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**Pho-lha-nas, Khang-chen-nas,  
and the Last Era of Mongol Domination in Tibet**

**Abstract**

The lives of Pho-lha-nas and Khang-chen-nas are well known, most importantly from Luciano Petech's seminal study of early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Tibet. Since the publication of that study, the appearance of several previously inaccessible sources has allowed us to form a fuller image of the situation in Tibet before and during their lifetimes, a period that coincided with the last era of Mongol dominion in Tibet. The effects of this domination and the concomitant integration of Tibetans and Mongols in military, political and other spheres of Tibetan life were observable decades after the end of Pho-lha-nas's rule. As a result, while the Dga'-ldan pho-brang government of the Dalai Lamas is a useful lens through which to view Tibet's history at this time, it is equally useful to construct a view of Tibet as simultaneously a Mongol realm, a "Qanate of Tibet."

**Keywords:** Tibet, Mongolia, Chinese, archival materials, 18<sup>th</sup> century, political relations, Jungar

[T]he Grand Secretariat officials [Tib. *krung-thang* < Ch. zhongtang 中堂] had never seen lay Tibetans and so asked us "What custom is this, to wear earrings of two different sorts on the left and the right?" As I was in the place of first rank I answered by explaining that the wearing of a turquoise was an old Tibetan custom and the wearing of a pearl a custom that spread when those of the royal lineage of the Koko Nor king Gušri Qan [Tib. *Mtsho-sngon-gyi Rgyal-po Gau-shri Khang*], were kings of Tibet.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot Sperling, "Awe and Submission: A Tibetan Aristocrat at the Court of Qianlong", *International Review of History*, vol. 20, 1998, p. 329.

This passage from Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor's account of his sojourn in Beijing in 1792–1793 – a century and a half after they heyday of Gušri Qan – first struck me when I encountered it in the *Rdo-ring paṇḍita'i rnam-thar* several years ago for what it indicated regarding the impact of the Mongol presence in Tibet that had effectively begun with the campaigns of Gušri Qan in the 1640s to establish the power and authority of Dga'-ldan pho-brang, the government of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, over Tibet. The long lasting consequences of this particular Mongol episode in Tibetan history, just in terms of its effect on Tibetan society, were further underlined by an incident (which I have described elsewhere) in which Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor, whose career was almost exclusively within the bounds of Tibet and the Nepalese borderlands, came face to face with the Qianlong Emperor and had little difficulty conversing with him in Mongol.<sup>2</sup>

The general impression that many people have of this Mongol era in Tibetan history is (to put it rather simplistically) of a period in which the government of the Dalai Lamas came to dominance over Tibet through an effective alliance with the Qošot Mongols under Gušri Qan, the latter providing the military force that brought victory to Dga'-ldan pho-brang. Then, after a few years, that force faded into the background until Lajang Qan reasserted the authority that had previously belonged to the Qošot. A Junḡar invasion followed, only to be defeated by Tibetan forces led by Mi-dang Pho-lha Bsod-nams stobs-rgyas (i.e., Pho-lha-nas) and Khang-chen-nas in alliance with the Qing. Thereupon Mongol influence in Central Tibet came to an end, albeit with a continued Mongol presence and Mongol power in parts of A-mdo.

While this general outline retains some currency, the texture of Tibetan history as we experience it in relevant texts of the time gives a distinctly different feeling. Indeed, the Mongol element is much stronger than the outline actually suggests. I would propose, therefore, that we may do well to imagine this era somewhat differently: to see Central Tibet within the context of Mongol dominion and military power for a longer period and in a manner that was more pervasive in Tibetan society than previously imagined. Let me put this somewhat differently. There is nothing controversial in stating that one can write a valid history of India from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries from the standpoint of Fort William and Calcutta, while maintaining that one may also write a valid history of India during the same period from the standpoint of Agra and Delhi. Both histories would be valid in their own ways; they would be different, of course, but nevertheless compelling and useful.

So too, one can write a history of Tibet from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries from the standpoint of the Potala that would be valid; and compose another one from the standpoint of the 'Dam encampments of the Qošot that would be equally valid. One would be a history of Dga'-ldan pho-brang, the other a history of the Qanate of Tibet.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 331–332.

<sup>3</sup> I would like to acknowledge the input of my colleague, Prof. Christopher Atwood, who suggested this useful term.

This essay, focusing on aspects of the careers and family histories of Pho-lha-nas and Khang-chen-nas is written with the latter notion specifically in mind.

