after Tibetans had been taken prisoners. These photographs were taken by one of the youngest officers (then twenty-one years old) of the military escort to the Tibet Frontier Commission, Frederick Marshman Bailey (known as ‘Eric’ on his album’s captions) (1882–1967),⁸³ then a Lieutenant of the 32nd Sikh Pioneers.⁸⁴ Headed by Brigadier-General James Macdonald (1862–1927), the military escort of the Tibet Frontier Commission (itself headed by the Commissioner Colonel Francis Younghusband, 1863–1942) was composed of 100 Englishmen and 1,200 Indian soldiers from various troops of the British Indian army, i.e. the 23rd and 32nd Sikh Pioneers, the 8th Gurkha Rifles, the 40th Pathans (1st and 2nd Mounted Infantry drawn from among their ranks), and the Norfolk Maxim detachment, who were joined at a later stage by a regiment of British infantry, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. One photograph shows Tibetan soldiers watching the British at Guru from behind a demarcated boundary line



Pl. 17. Tibetan soldiers at Guru – standing beyond the furrow
March 1904
Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
The British Library Board, London,
IOR 1083/13(45)

(see Pl. 17). We see here for the first time, as worn by a soldier standing in the middle of the second rank, a *chuba* with the collar lined in a multicolour *nambu* (*snam bu*) design, which by this point has started to appear here and there on other soldiers' *chubas*. There is no way of asserting whether it was a distinctively military feature at this time,⁸⁵ or merely a common fashion trend among both military and civilians. Indeed, such a *nambu* multicoloured lining (*gong par rgya khra*) is seen on Pl. 14 worn by a Tibetan who is not identified as a soldier). Nonetheless, it was to become, decades later, a distinctive pattern of the new military uniform which, during the declining phase of the British-style uniform in the army, would see the Tibetan *chuba* experience something of a renaissance (see Chapter 3).

Another photograph features a Tibetan taken prisoner by the Mounted Infantry. He is carrying his comrades' firearms (see Pl. 18), apparently mostly matchlocks

or, as they are referred to in the caption, "prong guns" because of the two prongs that were fixed to the barrel for the marksman to rest the gun upon when firing. We know from descriptions in British sources that the Tibetan forces, both regular soldiers and militia who opposed British troops were equipped with swords and smaller arms such as matchlocks, but that a minority also carried a variety of more modern breech-loading guns,⁸⁶ in a few cases either imported or else locally produced in a Lhasa arsenal (which had started manufacturing arms in the late 19th century, mostly by copying the old British Martini-Henry models, as well as Chinese models).⁸⁷ The British Indian troops were fighting with far superior Lee-Metford and new Lee-Enfield rifles (the latter of which they would start to export to Tibet a decade later). They were also equipped with a highly effective heavy artillery (on which more will be said later in this chapter). The prisoner in the photograph

is standing between two Sikh soldiers of the military escort, who are wearing characteristic Indian turbans or *pagri*. The photograph belongs to an ensemble of images featuring him and fellow soldiers that have been published. A photograph of the very same soldier was taken moments before he was taken prisoner, and shows him standing and holding two matchlocks. The image was reproduced in Ottley's account of the British Mission with the caption "Before fighting commences. Tibetan with prong guns at Tuna". The other photographs featuring the same soldier, taken by Bailey, show him after he had been taken prisoner. One of these images, on which the same Tibetan soldier is seen grinning, because, according to Bailey's own caption, he "thought the camera was a pistol, hence his face", has been specifically analysed by Simeon Koole, who doubts that Bailey's interpretation of the situation was correct.⁸⁸

Lastly, we turn to several photographs that would come to immortalise the last moments before the "Frontier Commission" turned into a deadly military invasion. These four photographs, pasted on a page of Bailey's photo album, document negotiations, described in the album's handwritten captions as the "conference" at Chumi shenko (Chu mig gshongs ko) near Guru between the Tibetans and the British on 31st March 1904 (see Pl. 19). In the first photograph (top left corner of the page), the Tibetan General Lhadang Dralha

Pl. 18. Prisoner carrying arms of other prisoners

March 1904
 Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
 The British Library Board, London,
 IOR 1083/13/91

Pl. 19. Page of Frederick ('Eric') Marshman Bailey's photo album showing the moments just before the first battle of the "Tibet mission" which took place near Guru, at Chumi Shenko

31st March 1904
 Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
 The British Library Board, London,
 IOR 1083/13(114-117)



near view of the conference. The sepou speaking, Capt Stanger kneeling - Gen Macdonald sitting.
 The sepou was killed in the fight which followed - 31 March
 31-3-04



The same
 31-3-04

Eric's men, trying to disperse the Tibetans
 at the Sangar - 31 March
 31-3-04

(Mda' dpon Lha sdings Dgra lha; ? –1904),⁸⁹ identified as “the Depon”, sits cross-legged on the left side, wearing a fur-trimmed hat, trying to persuade the head of the military escort to the mission, General James Macdonald (sitting cross-legged on the right with his white helmet, flanked by one standing British soldier, and one Sikh soldier with a large turban standing on the left of the photograph), not to pursue its advances into Tibet any further. The British interpreter, the Irish-born Captain Frederick O'Connor (1870–1943), is here seen kneeling between the two with his back to the camera. Tibetan soldiers wearing smaller turbans wrapped around their heads stand behind their General, one of whom wearing an ammunition belt, also called a bandler, indicating the use of a modern rifle. Austin Waddell (1854–1938), Lieutenant-Colonel of the Indian Medical Service and the “archaeologist” of the mission observed that some of the Tibetans were carrying Russian-made rifles emblazoned with the Tsarist eagles.⁹⁰ However, it must be remembered that in the end, very few traces of Russian armaments (the search for which was supposed to be among the reasons for the Younghusband Mission in the first place) were found during the entire British Mission.⁹¹ The conference eventually failed, and the photograph on the bottom right shows Muslim soldiers of the British Indian army (recognisable by the cone or *khulla* poking out from their turban) actually disarming the Tibetan soldiers (the handwritten caption shows that Bailey added the qualifying adverb “peaceably” to characterise how the disarmament started in his view; however, even British accounts indicate that the refusal of Tibetans resulted in a good deal of wrestling, degenerating soon into shoots being fired by both sides), next to stone walls known as “sangars” which had been built by the Tibetans as a protective measure. As the caption indicates, the Tibetan General was killed in the fight that followed (later known as the “Massacre of Chumi shenko”), which claimed the lives of about 700 Tibetan soldiers.⁹²

The “Lhasa General” Lhading Dapön, along with his entourage who feature in these photographs, have been described by several eyewitnesses to the scene. First, as far as weapons were concerned, Edmund Candler writes:

“Soon after they had disappeared another group of horsemen were seen riding towards us. These proved to be the Lhasa Depon, accompanied by an influential Lama and a small escort armed with modern rifles. The rifles were naturally inspected with great interest. They were of different patterns—Martini-Henry, Lee-Metford, Snider—but the clumsily-painted stocks alone were enough to show that they were shoddy weapons of native manufacture. They left no mark on our troops.”⁹³

Perceval Landon gives indications as to the colours of the Tibetan officers’ and soldiers’ *chubas*, including the first mention of a possibly distinctive “blue” colour (which has been described as being the colour of the military *chuba* in the 18th century for Tibetan soldiers dressed in Mongol-style uniform),⁹⁴ however, as we can see, the account is far too vague in terms of who was wearing what to be of much help in tracing the evolution of Tibetan soldiers’ attire:

“[...] the gay yellow and green coats of the generals from Lhasa and Shigatse; the various headdresses, the purple and blue of the robes, the strange forked guns embossed with turquoise and coral, the richly-worked sword-hilts, the little grey and bay ponies, saddle-clothed with swastika-patterned stuffs and gay with filigree brass headbands and wide moulded iron stirrups – all these things straight from the sacred and forbidden city possessed a new and intense interest for all of us.”⁹⁵

Another factor related to the general lack of uniforms explains the diversity of dress and colours mentioned in this quote, and further complicates the identification of officers of the Tibetan army in photographs: the military officers, in particular high-ranking officers of the Tibetan army, being all drawn from the group of aristocratic lay officials of the Ganden Phodrang government, were dressed in the required costume for

their government position, rather than in any military uniform, and this will remain the case in the years after the Younghusband Mission, as we shall now see.



Pl. 20. General (Dapön) Miru Gyalpo Chime Tsewang (born c. 1862) in Gyantse
July 1906
Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
The British Library Board, London, IOR
1083/17(106)

The Tibetan army in British photographs from Central Tibet after the “Opening of Tibet” (1904–1912)

After the signing of the *Treaty of Lhasa* in September 1904, the British “Tibet Mission” left Captain W.F. O’Connor, who had become Younghusband’s “right-hand man”,⁹⁶ stationed in Gyantse (Rgyal rtse) as British trade agent, along with a small escort. Two further trading posts were to be opened, in Yatung (Sgro mo) and Gartog (Sgar thog). This British presence would cement their growing political influence on the Tibetan government, especially after they offered asylum to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who sought refuge from the Chinese in 1909, and even more so after 1911, with the collapse of the Manchu Empire, the representatives of which being ultimately expelled from Tibet in 1912.



Pl. 21. Colonel (Rupön) Kyibuk Sonam Tobgye (seated, right) and the monk official Liushar (seated, left)
1907–1908
Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
The British Library Board, London, IOR 1083/18(223)

In the years immediately following the Younghusband Mission, the process of rebuilding workable diplomatic relationships between the British and the Tibetans was hastened by a new surge of Manchu interference in Tibetan affairs, the Qing wanting to reassert their authority on Tibet (a move which came as a direct consequence of the British invasion of Tibet), through a number of measures, including military reforms and the rearmament of the Tibetan troops.⁹⁷ A more informed opinion about the Tibetan government and its army developed among the British officers and photographers, who often socialised and entertained personal relationships with the subjects featured in their images. British photographers were now able to give precise names, as well as exact government’s positions in their captions. In this new context, the British began to create clearer portraits of Tibetan military officers commanding the regular troops, and thus document in much more detail the presence of Tibetan troops (both regular and militia) in more central areas of the

country, and not just in the borderlands, as they had done previously.

As far as the Tibetan military officers of the regular troops were concerned, since it seems that there were no official military uniforms in use at this time, it is quite logical that they posed in front of their former enemy’s camera dressed only in their costumes as lay officials (*drung ’khor*), without displaying anything in their outward appearance that would reveal which particular (military) position they had been appointed to. It is thus only through the mention of an officer’s rank or title in the captions that we can infer their military function as being the very highest commanders of the Tibetan army. The hierarchy of military officers remained almost unchanged from at least 1793 to 1959: the highest-ranking officer, the Dapön (*mda’ dpon*) or General (a position corresponding to the fourth rank in the hierarchical ladder of government officials), was the head of a regiment of around 500 soldiers,⁹⁸ which was divided into two smaller units composed of around 250 soldiers each, under the supervision of a Rupön (*ru dpon*) or Colonel (holding the fifth rank). Each unit of 125 soldiers was placed under the orders of a Gyapön (*brgya dpon*) or Captain (holding the sixth rank). They consisted of five sub-units of twenty-five men under the orders of a Dingpön (*lding dpon* and sometimes *zhal ngo*) or Lieutenant (holding the seventh rank). The smallest unit of ten men was under the command of a Chupön (*bcu dpon*) or Sergeant, who did not hold a government official’s rank.⁹⁹ The Chupön and Dingpön were considered non-commissioned officers by the British, while Rupön, Gyapön and Dapön they regarded as commissioned officers. Almost all Dapön and Rupön were recruited from among the lay officials (*drung ’khor*), who had themselves almost all been recruited from among the Lhasa aristocracy (*sku drag*).¹⁰⁰

A few photographs of Tibetan officers from the period following the Younghusband Mission are included in the Bailey material found in the British Library. Among these images we see General Meru Gyalwa Chime Tsewang (Mi ru rgyal po 'Chi med tshé dbang, 1862–?),¹⁰¹ photographed around July 1906 (Pl. 20), as well as Colonel Kyibuk Sonam Tobgye (*ru dpon* Skyid sbug Bsod nams stobs rgyas) taken in 1907–1908 (Pl. 21). The original caption of this photograph states that this latter officer was wounded in the Guru fight (on 31st March 1904), as confirmed in his biographical entry in the British *Who's Who* (the lists of Tibetan government officials drawn and regularly updated by the British representatives in Tibet between 1907 and 1948).¹⁰² His son would be one of the four Tibetan boys sent to Britain in 1913 to study at Rugby School.

Interestingly enough, standing on the wall next to a butter tea churn behind General Meru Gyalwa is a Tibetan *jingal* or wall gun (described with the generic term of a “cannon” in the caption of another related photograph where it also features), which is an arm rarely seen in photographs of the time. As far as their artillery was concerned, the Tibetans faced the 1903–1904 British Mission equipped with *jingals* and wall guns such as these,¹⁰³ as well as old cannons that had been used in Tibet since at least the 18th century.¹⁰⁴ They were met with the superiority of the British artillery, which comprised not only two seven-pound outdated steel mountain guns belonging to the Gurkha rifles (nicknamed “Bubble and Squeak”), but also two ten-pound mountain guns and two Maxim guns. The latter appear in a photograph of the same collection

(Pl. 22) which was taken before the first battles took place, i.e. just after the Tibet Frontier Commission and its military escort had crossed the Sikkim border and reached Gampa Dzong (Gam pa rdzong), where they were to stay for five months, at that point being still on friendly terms with the Tibetans. The image documents the keen interest of the District Commissioner of Gampa in the technological progress of the British, which, ironically, Tibetan troops were soon to suffer from. It shows the District Commissioner (*rdzong dpon*) of “Khampajong” attending a demonstration of the Maxim gun’s firepower in July or August 1903.¹⁰⁵ The image is accompanied in the album by a handwritten comment “An object-lesson for the Tibetans”: this demonstration of sheer firepower was probably a calculated effort on the part of the British to make it clear



Badula. Kambajong

62

Pl. 22. The Gampa District Commissioner inspects one of the two British Maxim guns
 July-August 1903
 Photograph by Frederick M. Bailey
 The British Library Board, London,
 IOR 1083/12(62)

Pl. 23. Soldiers' shrine at Gyantse
 Undated; 1904–1920
 Photograph by Charles A. Bell or Rabden Lepcha?
 Glass negative, 78 x 103 mm
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
 University of Oxford, 1998.286.45



to potential opponents that they would be outgunned and perhaps thereby avoid a violent confrontation and the use of actual force.

The prolonged British presence in Tibetan territory allowed the creation of photographs documenting otherwise completely unknown aspects of the cultural history of the Tibetan army. One of the most striking examples in this regard is a glass negative taken in Gyantse by Charles Alfred Bell (1870–1945) or by Rabden Lepcha¹⁰⁶ at an unknown date between 1904 and 1920 (Pl. 23), that shows a tree apparently used as shrine by soldiers’ wives, where they could pray for the wellbeing of their husbands when these men were on the front. This photograph is today the only existing trace of such a practice, it being documented in no written sources whatsoever. Charles Bell describes it as follows in the index of his photographs: “Soldiers’ shrine (marked with x) at Gyantse; wives burn incense on it when husbands are absent on active service, write their names on paper and suspend them from the ropes at the side”.

One collection of photographs in particular, that of the British Sergeant Henry Martin (?–1931),¹⁰⁷ is invaluable to our understanding of the history of the Tibetan army—both in terms of the militia and regular troops—during the very last years of the Qing presence in Tibet, and probably also the very first years of Tibet as an independent country. Martin served in the Younghusband Mission and then stayed in the country, working first as a telegraph operator, and then as head clerk of the British Trade Agency at Gyantse from 1904 to 1931. He took most of the images which are in the collection of David Macdonald (1870/3–1962), the Anglo-Sikkimese British Trade Agent of Gyantse and Yatung from 1909 to 1924. Among the British contingent, Martin is one of the men who spent the longest time in Tibetan territory, twice marrying Tibetan women.¹⁰⁸ Given his uniquely embedded personal circumstances, Martin took particularly original photographs of Tibetans, especially of the Tibetan and Sino-Manchu troops in Gyantse before 1913.

We have seen that the earliest “border photographs” featured “armed riders” who may have been either regular soldiers (they were at least described as

such by the photographers) or regional militia (likely from the northern areas, as shown by their conical white hats, for instance). Photographs taken by Martin further testify to the presence of various militia in Central Tibetan areas in these last years of Manchu rule over the country. In particular, a series of photographs taken in Gyantse in 1911–1912 clearly shows the diversity of the men’s regional outfits, especially when compared to the attire of what seem to be the regular troops.

As was the case during the Younghusband Mission, when various militia took part in defending their country, the presence of Tibetan militia in Central Tibet, as shown in Martin’s images, is probably related to another important military operation that took place in the area: the expulsion of the last Sino-Manchu troops from Tibet, as documented in many photographs in Martin’s collection. Taken probably around 1911–1912, a particular photograph (Pl. 24) both shows and identifies in the captions the Khampa militia from Eastern Tibet who are clustered around a General holding a gun.¹⁰⁹ The photograph is part of the Henry Martin collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, as well as of two other collections. First, the collection of the French explorer Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969), who had somehow acquired a copy,¹¹⁰ either when she was staying in Sikkim between 1912 and 1916, or when she was in Gyantse (the first time in 1916 when she was invited by the Panchen Lama, and the second time in 1924, after her trip to Lhasa in disguise, when she was en route to India and she disclosed her presence to David Macdonald, the British representative stationed there).¹¹¹ On the early photograph originally taken by Martin, she wrote “Tibetan General with bodyguard”,¹¹² while the handwritten caption on the back of Henry Martin’s photograph says “Khamba troops”.¹¹³ Another of Martin’s shots confirms the fact that the central figure holding a modern pistol is indeed a General, thanks to its caption, which describes a “Depon magistrate [sic]¹¹⁴ and Khamba officers”.¹¹⁵

The third collection to feature the same photograph is that of Eric Parker (1896–1988) in Vancouver.¹¹⁶ As will be seen in the next chapter, Parker, Captain of the 90th Punjabi regiment, would only go himself to Tibet

in 1921–1923 as head of the British military escort and was probably given these photographs by Henry Martin or David Macdonald while in Gyantse.¹¹⁷

Another photograph (Pl. 25) is also part of Alexandra David-Neel’s collection, but again this was probably taken by Henry Martin between 1908 and 1914 (the period during which he took most of his dated photographs).¹¹⁸ It shows the militia from Northern Tibet, recognisable by their short knee-length *chuba*. The conical high hats placed on the ground before them, which we have seen already in Sven Hedin’s photographs from Northern Tibet, could be an indication that these men may have belonged to the Changrig deshi militia.¹¹⁹ However, it is unclear whether the conical hats actually belong to them. The militia is already wearing a variety of hats, including a distinct cap worn by the three soldiers on the right and the fourth from the right, and most probably by all the others as well, under their turban. Though this cap is here worn with what seems to be a civil dress in the form of a traditional *chuba*, we will see that it appears as a distinctive element of a newly-designed uniform appearing in three other photographs, two by Martin (Pl. 28 and 29) and another one by Aoki Bunkyō (Pl. 30). Thus, the conical hats on the ground could instead belong to another group of militiamen, who may have been photographed just before them on the same spot, leaving their hats there. Alternatively, we cannot completely reject the notion that the men in the photograph were wearing a mix of a military cap *cum* turban for some, and of cap *cum* conical hat for others. The militia have the bottom of their matchlock wrapped in a pouch made of *nambu* fabric, matching the multicoloured collar lining of some of their *chubas*. Henry Martin’s photographs, and the diversity of the soldiers’ dress and weapons, are indicative

of the structural changes already taking place during this time. We see in these images taken at Gyantse examples of militia with their matchlocks (Pl. 25 and 26), militia with modern guns (Pl. 24), regular troops in *chuba* and turbans, shouldering their modern guns (Pl. 27),¹²⁰ and a large pile of dozens of modern rifles in the left background. The turban, as we have seen, was typical soldier’s headwear in Qing China.

Related in content and contemporaneous to other images in this series, is another photograph taken by Henry Martin, which is now part of the Pitt Rivers Museum collections, but was also acquired by Eric Parker and as such appears in his collection in Vancouver, in a version that is reproduced here. The photograph itself (Pl. 28) shows the “Tibetan escort” of David Macdonald,¹²¹ and can be (quite fortunately) precisely dated

because of the presence of Captain G.B. Harland, who was medical officer at Gyantse only from October 1912 to December 1915.¹²² Here also, we see soldiers in Tibetan-style *chuba* and boots, with turbans and equipped with modern guns. The man kneeling on the right side of the first line seems to be wearing that same cap under his turban as in Pl. 25.



Pl. 24. A General with his Khampa militia troops, Gyantse
Undated; 1908–1914?
Photograph by Henry Martin
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 1998.293.140



Pl. 25. Northern militia in Gyantse
Undated; 1908–1914?
Photograph by Henry Martin?
Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de
Digne-les-Bains, Dn762a



**Pl. 26. Tibetan soldiers or militia
with prong guns**
Undated; 1908–1914?; Gyantse?
Photograph by Henry Martin
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 1998.293.143



Pl. 27. Tibetan troops with *chuba*, turbans and modern guns
 Undated; 1908–1914? Gyantse
 Photograph by Henry Martin
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
 University of Oxford, 1998.285.450



Pl. 28. David Macdonald (3rd from left) Trade agent Yatung and Gyantse, Dr. Harland (2nd from the right), Trade Agency Doctor with Tibetan Escort, Yatung 1912–1915
 Photograph by Henry Martin
 Courtesy of UBC Museum of Anthropology, Eric Parker funds,
 Vancouver, Archives image a033540



First attempts at a standardisation of the Tibetan regular troops' uniforms (1908–1913)

Generally speaking, even if each group of militia and soldiers featured in Martin's photographs wear different interpretations of dress uniform, there is a new level of homogeneity *within* each group of soldiers, unlike in the earliest photographs taken up to 1908. But most importantly, Henry Martin (Pl. 29) photographed what seems to be early first attempts at introducing a standardised, modern military uniform among the Tibetan regular troops, a fact that has only been ascertained through the photographic evidence. The wooded scenery behind the "Tibetan troops" (as it is originally captioned) of the photograph points to the image having been taken in Yatung, rather than Gyantse.¹²³ The photograph shows two different types of uniforms: the most visible one is of a broadly Western-style, with shirt and trousers; the second one is of an unidentified style, with a distinctive tunic containing two diverging rows of buttons (the two soldiers standing on the right, and in the rear line), that will be further proposed below as being possibly of Japanese inspiration. Both types of soldiers wear the same distinctive cap (that featured also in Pl. 25).

The photograph is not precisely dated and it is thus impossible to be certain of its date (as already mentioned, Martin's photographs dated in their majority from the period from 1908 to 1914). An exact dating would help us to conclusively decide between three entirely different interpretations of this photograph. These new uniforms could either show the result of the

above-mentioned reforms undertaken by the Manchu authorities around 1908, which were aimed at modernising the Tibetan troops. Indeed, we know from British archives that the Qing military reforms were also aimed at introducing new uniforms for the Tibetan soldiers. In June 1908, for instance, we learn that the Chinese wanted to create a Tibetan "police" in Japanese-style uniform, but that the Tibetans were reluctant to "change uniform" (which interestingly means that they were already wearing a military uniform by 1908).¹²⁴ In September 1908, another report states that the Chinese were "busy making uniforms" for the new Tibetan army (without any details being given about the shape and colour of these uniforms, or whether they were, in the end, after the Japanese style or Sino-Manchu style).¹²⁵

The second option is that the photograph could show the first steps of the military reforms undertaken by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1875–1933) upon his return from exile in 1913, in the short interval before the British model was chosen and British army-style uniforms were introduced in 1916 (see the next chapter). It could lastly illustrate individual or local initiatives to introduce "modern", i.e. Western-style military uniforms before 1913, in an area where the commanding officers were possibly influenced by their proximity with the Gyantse and Yatung British trade agents and their escorts and with the Sino-Manchu garrisons in Central Tibet.

The second hypothesis would be strengthened by the fact that the same particular cap appears on yet two other photographs (Pl. 30 and Pl. 138) taken by the Japanese Buddhist priest Aoki Bunkyō (1886–1956). They show the cap being worn with the above-mentioned unidentified uniform (seen in Pl. 29), which thus appears only in these three photographs of the whole collection to be gathered for this research. Aoki Bunkyō was sent to Lhasa by Prince Ōtani Kōzu and lived there for three years between 1913 and 1916 (he had already reached Tibetan areas by the end of 1912). The photographs having been taken in Lhasa means that it cannot be dated before 1913 and after 1916. Pl. 30 was reproduced by Aoki in the account of his stay in Lhasa, published in 1920, with the following caption:

"The servant for the author [Aoki] in his stay in Tibet (the original photo taken by the author)",¹²⁶ and with a very interesting and detailed explanation about this "servant":

"He (Tsarong) put a set of Tibetan clothes in front of me, which he made his servant bring. And he said: 'According to our custom in Tibet, visitors have to wear appropriate costumes, just like we would imitate European appearance when we visit India. Moreover, you can keep one of my escorts by your side, so that you can use him as a servant for your stay in Tibet. His name is Tsering Gompo, who turned 26 years old this year. He has a military status, and has experience in fighting in various places. He is very useful'. Thus, he even presented me with a servant, too."¹²⁷

Tsering Gompo was visibly a member of the Tibetan army, and probably of the troops being trained by Tsarong Dasang Dadul (Tsha rong Zla bzang dgra 'dul, 1888–1959) as the new Bodyguard regiment (Kusung Magar) at this time, in 1913.¹²⁸ The status of the man is confirmed by the caption created by the "Ato photographic association", through which the image entered the collections of the Royal Geographical Society: "Tibetan Soldiers (2) (Tibet). The regular army of Tibet is given comparatively modern training by officers, some of whom are said to have studied abroad. The picture shows an infantryman of the Palace Guards." The tunic of the guard has a specific shape, with two diverging rows of buttons. Interestingly, this element also appears (in addition to the cap) as being worn by several soldiers in Henry Martin's photograph taken in Yatung (Pl. 29), which we can see on the soldier in the second line on the right and on all soldiers standing in the rear line. The chosen model of the uniform for this Palace guard could thus be a new (possibly Japanese-style) uniform, either imported thanks to the late-Qing reforms or directly through the Japanese who held a presence at the time and are known to have influenced the Tibetan military modernisation, such as Aoki Bunkyō or

Pl. 29. Tibetan troops in new standardised uniforms
Undated; 1908–1914?
Photograph by Henry Martin
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 1998.293.142

Yajima Yasujirō (more will be said on Yajima in the next chapter).¹²⁹

Being able to precisely identify the model for this new uniform would help, but it is a difficult task, as, by 1908, all the countries that may have been an influencing force on the Tibetan troops had already completely westernised the uniforms of all their own troops (in Japan and British India) or of parts of their troops (in Qing China, with its “new army” for instance). This situation is further complicated by the fact that both the Manchu authorities in Lhasa between 1908 and 1912¹³⁰ and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama between 1913 and 1916¹³¹ were influenced by the Japanese military model and could have introduced Japanese-style uniforms in Tibet, albeit in a limited measure and locally, as the rarity of the photographs suggest. Further complicating the matter, we can also see signs of Manchu influence in photographs featuring this “new-style uniform” and precisely dated to 1912 at the latest: the cartridge belt of the first rank of the kneeling soldiers in Pl. 29 for instance, which has white squares with a black circle, is identical not only to that of Sino-Manchu soldiers photographed by Henry Martin at some point between 1908 and 1914,¹³² but also to that of other Tibetan soldiers photographed by Sonam Wangfel Laden La (Bsod nams dbang ’phel legs ldan la, 1876–1936) in 1912 in Gyantse. In Laden La’s image, which has been published and is entitled “District governor of Tsang with soldier-bodyguards, Gyantse Dzong, 1912”,¹³³ the soldiers wear distinctively Western-style uniforms and carry rifles fitted with bayonets, as in Henry Martin’s photograph. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that both photographs (Pl. 29 with the Western-style uniform and the specific cap on the one hand, and Pl. 30 with the unidentified-style uniform, worn with the same cap on the other hand) illustrate the very first steps taken in this transformation of the Tibetan army’s appearance.

However, the fact that photographs dating from the exact same period feature soldiers in high numbers who are not wearing these two particular uniforms, shows that they were either short-lived experiments, or uniforms worn only by certain parts of the Tibetan troops. Indeed, another photograph, likely also taken

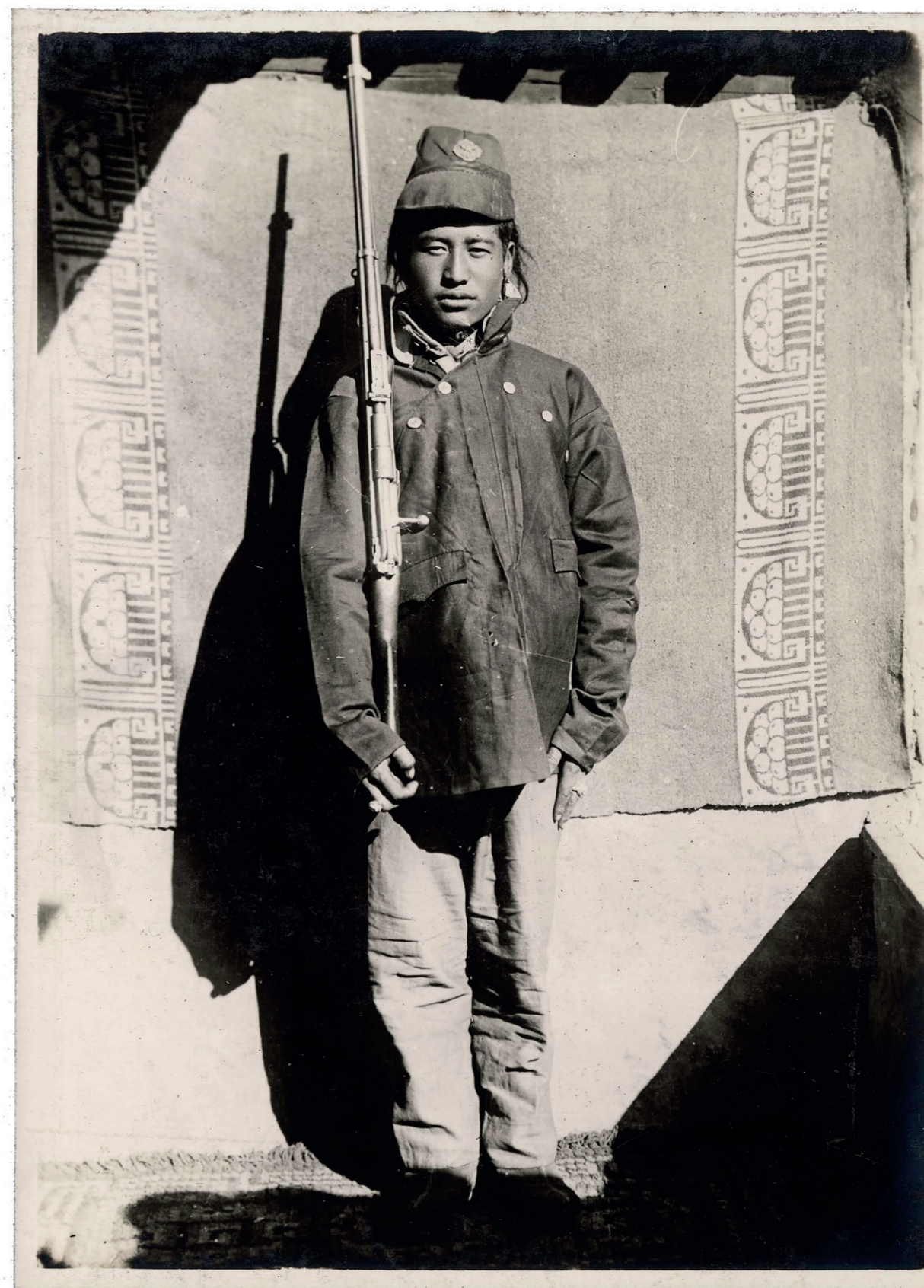
by Aoki Bunkyō (Pl. 31), features Tibetan soldiers in a third type of uniform, this time a Chinese-style one. This print is also part of the Royal Geographical Society and attributed to the same Ato photographic association (the two prints belong together, as shown by their captions “Tibetan soldiers (1)” and “Tibetan soldiers (2)”.¹³⁴ The caption for this other photograph of the Ato association reads: “Tibetan soldiers (1) (Tibet). The Tibetan army is divided into three classes. The first one is called Regular which stands ready for actual service, the second one consists of monks who are famous for their valour, and the third one is Militia. The number of the standing army of Tibet is 6,500 men, while up to 100,000 men strong can be called up in case of emergency, it is said.” It is not known at all whether the caption and the photograph were produced at the same moment, or it is also very possible that there could have been a significant time gap between the two, the latter being very possible.

In any case, the photograph is very likely to also be attributed to Aoki Bunkyō. Although it was not published in his account, it is very similar to another one featured in his book, which will be examined in Chapter 5 (Pl. 138).¹³⁵ The presence of puttees (i.e. covering for the lower part of the leg from the ankle to the knee) indicates that the photograph was taken after some kind of modernisation of the uniform was implemented. Most tunics are visibly in the Chinese style (in addition to elements of Western and Tibetan uniforms). Generally speaking, the dress style is very similar to the uniform worn by some Chinese soldiers photographed in 1911–1912 by Henry Martin (see for instance “Chinese Firing Party”), in which the Chinese soldiers wear puttees and turbans.¹³⁶

In summary, the Tibetan army, as it appears in photographs taken in the period from 1890 to 1913, included both regular soldiers and officers and militia from various parts of Tibet; until the very last years of this period, they appear not to wear a distinctive outfit to set them apart from other civilians of their time who are also featured in some of the photographs. However, thanks to careful study of the photographs and their corresponding written descriptions in travellers’ account, we do know that some of them wore either

red or white sheepskin *chubas*, or *chubas* with a *nambu* multicoloured lining, worn with a variety of regional hats, or red turbans, as well as amulet boxes.

In photographs taken by Henry Martin and Aoki Bunkyō in Gyantse and Yatung, noticeable first attempts at standardising the appearance of troops are visible, in a Western- or Chinese- style and with potentially the creation of another uniform of an as-yet unidentified influence. As for the weapons which can be seen in photographs, they are generally, for the militia, matchlocks or prong guns, onto which small flags could be attached (the last photographs showing such flags are those of the troops of the District Commissioner of Nagtshang, taken by Sven Hedin in 1907, but no such flags were seen in photographs from the British Mission), lances and swords, as well as a wall gun; regular troops are seen with ammunition for modern rifles in one photograph of the British Mission. In photographs from the years 1911–1912, the wider adoption of more modern firearms is noticeable (though we do know that they already existed in 1903–1904), alongside the continued use of the matchlock for the militia only.



Pl. 30. Tsering Gompo, a Tibetan soldier who served as a personal guard and servant to Aoki Bunkyō during his stay in Lhasa 1913–1916
Photograph by Aoki Bunkyō
100 x 150 mm
Ato Photographic Association
Royal Geographical Society, London, A130/003262



Endnotes Chapter 1

- 1 Harris 2016, Chapter 1.
- 2 Harris 2016, Chapter 1.
- 3 On the reason we have considered that both regular soldiers and militiamen made up the Tibetan army, see the introduction.
- 4 Rawling 1905: 137.
- 5 Travers 2015: 256–257.
- 6 For a study of the militia organisation and its changes over the early 20th century, based on Tibetan sources, see Travers forthcoming.
- 7 Being at home on half pay, cf. Das 1902: 180. Das’ observations on this military organisation concern the period of his second trip to Tibet, including the visit to the towns of Tashi Lhunpo and Lhasa in 1882.
- 8 District Commissioners (*rdzong sdod* or *rdzong dpon*) were usually one or two lay or monk government officials (*gzhung zhabs*) holding the seventh to the fifth rank—depending on the size and significance of the district—and usually served a term of three years. For a list of the districts of the Ganden Phodrang territory, see Travers 2020c.
- 9 As Perceval Landon, the special correspondent representing the British newspaper *The Times*, would phrase it in his later published account of the Mission (Landon 1905); see also Chapter 2 “The Opening of Tibet to Photography” in Harris 2016.
- 10 Foliard 2020: 6.
- 11 According to Bertsch (2003–2004: 35), based on a description of the Tibetan army in the 18th century found in Chinese sources (Becker, Andrea, “Eine Chinesische Bes-

Pl. 31. Tibetan soldiers in Lhasa
1913–1916
Photograph by Aoki Bunkyō
100 x 150 mm
Ato Photographic Association
Royal Geographical Society, London,
A130/003261

- chreibung von Tibet aus dem 18. Jahrhundert”, PhD Dissertation, München, 1976): “previously every army member dressed as suitably as he could and his means would allow, as no uniforms provided by the government were available”. This seems to have still been the case at the time of Sarat Chandra Das’ (1849–1917) second trip to Tibet in 1882 (i.e. just a decade before the first photographs examined in this volume were taken), who writes that regular soldiers of this period were “not usually uniformed, though some wear a black Chinese jacket” (Das 1902: 180). However, as we will see in this volume, the first and short-lived attempts at introducing modern (Western-style) uniforms into the dress of the Tibetan army were made in the last years of the Manchu Empire. Additionally, one element worn by some soldiers who dressed in the Tibetan style before 1912 (visible in Pl. 17, 26 and 27), i.e. the *nambu* multicoloured lining of their *chuba*, remained visible in photographs throughout the 1920s (Pl. 60, 61), before being ultimately taken over, and generalised and standardised as the new Tibetan-style military uniform for one regiment in the late 1930s and for more regiments in the 1940s.
- 12 On the history of the matchlock musket in Tibet, see La Rocca 2006: 198–213 and 2021, Josayma 2021 and Travers 2021b.
 - 13 This is contrary to a frequently found assumption that the Ganden Phodrang was a territory without well-delineated borders.
 - 14 On this question of territorial borders, see again Travers forthcoming.
 - 15 On the history of these two weapons in Tibet through the analysis of the objects kept in museums, see La Rocca 2006: 146–184.
 - 16 Harris 2012: 97 regarding Sarat Chandra Das. One exception could have actually been Das, who first entered Tibet in 1879 and displayed a keen interest in photography (not to mention the few plates attributed to him in the Royal Geographical Society), but Harris has convincingly demonstrated that it is unlikely that he ever brought photographs back from Tibet (Harris 2012: 96–103 and 2016: 45–49).

