

Abstracts

Some Remarks on the Influence of Chinese Art on the Tibetan Artistic Depiction of Armor and Weapons During the Ming Dynasty

Olaf Czaja

Twelve years ago, in her important contribution *Armor and Weapons in the Iconography of Tibetan Buddhist Deities* to La Rocca's seminal publication *Himalayan Warriors*, Amy Heller offered important insight into the genesis of armor worn by wrathful deities and other gods like Vaishravana. For instance, she demonstrated that lamellar armor and helmets reached Tibet during the Yuan dynasty which may have contributed to the creation of Tibetan iconographical models for wrathful male protector deities in armor. In this talk I want to supplement and expand her findings by investigating the influence of Ming art on Tibetan depictions of weapons and armor by a few selected examples. On the Tibetan side, I will mainly, but not exclusively, analyse murals and statues executed during the 15th centuries such as the murals at Gongkar monastery painted by Khyentse Chenmo between 1464 and 1476 or the sketchbook made by Nevar artist Jivarama in 1435. On the Chinese side, I rely on murals found in Ming Dynasty Buddhist sites such as the Fahai Temple in the Shijingshan District of Beijing, the Baofan Temple in Pengxi County in Sichuan province and Yongning Temple in Taiyuan in Shanxi province but also on various Ming Buddhist paintings. I will also refer to the *Records of Armaments and Military Provisions (Wubei zhi)* compiled in 1621 by Mao Yuanyi (1594–1640?). In my presentation, I will highlight specific weapons like the Emei Axe, shields like a Ming cavalry shield with a lion mask and particular features of the armor worn by Tibetan and Chinese guardians of the four directions. Reviewing later examples of paintings and statues, I would argue that it contributed significantly to the visual repertoire to depict weapons and armor in Tibetan religious art. Later artists working during the Ganden Phodrang period have benefitted from it considerably.

Connoisseurship, Inter-Asian Trade, and Tibetan Swords

Johan Elverskog

As much recent research has shown there has long been a lively exchange between Tibet and the rest of the world in all kinds of commodities ranging from coral to musk and silk to tea. And unsurprisingly this trade has also invariably included weapons of all sorts. Indeed, as is well-known from Donald LaRocca's groundbreaking *Warriors of the Himalayas* such exchanges also included swords. Thus, not only did Tibetans have swords from the Chinese world, but they also had ones from the Muslim world as most notably evidenced in the rehandled Tibetan sword bearing an Arabic inscription "ya Ali." The aim of this paper is therefore to both broaden the historical focus of this exchange, and to delve deeper into the Tibetan appreciation and understanding of swords from across the Eurasian world. In particular, the basic question is whether they actually knew anything about these swords – including their provenance – or not. Since the transmission of military technology is one the main drivers of

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November, Paris**

world history this question invariably ties into the larger issue of how much Tibet was integrated – culturally, economically, militarily, politically, etc. – (or not) with the rest of Asia. Or in other words, what does this dynamic (or lack there of as the case may be) tell us about Tibetan military culture?

ལྷ་རིང་བོག་གི་བཤད་པ།

and Other Material on the Matchlock

Tashi Tsering Josayma

Tibetans in the Diaspora, by living in alien cultures, have been uprooted from a great deal of their practices, knowledge and beliefs descending from their age-old heritage and traditions. Inevitably, globalization and modernization invade everyday exile life, and this has further disadvantages and destructive effects on the existence of the Tibetan culture. There is a noticeable epidemic of collective amnesia in the Tibetan exile society.

Diaspora Tibetans must also be law-abiding citizens in the host countries and, as a result, they are not able to sport guns and swords on any special occasion. The inherent gun toting and sword wielding culture of Tibet is rarely found nowadays anywhere. At most, the younger generations in Tibet and in exile can play with plastic BB guns made in China or immerse themselves in phubbing. Today, most Tibetans below the age of sixty do not have any knowledge or understanding of how to use and wear their arms and ammunition. They do not know, too, how to appraise them. Tibetans have forgotten about flintlocks and matchlocks, their use and the related technical terms.