The penetration of Central Tibetan society by elements of Mongol rule is best acknowledged by understanding that the dominant role of the Qošot brought with it processes of integration between Tibetans and Mongols. There was no hard and fast divide between the two at many levels. In this regard the extent of Indian participation in the machinery of British rule over India provides a useful point of comparison. The relatively few Mongols in Tibet, like the relatively few British in India, were highly dependent on personnel from the peoples whom they dominated in order to maintain a working state. The integration of Tibetans into the forces of Gušri Qan, forces that are generally described simply as “Mongol”, is obvious from the material on Mi-dbang Pho-lha’s family found in his biography, the famous *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod* by Mdo-khar zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal. Therein we find that the ties between the Pho-lha clan and the Mongol forces of Gušri Qan date from before Mi-dbang Pho-lha’s birth, to the time of his grandfather:

[12] Then, at that time, in order to destroy the powerful Karma bstan-skyong in the area of Nyang in Gtsang, who was made arrogant by pride, an innumerable body of troops of Gušri [Tib. Gu-shrī] Bstan-’dzin chos-kyi rgyal-po, the bodhisattva and marvelous manifestation of the wisdom of the mahāsattva Vajrapāṇi, [13] set out for Bsam-grub-rtse at Gzhis-ka-rtse [Tib. Gzhis-ka Bsam-don grub-pa’i rtse] via the region of Gling-dkar. And when they did so, the courageous Dar-rgyas [i.e., Pho-lha’s great-uncle] calmly took up the duty, riding in the front rank before the troops. In the place called Mang-ra lug-gdong they started to cross weapons with the sentinels of the Gtsang forces. At that time, although a few who comported themselves with cowardice fled, Dar-rgyas, the ancestor, retained possession of himself and without hesitation roused his courage and attacked, thereby inflicting defeat on the other side, a thing which greatly pleased the Mongol lord. As the first mark of his perfect gratitude he bestowed on him a garment most fitting to wear, which was like something made from the essence of a molten moon. Not long afterwards the drumbeat of his triumphs in battle resounded victoriously to the utmost heights and he was rewarded and praised and by order he was made the commander of eighty armed [i.e., *go-mtshan* = *go-mtshon*] infantry.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod* (Chengdu, 1981), pp. 12–13: *de’i tshe de’i dus na yul Gtsang Nyang gi ljongs su stobs kyi dbang phyug Karma bstan skyong dbang po dregs pas mngon par ‘gying ba tshar gcod pa’i slad du byang chub sems dpa’ sems [13] dpa’ chen po Lag na rdo rje’i ye shes kyi sgyu ‘phrul gu shrī Bstan ’dzin chos kyi rgyal po’i dpung gi tshogs bgrang du med pa yul Gling dkar nas brgyud de gzhis ka Bsam don grub pa’i rtse mor chas pa’i tshe snying stobs dang ldan pa Dar rgyas kyis dpung gi sngon du ‘gro ba’i bya ba’i khur bzod par byas pa las / Mang ra lug gdong zhes bya ba’i sa’i char yul Gtsang ljongs*

This integration of Tibetans into the Mongol military establishment is very much a background element in the general history of the Pho-lha clan. Pho-lha-nas's great-grandfather, Orgyan, had two sons, Dar-rgyas, just mentioned, and Gsum-dga'. And Gsum-dga' (more commonly referred to as A-gsum), served the Qoṣot too, in his case "taking up an official post on the fringes of the victorious Shangs region."<sup>5</sup> During this period Dar-rgyas continued his rise:

[13] At this time in Nags-rong in the east the Bka'-brgyud-pa rulership [Tib. *Dkar-srid*] in Dwags[-po] and Kong[-po] was crooked and as a result no respect was shown to the lord [Guṣri Qan]. Then, at the time in which, in the manner of the unsullied *Ljon-shing* tree, what had been [previously] neglected and which then began to be provided for, the sprouts [i.e. the younger members of the line] of the lineage of the Mongol lord, [14] along with the one known as Star-sdong-pa Gu-ru who was active near the mountains on the south shore of the flowing Skyid-chu, went before the ruler. At the same time, Dar-rgyas, the family elder, went there with his attendants, and afterwards his deeds in battle were supremely brave, courageous and skilled. In particular, at a terrifyingly narrow and difficult part of the route, in a deep defile, he joined with the enemy in battle. And at that time, bestirred by the divine and incorruptible lineage of his ancestors, filling the space between his ears [and the bow] with wild and glorious arrows he shot into them again and again, and sent some ten of the wild and aroused [enemy] on the path to impermanence. Thus, with marvelous bravery and heroics he won the admiration of the King of Tibet, the Earthly Brahma, and ornate presents were given and a gracious edict promulgated that as a *dbang* under the assembly he was at no time to be afflicted with taxes and was to dwell in comfort!<sup>6</sup>

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*kyi dpung gi mel tshe ba dag dang mtshon cha'i las rtsom pa 'dres par gyur te / de'i tshe sdar ma'i brtul zhugs 'dzin pa 'ga' zhig ni byer bar gyur mod / mes po Dar rgyas dpa' brtul dang ldan pa des ni tsham tshom bral bar mthu rtsal bskyed de rgol bas pha rol de dag 'pham par byas pa las Mong gol gyi rje bo yang rab tu dgyes pa bskyed par gyur te gtang rag legs so'i dge mtshan dang por zla ba zhun ma'i khams las grub pa lta bu'i gyon pa mnabs su rung ba yang bstsal / dus de nas ring min gyi char g.yul las rnam par rgyal ba'i rgyal rnga srid rtse'i bar du snyan par srgos pa na 'di nyid la mngon par gzengs bstod de dpung bu chung go mtshan can bcu phrag brgyad kyi kha lo sgyur ba'i byed por lung gis mngags / /. N.b., Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIII<sup>th</sup> Century* (Leiden, 1972), p. 283 refers to Dar-rgyas as A-sum, most likely a confusion with his brother, Gsum-dga', i.e., "A-gsum." On Bsam-grub-rtse as a former name for Gzhis-ka-rtse, see Alfonsa Ferrari, *Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* (Rome, 1958), p. 144.*