- 17 Andreyev 2013: 4.
- 18 Andreyev describes these photographs as showing only landscapes and villages. I have unfortunately not been able to browse these collections in Russia myself, nor check their written accounts. Russian explorers, namely O. Norzunov and G. Tzibikov (or Tsybikov), would finally make it to Lhasa in 1899 with a camera, but as far as the army is concerned, they left only one photograph, of the Chinese garrison barracks taken from quite a distance in Trapchi (Andreyev 2013: 132). Parts of their collections are preserved at the Royal Geographical Society and at the French National Library, the latter being available online: “50 photographies du Tibet en 1899, par O. Norzounoff et G. Tzibykoff, avec tiré-à-part explicatif en russe et légende dactylographiée en français, don [1904] Norzounoff, O.”: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b531948461/f55.item>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 19 Bonvalot’s published account (Bonvalot 1892) mentions their meeting with “chefs” and “pelotons de cavaliers” (in French).
- 20 Travel diary or notebook, kept in the French National Archives: they met “armed riders who seem to be half-chief-half-soldiers” (in the French original source: “des cavaliers armés, ils semblent être des chefs moitié soldats”), French National Archive, 300/AP/III/257B, Notebook n°6, 20 December 1889–14 February 1890, page 126. In addition, some of the 108 drawings illustrating the first edition of Bonvalot’s published account show Tibetan riders armed with matchlocks.
- 21 Bonvalot’s account was illustrated with 108 engravings based on Prince Henri d’Orléans’ photographs taken during the expedition (Bonvalot 1892: 231 and 243). The two original photographs from which these engravings were made have never been published—they are not among Prince Henri d’Orléans’ photographs reproduced in Lhalungpa (1983: 57–63)—and were unfortunately not among the files we were able to access in his private archive at the French National Archives (the collection is unfortunately not accessible in its entirety). However, the perfect resemblance of the few photographs (in general, even when not related to the present topic) we could access and their corresponding engravings in Bonvalot’s book show the meticulous precision of the engraver’s copying skills.
- 22 Archives nationales, 300/AP/III/257B, Notebook n°6, 20 December 1889–14 February 1890, page 159 and 160. Whether the flying of white, yellow or red flags on their matchlocks (a common practice among Tibetans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, that would entirely disappear from later photographs after 1912), was used as an identifying symbol for militia and/or soldiers, or even as an early type of military flag could not be ascertained, since this aspect is not discussed in the written sources.
- 23 For instance, the French geographer Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins (1846–1894) along with Fernand Grenard (1893–1894), who also reached Namtso but were arrested and then rerouted towards Eastern Tibet after Nagchu in December 1893, away from their attempt to reach Lhasa. Jules-Léon Dutreuil de Rhins would later be killed in what is known today as Qinghai Province in 1894, leaving his young associate Grenard to take charge of the publication of their mission’s results, see Dutreuil de Rhins 1897–1898. The same also happened to the earlier travellers Littledale and Fletcher, whose collection contains no army-related photographs at all. For a thorough review of the bibliography on early travellers to Tibet, see Marshall 2005.
- 24 His photographs in general are amongst the first ever taken by Westerners of Tibetans in the Ganden Phodrang territory. Some of them are available online in the Smithsonian collection: <https://learninglab.si.edu>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 25 He had not crossed towards the Ganden Phodrang territory during his first trip in 1889 recounted in *The Lands of the Lamas* published in 1891.
- 26 Rockhill 1894. I am grateful to Donald La Rocca for pointing the existence of this diary and written descriptions out to me.
- 27 Rockhill 1894: 229–231.

- 28 The photograph is included between page 232 and 233 (Rockhill 1894).
- 29 Rockhill 1894: 234.
- 30 Rockhill 1894: 235.
- 31 Rockhill 1894: 241–242.
- 32 Drawings of these “summer hats” are reproduced between page 216 and 217 of his diary (Rockhill 1894). They seem to have been widespread in Northern and Eastern Tibet, including in areas not under the jurisdiction of Lhasa, such as among the Horgo nomads he met later on and who lived in Jyadé (*rgya sde*, the “Chinese province”) that was then, according to Rockhill, under the authority of the Lhasa Manchu *amban* but not of the Lhasa Tibetan government (see Rockhill 1894: 254 and 260).
- 33 He was probably a District Commissioner (*rdzong dpon*), as the position of Province Governor had not yet been created in Nagchuka (it would only become a viable position from 1916).
- 34 Rockhill 1894: 328.
- 35 Rockhill 1894: 336. There is no information on exactly where the Tibetan soldiers left.
- 36 Deasy 1901: 59–63. The photograph is reproduced in the book (Deasy 1901: 68).
- 37 Travers forthcoming.
- 38 Harris 2012: 81.
- 39 In the 1890s, because of technical difficulties in the process of reproducing photographs, it was still common to include handmade drawings and engravings made from photographic plates in publications. It was not until the 1920s that the photomechanical revolution allowed photographs to be more easily included in publications.
- 40 It has been considered an improbable tale by Harris (2012: 82), who recalls that it was doubted at the time of its publication as well.
- 41 Savage Landor 1898, vol. 1: 188–189, 192–193. This feeling of admiration towards the “picturesque” Tibetan soldiers that accompanied these earlier travellers is often expressed, but this comes to be replaced by more frequent expressions of hatred after the Younghusband Mission in 1903–1904.
- 42 Savage Landor 1898, vol. 1: 194.
- 43 “Report on a visit to Western Tibet from August to October 1932. Letter by F. Williamson” (IOR/L/P&S/12/4/163/P1165).
- 44 Savage Landor 1898, vol. 1: 232–233.
- 45 Savage Landor 1898, vol. 2: 32.
- 46 Savage Landor 1898, vol. 2: 116.
- 47 Reproduced in Savage Landor 1898, vol. 2: 94, 103, 178.
- 48 Reproduced in Savage Landor 1898, vol. 2: 37.
- 49 See for instance Lhalungpa 1983.
- 50 Hedin 1903.
- 51 Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 358.
- 52 Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 394. However, it does not seem that he made any use of his camera, as the photographs used in *Central Asia* to illustrate this first meeting obviously belong to later encounters he photographed in Yagyu Ragpa and Chargu-tso.
- 53 Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 396.
- 54 Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 359. See also the drawing depicting the scene when the Governor of Nagchu threatens him with death should he continue his journey, Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 376. The diversity of the hats is notable: in addition to the conical hats of the guards, the District Commissioner himself wears a kind of dark hood.
- 55 Also reproduced in Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 434, as well as in Lhalungpa 1983: 90.
- 56 The identification of the militia photographed at “Yagu Ragpa” by Sven Hedin (Lhalungpa 1983: 90) has been made thanks to an information given by Josayma Tashi Tsering, whom I would like to thank. It has to be noted that the militia related to the Nagchu governor are also described as wearing a tall white felt hat, and that publications tend to characterise these soldiers as a “*hor pa*” militia. This conical hat might have been widely used in the northern areas, along with the red scarves around the head, that also feature in the photographs and in the descriptions. For a map and an identification of the various militia in North-eastern Tibet, see Travers forthcoming.
- 57 Reproduced in Hedin 1903 (vol. 2: 380 and 476) with the captions “The Tibetan Emissaries’ Guard at the Chargut-tso” and “Tibetan cavalry”.
- 58 Hedin 1903, vol. 2: 479.
- 59 Only aristocrats were allowed to serve the government as lay officials.
- 60 Thus, it must be understood that this third excursion did not take place in the same political context as his first two trips. At that time, Tibet was on somewhat better (if not yet entirely stable) terms with the British authorities, although the latter had once again failed to give authorisation for Hedin’s travel.
- 61 The photograph was originally entitled “Army at Targo gangri” in Hedin 1909–1913, vol. 2: 26; and “Armed Tibetans at the foot of Targo-Gangri”, in Hedin [1916–1922] 1991, vol. 3: 283. On this photograph, see also Chapter 5 on flags.
- 62 Hedin 1909–1913, vol. 2: 31.
- 63 Hedin 1909–1913, vol. 2: 355.
- 64 Hedin 1909–1913, vol. 2: 365.
- 65 Hedin 1909–1913, vol. 2: 353.
- 66 Rawling 1905: 6.
- 67 Recounted in Part I, “Exploration of Central Tibet, 1903” of Rawling’s book.
- 68 There is no exact date given in the account, but the author does hear while in Ruthog about the presence of a British force (i.e. the Younghusband Mission) in Gampa Dzong, thus one can infer the approximate date of his arrival there.
- 69 Not reproduced here: Capt. C.G. Rawling, Royal Geographical Society, PR/030113.
- 70 Under the caption “Our captors”, Rawling 1905: 134.
- 71 Rawling 1905: 132–133.
- 72 Rawling 1905: 138.
- 73 After his failure to reach Gartok from the West and his subsequent return to British territory, he would eventually join the members of the Younghusband Mission in Gyantse in September 1904, and resume his attempts to reach Gartok, successfully this time, in the aftermath of the British Mission, cf. Rawling 1905, part II, “The Gartok Expedition 1904–1905”.
- 74 Caption of the group photograph reproduced in the book (Rawling 1905: 152).
- 75 This image, which Rawling chose as the cover image for his book, allows us to identify which of the men in the photo is the soldier, since the men were obviously presented in the caption in the wrong order.
- 76 One such example is currently held at the Museum of Liverpool, and was collected from a dead soldier during an expedition to Dongtse monastery, see Collection of National Museums Liverpool: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/artifact/amu-let-box-gau-21>, last accessed 30th January 2022. See also Harris 2012: 58–59. On the general topic of British looting during the Younghusband Mission, see Myatt 2012; Harris 2012: 49–78.
- 77 Harris 2012: 108.
- 78 Harris 2012: 108–115.
- 79 As put succinctly by Clare Harris, “military photographs” taken in 1904 “tell us more about the British army than they do about Tibet” (Harris 2012: 105).
- 80 They have not been included in the exhibition for obvious reasons. The torture case in question is a flogging inflicted as a punishment. For a thorough historical analysis of the links between photography and violence during this period and in the specific context of French and British colonialism, see Foliard 2020. For a very interesting examination of how these photographs of dead Tibetan soldiers were published in the British press and, within a short space of time, forced their author F. Bailey to “reinterpret his own relationship to Tibetans”, see Koole 2017: 339–340.
- 81 Composed of images made by several members of the British Mission, it is kept at the Royal Geographical Society. It seems that the absence or rarity of Tibetan soldiers in photographs also characterises other collections of photographs taken between 1903–1904, for instance those taken by John Claude White and Gerald Irvine Davy and kept at the Museum of Liverpool (as presented in the exhibition *Capturing Tibet: Colonialism and the Camera during the Mission to Lhasa*, curated in 2017 by Emma Martin).
- 82 Foliard 2020: 7.
- 83 Bailey would become, at a later stage of his career, British Political Officer to Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet (1921–1928). On Bailey, see McKay 1997: xxix, 34–39 and 115–130.
- 84 For a detailed and well documented account of the Younghusband Mission, based on British archive as well as regimental and private sources of the British participants, see Allen 2004.
- 85 This would contradict generally made assertions that there was no Tibetan uniform before the British-style uniforms, but this assertion, as we shall see in the last part of this chapter, is in any case incorrect.
- 86 See for instance General Macdonald’s report reproduced in Otley’s account, where Macdonald states, regarding the Tibetan forces met at Kangma on June 22, 1904: “The enemy had by this time collected against us a force of 16,000 men. They had several small cannon, some 30 Jingals and wall pieces, and 800 breech-loaders, while the balance were armed with matchlocks” (Otley 1906: 261). I am grateful to Donald La Rocca for pointing this report out to me.
- 87 See Travers 2021b for descriptions of the local manufacture of firearms, based on both Tibetan accounts and British sources.
- 88 “However much this photograph moves us, though, however much it seems to evidence dispossession in its rawest form, the seized weapons flung at the feet of a distressed prisoner now photographed, we must not repeat Bailey’s assumption that this was the case. We must not legitimate the role he took as sole claimant to the event through assuming the Tibetan’s ignorance of the end result. Other interpretations of Tibetan reactions to photography suggest that other photographers did not always assume the ignorance that Bailey did” (Koole 2017: 336). Foliard comments on the same photograph, underlining how the photographer, through his caption, “builds the myth of photography as one of the tools of Western power” (Foliard 2020: 64, translation from French).
- 89 Personal name in Lha sding Rnam rgyal rdo rje dang dge slong Blo bzang bstan ’dzin 2005: 9.
- 90 Otley 1906: 72. See also Waddell [1905] 1929: 155: “three orderlies with Russian-rifles bearing the Imperial stamp slung over their shoulders”.
- 91 On Russian imported firearms more generally, see Travers 2021b: 1012–1013.
- 92 Candler 1905: 102–112. See also Allen 2004 for a comparison of British sources and the statement that the British were by all means trying to create an incident to start the fighting.
- 93 Candler 1905: 103.
- 94 Gyantse Namgyal Wangdue 2003: 21 (2012: 18), where the colour is described as a “pale blue” (*sngo sang*) for the Mongol-style uniforms of soldiers. Interestingly, he also describes the *chubas* of officers below the rank of General as being brown, while the Generals’ *chubas* of this time would have been yellow. No source is quoted and the exact chronological period for this description is not indicated.
- 95 Landon 1905: 80.
- 96 McKay 1997: xxvi.
- 97 On the whole plan of military reforms, see Kobayashi 2020; on the new impulse in firearms manufacturing, see Travers 2021b.
- 98 Some regiments had 1,000 soldiers (and thus comprised four *ru*), others had only 500 soldiers (comprising only two *ru*), and one had 1,500 soldiers (six *ru*).
- 99 Travers 2015: 259 and 263; 2016: 112; 2020a: 159.
- 100 The Tibetan aristocracy of the Ganden Phodrang consisted, according to our own research, of 213 families in total. They had the obligation and privilege to enrol at least one son per generation in the administration. In exchange for their government service, the family received estates which were hereditarily transmitted. The careers of lay officials were not specialised: they were appointed to different government positions every few years, and so, from among these various positions, they could be appointed as military officers. For more on the careers of lay officials, and in particular in relationship to the army, see Travers 2011.
- 101 His personal name was ascertained thanks to his biography, found in two of the British *Who’s Who*: “MI-RU GYAL-PO CHI-ME TSI-WANG, born about 1862. Took part in the fighting at Lhasa, where he was wounded in May 1912. Is a Depon. He is of the Chok-te family and married Mi-ru Gyal-po’s daughter and took the name of Mi-ru Gyal-po after his death. Is of influence owing to his great friendship with Chen-se Nam-kang now Shape Tsarong. He is now the TTA and Frontier Officer at Yatung, and is very friendly towards the British.” (*Chiefs and Leading Families 1915*: 18); “Was formerly a General in the Tibetan army and has twice acted as Tibetan Trade Agent at Yatung, from which post he retired in the summer of 1932. Is now living in the Shang province (Western Tibet). Was created a Dzasa in 1929.” (*List of Chiefs and Leading Families 1933*: 18).
- 102 His details were confirmed thanks to his biography, found in two British *Who’s Who*: *List of Leading Officials 1908*: 9 and *List of Leading Officials 1909*: 11: “This man held the position of Special Commissioner in the Chumbi valley during the advance of the mission in 1903 and was wounded at the fight near Gu-ru in March 1904. He has now been appointed joint representative of the Lhasa Government at the Trade Mart at Gyantse. His rank is only that of a Ru-pon or Major”; his personal name features in his son’s biography in *Chiefs and Leading Families 1915*: 17.
- 103 As seen above, General Macdonald stated that the Tibetan forces fighting at Kangma on 22nd June 1904 had, in terms of artillery, several small cannon, some thirty *jingals* and wall pieces (Otley 1906: 261).
- 104 A large cannon, almost certainly bronze, possibly one of those which was used in 1903–1904 during the Gyantse siege, was still visible on the walls of Gyantse Dzong in 2003 (according to personal communication with Donald La Rocca). On the Tibetan cannons used in 1903–1904 during the Younghusband Mission and on the historical use and manufacturing of cannons in Tibet as described in Tibetan written accounts, see Travers 2021b, Venturi 2021 and Josayma 2021. Two iron cannons and two leather cannons, said to have been seized in Tibet during the “second Nepal-Tibet war” (1791–1792) are on display at the National Museum of Nepal in Kathmandu (in the “Arms & Armour Gallery” of the “Historical Museum Building”); see the photographs of these cannons taken by La Rocca and reproduced in Venturi 2021: 954. Photographs of the leather cannons have also been reproduced in Gnya’ nang bur sras pa rin chen dar lo 2021: 376 (I am grateful to Tashi Tsering Josayma for providing this reference).
- 105 Due to the difficulty of access to the British Library collections during the Covid pandemic, this photograph could unfortunately not be seen before the completion of my earlier paper on the modernisation of the Tibetan firearm in 2021. In the footnotes, I raised a question about the type of Maxim gun used by the British during the Younghusband Mission. This photograph confirms beyond doubt that it was the light “tripodic” type of Maxim gun that was used.
- 106 Charles A. Bell was in charge of the administration of the Chumbi valley in 1904–1905, as well as being Acting Political Officer of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet during the absence of John Claude White, before succeeding him officially in 1908, holding the position until 1918. He took the position again in 1920–1921 for a diplomatic visit to Lhasa, see Chapter 2. Rabden Lepcha, his Sikkimese orderly, in Bell’s service for eighteen years, took many photographs for him, see Harris and Shakya 2003: 141–144.
- 107 His collection is mainly kept at the Pitt Rivers Museum. Interestingly, as we will see, some of his prints landed in other collections (Alexandra David-Neel’s collection in France and Eric Parker’s collection in Canada), recognisable either because some of these prints (but not all versions of the prints) have his signature “HM” in the bottom right corner, or they display his signature format.

A new visual identity: the modernisation of the Tibetan army under British influence (1913–1938)

- 108 All the biographical information provided here on Henry Martin as well as the general description of his collection, come from the presentation authored by Philip N. Grover (Pitt Rivers Museum) in Harris and Shakya 2003: 156–157.
- 109 The General looks like he is holding a German Mauser C96 semi-automatic pistol with an attached shoulder stock, which was apparently very popular with British officers; the men around him have mostly bolt-action rifles and a few breech-loaders (I am grateful to Donald La Rocca for sharing his observations about the firearms in this image). Pl. 24 is also reproduced in Hicks 1988: 19.
- 110 For the same reasons as the Indian pandits who came before her, she could not bring a camera with her during her travel in disguise in Central Tibet, but she did manage to bring back a few significant photographs of soldiers taken in Lhasa probably in 1923–1924 (as will be seen in Chapter 2). In the introduction to her account *Voyage d'une Parisienne à Lhasa (Journey of a Parisian to Lhasa)*, she explains that all the photographs illustrating this book were taken by her in Tibetan areas before this trip and, for those featuring Lhasa and its surroundings, were given to her by “indigenous photographers” (David-Neel 1927: 20).
- 111 During her stay in Sikkim, she had met the Thirteenth Dalai Lama during his exile in Kalimpong. On David-Neel’s life, see Mascolo de Filippis 2018 and Borin 1979. Alexandra David-Neel was not the first female explorer to Tibet. She had famous predecessors: British explorer and missionary Annie Royle Taylor, who had been stopped by Tibetan soldiers in 1893 beyond Nagchu, just three days from Lhasa, and would later accompany the 1903–1904 British Mission as a nurse, or Canadian doctor and missionary Susie Rijnhart, who had also travelled disguised in Tibetan dress but was also forced by Tibetan soldiers to go back near Nagchu in 1897. David-Neel was, however, the first woman to successfully reach Lhasa.
- 112 Her whole collection is kept at her former house, now the museum “Maison Alexandra David-Neel (Dignes-les-Bains)”, and a few of them are also kept at the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris).
- 113 Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, Martin-1998–293–140.
- 114 The use of the term “magistrate” seems improper here, to qualify the military officer position of a “*depon*” (*mda’ dpon*, transcribed, in this *volume*, as Dapön, to avoid the frequent confusion with the other Tibetan term *sde dpon* meaning a “chief”).
- 115 Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, Martin-1998–293–141.
- 116 Eric Parker Fonds, Audrey and Harry Hawthorn Library and Archives, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, photograph a033541.
- 117 His collection thus contains photographs dated from the 1920s as well as earlier photographs (dated 1911–1912 or undated) he had acquired. It is only through their objects that they can be identified as earlier photographs: one features the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in Yatung when coming back from his exile in India in 1912, another one of the Manchu *amban* and his guards (thus before 1912).
- 118 We make this hypothesis for several reasons: not only because Alexandra David-Neel never herself travelled in the northern areas of Tibet, but also because of the typically “Henry Martin” size (13,5 x 7,5 cm) of this photograph, which bears no resemblance to the other photographs she brought back.
- 119 I am grateful to Tashi Tsering Josayma for pointing to this particular characteristic of the regional dress in this photograph. For a colour photograph featuring this white conical hat, see Normanton [1988] 1989: 99.
- 120 This photograph was reproduced in Clarke 1997: 19 with an interesting remark about the various weapons carried by the soldiers: “breech-loading rifles of the type issued to the Indian army from the 1880s onwards, swords (fourth and sixth man from the right), and one double-barrelled shotgun (fifth man from right)”. It is there dated as “before the Chinese invasion of Central Tibet in 1910”.
- 121 The British representatives already had their own military escort from the Indian Army and thus, if this caption is correct, which

is by no means certain, the circumstances in which a Tibetan escort would have been given to D. Macdonald are not known.

122 His dates in Tibet are taken from McKay 1997: 268.

123 See for instance the similarities with the background on another photo by Henry Martin that we know was taken in Yatung, and which shows a “Detachment at Yatung in 1914” (PRM-Martin-1998.293.11) from the British Indian army, and is reproduced and available online in FitzHerbert and Travers 2020: 22.

124 “Translation of a Tibetan paper received with the letter from the Resident in Nepal, N°81, dated the 15th June 1908”, Frontier Confidential Report N°88, from Captain W.L. Campbell, British Trade Agent, Yatung to the Political Officer of Sikkim, National Archives of India, Sec. E Sept 1908, 113–134.

125 “Proposed establishment of a military college in Tibet”, National Archives of India, Sec. E, Sept 1908, 113–134.

126 Aoki 1920: 127.

127 Aoki 1920: 128.

128 Tsarong 2020.

129 However, if Japanese-style uniforms of that period did in some cases display a double row of buttons, they do not seem to have ever featured these two distinctive diverging lines, see Nakanishi 2006.

130 On the Japanese influence underlying the Qing military reforms in 1908, see Kobayashi 2020; on the presence in Tibet in 1908 of a Japanese military instructor and of two Manchu military instructors trained in Japan, see Travers 2020: 1002–1003.

131 On which point, see the next chapter.

132 In several photographs dated 1911–1912: see for instance “Chinese Troops” (PRM-Martin-1998.293.129) and “Chinese Firing Party” (PRM-Martin-1998.293.130), the latter being reproduced and available online in FitzHerbert and Travers 2020: 21.

133 Reproduced in Lhalungpa 1983: 98. Despite the centrality of this image, it could unfortunately not be reproduced here for reasons of copyright. Interestingly, Laden La had been taught photography by Henry Martin whilst in Gyantse in 1911 (Harris 2016: 131), which goes some way to explain the similarities between this photograph and those taken by Henry Martin. See Pl. 49 in this volume for a photograph were Laden La features, taken in 1923–1924.

134 The Royal Geographical Society, where the two photographs are kept, indicates in its database that the two photographs date back to the “1930s” without explicit elements to support this dating, neither on the material environment of the photograph itself, nor in the database information. This assertion has now been proven incorrect, since at least one of them has been attributed to Aoki Bunkyō with absolute certainty, and the other with great probability.

135 Aoki identifies these troops as the “New Model Tibetan army (gathered at the square in front of the Palace)”. I am very grateful to my colleague in the TibArmy project, Kobayashi Ryosuke, who translated the Japanese caption of this photograph for me. A few of the soldiers in the front line of Pl. 138 are wearing the same specific uniform as worn by the guard in Pl. 30, with two diverging rows of buttons on the tunic. It is hoped that the examination of Aoki Bunkyō’s entire photographic archive by colleagues will reveal new details in the future.

136 In particular the Chinese soldiers, with some kneeling on the left of the first row in PRM-Martin-1998.293.130, reproduced and available online in FitzHerbert and Travers 2020: 21.

After the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the expulsion of the last Chinese and Manchu forces from Tibet between 1912–1913,¹ the Thirteenth Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa from two successive periods of exile, the first of which was spent in Mongolia and China (1904–1909) and the second in India, in Darjeeling and Kalimpong (1910–1913). Having travelled and observed the situation in these neighbouring countries, upon his return he undertook a full programme of modernisation of the country, ranging from education and health infrastructure to the introduction of new technologies. He also endeavoured to provide Tibet with the attributes of a sovereign country in the form of coins, paper money, stamps and a national flag, and to strengthen its army.

Thus, the period from 1913 onwards saw the launching of a comprehensive set of reforms for the regular troops, which included increasing their numbers and the subsequent multiplication of regiments and their growing specialisation, all of which was financed by new military taxes; another measure was the creation in 1913 of the country’s first centralised High Military Command, the Army Headquarters, located at the foot of the Potala in the Shöl (Zhol) area.² The first incumbents of the office of Commander-in-Chief (*dmag spyi*) of the Tibetan Armies, Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar (Bka’ blon bla ma Byams pa bstan dar, 1870–1923, see Pl. 39) and Tsarong Dasang Dadul (Tsharong Zla bzang dgra ’dul, 1888–1959, see Pl. 44), on whom more will be said later, were to play a pivotal role in the modernisation of the Tibetan army, along with a

number of lay officials who were appointed as military officers and who appear on several photographs of this period. Lastly, the Tibetan government attempted to improve the army’s equipment by introducing modern firearms, which were locally made at first, produced in a series of arms factories created mainly in and around Lhasa, the most modern one being the hydroelectric-powered Trapchi factory (Grwa bzhi glog ’phrul khang) opened in 1931. The local production was supplemented after the Simla Conference in 1914 and soon supplanted by imported firearms from British India, with the government organising the training of Tibetan troops and the dissemination of training as to the use of these new firearms.³

The modernisation of the Ganden Phodrang army appears in a variety of ways in all photographs from the period from 1913 onwards. The most obvious change seen in the images is the creation of a new visual identity for the regular troops through the introduction of new uniforms, along with new Tibetan military banners and flags. The history of the flags found in photographic evidence will be tackled in Chapter 5, as will the Tibetan army’s new “sonic identity”, i.e. its marching band, in Chapter 6. We have seen in the previous chapter that initial attempts at creating a new visual identity by dressing the troops in a non-traditional uniform without the Tibetan *chuba* can already be observed in photographs taken between 1908 and 1914 by Henry Martin and between 1913 and 1916 by Aoki Bunkyō. After 1916 and up until the 1940s, the Tibetans’ new visual identity was largely based on the British

model. However, from the very beginning, there was a great deal of borrowing from the Tibetan cultural repertoire, by the adaptation and incorporation of a significant amount of traditional Tibetan and Buddhist symbols, first in the emblems only (flags, badges, insignia), and later even by the incorporation of traditional Tibetan sartorial elements. This resulted in a fusion of Western and Tibetan military aesthetic styles being created, which would come to define the new “face” of the Tibetan permanent army.⁴

Contemporary photographs reflect both the growing professionalisation of the Tibetan army and the significant new investment the government was now making in its “armed wing”. They also largely reveal the limits of the introduction of uniforms for the troops, which remain, for various reasons that will be explored, somewhat heterogenous throughout this period. This lack of uniformity is partly related, as is the case in other armies, to the specificities of the various regiments that comprised the regular troops; it is also partly due to the continued existence of the regional militias, who appear in a few photographs; and finally, it reflects the ups and downs of the military project itself, which was not consistently supported by the successive rulers over the period. In this particularly turbulent political context, from both the internal and external political point of view, the tumultuous diplomatic relationship between the Tibetan government and the British Raj is also revealed in these images. When funds were low, regular troops were not provided with new uniforms and so resorted to using the traditional Tibetan *chuba*,

as can be seen in photographs taken throughout the period, but in particular from the 1930s onwards. Thus, the progressive re-Tibetanisation that appears in photographs, which seems to have started out as a temporary solution, would turn in the 1940s into a choice which was fully embraced by the Tibetan government for its military, as we will see in Chapter 3.

In terms of the photographic context itself, this is a time of exponential rise in the number of photographers present in Tibetan territory.⁵ These were mainly foreigners but also started to include Tibetans or other people native to the Himalayas, resulting in an abundance of photographs available to us from this time. This is paralleled by the rise in the sheer number of subjects who were now available to be photographed: between 1913 and 1923, the regular troops increased in size, going from 3,000 to 13,000 soldiers, while the regional militia were kept on in the border areas to be summoned, as before, in the event of war. The result of these changes is that, contrary to the previous period during which it was the militia who were photographed much more frequently than the regular troops (also because photographs were only taken in border areas until 1904), photographs taken after 1913 and until 1950, with few exceptions, are only of the regular troops.

The expansion of the troops happened gradually. In the years 1913–1914, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama organised the first increase of his main corps of regular troops (who had, since the late 18th century, been composed of the four regiments of Trapchi, Gyantse,

Shigatse and Dingri) with the addition of 1,000 men to create a new Bodyguard (Kusung) regiment, meaning that the army now comprised 4,000 soldiers. These five regiments were newly referred to by the first five letters of the Tibetan alphabet, *ka to ca* (*ka dang dmag sgar, kha dang dmag sgar, ga dang dmag sgar, nga dang dmag sgar* and *ca dang dmag sgar*) from 1916 onwards.⁶ At the height of relations with British India—marked by the first visit of Charles Bell, Political Officer of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, to Lhasa in 1920–1921⁷—a much more significant increase in troop size followed, carried out on the advice of Bell and of the Tibetan Commander-in-Chief Dasang Dadul Tsarong. The Commander was very close to the British and played a pivotal role in the modernisation of the Tibetan army from 1913 onwards.⁸ A progressive recruitment plan was thus initiated, with an initial target of 15,000 soldiers, but this total was later reduced due to a lack of funding. Nevertheless, the army reached a total of between 12,000 to 13,000 men⁹ at its maximum size in 1923, divided into sixteen regiments, a situation which lasted in a roughly similar configuration until 1950. Due to the wealth of primary sources available, this period has received the most Tibetan¹⁰ and Western¹¹ scholarly attention.

The present chapter will focus on what the photographs tell us about the modernisation of the Tibetan army during this period, and more specifically on the government’s attempts to homogenise the regular troops’ appearance with the introduction of uniforms. It will analyse the visibly drastic changes to take place

during this time, as well as highlight the limits of these attempts, particularly evident in the photographs from the 1930s onwards.

It will also reflect on the impressions which these images may convey on the viewer. An obvious sense of self-assurance emanates from the Tibetan officers and their troops in these photographs, who pose standing or marching proudly in front of the camera, either alone or in group photographs. The sense of pride expressed by the officers and soldiers in these images may not only be due to their awareness of their military valour, their belonging to a group sharing common values, codes and experiences, but also to their newly inflated ranks (as seen in wide angle shots of the troops). Resplendent in their new “skins”, these Tibetan soldiers are finally, proudly, visible. Second, these photographs are testimony to the interest in the army taken not only by the Tibetan government—whose highest-ranking members are seen seated in photographs or else attending numerous military reviews, some of which were recurring official events in Lhasa, such as the Army New Year parade in front of the Potala or in the gardens of the Norbulingka Summer Palace during the Shotön (*zho ston*) Festival,¹² or during the procession accompanying the Dalai Lama from his Winter Palace (Potala) to his Summer Palace (Norbulingka), and vice-versa, for instance—but also by the civilian Tibetan population, who are seen jostling to watch the troops.

The introduction of British Raj-style uniforms with Tibetan-style insignia

Tibetan-British relations, which had begun hostilely in 1904 on the battlefield, had improved rapidly after the British granted protection to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, who had fled to India to escape the occupation of Lhasa by a Sino-Manchu garrison in 1910. The Political Officer of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet from 1908 to 1918, Charles A. Bell, considered the most influential British officer to have ever served in Tibet, was in charge of dealing with the exiled Dalai Lama, and they formed a solid friendship that was to have long-lasting consequences.¹³ Upon his return from exile to Tibet in 1912, the Dalai Lama appealed to the British for help to modernise its army, starting immediately with the training of Tibetan military officers in Gyantse, where the British Trade Agent’s military escort was located. General reforms, and military reforms in particular, were undertaken at the height of Tibetan-British relations, reaching their peak after Charles Bell’s mission (again as Political Officer) to Lhasa in 1920–1921, granting for a few years such a military support to Tibet that diplomats and observers of other countries such as France feared that a “British protectorate” was being established in Tibet.¹⁴

However, the English model, which had come to be considered by some of the Tibetan elites as the paragon of modernity, was not the only choice available to the Tibetan government after 1912, nor the only one taken into consideration at the beginning of the period of a *de facto* independent Tibet. Indeed, the Tibetan government carefully compared several methods of drilling the troops. By that time, the Tibetan army was already familiar with the Sino-Manchu military training model, as the core of its regular troops had been trained in this tradition from the 18th century up until 1912. They were therefore known as the “*gyajong* (*rgya shyong*) regiments”, i.e. “trained by the Chinese”. Just before the collapse of the Qing Empire, the Tibetan army had experienced a number of military reforms in the years between 1906–1907 and 1911, launched

by Sino-Manchu officers who were themselves inspired by the modern Japanese model of militarisation.¹⁵ This may explain why Yajima Yasujirō (1882–1963), a Japanese army veteran who lived in Tibet between July 1912 and October 1918, was requested very early on by the Tibetan government to train a first group of soldiers. Yajima not only trained the first soldiers of the new Bodyguard regiment (probably around 1913–1916), but also advised on architectural plans for the construction of this new regiment’s barracks near the southern wall of the Norbulingka.¹⁶ Photographs from that period, brought back to Japan by Yajima and now held there in two private collections, illustrate this episode. Other photographs of him wearing the Tibetan *chuba* are known of,¹⁷ but one here shows him in the full dress of a Tibetan General (Pl. 33), probably taken in the period between 1916, after the British-style uniform was first imported (as we will see below), and his eventual departure in 1918. It can also be seen that

he not only wore the dress of an army General, but also the topknot headdress of a government lay official (*drung ’khor*), with a yellow ribbon instead of the red ribbon of aristocrat officers.¹⁸

In addition to the Japanese-style training of the Tibetan troops, the government asked a Mongolian named Tenpe Gyeltsen to train another group with Russian military methods, while a group was also trained in British drill. In the late spring of 1916,¹⁹ a review of the different groups and their military exercises was held for four days in front of the Tibetan government in the Norbulingka. A mural painting at the Potala Palace, made around 1934 and located in the stupa room which serves as a reliquary for the body of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, illustrates this episode (Pl. 32). The caption, written in Tibetan next to the scene on the mural painting, provides a partial explanation: “In order to build up an armed force capable of obstructing foreign forces, the great Commander-in-Chief of the



Pl. 32. The 13th Dalai Lama and his government compare Russian, Japanese and British-style military drill exercises in 1916 at the Norbulingka Palace
From, *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* (Zhongguo Xizang Budala gong guan li chu bian zhu 2000: 206)

army invited the Dalai Lama and the Ministers to come to the military camp, where they attended demonstrations of Russian and English military drill”.²⁰ Following that event, the Dalai Lama opted for the British model for the Tibetan army, not only as far as drill tradition and orders were concerned, which were from then on first taught in English to Tibetan soldiers and then used in regiments in English, but also in terms of material equipment, such as uniforms, insignia, weapons, and military music bands, which were all copied from the British model.



Pl. 33. Yajima Yasujirō in British-style full dress in Lhasa
1916–1918
Unknown photographer
Ms. Nakako Yajima Private Archives, Maebashi

As for the introduction of British-style uniforms, we know from a letter from C.A. Bell, kept in the National Archives of India, that Tsarong Shape (or Minister), who was then also a Commander-in-Chief, requested that the British send him a complete sample of their uniform in March 1915:

“I have the honour to state that Tsarong Shape, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan Army, has requested the British Trade Agent at Yatung to purchase for him a complete suit of:

1. General Officer’s uniform in serge and khaki
2. Indian sepoy [the name of the rank-and-file soldier in the British Indian army]’s uniform in serge and khaki

The Shape requires the sepoy’s uniform as a pattern for clothing the Tibetan soldier, whom he wished to equip on the general lines of the Indian sepoy, but in order that the two uniforms may not be exactly the same he suggests a yellow cap for the Tibetan soldier instead of the sepoy’s turban. It is, I think, desirable that the uniform of the Tibetan soldier should be on the general lines of the Indian sepoy rather than on the lines of the Russian or Japanese soldier. I would therefore suggest that, if the Government of India see no objection, I may be furnished with patterns and any instructions that may be necessary to prevent the uniforms of the Tibetan General and soldier from resembling too nearly those in the British or Indian army. Our refusal to supply the patterns would probably enable the Japanese Yajima, who has recently been appointed to the Tibetan Government service, to introduce Japanese uniforms into the Tibetan army.”²¹

A positive answer from the Government of India arrived from Shimla on 1st June 1915, and all samples of uniforms were sent to Tibet on 3rd January 1916 from India, with the request that all incurred costs should be reimbursed by the Tibetan government. It is thus probable that the first new uniforms for the Tibetan army were manufactured in the early months of 1916. According to Charles Bell, “the uniforms of the soldiers were made in Lhasa, the woollen cloth coming mostly from the Tsang province and from the districts South of Lhasa.”²² It will be seen in the photographs, however, that the final choice did not entirely exclude the turban formerly worn by Tibetan soldiers (and it was still worn by one regiment participating in a parade in Lhasa much later, as shown in a 1945 film, see Chapter 4), and it is difficult to ascertain from the black and white photographs whether the cap was indeed of the yellow colour suggested. We will see that photographs show a strong standardisation of the uniforms at work until the 1920s, and then a growing diversification in the 1930s.

As regard the British-style uniforms initially introduced, another photograph from a private Japanese collection (Pl. 34) is of significance. It shows the “troops trained by Yajima”, according to the caption provided by the collection’s owner. It is not entirely possible, even after careful consideration of the photograph, to verify that the caption is correct (Yajima cannot be identified on the photograph, for instance), but in any case this is one of the earliest photographs of the new modern troops we currently know of, since Yajima’s sojourn in Tibet took place between 1912 and 1918, and the photograph was most probably taken after 1916, as the Tibetan troops are seen fully dressed in the British army or British Indian army-style uniforms, with a noticeable variety of styles: the main part of the regiment is here seen wearing a classic service-dress uniform (as worn by the British Army until 1938),²⁴ and

Pl. 34. Training of the Tibetan army by the Japanese instructor Yajima Yasujirō, Lhasa 1916–1918
Unknown photographer
Ms. Akiko Tada Private Archives, Chiba, Sapporo (temporarily held by Komoto Yasuko)





Pl. 35. Group of Tibetan military officers in Lhasa wearing new military uniforms
1923–1924
Unknown photographer
Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de Digne-les-Bains, Dn764b

Standing, left to right: Dapön Salungpa, unknown, Sampho Palden Chöwang, T. Tsering, Dapön Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen, Penpa Tsering, Phurphu Döndrup.
Sitting: Trengdong Letsenpa, Tsarong Dasang Dadul, Dapön Nyelungpa.
Sitting front: Rupön Tsogowa, Dapön Surkhang, Dapön Drumpa.



Pl. 36. Close-up on the General (Dapön) crossed-vajra insignia work on the peaked cap
1923–1924
Unknown photographer
Collection Alexandra David-Neel
© Ville de Digne-les-Bains, Dn764b



Pl. 37. Close-up on the Colonel (Rupön) crossed-vajra insignia work on the peaked cap
1923–1924
Unknown photographer
Collection Alexandra David-Neel
© Ville de Digne-les-Bains, Dn764b

while the upper part of the uniform is quite identical to one another (tunic, leather belt, shirt and tie, peaked cap, bandolier with munition pouches), the lower part of their dress shows a wide range of divergence, from the trousers and shortened trousers,²⁵ to the jodhpurs and puttees,²⁶ and sometimes even leather gaiters, with a variety of shoes, i.e. leather ankle boots or high boots. The variety in the lower part of the uniform remains consistent until the 1930s (see Pl. 73 for instance) and seems to have been quite common in the British army as well.²⁷ It is known from both written Tibetan and British descriptions, and later from colour photographs (see Chapter 3 for the first films and photographs of soldiers in colour), that the new uniform was and would remain khaki (albeit available in a variety of different shades, as was also the case for British troops of the time).²⁸

A group of soldiers in the middle of this image wear a turban, instead of a peaked cap, while a third group of soldiers on the right, clustered around the marching band, are dressed as Indian sepoy, with their cone or *khulla* poking out from their turban, a feature which was usually characteristic of the turban worn by Muslims in the British Indian army. One might also notice the very small size of the soldiers on the left side, who are quite clearly children, which is actually not so surprising, as children occasionally entered the army at the age of 12 or 13 for an initial period of service and training intended as preparation for their full service later on as adult soldiers. Almost all the soldiers have a gun on their shoulder and a bandolier, but only a few carry a sword. In line with contemporary developments in the Western armies, these swords of a British military pattern were introduced as a uniform element but were merely ceremonial attributes of prestige, and were not to be used as an actual war weapon.²⁹

The uniform of the soldiers in Pl. 34 allows to hypothesise that the photograph was taken around the same period as another image showing a group of officers (Pl. 35), where the same diversity between the two types of uniforms (those of the British army and the Indian sepoy) is striking, as is the range of interpretations of lower half clothing to be found amongst the small group of officers, who are either looking away

with a grave expression or staring at the camera with a rather daring look. Each man carries a sword, with a leather scabbard worn in a chest belt, which will remain a distinctive marker of the highest officers until the early 1950s. Their rank of officer is also visible on the insignia of the crossed *vajra* (*rdo rje rgya gram*) that is attached to their cap (Pl. 36), as will be seen in more detail below. As most of them are lay officials of the government, they wear the distinctive turquoise ear-ring in their left ear. Apart from these two early photographs, we will see only British-style uniforms used in the Tibetan army in later photographs. However, film archive evidence testifies to the fact that the military uniform of the Indian sepoy was still worn by at least one regiment until at least 1930,³⁰ in S.W. Laden La's films. It will then disappear entirely from photographs and films.

