

## GREY WOLF IN TIBETAN TRADITION

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།། | རྩེད་དགས་སུ་སྤང་གི་རྒྱལ་མཚན་འཛིན། |

“Holding the banner of wolf symbolises holding by force, that is, conquest”. (1)

It is true that the expression “grey wolf” is used much later than “wolf”, though ordinarily the colour of the wolf is grey in Tibet as in other parts of the world too (2). The first instances—in the works on Mahākala (mgon-po མགོན་པོ་) and Kila (phur-pa ལུ་པ་) in Kanjur (bka’-’gyur བཀའ་འགྱུར་) and Tenjur (bstan-’gyur བསྟན་འགྱུར་) (3)—did not use the epithet grey while later in Sakya Kabbum (sa-skya-bka’-’bum ས་སྐ་བཀའ་འབུམ་) (4), Rinchen Terzod (rin-chen-ger-mzod རིན་ཆེན་གཏིར་མཛོད་) (5) and the 5th Dalai Lama’s (lha-pa-chen-po ལྷ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་) works, (6) the epithet was quite current.

When the Mandala (dkyal-’khor དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་) (7) of a deity was threatened by the evil spirits an animal like tiger, elephant or wolf emerged from the body of the same deity to protect the Mandala. The fat of the wolf is used in Tantric (rgyud རྒྱུད་) chemistry (8) and some Mandala is surrounded by eight graves and also eight different creatures (9). Wolf is one among the eight creatures.

In Eastern Tibet (khams ཁམས་) a traveller would regard it as a good omen, if he comes across a hawk, a kite or a wolf on the way. This belief can perhaps be traced back to King Gesar (ge-sar གེ་སར་). Gesar had three big generals who were represented by these three creatures. In the epic of Gesar one reads about the general who was symbolised by wolf and who described himself as the wolf of a man who killed or preyed on others as if they were lambs (10).

There are possibilities that the grey wolf motif itself might have developed in Khotan (li-yul ལེ་ཡུལ་) and had come to Tibet *via* India, in the time of Guru Padmasambhava (eighth century A.C.) The Tsenmara (tsi’u-dmar-po ཚེན་དམར་པོ་) and his six brothers appeared as wolves in seven different colours and approached Guru Padmasambhava, desiring to disturb him while he was in meditation in a grave in India (11). On asking who the demons

were, Guru was told that they were the sons of the king of Khotan. By his supernatural power the seven demons were made to be the protectors of the Doctrine. They are known as Tsenmar Pundun (btsan-dmar-spun-bdun བཙུན་དམར་སྤུན་བདུན་) in Tibet.

In Tibetan literature the banner of wolf (spyang.k'i-rgyal-mtsan སྤྲེལ་ཀི་རི་རྒྱལ་མཚན་) (12) is found in the books on Gyalpo Ku-nga (rgyal-po-sku-lna རྒྱལ་པོ་སྐུ་ལྷ་: five kings who are the protectors of the monasteries and the State Oracles of Tibet) who are known as "tobun-qaghan" in Mongolia. In those books the symbolic meaning is as explained above in the opening para. Among those deities, the chief deity known as Pehar (pe-har ཤེ་ར་) or Pekar (pe-kar ཤེ་ཀར་ or pe-dkar ཤེ་དཀར་) is some times addressed as the god of war of all men (skyes-bu-yongs-kyi-dgra-lha སྐྱེ་བུ་ཡོང་ས་ཀྱི་དང་ལྷ་) or simply as great god of war (dgra-lha-chen-po དང་ལྷ་ཅེས་པོ་) who came to Tibet in the eighth century from Bhata Hor (bha-ta-hor བྱ་ར་) (13). The books on these deities narrate almost the same story about the appearance of Pehar—first in Khotan, then in Bhata Hor (Mongolia) and finally in Tibet (14). It is said that after the completion of Samye (bsam-yas བསམ་ཡལ་) monastery the Guru asked a serpent to be the guardian of the monastery but it refused (15). Then the Guru advised the king Thrisong Detsen (khri-srong-lde-btsan ཁྱི་སྲོང་ལྷེ་བཙུན་) to send an army to Bhata Hor for bringing certain objects from the Gomda (sgom-grwa སྐོམ་གྲཱ་, Meditation School). An army was sent and they ransacked that school and brought the objects which included a small turquoise image of the Buddha and a mask (16). These were in the monastery of Samye till 1959. Pehar, as custodian of religious property in that school could not leave the site but had to follow those articles, as it was said by Guru. Thereupon he was appointed by the Guru as the guardian of the monastery. There is a temple in Samye which is known as Pehar Chog (pe-har-lcog ཤེ་ར་ལྷོག་) and on which there was a banner of wolf on the roof of the temple on the north (17). Mongolia being on the north of Tibet, the northern direction is significant.

It is interesting to note that in Tibetan tradition a deity riding a grey wolf or having a grey wolf head is usually found on the north, northwest or back of the principal deity surrounded by its retinues (18). In Mongolia the word for north, umar-a, also stands for back.