<sup>5</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 13: *Shang phyogs rnam par rgyal ba'i gling gi sne mo*. On the Shangs area, which is marked by the course of the Shangs-chu that flows into the Gtsang-po north-west of Gzhis-ka-rtse, see Ferrari, op. cit., p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., pp. 13–14: *dus der yul shar phyogs Nags rong na spyod pa Dwags Kong dkar srid dang bcas pas gya gyu'i sbyor bas rje bo la gus par mi blta bar / grib ma med pa'i ljon shing bzhin du yal bar 'dor ba'i 'du 'god rtsom pa de'i tshe Mong gol gyi rje bo dam pa de'i rigs kyi myu* [14] *gu dag dang / dal 'bab Skyid chu'i 'gram ngogs lho phyogs kyi ri bo'i gam na spyod pa Star sdong pa Gu rur*

Indicative of the confidence that the family was gaining, A-gsum and others were covertly placed in charge of several strategic areas within the area of Nyang where, not surprisingly, those previously in authority were little trusted by the Qoṣot regime that had defeated the local rulers.<sup>7</sup> Sometime later, A-gsum came to the attention of Guśri Qan's sixth son, Dalai Qongtaiji,<sup>8</sup> who dominated the Kokonor region and played an important role in Tibetan affairs in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we read further in the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod*:

Afterwards, when the lord of the Mongol lands [i.e., the Kokonor lands of the Qoṣot], known as Dalai Qongtaiji [Tib. Da-las Hor-(sic) tha'i-ji], made exceptional efforts in working to increase the accumulated merit and wisdom that lay within the Land of Snows, he commanded [A-gsum] to shoulder the burden of a friend who would show him which customs were to be retained and which were to be rejected, [so that] then there would be nothing misguided in the stages of any actions that he might wish to undertake. The opportunity thus opened made for a complete meeting of the minds with the lord, and he and the Mongol lord behaved in the particular ways of warm friendship, as if they were the closest of relatives, holding to the wisdom of Brahma in the round of activities. Thus, the regard of the All-Seeing Lord of the *Jina* [the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama] for the great, fearful earth-rending one [Dalai Qongtaiji] grew tremendously. And then in gratitude [A-gsum] was granted the house of Pho-lha with its bound subjects, like a fine granule born from the womb of the earthly meeting place of the *nāga* lords, to have and use as his own.<sup>10</sup> And a full edict was promulgated saying "If you become tired of this place and tension arises, just say so and you'll be granted a home and subjects to the extent

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*grags pa dbyings sa gong ma'i mdun na 'don dang chabs cig tu mes po Dar rgyas kyis kyang zham ring pa'i tshul du bskiyod nas g.yul gyi bya ba la mchog tu dpa' ba'i snying stobs rngo thogs pa dang / lhag par lam gyi 'phrang nyam nga ba bgrod dka' ba 'gram ngogs na gcong rong zab pa zhig gi sa'i mdun du pha rol gyi rgol ba dang g.yul bsres pa'i tshe / mes kyi gnam ru sra ba rgyud kyis bkug pa bdungs pa las nyag phran gyi mtshon cha rtsub mo dpal dang ldan pa rna ba'i bar du bkang ste yang dang yang du nye bar bsmun pa las / gdug can mi srun pa bcu phrag tu nye ba mi rtag pa'i lam du bkod / de lta bu dpa' zhing rtul phod pa'i ngo mtshar gyis Bod rje sa'i Tshangs pa'i thugs 'phrogs te tshong 'dus 'og gi dbang rigs kyi cha las dus dang dus ma yin par dpya dang khral gyis nye bar gtsar pa med pa ci bder gnas bcar yod pa'i bka' yig phyag rtags kyis rnam par spud pa legs so'i skyes kyi bka' drin du stsal / /.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15. Nyang refers to the region marked by the course of the Nyang-chu, which flows through Rgyal-rtse and on towards Gzhis-ka-rtse. See Ferrari, *op. cit.*, pp. 59 and 142–143.

<sup>8</sup> For his place among the sons of Guśri Qan, see Dung-dkar Blo-bzang 'phrin-las, *Dung-dkar tshig-mdzod chen-mo* (Beijing, 2002), pp. 507–508 and Sum-pa Ye-shes dpal-'byor, *Chos-'byung dpag-bsam ljon-bzang* (Lanzhou, 1992), p. 1000.

<sup>9</sup> See Zahiruddin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Rome, 1970), pp. 66, 148, 208–209, 225, 241, and 251.