If we examine the identity of the officers featuring in Pl. 35 (as identified in prior publications),³¹ and if we look at their officers' badges, the photograph is very likely dated 1923 to early 1924:³² first, Tsogo Sonam Wangdu (Mtsho sgo Bsod nams dbang 'dus, born 1891), seated on the left, wears only a Colonel (*ru dpon*) badge on his cap (Pl. 37), although he had been appointed General in 1916. The only possible explanation for this discrepancy is that the photograph must have been taken after he was demoted in 1923, for failing to catch up with the Ninth Panchen Lama as he escaped to China.³³ Second, General Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen (Lding bya Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, born 1896, also featured in Pl. 49 and 72), was not part of the military prior to 1923 (he held already two civil positions, being at the same time Post-Master General and District Commissioner of Gyantsé). He was appointed General in 1923 and received gunnery training at Quetta and Shillong in 1923–1924,³⁴ which could maybe explain his Indian-style dress, upon which however, there is strangely no sign of him being a General. General Salungpa Tsering Tobgye (Sa lung Tshe ring stobs rgyal, born 1883), standing on the left, was also appointed to this position “in 1923–1924” according to the British archives.³⁵ Lastly, General Drumpa (Brum pa, born 1897), a nephew of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and seated on the right, became Commander-in-Chief



Pl. 38. The Tibetan army's highest-ranking officers sitting with members of the Cabinet and other high officials

c. 1922–1923
Unknown photographer
George Tsarong Private Collection, F1-26

Sitting left to right: Neshar Tsendrön, Dapön Doring, Meru Talama, Dapön Drumpa, Dzasa Horkhang, Commander-in-Chief and Shape Tsarong Dasang Dadul (with the bright sash), Shape Kunsangtse, Dapön Gajang Tenpa, Shape Ngapö, Dapön Tethong, Narkyi, Trengdong Letsenpa (in service dress).

Standing: Dapön Shasur in the middle (next to the central pillar), and other soldiers, officials and servants.

from 1924 to 1929,³⁶ but he does not seem to hold any rank higher than General in this image.

Besides the service dress with its tunic and peaked cap, full-dress uniform could be worn by the Generals for ceremonial occasions. In the Tibetan army, the full dress seems to have been the preserve of Generals only, since no officers below that rank are seen in full dress in photographs. The full-dress uniform appears in several group photographs, such as a significant image (Pl. 38) that has since been reproduced several times and dated to the early 1920s.³⁷ It shows the highest-ranking Tibetan military officers amongst the leading officials of the government. Here the Generals wear a Pith helmet or topi/topee, which, as the photographic evidence suggests, could be worn instead of the peaked cap (see Pl. 40 and 49) both in full dress and service dress, and would remain their headwear of choice up until the latter years of the army.

Their tunics are brightly ornamented with gold epaulettes, embroidered collars and cuffs, as well as lanyards, also called “aiguillettes” (ornamental plaited cords with decorative metal tips) worn between the chest and right shoulder. Trousers with leather boots and a ceremonial sword complete the ensemble. Tsarong, then Commander-in-Chief, wears a sash on his full dress, an ornament that will remain visible in colour photographs of the late 1940s for leaders of the military bands (see Chapter 6).

It is not possible to deduce from the photographs from this early period whether the full dress of the Tibetan Generals was of the same hue as in the British army of the time, i.e. a scarlet or dark blue. In any case, when colour photographs and films become available, the full-dress tunic is revealed as being of a yellow-gold colour, while the trousers are black with lampasses (i.e. a vertical stripe down the side of the leg).³⁸

Contrary to any other type of military uniform in the Tibetan army, the Tibetan full-dress uniform for Generals remained in place throughout the entire period after the beginning of the reforms and until the 1950s army without significant change (except perhaps for the colours). Indeed, the uniform can be seen in photographs taken from the very beginning of the period of military reforms (Pl. 33, 38, 40, 44) up until 1951

at least (see for instance Pl. 118 and 119, taken by Tse Ten Tashi in 1951).³⁹

Since these ceremonial uniforms are not mentioned in the previously quoted British archive documents, it is not possible to know whether they were ordered at the same time as the service dress in 1916 or at an earlier or later occasion. Three beautifully staged portraits (Pl. 39, 40 and 44) taken outside or in studios show the first Generals of the new Tibetan army in full dress.⁴⁰ Although these officers were all appointed to the position of General as early as 1912 or 1913, none of these portraits could be very precisely dated.⁴¹ The monk official Jampa Tendar (Byams pa bstan dar, 1870–1923) (Pl. 39) who played a pivotal role in the fighting against the Chinese and in their initial expulsion from Tibet in 1912, was the first appointed Commander-in-Chief of the whole Tibetan army in 1913. He became a Monk minister (*bka' blon bla ma*) and Province Governor of Kham (*mdo spyi*) immediately after, whereupon he led his troops to victory in the fighting against the Chinese on the eastern border in 1918.⁴² He won the respect of several external observers, including Eric Teichman (1884–1944), British consular officer in Chengdu, who writes that Jampa Tendar had hired for his troops a Mongol instructor in Russian military drills, who had travelled to Russia, China and Japan.⁴³

The second portrait is that of Ragashar Tenzin Namgyal (Rag kha shag Bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal, 1886–1935) (Pl. 40), who had formerly been a Finance Minister (*rtsis dpon*), and had also taken part in the combats against the Chinese in Lhasa in 1912 and was appointed General of the Ü Province (Dbus mda' dpon) in 1912.

The third portrait is that of Tsarong Dasang Dadul (Pl. 44), who replaced Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar as Commander-in-Chief of the whole Tibetan army in 1913.⁴⁴ His appointment resulted from the pivotal role he had played in protecting the flight of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in front of the Chinese troops in 1909 and, as his predecessor, in expelling the last Sino-Manchu troops from Tibet in 1912. He would remain in this position until 1925.

The main and most visible form of adaptation of the British-style uniforms to the Tibetan cultural context

was displayed through the regimental and officer's badges or insignia, medals and flags, all three of which were based on two main Tibetan and Buddhist symbols, the lion (*seng ge*) and the *vajra* (*rdö rje*), as well as others that will be presented below. The symbolism contained in the flags will be studied in a separate, dedicated chapter, but as far as badges and medals are concerned, they should be differentiated between those worn by officers and those worn by ordinary soldiers. The badges of officers are extensively documented in the photographic evidence. Officers wore two types of metal badges on their hats. The first one was a *vajra*-shaped metal badge, with the crossed *vajra* being the insignia worn by Generals (*mda' dpon*), a three-branches version of the crossed *vajra* as the insignia of Colonels (*ru dpon*), a simple *vajra* being the symbol of Captains (*brgya dpon*) and half a *vajra* that of Lieutenants (*lding dpon*).⁴⁵ These symbols would start to appear from at least the early 1920s (as seen in Pl. 35 and 38) and continue to be worn until the 1950s, however in a much larger-size design (see for instance Pl. 92 and 93).

It is not understood from photographic evidence how the first type of officer's badge functioned in relation to the second type of regimental badge for officers, i.e. metal plates (Pl. 41, 42, 43), which usually only bore the name of the regiment.⁴⁶ Worn apparently also up until the 1950s, it seems that their usage did undergo some changes, however: in early photographs from the 1920s, they are seen only on the hats of Generals (see for instance Pl. 40), but by the 1940s and 1950s they have started to also appear on the hats of lower-ranking officers (Pl. 89 featuring a Chupön, Pl. 92, featuring a General of the Trapchi regiment with lower ranking officers and Pl. 93, featuring a General of the Bodyguard regiment with lower ranking officers). Usually made from silver sheets (in rare cases from gold), and in a diamond shape, embossed and engraved, they followed a general design, allowing both the owner and the craftsman some freedom to express their personal tastes.⁴⁷ Some are without any inscription, some with the name of the regiment and some with the additional mention of the officer's title (*mda' dpon*) (Pl. 43). Three examples have been included in this volume.⁴⁸ The first badge (Pl. 41)⁴⁹ belongs to an officer in command of



Pl. 39. Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar (1870–1923), Province Governor of Kham, in full dress, Chamdo
Undated; c. 1918–1919
Unknown photographer
Tethong Family Private Collection

the Chadang regiment and is described by W. Bertsch as follows:

“Silver badge of squarish shape, being lobed around the border. In the centre, two snow lions face each other, each supporting the flaming triple jewel with one raised front paw. The two animals are looking sideways towards the viewer. Small mountains are seen below the lions, and leaves, fruits and flowers beneath. A sun is seen to the right of the triple jewel and a moon to the left. The inscription below is placed into a small, arched cartouche and reads: *cha* 1. This badge was probably used by the commander of the 6th *cha*-regiment which was stationed at Tsho wa so dgu Ri bo che.”⁵⁰

The second (Pl. 42) has a turquoise stone in the middle and belonged to an officer commanding the Dadang regiment.⁵¹ The third (Pl. 43) is of a singular shape (a lozenge shaped with scalloped edges), and includes, in addition to the officer’s title, the number of the regiment, in this case “8/eight” (given both in the Tibetan numeric and written form).⁵² As analysed by Bertsch, the vast majority of these officers’ badges have a pair of snow lions (Pl. 41, 42 and 43) in the middle, which stand for Tibet as a nation, carrying either the triple jewel or *triratna* (*dkon mchog gsum*) which stands for the Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha*, or more Flaming Jewels (Pl. 41 and 42), or a crossed *vajra*, which may also be taken as an emblem of Buddhism (Pl. 43). All these plates are decorated with leaves and floral designs; occasionally, they feature other important Buddhist symbols such as the Eight Auspicious Signs, the Wheel of the *dharma*, or the Precious Sword. As Bertsch puts it: “Thus every officer demonstrated with his badge that he understood himself and his regiment as defenders of both Buddhism and Tibet.”⁵³

It is interesting to note that the lions, a regal symbol as well as a symbol of Buddhism itself,⁵⁴ was a pervasive signifier of Tibetan sovereignty, used not only on the flag (as will be seen in Chapter 5), but also on coins minted from 1909 (when the Tibetan government

struck its first *tam srang* coins, which bore no reference whatsoever to Sino-Manchu authority),⁵⁵ and stamps from 1912 onwards,⁵⁶ and lastly, we also see the image being used as well by aristocrats on their family crests from 1921 onwards.⁵⁷ The martial significance of the leonine symbol in Tibet dates back to the Empire period (7th–9th centuries) at least. Rolf A. Stein has shown that government officials back then were bestowed insignia (*yig ge*) displaying the tiger as an emblem of heroism (*dpa’ rtags*) to illustrate an official’s glory and bravery, a practice which can also be found in the Chinese tradition.⁵⁸

The use of the snow lion along with mountains as symbols of Tibetan national identity dates back to the imperial period, as shown by Samten Karmay in his paper “Mountain Cult and National Identity in Tibet”.⁵⁹ In another article, the “Wind horse and the well-being of man”, Karmay explains that among the four animals on the “wind-horse” flags (*rlung rta*) composition, the lion replaced the yak at some point after the 13th century, “when it becomes the national emblem of Tibet” (in addition to the *khyung* /eagle, *garuda*, *’brug* /dragon, and *stag* /tiger).⁶⁰ In another paper, Karmay describes the tiger (among the four animals of the wind-horse flags) as symbolising bravery.⁶¹

Snow lions were already represented on army banners during the Empire period,⁶² and in order to create a sense of continuity with the glorious period of the Tibetan Empire, the snow lion became the emblem of Tibet’s sovereignty under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama from 1909 onwards. It was thus only logical that Tibetan military officers’ badges, insignia and medals would be engraved with lions or tigers, as these animals were already both Tibetan national emblems and ancestral symbols of heroism.

As for the *vajra* (*rdo rje*) or crossed *vajra* (*rdo rje rgya gram*), Buddhist symbols that represent the indestructible state of enlightenment and emphasise the principle



Pl. 40. General Ragashar Tenzin Namgyal (1886–1935) in full dress
Undated; probably after 1916
Unknown photographer
George Tsarong Private Collection, F1-31

of absolute stability, they are also present on the military badges created after 1913 (as well as on military banners, as will be seen in Chapter 5). Indestructibility and stability are two qualities that lend themselves well to the symbolic armoury of a country's army.

Special military decorations, following British examples, but decorated with the snow lion and Tibetan inscriptions were also awarded, such as medals for heroism (*dpa' rtags*, lit. "sign of the hero"). Three medals presented to Tsarong Dasang Dadul in 1916 (Pl. 45 and 46) are worn by him in several photographs (for instance Pl. 38 and 44). The front side of all of these medals reads: "Awarded by the Vajra Dhara Dalai Lama in the Fire Dragon year of the 15th *rabjung* [1916]." The reverse side reads, for the first medal: "Medal for the Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armies Tsarong, who showed perseverance and courage in introducing foreign military customs into Tibet."⁶⁴ The second medal was awarded for success

in shooting at three targets on horseback, and the third was awarded for skills in assembling and dismantling a Mauser pistol.⁶⁵ Photographs show a number of other officers of that time wearing such medals (see Pl. 38, 51–52).

It seems that, exactly as in the British military tradition, ribbon bars or medal ribbons could be worn on some of the officers' service dress, instead of wearing the medals themselves (photographs do not allow, however, to ascertain whether the ribbon bars carried their original British army meaning). See for instance the brother-in-law of Tsarong Dasang Dadul, Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen (Pl. 72).⁶⁶ Medal ribbons are also worn by various officers either in service dress or in full dress in photographs throughout the 1920s and 1930s (see one of the sitting officers in Pl. 49; see also General Doring Teiji in Pl. 51, 52 and 57) and 1940s (see Pl. 92 and 93, Chapter 3, showing a General in full dress, taken by Lowell Thomas Jr. in 1949).

Lastly, gorget patches or collar tabs, i.e. insignia in the form of paired patches of cloth or metal on the collar of a uniform, are visible on a number of photographs taken during the period, in particular in a group portrait featuring General Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (Bkras mthong 'Gyur med rgya mtsho, 1890–1938) in the centre (Pl. 49). He was General from 1913 to 1924 and often posted in Kham. In 1923 he was recalled to Lhasa and took part in the drive to modernise the Tibetan army under Tsarong. In 1924, he was once again on the eastern border, being appointed Governor of Derge (Sde dge spyi khyab) until 1928, when he was either transferred or on leave in Shigatse and Lhasa. In 1932, he was appointed Province Governor of Kham (Mdo spyi), with the rank of Additional Cabinet Minister (*bka' blon las 'phar*).⁶⁷ The photograph, which has been dated as "early 1920",⁶⁸ shows General Tethong not only wearing a spiked helmet (on which is attached a crossed-*vajra* badge indicating his rank of General),



Pl. 41. Diamond-shaped silver badge for a high officer of the Chadang regiment
Undated
Size: 120.5 x 129.2 mm
Wolfgang Bertsch Private Collection



Pl. 42. Diamond-shaped badge for a high officer of the Dadang regiment
Undated
Size: 90 x 90 mm
Wolfgang Bertsch Private Collection



Pl. 43. Officers' badge for a General (Dapön) with his numbered identification "8" spelled out in the centre of the crossed vajra (*brgyad*) and below between the two lions (*ang 8*)
Undated
Danny Wong Private Collection



Pl. 44. Commander-in-Chief of the armies and Minister Dasang Dadul Tsarong (1888–1959) in full dress
Undated; 1916–1924
Unknown photographer
Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de Digne-les-Bains, Dn472

but also a jacket (a one-of-a-kind that does not appear in any other photograph) with a fur collar, on which a collar tab (whether it comes in a pair is not entirely certain) in a crossed-*vajra* shape is visible. Other gorget patches⁶⁹ in an oblong shape representing swords and guns appear on later photographs (see Pl. 117, a portrait of Dzasa Kunsangtse or Kheme Sonam Wangdu (Dza sag Kun bzang rtse/ Mkhe smad Bsod nams dbang 'dus, 1901–1972) and Pl. 92, Chapter 3, Lowell Thomas' colour photographs in 1949). It is in fact possible to refine the dating of Pl. 49 to 1923–1924 thanks to the presence, again, of Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen, appointed General in 1923, and to the presence of S.W. Laden La, who was in Lhasa in 1923 and 1924 in order to create and head the new Police regiment,⁷⁰ in addition to the presence of Möndrong Khyenrab Kunsang (Smon grong Mkhyen rab kun bzang, born 1897), who was appointed Chief of Police in 1923.

As far as ordinary soldiers' badges are concerned, there is a mystery which persists to this day: an abundance of material evidence has survived, in the form of cross-shaped bronze badges, indicating the registration number of the soldier (which thus functioned as a military identification tag or "dog tag"), but they are entirely absent from photographs. As analysed by Bertsch, the "outlines of the cross shaped piece are undoubtedly inspired by British shaped orders like the 'Victoria Cross' or the enamelled 'Distinguished Order' which Tibetan officials must have admired during receptions in honour of British diplomats like Sir Charles Bell".⁷¹ In addition to the individual number of the soldier, these badges detail the particular *lding* (group of 25 soldiers), in turn part of a particular *ru* (group of a 250 soldiers) within the particular regiment (*mda' khag*) to which the soldier belonged. These objects have been studied in depth by Wolfgang Bertsch, thanks to a col-

lection of several dozen objects gathered by private collectors in Germany and Nepal,⁷² of which one example is shown (Pl. 47). Wolfgang Bertsch explains how the numbering works:

"Each regiment member had its own number [...]. The numbers were assigned in a logical sequence: for the first *ru* the numbers 1 to 250 and for the second *ru* the numbers 251 to 500. For the first *lding* (unit of 25 men) of the first *ru* were assigned the numbers 1 to 25 for the second *lding* the numbers 26 to 50 and so on up to the tenth *lding* for which the numbers 226 to 250 were assigned. The same was done with the numbers of the second *ru*. Thus, for the seventh *lding* of the second *ru*, the numbers ranged from 401 to 425."⁷³

Another version of a metal plate, this time showing the registration number in an angular shape, probably worn on the shoulder, has also survived in a few cases (Pl. 48).⁷⁴ Bertsch has observed, based on material evidence, that some badges came in a pair of both cross shape and angular shapes (with identical registration numbers on both), the first one being worn on the cap and the second on the shoulder.⁷⁵ According to former Dingpön Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue, these angular badges were worn only by Chupön and junior Chupön, and not by ordinary soldiers who wore only the cross-shaped badge (which would explain the few numbers of surviving angular-shaped badges).⁷⁶

However, in both cases, as mentioned, these registration badges are strangely not seen in a single photograph, despite the quantity of available photographs from this period featuring soldiers, and despite the fact that the holes on the badges are a sign that they were supposed to be sewn somewhere on the uniform or hat

(instead of being kept with one's personal belongings for instance, which may have explained their absence from photographs). In both styles, these badges feature a single lion in front of a mountain with the sun, symbolising Tibet as a nation, exactly as on an early version of Tibet's national flag which appeared at the latest in 1918 (see Chapter 5). It is also impossible to know when these badges began to be issued.

According to the American explorer William Montgomery McGovern (1897–1964), who travelled in disguise to Lhasa in 1922, other insignia made out of cloth were sewn on the shoulder, below the shoulder strap, to show affiliation with a particular battalions as well as the officer's rank,⁷⁷ two claims which can unfortunately not be substantiated in photographs.⁷⁸ The practice of having unofficial coloured regimental "flashes" (a small square piece of coloured cloth) sewn onto helmets seems to have existed in the Tibetan army in the same way as it did in the British army (see the

helmet of the soldier sitting in the front right, carrying his helmet in his hands in Pl. 49, for instance).

As for the regular rank-and-file soldiers, they are also seen in photographs from 1916 into the 1920s wearing other types of British-style military hats (in addition to the peaked caps and helmets), including turbans, but also "slouch hats" (Pl. 50; see also Chapter 3 for images of the new regiments to emerge with new Tibetan-style *chuba*-uniforms in the late 1940s) as well as fur winter caps (one soldier standing in the rear line in Pl. 49, two on the right in Pl. 50), that will also remain visible in photographs until 1950. It is not possible to identify from the photographs starting from 1916 whether each regiment had its own uniform, or whether all of the regular troops were supposed to wear the same kind of uniform at that time (by the 1930s, however, visible differences will begin to emerge among the regiments).



Pl. 45. Medals awarded by the 13th Dalai Lama to Dasang Dadul Tsarong in 1916 - recto
George Tsarong Private Collection, N7 front



Pl. 46. Medals awarded by the 13th Dalai Lama to Dasang Dadul Tsarong in 1916 - verso
George Tsarong Private Collection, N7 back



Pl. 47. Cross-shaped identification badge for soldier
Undated
Danny Wong Private Collection
All badges are decorated with Tibetan national symbols: the snow lion, the mountains and the sun.
This badge is for soldier 408 (below) of the seventh *lding* (right) of the second *ru* (left) of the Gadang regiment (above: the letter *ga* and the number 1 (*dang po*) = *ga dang*).



Pl. 48. Angular-shaped identification badge for soldier
Undated
Danny Wong Private Collection
These angular badges were worn on the shoulder only by Sergeant (Chupön) and junior Sergeant, in addition to another cross-shaped badge on the cap (while ordinary soldiers wore only the cross-shaped badge on the cap). This badge is for soldier 525 of the first *lding* of the third *ru* in the Gadang regiment.



Pl. 49. Tibetan officers and soldiers around General Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (1890–1938)
 Undated; c. 1923–1924
 Unknown photographer
 LTWA, Dharamshala, P302429

From left to right, standing: Unknown, Ragashar Phuntsok Rabgye, Tsogo Sonam Wangdu, Doring, Dingia Dorje Gyeltsen, elder Kyibuk Sonam Wangyel, younger Kyibuk Wangdu Norbu, Normang Sonam Dorje, Major Penpa Tsering

Sitting: Shasur, Drumpa, Tethong Dapön Gyurme Gyatso, Laden La (Chief of Police), Möndrong Khyenrab Kunsang (Chief of Police).
 Front: Major Padma Chandra, Gokhar Sonam Gönpö.



Pl. 50. Tibetan soldiers on parade in Lhasa
 February 1921
 Photograph by Rabden Lepcha?

The Charles Bell Collection
 Glass negative, Size: 120 x 163 mm
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
 University of Oxford, 1998.285.109.1



Pl. 51. Anglo-Indian army officers of the 90th Punjabis interspersed with four Tibetan officers

1922
 Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
 Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073234
 From left to right: Colonel (Rupön) Tsogo, General (Dapön) Doring Teiji, General Changchen Kung and Colonel Rong Demön.



Pl. 52. General Doring Teiji (left), and General Changchen Kung (right), Gyantse

1922
 Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
 Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073225

The training of the Tibetan troops by the military escort of the British Trade Agent

As early as 1915 the British military escort started to train Tibetan officers and soldiers in British drill at Gyantse, as well as in the use of firearms imported from British India. This included the first batch of 500 British Lee-Metford rifles, imported in the aftermath of the Simla Conference in 1914, and later on the second batch of 10,000 British short magazine Lee-Enfields, imported from 1921 onwards, along with the first Lewis guns, mountain guns and machine guns.⁷⁹ Many Tibetan officers would be trained by the British not only in Gyantse, but also in India, in Quetta, Shillong or Darjeeling. In 1921, the British made an official request to the Tibetan Cabinet, requesting that the military officers be authorised to have their hair cut in the Western fashion, as the Tibetan officers, being lay officials, were obliged to wear their hair long, with a specific headdress in which the braided hair was

brought to the top of the head in a knot adorned with a charm-box. The request was denied in December of that year in a letter addressed by the Tibetan government to Colonel Parker, the officer in charge of the British escort of the Trade Agent at Gyantse, as well as of the training of Tibetan officers, who therefore had to keep their hair long,⁸⁰ as can be seen in a series of photographs taken just six months later, during the training at Gyantse.

Taken by Captain Henry Richard Carnie Meade (?–1935), an officer of the British Survey, these photographs (Pl. 51, 52 to 57)⁸¹ comprise a rare document indeed of the training of Tibetan officers and soldiers that took place in 1922 at Gyantse. Meade, along with Parker to a lesser extent,⁸² are the only people known to have photographed these training sessions. The British Indian Empire had sent Major Frederick Marsham Bailey (1882–1967), who was then Political Officer of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet (from 1921 to 1928), and a veteran of the Younghusband Mission, to present the Maharaja of Bhutan with the insignia of the Knight Grand Commander of the Order of the Indian

Empire. The presence of Captain Henry Richard Carnie Meade and his team made it possible for them to use the trip to map certain regions of Bhutan and Southern Tibet. On the way back, Bailey and Meade's expedition stopped in the Tibetan town of Gyantse in August 1922.

The escort of the British Trade Agent was composed of Anglo-Indian soldiers, then under the authority of Eric Parker (1896–1988), who was a Captain of the 90th Punjabi regiment. Meade was able to photograph the manoeuvres and firing exercises of the Tibetan soldiers with their newly imported weapons. Meade's photographs immortalise the moment when the army of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama were able to enjoy a brief period of prosperity, having recently emerged victorious from armed conflicts with Republican China in 1918 (a success that was attributed to the new weapons),⁸³ and before the anti-military and anti-British crisis of 1924. It is interesting to highlight how this visual source provides us with a valuable independent historical perspective: these images illustrate indeed an episode which is omitted from the written sources produced on this mission by Bailey⁸⁴ and Meade,⁸⁵ who do not mention the observation of the training of Tibetans by the British Army of India at all.

Under the supervision of four Tibetan officers, i.e. Colonel Tsogo (Mtsho sgo ru dpon), General Doring Teiji (*mda' dpon Do ring tha'i ji*), General Changchen duke (*mda' dpon Lcang can kung*) and Colonel Rong Demön (Rong Bde smon ru dpon), and the Anglo-Indian soldiers of the 90th Punjabis, recognisable by their unique turbans, one hundred Tibetan troops are seen practising drill exercises (Pl. 53 and 54), reassembling a Lewis gun (Pl. 55),⁸⁶ and also kneeling (Pl. 54) and honing their shooting skills with both rifles (Pl. 53) and Lewis guns (Pl. 56). It is mainly other written and visual sources,⁸⁷ as well as Tibetan autobiographical sources, that have provided a better understanding of the context and the people featured in these photographs.⁸⁸ General Doring Tenzin Norbu (Do ring Bstan 'dzin nor bu, born 1900),⁸⁹ along with General Drumpa (Brum pa), had been the first officer to be sent to Gyantse to receive military training from the British as early as 1915. He was then aged only 15, and Charles Bell even met his



Pl. 53. Tibetan soldiers practising shooting with British Lee-Metford rifles under the supervision of an Indian officer of the 90th Punjabi, Gyantse

1922
 Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
 Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073235

parents, who were “lamenting his military career, but had had no voice in the matter”.⁹⁰ The image showing General Doring (Pl. 57), seven years after this encounter, with his wife and young son wearing a child-size military uniform and either waving or saluting to the camera, seems to indicate that the young General had by this time fully embraced his military calling.

One photograph (Pl. 55) is particularly informative, showing a crowd of various participants to the whole scene. In the centre of the photograph, General Doring stands, holding the barrel of a Lewis machine gun, an emblematic weapon of the First World War, which had recently been imported into Tibet by the British, and which was to become a key piece of Tibetan weaponry. Seated in the foreground is the other General, Duke Changchen, leaning over other parts

of the machine gun, including the distinctive drum magazine, visible on the blanket in front of him, and the shoulder stock, the end of which can be seen protruding on his right. The wooden box beside him was probably used to transport the Lewis machine guns. The title of the recipient is written in English, “Political Officer Sikkim”, in strangely shaped letters. Among the people surrounding and observing these two Tibetan officers, we can pick out an Indian officer of the 90th Punjab, recognisable by his turban. A woman dressed in white, protecting herself from the burning sun of the Tibetan high plateau, stands out in contrast: it is probably Mrs Irma Bailey, daughter of Baron Cozens-Hardy, whom Major Bailey, the Political Officer of Sikkim, had just married, or else her mother-in-law, as both were on the trip. Behind this group, Bailey stands

slightly turned away from the group. He seems to be in conversation with a Tibetan nobleman, who has his back to the camera. He may be a local nobleman or the local District Commissioner. Their attention seems to be focused on the manoeuvres of the Tibetan soldiers in the background.

Meade’s last photograph (Pl. 58), originally entitled “Gyantse – Tibetan soldier, old style”, is a testimony to the fact that even at the height of the military reforms, Tibetan soldiers were seen in Gyantse wearing a different and probably old-style uniform. A bandolier of modern cartridges is seen slung across his chest, and his gun rifle, leaning on the wall to our left (behind what appears to be the soldier’s own saddle, saddle pads and straps), is entirely sheathed in a textile covering, probably to protect it from dirt and dust while travelling.⁹¹ His dress is specifically Tibetan (a *chuba*), but the hat seems to be a wicker or straw helmet, typical of the Qing dynasty infantry.⁹² This type of hat does not appear in any other photographs among our collection, and the reasons why it was still being worn by a Tibetan soldier in 1922 are unknown (it is also not known whether he was a member of a regional militia, or a former soldier, or a member of a regular regiment). In any case, other photographic evidence from this period at least shows that the appearance of Tibetan-style or “old-style” military dress were not isolated cases in the 1920s, as we will see.



Pl. 54. Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by Indian Army Officers and N.C.O's

1922
 Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
 Bailey Collection
 The British Library Board, London, IOR 1083/46(255)

Pl. 55. General Doring (standing) and General Changchen reassembling a recently imported Lewis gun, Gyantse

1922
 Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
 Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073237





Pl. 56. Tibetan soldiers practising with the Lewis gun under the supervision of their officers, Gyantse 1922

Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073238

Standing, left to right: General Changchen Kung, General Doring Teiji, Colonel Tsogo and Colonel Rong Demön



Pl. 57. General Doring Teiji Tenzin Norbu (born 1900), a Tibetan noble officer, his wife and their son, Gyantse 1922

Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade,
Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073240



Pl. 58. Gyantse – Tibetan soldier, old style 1922

Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade
Royal Geographical Society, London, rgs073128

117
Local Tibetan militia in Tsawarong.
(Khampas)

PRO 75649



Phot. E. Teichman, 1919 to 21.

CHINA—Sikang

Continued traces of heterogeneity within the Tibetan troops

It is clear from the photographs that some Tibetan soldiers continued to wear a Tibetan-style *chuba* after the British style was implemented for the national uniform. This is the case of course for the militia of that time, who are recognisable in images by their various regional styles of thick Tibetan *chubas* and boots (see Pl. 59, for instance, which is a photograph taken by Eric Teichman in 1919–1921 in Tsawarong in Kham),⁹³ but also for the regular troops: for instance, the “Lhasa

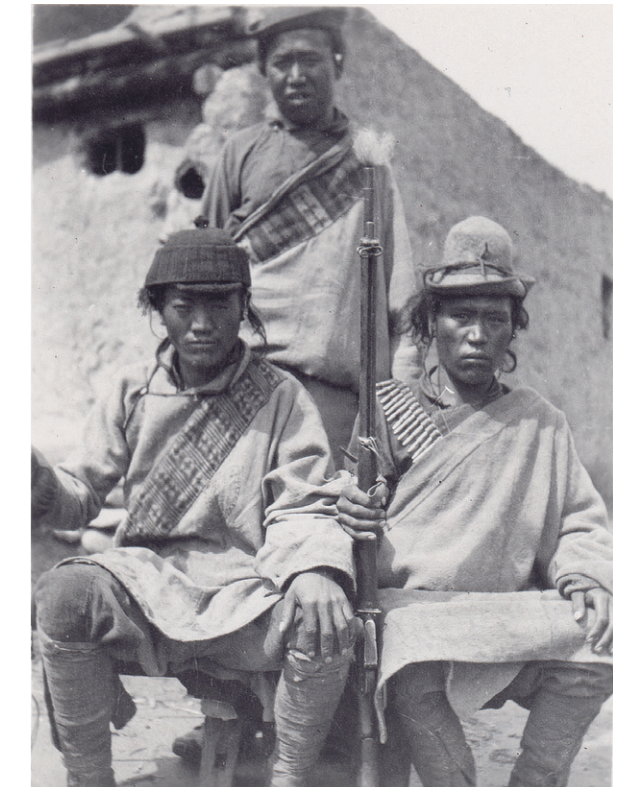
soldiers” photographed in Eastern Tibet in September 1921 by the French traveller Alexandra David-Neel (see Pl. 60 and 61). The soldiers’ *chubas* are rather worn out and their hats do not match. The *nambu* multi-coloured lining of the *chuba* seems to be distinctive of some of the pre-1912 Tibetan-style uniforms of the regular troops. The only signs that the military reform has taken place to be gleaned from their appearance are the puttees (or legwraps) worn under the *chuba* and their ammunition bandoliers. It is very possible, however, that what we see in these photographs was only an exceptional situation at that time for regular soldiers stationed in border areas, or that the soldiers

who appeared in *chubas* were photographed in an informal setting or during leisurely occasions when the wearing of the British-style uniform was not required. This would also explain the *chuba* uniforms of other soldiers (Pl. 62) in their encampment seen in photographs also taken in Kham during the same period by Eric Teichman in 1920–1921. The presence of women around the cooking fire is noticeable and perfectly normal, since Tibetan troops levied in Central Tibet took their families along when their regiment was sent to the border areas.

Pl. 59. Local Tibetan militia in Tsawarong (Khampas) 1919–1921
Photograph by Eric Teichman
Royal Geographical Society,
London, rgs075649

Pl. 60. Alexandra David-Neel surrounded by Tibetan soldiers of the Lhasa troops, Kham
September 1921
Unknown Photographer
Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de Digne-les-Bains,
Dn100a

Pl. 61. Tibetan soldiers of the Lhasa army in Kham
September 1921
Photograph by Alexandra David-Neel?
Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de Digne-les-Bains,
Dn720



In any case, among the different regiments the actual form of the uniform seems to have been quite diverse. We see evidence of this, for instance, in a photograph (Pl. 63) taken just a few years later, in 1926 in the Markham Province, where a perfectly homogeneously dressed “company of the New Tibetan army” is shown, all of whom are wearing, however, a very different style than the British army style seen in the same period in Central Tibet. The Tibetan soldiers wear a unique combination of Chinese soldiers’ style turbans and loose trousers with puttees—that appear

in much older photographs taken in Central Tibet, i.e. mainly in the photographs of Sino-Manchu troops in Gyantse around 1911–1912,⁹⁴ and in one photograph of Tibetan troops in Lhasa that we have attributed to the same period (Pl. 31, on which see the end of Chapter 1)—along with short Western-style tunics, an element that had also first appeared around 1912 in photographs of Tibetan troops in Central Tibet (Pl. 29).⁹⁵ One may hypothesise that the uniform worn by this “new company” of Tibetan soldiers was inspired by a former Chinese-type of military uniform for the upper

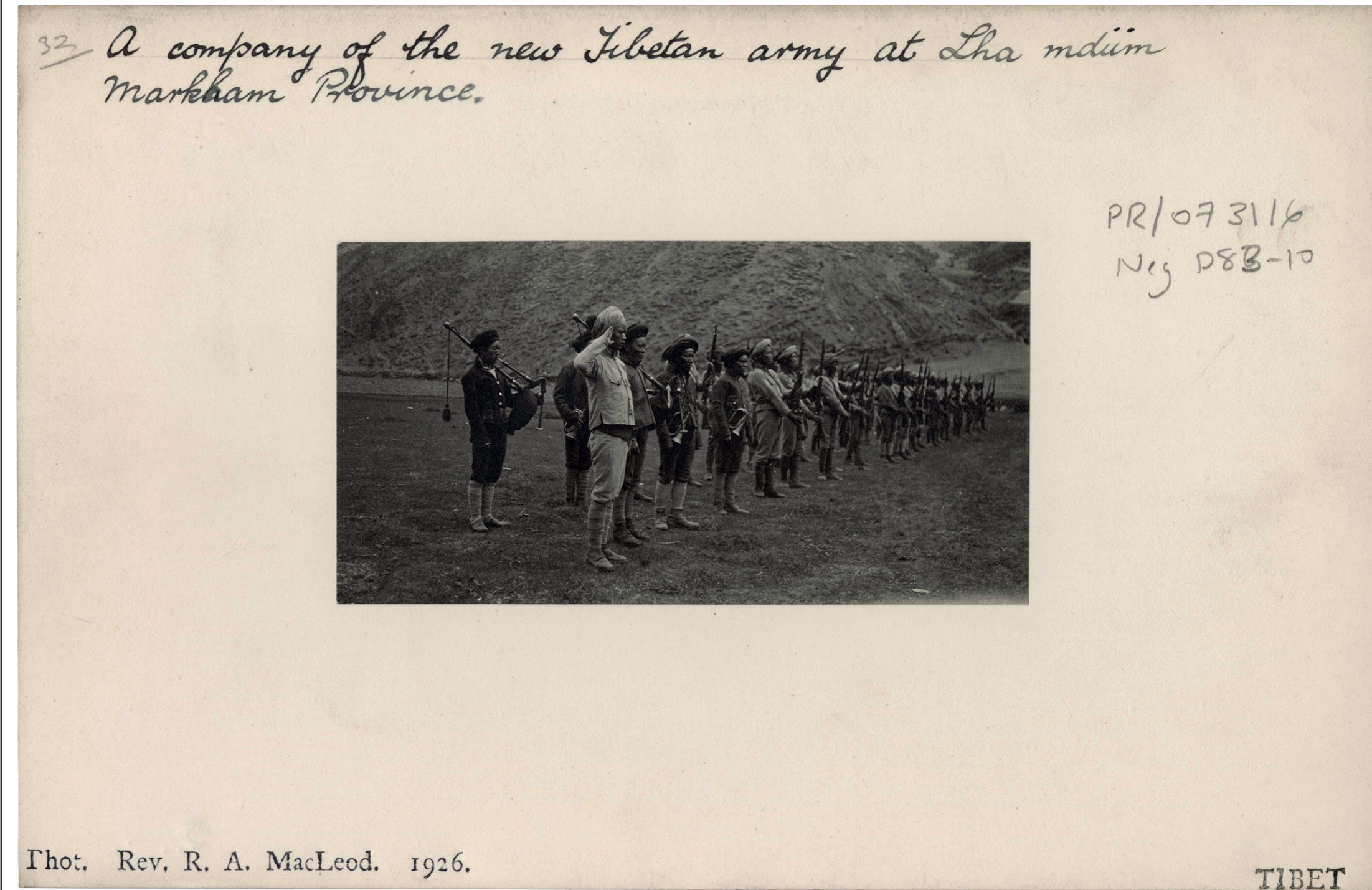
half (by that time the Chinese Republican army was already supposed to be fully dressed in a Western-style uniform) and for its lower half by the new British-style uniform introduced into Tibet after 1916.

Thus, in the 1920s, differences in the military uniforms can be observed between regiments based in Lhasa (more generally dressed in British-style uniforms) and those stationed in provincial areas, who can be seen wearing remnants of the pre-1913 military dress, in the shape of either the Tibetan *chuba* or other elements of the Sino-Manchu military style.



Pl. 62. Tibetan troops in camp
1919–1920
Photograph by Eric Teichman
Royal Geographical Society,
London, rgs073774

Pl. 63. A company of the new Tibetan army at Lhadü (Markham Province), in Chinese-style uniforms and British-style music band
1926
Photograph by Rev. Roderick A. MacLeod
Royal Geographical Society,
London, rgs073116



32 A company of the new Tibetan army at Lha mdüm
Markham Province.

PR/073116
Neg D8B-10

Phot. Rev. R. A. MacLeod. 1926.