The animals which the Dharmapalas (Defenders of Law) have are tiger, wolf, kite, crow and owl etc. Thu'u Kan (thu'u-bkan ཐུ་འུ་བཀའ་) divides the day and night into six periods and finds the

evil spirits disguised in six forms. To subdue these evils there are six retinues; for instances, when an evil spirit appears in the form of a sheep, the wolf is the subduer of it (19).

Dhalha (dgra-lha དགའ་ལྷ་ /god of war, see Sarat Chandra Das: *Tibetan English Dictionary*) is one of the five gods, who are inseparable companions of humanity. Dhalha is accompanied by a wolf and a hawk; it is said that Dhalha let emanations of wolves and hawks (20).

The Turks might have got grey wolf banner from Tibet. When the third Dalai Lama visited the Mongol Khan in the 16th century, as it was prophesied in Kadam Legsbam (bka'-gdams-glegs-bam བཀའ་གདམས་གླེང་བམ་ ) and also by Chogyal Phagpa (chos-rgyal-'phags-pa རྗེ་ཤཱ་གྲུ་འཕགས་པ་) (21), he (D.L.) built a monastery which included a temple named Pehar Chog (22). Whether there was a wolf banner or not on the roof of that temple but there must have been paintings of all the retinues of the Pehar. Among the retinues of Pehar, some hold the banner of wolf (23).

The third Dalai Lama was born in Water Rabbit year corresponding to 1543 and passed away in Mongolia in Earth Rat year, that is, 1588. A recent traveller to Mongolia says that Erdeni Tsu, the largest monastery, was founded in 1586 (24). Though the founder of the monastery is not mentioned in this travel book, one can guess by its date that the third Dalai Lama may have been the founder of it.

A special importance of the wolf for the Mongols is that the first Mongol king had the name Borte-chinua which means grey-blue wolf (25); and the Mongols also believed that their first king was descended from the Tibetan kings. The Mongol historians say that he was the youngest son of Dalai Subin Aru Altan Shiregtetu (Tibetan gri-gum-btsan-po གྱི་རུ་མ་བཙའ་པ་) whose name was Shaza Thi (sha-za-khri ཤ་ཙ་ཁྱི་ , means flesh eater) and his two brothers fled to Kongpo (kong-po ཀོང་པོ་) after their father's assassination (26). From there he crossed over the Tenggis Sea in the direction of the north and came to the land of the Mongols (27). Mongol Chronicles of the Seventeenth century say "tere gongbo-yin utus-i ulu itegegsen" meaning that he (Borte-chinua) did not trust the Kongpo people (28), and came to Mongolia. On the other hand the Tibetan historians as Golotsawa ('gos-lo-tsa-wa འགོ་ལ་ལོ་ལྷ་བ་) Sonam Gyaltzen (bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ་མཚན་) and fifth Dalai Lama describe the first Mongol king Borta Che (sbor-ta-che སྐོར་ཏ་ཇེ་), the son

of Heaven (29) and about Shaza Thi, they said that he later on became the king of Kongpo (30).

The wolf was also described as the god of the travellers ('gro-lha རྩོམ་ལྷ) (31). It is however difficult to say whether the association of wolf with travels is Bon (བོན) or Buddhist (nang-pa རྣམ་པ་).

## NOTES

- (1) རིན་ཆེན་གཏེར་མཛོེད་ Vol. ཉི: རྒྱལ་པོ་རྩུབ་ལམ་འཁོར་བཅས་ཀྱི་གསོལ་ཁ་ལྷན་ལས་  
དོན་བཅུ་མ་ pp. 10, 11; and རྒྱུ་བཀའ་རྒྱུ་བཟོ་ Vol. ཙ: book No.  
37, pp. 13, 19.
- (2) *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1959) Vol. 23, p. 697.
- (3) Kanjur, རྒྱན་ Vol. ཙ: pp. 44, 56 and རྒྱན་ Vol. བ: p. 209.  
Tenjur རྒྱན་ Vol. ཟ: p. 185.
- (4) ས་སྐྱ་བཀའ་འབྲུག་ Vol. ཉ: pp. 362, 370, 374, 378.
- (5) རིན་ཆེན་གཏེར་མཛོེད་ Vol. ཀི: ལྷུང་བའི་དམར་ཆེན་གཏེར་མའི་ལས་རིས་  
pp. 8, 12; and Vol. ཇི: བཀའ་རྒྱུང་གྲུ་ན་ཆེན་པོ་རྩུབ་པའི་འཕྲིན་ལས་ pp. 3, 6.
- (6) Fifth Dalai Lama Vol. ད: ཐོག་མེད་དྲག་ཅམ་རྒྱལ་ལྷོ་བས་ལྷན་པའི་དམ་ཅན་  
ཆོས་རྒྱུང་གྱུ་མཚོའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་མཚོའི་འབྲུག་བསྐྱེད་བཀའ་སྤྱོད་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྣམ་པའི་  
ལྷན་གྲུབ་ pp. 177, 188; ཐོག་མེད་གྱུ་མཚོའི་དོ་རྩེའི་ལོ་ལྷན་ p. 5.
- (7) Kanjur རྒྱན་ Vol. ཟ: p. 282.
- (8) Kanjur རྒྱན་ Vol. ཙ: p. 56.
- (9) Tenjur རྒྱན་ Vol. ཟ: p. 185.