<sup>10</sup> On the location of Pho-lha, west of Rgyal-rtse and west of the Nyang-chu, see Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 27 and Turrell V. Wylie, *The Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling rgyas-bshad* (Rome, 1962), p. 143.

that you desire in Dbus, the land of your birth”, and a seal ornamented with a beautiful picture was given to him. And he visibly gasped.<sup>11</sup>

And so it is that the installation of the family as the Pho-lha lineage, with the grant of lands and subjects, ultimately derives from its place within the Mongol presence in Tibet in the wake of Gušri Qan’s campaigns. As noted, the general outline of these events is not unknown, but there are nuances that make for a better understanding of the significance of the Mongol presence in Tibet during this period. Thus, we can note that Luciano Petech mentions that when Mi-dbang Pho-lha later gathered his forces in Western Tibet in the wake of Khang-chen-nas’s murder in 1727, he could rely on his local popularity there because “since his birth he had been regarded as the incarnation of the Mongol lama dGa’-ldan ts’e-dbañ who had conquered mŅa’-ris for Tibet in 1678–1683”.<sup>12</sup>

This association with Dga’-ldan tshe-dbang (or better Galdan Tsewang) needs to be understood a bit more fully. Mi-dbang Pho-lha was not simply rumored to be an incarnation of Galdan Tsewang, he asserted as much himself.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, this connection is given prominence in the section of his biography describing his birth and first years:

Regardless of what was related previously as to how thoughts arose as to whether he was another [rebirth of] Galdan Tsewang Paljang [Dga’-ldan Tshe-dbang dpal-bzang-po],<sup>14</sup> who stood above others, not only were the sacred instructions that he was that very lord of men true and evident, from the time of his birth he had memories of [his former] courage and daring... He was more courageous, more articulate and stronger than other children and particularly attached to the sort of people who were ordained and were Mongols. He was especially fond of weapons...<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 16: *de’i phyi nas yul Mong gol gyi rje bo Da las Hor tha’i jir grags pa gang can gyi ljongs na bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs spel ba’i las mngon par ’du byed par lhags pa na / de la yul lugs kyi blang dor ston pa’i grogs su bka’ bsgos pa khur du bzod par byas nas / ci dang ci ’dod pa’i bya ba’i rim pa ma ’khrul zhing / go skabs phyed pa rje bo’i bsam pa dang mthun pa legs par tshar phyin pa bgyis pa las Mong gol gyi rje bo dang lhag par yid gcugs pa mdza’ bshes smon ’drin lta bur spyod par gyur pa sogs bya ba las kyi ’khor lo la Tshangs pa’i blo gros dang byed pa ’chang bas Thams cad gziḡs pa Rgyal ba’i dbang po dang / sa’i ’byer ’jigs chen po’i gziḡs pa je cher gyur nas gdengs can dbang po bor rgyas kyi ’dun sa nor ’dzin ma’i lhums nas sbye bar ldan pa dang mtshungs pa’i ’brum Pho lha khang bzang mnga’ ris dang bcas pa rang gir spyod pa’i bka’ drin bstsal zhing / gzhan yang ’di skad ces / gal te khyod nyid yul ’khor de nyid la yid gdung bar gyur pa dang / bag mi phebs pa’i rnam pa shar na smros shig dang / slar yang btsas ba’i yul Dbu ru’i phyogs nas khyim dang ’bangs ji dga’ ba ’dod pa ’jo bar bya’o zhes bka’i yi ge gtsang ma phyag rgya’i re khā bkra bas mtshan pa byin nas mngon par dbugs dbyung ngo / /.*

<sup>12</sup> Petech, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> See his biography in Dung-dkar, op. cit., pp. 597–600.

<sup>15</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 66: *de yang gong du ji ltar bsnyed pa’i khyu mchog Dga’ ldan tshe dbang dpal bzang po de nyid gzhan zhig yin nam snyam na de ltar mi blta ste / dam pa’i lung gis mi’i dbang po ’di nyid yin par bsnyon du med cing gsal bar bstan par ma zad kyi / bltams ma thag pa nas dpa’ zhing brtul phod pa’i dran pa bsnyes... byis pa gzhan las brtul zhugs che ba / smra mkhas pa / drag shul che ba / rab*

Then talk arose among those who were ordained and were monks: “*E-ma!*  
This child is undoubtedly the rebirth of the infinitely articulate Galdan...<sup>16</sup>

The question arises as to why such attention is paid to the establishment of an incarnation link between Mi-dbang Pho-lha and this particular Mongol figure. In part, we can deduce a good deal of reasoning from Pho-lha-nas’s father’s relationship with this same Galdan Tsewang, something that in itself is indicative of the way Tibetans and Mongols were enmeshed together during this period of the Qanate of Tibet. But there is one element that adds considerably to the significance of the link. It is not just the fact that Galdan Tsewang was both a fighter and a monk (though not concurrently, contrary to what Petech implies).<sup>17</sup> In his role as the former he was specifically linked with Gtsang, the region wherein the Pho-lha lineage had been established by Dalai Qongtaiji, and particularly with Mnga’-ris. In his role as the latter, we can note that he was in fact ordained by none other than the Panchen Lama. Indeed, the account of his ordination hints at conflicting personal factors (perhaps reflected in the literary description of the young Mi-dbang Pho-lha’s being drawn to both monks and Mongols):