TIBET



Pl. 64. The modern Tibetan army in Lhasa
 Undated; 1924 or before
 Photograph by Alexandra David-Neel
 Collection Alexandra David-Neel © Ville de Digne-les-Bains,
 Dn764a

The difference is striking if we compare the soldiers photographed in the eastern parts of the Ganden Phodrang territory in the 1920s (Pl. 60 to 63) and the new regiment of the Lhasa Police, founded in 1924 by S.W. Laden La, who had been given a Western education in Darjeeling as well as a Sikkimese Tibetan education, and served in the Imperial Police Force in Darjeeling. S.W. Laden La had been involved in Tibetan affairs for a long time when he spent a year in Lha-

sa with the Political Officer Charles Bell, after which he was asked by the Tibetan government to create a new police force in Tibet in 1923–1924.⁹⁶ According to Colonel Bailey, the 200 men were “dressed in thick khaki serge in winter, and blue with yellow piping in summer”.⁹⁷ Despite the summer dress being apparently different, at least in terms of its colour, from the rest of the Tibetan troops, the overall shape and individual elements of the winter uniform were the same. In any

case, the published photographs of the police by Laden La⁹⁸ very closely resemble the soldiers of the “new Tibetan army”⁹⁹ seen in the photograph (Pl. 64) brought back by Alexandra David-Neel from her trip to Lhasa in disguise, probably taken around 1924.

The difference in appearance between Lhasa-based regiments and those regiments stationed outside Lhasa would remain visible throughout the 1930s. An ensemble of photographs of the Gyantse regiment,



Pl. 65. Parade of the Ngadang regiment with band and standard bearers, Gyantse, 1931
 20th July 1931
 Photograph by Frederick Williamson
 University of Cambridge
 Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, P. 87153.WIL

taken in 1933 by F. Williamson while on a two-month tour of duty to the British Agency at Gyantse, represents a very significant testimony, not only of the history of military banners (as will be seen in Chapter 5), but also of the uniform itself. The soldiers of the Gyantse Ngadang regiment (Pl. 65), one of the four oldest regiments in Tibet, wear slouch hats or turbans, with long British-style tunics and puttees. We can see (Pl. 66 and 67) a Colonel (*ru dpon*) of the regiment, pictured in a singular uniform (see Pl. 66), including a Chinese-style tunic, as well as a peaked cap possibly being also of Chinese-style shape.

After the “crisis of trust” against the military elite in 1924–1925,¹⁰⁰ the Thirteenth Dalai Lama progressively dismissed most of the Tibetan officers that had been trained by the British, including Tsarong, and put a temporary hold on further military reforms. A last attempt to resume them was marked by the creation of the elite regiment called *drongdrag magar* (*grong drag dmag sgar*), which was created in 1931 by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama’s “favourite” K unpela (Kun ’phel lags, 1905–1963) and assembled for training in late 1932.¹⁰¹ The soldiers looked particularly smart in impeccable uniforms which were identical to those initially created after 1916 but with all soldiers of this particular regiment wearing helmets.¹⁰² The Tibetan tailor Gyeten Namgyal (1912–1996) wrote in his memoirs how an English tailor came from India in 1932 and showed the Tibetan tailors how to cut uniforms to the British



Pl. 66. French, Marshall, Rupön, Sinclair and Fletcher at Gyantse, 1931

20th July 1931
 Photograph by Byers
 Frederick Williamson Collection
 University of Cambridge Museum
 of Archaeology & Anthropology, P97876.WIL

Pl. 67. Rupön’s reception on the way to Dongtse

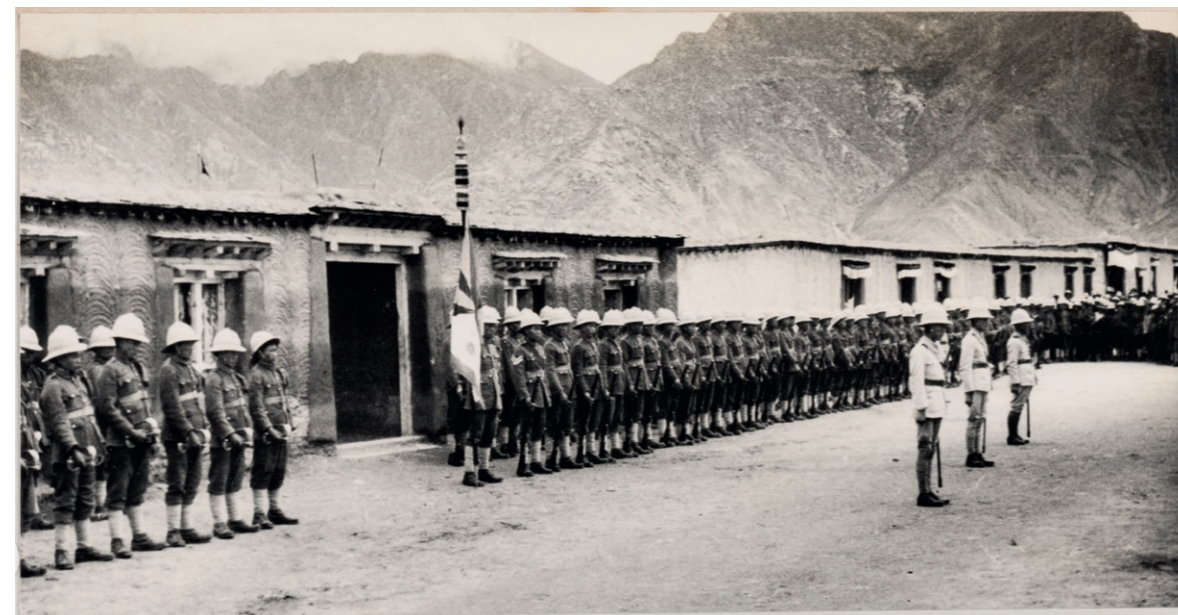
1st August 1931
 Photograph by Frederick Williamson
 University of Cambridge Museum of
 Archaeology & Anthropology, P97893.WIL
 Seated behind (left to right): French, Fletcher, Sinclair and
 Marshall. Seated in front (left to right): Byers and Rupön.



Pl. 68. Review of the new elite (*drongdrag*) regiment at Trapchi

September 1933
 Photograph by Frederick Williamson
 University of Cambridge Museum of
 Archaeology & Anthropology, P97020.WIL

pattern for this new regiment. Gyeten Namgyal adds: “He was in a hurry to leave; within one month we mastered the technique.”¹⁰³ As in the police regiment created by Laden la, the soldiers of this new regiment had to cut their hair short in the Western fashion, contrary to other soldiers who wore their long hair in one or two braids (see Pl. 113 Tse Tsen Tashi, part 3). Under their two Generals (Pl. 70) Yuthog Tashi Döndrup (G.yu thog Bkra shis don grub, 1906–1983) and Jigme Taring (Jigs med Phreng ring, 1908–1991), who had both received artillery training in India, the regiment, based in the Trapchi compound and therefore sometimes referred to as the “Trapchi regiment” (not to be confused however with the traditional Trapchi regiment) was photographed during its short-lived existence by Williamson (Pl. 68 to 71). The ranks of soldiers are striking in their absolute uniformity, the only visible difference being the colour of the officer’s dress (white or light coloured) contrasting with the darker (most probably) khaki colour of the soldiers’ dress (Pl. 69 and 70). The hierarchy is displayed through the soldiers’ lodgings, as one sees the two-storey building housing the officers’ quarters behind the regiment (Pl. 68), while the soldiers have their barracks in the one-storey building (Pl. 69).



Pl. 69. Troops of the *drongdrag* regiment at Trapchi
30th August 1933
Photograph by Frederick Williamson
University of Cambridge Museum of
Archaeology & Anthropology, P97013.WIL

Pl. 70. The officers of the *drongdrag* regiment: Dapön Yuthog Tashi Döndrup (1906–1983), Datsap Jigme Taring (1908–1991) and Chamje
30th August 1933
Photograph by Frederick Williamson
University of Cambridge Museum
of Archaeology & Anthropology, P97021.WIL



Pl. 71. The *drongdrag* regiment at Trapchi
30th August 1933
Photograph by Frederick Williamson
University of Cambridge
Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, P97015.WIL



Pl. 72. General Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen (1896–?) at Tsarong's house
 1933
 Photograph by Frederick Williamson
 University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, P.96966.WIL

From left to right: Delerabten Yeshe, George (Dundul) Tsarong and Dingja Dorje Gyeltsen.



Pl. 73. Four Tibetan Generals, three wearing jodhpurs, one wearing slacks
 1935–1937
 Photograph by Charles Suydam Cutting
 Gelatin silver print, 229 x 292 mm
 Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 83.801



Pl. 74. Brigadier Neame inspecting troops
 7th September 1936
 Photograph by Evan Yorke Nepean
 Collection Evan Yorke Nepean
 90 x 58 mm
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 2001.35.214.1

The British colonial gaze on the Tibetan army's "flaws" in the mid-1930s

The death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1933 started a decade of decline for the Tibetan army. The elite *drongdrag* regiment was disbanded after a mutiny in January 1934.¹⁰⁴ Because of the lack of resources, the military uniform progressively reverted to more Tibetan styles in the 1930s, with the use of earlier Tibetan military dress in the form of a *chuba*, a change which can be explained by the availability of cloth in the country

(contrary to the English-style uniform which required that the government import sufficient cloth).

The deterioration of the Tibetan army is particularly well documented in the British archives, especially because the Tibetan government again turned to the British for advice. British reports turn a very critical eye towards the Tibetan army, which is only partly reflected in the photographic evidence. British written sources are an irreplaceable source for our historical understanding of the Tibetan army's history (in the absence of Tibetan archives), but they are also known to hold up a distorting mirror, their biased colonial gaze affecting their interpretation of reality. In our case for

instance, the distancing of the Tibetan government from the military project from the mid-1920s onward is interpreted as a rejection of progress in general and as the result of a so-called Tibetan "conservative camp" taking over from more progressive forces. The reports complain generally about the fact that the British efforts to help the Tibetans modernise their army had gone to waste, for instance when all the officers trained by the British were summarily dismissed. However, British imperial sources fail to include, or rather acknowledge, how these structural changes could also be related to the Tibetan rejection of British interference in state affairs, based on the progressive and realistic



Pl. 75. Inspecting the Tibetan Troops at Military Review
 7th September 1936
 Photograph by Evan Yorke Nepean
 Collection Evan Yorke Nepean
 90 x 58 mm
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
 University of Oxford, 2001.35.217.1

assessment by the Tibetan government that the British were not prepared to fully support the Tibetan government's military requests and needs, but only to help in a limited measure, so that Tibet would remain in a situation of dependency towards Great Britain (and therefore not turn to another external power). Given these circumstances, the question to ask here is how and to what extent are the photographs of the Tibetan army taken by the British in the 1930s affected by the British colonial gaze? With this in mind, we examine here two moments captured as photographic reports on the Tibetan troops, which were intended to accompany British written reports in the 1930s. The first moment captured was the inspection of Tibetan troops by Brigadier Neame during the 1936 British Diplomatic Mission to Lhasa (July 1936–February 1937), led by Sir Basil J. Gould (1883–1956), Political Officer in Sikkin, Bhutan and Tibet (1935–1945). On the Tibetan government's request, after having conducted a review of the troops (see Pl. 74 to 79) and discussions with the military officers, Brigadier Neame (Pl. 74) made a full report in 1936.

His report was very critical, mainly based on structural and strategical flaws: the initial 12 to 13,000 regular troops had dropped to only 5,000 men by that time (plus around 5,000 militia); the troops were found to be lacking in shooting practice; borders were unevenly defended, the majority of the troops being concentrated on the eastern border, while other borders (with Ladakh for instance) were defenceless; even in Eastern Tibet, troops were extended along a wide stretch of border, with no reserve behind if one point was attacked; the highest military officers, being government lay officials, were often nominated for political reasons, often with no prior experience in the military.¹⁰⁵

These actual structural problems cannot be reflected in the few photographs of the review,¹⁰⁶ which do not compare negatively with photographs from the 1920s and thus contrast only with the content of the report: they show a seemingly smart-looking army, displaying their shooting skills with mountain guns, Lewis guns (Pl. 78 and 79), etc., in front of a crowd of curious monks (Pl. 76). It is true that photographs clearly illustrate that some of the soldiers now wear the Tibetan

chuba, which is described in captions by Neame as “old Tibetan uniform”. It seems to us however, that these should actually be thought of as “new” uniforms rather than “old”: the Tibetan government decided to reintroduce the Tibetan *chuba* into the army in the late 1930s, at which point the British uniforms were on the verge of themselves becoming the “old” uniforms. It is correct that the *chuba* had been worn by Tibetan soldiers in former times, before they adopted the British-style uniform, but, as these photographs show, this was now a fully standardised uniform, one which formally included the *chuba* (their probably already consistent khaki colour will become visible only a decade later in colour photographs), and they appear in the photographs to be in a good state (much more than the British-style uniforms worn by some soldiers photographed by Schäfer only three years later).

Apparently, this reintroduction of the Tibetan *chuba* as part of the military uniform started with the Trapchi regiment only (the traditional Trapchi regiment, not to be confused with the aforementioned short-lived *drungdrag* elite regiment at Trapchi, which existed between 1932 and 1934 only). But it remains unclear whether this reintroduction of the *chuba* for the whole Trapchi regiment had already taken place in 1936, or not: the photographs (Pl. 78 and 79) taken by the British in 1936 always include soldiers wearing both British and Tibetan-style uniforms, and it is not clear whether they belong to the same regiment (and are merely cobbling together uniforms, given the unavailability of British-style uniforms, for instance) or whether they already belong to two different regiments, i.e. the Bodyguard and the Trapchi regiments. Soon, in the late 1930s, the traditional Trapchi would all officially be dressed in the traditional military *chuba*, and later in the 1940s, the government would decide to dress its whole army, except the Bodyguard regiment and the officers of other regiments, in Tibetan-style uniforms (as will be seen in Chapter 3). In any case, the changing of uniform in itself does not automatically denote any decline in military training.

However, the visible state of the uniform itself is of significant value in understanding the army's financial situation, a fact that images of a second episode,

the visit to the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard regiment by J. Ken Shephard in 1938, illustrate. J. Ken Shephard (1908–1997), then a Captain, accompanied Lieutenant Archie Jack on a tour to inspect the Tibetan army from August to October 1938. His collection, held at the Cambridge University Archaeology and Ethnology Museum, includes photographs of the Bodyguard regiment at Norbulingka Palace taken on 21st September 1938. J. Ken Shephard's diary strikes a rather derogatory tone about the regiment, and the photographs do indeed show the Bodyguard regiment to apparently be in a rather shabby state at this time.¹⁰⁷ Very interestingly and uniquely (as far as photographic collections of the Tibetan army are concerned), the photographs show the interior of the soldiers' barracks. We know from the daughter of Bodyguard regiment General Surkhang (appointed in 1917), that in earlier times, ordinary soldiers of the Bodyguard were lodged ten men to a barrack (therefore without space to house their families), while the General was given a large separate residence with about six or seven rooms, and officers also had their own private quarters where their families could stay.¹⁰⁸ According to these photographs, it seems that the housing situation of ordinary soldiers continued in this way at least until 1938.

To conclude, the ensemble of photographs gathered in this volume for the period from 1913 to 1938 allows us to draw a number of conclusions regarding the British-style uniform first introduced in the Tibetan regular troops at some point around 1916–1917. First, one can easily see the difference between photographs from the “glorious Tibetan military decade” approximately spanning the period from 1913 to 1924, when the military reforms were launched and fully embraced by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, as contrasted with evidence from the next decade, when this project was at

Pl. 76. Crowds watching military display

7th September 1936
 Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman
 Collection Evan Yorke Nepean
 104 x 70 mm
 Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
 University of Oxford, 2001.35.298.1



times put aside, and revived at others. If we now focus on the first round of British-style uniforms introduced in this first decade of the 20th century, we see that Tibetan soldiers were equipped with different types of service-dress uniforms from the British Indian army,

i.e. both English-style and Indian-style in the first years, with the Indian-style uniform soon disappearing entirely. Even if we can observe a certain degree of disparity already at play during the 1920s (with the militia, or with occasional regular soldiers in “old-style uniforms”

and among the different regiments), it is really in the 1930s that a growing heterogeneity in the dress of the regular troops appears, including in Lhasa, with occasional appearance of the Tibetan *chuba*, perhaps only for certain regiments at this time.



Pl. 77. Brigadier Neame inspects Tibetan soldiers
7th September 1936
Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman
Collection Evan Yorke Nepean
106 x 72 mm
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 2001.35.370.1



Pl. 78. Tibetan Lewis Gun section
7th September 1936
Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman
Collection Frederick Spencer Chapman
119 x 170 mm
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 1998.131.505



Pl. 79. Tibetan soldiers in different uniforms
7th September 1936
Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman
Collection Evan Yorke Nepean
106 x 72 mm
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 2001.35.373.1

Endnotes Chapter 2

- The last Sino-Manchu soldiers were sent back to China via India in January 1913 (Shakabpa 2010, vol. 2: 748).
- See Travers 2018: 227–229 for an examination of this new position of Commander-in-Chief. The Army Headquarters were located near the main government arsenal called the Dorjeling armoury (Rdo rje gling mgo mdzod), founded in 1667 by the Fifth Dalai Lama (Venturi 2021); on the Dorjeling armoury at the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, see Venturi 2015.
- See Travers 2021b for a detailed study of the local production, imports and training in the use of modern firearms.
- For an analysis of how “militaria” (i.e. those collections of military objects not included in the category “arms and armour”) came to be increasingly appreciated as works of art representative of their time during the 19th century, see Mollo 1972.
- According to Alex McKay, for two centuries, between 1700 and 1900, only a hundred Westerners were able to visit Tibet and only 24 made it to Lhasa; whereas between 1900 and 1950, 1,500 to 2,000 Europeans travelled to Tibet, including about 1,000 British visitors (McKay [1998] 2003: 644).
- It seems that the “*dang*” after each letter of the alphabet was meant to signify “first” (*dang po*), because it was thought at that time that a future expansion of the army might result in the doubling of each regiment using a “*ka gnyis pa*”, etc. Sources remain unclear about this, however.
- For a detailed study of Charles Bell, see McKay 1997: Chapters 3 and 4.
- On Dasang Dadul Tsarong’s life and role in the army see Tsarong 1996, 2000; Tsha rong 2014.
- Tsarong 1996; Shakya 1999: 13.
- Shakabpa’s comprehensive history includes a considerable amount of information on the Tibetan army, see Zhwa sgab pa 1976 and for its English translation Shakabpa 2010. For papers focused on the history of the Tibetan army during this period, see Pa sangs Nor bu 1992; Dwang slob ’go ’dzin rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dud [sic], 1976 and its later fuller version Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus, 2003, along with its English translation Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2010 and 2012.
- Goldstein’s comprehensive history of the period in several volumes (1993 [1989], 2007, 2014 and 2019) includes a considerable amount of research and information on the Tibetan army; see also the following papers focusing on the Tibetan army history Bertsch 2001, 2003–2004, 2010; Mehra 2007; Travers 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2021.
- At the end of each day or opera performance, the attending troops marched past the end of the grounds opposite the Dalai Lama, with bands playing and colours being trooped, followed by a presentation of arms and then the troops marching out.
- Harris and Shakya 2003: 141; McKay 1997: 55.
- Box 513PO/A 238 (File 36 C Tibet 1918–1920), Report n°89, dated 24th December 1920, by “M. Bodard, Consul de France à Tchentou”: “Arrivée de Bell à Lhasa en 1920”.
- On which point, see Kobayashi 2020 and Travers 2021b.
- Tsarong 2000: 49. On Yajima’s life and time and Tibet and on the wider context of Tibet-Japan relationships in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see Komoto 2020 (in which these two photographs were first reproduced) and Kobayashi 2020. See also Shakabpa 2010, vol. 2: 766 (who has him arrive in 1913 and not 1912), and Tsarong 2000: 49. Two photographs of him and of his Tibetan wife were also reproduced in Thondup 1983: 41.
- See one at the Pitt Rivers Museum, reproduced and discussed as Photograph 7, FitzHerbert and Travers 2020: 24.
- Tsarong 2000: 49.
- Tsarong 2000: 51; Shakabpa 2010, vol. 2: 777 and Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2010, vol. 2: 27.
- gzhan sde rnam par gnön pa’i dmag dpung gсар ’dzugs thog dmag snyi che ba nas Ḥgong sa mchog dang srid blon sogs spos sne bcas kyis dmag sgar du gdan drangs te ru su dang dbying ci’i dmag rised sgyu tsal bcas sbyan lam du bstar ba*. The mural painting was reproduced in a book entitled *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* (Zhongguo Xizang Budala gong guan li chu bian zhu 2000: 206). The publisher captioned it with the incorrect year and by confusing the Russian with the Japanese: “*sman thang lugs kyi bris cha* (1934–1935). *Shing stag 1914 lor bod dmag bcas sgrig gis nyi hong dang dbyin ji rgya lugs bcas kyi dmag sbyongs brdar byed bzhiñ pa’i rnam pa’*”, meaning “Painting in the Māntang style, Re-establishment of Tibetan troops in 1914 by invitation of Japanese, British and Chinese military instructors” (Zhongguo Xizang Budala gong guan li chu bian zhu 2000: 206). In any case we know from the sources mentioned above that the three models, Japanese, Russian and English, were all considered.
- Letter N°46-E.C., dated Gantok, the 19th March 1915, from C.A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, National Archives of India, Sec E, June 1916, “Supply of sample uniform clothing for the Tibetan army”.
- Photographs taken before that date do not usually feature British-style uniform, see for instance the photograph of General Tethong Gyurme Gyatso “resting his foot on the mountain gun which was captured at the battle of Jyekundo after defeating the Chinese, 1916” where all men, soldiers and officers wear the traditional Tibetan *chuba*, turban and fur hats (Tsarong 2000: photograph 9).
- Bell [1924] 2000: 164.
- In this year the British army shifted to a new battle dress.
- Used in the armies to lessen lice infestation (Fosten and Marrion [1978] 2008: 35).
- The puttee or puttie had been introduced in the second half of the 19th century in the British Indian Army, as they were tribal leggings of the Himalaya (the terms comes from the hindi *patti* meaning “bandage”). In 1902, they replaced the gaiter as a formal part of the British Army service uniform (and were also introduced in many other Western and non-Western armies’ uniforms).
- See illustrations in Fosten and Marrion [1978] 2008, and Sumner [2001] 2009.
- Interestingly, the Chinese army would undergo the same change around the same time, just a few years later: after the establishment of the Republic of China, the army would definitively adopt the European-style uniform, changing from a dark blue to grey-green in 1918.
- I am grateful to Donald La Rocca for identifying the type of swords which appear in photographs.
- Tibetan soldiers wearing the Indian sepoy uniform, with the turban and *khulla*, are visible on film footage taken in 1930 by Laden La (British Film Institute, London, Laden La 8, visible at 2mn 05).
- In Tsarong 2000: photograph 12 and Tsarong 1996: 140.
- And not earlier, as has been previously estimated: 1920 in Tsarong 2000, photograph 12; 1922 in Tsarong 1996: 140 and Tsarong 2021: 18.
- Who’s Who in Tibet 1938*: 76 and Petech 1973: 139 and 243.
- Who’s Who in Tibet 1948*: 32 and Petech 1973: 244.
- Who’s Who in Tibet 1938*: 61.
- List of Chiefs and Leading Families 1933*: 24.
- 1922 in Tsarong 1996: 82–83 and between 1920 and 1923 in Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: final drawings section.
- Such trousers with lampasses are visible on film footage made in 1930 by Laden La, and worn by an entire regiment (British Film Institute, London, Laden La 8, visible at 2mn 05), not just by the high officers in full dress of the music bands (as is the case in photographs), so they must have been worn

- by most members of the regiment during quite a short period.
- 39 The British-style full dress disappeared for good in 1955, when all British-style military uniforms still in use were replaced by Chinese-style ones (see Chapter 4).
- 40 According to Clare Harris, by 1910, photography was being used commercially in Lhasa, in particular by individuals from neighbouring regions: “A Ladakhi Muslim known only as ‘Ishmael la’ was popular in Lhasa’s smart social circles, since he made house visits to take portraits, and a photographer from Nepal, Bhalpo Nadi, had established a studio in a central location” (Harris 2016: 131).
- 41 Interestingly, one photograph included in Aoki’s account published in 1920 (Aoki 1920: 5), probably not taken by him (since he usually indicated in the caption whether he had taken the photograph himself) but given to him at an unknown date prior to publication, features all of the Tibetan Army Generals dressed in khaki British-style uniforms, and not in full-dress uniforms. Since the photograph was taken in the exact same place as Pl. 38 (see below) and in an apparently equally ceremonial context, this might suggest that the full-dress uniforms were implemented for Generals only after this photograph was taken. I am very grateful to my colleague in the TibArmy project, Kobayashi Ryosuke, who translated the Japanese caption of this photograph for me.
- 42 See Travers (2018: 230–236) for a biography of Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar, reproductions of photographs of the same period showing him in monk’s dress and for an examination of the involvement of monk officials in military government positions. Pl. 39 is also reproduced in Hicks 1988: 19.
- 43 Teichman [1922] 2000: 122. For a full biographical account on him, see Travers 2018.
- 44 Two other full-length versions of him in full dress show him sitting (Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol.1: final photographic section) or standing, see Tsarong 2000: photograph 1; this photograph seems to be a reproduction, without the original background, of the portrait of Tsarong made by W. Montgomery McGovern and published by him in 1923 (McGovern 1924: 290).
- 45 Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol.1: final drawings section.
- 46 Pl. 41 is discussed in Bertsch 2001: Fig 14 and Bertsch 2010; and Pl. 42 in Bertsch 2010.
- 47 See Bertsch 2001 and 2003–2004, where several examples are shown and analysed, with inlaid semi-precious stones in the middle and sometimes Tibetan inscriptions giving the officer’s rank. Bertsch states that these badges were worn only by the highest officers such as Generals (*mda’ dpon*) and Colonels (*ru dpon*) since no indication is given on which squad (*ding*) or division (*ru*) the soldiers belonged to (Bertsch 2001: 41). We have not yet identified a Rupön wearing such a badge in the 1920s.
- 48 Many more are available in Bertsch 2001, 2002–2004, 2010 and 2017.
- 49 Reproduced in Bertsch 2001: 58 and Bertsch 2010.
- 50 Bertsch 2001: 42 and 58.
- 51 Reproduced in Bertsch 2010.
- 52 The practice of referring to the various Tibetan regiments by a number instead of a letter seems to have originated at a later but as yet undetermined date.
- 53 Bertsch 2001: 41.
- 54 Beer 1999.
- 55 Bertsch 1996.
- 56 Singer 1995.
- 57 See Travers 2020b for a discussion of the lion symbolism in aristocratic crests.
- 58 Stein 1984: 258.
- 59 Karmay [1994] 1996.
- 60 Karmay [1994] 1996.
- 61 Karmay 1993.
- 62 Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 95; see also Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 7.
- 63 *vajra dhara ta la’i bla mas rab byung 15 me ’brug zla ishes la stsal*. The medals are reproduced in Tsarong 2000: Photographs 2 and 3; see also Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 231.
- 64 *dmag spyi che ba bka’ blon tsha rong pa bod z’rgyal khab tu phyi rgyal dmag rced srol gtod thub pa’i sgyu rcal la sgyangs brtson sroying stobs bskyed pa ’i dpa’ rtags sgyangs brtson*.
- 65 Tsarong 2000: 51.
- 66 *Who’s Who in Tibet 1948*: 32.
- 67 I would like to thank Jamyang Norbu for his additional information (private communication) that allowed me to fill in remaining gaps in the biographies available in the *Who’s Who in Tibet 1938*: 68; and in Petch 1973: 90 and 244.
- 68 Tsarong 2000, photograph 13. The identification of the officers and soldiers in the image comes from this source as well.
- 69 As seen above, gorget patches or collar tabs are insignia in the form of paired patches of cloth or metal on the collar of a uniform.
- 70 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 121; Rhodes 2006.
- 71 Bertsch 2001: 37.
- 72 Bertsch 2001 and 2003–2004.
- 73 Bertsch 2010 (my translation from German).
- 74 Concerning the rare angular-shaped badge, Bertsch has made the hypothesis that it might have been rapidly replaced by insignia made of cloth instead.
- 75 Bertsch 2001: 37.
- 76 Bertsch 2001: 50.
- 77 “Battalions are distinguished by numbers (Tibetan numerals) cut out of coloured cloth and sewed on the sleeves just below the shoulder-straps [...]. Rank is indicated by badges on the shoulder” (McGovern 1924: 457), quoted in Bertsch 2001: 36.
- 78 Some insignia (*rtags*) with one to three red angular stripes for the lowest officers and instructors (Chupön, Gegen, Geche, and Dingsap) have been drawn by Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: photographic final section (no page numbering).
- 79 See Travers 2021b for a detailed examination of the modernisation of the Tibetan army’s firearms through local manufacture and imports.
- 80 See Travers 2016: 104–105 for a discussion of the reasons given by the Tibetan government. The original letter is in the LTWA archives (ID 1409LTWA651), which have been digitised in the Bonn database and there is also a copy of them in the Parker personal papers in Vancouver (Eric Parker Fonds, Audrey and Harry Hawthorn Library and Archives, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, Letter 1–1–6, Acc: 2005–5).
- 81 The photographs were apparently taken by Meade with a Sanderson Tropical camera (Meade 1925). All of the images are now kept at the Royal Geographical Society, except one which is only part of the Bailey collection at the British Library (which also includes copies of some of the Royal Geographical Society’s photographs).
- 82 The Eric Parker Fonds, Audrey and Harry Hawthorn Library and Archives, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia (File 1–1–13/17 and photographs, available online: <https://atom.moa.ubc.ca/index.php/photographs>, last accessed 30th January 2022). Three photographs document the training of the soldiers at Gyantse (0033693 to 95).
- 83 As shown in Goldstein [1989] 1993: 83.
- 84 Bailey 1924.
- 85 Meade 1925.
- 86 See Travers 2021a for a study of this group of photographs and particularly Pl. 55.
- 87 Confidential reports produced by the British Trade Agent in Gyantse and held in the British India Office Records in London and the National Archives of India in Delhi; private records and photographs of the British officer who trained the Tibetan soldiers, held in Vancouver in the Eric Parker Fonds at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. I would like to thank Alex McKay for directing me to this archive in 2009 and for sharing material from the Parker collection with me.
- 88 I thank Tashi Tsering Josayma (Amnye Machen Institute) for his contribution to the identification of the Tibetan officers in the Meade and Parker photographs. Also photo a033872 and a033792 with the names handwritten (left to right: “Lhading, Theji, Kung, Kenchung”) further helped us to identify the characters in the images: <https://atom.moa.ubc.ca/index.php/photo-of-four-men>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 89 *Who’s Who in Tibet 1948*: 35 and Petch 1973: 246.
- 90 Bell [1924] 2000: 91.
- 91 I am thankful to Donald La Rocca for his help in identifying the rifle and saddle’s details.
- 92 Examples are available online: <https://www.militarysunhelmets.com/tag/qing-dynasty>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 93 One single soldier dressed in Western uniform is visible on the right-hand side of the image. Based on the shapes of the muzzles, the barrels, and the stocks, the firearms held by these militia seem to be shorter matchlocks (carbines) without prongs, and not modern rifles. Possibly as in the example in the Met (acc. no. 36.25.2173, La Rocca 2006: 205, no. 102). Prongs appear to be visible on a few of the guns in the photo, and all, or most of these militiamen, are carrying traditional Tibetan swords. Note also the absence of any cartridge bandoliers, which one would expect to see if they were carrying rifles (I am indebted into Donald La Rocca for the information related to the weapons in this image).
- 94 See for instance “Chinese Firing Party” (PRM-Martin-1998.293.130), which is reproduced and available online in FitzHerbert and Travers 2020: 21 (Photograph 2): http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_53.pdf, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 95 Though not combined with large trousers and puttees. As discussed in Chapter 1, another photograph by Laden La (not included in this volume), dated 1912, features Tibetan soldiers wearing a Western-style uniform (Lhalungpa 1983: 98).
- 96 Rhodes 2006: 4.
- 97 As quoted in Rhodes 2006: 39. The absence of any colour photographs means we are unable to ascertain the use of blue trousers for this regiment.
- 98 Rhodes 2006: Plate 22, 23, 24.
- 99 One hypothesis would be that this photograph is in fact of the new police, but this remains uncertain.
- 100 On which point, see Goldstein [1989] 1993: 121–138.
- 101 On this regiment, see Goldstein [1989] 1993: 152–156.
- 102 According to Goldstein, the insignia of officers and NCOs were of pure gold, Goldstein [1989] 1993: 154.
- 103 Yeshi 2009: 226.
- 104 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 172–174.
- 105 This episode and the report are both discussed in detail in Goldstein [1989] 1993: 278–288.
- 106 Gould had asked Frederick Spencer Chapman (1907–1971) to join him as secretary to the mission. He brought back an important collection of photographs (now held at the Pitt Rivers Museum), including among the first colour images of Lhasa (using Dufay-colour transparencies), see Harris and Shakya 2003: 144–147). However, to our knowledge, these colour photographs do not feature any Tibetan soldiers.
- 107 The related four images (University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, DG.145098.SHP, DG.145099.SHP, DG.145129.SHP, DG.145127.SHP) could unfortunately not be included in this volume, although they were part of the exhibition, for reasons specific to the copyright of these images.
- 108 Yuthok [1990] 1995: 39.

The re-Tibetanisation of the Ganden Phodrang army (1939–1950)

This period saw quite radical changes in the external appearance of Tibetan regular troops. The Tibetan government implemented new reforms to resume the modernisation of its army, but this time it expressed its plan to depart from the English model and re-Tibetanise the army in several ways. Two main innovations were decided upon. First, to translate all British drill orders into Tibetan, because Army Headquarters were aware that it had become rather awkward to have all orders and military terms in English. Second, to change the British-style uniform of the Tibetan army into a Tibetan-style one, by establishing the traditional Tibetan dress or *chuba* made of a khaki *nambu* cloth, a change which, according to Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue, only happened in 1945.¹

However, photographic evidence, in particular the photographs of Ernst Schäfer, as we will see, suggests that these changes had already started to take place by 1939. This is also confirmed by the oral testimony of the former secretary (*dmag drung*) of Army Headquarters (*dmag spyi khang*) Nornang Ngawang Norbu (Nornang Ngag dbang nor bu, c. 1911–1989), who writes that they started during the tenure of “Khenchung Tenpa Jamyang and Nangkarwa as the Commanders-in-Chief”.² Tenpa Jamyang (Bstan pa ’jam dbyangs, 1888–1944)³ was in charge between 1933 and 1944 and Nangkarwa or Changra Wangchuk Tharchin (Snang dkar ba/Lcang ra Dbang phyug mthar phyin, 1878–1939)⁴ between 1934 and 1939 as Commanders-in-Chief, thus these changes must have taken place at some point between 1934 and 1939. Given the fact

that in 1936, at the time of Neame’s report, the British Mission did not understand the occasional occurrence of the Tibetan-style uniform as anything other than an apparently unplanned resurgence of an “old uniform” (see Chapter 2), it is most probable that the decision to introduce the Tibetan *chuba* as a new and systematic uniform had not yet been fully agreed upon in 1936. According to Schäfer’s photographs, taken in 1939, there was still only one regiment (apparently the Trapchi) wearing this new Tibetan-style uniform. It is thus most probable that the change was only gradually being implemented in the years 1936–1939 and would be generalised to the rest of the army only in 1945, as proposed by Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue. Nornangpa recalls:

“One thing I remember is that during the time of Khenchung Tenpa Jamyang and Nangkarwa as the Commanders-in-Chief, it was decided to ‘Tibetanise’ all the English military commands (*skad brda*) and terms of the Tibetan army. Though initially the English military commands seemed impressive, gradually the pronunciation of the English words degenerated and sounded very funny when used by the troops. If people who knew English heard them, they would laugh. If they were in Tibetan and both the speakers and the listeners were Tibetan, they would find it easy to understand and learn them. Therefore, the Headquarters

planned to translate them into Tibetan gradually. It was also planned to Tibetanise the uniform of the Tibetan army. [...] However, the idea of translation of the English military terms into Tibetan could not be put into practice at that time.”⁵

Second, and of more significance for our present study:

“As regards how the Tibetan army uniform was Tibetanised, the Tibetan Army Headquarters purchased white *nambu* cloths [*snam bu dkar po*]. They decided to make the army uniform grey [*sa mdog*, i.e. khaki] to make it distinct from their civil dress. They sent the *nambu* cloths to the Nepalese Dry House to colour them. From the cloths were made two kinds of *chupa*, one with a multicoloured collar [*gong khra*] and one with a single coloured collar, two different hats and shoes. The Two Commanders-in-Chief dressed the gatekeepers [*go srung dmag mi*] in the new uniforms and took them to the Regent Reting at his residence to show him the uniforms. He chose the *chupa* with the coloured collar [*gong par rgya khra*] as the army uniform. As for the uniform hats, the summer hat was grey [*sa mdog*, i.e. khaki; also made of *nambu* cloth] with a conical shape resembling the mouth of a big clarinet [*dung chen kha lta bu*], and



could be folded from the back. The winter hat was the same as the summer hat, but it had earflaps [*ldan zhol*] with lamb skin [*lug phrug gi pags pa*] liners. The shoes had thick soles and long angles, made from grey *nambu* material.

Before that, every regiment used to send a team to collect money for uniforms (*dmag chas kyi dod*). After that, a system of collecting brown *nambu* cloth instead of money was made. Each regiment was given a piece of original *nambu* cloth as the sample and a length of thread, each end bearing the stamp of the Army headquarters, as the standard measure. Whenever *dingpon* or *chupon* officers from a regiment went to collect *nambu*, they had to take with them the *nambu* sample and the measuring thread. An edict was circulated throughout the country to this effect.⁷⁶

Other measures to create uniformity among the soldiers were also taken, such as the new seal which read “Tibetan Army headquarters, to be stamped on all soldiers’ hands (after the prints of various other seals from former times had been first removed)”.⁷

The drive to reorient the military culture towards its Tibetan roots intensified in the 1940s, amid a domestic context of a new era of nationalism and cultural protectionism, which found expression in government policies such as the prohibition on importing foreign food items and on the use of foreign styles of clothing. Although most of the decisions regarding these new military reforms had been taken before 1947, the independence of India in 1947 certainly brought the fact

home to the Tibetan authorities that Tibet had to rely on itself, and indeed it was in 1947 that a number of measures to strengthen the Tibetan army were taken. Military “cultural” innovations included the publication and distribution of a newly-translated manual with the new drill orders (1948), by a newly-formed committee including Gendun Chomphel (Dge ’dun chos ’phel, 1903–1951),⁸ or the preparation of a new military law code (the *Iron Tiger Military Law Code*, 1950), which was to be adapted to the particular cultural features of the Tibetan army.⁹

Facing increasing threats on the Chinese border, as the Communists, who had made clear their intentions to “liberate” Tibet, were on the point of taking over in China, the Tibetan government hastily resumed the importing of foreign weapons and the recruitment of new troops was also resumed at the end of the 1940s.¹⁰ The permanent army, whose numbers had dropped to around 6,000 during the late 1930s and early 1940s, once again swelled to its former size of 12 or 13,000 regular troops, as in the 1920s. A new elite regiment (*grong drag dmag sgar*) was raised in September 1949,¹¹ as illustrated in Heinrich Harrer’s photographs.

A “mobilisation office” was created to draw up plans for general mobilisation, which organised the deployment of troops and weapons to Kham,¹² along with several other measures, such as the creation of the first broadcasting radio station in Lhasa in 1948, and the installation of two other radio stations in Chamdo and Nagchuka, the two most likely routes to be targeted by invading forces.¹³

The general distancing from their former British ally is revealed by the drastic reduction of photographs of the Tibetan army taken by the British, if not their disappearance entirely. This short but intensely creative

period, from the point of view of military history, is thus documented mainly by four photographers who had a particularly prolific output in their work on the Tibetan army: the German Ernst Schäfer (1910–1992), for the very beginning of the process in 1939; the American radio host and explorer, Lowell Thomas (1892–1981) and his son Lowell J. Thomas (1923–2016, also known as Lowell Thomas Jr.) in 1949; and finally the Austrians Heinrich Harrer (1912–2006) and Peter Aufschnaiter (1899–1973), who photographed the army in 1949 and 1950, when intense military reorganisation and arrangements were being made in haste to prepare for the imminent Chinese invasion.