- (20) བདག་ཚེན་རྒྱ་གར་བས་མཛོད་པའི་དཔལ་ས་སྐྱའི་རམངས་ཡིག་དགོས་འདོད་ལྷན་གྱི་ལྷན་ Ms. with author p. 86 ; བུའུ་བཀུན་ Vol. 3: book No. 43, p. 2.
- (21) *The Golden Annals* (ed. Lokesh Chandra) part III, p. 20. reads as: “རྗེ་སྐུན་དུ་བཀའ་གདམས་སྐྱབས་བས་ལས། བོད་བྱང་གི་ཕྱོད་ནས་བྱང་ཕྱོགས་སུ། །མི་ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་སྐྱུལ་པ་རས་པ་ཞིག། །འབངས་མགོན་མེད་མང་པོ་འདྲོན་དུ་འགྲོ། །ཞིས་པའི་ངང་བཟུན་དང། སྤོན་འགྲོ་མགོན་ཚེས་རྒྱལ་འཕགས་པ་ལ་སྤོ་བེ་ལའི་སེ་རྒྱལ་པོས་གོང་དུ་བཞུགས་པ་ལྟར་བོག་མཐུན་པར་བར་གསུམ་གྱི་འབྲུལ་རྒྱུས་ཀྱིས། ལོས་སྤྲུག་ནག་པོ་བུའུ་ན། དེའི་རྗེས་སུ་དཀར་པོ་གཅིག་ཕུལ་བས། རྒྱ་མའི་ཞལ་ནས། དེའི་རང་གེ་སྐྱེ་བ་བུའུ་ན་གྱི་འོང་མི་སྤང། དེ་ནས་ཁྱེད་རྒྱལ་པོ་གསེར་གྱི་མིང་ཅན་དང། དེ་ཙམ་ལས་བྱས་པའི་མིང་ཅན་དུ་གྱུར་ཚོ་མཆེལ་ནས་འགྲོ་དོན་རྒྱ་ཚེན་པོ་བྱེད་དོ།”
- (22) Fifth Dalai Lama : Vol. 9: རྗེ་བཙུན་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ་བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ནམས་ཐར་དངོས་གྲུབ་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཤིང་དྭ་ (Life story of the III Dalai Lama) p. 96.
- (23) རིན་ཚེན་གཏེར་མཛོད་ Vol. 5: སྐུ་ལྡེ་ལམ་ལམ་ཁ་ pp. 10, 12; བུའུ་བཀུན་ Vol. 3: book No. 37, p. 19.
- (24) JORGEN BISCH *Mongolia: Unknown Land* (London 1963) p. 110.
- (25) HOWORTH : *History of the Mongols* (London 1876/New York 1964) pp. 32, 34.
- (26) རྒྱ་བོད་ཡིག་ཚང་; Ms. in NIT p. 90; རྒྱལ་རབས་གསལ་བའི་སེ་ལོང་ Ms. in NIT p. 27. and རྒྱལ་རབས་རྗོགས་ལུ་ལུ་ལུ་ལུ་ལུ་ p. 12.
- (27) C. R. BAWDEN: *The Mongol Chronicle Altan Tobci* (Wiesbaden 1955), p. 113.

- (28) A. Z. ZAMCARANO: *The Mongol Chronicles of the Seventeenth Century* (Wiesbaden 1955), p. 32.
- (29) རྒྱལ་རབས་གསལ་བའི་མེ་ལོང་ p. 13; དེའི་གཏོར་སྤོན་གོ་ book No. ༧: p. 26 and GEORGE N. ROERICH: *The Blue Annals* (Calcutta 1949) part I, p. 57. and རྒྱ་པོད་ཡིག་རྩལ་ p. 177.
- (30) རྒྱལ་རབས་གསལ་བའི་མེ་ལོང་ p. 27; རྒྱ་པོད་ཡིག་རྩལ་ p. 87; *The Red Annals* (NIT 1961) and སློབ་དེབ་ཕྱི་པ་རབ་གསལ་སློན་མེ་ (*Primary School Reader 5*, published by the Council for Tibetan Education 1963) p. 148.
- All these books mention their (three sons of རྒྱ་གུས་བཙན་པོ་) flight to Kongpo but they disagree about who was the youngest or eldest.
- (31) རྒྱལ་མའི་ཚོས་འཁྲུང་ཡིག་སྤྲེལ་བཤད་གསལ་རྩལ་ཡི་ཡིག་རྩལ་ p. 136.