At that time, the one who stood above others, with the wisdom of Brahma, the qualities of Īśvara, the skills of Vishnu; the great courageous one skilled at strategy against a fully-enclosed enemy encirclement, the great hero Galdan Tsewang Paljang, removed himself from the throne, spread out a long, pure white *kha-btags* and secretly said “I ask the gods to look down on me. Unlike the many scholars who are naturally born in Dbus, I am a Mongol from the far borders. But former, deep karmic traces [of understanding] have grown in my heart to the effect that perfect worldly wealth cannot be relied on, is impermanent, and is misery by its nature.” And at that he was given vows by the omniscient [Panchen Lama] Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan [1570–1662].<sup>18</sup>

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*tu byung ba dang / yul Mong gol gyi skye bo'i rigs la lhag par chags par byed cing / mtshon cha'i bye brag la gces par 'dzin...*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 72: *de'i tshe rab tu byung ba dang / dge sbyong dag phan tshun gnam gleng ba / e ma bus pa 'di ni rab byams smra ba Dga' ldan gyi skye ba slar 'ongs par gdon mi za ba zhig ste...*

<sup>17</sup> See Dungkar, op. cit., p. 598, who notes that when appointed to lead the forces against Ladakh he gave back his *so-thar* vows.

<sup>18</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 49: *de'i tshe mi'i khyu mchog Tshang pa'i blo gros / Dbang phyug gi yon tan / Sred med kyi bu'i rgyu rtsal / 'khor lo'i mu khyud lta bu'i dgra thabs la mkhas pa'i dpa' bo chen po Dga' ldan tshe dbang dpal bzang po rang nyid khri las babs te lha rdzas rab dkar dri ma med pa kha tshar can srid du ring ba mngon par bstar nas gsung gsang mthon pos 'di skad ces / lha gzigs su gsol / yul Dbus mkhas pa 'byung ba'i rang bzhin can du ma skyes kyi / bdag ni mtha' 'khob Mong gol gyi yul du'o / 'on kyang sngon gi bag chags zab mo snying la brtas pa'i srid-pa'i dpal 'byor phun sum tshogs pa ni yid brtan mi rung ba / rtags pa ma yin pa / sdug bsngal gyi rang bzhin can du shes nas thams cad mkhyen pa Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan las rab tu byung /* On this particular Panchen Lama, see Dungkar, op. cit., p. 1258.

Galdan Tsewang was unquestionably a crucial figure in the making of an authoritative Mongol regime in Western Tibet. He was also a crucial figure in the continuing rise of the Pho-lha clan. His role in the Ladakh campaign was mentioned above. But here as in many other campaigns the Tibetan participation was significant:

[36] At that time the Mongol forces were skilled at subduing enemies by reliance on mounted [warfare]. But they were not skilled at moving on foot to enter and bring down fortresses. Thus, there were sent from the region of Lhasa those who could apply broad intelligence [to the task], first and foremost Ngam-ru-ba, with the strong armor of courage; [37] from the region of Nags-rong, Kong-po A-bo bkra-shis; the father of the lord of men [i.e., Mi-dbang Pho-lha], Padma rgyal-po; Dgon Bla-ma 'phrin-las; and the one known as the *rje-drung* ["noble scion"] of the ruling lineage of Bye-ri Stag nam-par-rtse. And they approached Mnga'-ris in four divisions of almost 5,000.<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately the Tibetan and Mongol army inflicted a severe defeat on the Ladakhi forces, with Padma rgyal-po, Mi-dbang Pho-lha's father, serving as one of the victorious commanders. Out of gratitude, Galdan Tsewang rewarded him and his minister Bu-chung liberally, with items from the royal stores of Ladakh.<sup>20</sup> From that point on Padma rgyal-po became one of Galdan Tsewang's close followers:

Although the lord of men Galdan had many subordinates whose practical application of intellect was broad and whose robust youth matched their skills, among them the one who was the object of immense and particular regard was Padma rgyal-po, the father of the excellent lord of men. He was naturally insightful, his mind was close to that of the lord, and because

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<sup>19</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., pp. 36–37: *de'i tshe yul Mong gol gyi dpung rnams ni bzhon pa la brten te dgra bo gzhom par mkhas pa yin gyi / rang nyid kyi rkang pas song nas mkhar rdzong du zhugs pa 'bebs pa la mi mkhas pa yin pas / star yang yul Lha ldan gyi phyogs nas blo gros kyi 'jug pa yangs pa / snying stobs kyi go cha btsan [37] po ngam rub ba / yul Nags rong gi phyogs nas Kong po A bo bkra shis / mi'i bdag po gang di'i yab gcig Padma rgyal po / Dgon bla ma 'Phrin las / Bye ri Stag nam par rtse ba'i sa skyong ba'i rigs las rje drung du grags pa rnams gtso bor mngags te yan lag b'zhi pa'i dpung gi tshogs brya phrag lnga bcur nye ba yang yul Mnga' ris kyi phyogs der lhags so /* Nags-rong may be in the area of Kong-po, as alluded to in the name Kong-po A-bo bkra-shis, but it might also be a reference to Nags-shod, north of Lhasa and southeast of Nag-chu; concerning which see Wylie, op. cit., p. 103. As for Bye-ri Stag nam-par-rtse, cf. Petech, op. cit., p. 52, and the reference to "sTag-rtse in Bye-ri", which is then identified as "Taktse-dsong on the right bank of the sKyid-c'u to the east of Lhasa." Following Petech further, the person in question is likely the *zhabs-drung* (= *rje-drung*) Rdo-rje nam-rgyal of Stag-rtse.