The photographs of this period are very useful to help understand exactly how the re-Tibetanisation of the army’s visual identity took place. They show that it was not a sudden change, but rather a gradual and selectively applied process which depended on different regiments and on the status of the soldier (officer or rank-and-file). In the late 1930s,¹⁴ this newly standardised Tibetan-style uniform was introduced only for one specific regiment, while the remainder of the troops had begun to experience an obvious deterioration in the condition of their British-style uniforms, displaying an increasingly striking level of heterogeneity. The second phase, from 1945 onwards (visible in the photographs of Thomas, Harrer and Aufschnaiter), was that of a generalisation of the new uniform among the regular regiments, with the exceptions of the Bodyguard regiment and the higher officers of other regiments, who remained dressed in British-style uniform.

Pl. 80. Parade of the Gadang regiment in front of the Shigatse fortress

1939

Photograph by Ernst Schäfer

180 x 240 mm

Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-17-14-34



Deterioration of the British-style uniform among troops and the limited adoption of a standardised Tibetan-style uniform (Ernst Schäfer's collection)

The first phase of re-Tibetanisation is captured by the photographs taken by Ernst Schäfer during his expedition to Tibet in 1938–1939. Organised during the rise of Nazism in Germany, Schäfer's mission purported to pursue scientific goals in the natural sciences, with some members of his crew being influenced by racist theories. As demonstrated by Isrun Engelhardt, who curated in 2006 the exhibition “Tibet in 1938–1939. Photographs from the Ernst Schäfer Expedition to Tibet”,¹⁵ the 17,000 negatives brought back by the expedition, a part of which is kept at the BundesArchiv in Germany, are an extraordinary visual source which documents a wide range of political, social and economic aspects of Tibetan life at the time. The collection includes a group of around twenty photographs of the Tibetan army, taken in Lhasa and Shigatse during the first months of 1939. They show a growing diversity in the troops' appearance. We see rank-and-file soldiers wearing British-style uniforms in various configurations, sometimes in a visibly bad state; Tibetan-style elements such as hats start to appear alongside the older British-style clothing; finally, the soldiers begin to appear dressed consistently in the new Tibetan-style military uniform.

As we have seen in the photographs from the preceding decades, the Tibetan *chuba* had actually never fully disappeared from the Tibetan army: in the 1920s, they were still occasionally seen, in particular on soldiers stationed in border areas (Pl. 60, 61), and in the 1930s, probably due to a lack of funding, the

chuba began to appear more and more in photographs, in particular in images from the 1936 British Mission to Lhasa. The photographs taken by Schäfer, however, are the best illustration of the vast disparities in the uniforms worn in the Tibetan army in the late 1930s (Pl. 80 to 88), as the lack of standardisation of the British-style uniform by that time (Pl. 83 to 87) and the first adoption of a Tibetan-style standardised uniform by one particular regiment are clearly visible in these images (Pl. 88 for instance).

Several photographs feature the Shigatse regiment (Pl. 80, Pl. 157, and 158), standing in ranks in front of the city's fortress. They were taken while the expedition made its way to Lhasa, during a military parade related to the city's festivities. They also feature in the film *Geheimnis Tibet*, which was shot during the expedition.¹⁶ In Lhasa, the Bodyguard regiment appears in several photographs (Pl. 81 to 84 and 87). Zompü Thubten Wangchuk (Zom phud Thub bstan dbang phyug, 1908–1949, seen in Pl. 82 and 83), General of



Pl. 82. Zompü Thubten Wangchuk (1908–1949), General of the Bodyguard regiment at the New Year parade of the army in front of the Potala, Lhasa 1939
 Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
 180 x 240 mm
 Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-16-01-27

Pl. 81. Tibetan troops parading in front of the Potala during the New Year ceremonies in Lhasa 1939
 Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
 180 x 240 mm
 Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-11-07-17

the regiment between 1938 and 1943,¹⁷ is wearing the same British-style service dress as was introduced after 1916 (though with a leather chest belt, which is not so frequently seen in photographs). He is here photographed in a sort of “half full dress” which may have become the norm at this time, consisting of the usual service dress, to which are added elements of the full dress, such as a spiked helmet (with the chin chain attached on its top) and a ceremonial sword.¹⁸ The soldiers of the bodyguard under his command (Pl. 83) wear a different pattern of British-style uniform with a

peaked cap, as had been customary since around 1916. Soldiers of the Bodyguard regiment, posted at the gate of the Norbulingka Palace (Pl. 84), however, wear an entirely different uniform (made of thick fabric, probably Tibetan *nambu* cloth) for their lower half, and a tunic of an undefined pattern for the upper, accompanied with a fur winter hat. Two portraits show soldiers with uniforms that seem cobbled together, one combining a Western-style tunic with a traditional Tibetan hat (Pl. 85), the other one with felt hat usually worn by civilians (Pl. 86). Two photographs show groups of rest-

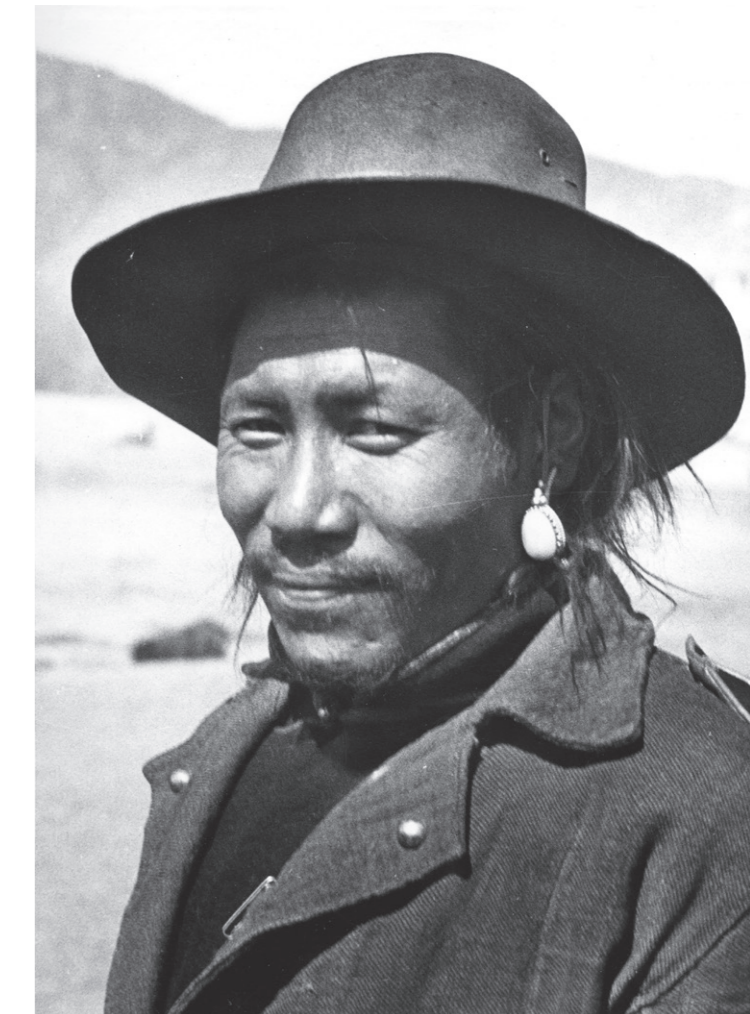
ing soldiers, one in British-style uniform with helmet, most probably from the Bodyguard regiment (Pl. 87), and the second in traditional Tibetan *chuba* (Pl. 88), but of a clearly homogeneous pattern and colour, with the same multicoloured *nambu* lining on the collar and identical fur lined hats with ear flaps, indicating the rise of a new Tibetan-style uniform, possibly that of the Trapchi regiment. The new uniform will come to be, if it was not already the case by 1939, universally worn by this regiment, as can be seen in photographs of the late 1940s and 1950s.



Pl. 83. Kusung Dapön Zompü Thubten Wangchuk and his soldiers at the New Year parade of the army in front of the Potala, Lhasa
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-16-01-17



Pl. 84. Guards of the Bodyguard (Kusung) regiment at the entrance of the Norbulingka Palace
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-13-13-33



Pl. 86. Tibetan soldier, Lhasa
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-14-02-11

Pl. 85. Soldiers at the New Year parade of the army in front of the Potala, Lhasa
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-10-11-11



Pl. 87. Resting soldiers in British-style uniforms at the New Year parade, Lhasa 1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-16-08-13



Pl. 88. Resting soldiers in the new standardised Tibetan-style uniforms at the New Year parade, Lhasa 1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-11-04-37



Pl. 89. Chupön Nyima Gyabu, who served as the Thomas caravan's military escort throughout the journey to Lhasa

1949
 Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
 James A. Cannavino Library,
 Archives & Special Collections,
 Marist College, LTP.1578.13.42

The true colours of the regular troops revealed at last (Lowell Thomas' collection)

In the 1940s, with the Chinese threat on the eastern border intensifying, the Tibetan government, under two successive regents, Reting (Rwa sgreng, r. 1934–1941) and mainly Tagtra (Stag brag, r. 1941–1950), decided to accept American requests to visit Lhasa, with the idea that they would help raise international awareness about the situation in Tibet. The first visitors, two US army officers, Major Ilya Tolstoy (1903–1970, grandson of the novelist) and Captain Brooke Dolan (1908–1945), were sent by US president Franklin Roosevelt and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) on a diplomatic and military mission in 1943, with the aim of looking for an alternative supply corridor between India and China, the Burmese route having been cut off by Japan. These men made a colour film entitled *Inside Tibet*, in which the Tibetan-style new uniform of the Trapchi regiment, which formed the guard of honour welcoming the American party, can very clearly be seen.¹⁹ In 1944, a couple of other photographs of the Tibetan army were taken by the American photographer and foreign correspondent, Archibald Trojan Steele (born 1903),²⁰ but again only of the Trapchi regiment.

The film shot in Lhasa in 1945 by James Guthrie (1906–1971), then a Major who was the British Medical Officer in Gyantse from 1934 to 1936 as well as Civil Surgeon of Bhutan and Tibet posted in Lhasa from 1945 to 1948,²¹ is proof that the Tibetan-style

uniform had yet to be generally adopted at that time. Indeed, the films very distinctly show the composition of a military parade during the New Year ceremony in Lhasa. In colour,²² this footage represents a unique testimony of the outward appearance of the Tibetan troops at that time and shows that they were still mostly wearing the British-style uniform, except for one regiment, again probably the Trapchi. The parade is led by the Bodyguard regiment, headed by three officers in full dress (yellow tunic, black or dark blue trousers with white lampasses, and spiked helmet). The Bodyguard's band follows, wearing scarlet tunics and black trousers, and then the rest of the regiment, all in full dress with yellow tunics and black or dark blue trousers, with white topee hats. A second regiment follows, in British-style khaki service dress; then a third, this time wearing British-style khaki uniforms with white turbans, but they seem to be holding heavier weapons, which indicates that they could be the artillery regiment (*cha dang*); a fourth and last regiment ends the march, wearing a Tibetan-style uniform with felt hats.

Thus, the aforementioned decision, taken in 1945 (according to Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue), to adopt the new Tibetan-style uniform for general use among all regiments, must have taken place shortly after James Guthrie's film was shot but before the arrival of the 1949 expedition led by Lowell Thomas (father and son).²³ The new "fully Tibetanised" face of the Ganden Phodrang army is best seen in the photographs of the latter collection, all of which were taken by Lowell Thomas Jr. Most importantly, these men brought back one of the first recorded collections of colour photographs of the Tibetan army. Heinrich Harrer recounts

the arrival of the two Americans in his account, *Seven Years in Tibet*:

“Both of them had moving-picture cameras and took some splendid pictures. [...] I greatly envied them their splendid photographic equipment and especially their abundance of film. About that time I had joined with Wangdüla in buying a Leica, but we always suffered from a shortage of film. The Americans made me a present of two color films, my first and only ones.”²⁴

In accordance with their Tibetan passport, the Thomas party’s caravan from Yatung to Lhasa was given a Tibetan soldier as escort, “Chogpon (Corporal) [i.e. *bcu dpon*] Nima Gyabu of the Tibetan army” (Pl. 89), as Lowell Thomas recounts in his travel account, *Out of this World*:²⁵

“He carried the all-important passport in his yak-skin saddle-bag. Perched atop his gaily bedecked mule, the corporal led the way along the banks of the roaring Amo. Slung across his back was a Springfield clip rifle, with a bit of red yak cloth in the tip of the barrel; and on his hip he carried a portable altar, his silver prayer box containing an image of Buddha. With his long pigtail dancing to and fro across his rifle and prayer box, the Chogpon set a lively pace, as the many bells attached to his mule echoed through the valley.”²⁶

The photographs of the army were taken chiefly during a parade in the Norbulingka Gardens, that Thomas explains had been specially organised for them by the Tibetan government. However, he also writes that they arrived in Lhasa on the eve of the final day of the “Summer festival” that took place every year during the First week of the Seventh month of the Tibetan calendar, in September 1949. This was without doubt the Shotön (*zho ston*, lit. the “Curd festival”), when Tibetan opera (*a lce lha mo*) would be performed all day long and troops would be reviewed and parade every morning and evening of the festival. Thus, they probably witnessed the usual army review and parade of this festival, possibly with some added features. He describes the event as follows:

“A little later, still almost stupefied with overeating, we went back of the pavilions to photograph the army. A private show was put on for us while guards, wielding long wooden staves, unmercifully beat back the curious crowd of commoners to clear a path for our cameras. The national army then numbered about ten thousand men, but we have heard that it has now been increased to nearly one hundred thousand. It is the only Tibetan institution that has been changed in centuries. The Dalai Lama’s troops, for the most part, are clad in native costume, but a few hundred wear the discarded British uniform of World War I, with rifles and other light equipment of the same period.”²⁷

Thomas’ photographs not only document the new Tibetan-style uniforms, but also the Tibetan-style emblems and insignia that had been created at some point after 1913 and had been worn along with both British- and Tibetan-style uniforms, as well as the original British-style dress still worn by the Bodyguard regiments and the highest-ranking officers of most regiments.

There are two specific regiments that feature most frequently in the photographs. The first is the Trapchi regiment (Pl. 90), with their felt hats on which the letter of the regiment (*kha*) was inscribed. A colour photograph (Pl. 91) of the same scene, even if it is blurred, helps us to understand that their *chuba* had a red lining to the sleeves, and that red regimental flashes were pasted on the felt hats (as it had been the case on the topees in earlier years). Lower ranking officers wore the Tibetan-style uniform, with metal plates attached to their felt hats. Their General, Kunsangtse Tsewang Döndrup (Kun bzang rtse/ Khe smad Tshe dbang don grub, 1902–1967) (Pl. 92), who had held this position since January 1948,²⁸ continued to wear the British-style uniform. The second regiment featured in the Thomas’ images is the Bodyguard (Pl. 93), with all officers (in addition to the rank-and-files) in British uniforms including, in the middle, their long-serving General Phala Dorje Wangdu (Pha lha Rdo rje dbang ’dus, born in 1915, see also Pl. 108 and 131), who had been first appointed a Colonel (*ru dpon*) in 1942 and then General (*mda’ dpon*) in 1943, a position he would retain until 1954.²⁹



Pl. 90. The Trapchi (Khadang) regiment band and soldiers (in black and white) at a parade in the Norbulingka
September 1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Gelatin silver print
203.2 x 255 mm
James A. Cannavino Library,
Archives & Special Collections, Marist College,
LTP:1533.10.01



Pl. 91. The Trapchi (Khadang) regiment band and soldiers (in colour) at a parade in the Norbulingka
September 1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Projected graphic / 35-mm slide, Kodachrome
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist College, LTP:1582.11.09



Pl. 92. Kunsangtse Tsewang Döndrup (1902–1967), Trapchi General, in British-style uniform, lower ranking officers in Tibetan-style uniform
September 1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Projected graphic / 35-mm slide, Kodachrome
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist College, LTP:1582.10.14

Pl. 93. Bodyguard regiment General Phala Dorje Wangdu (1915–?) and other officers at the parade in Norbulingka
September 1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Projected graphic / 35-mm slide, Kodachrome
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist College, LTP:1582.10.8



A photographic “goldmine” to help us understand the final phase of re-Tibetanisation (Harrer and Aufschneider’s collections)

The photographic collections of Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschneider, housed at the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, are among the richest visual archives we have for pre-1959 Tibet,³⁰ and for the Tibetan army in particular. Having escaped from a British camp near Dehra Dun in 1944, the two men reached Lhasa in January 1946, where they stayed until 1950. They became immensely famous, not only for their escape from India to Lhasa, but also for the fact that they gave their skills in service of the Tibetan government and the young Dalai Lama in various respects. Harrer’s collection is by far the biggest collection of photographs related to the Tibetan army (making up almost one third of all the 700 photos we have related to the Tibetan army which are scattered across various collections all over the world). Most of their photographs were taken in the later stages of their stay, around 1949 and 1950.³¹ Indeed, during the earlier part of their sojourn, they had no camera at all, and were attempting to get their presence in the country accepted by the Tibetan authorities (and the British delegation). They were also aware of the difficulties the Schäfer expedition members had experienced in filming the various ceremonies of the Lhasa year (there had been an incident when they had attempted to film the oracle, for instance).³² By 1949, Harrer had acquired a Leica and he was allowed, at some point, to shoot films and make photographs for the Dalai Lama himself, a

Pl. 94. Soldiers of the Police regiment (wearing Tibetan-style uniform, i.e. khaki *chuba*, Tibetan boots and felt hat), Lhasa 1950
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No. VMZ.400.07.02.023

fact which was known to the general population and thus allowed him great freedom in the collection of his film and still footage.³³

In these images, we see a shift in how soldiers are photographed: the army is now more dynamic, often seen marching, from a distance, and less often seen through the framework of official inspections, though these moments are also photographed. The diversity and sheer quantity of the images, and the detailed descriptions contained in the captions, make it possible to differentiate between various Lhasa-based regiments’ uniforms. They illustrate the degree of generalisation of the Tibetan-style uniform in the period just before Tibet was invaded: all regiments now wore it, except for the Bodyguard regiment and for officers of other regiments. The “Police regiment” (Pl. 94) as Harrer defines it in a caption attached to the same photograph in one of his publications,³⁴ appears sitting leisurely in a Lhasa street. They are dressed in exactly the same way as the Trapchi regiment, their *chuba* having a multicoloured *nambu* lining (apparently by then the common uniform of several regiments) with the key difference being that the Trapchi regiment’s *kha* letter does not appear to be printed or painted on their felt hats.

A large review held in 1950 in the Norbulingka was the occasion for photographing several regiments, under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army, Kunsangtse/Kheme Sonam Wangdu (Kun bzang rtse/Khe smad Bsod nams dbang ’dus, 1901–1972). Born in the Surkhang (Zur khang) family and married into the Kunsangtse family as *magpa* (*mag pa*),³⁵ he had been appointed to the very top of the military hierarchy in September 1949.³⁶ Surrounded by monastic members of the government, he is here (Pl. 95) seen giving instructions to a lay government official. In wide-angle group shots taken of the different regiments, they are all recognisable beyond any doubt, as each regiment is carrying their own particular version of the national flag, on which the regiment’s letter is visible (for more explanations on the flags, see Chapter 5): the Trapchi regiment and its brass band (Pl. 96); the Bodyguard regiment (Pl. 97 to 99); and lastly, newly recruited troops in 1949 (Pl. 100 and 101). They wear what seems to be a second type of Tibetan-style

uniform, in which their *chubas* have a plain collar (i.e. the type of uniform which was not chosen in the late 1930s, when the *chuba* with the multicoloured *nambu* lining was retained instead), which might have been used for the newly recruited troops in 1949, as shown in the photographs. According to Harrer, these images illustrate ceremonies during which the troops were blessed by the Dalai Lama before leaving for the eastern border.

Interestingly enough, these photographs, the majority of which were taken by Heinrich Harrer (Peter Aufschneider having taken only a few images of Tibetan soldiers) also give us a renewed sense of how the Tibetan army occupied space in the capital city. All the various places the army would troop and parade in during the numerous ceremonies and events of the Lhasa year are shown: the streets or roads between the Potala and the Norbulingka Palaces, used during the two “Great processions” (*chibs bsgyur chen mo*) to accompany the Dalai Lama from his Winter to his Summer Palace, back and forth, that took place on the Third day of the Fourth month of the Tibetan calendar,³⁷ and in the Tenth month for his return;³⁸ the Norbulingka Gardens (Pl. 95 to 100) during special events and various festivals, in particular the Shotön, as mentioned above; the Barkor (Bar skor) (Pl. 101); and finally the foot of the Potala Palace in the Shöl area (Pl. 102–103). An image by Peter Aufschneider (Pl. 104) gives us a glimpse into the soldiers’ daily lives, showing them in camp near the estate of the noble family Bönshö (Bon shod), located in the northern outskirts of Lhasa.³⁹

At the same time that the Communists were gaining significant ground in China, the Tibetan government organised the expulsion of the last representatives of Republican China (who had arrived in Lhasa in 1934 on a mission of condolence after the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and had subsequently left two Chinese liaison officers equipped with a radio behind),⁴⁰ accompanied by a cavalry corps of the Tibetan troops, an event that was recorded in a series of photographs taken by Harrer.⁴¹ After the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China in October 1949 and the announcement on Radio Beijing on 1st January 1950 that it intended to liberate Tibet, Chinese troops began concentrating on Tibetan borders. On 7th October 1950,



Pl. 95. Group of lay and monk government officials inspecting the troops, Lhasa
1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.004

Pl. 96. Trapchi regiment (Khadang) at the inspection, with its brass band and flag bearers, Lhasa
1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.22.019

the PLA troops crossed the Yangtse River into Tibetan territory, starting what is now known as “the Battle of Chamdo”. On 19th October, Ngapö Ngawang Jigme (Nga phod Ngag dbang jigs med, 1910–2009), the Province Governor of Kham (Mdo smad spyi khyab) surrendered. The Tibetan government transmitted a first appeal to the United Nations in November, but talks regarding the proposed resolution against China’s invasion of Tibet were adjourned. At the beginning of December 1950, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama assumed religious and political authority over the country, despite his young age, because of the urgent circumstances of Tibet’s invasion. The various positions regarding Tibet’s situation taken by Great Britain, the United States and India—the latter’s view that “friendship with China outweighed obligations inherited from Britain regarding Tibet”, serving as a benchmark for other nations at that time—have been detailed in all their complexity by Goldstein.⁴² The Tibetan Cabinet and the National Assembly again sought the support of the United Nations in December, again without success, although by that time the United States had begun to reconsider their policy towards Tibet,⁴³ and decided to provide stronger support, which would materialise in the late 1950s in their financing, arming and training of the Tibetan resistance in Tibet.⁴⁴

The Dalai Lama appointed two Prime Ministers and left for the Indian border. A beautiful photograph (Pl. 105), with a playful use of light characteristic of a number of Harrer’s images, documents the flight of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama from Lhasa towards the Indian border, with his military escort, as well as the end of Harrer’s stay in Tibet (see also Pl. 151 to 153 in Chapter 5, taken at the same moment). Harrer had left Lhasa in November and was already in Gyantse when the Dalai Lama arrived from the capital in December 1950, and he accompanied the caravan to Yatung where Harrer would stay until March, before returning home, while the Dalai Lama remained, considering his options.

There is a uniform of a General of the Bodyguard regiment which is kept at the National Museum in Copenhagen (Pl. 106 and 107), collected in Kalimpong from Tibetans in exile by the anthropologist Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark in 1950–1952.⁴⁵ This uniform has until now remained something of a mystery, but it seems to be emblematic of Tibetan attempts to modernise their army in their own Tibetan way, attempts that seem to have been particularly short-lived, coming either after the fall of the Qing dynasty between 1912 and 1916 or between 1945 and 1950. Composed of a short tunic and pair of trousers, this uniform was worn with Tibetan boots and hats, as well as small-sized crossed-*vajra* badges, worn on the hat, and on the tunic’s chest and shoulders. The uniform is “made of finely woven pale green silk with life-sized flowers embroidered on it in gold thread” and “fully lined with pink silk”.⁴⁶ Considering the date the uniform was collected, it could reflect further attempts to re-Tibetanise the uniforms, including that of the Generals who, particularly in the Bodyguard regiment, were still wearing British-style uniforms. This uniform does not, however, feature in any photographs and therefore might be one of a kind, a sort of prototype that had not yet been introduced into the army. Alternatively, it could be related to a period forty years before that, to a time when the first attempts at a standardised uniform were made, either in the very last years of the Qing dynasty or between 1913 and 1916, possibly under Japanese influence, before the introduction of British-style uniforms into the Tibetan army. This second hypothesis is reinforced by the existence of the diagonal line linking the collar to each side, which resembles the shape of the tunic worn by Aoki Bunkyō’s personal guard from the Bodyguard regiment when it had just been created (Chapter 1) in 1913, as well as the small size of the crossed *vajra*, which resembles the photographs of the early 1920s (Pl. 35, 38 and 49), rather than those of the late 1940s (for instance Pl. 93). This latter hypothesis seems also more likely, given the information collected

on the uniform by Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark himself:

“The Dalai Lama has a regiment of lifeguards called *Kusung* = Lifeguard. *Ku* = body (honorific), *sung* = protection. The three stripes on the arm indicate that the wearer is *De-pon* = Colonel [*mda’ dpon*, i.e. General]. Obtained through Tsjampa Sangta. Used with an ordinary English bandolier and English belt; also with an English sword and pistol. This uniform is no longer in use. Now all officers and men wear khaki uniforms. The double thunderbolt (*dorjes*) is a regimental emblem for the Dalai Lama’s Lifeguards.”⁴⁷

However, part of the information has since been proven incorrect, because the crossed-*vajra* insignia were not the sole preserve of the Bodyguard regiment alone, but of the whole army. Also, those insignia did not appear in photographs before the Bodyguard regiment had already started wearing British-style uniforms after 1916. This would lead to the conclusion that this uniform is rather a later prototype.

To conclude, the photographs taken between 1939 and 1950 show precisely how and when the Tibetan government attempted a re-appropriation of its army through a Tibetanisation of the uniforms (in a broader context including the Tibetanisation of drill orders and military laws). This deliberate choice provides us with additional background information, and helps us to retrospectively clarify the reasons behind the anti-military pressure that had begun in Tibet around 1924 and been renewed after the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The rejection of a fully English model for military modernisation can be understood as a more general rejection of British imperialism, a factor which was just as significant as other, domestic ones that have already been expounded upon (such as political

competition and internal conflicts within the Tibetan elites). Nonetheless, despite the concerted resumption of military reforms in the late 1940s (with efforts towards restructuring, recruitment, training, etc.), in the face of rising threats to Tibetan territorial integrity, the pausing of the reforms between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s caused a delay that clearly affected the size and shape of the Tibetan army by 1950.

In this period, the reappropriation of Tibetan cultural heritage for its army did not hinder the Tibetan government in taking other steps to improve its army’s efficiency, such as pushing new recruitments, including that of a new elite corps, and above all, the purchase of arms and munitions from British India, which equipped the Tibetan army with modern enough firearms (modern rifles, Bren guns, Sten guns, pistols, hand grenades, mortars and various types of heavy artillery) in 1950.⁴⁸ However, dependency on the British Empire for these imports, with the quantities sent never meeting the expectations of the Tibetan government, coupled with the lack of support from the Republic of India after 1947, proved to be significant obstacles for the Tibetan government to reach its goals in terms of equipment and training.



Pl. 97. Soldiers of the Bodyguard regiment (Kusung), with standard bearer, Lhasa
1950

Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.012

Pl. 98. Soldiers of the Bodyguard regiment (Kusung) at rest, Lhasa
1950

Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.010





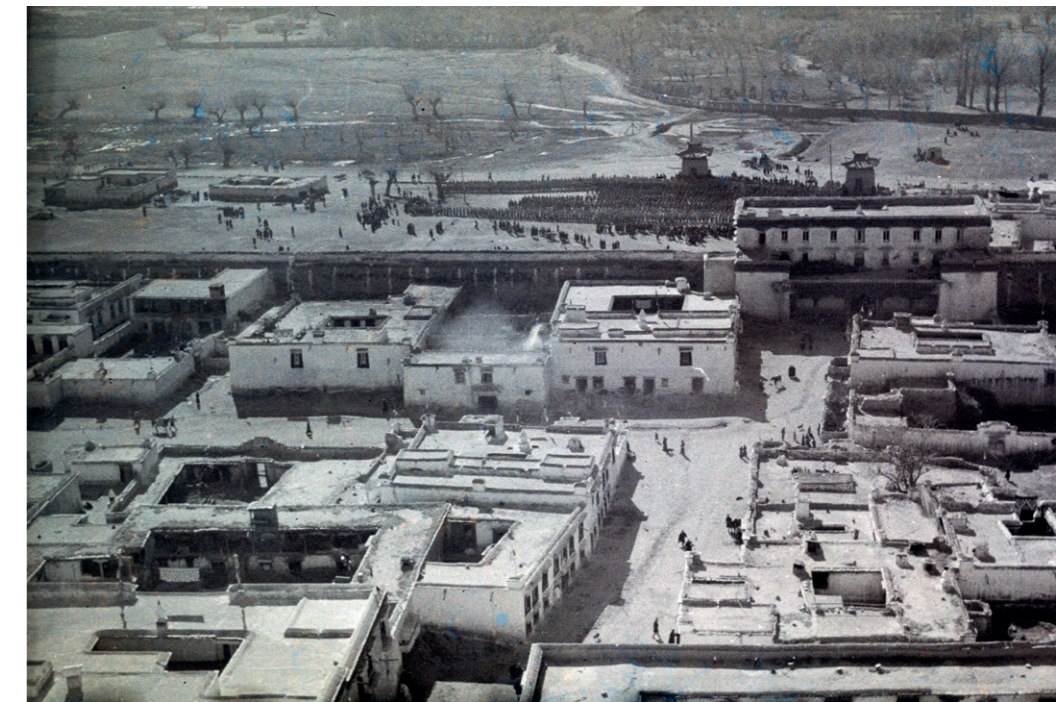
Pl. 99. Soldiers of the Bodyguard regiment (Kusung) presenting arms, Lhasa
1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.014



Pl. 100. Newly recruited regiment, in Tibetan-style uniform, Lhasa
1949–1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.002



Pl. 101. Troops parading in the Barkor before going to the front, Lhasa
 1950
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative or cellulose acetate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.559



Pl. 102. Deployment of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard regiment (Kusung) in the Shöl area (seen from the Potala), Lhasa
 December 1950
 Photograph by Peter Aufschnaiter
 Cellulose nitrate negative
 Leica film
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No VMZ.401.10.005



Pl. 103. Deployment of soldiers with flagbearers in the Shöl area, Lhasa
 1948-1950
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative or cellulose acetate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.550



Pl. 104. Soldiers in camp near the estate of the Bönshö family
August 1950
Photograph by Peter Aufschneider
Cellulose nitrate negative
Leica film
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.- No VMZ.401.04.019



Pl. 105. Trapchi soldiers with flags in the escape caravan of the 14th Dalai Lama towards the Indian border
December 1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Cellulose nitrate negative
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.08.026



Pl. 106 and 107. Uniform of a General of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard

From H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark's collection (early 1950s)
 Courtesy of the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, R. 243b and c

Endnotes Chapter 3

- 1 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 69; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 105.
- 2 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 43; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 57. The whole testimony by Norngang is reproduced in Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue's book on Tibetan political and military history.
- 3 Travers 2018: 229.
- 4 Petech 1973: 204.
- 5 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 43; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 57. See below for details on when it finally took place, in 1948.
- 6 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 43; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 57. Tibetan terminology in square parenthesis is added by me, while Tibetan terms between round parenthesis were added from the original Tibetan by the English translator Yeshe Dondup.
- 7 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 44; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 57. He is here most probably referring to the *lag thei*, i.e. the seal stamped on bracelets that each soldier received upon enrolment.
- 8 On which point, see Stoddard 2009, including other bibliographical references. For details known regarding the translation of drill terms into Tibetan that finally took place in 1948, see Travers 2016: 107, fn. 18. The committee included, in addition to Gendun Chomphel, members such as Kapshöpa, Dapön Kharnawa and Dingpön Kagyin Gokye of the *drong-drag* regiment (Dhingri Ngawang 2011: 225). The booklet was transmitted to all regiments, but no copy has survived. Rnam rgyal dbang 'dus was able to give a lengthy list of all terms he could remember (Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 69–70; Rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 108–119). A much shorter version of this list of commands was first published in Ri kha Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 1972: 239–242.
- 9 For a presentation and an analysis of this code of military law, the first of its kind in the Tibetan modern period, see Travers 2016.
- 10 See Goldstein [1989] 1993: 619 and Travers 2021b.
- 11 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 620. An elite regiment had been first created by Kumpela in 1931 and then disbanded after the death of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (see Chapter 2).
- 12 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 620.
- 13 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 622.
- 14 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 43.
- 15 For a thorough analysis of the collection, see Engelhardt 2007, which contains contributions by several scholars, one of which by Clare Harris, who analyses the ethnographic and diplomatic discourses at work in the photographs.
- 16 *Geheimnis Tibet*, shot in 1939 and released in 1943, mn 1:03:59 to 1:06:19.
- 17 *Who's Who in Tibet 1948*.
- 18 The identification of this officer was first made by Engelhardt 2007: 175, as “Zimpö depön”.
- 19 Though they are visible only briefly (and no other Tibetan troops are seen in the entire film), cf. *Inside Tibet*, US National Archives, 1942, about 30 seconds (visible from mn 14:16 to 14:54). A large number of their photographs from this collection has been reproduced in Tung [1980] 1996. As already mentioned in the introduction, there are surprisingly few photographs of Tibetan troops.
- 20 Three photographs were found. The collection, held at the Arizona State University (A.T. Steele Papers, Special Collections, Arizona State University Libraries) includes photographs taken in 1939 in Kumbum and in 1944 in Lhasa. It is available online: https://prism.lib.asu.edu/collections/41033/search?search_api_fulltext=, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 21 For his biography, see McKay 2005.
- 22 Other films featuring the army in colour were made before by Guthrie in 1935, by Williamson in 1936, by Spencer Chapman in 1936–1937 and by Gould in 1940, but with only very short extracts of soldiers or poor image quality.
- 23 An exhibition was curated in 2015 by LTWA with 90 black and white photographs from their collection (including photographs taken in exile until the 1970s), among which were included two images of Tibetan soldiers (one taken almost at the same moment as Pl. 91 in this volume, and the other being a black and white version of Pl. 93 in this volume).
- 24 Harrer [1953] 1996: 218.
- 25 Thomas 1950: 85.
- 26 Thomas 1950: 85. Along with the reproduction of the photograph of the soldier sitting among flowers (of which there is another beautiful version in colour, though unfortunately somewhat blurred), he has written in the caption: “Chogpon Nima Gyabu, wearing an earring under his campaign hat, served as our military escort throughout the journey. Near the end of each day's march, he would gallop ahead to arrange our accommodation” (Thomas 1950: 86).
- 27 Thomas 1950: 178. The estimate of one hundred thousand men is a thorough exaggeration.
- 28 He remained in this position until May 1950 when he became a Finance Minister (*rtsis dpon*), cf. *Who's Who in Tibet 1948*: 59; Petech 1973: 93 and 247.
- 29 *Who's Who in Tibet 1948*: 92. According to the information available for this image in the photo archive of the Tibet Museum in Dharamshala (Tibet Museum, P-017-38), the first officer on the left is Rupön Phurbu Döndrup.
- 30 Numerous photographs have been reproduced in several publications (Harrer 1991, 1992, 1997).
- 31 All the dates for the photographs are derived from research made by Daniela Zurbrügg (Photo archive, Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich) on the collection, based on Heinrich Harrer's description of the photographs as well as on his personal diary.
- 32 Harrer [1953] 1996: 222.
- 33 Harrer [1953] 1996: 222 and 257. Harrer used a variety of cameras: according to his personal diaries, Harrer mentions that he bought a Leica in the summer 1949; later in October 1950, he mentions that he was working with a “mediocre Japanese camera”, and in March 1951, that he was taking pictures at a ceremony and had “four different cameras” with him. I am very grateful to Daniela Zurbrügg (Photo archive, Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich) for sharing this information with me. The ceremony must have been the visit of the Buddha relics, of which Harrer indeed took a photograph featuring the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the last he took of him (Harrer 1992: 204) before going back to Europe.
- 34 Harrer 1997: 108.
- 35 A son-in-law who lives in his wife's house and takes her house's name.
- 36 *Who's Who in Tibet 1948*: 54 and Petech 1973: 94.
- 37 Richardson 1993: 82–83.
- 38 Richardson 1993: 110.
- 39 Alexander 2019: 108.
- 40 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 224–246.
- 41 Harrer 1992: 198–199.
- 42 Goldstein [1989] 1993: Chapter 19 “After the Fall of Chamdo”.
- 43 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 752–757.
- 44 Goldstein 2019.
- 45 The uniform has been described in detail in the catalogue of the Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark's collection (Schuyler 1996: 207–208).
- 46 Schuyler 1996: 207.
- 47 Schuyler 1996: 208.
- 48 Travers 2021b.

Towards Sinicisation: the aftermaths of the 17-Point Agreement (1951–1959)

Article 8 of the 17-Point Agreement, signed in May 1951, stated that the Tibetan Army would gradually be incorporated into the People's Liberation Army of China. However, an appendix clause allowed 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers (depending on the source), i.e. a few regiments from among the old (so-called *gyajong*) regiments,¹ plus the Bodyguard regiment, to be maintained. The Tibetan regular troops thus almost shrank to their former size before the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's reforms. The rest of the Tibetan forces disbanded, and this reduced army entered the last phase of its existence before ceasing to exist entirely in March 1959,² after the flight into exile of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

In the period from 1951 until 1959, the fact that Tibet had signed the 17-Point Agreement, and formally recognised it in the autumn of 1951, meant that the country had “grudgingly accepted Chinese sovereignty for the first time in history”.³ This new political situation in Tibet, now involving Chinese and Tibetan sides, has been examined and analysed in great detail by the historians Tsering Shalya and Melvyn Goldstein.⁴ The latter divides the period into three key phases, and his analysis into three volumes, the titles of which characterise the changes in the general political situation. A first period, from 1951 to 1955, is covered in the book entitled *The Calm before the Storm* and finishes when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama comes back to Lhasa after a year-long trip to China, where he had tried to find a way for the maintenance of an autonomous Tibet within China. However, shortly after his return, the political situation began to worsen drastically in Tibet,

leading to the second period, identified by Goldstein as lasting from 1955 to 1957, examined in *The Storm Clouds Descend*, and the third from 1957–1959, *In the Eye of the Storm*, ultimately resulting in the Tibetan uprising on 10th March 1959, its military suppression by the Chinese authorities and the eventual flight of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama into exile in India.

From the photographic point of view only, the period from 1951 to 1959 is not as thoroughly documented as previous ones. With a few exceptions, most foreign observers had left Tibet in the aftermath of the Chinese occupation in the autumn of 1950. As a result, photographs of this period are quite rare and there are significant gaps in the chronology. The archival photographs assembled for this period are the work of a Sikkimese photographer, Tse Ten Tashi (1912–1972), the Tsarongs (Tibetan father and son),⁵ and three Czech photographers, who were invited by the Chinese authorities to visit Tibet in 1954–1958. The images can be split into two periods: a brief first one, during which signs of changes are entirely absent, and a second, where signs of the Chinese presence and of the ongoing Sinicisation of the Tibetan army start to become visible in a number of images, though not in all of them.