Armor and Weapons in Tibet from Yongle to Younghusband: Learning from Object-Led Research

Donald J. La Rocca

This talk will present an overview of the various types of arms and armor used in Tibet from about the 15th century to the early 20th century. Beginning with basic and well recognized examples, we will survey the wide and often surprising multiplicity of forms, including helmets, armor for men and horses, swords, and firearms, many of which have only come to light over the past twenty-five years. We will consider aspects of what these newly recognized types may tell us about possible cultural, artistic, and iconographic influences, and conclude with some new finds and the potential of what can be learned from them.

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Arrows, Speers and Swords: Weapons in Tibetan Literature

Petra Maurer

Tibetan literature contains a broad variety of weapons originating in various traditions: in texts translated from Sanskrit they point to Indian cultural contexts telling stories for example from the Mahābhārata.

In other sources, such as the early inscriptions, Pelliot Tibétain and later texts such as documents they reveal stories of real life, stories of wars with Chinese, Drugu and others but also internal fights during many centuries.

Weapons and armours are the equipment of men and *dgra lha*, of gods and demons threatening men. They tell stories of war, of misery and pain. However, they also allow an insight in ritual practises and concepts with regard to the conversion to Buddhism.

The terminology and the context of weapons are rich and manifold: they might render a Sanskrit term, be originally a Tibetan term or originate in still unknown sources such as *ya tsa* that denotes a “sword” in the *gzi Brjid* and *ka na ya* in *Tsong kha pa gsung ’bum*.

In my paper I would like to present terms and expressions for weapons and the contexts they are applied taken from the “Wörterbuch der Tibetischen Schriftsprache”.

**The Modernisation of the Tibetan Army’s Firearms from 1896 to 1950: Between Local
Production and Import**

Alice Travers

From the very beginning of the 13th Dalai Lama’s reign, the Tibetan government realised the need to improve the local production of weapons and took several steps towards this aim up to 1950. From the outset, particular obstacles or limits to the realisation of this plan led the Tibetan government simultaneously to import modern hand-held firearms and artillery, from China and Russia, and, after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, from British India, thus taking advantage of the technical superiority of neighbouring countries in weapon production and also of their own existing import networks. These imports raised particular difficulties, as they not only required the introduction and diffusion of knowledge and techniques of using these weapons, but also were directly related to the political relationship of the Tibetan government with these neighbouring countries and their varying fortunes.

This paper, based mainly on former Tibetan soldiers’ autobiographical accounts and on British archives, intends to illustrate and discuss some of the above-mentioned challenges met by the Ganden Phodrang government in successive attempts to modernise the firearms and artillery of its troops. It will also give an overview of the variety of modern firearms that the Tibetan army used in the early 20th century, and of the related terminology in Tibetan autobiographical accounts.

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**The rDo rje gling Armoury in the Potala According to the Fifth Dalai Lama's
*gsung 'bum***

Federica Venturi

Although the government that was established through the alliance of the dGe lugs pa and the Khoshut in 1642 took its appellation from the dGa' ldan pho brang at 'Bras spung, it was the Potala, at the same time fortress, administrative center and earthly copy of the celestial palace of Avalokiteshvara, that became the symbolic seat of power of this government. In addition to its imposing presence on the plain of Lhasa, its status was greatly amplified by being the official residence of the Fifth Dalai Lama and thus the place where all visitors coalesced, including local and foreign dignitaries, lamas, *sprul sku*, and simple petitioners. Less known, however, is that the Potala also came to symbolize military readiness. It acquired this new martial function in 1667, when an armoury, called rDo rje gling (*go mdzod rdo rje gling*), was set up and located at the base of the White Palace. The Fifth Dalai Lama memorialized its establishment with a poetic text, which is included in volume *ma* of his *gsung 'bum*. The proposed paper will examine this text, which provides information both on the contents of the armoury and on the logic employed to justify the creation of spaces dedicated to military readiness within a palace that was fast becoming one of the most revered sites in the Tibetan sphere.