<sup>20</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., pp. 38–39.



he accomplished whatever he was ordered to do, he impressed [Galdan Tsewang] who cherished him like a brother, loving him like kin...<sup>21</sup>

This description mirrors, not surprisingly, the relationship between Dalai Qongtaiji and A-gsum. It is worth emphasizing here that the nature of Tibet's history at this point was an intertwined history of Tibetans and Mongols in many spheres, and not simply a sort of "service" phase in which the Mongol role was simply to provide support for Dga'-ldan pho-brang. The Mongols predominated, but they also worked with Tibetans within the order that was being established through Mongol domination. As indicated by Mdo-mkhar zhabs-drung's comments about the need for Tibetan military skills in dealing with fortresses, this was by no means an era in which Tibetan power was wholly passive. Tibetan power stood at the service of a Mongol order, not unlike the massive Indian power that was once at the service of a British order.

As an indicator of the extent of Mongol-Tibetan integration within the Tibetan structures, we should turn again to the lineage of Mi-dbang Pho-lha. We have already noted that his grandfather and great uncle served in the military campaigns waged in Tibet under Gušri Qan and his son Dalai Qongtaiji and that the elevation of the family as the ennobled family of Pho-lha was born out of his grandfather's service to Dalai Qongtaiji. But this goes one step further when we look at Mi-dbang Pho-lha's renown as the incarnation of Galdan Tsewang. This notion did not simply connect Pho-lha to the martial heritage of the family, it connected him to the lineage of Gušri Qan himself, for Galdan Tsewang, military commander and monk, was the grandson of Gušri Qan,<sup>22</sup> and Mi-dbang Pho-lha was his incarnation.

\* \* \*

We find other hints at the extent to which the Mongol Qanate functioned in Tibetan life and Tibetan affairs from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this regard we should turn now to Mi-dbang Pho-lha's close ally, Khang-chen-nas (or Khang-chen-pa) Bsod-nams rgyal-po. This well-known figure, who appears in Mi-dbang Pho-lha's biography almost exclusively with the Mongol title he bore, Daičing Bātur, was also tied to Mongol forces. In his case he was famously appointed to administer Mnga'-ris and later, after playing an important part in the Junyar defeat, was made the highest ranking of the *bka'-blon*.<sup>23</sup> These facts are well known, as is the story of his assassination, which sparked the civil

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 51: *de ltar mi rje Dga'ldan de nyid la zham ring du spyod pa blo gros kyi 'jug pa yangs pa dang sgyu rtsal gyi mkho lag rdzogs pa mang du mchis mod kyi / de dag gi dbus na mchog tu gzigs pa yangs pa ni mi rje mchog gi yab gcig Padma rgyal po de nyid yin te / de yang rang bzhin gyis yid gzhungs pa / rje bo la blo ba nye ba / ji ltar bsgo ba de bzhin du sgrub pa'i ngang tshul gyis yid 'phrogs nas phu nu lta bur brtse zhing dungs pa / mdza' bshes / smos 'drin lta bur mnyes gshin par gyur...*

<sup>22</sup> Sum-pa mkhan-po, op. cit., p. 1000.

<sup>23</sup> Dung-dkar, op. cit., p. 295; Petech, op. cit., pp. 61 and 78.

war of 1727–1728 out of which Mi-dbang Pho-lha emerged victorious and supreme. What is of further interest, however, are some of the Chinese-language materials relating to the Qing court's involvement in the aftermath of the murder and what they say of Khang-chen-nas's Mongol connections.

The life of Khang-chen-nas is well known to students of Tibetan history, most importantly from Luciano Petech's study of early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Tibet. Since the publication of Petech's monograph on the subject several previously inaccessible sources have become available. These include Chinese archival materials, now in published form, and two versions of the *Rdo-ring paṇḍita'i rnam thar*. A preliminary study of all of these, combined with information from already accessible materials (most significantly, the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod*), allows us to form a fuller image of Khang-chen-nas and of the political circumstances in Tibet during his lifetime.