Next page
Pl. 108. The Bodyguard regiment and its General Phala Dorje Wangdu (1915–?) in Yatung at the border with India
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, P302445



**“Business as usual”:
Tibetan troops photographed
by Tse Ten Tashi (1951)**

The photographs by Tse Ten Tashi (housed in part at the Newark Museum, New Jersey⁶ with another part at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala),⁷ are invaluable in several respects. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, who had fled in December 1950 to the Chumbi Valley, next to the Indian border, to wait and see whether he had to flee into exile or else come back to Lhasa, finally decided to return to Tibet in July 1951.⁸ Tse Ten Tashi, who was married to a Tibetan (during his first trip to Tibet in 1933), had established a photo studio called the “Tse Ten Tashi & Co. Parkhang” in Gangtok in the 1940s, using among other cameras a Rolleiflex acquired indirectly from a member of the Schäfer expedition to Tibet (1938–1939); the fact that he was also a secretary to the Chögyal (*chos rgyal*) of Sikkim, and “court photographer”, probably explains why he was invited to accompany the Dalai Lama on his return journey to Lhasa.⁹

From a few of the photographs there emerges a rather carefree atmosphere, which might be related to Tse Ten Tashi’s closer status to the subjects being photographed compared to that of the foreign photographers.¹⁰ This can be seen in his photographs of the Bodyguard regiment, featuring their General, Phala Dorje Wangdu (Pl. 108, see also Pl. 93 and 131),¹¹ taken at the border with India in Yatung either during the beginning of Tse Ten Tashi’s journey to Lhasa in July, or a few months before. We can see the obviously relaxed mood of the soldiers, who are photographed posing in “fake attack” poses (Pl. 109). Tse Ten Tashi might have taken these images during an important event which took place before the signature of the 17-Point Agreement: in March 1951, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama had “invited” the relics of the Buddha, which had been placed by Emperor Asoka (c. 304–232 BCE) in a stupa at Sanchi, to return to India after almost a century of absence.¹² The Maharaja of Sikkim had requested that the relics visit his country before being returned to Sanchi, and they were thus in Gangtok in the spring of

1951. “As it happened”, records a Tibetan government official brochure published in 1951,¹³ the Dalai Lama “was staying at that time at Yatung in [the] Chumbi valley, a fortunate coincidence”, and he was able to get the relics brought within Tibet’s borders, specifically to Yatung. The relics were transported from Gangtok to Yatung and crossed the frontier pass of the Natu La on 7th March. We learn about the presence of the Bodyguard regiment on this occasion: “On the pass the Sacred Relics were met by the Commander of the Bodyguard Phala Se [Pha lha *sras*, i.e. General Phala Dorje Wangdu] with ten cavalry, who then escorted the Relics and led the procession down to Chumbithang”. A cavalryman (*ra dmag*), named Dorje Döndrup (Pl. 110) who was in fact clearly from the Trapchi regiment, was also photographed, most probably by Tse Ten Tashi, in wooded scenery evocative of Yatung.

The relics were then taken to Dungkar (Dung dkar) monastery in Tibet, still accompanied by the Bodyguard regiment. They were welcomed there by the Cabinet Ministers Kalön Lama Rampa (Bka blon bla ma Ram pa) and Surkhang (Zur khang). Thousands of people from the surrounding area came to attend a speech by the Dalai Lama, after which the relics were accompanied once again by the Bodyguard back to the Indian border, on the 16th day of the Second month, thus around two weeks later. A possible hypothesis for Tse Ten Tashi’s presence at these events would therefore be that he had been simply invited from Sikkim to attend this event in Tibet and thus could have photographed the Bodyguard at this time. Alternatively, he may have only joined the Dalai Lama and his Bodyguard regiment escort when they left for Lhasa on 23rd July.¹⁴

Most of Tse Ten Tashi’s images were taken in August and September 1951 during his stay in Lhasa. His photographs document a moment which is almost suspended in time, in the immediate aftermath of the 17-Point Agreement: the radical changes that were affecting Tibet’s international status and would, in the near future, also affect its army, are not yet visible in his photographs, which show the Tibetan army in “business-as-usual” mode, marching in parades (Pl. 111) towards the Norbulingka, surrounded by an assembled

crowd of children, monks and women; sitting and waiting in courtyards (Pl. 113); impeccably standing to attention in reviews at the Norbulingka (Bodyguard regiment, Pl. 114, Trapchi regiment, Pl. 112); lining up in processions to offer ceremonial scarves (*katak*) to the Dalai Lama (Pl. 115); or in camp (Pl. 116).

Tse Ten Tashi also took a number of portraits, among which there is one of the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army (*dmag snyi*) Kunsangtse/Kheme Sonam Wangdu with a cheerful expression, and wearing gorget patches in an oblong shape representing swords and guns (Pl. 117, see also Pl. 95 and Pl. 119 for other portraits of him);¹⁵ one of General Muja Tsewang Norbu (Mu bya Tshe dbang nor bu, 1904–1961/2) (Pl. 118), who had been a General since August 1940 and would fight in the battle of Chamdo in the Autumn of 1950, remaining in that position until 1952.¹⁶ In an echo of the three portraits taken in the early years (Pl. 39, 40 and 44), he is here seen in full dress: his tunic is brightly ornamented with gold epaulettes, embroidered collars (and probably cuffs as well, although they are not visible in Muja’s portrait), as well as with lanyards (ornamental plaited cords with decorative metal tips) worn between the chest and right shoulder; he is wearing a spiked helmet (with the chin chain attached on its top), adorned with a large metal plate (see also Pl. 93 for examples in colour and Chapter 2 for an analysis of their symbolism).

The Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army, Kunsangtse/Kheme Sonam Wangdu (Pl. 119), seen here holding hands with Gönsham Latsan, the Tibetan ambassador to Beijing, is also photographed wearing full dress, with a bright sash, i.e. the distinctive adornment for his position of Commander-in-Chief, seen also worn by Tsarong Dasang Dadul in an early group photograph (Pl. 38). The photograph shows that Kunsangtse is also wearing trousers with lampasses as the lower part of his full-dress uniform. To the best of my knowledge, these two portraits are the last time we are able to see Tibetan high command wearing the British-style full-dress uniforms.



Pl. 109. The Kusung regiment simulating a battle scene for the photographer, Yatung
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, P303101

Pl. 110. A cavalryman named Dorje Döndrup
Undated; 1951?
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi?
LTWA, Dharamshala, P303095



Pl. 111. Troops marching to Norbulingka
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, P303103



Pl. 112. Tibetan troops in Tibetan-style uniform lined up outside the Norbulingka, Lhasa
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.3.39



Pl. 113. Soldiers sitting at the Norbulingka during a ceremony involving both the Bodyguard and Trapchi regiments, Lhasa

1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, File 102, 231

Pl. 114. Unit of the Bodyguard regiment (Kusung) in the Norbulingka, Lhasa

1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.3.43





Pl. 115. The Bodyguard regiment in a Norbulingka courtyard with ceremonial scarves for the Dalai Lama, Lhasa
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.3.50



Pl. 116. Tents of the Bodyguard regiment, with lines of guns held three by three in the background on the right, Lhasa
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.3.45



**Pl. 117. Commander-in-Chief
Dzasa Kunsangtse Sonam Wangdu
(1901–1972) at the training site
outside Norbulingka**
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, P302424



**Pl. 118. Dapön Muja Tsewang Norbu
(1904–1961/2) in full dress**
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
LTWA, Dharamshala, P302422



Signs of Chinese presence in Lhasa: the PRC's flags in military reviews (1952–1954)

In September 1951, the advanced forces of the PLA arrived in Lhasa. Not surprisingly, the largest number of photographs documenting Tibet after its occupation come from the collections of Tibetan photographers, in particular images taken by Tsarong Dasang Dadul and his son George (Dundul Namgyal) Tsarong (1920–2011).¹⁷ Tsarong Dasang Dadul had been one of the first Tibetans to take up photography as a hobby,¹⁸ and transmitted this love to his son. Their astoundingly rich collection contains a great number of images of the Tibetan army (which is not surprising given the pivotal role of Tsarong Dasang Dadul in the military reforms between 1912 and 1924),¹⁹ starting from the modernisation of Tibetan regular troops and following the British model in 1916 right up to the 1950s. For the specific period 1952–1959, three of their photographs show large military reviews: in a particularly beautiful image (Pl. 120) taken in Tse drung lingkka (the garden where the monk officials held their annual parties), the photographer captures the backs of the Tibetan troops against the Potala in the background. Two other images (Pl. 121 and 122) document in colour a military

review organised on 1st August 1952 on “Nagthey field” (Lhasa) involving the remaining Tibetan troops, with a small party of them seen in their British-style uniform (namely the Kusung regiment) and the rest in Tibetan-style uniforms, carrying the Tibetan national flags used in Tibetan regiments (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the regimental use of Tibet’s national flag), along with Chinese troops dressed in blue uniforms and carrying red PRC flags. The Tibetan Ministers are seen inspecting the troops in their yellow officials’ dress.

A fourth photograph (Pl. 123) features the first Chinese military uniform of our sample, worn however not by a member of the Tibetan army, but by a Cabinet Minister, Ragashar/Dokar Phuntsok Rabgye (Rag kha shag/Mdo mkhar Phun tshogs rab rgyas, 1903–1957), who was appointed in 1952 to the position of Junior Commander of the PLA in Tibet, with Ngapö Ngawang Jigme being appointed Senior Commander.²⁰ Indeed, in 1952, the Chinese authorities established a new Tibet Military Area Headquarters, which was supposed to head the Chinese troops stationed in the country and, it was envisaged, Tibetan troops as well. Until then, according to the appendix clauses signed in May 1951, the Tibetan army had continued to function solely under the command of the Tibetan headquarters, which had long been established in the Shöl area at the foot of the Potala. This became a source

of conflict between the Chinese authorities and the Tibetan authorities. In 1952, the Tibetan authorities were still maintaining that the Tibetan army would not yet merge with the PLA, that their uniforms would not be changed, nor the Tibetan flag discontinued; but, as Goldstein recounts, “the Tibetan side gave the Chinese a small victory by appointing the two Kashag ministers as vice-commanders of the Tibet Military Area Headquarters, which opened on 10th February 1952”.²¹ However, as underlined by Goldstein: “this was solely a face-saving device. These two were PLA commanders in name only and played no role in PLA military affairs. Conversely, from 1951 to 1959, the PLA had nothing to do with the operation of the Tibetan army or vice versa. The Tibetan army trained and paid its own troops, promoted and demoted its officers, and shifted it troops internally on its own.”²²

A few photographs of the Tibetan army were taken by the Czechoslovakian army filmmakers Josef Vaniš (1927–2009) and Vladimír Sís (1925–2001), who stayed in Tibet for ten months in 1954–1955.²³ Coming from the Eastern Soviet Bloc, they had a unique opportunity to record the Tibetan army during this final phase. Two photographs (Pl. 124 and 125) taken by Vaniš in 1954 show members of the “Police” (most probably the Trapchi) regiment sitting under a tree in front of the Potala.²⁴

Pl. 119. Commander-in-Chief Dzasa Kunsangtse Sonam Wangdu (1901–1972) (left), Gönsham Latsan, Tibetan ambassador in Beijing (right)

1951

Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi

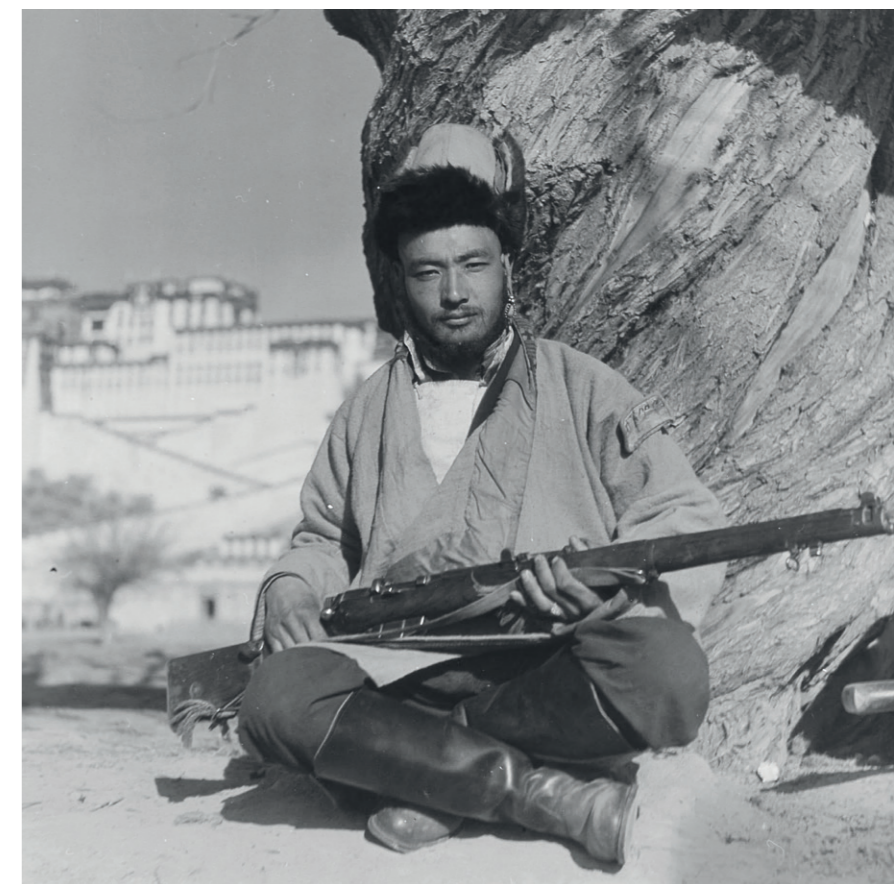
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000

Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.2.63



Pl. 120. Tibetan troops on the Tsedrung lingka Plain
1952
Photograph by Tsarong Dasang Dadul or George Tsarong
George Tsarong Private Collection, F7-341

Pl. 121. The four Tibetan ministers inspecting the troops at Nagthey field, Lhasa (1)
1st August 1952
Photograph by Tsarong Dasang Dadul or George Tsarong
George Tsarong Private Collection, Slide S38-2



Pl. 122. The four Tibetan ministers inspecting the troops at Nagthey field, Lhasa (2)
1st August 1952
Photograph by Tsarong Dasang Dadul or George Tsarong
George Tsarong Private Collection, Slide S38-8

Pl. 123. Minister Ragashar Phuntsok Rabgye (1903–1957) in Chinese military uniform
1952–1957
Photograph by Tsarong Dasang Dadul or George Tsarong
George Tsarong Private Collection, F7-204

Pl. 124. Soldiers from the Police regiment in Lhasa
23rd December 1954
Photograph by Josef Vaniš
Josef Vaniš Private Collection
CD 180

Pl. 125. A soldier from the Police regiment in Lhasa
23rd December 1954
Photograph by Josef Vaniš
Josef Vaniš Private Collection
CD 169



Pl. 126. Officer in brand new Chinese uniform with other soldiers in Tibetan uniforms, Lhasa
1st October 1956
Photograph by Augustin Palát
Photograph from the estate of Augustin Palát in the possession of the Czech-Chinese Society, Prague, palat_tibet_1956_235



Pl. 127. Tibetan military officers of the Bodyguard regiment
Undated, c. 1954
Unknown photographer
LTWA, Dharamshala, P302440

General of the Bodyguard regiment Kusung Dapön Takla Phuntsok Tashi (seated) and his officers (standing left to right) Kusung Rupön Sonam Tashi, Kusung Gyapön Dorje Wangdu, Kusung Rupön Pasang Wangdu.

The partial introduction of Chinese-style uniforms: 1955–1959

When, in 1954, in the context of setting up for a Preparatory Committee for the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and during the Dalai Lama's stay in Beijing, another attempt was made by the Chinese authorities to reduce the Tibetan army to 1,000 troops, with 500 constituting the Bodyguard of the Dalai Lama and 500 the Lhasa police,²⁵ the plan was strongly opposed by Tibetan military officers in Lhasa, and in December 1955 it was decided that the troops would finally not be reduced, which would remain the policy until 1959. However, they had to abide by one of the Chinese authorities' requests concerning the uniform.²⁶ The wearing of the British-style uniform by the Bodyguard regiment and the Generals of the other regiments had been resented very much by the Chinese authorities, so from that point on, the whole Bodyguard regiment was to adopt the PLA's uniform, as did the commanders of the other regiments, with their troops remaining in Tibetan-style uniforms.²⁷

Only a few photographs testify to this period. One was taken by the Czechoslovakian Sinologist and diplomat Augustin Palát (1923–2016)²⁸ in 1956. It features an unknown officer²⁹ who is now dressed in the new PLA uniform (Pl. 126).

The two photographs kept at the LTWA, showing the Bodyguard regiment General Takla Phuntsok Tashi (Stag lha Phun tshogs bkra shis, 1922–1999)

(Pl. 127 and 128), the brother-in-law of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, were probably taken just before and after the 1955 decision to adopt PLA uniforms, respectively. The first one (Pl. 127) shows the General sitting with three Rupön and Gyapön of his regiment: Sonam Tashi (Bsod nams bkra shis), Dorje Wangdu (Rdo rje dbang 'dus) and Pasang Wangdu (Pa sangs dbang 'dus). They all wear what still seems to be a British-style uniform, although the metal plates and insignia on their caps, unfortunately not clearly visible, do seem to differ from the crossed-*vajra* ones seen on officers until 1951. The other photograph (Pl. 128) shows him wearing the new PLA uniform with the distinctive star of Chinese Communism on his cap.

After the creation in Lhoka (Lho ka) in 1957 of the Khampa resistance organisation known as Chushigangdruk (*chu bzhi sgang drug*), a number of army officers from the Gyantse regiment and Trapchi regiment were in contact with the organisation. Two Trapchi officers, Kedram (Skal dgram) and Wangden Tashi (Dbang ldan bkra shis), who were connected with a covert anti-Chinese movement led by the Great Chamberlain (*mgyon gnyer chen mo*) Phala, were sent to participate secretly in the resistance organisation's meetings and unofficially represent the Tibetan army there, although they were not allowed to take oaths.³⁰ In 1958, the Khampa movement transformed into an all-Tibetan organisation, the "Volunteer Defenders of the Faith" (*dang blangs bstan srung dmag sgar*),³¹ and received help, in the form of weapons and training, from the CIA. Despite supporting the organisation, the Great Chamberlain Phala could not provide weapons from

the Potala armoury and still maintain the façade of Sino-Tibetan cooperation.³² In mid-January 1959, a platoon of around forty soldiers and officers of the Tibetan regular troops was secretly sent to Lhoka to train the militia recruited by the resistance.³³ The army officers had been contacted by an organisation including various monk and lay officials (among them Ragashar Sonam Tobgye, General of the Gyantse regiment, as well as the Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan army).³⁴ Early in 1959, in the person of Radru Ngawang (Dbra phrug ngag dbang, 1926–2016), the resistance tried to obtain weapons from the Tibetan government armoury at the Potala, through its Trapchi regiment's contacts, a request which was refused. However, they did receive instructions from the two military officers working on behalf of the Chamberlain Phala, to be prepared to exfiltrate the Dalai Lama should the need arise.³⁵ After the Lhasa uprising, the final escape of the Dalai Lama and his entourage was organised, on 17th March, a few days before the shelling of Lhasa started. The Dalai Lama reached India on 5th April 1959, where he issued a statement rejecting the 17-Point Agreement and established a Government-in-Exile. A number of regular troops had accompanied him to the border and returned to Lhoka to fight against the Chinese, for a short while, before most of them finally went into exile.³⁶ The Tibetan army of the Ganden Phodrang had definitively ceased to exist.



Pl. 128. Bodyguard General Takla Phuntsok Tashi (1922–1999) in Chinese military uniform

Undated; c. 1955–1959
Unknown photographer
LTWA, Dharamshala, P302448

Endnotes Chapter 4

- 1 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 767. The *gyajong* (*rgya shyong*; lit. “trained by the Chinese”) regiments corresponded to the historic core of the Ganden Phodrang army, which was founded in the 18th century and trained by the Chinese until 1912, hence their name. In Goldstein (2014: 38), the four regiments left in 1951 were the Kusung (*ka dang*), Trapchi (*kha dang*), Gyantse (*nga dang*) and artillery (*cha dang*) regiments.
- 2 Shakya 1999: 451.
- 3 Goldstein 2012: xi.
- 4 Shakya 1999; Goldstein 2007, 2014 and 2019.
- 5 Another Tibetan photographer was the Tenth Demo Rinpoche (De mo rin po che, 1911–1973), a nephew of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and a reincarnate monk. He had apparently practised photography with the help of a Nepalese friend in a photo studio in Lhasa (Harris 2012: 137 and 2016: 131). Six photographs of the Tibetan army in this period taken by Demo Rinpoche have been published (Gao 1998). I am very grateful to Kunsang Namgyal Lama for indicating their existence to me.
- 6 In a collection given in 2000 by the family of former CIA agent Bruce Walker, who was in charge of training Tibetan resistance fighters.
- 7 Another part of the collection remains in the hands of his family.
- 8 On the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s stay in Yatung and the events leading to that decision, see Goldstein [1989] 1993: 798.
- 9 Harris 2016: 134–135.
- 10 Harris highlights that, for this reason, his portraits, including those of the Dalai Lama, are usually less formal than those taken by foreign photographers (Harris 2016: 135).
- 11 A beautiful portrait of General Phala with his wife, not reproduced in this volume, was also taken by Tse Ten Tashi in 1951 and is part of his collection at Newark Museum (2000.36.1.3).
- 12 After having been excavated in the mid-19th century by the British and housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, they were returned to Ceylon around 1943, and then brought to Bengal in 1949 by the Mahābhody Society.
- 13 *The Sacred Relics in Tibet* 1951. I am grateful to Tashi Tsering Josayma for having shared with me his copy of this rare publication.
- 14 Goldstein [1989] 1993: 798.
- 15 As seen above, gorget patches or collar tabs are insignia in the form of paired patches of cloth or metal on the collar of a uniform.
- 16 *Who’s Who in Tibet 1948*: 77.
- 17 On his life, see Tsarong 2021. George Tsarong features, as a young recruit in the Tibetan government, in Pl. 72. Films of the Dalai Lama’s journey to Beijing in 1954 were shot by Jigme Taring, and were included in the film *Tibet, the Bamboo Curtain Falls*.
- 18 For a history of indigenous Tibetan photographers from the 1910s onwards, see Harris 2016: Chapter 3 “Tibetan Encounters with the Camera”. For a famous image showing Tsarong Dasang Dadul taking a photograph, see Harrer 1991: 72.
- 19 A number of which images have been reproduced in several publications, chiefly Tsarong 1996, 2000 and 2021.
- 20 Therefore, the photograph was taken at some point between this appointment, in 1952, and his death in 1957.
- 21 Goldstein 2007: 304.
- 22 Goldstein 2019: 237.
- 23 The trip is recounted in their book *Der Weg nach Lhasa*, published in 1956 by Sis and Vaniš, in which, probably for political reasons, not a single photograph out of the 223 comprised in the book features the Tibetan army. See also Vaniš *et al.* 1997, in which Pl. 125 is reproduced (Vaniš *et al.* 1997: 125), as well as a colour photograph taken at almost the exact same moment as Pl. 124 (Vaniš *et al.* 1997: 124), and colour portraits of two junior officers (Vaniš *et al.* 1997: 127).
- 24 I am very grateful to Luboš Bělka of Masaryk University, who provided photographs of this collection, and gave me all possible details on the dating.
- 25 Goldstein 2007: 500–501.
- 26 Goldstein 2019: 237.
- 27 Goldstein 2007: 537–538.
- 28 I am very grateful to Luboš Bělka of Masaryk University, who provided photographs of this collection, and gave me all possible details on the dating.
- 29 The single stripe on the shoulder straps of his Chinese uniform corresponds to the Chinese army rank of Second Lieutenant (*shao wei*) (Private communication with Luboš Bělka, whom I also thank for this information).
- 30 Goldstein 2019: 79, 124.
- 31 Goldstein 2019: 135.
- 32 Goldstein 2019: 305.
- 33 Goldstein 2019: 306 and 420.
- 34 Goldstein 2019: 307.
- 35 Goldstein 2019: 282–285.
- 36 Goldstein 2019: 483.

The lion and the *vajra*: the history of Tibetan military flags through film and photography

When considering the history of Tibetan military flags, the contribution of visual sources is certainly vital. By Tibetan “military flags”, we mean all types of flags and banners, as seen in photographs and in films, carried by the Ganden Phodrang troops between 1913 and 1959. They comprise the regimental banners (*ru dar*),¹ i.e. flags that were specific to particular regiments; the Tibetan army flags (*dmag dar*) that were uniformly carried by all regiments; as well as the national flag (*rgyal dar*). Indeed, the national flag and the military flags are intrinsically related: the national flag being, as in any nation, carried by soldiers in parades. In Tibet moreover, the national flag was personalised for each regiment by the application of the letter of a given regiment, which *per se* transformed the national flag also in a regimental flag.

The present chapter builds on prior work on this topic,² and tries to complement missing information, take the discussion further, and propose a new chronology for the history of these flags, by using photographic evidence as well as evidence from film footage, and by comparing them with available written sources. Analysis of the images significantly enhances our understanding of the diversity and evolution of these flags. It sheds light, in particular, on the early history of Tibetan military flags and on their striking variety throughout the period. Specifically, it also allows us to better understand how the various versions of flags featuring

one single snow lion (*seng ge*) or two facing lions (*seng ge kha spros*) are chronologically related. In the same way as the study of uniforms and emblems, the analysis of images and their comparison with written sources does not answer all of the existing questions, but it does show what stands on firm ground and what lacunae remain. We will not discuss here again the small flags attached to the matchlocks of militia and soldiers in pre-1912 Tibet, which have been described in the first chapter of this volume, except to say in summary that they came either in white or plain colours (yellow or red) (Pl. 15) or with a grid design (the field appears to be quartered, that is, divided into four compartments or four equal quarters by one horizontal and one vertical line) (close-up of Pl. 129), probably only before the military reforms. Also, there existed, during the period under scrutiny after the military reforms, signalling flags of small size,³ usually in two colours, either with two adjacent strips, white and dark strip (Pl. 130), or white with a central blue strip (Pl. 131). The men holding them were usually standing or marching next to the army band and would, during parades, perform signalling movements with their flags to the sound of the music.⁴

We will thus focus only on the larger flags fixed on poles, described in written sources as being extant at least from 1912–1913 onwards and appearing for

Pl. 129. Close-up of Pl. 11.
Flag with a quartered design (troops of
the Nagtshang District Commissioner)
1907

Photograph by Sven Hedin
Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography,
Stockholm, 1027.0067



Pl. 130. Newly recruited soldiers with signalling flags

1950

Photograph by Heinrich Harrer

Cellulose nitrate negative

Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.008



the first time in a photograph in 1920. Photographic evidence, as we will see, suggests that Tibetan government troops carried at least four different “families” or groups of flags between 1920 and 1959:

-A group of flags featuring one single snow lion, which may also have been the first national flag, described as early as 1918 and featuring in photograph archives dated 1920, and which remain used throughout the period as a regimental or army banner with variations;

-A group including various versions of what came to be known as “Tibet’s national flag” (*rgyal dar*) with two lions, which was raised by regiments, featuring in photographs and films only after 1930, on which the letter corresponding to regiment (*ka, kha, ga, nga,* etc.) was stitched on and, in some cases, painted on;

-A group of large red army flags with the crossed *vajra* (*rdo rje rgya gram*) as device in the field, appearing on films and photographs after 1945;

-Regimental banners representing protective deities of the regiments, of which only one photograph, of the Trapchi regiment’s banner, is known and dated 1950.

The chronology and detailed variations within these four categories can be refined when comparing photographs and written sources, as we shall see.

Pl. 131. Bodyguard General Phala Dorje Wangdu (born in 1915) and soldiers, including children, by the colour guard

1949

Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.

Projected graphic / 35-mm slide, Kodachrome

James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections, Marist College, LTR.1582.10.03



National and regimental flags with a single snow lion

The significance of the snow lion as symbol of Tibet as a nation in general under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (on coins and paper money) and on the Tibetan army's insignia in particular has been already discussed in Chapter 2: it appears on most soldiers and officer's badges and medals, often with a mountain and the sun, and either as single or as a pair of lions. We have seen that the lion symbol is based on ancient Tibetan cultural repertoire, dating back to the Tibetan Empire: Shakabpa Wangchuk Deden (Zhwa sgab pa Dbang phyug bde ldan, 1907–1989), a historian and former Tibetan Minister of Finances (1939–1950), has shown that military flags during the Empire period from the 7th to 9th century were already featuring either one or two lions.⁵ It seems that this prominent symbol has crossed the centuries as it was still in use, in the single lion form, in 1912–1913, as inferred from two written sources. The first is the travel account of the Japanese Buddhist priest Aoki Bunkyō (1886–1956), who was sent to Lhasa by Prince Ōtani Kōzu and lived there for three years between 1913 and 1916 (he had reached Tibetan areas already in the end of 1912). According to a recently published paper by Komoto Yasuko, Aoki Bunkyō writes in the account of his travels that, on his way to Lhasa, while he was in Chökor Yantse between October 1912 and mid-January 1913, he witnessed a “military flag” being used by the Tibetan army that “had a bigger lion and snow mountain, as well as a very small sun and moon on a triangular red-coloured cloth background”.⁶

Pl. 132. Painted photograph of the earliest known version of the Tibetan national flag, 1920

Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes,
Box 513PO/A 238 (File 36 C Tibet 1918–1920),
Report n°78, dated 28th August 1920

The second source is the account by Shakabpa, who writes: “I have heard about Cabinet Minister Jampa Tendar's banner from officials who were there at the time that the officers and troops of the Chinese Manchu Empire were gradually driven from Tibet in 1913”.⁷ Jampa Tendar had been the first Commander-in-Chief of the whole Tibetan army, and he then held the double charge of Monk-minister (*bka' blon bla ma*) of the Tibetan government, as well as of Dochi or Province Governor of Kham (Mdo smad spyi khyab), which meant that he was the head of all military troops on the eastern border.

As underlined by Shakabpa, a description of this flag is to be found in Eric Teichman's book *Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet*, and concerns the year 1918, where it seems that this flag was now to be considered as a national flag: “Over the Kalön Lama's residence, a small Tibetan house, floats the banner of Tibet, a yellow flag bearing a device like a lion in green, with a white snow mountain and a sun and moon in the corner”.⁸ A photograph of the Dochi's headquarters is reproduced in Teichman's book, in which the lower part of a flagpole is visible, without the flag itself being shown.⁹ Given the double status of Jampa Tendar, who cumulated civil and military government responsibilities, it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty whether “Jampa Tendar's banner” had a sole military function, for instance being his personal guard or one particular regiment's banner, or primarily functioned as a representation of Tibet as a state. The fact that Teichman, who was very well informed, describes it as “the banner of Tibet” points to the second hypothesis.

Also pointing to that second hypothesis and of great interest for this matter is a photograph kept in French archives (at the French Diplomatic Archives in Nantes) of what is thus likely to have been a first version of Tibet's national flag and which is here reproduced for the first time.¹⁰ Albert Bodard (1883–1969), then Consul de France at “Tchentou” (Chengdu), wrote on 28th August 1920 to Mr. A. Boppe, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the French Republic in China, Beijing, a letter entitled “The new Tibetan flag”:

“I was able to obtain a copy of the new Tibetan flag from a Living Buddha who had recently returned from Lhasa. Until now, Tibet had no special emblems; in recent years, it has been using the old Chinese imperial flag: the five-clawed dragon on a yellow background. ‘Independent’ Tibet had to have its own colours. This has now been done. The insignia is made in Lhasa, but it is still very difficult to obtain. Your Excellency will find below a reproduction of the Tibetan flag. This is made of yellow silk and is almost square (0.55 cm by 0.60 cm). Its design remains rather naive. I have indicated, below the photograph, the explanations which were given to me by the Living Buddha himself. This flag of autonomous Tibet was flying last spring, next to the Union Jack, above the tent which hosted the talks between the Kalön Lama and Mr. Consul King in Chamdo.”¹¹

The letter is accompanied by the photograph (Pl. 132) of the Tibetan flag said to be “in the hands of Mr. Bodard”. The photograph is glued on the letter sent by the French diplomat and appears to be a black and white printed photograph, on which an artist has beautifully painted a few colours (white, green, red, and the gold of the sun and of the lions' eyes). The flags show a snow lion with green mane and tail in front of white three-peaked mountain, below the sun and the moon. The lion has between his paws the Buddhist symbol of the Triple-eyed gem in the shape of the Wheel of Joy (*dga' khyil*),¹² representing the Three Jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*) of Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha*, representing the body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas,¹³ and placed on the lower left corner. Another photograph of the same flag (Pl. 134), given two years later in 1922 by A. Bodard himself to the French Geographical Society, has not been painted.¹⁴

The painted photograph of the flag in Bodard's 1920 letter was accompanied by "explanations given by the living Buddha on the new Tibetan flag", in French (Pl. 133), that are worded in colourful terms, not possibly being the result of a somewhat fanciful translation from Tibetan:

"No country in the universe has the privilege, like Tibet, to be surrounded by mountains as high as impassable. These mountains constitute the natural border of the kingdom. The lion, king of the mountains, represents the power of the Dalai Lama. Above him are only the sun, the moon and the stars. The lion looks at these heavenly bodies in order to implore their light: indeed, the Dalai Lama's hope rests in the sky, of which he is the incarnation. The lion also watches over the mountain, so that no foreigner can pass them without his authorisation. The ball circled by flames and placed under the lion's paws shows that the Dalai Lama has claws strong enough to crush the revolutionaries and disrupters who would like to harm Tibet."¹⁵

This document comes as a confirmation of three elements. First that this flag was considered as a national emblem (not a mere military or regimental one) and that there was no previous version known of a Tibetan national flag in 1920. Second, that the flag received by Mr. Bodard was the same as the one he himself had seen flown in Chamdo in 1920. It corresponds also exactly to the abovementioned description made by Teichman of the flag the latter had also seen flown in 1918 on the headquarters of Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar; thus, it can be ascertained that this version of the national flag existed already in 1918. It is possible, if the flag was indeed created before 1918, that it was still difficult to find and was still considered "new" by foreigners in 1920. Third, that the flag had been brought from Lhasa and not copied in Chengdu or Chamdo, hence Bodard's flag was a different sample of the one described as being flown by Kalön Jampa Tendar and,

it confirms that Kalön Lama Jampa Tendar's flag was not just a personal creation or a local and unique version of a particular Tibetan regiment posted in Chamdo under his orders (as we will see below, regiments also had particular banners).

In addition, an account written by Alexandra David-Neel attests to the fact that in 1921, while the French traveller was trying to enter Tibet, the flag flown by the Tibetan soldiers at the border checkpoint of the Ganden Phodrang territory in Jyekundo was described by her as "the Tibetan flag" featuring a single lion in a "crimson-coloured field".¹⁶

It seems thus that the version mentioned by Shakabpa could have been a military flag that served as model for the new national flag. The fate of what seems to be the earliest version of a national flag is unclear, but

the single lion device continued to be used in army and regimental flags. Indeed, three other flags also featuring single snow lions are known from photographic evidence, but in a much simpler setting. The first two seem to be related to particular regiments: the Shigatse and Gyantse regiments. One flag has reached us as material evidence and is here shown in a photograph (Pl. 135): it belonged to General Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (on which see Chapter 2), who was commanding the Shigatse Gadang regiment (1913–1932) that was posted for years on the eastern border in Kham. It features a snow lion on a plain orange field, with no mountains, but above it to either side the sun and the moon; in the middle of the moon there sits a rabbit (Rebong Loden Sherap).¹⁷ The lion holds a Flaming Circle in its right forepaw, which may be an alternate version

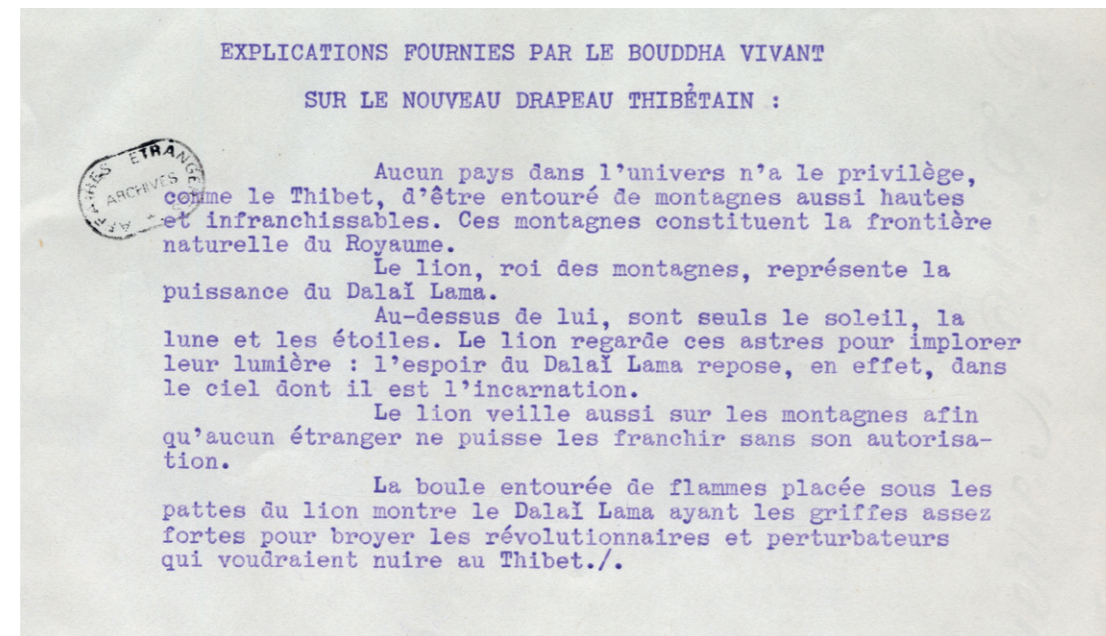
of the Wheel of Joy. Whether this flag was considered as a "national flag" when carried by the Shigatse regiment (as will be the final version of the national flag) or whether it was a specific emblem of the Shigatse regiment is impossible to say.

The second piece of photographic evidence is an image (Pl. 136) taken by F. Williamson in July 1931, which shows the standard bearers of the Gyantse regiment, around their marching band. Out of the eleven flags, three are draped in a more or less visible manner in the photograph and they all seem to feature a single lion on a plain background, each flag having its own different colour. The biggest flag is seen unfurled in another photograph and has a large white single snow lion too.¹⁸ It is very well possible that the "single" lion flag that is drawn in Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue, with

the mountains behind and a blue sky and which has yet to be attested in a historic source, could be among the flags that cannot be seen well enough in this photograph, but in any case, the photograph attests to the continued use of the single lion flag as a regimental banner in the early 1930s.¹⁹

Lastly, a large red flag with a single white snow lion in its centre starts to appear in films of military parades in Lhasa in the mid-1940s and 1950s. Because of its size and pervasiveness in military parades of this time, this flag might very well have become by that time an emblem of the Tibetan army in general and not only of one specific regiment: it is seen for instance in a scene (Pl. 137) from the films taken in 1945 by James Guthrie, then a Major, with the moon and sun, shining above the single white snow lion,²⁰ as well as

in films taken in the 1950s by the Tibetan aristocrat Jigme Taring (1908/12–1991, see also Pl. 70) when the Fourteenth Dalai Lama came back from Beijing and was escorted by Chinese and Tibetan troops to the Norbulingka.²¹ This red "army flag" does not appear in films taken earlier in 1930 by the Sikkimese S.W. Laden La or in 1940 by Basil Gould (1883–1956), the British Political Officer in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet (1935–1945). However, since the film does not feature the military parade in its entirety, but only edited extracts, it is not possible to be certain that this specific flag did not already exist. Interestingly, in these extracts from 1930 and 1940 only the flag that has become to be known as Tibet's national flag is seen being carried by the Tibetan troops parading in Lhasa.