The basic outline of Khang-chen-nas's life was sketched by Petech.<sup>24</sup> Khang-chen-nas was a member of the Dga'-bzhi clan, whose history is a part of the content of the *Rdo-ring paṇḍita'i rnam-thar*, by Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor.<sup>25</sup> He was appointed *sgar-dpon* of Mnga'-ris skor-gsum by Lajang Qan (Lha-bzang) Khang<sup>26</sup> and it was in that post that he attained renown when, in 1719, he attacked and destroyed a Junyar force that was carrying hostages and sacred images taken in the Junyar occupation of Lhasa. This is what the *Rdo-ring paṇḍita'i rnam-thar* particularly emphasizes:

[25] As for the one known as Daičing Bātur, during the time of His Holiness the Great Sixth, Rin-chen tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho, he gradually and incrementally served in government positions such as *rdzong*- and estate-level grain and revenue collector. Then, during the time of the Tibetan king Lajang Qan, when he was serving as *sgar-dpon*, the leader of Mnga'-ris skor-gsum in the west, the troops of the Junyar Tshe-ring don-'grub poured into Tibet and killed Lajang Qan. Although the Junyars held Dbus-Gtsang, in Mnga'-ris [Khang-chen-nas] held his own and did not surrender to them. Afterwards, when the Junyars were unbearably frightened and overcome with awe at the arrival of the divine troops of the Great Emperor [e.g., Kangxi], fierce sorts, such as the Junyar *taiji* and *jaisang*, retreated via Mnga'-ris, taking several rare government treasures, [26] most prominently jeweled objects, as well as

<sup>24</sup> See Petech, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 61–65.

<sup>25</sup> The *Rdo-ring Paṇḍita'i rnam-thar*, is an extremely important source for Tibet's history in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although much of it deals with the career of its author, Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor, who played an important role in the disastrous Tibetan diplomacy connected to the conflicts with the Gurkha state in Nepal between 1787 and 1792, the book is essentially a history of his family, the Dga'-bzhi or Rdo-ring clan. Two versions of the text are available in modern printings; see Dan Martin, *Tibetan Histories* (London, 1997), p. 150. A third version was in the possession of Rtsis-dpan Zhwa-sgab-pa Dbang-phyug bde-ldan and utilized by him in writing about the Gurkha War in his *Bod-kyi srid-don rgyal-rabs* (K Kalimpong, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> In late 1715 or early 1716, according to Petech, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

some religious supports, such as the Arya Lokeśvara from the Potala and others.<sup>27</sup> At that time the *sgar-dpon* Khang-chen-pa deceptively invited them into his tent for a feast and then sent the tent crashing down. Thus, it is said, a few of the servants who were not in the tent fled while most of the principle leaders were neutralized. Once more the precious Arya image as well as things belonging to the government that the Junyars were carrying, most prominently jeweled objects, were handed over to their owner. And thus the Emperor [and the Dalai Lama], priest and patron, gave to Daičing Batur the rank of *beise* and appointed him to the position of chief among the *bka'-blon*. Later, however, because the *bka'-blon* from Dbus, Nga[-phod-pa], Lum[-pa-nas], and Sbya[r]-ra-ba, were unsympathetic towards him they attacked and killed him in the Khams-gsum sitting room in Lhasa.<sup>28</sup>

This truncated version of Khang-chen-nas's career does demonstrate the significance of the events in Mnga'-ris in his rise. And those events also show that Khang-chen-nas was able to deploy his own forces within a Mongol-dominated Tibet. Thus, Tibetan events were not simply being dictated by the fortunes of the Qoṣot and the Junyars; rather, their power predominated in the era that saw the rise of Khang-chen-nas and his patron Pho-lha-nas – both Tibetan – to positions of dominance. In the latter's case, for a good portion of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The story of Khang-chen-nas's strike against the Junyars in Mnga'-ris does not go wholly unchallenged. Given that the *Rdo-ring paṇḍita'i rnam-thar* comes from the pen of

<sup>27</sup> This is the famous sandalwood image of Avalokiteśvara in the "Arya Chapel" (*Phags-pa lha-khang*) in the Potala, said to have been the tutelary deity of Srong-btsan sgam-po; see Bod rang-skyong-ljongs rig-dngos do-dam U-yon lhan-khang, ed., *Pho-brang Po-ta-la'i lo-rgyus phyogs-bsgrigs* (Lhasa, 1994), pp. 36–37. A photograph of the image can be found in Phuntsok Namgyal, ed., *The Splendor of Tibet: The Potala Palace* (Beijing 2002), p. 83.