Pl. 133. Description of the 1920 flag
Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Box 513PO/A 238 (File 36 C
Tibet 1918–1920), Report n°78, dated 28th August 1920



Pl. 134. Photograph of the earliest known version of Tibet's national flag, black and white
Photograph by A. Cintract, donated by A. Bodard in 1922
Société de géographie, gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, SG WD-157



Pl. 135. Flag of the Gadang (Shigatse) regiment
The flag belonged to Dapön Tethong Gyurme Gyatso, General of the Gadang regiment.
Tethong Family Private Collection



Pl. 136. Military band and standard bearers of the Ngadang (Gyantse) regiment
20th July 1931
Photograph by Frederick Williamson
University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, P.97858.WIL



Pl. 137. The white snow lion flag on a red background, Lhasa
1945
Still image from James Guthrie's films
British Film Institute, London, Guthrie 8, 1945,
Collection21-35_HLS, 01:34:56



Dating the creation of the last version of the national flag with two lions and its regimental use

It is widely acknowledged that the flag that is known today as Tibet's national flag was standardised by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Shakabpa has given a detailed explanation about the design of Tibet's national flag, called the "Banner of the religion" or the "Banner of the victory over foes",²² and much has been written about its symbolism.²³ However, the exact date of its creation has not yet been firmly established.

As far as written sources are concerned, at this point in time, the earliest available primary and "contemporary" sources known to us are an Austrian company cigarette card showing the flag in 1928²⁴ and the reproduction of the flag in a German book on flags dated 1930, which at least prove that the flag was known internationally in those years.²⁵ However, there is also a brief passage in the diary of Konstantin Riabinin, the medical doctor who accompanied the expedition (1925–1928) of the Russian painter Nicholas Roerich (1874–1947) and his son the tibetologist George Roerich (1902–1960), when they were stopped near Nagchu for five months. On 10th October 1927, they met the Governor of the Northern Province (Horchi) Kapshöpa Chögyel Nyima (Ka shod pa Chos rgyal nyi ma, 1902–1986) and his guard of honour. Riabinin describes the soldiers as carrying:

"a large Tibetan banner, which depicts the sun and the red rays coming from it on a blue background, below, on a white background, some kind of image in red tones. So, the banner was carried ahead, followed by soldiers in English summer uniforms, with summer hats on their heads, with a badge on the right, and among them musicians with cavalry pipes and Scottish horns [...]. It should be noted that the general had more musicians than soldiers."²⁶

This passage thus allows us to date with certainty the existence of Tibet's national flag with sunrays to 1927 at the latest, however with no information on exactly what featured in the rest of the flag, i.e. either one lion or two lions, Three Flaming Jewels (*nor bu me 'bar*), Wheel of Joy, etc.

As for when at the earliest the flag with sunrays and two lions was created, we must consider that several written accounts based on witnesses' memories point to an even earlier creation of Tibet's national flag. These accounts are to be taken with some caution, however, since they were all written many years after the recounted events and are based on memory. Tsarong Dundul Namgyal (Tsha rong Bdud 'dul rnam rgyal) or George (1920–2011) writes in the biography of his father Tsarong Dasang Dadul that a new national flag had been designed in preparation for the parade held in 1916 where the Dalai Lama intended to choose between the British, Russian and Japanese drill methods.²⁷ Tsarong does not describe what the flag looked like, so it is not known whether this flag had one or two lions, etc.

A piece of information contained in Japanese sources of the time might be a fortuitous "missing link": it makes us understand that a first version of today's national flag with a rising sun showed only a single lion. Until relatively recently, the Japanese influence on Tibet's national flag was still up for debate, with many initially doubting its connection altogether.²⁸ However, the contents of this claim and their precise limits have now been clarified. First, as established by Komoto Yasuko, Yajima Yasujirō was not himself involved in the creation of Tibet's national flag. However, he reported

in the diary he kept during his stay in Tibet between 1912 and 1918, that he did raise the Japanese flag in Lhasa on one occasion and that he had also personally created a "cavalry flag" for Tibetan soldiers once.²⁹ No further evidence has been uncovered giving detail of its shape nor whether it was used more than once.³⁰

Second, the claim that Aoki Bunkyō contributed to the creation of Tibet's national flag is based on his travel account, in which he writes that he, along with Tsarong Dasang Dadul, designed a new "military flag" for the Tibetan army that was flown during a rifle practice held at Chökor Yantse again between October 1912 and mid-January 1913. The flag is described as follows:

"The lower half of the design included a lion on a snow mountain, and the upper half showed a rising sun and the moon on a yellow background. He notes that there were discussions about making further modifications, because in this form it looked too similar to the Japanese military flag."³¹

We see that this flag retains most of the elements that were already present in the above-mentioned triangular Tibetan military flag, also observed by Aoki Bunkyō in 1912–1913, with the single lion, the snow mountain, the sun and the moon. This version newly divides the design elements (there is now a lower half and upper half) and adds a "rising" character of the sun, although nothing is said as to if and how any sun rays might have been represented. Lastly, it was said to resemble the Japanese "military flag" too closely. If this claim is correct, we can conclude that a first version of the current national flag with a "rising sun" could have been created as early as 1912–1913, on which however only a single lion featured, and which was supposed to be later modified to minimise any obvious Japanese input. It is not known whether this military flag was kept or reused after 1913, but it could be the one Tsarong refers to as having been flown during the parade in 1916.

Very importantly, one photograph taken by Aoki Bunkyō during his stay in Tibet illustrates at least that the Tibetan army in Lhasa was already carrying flags at some point of his stay in Tibet between 1913–1916,

Pl. 139. View of soldiers during a ceremonial trooping of the Tibetan colours
Undated, before 1931
Photograph by Henry Martin
Lhasa?
Copyright Pitt Rivers Museum,
University of Oxford, 1998.293.149

i.e. in the years just after the return from exile of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. This photograph shows, according to its caption, the “New Model Tibetan army (gathered at the square in front of the Palace)”³² (Pl. 138) in front of the Potala and carrying six flags. It is unfortunately impossible to see what they look like—because of the quality of the reproduction of this photograph in his book and because the flags are draped in a way that prevents them from being seen clearly—and thus whether these flags included already the new flag created by Tsarong and Aoki.

When exactly these modifications (notably the replacement of one lion by two, the addition of the Three Flaming Jewels and of the Wheel of Joy) took place, and when the flag began to be considered a national (and not merely an army) flag, remain unknown. Shakabpa writes that all banners of the military camps—in which he seems to include Tibet’s new national flag—

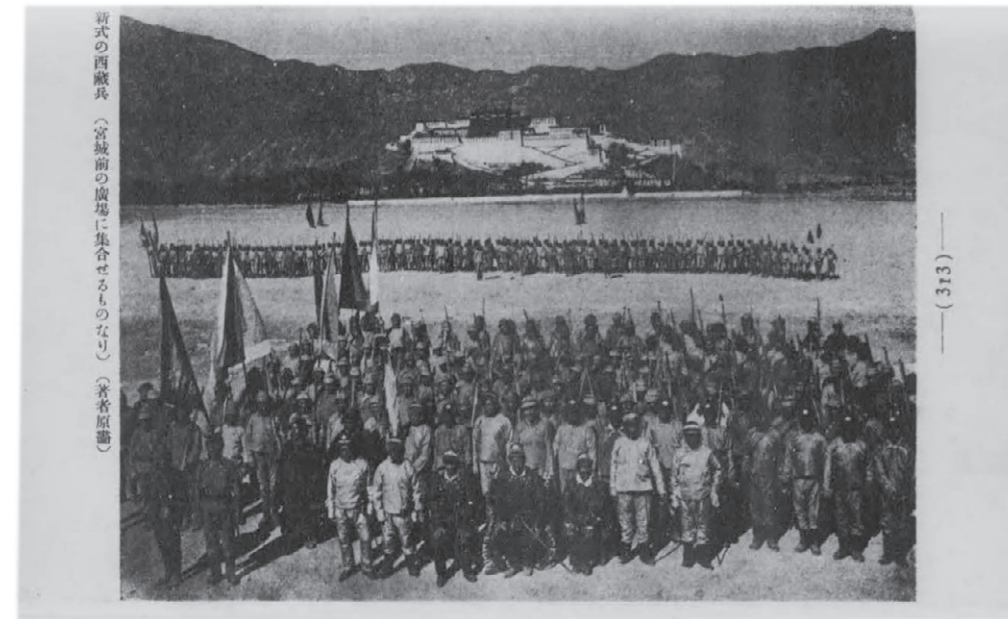
were determined in 1918, “when the Tibetan army was trained in English style.”³³ Based on information he gathered regarding an exemplar of the national flag belonging to his family (which we understand resembles the current version), Jamyang Norbu writes that it was extant around 1919–1920.³⁴

However, another Tibetan testimony points to a slightly later dating for the appearance of a new national flag with two lions: the Tibetan tailor Gyeten Namgyal (1912–1996) remembers having himself sown the “new national flag”, after a design drawn by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.³⁵ His description of the flag concurs with that of the current national flag: he describes it as having as symbols “snow lions” (in plural, thus two, for the first time), the Sword of Wisdom and Victory Banners, and he gives as contextual information that until then, the regiments of the army each had their flags but that there was no national flag. Incidentally, he mentions

that this first national flag was made out of brocade. There is a later instance of the national flag partially made out of brocade (Pl. 135): several panels that are used for the radiating wedge-shaped panels and for the borders of the flag show clear brocade patterns, while the emblems (lions, Flaming Jewels, Wheel of Joy, and the sun) are applied or embroidered on what appears to be a plain panel of the flag. If we rely on this account, given Gyeten Namgyal’s birth year in 1912,³⁶ and the fact that he entered the tailors’ guild (*bzo khang*) as an apprentice when he was only ten years old,³⁷ it becomes clear that the sewing of the new flag could not have taken place before 1922 at the earliest. It is even probable that it was slightly later, as it seems unlikely that an apprentice would have been entrusted with such a significant job without having first undergone a period of training.

Photographic archives do not, unfortunately, allow us to fully clarify the matter, but they cast at least some doubts on too early a dating of the final version of the national flag. Available images taken between 1912 and 1930 in Tibet and featuring flags are extremely rare: we have only the photograph taken in 1913–1916 by Aoki (without the possibility to see what features are on these flags), the above-mentioned single lion flag described in words by Teichman (and probably appearing in its lower part in a photograph taken by him in 1918)³⁸ and later photographed by A. Bodard in 1920. In the 1920s, there are no photographs with flags whatsoever (even soldiers photographed in large groups in Lhasa during reviews or parades until 1924 strangely carry no flags, cf. Pl. 34, 50, 64) until those taken in Gyantse by Williamson in 1931, with only single snow lions. This contrasts strikingly with the 1940s and 1950s when the Tibetan army is rarely photographed without flags.

Actually, the first precisely dated images featuring the last version of the national flag with a pair of snow lions and/or rays of lights relate to a period that post-dates the already known existence of Tibet’s national flag, as it is attested in written sources: these are the films shot by S.W. Laden la in 1930 in which the army is seen carrying the national flag,³⁹ and, as far as photographs are concerned, the photographs of the new Trapchi regiment taken by Williamson in 1933 (Pl. 68 and 69).



Pl. 138. “New Model Tibetan army” gathered at the square in front of the Palace, Lhasa 1913–1916 Aoki 1920: 313

There is however a possibly earlier piece of evidence, in the form of a photograph (Pl. 139) attributed to Henry Martin (who stayed in Tibet from 1904 until his death in 1931), which might be the oldest image we know of to feature the new national flag. Most of Martin’s photographs in his collections are dated between 1908 and 1914, but as this one is undated, it may have been taken as late as 1931. However, the fact that it does not seem likely that Martin took photographs in his latest years,⁴⁰ as well as the style of the soldiers’ uniforms, i.e. the shape of their peaked caps and of their cartridge bandoliers, all point to a possible dating to a much earlier period, possibly the early 1920s (see the similarity with photographs Pl. 34 and 64, dated prior to 1924).

In any case, we can conclude that the new national flag of Tibet (with two lions and the rising sun) appeared at some point between 1922 at the earliest and 1927 (if the one witnessed by Riabinin featured two lions) or 1930 (if not) at the latest. As Shakabpa puts it, it became “both the flag of the country and the flag of the army”.⁴¹ The reason is that it was used by most regiments when parading (see for instance Pl. 140), with the visible addition in a number of instances of the regiment’s letter.⁴² Photographs and archival material document this use for various regiments, i.e. the Kadang (Pl. 141),⁴³ Khadang (Pl. 142 and 143),⁴⁴ Tadang⁴⁵ and Dadang regiments (Pl. 144) at least. In addition, a version with only the sun and the rays without the lions existed (see Pl. 145, carried by the Trapchi Khadang regiment) and is seen on several photographs.⁴⁶ Some photographs show that the poles carrying national flags could be topped with elaborate finials, which added a significant level of Buddhist symbolism to the flags. These finials could be, as here (Pl. 140 and 142) in the shape of a trident (*tri shul* or *rtse gsum*), usually representing the Three jewels of Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha*, but here in the shape of the trident-spear, or trident-staff that, according to Beer, symbolises the destruction of the three poisons of ignorance, desire and aggression within the three realms; “the *vajra*-flame crowning the central prong symbolises the wisdom-fire which completely immolates ignorance as the primordial poison. The hanging links which may descend from the two



side prongs [visible on these two particular pole finials] of the trident symbolise the breaking of the twelve links of dependent origination or karmic causation. The two side prongs uniting in the flaming central prong also symbolise the unity of method and wisdom; the abandonment of the two extremes of samsara and nirvana; and the ultimate union of absolute and relative truth.”⁴⁷ The finials could also be in the shape of a Flaming Sword (Pl. 136, 150 to 152) one of the seven possessions of the Chakravartin. The Flaming Sword, in the

Pl. 140. Tibetan flagbearers, Lhasa 1950 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer Gelatine silver paper Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.50.012



same way as Manjushri's Flaming Sword of Wisdom, is entwined in a crest of flames, because, as Beer explains, the flame "symbolizes the *vajra* nature of the sword: it is unbreakable, adamantine, invincible".⁴⁸ Victory Banners (*gyal mtshan*), originally a military standard carried in ancient Indian warfare and in Tibetan Buddhism one of the Eight Auspicious Signs,⁴⁹ are also, though less frequently, noticeable, on the national flags of the Bodyguard regiment (Pl. 141).

Archival films show that not all regiments carried the national flag during parades. In the military parade filmed by James Guthrie in 1945, the national flag opens and closes the march: the first regiment, the

Bodyguard, has three standard bearers, with two national flags around one large red flag with a white crossed *vajra* (see below), the second regiment has only two large red flags (apparently with the crossed *vajra* again, but the white snow lion cannot be entirely excluded), and the third regiment has two large orange flags both with seemingly, the white and green snow lion. The fourth and last marching regiment's standard bearers hold two national flags.⁵⁰

The precise year or period that the element of the Three Flaming Jewels (*nor bu me 'bar*) was incorporated into the flag design has never been explicitly mentioned in descriptions of the flags available in written sources.

It cannot be clearly made out in photographs before 1943 at the earliest.⁵¹ Also, according to Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue, there was yet another step in the finalisation of the current version of Tibet's national flag. Indeed, he writes that in 1945, "the national flag was modified and flown at the Tibetan Army Headquarters and all the regimental barracks at all times, and carried and flown during all military parades, as in the past", while the military flag used was the same as the old one.⁵² One can only speculate as to what this change in the national flag was about, as it is, in any case, not visible in photographs.

Pl. 141. Soldiers of the Bodyguard regiment (Kadang), with standard bearers in Norbulingka during the Shotön festival

1950
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative or cellulose acetate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.645

Pl. 142. Two national flags of the Trapchi regiment during a review at the Norbulingka

1950
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Cellulose nitrate negative
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
 Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.006





Pl. 143. National flag of the Khadang regiment
 1949
 Still image extracted from Lowell Thomas Jr.'s films
 James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
 Marist College, LTP:1889.06, 02:24



Pl. 145. A version of the national flag carried by the Khadang regiment
 1949
 Still image extracted from Lowell Thomas Jr.'s films
 James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections, Marist College, LTP:1889.06, 02:21

Pl. 144. Flagbearers of the Dadang regiment during a military review at the Norbulingka
 1950
 Gelatine silver paper
 Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
 Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.50.037



Pl. 146. Flag which was in possession of Tethong Gyurme Gyatso (1890–1938), General of the Gadang regiment
Tethong Family Private Collection

Pl. 147. The red crossed-vajra flag and the red snow lion flag
1945
Still image extracted from James Guthrie's films
British Film Institute, London, Guthrie 8, 1945,
Collection21-35_HLS, 01:35:04



Pl. 148. Army flag of the Chadang regiment
1949
Still image extracted from Lowell Thomas Jr.'s films
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist College, LTP.1889.06, 00:34

The crossed-vajra army flag

Another type of flag has been described as being the “flag of the Tibetan army” (*bod kyi dmag dar*) by Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue and features either a yellow crossed *vajra* on a red background,⁵³ or else two lions holding a crossed *vajra* according to a drawing made by the author,⁵⁴ and also to his descriptions.⁵⁵ As seen in Chapter 2, the crossed *vajra* is a Buddhist symbol representing the indestructible state of enlightenment and emphasising the principle of absolute stability.⁵⁶ The second described version of the army flag with the crossed *vajra* uplifted by lions does not appear in any available photographs. However, the first described version of the army flag, i.e. a large red flag with a yellow crossed *vajra*, does appear in many instances. First, there is one remaining piece of material evidence in a private collection (Pl. 146) of a large red flag with a crossed *vajra* as device. This flag is seen, from its back side, in James Guthrie's 1945 film of the military parade, alongside the red flag with a white snow lion as a device (Pl. 147).

Very interestingly, the same flag is seen atop on a building in a film made by Lowell Thomas Jr. (Pl. 148), with the letter *cha* indicating that it was “adapted” for the Chadang regiment, in the same way as the national flag could be.⁵⁷ This seems to confirm that the crossed-*vajra* flag was indeed the emblem of the whole army and not of a particular regiment, which also aligns with the fact that army badges for officers used this symbol as well (see Chapter 2). Lastly, this crossed-*vajra* flag appears in several photographs taken in 1951 between Gyantse and Lhasa by Tse Ten Tashi, when he accompanied the Fourteenth Dalai Lama back to Lhasa from the Indian border where he had fled. The crossed-*vajra* flag (which does not feature any letter) is apparently carried by the Trapchi regiment (wearing the Tibetan-style *chuba*), along with the national flag (Pl. 149 and 150).



Regimental banners of protective deities

Another type of flag, bearing neither snow lion nor crossed *vajra*, appears in photographic archives and has been described either by former Tibetan soldiers or by archive holders as flags representing protective deities. The only example documented in photographs is found in the Harrer collection (Pl. 151, 152, 153). They were taken during the flight of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama towards the Indian border in 1950. One of the photographs by Harrer (Pl. 152), was captioned by him as “the personal banner of the Dalai Lama”.⁵⁸ The flag has an elaborate finial in the shape of a Flaming Sword.

However, the fact that the standard bearers are obviously from the Trapchi regiment—as the flag is carried by a standard holder next to the national flag with a visible Kha letter (Pl. 153)—and that a copy of the same image was captioned in the Tibet Museum collection as “Trapchi army holding regiment flag”,⁵⁹ seems to contradict this information. Also, according to oral information, several regiments had their own protective deities, sometimes represented on flags, the Trapchi regiment’s one being Trapchi Lhamo (Grwa bzhi lha mo).⁶⁰ Thus, although the image is not sufficiently clear to confirm with certainty, it is possible that this flag represents Trapchi Lhamo. If correct, this is an additional testimony of the significance of visual sources, this information being entirely absent from secondary and primary literature.

These flags representing protective deities seem to date back to very ancient military traditions, if we consider that the infantry and cavalry re-enacting the 17th-century military during the ceremonies of the Lhasa New Year were reported and photographed as carrying such “sacred standards”. The flags are not clearly visible in photographs but Richardson describes how, during the Review at Trapchi (Grwa bzhi rtsis bzher), on the 23rd day of the First month, two standard bearers from the cavalry (see the introduction of this volume and Pl. 1) were seen holding “a tall lance wrapped in a painted banner crowned by a trident

Pl. 149. Flags of the Tibetan army: the Tibetan national flag and the army flag with the crossed vajra carried by the Trapchi regiment
1951?
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi?
Tibet Museum Photo Archive, Dharamshala, P-007-203

Pl. 150. The vanguard (Trapchi regiment) of the 14th Dalai Lama’s escort back to Lhasa
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.3.46



called the Tensung Marnag, the “red and black protector of the faith”, perhaps representing warriors from the retinue of Pehar or Palden lhamo. They are said to resemble the standard of Gushri khan’s forces.”⁶¹ Also, on the 24th day during the Mönlam Torgya (Smon lam gtor rgyag) ceremony, the *simchungpa* (see the introduction of this volume and Pl. 2) also carried their own standard, although Richardson was not sure of which warrior deity.⁶²

In conclusion, military flags are increasingly documented in films and photographs—and were probably increasingly used—by the Tibetan troops from 1930 onwards to 1959. Rare photographic archives, cross-referenced with written sources, show that a first version of Tibet’s national flag was created not long before 1918–1920 with a single lion as device, holding a Wheel of Joy, and with snow mountains and the sun, moon and stars. It was based on an earlier model of a military flag that already existed in 1912–1913, and it would later once again become both an army and regimental flag, however, albeit missing its mountains and sometimes its stars, i.e. simply featuring either a white lion on an orange background with the heavenly bodies, or on a red background with no heavenly bodies.

As far as we know, at some point between 1922 and 1927–1930, a new version of the national flag was created, and has remained in usage until today with a

few limited changes, but principally featuring the two facing lions and the rising sun, and it was carried by the Tibetan army. It appears in 1930 in dated films and possibly even earlier in photographs of military parades and reviews and sometimes, though not always, we can see that the flag was adapted to each regiment with its corresponding letter marked on it.

Other army flags are seen in photographic and film archives, with large red flags with a yellow crossed *vajra* as device being carried from 1945 at least onwards (they could very well have existed prior to that date). This flag was also adaptable to individual regiments by the addition of their corresponding letter to it. Lastly, some regiments held banners of their protective deities, with that of the Trapchi regiment possibly being the only one documented in photographic evidence so far.

The symbolism contained in Tibetan military flags, featuring the snow lion(s) or crossed *vajra* as the central devices, with snow mountains, heavenly bodies, the Wheel of Joy and the Three Flaming Jewels in the surrounding field, and raised on poles topped with finials in the shape of tridents or Flaming Swords, with, in some cases, the addition of Victory Banners, all emphasise the role of the Tibetan army as protector of both the country and the Buddhist faith and convey ideas of stability, victory, and indestructability, fitting both the secular and the spiritual spheres.



Pl. 151. Two standard-bearers in the flight caravan of the 14th Dalai Lama
December 1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv-No VMZ.400.08.01.239

Pl. 152. Flag with a protective deity carried by the Trapchi regiment
December 1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv-No VMZ.400.07.13.006



Endnotes Chapter 5

- 1 I follow here the distinction made by Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus (2003, vol. 1) between what he calls *dmag dar* and *ru dar*.
- 2 In particular Shakabpa's pages in the introduction of his history of Tibet (Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 94–97); the essay by Jamyang Norbu 2015a and b; Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 27 and Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012: 22. A large amount of detailed and very well researched work on the history of the Tibetan flag has been made available online, in pages written by vexillologists or amateur researchers into Tibetan history, in particular the page dedicated to Tibetan flags of the *Flags of the World* website, <https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/xt.html>, last accessed 30th January 2022. The scope of these works often goes further than what we are focusing on in this chapter, but we have included (as up to January 2022) and acknowledged their findings where related to the present research and when the available data was previously unknown to us.
- 3 Also described in Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 60.
- 4 For the best example of these movements, see the movie by Ernst Schäfer, *Geheimnis Tibet*, shot in 1939 and released in 1943, at the mn 1:04:48 and 1:05:07). There is no explanation in the written sources on which of the existing systems of flag signalling was used in the Tibetan army at that time. The holder of flags in all photographs (Pl. 130, 131 and 158) carries only one flag (and not two as in the semaphoric system). Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue speaks of “ways of flying flags of different colours on the battle field” (*dar cha tshos chogs so so gyugs stangs*) and indicates that these “newly invented ways of communication” (*brda ston*

- bya tshul gsar gtod*) were implemented in all regiments (Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 28). Until WW2, British units (Royal Signals and Royal Engineers) used a signalling system with only one flag, based on the knowledge of the Morse code (see the web history page of the Royal signals, in particular Fig. 17, <https://royal-signals.org.uk/Datasheets/SignallingFlags.php>, last accessed 30th January 2022), using a white flag with a central blue strip similar to those featuring in Pl. 131 by a Lhasa-based regiment (Bodyguard) and Pl. 158 by a Shigatse-based regiment. It is thus hypothesised that this British signalling code with one flag was the one implemented in the Tibetan army.
- 5 Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 94. See also the brochure produced by LIWA which is the official description and history of the current Tibetan national flag. Anon. [1980] 2000: 6 and 13. See Travers 2020b for a discussion of the symbolism of the lion in aristocratic crests.
- 6 Aoki 1920: 135. See also Komoto 2020: 350, fn. 25. Komoto adds: “A part of Aoki's possessions are currently housed at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, and these include a hand-made drawing entitled ‘Military flag of Tibet’ (Tibetto no gunki 西藏の軍旗). However, this is again slightly different from the above-described design of the ‘military flag’ which Aoki says he created together with Tsarong.” (Ibid.). This copy could unfortunately not be obtained so far and compared with other known versions.
- 7 Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 95. On Jampa Tendar, see Chapter 1.
- 8 Teichman [1922] (2000): 116. The same quote by Teichman has erroneously been cited as describing a flag with two facing lions (*seng ge kha spros*), instead of one single lion

- as in the original quote, Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 27 (and Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012: 23), an error which has unfortunately been repeated by vexillologists in online blogs.
- 9 Plate XII in Teichman [1922] (2000): 55.
- 10 I wish to thank John Bray, who kindly shared this information with me, and directed me to this archive document in the Archives diplomatiques de Nantes in 2016. The first mention of its existence was by Deshayes (1997: 268), as mentioned by the vexillologist Corentin Chamboredon. Chamboredon has also drawn a reproduction of this first version of Tibet's national flag in the page dedicated to Tibetan flags in the *Flags of the World* website, based on a drawing made by Roberto Breschi (on his website “Bandiere Passato e Presente”): <https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/xt-1920.html>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 11 Translated from French, Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Box 513PO/A 238, File 36 C Tibet (1918–1920).
- 12 Beer 1999: 170.
- 13 Beer 1999: 205.
- 14 Kept at the French National Library (department of the Geographical Society, SG WD-157), the image is said to have been taken by a photographer named Albert Cintract. It has been made available online recently by the French National Library: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b53194858b>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 15 Translated from French, Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Box 513PO/A 238, File 36 C Tibet (1918–1920).
- 16 “The officers sat in a tent in front of which flew the Tibetan flag: crimson, bearing an embroidered lion [cramoisi, portant un lion brodé]” (David-Neel 1927: 14, translation from French).
- 17 Jamyang Norbu 2015a.
- 18 The photograph does not appear in this volume, its accession number in the collection

- of the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology is P97857.WIL.
- 19 Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: “Ru dar gzig gi dpe mtshon” in the photographic and drawings sections (no page numbering).
- 20 Guthrie Collection-Tibetan ceremonies VHS 8031358A, Guthrie 8, 1945, British Film Institute, London.
- 21 The extract is part of the BBC movie “Tibet, the Bamboo curtain falls” (1:20:22), BFI, London.
- 22 See Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 94.
- 23 The official version of its symbolism is given in Anon. [1980] 2000.
- 24 Gulotta and Dicky Yangzom 2015.
- 25 Entitled *Drawings of the Flags of All Nations*, British Admiralty, 1930, see Jamyang Norbu 2015b.
- 26 Riabinin 1996: 323 (translated from Russian). I am grateful to Irun Engelhardt for indicating this passage to me in 2017. As for Roerich, he mentions the flag but does not describe it (Roerich 1931: 299). Interestingly however, he writes that the words of command given by the Tibetan soldiers of the Horchi escort were given in Chinese, which indicates that at least in 1927, not all soldiers of the Tibetan army used the British drill command.
- 27 Tsarong 2000: 51. On the 1916 parade during which the drill methods were compared, see Chapter 2.
- 28 Berry (1995: 125–126) discusses why this remains uncertain; Jamyang Norbu (2015a) doubts its veracity altogether.
- 29 Komoto 2020: 350, fn. 25.
- 30 Komoto 2020: 350.
- 31 Komoto 2020: 350, fn. 25.
- 32 Aoki 1920: 313. The caption also reads: “The original photo taken by the author”. I am very grateful to my colleague in the TibArmy

“God Save the Queen” in Tibet: the military bands of the Ganden Phodrang army

Lastly, the British influence on the Tibetan army after 1916 is most visible in its military bands (*bha dung/’ba’ dung sde tshan/’ba’ ja*).¹ All neighbouring countries (or countries taken by Tibet as a model, such as Japan), that had modernised their armies, had also imported Western-style military bands: the Indian army first (being part of the British Empire), in the 18th century; the Japanese army, modernised during the Meiji restoration (1868–1912) with the help of French, British and Germans; and the Chinese Republic after the revolution in 1912.

Photographs throughout the period show that Tibetan military bands consisted, as elsewhere, of wind and percussion instruments, in various configurations depending on the regiment and on the period considered, but usually mostly British snare drums (*rnga chung*), bass drums (*rnga chen*), bugles (*dung*), fifes (*gling bu*), and, last but not least, bagpipes, a term that has a number of Tibetan equivalents (*bha cha (spig spal) gling bu*,² or *sgye gling*, i.e. a “flute with a bag”, or *sgye dang bcas pa’i rgya gling*, i.e. a “bag that goes together with a trumpet”, or *’ba’ rje*, possibly the “lord of the band”).³ The bands were under the direction of a band master (*’ba’ dung/*

Pl. 154. Soldier from the escort of the Province Governor of Markham playing bagpipes
Undated; 1914–1920
Photograph by Albert Shelton
Gelatin silver print, 178 x 178 mm
Gift of Dr. Albert L. Shelton, 1920
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 20.1385



project Kobayashi Ryosuke, who translated the Japanese caption of this photograph for me. It seems that this image is related to Pl. 31 which is also taken in the plain in front of the Potala and where soldiers are seen wearing the same type of uniform. Interestingly, this photograph (Pl. 138) represents a link between the two other photographs by Aoki Bunkyō included in this volume (Pl. 30 and 31), as a few of the soldiers in the front line of Pl. 138 are wearing the specific uniform worn by the guard in Pl. 30 with two diverging rows of buttons on the tunic. It is hoped that the examination of the entire photographic archive of Aoki Bunkyō by colleagues will bring new elements in the future.

33 See Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 94. He was eleven years old at that time and no source is quoted so it could well be an approximation.

34 “The only existing copy of the original design (in exile) [of the national flag] is now in the possession of the Tethong family. It was sent from Lhasa to Derge to the headquarters of the Governor of Derge (*Dege-chikyap*) of Eastern Tibet, Tethong Gyurme Gyatso, sometime in 1919 or 1920” (Jamyang Norbu 2015a).

35 Yeshe 2009: 226.

36 Harris and Wardle 2016: 135.

37 Yeshe 2009: 220.

38 Reproduced as Plate XII in Teichman [1922] (2000): 55.

39 British Film Institute, London.

40 I would like to thank Philip Grover (the Pitt Rivers Museum) for the information he shared on Martin’s known activity as a photographer and on the dating of his collection of photographs.

41 Shakabpa 2010, vol. 1: 94. The question of whether what we know today as Tibet’s national flag was considered as such by the Tibetans in pre-1959 Tibet has been raised before and entirely and convincingly solved. The fact that Tibetans themselves have tried to maintain their own flag instead of the PRC flag after the 1950 Chinese occupation by arguing (obviously) strategically that it could be regarded as a mere military flag (Goldstein 1997: 302–303) cannot obliterate the fact that the flag was considered as a national flag by

foreign countries at least from 1930 onwards and used as national emblems in international conferences outside military contexts (Jamyang Norbu 2015a and b).

42 Regiments could carry several exemplars of the flag in parades and it does not look as if all had the regiment letter on it, but it is impossible to ascertain this with certitude in photographs because only one side of the flag is visible (the letter could have been printed on the other side).

43 In addition, a regimental flag of the Body-guard regiment (which features the painted letter *ka*) was brought in exile by a former soldier and is now kept at LTWA in Dharamshala.

44 The best close-up of this regiment’s national flag, which was not included in this volume, is a photograph taken by Tolstoy and Dolan, which has been published by Tung [1980] 1996: Pl. 33, and reproduced online by Bertsch 2010.

45 This particular flag has been brought to my attention by Corentin Chamboredon’s work (in the “Flags of the World” website: https://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/xt_se.html, last accessed 30th January 2022. He has found it published in Thomas Laird’s *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (page 264). It is described as having belonged to Derge Se (Sde dge sras) and as has having the interesting particularity to feature the Kalachakra symbol instead of the Three Flaming Jewels.

46 Again, this could also be the verso side of the national flag which would be not as “complete” as the recto. However, it seems likely that there were several versions and variants of the flag in this time, since an expert has observed that there existed at least fifteen different versions of the current national flag nowadays, cf. Mr. Chopathar W. Mache from Columbia University, <http://youtu.be/nyutS-wrU8gg>, last accessed on 30th January 2022.

47 Beer 1999: 285.

48 Beer 1999: 163–164.

49 Beer 1999: 180.

50 Guthrie Collection-Tibetan ceremonies VHS 8031358A, Guthrie 8, 1945, British Film Institute, London.

51 Photographed by Tolstoy and Dolan (1943), cf. Tung [1980] 1996: Pl. 33.

52 Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: 69.

53 Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: 60.

54 Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: “Bod kyi dmag dar” in the photographic and drawings sections (no page numbering). Interestingly, the author maintains (Ibid., vol. 1: 27; Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 22) that the Tibetan army had adapted the national flag by replacing its two lions holding a Flaming Jewel by two lions holding a crossed *vajra*. However, in all army photographs where it is visible, the two lions hold a Flaming Jewel (or a Kalachakra symbol in one instance, as seen above), and the crossed *vajra* is always represented alone, without the lions. It is of course possible that the army flag described by the author existed but maybe was not pervasive.

55 Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003: vol 1, 27; Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue 2012, vol. 1: 22).

56 Beer 1999: 239.

57 Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue wrote that the name of a particular regiment (*ka, kha, ga, nga*, etc.) was written in the top corner of the flag (Dwang slob mda’ zur spyi ’thus rgyal rtse rnam rgyal dbang ’dus 2003, vol. 1: 60), but this could not be confirmed from the visual evidence, the only available “numbered” flag displaying the number in the lower central part of the flag instead.

58 The image has been reproduced twice at least by Harrer, once (Harrer 1991: 230) with a description saying in German “das persönliche Banner des Dalai Lama”, i.e. “the personal banner of the Dalai Lama”, and later (Harrer 1992: 206) with the following description: “Two flags flew during the Dalai Lama’s escape, his personal flag and the Tibetan national flag [...]”. The original caption of the photograph at the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, written by Harrer himself, reads: “Bewaffneter Reiter mit Fahne der Dalai Lama (Details auf der Flagge teilweise gut erkennbar)”, i.e. “Armed horseman with flag of the Dalai Lama (details on the flag partly well visible)”.
59 The photograph is referenced P107108 in the Tibet Museum collection.

60 On the Trapchi Lhamo cult, see Murakami 2013. See also the episode recounted in Goldstein (2014: 38) when the “Phala clique” tried to resist the 1951 17-Point Agreement: Phala and Tashipelra, General of the Trapchi regiment, with the soldiers, consulted the Trapchi Lhamo through a medium for advice before submitting the petition refusing to reduce the number of the troops.

61 Richardson 1993: 34.

62 Richardson 1993: 39.



Pl. 155. Pipers of a regimental band
1951
Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi
Gift of Bruce Walker, 2000
Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, 2000.36.2.49

sba dung dge rgan), visible in one photograph (Pl. 160).⁴ It has been written that some of the most ancient regiments had one band unit of ten musicians who played traditional Tibetan instruments, such as conch-shells (*bod bzos dung*),⁵ trumpets (*rgya gling*) and drums (*rnge*),⁶ but only the British-style bands with their instruments appear in photographs. The Tibetan army used bugle calls in its camps three times a day and the bands played marching songs during ceremonies and parades. At war, the buglers would be responsible for sending signals, and the members of the band were also utilised for other means of communication such as sending signals with mirrors, and with the use of signalling flags (see Chapter 5).⁷ According to Gyaltsé Namgyal Wangdue, the size of the bands was four to eight units of ten musicians⁸ (such large bands are not visible in photographs though).

The Tibetan military bands are particularly visible in photographs and films throughout the whole period, with a remarkable continuity. The very earliest photograph of the Tibetan army after British reforms dates from 1916–1918, at the time of Yajima Yasujirō's stay in Lhasa (Pl. 34). His photograph shows a very large ensemble of snare drums, large drums, fife, and bugle (no bagpipe is visible). Some of the peculiarities of British military bands were indeed, apparently afterwards transplanted to Tibet, and are often visible in the photographs. The first were the highlanders' bagpipes, which had been introduced into the British army at the end of the 18th century and had become a flagship component of their bands, and later made their way into the Indian army's bands in the 1880s and 1890s,⁹ some of the Indian regiments even adopting the Scottish tartan. The Tibetans chose to have pipers in their band from the very introduction of military bands in their troops, though it seems that it took a few years before it was concretised.

The earliest traces of the creation of military bands in Tibet were found in the Indian national archives in Delhi at the end of 1917,¹⁰ and regard the organisation of their training in India, which appeared to have been laborious on the British India side, to say the least. On 6th December 1917, decision was taken that Tibetan musicians would be attached to the "1/8 Gurkhas"

(i.e. the first battalion of the 8th Gurkha Rifles) in Sitolu (?) for training in March 1918. They had expressed their wish to learn the bagpipes and the drum. But in June 1918, discussions were still going on regarding the musical instruments the Tibetan musicians should buy and about the type of martial music they should be taught. It was then decided that they would learn music for fife and drum. However, the Gurkha regiment to which they had been attached was a Gurkha regiment which did not have fife, so they were first to change regiments. The only place with such a regiment was in Delhi and not in the hills as the Tibetans had requested to be sent in the first place. Thus, the Tibetans opted to come back to their first option, the bagpipes and drums, and the British government decided to send them to the 93rd Burma Infantry, which was the only regiment to have bagpipes and drums, in Delhi. However, this regiment replied that it had not enough instructors to teach the Tibetan musicians. In a letter of July 1918, the Tibetan government complained that their soldiers were practising on stones for the snare drum and on trees for the bass drum, as no additional instruments were available for their exercises, although the Tibetan government had sent the money a long time before to finance the acquisition of instruments for them. Dejected, their interpreter finally resigned. In February 1919, we learn that the Tibetan musicians had arrived at the 93rd Burma, only to leave shortly after because they had not been given any instruments. In March 1919, it was thus decided that they would learn military music from the 1/35th Sikhs in Peshawar, who were famous for their fife and drums corps. In short, the Tibetan musicians were left during two years of wandering around in different regiments in India, an experience that seems to have been difficult. We thus also do not know how they finally learned the bagpipe; other endeavours than the one here documented probably happened in other places.

The first photograph found with a piper was taken on the eastern border by Doctor Albert Shelton (1875–1922), an American medical doctor and Protestant missionary who stayed in Eastern Tibet, based in Bathang, from 1903–1922, except for the years 1910–1914 when he was back in the United States. Because we know the

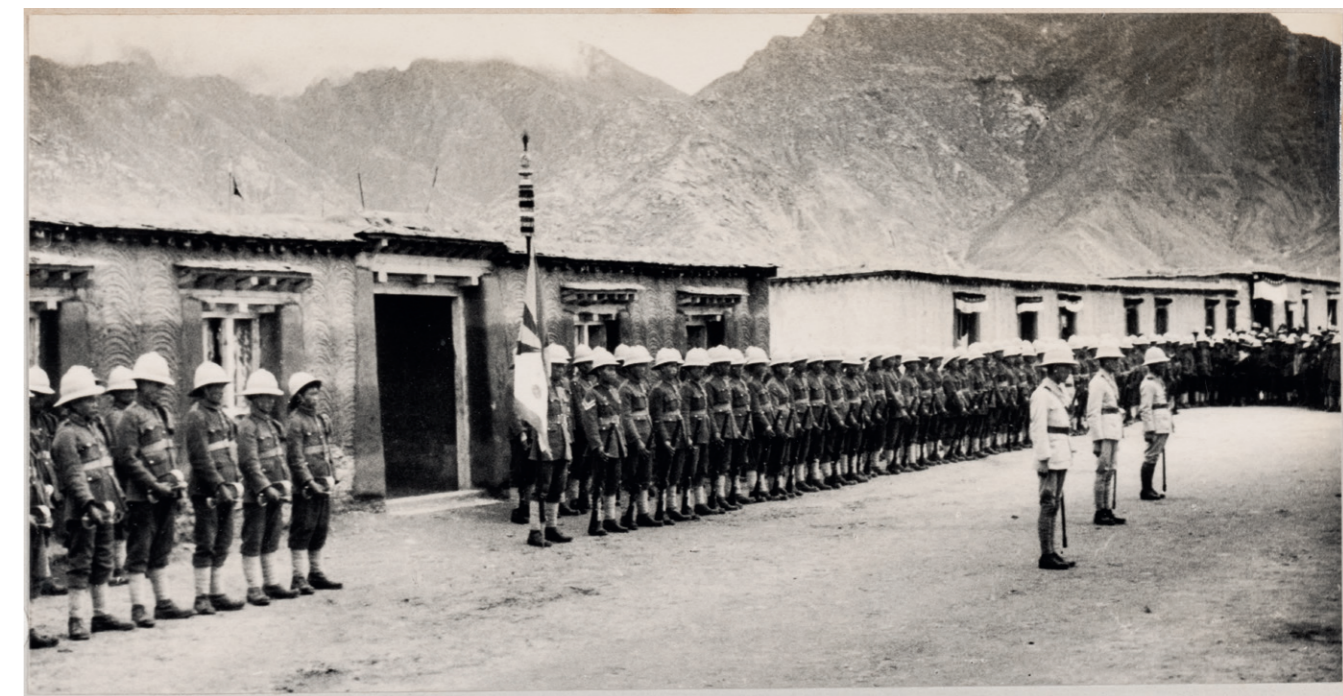
bagpipe was not introduced to Tibet before the military reforms on the British model, the photograph (Pl. 154) he took of a piper belonging to the military escort of the Province Governor of Markham (Smar khams *tha'i ji*) certainly dates back to the years after his return, i.e. between 1914 (and most probably after 1916 when the British model was chosen for the Tibetan army) and 1920 when the photographs were gifted to the Newark Museum. The Western-style uniform of the piper is unique in the entire collection, but, at this point of our study of military uniforms, we know this was often the case in particular on the eastern border in those years. Also, it differs from the uniforms of others photographed by Rev. R.A. MacLeod a few years later (1926) in a regiment stationed at "Lha mdüm" (Lha 'dus) also in Markham (Pl. 63, discussed in Chapter 2).¹¹ The last photographs of pipers were taken by Heinrich Harer (Pl. 166) around 1950 and Tse Ten Tashi in 1951 (Pl. 155). It is not known whether they remained in army bands during the period 1951–1959.

The second British specificity adopted by the Tibetan army bands and visible in photographs is the tradition of having bass drummers of some corps wearing animal skin pelts such as tiger skin and leopard skin, while on parade, which remains in use by some royal army bands in Great Britain until today. Such attire is seen at least worn by one drummer of the Trapchi regiment in 1944,¹² and by two drummers of the Bodyguard regiment around 1949 (Pl. 161) and 1950 (Pl. 162).¹³ The drum player wearing a leopard skin vest is also seen in colour in another photograph (Pl. 92).¹⁴

Again, Lowell Thomas Jr.'s photographs in 1949 help understanding the colour code of these particularly colourful military formations. Military bands indeed, had specific uniforms for their musicians, compared to the rest of the regiment. These included items taken from full-dress uniforms,¹⁵ such as red coats, crimson trousers, and other colourful or even somewhat extravagant pieces, such as the above-mentioned animal pelt vests. For instance, the bandmaster often wore

coloured sashes, and the musicians (in particular the buglers) wore coloured cords and tassels, seen in black and white on the drummers and buglers in Pl. 164 and Pl. 165, and in colour in Pl. 163. As in all Western armies, the drummers had specific choreographies, that appear in certain photographs (Pl. 167), and in films (for instance *Geheimnis Tibet* by Schäfer, 1939), in addition to choreographies performed by soldiers with the small signalling flags.

It seems that each regiment had its own band, but their size and composition varied depending on the regiment. All had bugles and drums, an indispensable part of military life, but it seems that some bands had fife while others had pipes. Bands of specific regiments can be identified in photographs: the bands of the Gadang Shigatse regiment (Pl. 157 and Pl. 158) with bugles, snares and bass drums; of the elite *drongdrag* regiment (Pl. 156), with its trumpets, snare drums and larger bass drums; of the Bodyguard regiment (Pl. 159 to 165), with its fife and drums; of the Trapchi regiment



Pl. 156. The military band of the *drongdrag* regiment at Trapchi, Lhasa
26th September 1933
Photograph by Margaret Williamson
University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, P.97018.WIL

(Pl. 155 and 166), with its pipes and drums; and of the last recruited (in 1949) regiment (Pl. 167).

The bodyguard's band is seen wearing entirely scarlet full dress,¹⁶ and trousers with lampasses (i.e. a vertical stripe down the side of the leg). Such trousers were part of the full dress of the highest officers at the beginning of the period as well as of regular troops in films by S.W. Laden La dating 1930,¹⁷ but they seem to have been maintained only in the full dress of Generals and for the music band in later years (see for instance the films taken by James Guthrie in 1945).¹⁸

The full repertoire of the tunes played by these bands is not known,¹⁹ but there are mentions, for the year 1924, of several "popular British tunes",²⁰ of the emblematic "God Save the King/Queen", which had been adopted by the Tibetan army at some point, maybe as early as the army bands themselves.²¹ It was played at the time of Brigadier Neame's review of the Tibetan troops in 1936, and there were already remarks being made on the quality of the performance, although the overall quality of the band itself was praised. In his published account, Frederick Spencer Chapman writes:

"Both the bodyguard and police had bands which made a very creditable noise. One was an ordinary military band with a big drum (the drummer complete with leopard-skin) and the usual bugles and kettle-drums, while the other was a bagpipe band. I am neither military-minded nor musical, but I was greatly impressed by these Tibetan bands, although I must admit that when they played the one tune I do know ("God Save the King") I did not recognize it until I saw the others standing to attention."²²

Ten years later, Hugh Richardson, the head of the British Permanent Mission in Lhasa, also wrote in one of his weekly letters that "God Save the Queen" was not recognisable as such when the band played it, because the interpretation had become so far removed from the original,²³ and was apparently a source of much

amusement to the British. This anecdote, reported in prior works,²⁴ coincides with the time when the Tibetan civil and military authorities had become aware of the need to reorient the Tibetan army to its local traditions and culture, and were translating all military orders into Tibetan (published in a leaflet in 1948, see Chapter 4), changing the military uniforms into *chubas*, etc. In September 1949, when Lowell Thomas father and son attended a military review at the Norbulingka, they recognised, a "medley of 'God save the King', 'Marching Through Georgia' and 'Auld Lang Syne'", being "not badly" played by the bands.²⁵

Heinrich Harrer importantly reports that the eve of Chinese invasion was also the time when the first Tibetan national anthem (*gyal glu*) was written to replace "God Save the Queen".²⁶ However, "God Save the Queen" was apparently still played by the band when the advanced PLA forces arrived in Lhasa.²⁷ Thus, it seems that the re-Tibetanisation did impact Tibetan military bands just before the end of their existence.



Pl. 157. The Gadang regiment's bugles, snares and bass drums during the troops' parade in front of the fortress of Shigatse

1939

Photograph by Ernst Schäfer

180 x 240 mm

Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-17-14-24



Pl. 158. Gadang regiment's bugles and signalling flags at the troops' parade in front of the fortress of Shigatse
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-17-14-39



Pl. 159. Fife and drums of the Bodyguard regiment, Lhasa
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
180 x 240 mm
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-11-07-36



Pl. 160. Snare drum line during the New Year's ceremonies parade, Lhasa
1939
Photograph by Ernst Schäfer
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Bild 135-S-11-07-34



Pl. 162. Bass drummer Lobsang Tashi, in tiger-skin pelt, and Bodyguard Rupön Trungtrung
1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ400.03.50.014



Pl. 161. Drummers of the Bodyguard regiment in tiger-skin and leopard-skin furs, Lhasa
1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Film negative
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist archives, LTP:1578.15.66

Pl. 163. Parade of the Bodyguard regiment at the Norbulingka
1949
Photograph by Lowell Thomas Jr.
Projected graphic / 35-mm slide, Kodachrome
James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections,
Marist College, LTP:1582.10.09





Pl. 164. Band of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard regiment (Kusung), Lhasa
1948–1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.161



Pl. 165. Bugler from the band of the Dalai Lama's Bodyguard regiment (Kusung), Lhasa
1948–1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.307



Pl. 166. Band of the Trapchi regiment, Lhasa
1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.002



Pl. 167. Band of the newly (1949) recruited regiment
1949–1950
Photograph by Heinrich Harrer
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich,
Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.006

Endnotes Chapter 6

- 1 The terms *bha dung sde tshan* or *bha dung* is by Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse nmam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 28; the spelling *'ba' dung* is by Ri kha Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 1972: 240. Thus *bha/'ba' dung* would be a combination of the Tibetan conch-shell/trumpet (*dung*) and the Hindi word for instrument and band. While *'ba' ja*, a direct transcription of the Hindi word for “band”, is from Lama Kazi Dawasamdub's English-Tibetan dictionary (1919). I am most grateful to Donald La Rocca for having indicated Lama Kazi Dawasamdub's dictionary to me. It reflects an earlier usage than the terminology used by Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue.
- 2 All previous Tibetan words for music instruments are based on Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse nmam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 28.
- 3 Lama Kazi Dawasamdub 1919.
- 4 Ri kha Blo bzang bstan 'dzin 1972: 240.
- 5 Dwang slob mda' zur spyi 'thus rgyal rtse nmam rgyal dbang 'dus 2003, vol. 1: 28.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Sumner [2001] 2009: 52.
- 10 “Arrangement made for the training in military music of the Tibetan –deported musicians to India”, May 1919, National Archives of India, Extl. Part B. May 31–52.
- 11 On which point, see Josayma 2009.
- 12 In a photograph entitled “Part of the Small Tibetan Army on Parade, 1944”, that has not been included in this volume but is available online: A.T. Steele Papers, Special Collections, Arizona State University Libraries, available online: <https://hdl.handle.net/2286/R.L.25522>, last accessed 30th January 2022.
- 13 The identification of the two soldiers in the photograph is based on a hand-written caption added to a copy of this image kept in the collections of Tibet Museum, Dharamshala.
- 14 A photograph, in which four drumplayers wearing leopard and tiger skin can be seen has been reproduced in Thondup 1983: 52.
- 15 In the British army too, most regiments maintained full dress for bandsmen and musicians of the troops (drummers, buglers, trumpeters and pipers).
- 16 Scarlet cloth required expensive red cochineal or alizarin dye and was therefore, for financial reasons, in addition as for tactical reasons (it made soldiers too visible on the battlefield), withdrawn from the service dress in most Europeans army at the beginning of the 20th century, being kept only for a few ceremonial corps, for the army bands as well as for full dress worn on special occasions.
- 17 Archive of the British Film Institute, London.
- 18 Archive of the British Film Institute, London.
- 19 Unfortunately, no films of the Tibetan army band with sound has reached us (to our knowledge). All are silent. Some have been edited with unrelated music (see the film shot by E. Schäfer in 1939 entitled *Geheimnis Tibet* for instance, at mn 1:03:57).
- 20 In a manner that David-Neel qualifies as being “not too bad, my Goodness!” (David-Neel 1927: 425). At another occasion, the French explorer witnessed the band playing what she called “music hall tunes” (David-Neel 1927: 414).
- 21 Tibet thus followed the example of a number of countries, which had adopted this tune as their national anthem during the 19th century, such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Russia, the United States, to name but a few.
- 22 Chapman 1938: 365.
- 23 *Lhasa Weekly letters of the British mission, Lhasa to Political Officer in Sikkim: for the week ending 1st September 1946*, National Archives, FO/371/53616, ex. F15693/71/10.
- 24 Recounted for instance in Stoddard 1986: 84.
- 25 Thomas 1950: 180.
- 26 Harrer [1953] 1996: “A new National Anthem was composed to replace “God Save

the Queen”, the tune of which had hitherto been played at important military parades”. However, this anthem was apparently not the current Tibetan national anthem, which was written in exile only by Trijang Rinpoche, according to Jamyang Norbu (2015a). Nothing else is known about this first new national anthem.

- 27 See an interview quoted by Goldstein, in which a witness remembers that this fact had caused displeasure to the Chinese authorities (Goldstein 2007: 215).

Conclusion

Lessons about the history of the Tibetan army from archival photographs and films

This collection of 168 historical photographs of Tibetan soldiers and militia has not only shown the multiple faces of the Tibetan army from 1895 to 1959, but also allowed us to move forward in our understanding of its history, spanning the reigns of the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth Dalai Lamas. The selection has shown how the Tibetan army progressively came into focus under a range of different lenses as it became more distinctively visible in a growing number of archival photographs and films from the end of the 19th century until 1951 (after which photographs and films become scarce). The numerous and frequent changes in the external appearance underwent by regular troops largely reflect in several ways the domestic and international political contexts.

Generally speaking, the main lesson to be learned from analysing the material culture of the Tibetan army through both film and photographic evidence is that the process of modernisation of Tibetan troops was far less linear than previously thought. The fact that numerous undated images, when first discovered, did not fit any existing historical discourse on the Tibetan army, was a sure sign that many of the changes the Tibetan army went through during this period were yet to be properly understood. At the end of this period of research, however, the images have revealed to us an abundance of interesting details regarding the exact composition of the uniforms and emblems of the Tibetan army. The images also help to place these changes in a more firmly established chronology. In addition, the analysis of images brought to light a few

new lessons of greater scope, regarding the history of the Tibetan army and of Tibet more generally, and the influences at work in Tibet during this period, which can be listed in chronological order as follows.

The first lesson concerns the efficiency of the Tibetan military system of border defence in the late 19th century, as testified to by foreign travellers in recording their many encounters with Tibetan militia and soldiers stationed in the regions they were trying to cross, encounters which are documented in a wealth of previously underestimated visual sources.

The second and main lesson to be taken from these sources is that attempts at creating a modern standardised uniform took place before the British model was chosen in 1916, at some point between 1908 and 1916, and possibly in two distinct political contexts, both under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama reign, either during the last years of the Qing Empire or (and?) during the very first years of the *de facto* independence of Tibet. The usual narrative imposed upon Tibetan history is that everything new in Modern Tibet dated to the point after the Thirteenth Dalai Lama returned from exile in an independent country, and that change was mainly due to British influence. We have seen however, that, at least as far as the modernisation of the troops' external appearance is concerned, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and around him a number of officers full of initiative had most likely begun to deal with this issue at an earlier stage, when the Manchu hold over Tibet was slackening (as illustrated in Henry Martin's photographs in 1908–1914), and in any case certainly before 1916

(as can be seen in Aoki Bunkyō’s photographs), possibly under Japanese influence. In much the same way as the first steps towards the modernisation of Tibetan firearms had already been taken in the last decade of the 19th century, this other key aspect of military modernisation, that of its outward appearance, is to be understood as being part of the larger need to modernise the army, a fact that had been realised after the first Tibetan defeat at the hands of the British army in 1888 in Lungtu, and repeated during the Younghusband military mission in 1904.

The third lesson of this sample of photographs is that the “British model” of uniform was never entirely or particularly strictly implemented throughout the Tibetan army, except for the Lhasa-based regiments, even when speaking only of the regular troops (the militia being in essence civilians, they were never concerned regarding uniforms, although they were armed by the government). Homogeneity of uniform was never fully achieved, even during the initially “triumphant” phase of modernisation drives based on the British model (1916–1924). Not only did sporadic elements of the previous Sino-Manchu military dress survive in some form or other, albeit in a limited measure (as seen for example with the single example of the Manchu soldiers’ helmets in Gyantse in 1924, with Chinese-style tunics worn in Lhasa in 1913–1916 or in Gyantse in 1931, and above all with the turbans worn by some Tibetan regular soldiers until at least 1945), but there were also various Tibetan-style sartorial elements that reappeared in the soldiers’ dress very quickly, if only occasionally, until the 1930s, before the military uniform was officially Tibetanised.

Fourth, thanks to photographic evidence, the re-Tibetanisation process of the uniforms has been clarified, with visual evidence allowing us to make sense of the two different dates proposed for its inception and implementation in the secondary literature (both in the same volume: in the late 1930s, as proposed by Norngang, and 1945 by Gyaltse Namgyal Wangdue). We can see that changes happened only incrementally, due first to a lack of funding, then introduced to only one regiment, with the reforms being eventually implemented for all but one of the Tibetan regiments.

Last, but not least, despite the much-debated and historically proven rejection of militarisation modernisation by a faction of the monastic elites, photographs show the marching Tibetan army as consistently being accompanied by dozens of enthusiastic Tibetans of all classes, statuses (monks and laity) and ages; they show dense crowds of monks and laypeople gathering together to witness the inspections and demonstrations of marksmanship with newly imported firearms. In a word, photographs bear witness to the high level of integration of the army within Tibetan society, of its visible presence at all significant events and most of the religious festivals of the Lhasa year, and generally speaking, of the marked interest displayed by the Tibetan population for its army.

Appendix 1. Archival photographs related to the Tibetan army consulted for this project

Collections	Photographers and period of time when the photographs were taken	Place of conservation	Number of photographs related to the Tibetan army
Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich	H. Harrer and P. Aufschnaiter (1949–1950)	Zurich, Switzerland	226
Tibet Album (Pitt Rivers Museum and British Museum)	C.A. Bell (1920–1921), Rabden Lepcha (1921), W.P. Rosemeyer (1922), J. Guthrie (1934–1936), E.Y. Nepean (1936), H.E. Richardson (1937), E.S. Chapman (1936 and 1937), H.W.G. Staunton (1940–1941), A.J. Hopkinson (1927–1928)	Oxford and London, UK, <i>available online</i>	100
Pitt Rivers Museum (not included in the <i>Tibet Album</i>)	H. Martin (1904–1931)	Oxford, UK	32
Library of Tibetan Works and Archives	Tse Ten Tashi (1951) and others	Dharamshala, India	60
Royal Geographical Society	O. Norzunov and G. Tsybikov (1899), S.C. Das, S. Hedin (1901–1908), Capt. C.G. Rawling (1903), Capt. H.H.P. Deasy and A. Pike (1903), Col. Younghusband (1903–1904), Major C.H.D. Ryder (1903–1904), “Tibet Mission Force Album” (1903–1904), Lieut. F.M. Bailey (1903–1923), Rev. R.A. MacLeod (1926), Capt. H.R.C. Meade (1922), E. Teichman (1919–1921), Ato Photographic Association (B. Aoki, 1913–1916)	London, UK	51
George Tsarong private collection	Dasang Dadul Tsarong, G. Tsarong and others (1913–1959)		50
Tibet Museum	miscellaneous	Dharamshala, India	45
Cambridge University Archaeology and Ethnology Museum	F. and M. Williamson collection (1931–1933), Byers, J.K. Sheppard collection (1938)	Cambridge, UK	40
Newark Museum	Tse Ten Tashi (1951), A. Shelton, C. Suydam Cutting (1935–1937)	New Jersey, USA	24
British Library (IOR)	F.M. Bailey (1903–1909) collection	London, UK	16
Bundes Archiv	E. Schäfer (1938–1939)	Koblenz, Germany, <i>available online</i>	15
Stockholm Ethnographical Museum	S. Hedin collection (1901 and 1907–1908)	Stockholm, Sweden	12
Fondation Alexandra David-Neel /Musée du Quai Branly	A. David-Neel (1912–1924)	Digne-les-Bains/Paris, France	11
Marist Archives	L. Thomas (1949)	Poughkeepsie, New York, USA	10
E. Parker Collection, British Columbia University	E. Parker Collection (1921–1923)	Vancouver, Canada, <i>available online</i>	8
Akiko Tada Private Archives and Nakako Yajima Private Archives	Y. Yajima (1912–1918)	Chiba, Sapporo and Maebashi, Japan	6
Tethong family private collection	Tethong Gyurme Gyatso and others (1913–1959)		3
Josef Vaniš private collections	J. Vaniš (1954)	Czech Republic	4
Augustin Palát private collections, Czech-Chinese Society	A. Palát (1956)	Prague, Czech Republic	2
Archives nationales de France	Prince H. d’Orléans (1889–1990)	Paris, France	1
Société de Géographie	A. Cintract (Collection A. Bodart) (1922)	Paris, France	1
Archives diplomatiques	A. Bodart (1920)	Nantes, France	1
Total			718

Appendix 2. Archival footage related to the Tibetan army consulted for this project

British Film Institute	Laden La (1930), J. Guthrie (1935), Sir B. Gould (1936 and 1940), G. Sherriff (1943), Tsien-Lien Shun (1942–1945), Jigme Taring (1954)	London, UK
Marist Archives	Lowell Thomas Jr. (1949)	Poughkeepsie, New York, USA
Cambridge University Archaeology and Ethnology Museum	FF. Williamson (1933–1935), reels 7, 8, 9, 14, 18, 20 and 23	Cambridge, UK, <i>available online</i>
Pitt Rivers Museum	E.S. Chapman (1936–1937), films 8 and 11	Oxford, UK, <i>available online</i>
Other online resources	<i>Geheimnis Tibet</i> (1938–1938), 1943, E. Schäfer	<i>available online</i>
	<i>Inside Tibet</i> , 1943 (I. Tolstoy and B. Dolan)	<i>available online</i>
	<i>High Adventure Tibet</i> , 1949 (L. Thomas)	<i>available online</i>

Appendix 3. Original titles of the photographs from public collections included in this volume

NB: This list of original titles (i.e. as they appear in the collections) is provided for the sake of accuracy, since new captions have been created where needed for a number of photographs in this volume, featuring updated information regarding their content and sometimes dates. However, for complete information related to the images (copyright, dates, size, technique used), the reader should refer to the captions next to each photograph. Still images and images from private collections (which usually had no titles) have not been included.

Photographs by Heinrich Harrer, Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich:

Cover photograph: “Prozession Dalai Lama Musikkappelle; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die Musikkappelle der Leibgarde des D.L. in europäischen Uniformen” (Inv. No VMZ.400.08.01.160)

- Pl. 94. “Polizisten der Stadt Lhasa; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Moderne Armee [handschriftlicher Übertitel]” (Inv.-No. VMZ.400.07.02.023)
- Pl. 95. “Truppeninspektion; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: ‘Amt im Freien’ der OKW in Uniform spricht mit Sergeanten. Die Mönche sind Vertreter des Regenten u. des D.L.” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.004)
- Pl. 96. “Truppen; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: dito [Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten]” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.22.019)
- Pl. 97. “Soldaten bei der Truppenrekrutierung; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.012)
- Pl. 98. “Soldaten bei der Truppenrekrutierung; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.010)
- Pl. 99. “Truppenaufstellung der tibetischen Armee; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.014)
- Pl. 100. “Truppen der tibetischen Armee; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Neurekruitierte Soldaten im Sommergarten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.002)
- Pl. 101. “Soldaten gehen an die Front; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Soldaten gehen an die Front” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.559)
- Pl. 103. “Fahnenweihe; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Fahnenweihe am Fuss des Potala” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.550)

- Pl. 105. “Fluchtkarawane: Reiter mit Fahnen” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.08.026)
- Pl. 130. “Soldaten bei der Truppenrekrutierung; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.008)
- Pl. 140. “Truppen; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: dito [Soldaten marschieren aus Lhasa hinaus, um an die Front zu gehen.] Vor Verlassen von Lhasa marschieren die Truppen in den Sommergarten, um vom D.L. gesegnet zu werden” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.50.012)
- Pl. 141. “Soldaten; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Defilieren der Soldaten nach dem tägl. Theater am Abend im Sommergarten” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.645)
- Pl. 142. “Zwei tibetische Nationalfahnen; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die Nationalfahne von Tibet” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.006)
- Pl. 144. “Soldaten; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: dito [Die neu-rekrutierten Soldaten]” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.50.037)
- Pl. 151. “Fahnenträger der Fluchtkarawane; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die Fahnen in der Prozession flattern im Sturm. [Legende 2:] Re. Banner des Dalai Lamas, li. Nationalfahne. Beachte windgebogene Fahnenstangen und zerzaustes Haar der Pferde” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.08.01.239)
- Pl. 152. “Reiter mit Fahne des Dalai Lamas; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Das Banner des D.L., beachte die im Sturm gebogene Fahnenstange” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.13.006)
- Pl. 153. “Fluchtkarawane vor dem Kloster in Phari; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Das Kloster von Phari, in dem der D.L. wohnte. Li. stehen Soldaten und Mönche Spalier. Erste Fahne ist das Banner der DL., zweite Fahne die Nationalflagge” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.13.017)
- Pl. 162. “Zwei Offiziere; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: zwei Offiziere niederen Ranges, links der Trommler mit Tigerfell behangen” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.50.014)
- Pl. 164. “Leibgarde des Dalai Lama: Trommler; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Die Trommler des Leibregimentes des D.L. Im Hintergrund der Potala” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.161)

- Pl. 165. “Leibgarde des Dalai Lama: Trompeter; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: Trompetenbläser der Leibgarde des D.L. am Tschagpori, der Signal gibt, wenn D.L.’s Säufte den Potala verlässt. [Legende 2:] Der Trompeter auf dem Tschagpori, der den Beginn der Prozession anzeigt” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.03.307)
- Pl. 166. “Musikgruppe der Armee; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: dito [Soldaten marschieren aus Lhasa hinaus, um an die Front zu gehen.] Vor Verlassen von Lhasa marschieren die Truppen in den Sommergarten, um vom D.L. gesegnet zu werden” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.50.002)
- Pl. 167. “Trommler der tibetischen Armee; Original-Liste von Heinrich Harrer: dito [Neurekruitierte Soldaten im Sommergarten], die Trommler” (Inv.-No VMZ.400.07.04.006)

Photographs by Peter Aufschnaiter, Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich:

- Pl. 102. “Gye Si Choe Si, Truppenaufmarsch Kusunga in Shol; Original-Liste von Peter Aufschnaiter: Gye Si Choe Si, Truppenaufmarsch Kusunga in Shol. Leica Film no 10 Plus X Dez 1950” (Inv.-No VMZ.401.10.005)
- Pl. 104. “Armenzelte bei Ponso Simsha; Original-Liste von Peter Aufschnaiter: Armenzelte bei Ponso Simsha mit Blumen. Leica Film 4 Anso Kinofilm 33 Sch August 1950” (Inv.- No VMZ.401.04.019)

Photographs by Ernst Schäfer, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz:

- Pl. 1. “Tibetexpedition, Neujahrsparade, Rta pa Reiter; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die große Neujahrsparade” (Bild 135-S-11-08-32)
- Pl. 80. “Tibetexpedition, Shigatse, Truppenparade; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Schigatse, tibetisches Militär mit Dzong, Truppenparade” (Bild 135-S-17-14-34)
- Pl. 81. “Tibetexpedition, Militärparade; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala” (Bild 135-S-11-07-17)
- Pl. 82. “Tibetexpedition, Tibetischer Offizier; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potalla, Soldat” (Bild 135-S-16-01-27)
- Pl. 83. “Tibetexpedition, Tibetische Soldaten, Offizier; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala, Soldaten” (Bild 135-S-16-01-17)

Pl. 84. “Tibetexpedition, Norbulingkawachen; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, Norbulinkhawachen” (Bild 135-S-13-13-33)

Pl. 85. “Tibetexpedition, Tibetischer Soldat; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala, Soldaten” (Bild 135-S-10-11-11)

Pl. 86. “Tibetexpedition, Tibetischer Soldat; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, tibetischer Soldat” (Bild 135-S-14-02-11)

Pl. 87. “Tibetexpedition, Rastende Soldaten; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala” (Bild 135-S-16-08-13)

Pl. 88. “Tibetexpedition, Rastende Soldaten; Original caption by Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala, Soldaten” (Bild 135-S-11-04-37)

Pl. 157. “Tibetexpedition, Shigatse, Truppenparade; Original-Liste von Ernst Schäfer: Schigatse, tibetisches Militär mit Dzong, Truppenparade” (Bild 135-S-17-14-24)

Pl. 158. “Tibetexpedition, Shigatse, Truppenparade; Original-Liste von Ernst Schäfer: Schigatse, tibetisches Militär mit Dzong, Truppenparade” (Bild 135-S-17-14-39)

Pl. 159. “Tibetexpedition, Militärparade, Trommler; Original-Liste von Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala” (Bild 135-S-11-07-36)

Pl. 160. “Tibetexpedition, Militärparade, Trommler; Original-Liste von Ernst Schäfer: Lhasa, die Neujahrsparade des modernen Militärs vor dem Potala” (Bild 135-S-11-07-34)

Photographs from the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford:

Pl. 2. “Tibetan foot soldier with old style armour and shield” (Photograph by Rabden Lepcha?, Coll. Sir Charles Bell, 1998.285.69.2)

Pl. 23. “Soldiers’ shrine at Gyantse” (Photograph by Charles A. Bell or Rabden Lepcha?, 1998.286.45)

Pl. 24. Untitled. Description: “Group portrait showing a depon (magistrate), standing, with Khamba soldiers. There are twenty-one persons in total, arranged in several rows, some standing, some kneeling, rifles in hand” (Photograph by Henry Martin, 1998.293.140)

Pl. 26. Untitled. Description: “Group portrait of Tibetan soldiers. This is a formal portrait with the soldiers arranged in several rows, some standing, some kneeling, prong guns in hand” (Photograph by Henry Martin, 1998.293.143)

Pl. 27. “Tibetan soldiers in Gyantse” (Photograph by Henry Martin, 1998.285.450)

Pl. 29. Untitled. Description: “Group portrait of Tibetan soldiers. There are nineteen soldiers in total, arranged in two rows, one standing, one kneeling, rifles in hand” (Photograph by Henry Martin, 1998.293.142)

Pl. 50. “Tibetan soldiers on parade in Lhasa, February 1921” (Photograph by Rabden Lepcha?, The Charles Bell Collection, 1998.285.109.1)

Pl. 74. “Brigadier Neame inspecting Tibetan troops” (Photograph by Evan Yorke Nepean, 2001.35.214.1)

Pl. 75. “Inspecting the Tibetan Troops at Military Review” (Photograph by Evan Yorke Nepean, 2001.35.217.1)

Pl. 76. “Crowds watching military display” (Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman, 2001.35.298.1)

Pl. 77. “Brigadier Neame inspects Tibetan soldiers” (Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman, 2001.35.370.1)

Pl. 78. “Tibetan Lewis Gun section” (Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman, 1998.131.505)

Pl. 79. “Tibetan soldiers in different uniforms” (Photograph by Frederick Spencer Chapman, 2001.35.373.1)

Pl. 139. Untitled. Description: “View of soldiers during a ceremonial trooping of the Tibetan colours. People at the right of the image are looking at the photographer” (Photograph by Henry Martin, 1998.293.149)

Photographs from the Royal Geographical Society, London:

Pl. 6. “Some of our Tibetan escort” (Photograph by Henry H.P. Deasy and A. Pike, PR/072986)

Pl. 13. “Tibetan warriors” (Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling, PR/073324)

Pl. 14. “Tibetans in Western Tibet, a pony merchant, a soldier, and a village headman” (Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling, rgs073319)

Pl. 15. Untitled (Photograph by Cecil G. Rawling, rgs073347)

Pl. 30. “Tibetan soldiers (2)” (Ato Photographic Association, A130/003262)

Pl. 31. “Tibetan soldiers (1)” (Ato Photographic Association, A130/003261)

Pl. 51. “Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by I.A. Officers and N.C.O’s” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073234)

Pl. 52. “Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by I.A. Officers and N.C.O” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073225)

Pl. 53. “Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by I.A. Officers and N.C.O’s” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073235)

Pl. 55. “Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by I.A. Officers and N.C.O’s” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073237)

Pl. 56. “Gyantse: Tibetan troops being trained by I.A. Officers and N.C.O’s” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073238)

Pl. 57. “Gyantse: Tibetan officers” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073240)

Pl. 58. “Gyantse – Tibetan soldier, old style” (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, rgs073128)

Pl. 59. “Local Tibetan militia in Tsawarong (Khampas)” (Photograph by Eric Teichman, rgs075649)

Pl. 62. “Tibetan troops in camp” (Photograph by Eric Teichman, rgs073774)

Pl. 63. “A company of the new Tibetan army at Lha mdüm Markham Province” (Photograph by Rev. Roderick A. MacLeod, rgs073116)

Collection of The Newark Museum of Art, New Jersey:

Pl. 73. “Four Tibetan commanders in chief, three wearing jodhpurs, on wearing slacks, 1935–1937” (Photograph by Charles Suydam Cutting, 83.801)

Pl. 112. “Tibetan troops in native dress (chupa) lined up outside Norbu Lingka, Lhasa, Tibet” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.3.39)

Pl. 114. “Kusung (body guard) unit standing in formation, Norbu Lingka, Lhasa, Tibet” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.3.43)

Pl. 115. “Kusung (body guard) unit in Norbu Lingka a courtyard with kathags” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.3.50)

Pl. 116. “Close up at Kunsung tent” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.3.45)

Pl. 119. “Dzasa Kunsangtse, Commander in Chief of the Tibetan army (left), Gonsham Latsan dgon gsham las mtsan, Tibetan ambassador in Beijing (right), around 1951” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.2.63)

Pl. 150. “Kusung (body guard) advance party on horseback” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.3.46)

Pl. 154. “Military Man (Governor of Mar khams’ staff) playing bagpipes” (Photograph by Albert Shelton, 20.1385)

Pl. 155. “Pair of Gurkha bagpipers” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, 2000.36.2.49)

Photographs from the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala:

Pl. 49. “Tibetan military group” (Unknown photographer, P302429)

Pl. 108. “Tibetan military group led by Phala Dorje Wangchuk (Dromo)” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, P302445)

Pl. 109. “Dromo Security Personnel and armies” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, P303101)

Pl. 110. “Security officer” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi?, P303095)

Pl. 111. Untitled (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, P303103)

Pl. 113. “Soldiers at the Norbulingka” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, File 102, 231)

Pl. 117. “Chief General Dzasag Kunsang Tse at the training site” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, P302424)

Pl. 118. “Military Officer Muja dhapon Tsewang Norbu” (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi, P302422)

Pl. 127. “Tibetan military officers” (Unknown photographer, P302440)

Pl. 128. “General Phuntsok Tashi Takla” (Unknown photographer, P302448)

Photographs from the Frederick Williamson collection (by Frederick Williamson unless specified), University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology:

Pl. 65. “Tibetan troops at Gyantse” (P. 87153.WIL)

Pl. 66. “French, Marshall, Rupon, Sinclair, Fletcher at Gyantse 20.7.31 [photo taken by] (Byers)” (Photograph by Byers, P97876.WIL)

Pl. 67. “Rupon’s reception on the way to Dongtse - 1.8.31, French, Fletcher, Sinclair, Marshall, Byers, Rupon” (P97893.WIL)

Pl. 68. “Trap-chi regiment” (P97020.WIL)

Pl. 69. “The new regiment at Trap-chi 30.8.33. Troops” (P97013.WIL)

Pl. 70. “Officers 30.8.33. Yutok Depön, Jigme Detsap, Cham-je” (P97021.WIL)

Pl. 71. “The new regiment at Trap-chi 30.8.33. Troops” (P97015.WIL)

Pl. 72. “At Tsarong’s house - 22.8.33. Sonam, Dundul, Ding-cha” (P96966.WIL)

Pl. 136. “Another view of the band with more standard bearers” (P97858.WIL)

Pl. 156. “Taken by Peggy” (Photograph by Margaret Williamson, P97018.WIL)

Photographs by Lowell Thomas Jr. from the James A. Cannavino Library, Archives & Special Collections, Marist College:

Pl. 89. “Chogpön Nima Gyabu served as the Thomas caravan’s military escort throughout the journey” (LTP1578.13.42)

Pl. 90. “Military parade of Tibetan soldiers, features drum corps” (LTP1533.10.01)

Pl. 91. “Snapshot: military parade of Tibetan soldiers” (LTP1582.11.09)

Pl. 92. “Military parade of Tibetan soldiers” (LTP1582.10.14)

Pl. 93. “Tibetan general and soldiers by the color guard” (LTP1582.10.8)

Pl. 131. “Tibetan general and soldiers, including children, by the color guard” (LTP1582.10.03)

Pl. 161. “Tibetan military parade includes musicians, soldier in tiger-skin fur, and soldier in snow leopard-skin fur” (LTP1578.15.66)

Pl. 163. “Military parade of Tibetan soldiers” (LTP1582.10.09)

Photographs by Frederick M. Bailey from the Bailey collection, British Library Board, India Office Records, London:

Pl. 17. “Tibetan soldiers at Guru – standing beyond the furrow” (IOR 1083/13(45))

Pl. 18. “Prisoner carrying arms of other prisoners” (IOR 1083/13(91))

Pl. 19. [Page of Frederick Marshman Bailey’s photo album] (IOR 1083/13(114-117))

Pl. 20. “Meru Gyalwa Depon (General)” (IOR 1083/17(106))

Pl. 21. “Kyï Buk - Rupen wounded at Guru” (IOR 1083/18(223))

Pl. 22. “Badu la - Kambajongpon, Inspecting the maxim” (IOR 1083/12(62))

Pl. 54. Untitled (Photograph by Henry R.C. Meade, Bailey Collection, IOR 1083/46(255))

Photographs from the Alexandra David-Neel Collection © Ville de Digne-les-Bains:

Pl. 25. “Old fashion soldiers” (Photograph by Henry Martin?, Dn762a)

Pl. 35. “Lhasa groupe d’officiers” (Dn764b)

Pl. 44. “Tsarong Shape” (Dn472)

Pl. 60. “Kham, Septembre 1921” (Dn100a)

Pl. 61. “Soldats Thibétains de l’armée de Lhasa” (Kham, Sept. 1921) (Dn720)

Pl. 64. “L’armée tibétaine moderne à Lhasa” (Dn764a)

Photographs by Sven Hedin from the Sven Hedin Foundation at the Museum of Ethnography, Stockholm:

Pl. 8. “Tibetanska soldater m. skjutvapen. På Ö. stranden av Tschargut-tso. Vy mot Ö. Tibetanska soldater” [Tibetan soldiers with firearms. On the W. Shore of Tschargut-tso. View of W. Tibetan soldiers] (1025.0286)

Pl. 9. “Kavalleri, ryttare” [cavalry, riders] (1025.0442)

Pl. 10. “Kavalleri” [cavalry] (1025.0209n)

Pl. 11. “Army at Targo Gangri” (1027.0067)

Pl. 12. “Commander of the Government escort” (952.56.x002_Teckning3)

Others:

Pl. 3. “Premiers hommes” (Archives de la Maison de France administrées par la Fondation Saint-Louis, Archives nationales, Pierrefitte, Photograph by Henri d’Orléans, AP/300(III)277)

Pl. 16. “Amulet and Container, made before 1904, taken from Dongtse, Southern Tibet” (© World Museum, Collection of National Museums Liverpool, E2022.029)

Pl. 134. “Phot. du drapeau tibétain par A. Cintract, don Bodard en 1922” (Photograph by A. Cintract, donated by A. Bodard in 1922, Société de géographie, gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, SG WD-157)

Pl. 28. “David Macdonald (3rd from left) Trade agent Yatung and Gyantse, Dr. Harland (2nd from the right), Trade Agency Doctor with Tibetan Escort, Yatung” (UBC Museum of Anthropology, Eric Parker funds, Vancouver, Photograph by Henry Martin, a033540)

Pl. 149. Untitled (Photograph by Tse Ten Tashi?, Tibet Museum Photo Archive, Dharamshala, P-007—203)

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