<sup>28</sup> Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor, *Rdo-ring Paṇḍita'i rnam-thar* (Chengdu, 1986), pp. 25–26: *Rda'i ching Sba dur du grags pa de ni gong sa drug-pa chen po Rin chen tshangs dbyang rgya mtsho'i dus nas gzhung gi rdzong gzhis bkar yong sogs las tshan rim pa'i zhabs 'degs sgrub cing / de rjes Bod kyi rgyal po Lha bzang Khang gi dus stod Mnga' ris skor gsum gyi 'go byed sgar dpon las thog mdzad skabs Jun sgar Tshe ring don 'grub gyi dmag Bod du lhags nas Lha bzang Khang dkrongs / Dbus Gtsang Jun sgar pas bdag bzung byed skabs kyang Mnga' ris su rang tsho zin nas Jun sgar par mgo ma gtad / de rjes gong ma bdag po chen po'i lha dmag 'byor ba'i 'jigs zil ma bzod par Jun sgar gyi tha'i ji dang / ja'i sang sogs drag rigs nas gzhung gi [26] rin chen rgyan chas gtsos sku chas rtsa che 'ga' zhig dang rtse'i 'Phags pa Lo ki shwa ra sogs nang rten kha shas 'khyer te Mnga' ris brgyud phyir log byed skabs sgar dpon Khang chen pas g.yo skor gyis gur nang du mgron 'bod ston gshoms thog gur rdib btang bar brten / gur nang du med pa'i g.yog rigs re gnyis bros thar skad las / gtsod drag phal cher dmigs med du btang mthar / slar yang 'Phags pa rin po che'i sku dang rin chen rgyan chas gtsos gzhung gi sku chas Jun sgar pas 'khyer ba rnam nor bdag po'i lag tu rtsis phul bar brten / gong ma mchod yon nas / Rda'i ching sba dur la pas se'i cho lo dang bka' blon gyi gtsod bo'i las 'khur du bsko gzhag btsal kyang / rjes sor Nga Lum Sbya ra ba sogs Dbus pa'i bka' blon rnam dang thugs nang ma gshin par brten Lha ldan gzim chung khams gsum gyi nang du brkus bsad kyis dkrongs shing /. Concerning the assassination of Khang-chen-nas, see Petech, op. cit., pp. 113–121.*

a family member – Khang-chen-nas was the author’s great-uncle<sup>29</sup> – it is not too surprising that a modern history of Mnga’-ris, the *Mnga’-ris skor-gsum sngon-byung lo-rgyus* by Gangs-ri-ba Chos-dbyings rdo-rje, gives somewhat less credit to Khang-chen-nas for the operation and rather more to local figures:

[110] Some of the *sgar-dpon* led the people of Mnga’-ris, protecting the frontiers of the great motherland and contributing to the reinforcement of its unity. For example, during the time of the *sgar-dpon* Khang-chen-pa or Daičing Batur Bsod-nams rgyal-po, Junyar Mongol troops reached Tibet and Lajang Qan was assassinated. Taking sacred supports and treasures of the Tibetan Government, they fled in the direction of Li-yul [“Khotan”; i.e., modern Xinjiang]. At that time, however, Mnga’-ris [leaders] held their own and [111] met to discuss standing up to the Junyar troops. In accord with that, with the Gtsod-tsho *dpon* and the ’Brong-pa *dpon* leading them, the various officials, acted as auxiliaries to the righteous and upright *sgar-dpon*. With various stratagems they set out a grand feast within a tent and when the Junyars were distracted the tent was brought down on them. Thus, most of the Junyar leaders were caught unawares and the lesser, ordinary ones, were also captured and ultimately handed over. Once more all of the treasures of the government, first and foremost the image of the precious Arya [Avalokiteśvara], along with precious ornaments, were given back to their owner. As a result, the *sgar-dpon* Khang chen-pa Bsod-nams rgyal-po was appointed *bka’-blon*. The officials who had been his comrades-in-arms received substantive edicts.<sup>30</sup>

The discrepancy in ascribing credit for the defeat of the Junyars in Mnga’-ris may indicate a certain degree of friction between local power and the *sgar-dpon* appointed

<sup>29</sup> See Bstan-’dzin dpal-’byor, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>30</sup> Gangs-ri-ba Chos-dbyings rdo-rje, *Mnga’ ris skor gsum gyi sngon byung lo rgyus* (Lhasa, 1996), pp. 110–111: *Sgar dpon ’ga’ res Mnga’ ris mi dmangs kyi ’go khrid de rlabs chen mes rgyal gyi mtha’ tshams srung skyobs dang gong bu gcig gyur la shugs bsnon byed pa’i bya bzhang nang byas rjes kyang ’jog gnang mdzad yod / dper na / sgar dpon Khang chen pa’am / Da’i Ching sba rdur Bsod nams rgyal po’i skabs Sog po ’Jun sgar gyi dmag Bod du ’byor nas Lha bzang Khāng bkroṅgs te Bod gzhung gi sku rten gces nor mang po ’khyer te Li yul phyogs su broṣ skabs kyang Mnga’ ris rang ’tsho bzung nas ’Jun sgar dmag [111] la kha gtad gcog rgyu’i gros gleng mdzad don ltar Gtsod tsho dpon dang ’Brong pa dpon gyis gtsos dpon khag so sos lhags bsam zol med kyi sgar dpon la ram ’degs byas te thabs shes sna mang gi sgo nas dbu gur nang du mgron tshul gyi ston mo gzab rgyas bshams te mgo g.yengs ba’i skabs su gur rdib btang bar brten / ’Jun sgar ba’i gtsod drag phal cher dmigs med du btang mthar lhag lus dkyus ma rnam kyang ’dzin bzung byas te mthar sprod btang slar yang ’Phags pa rin po che’i sku dang rin po che’i rgyan chas gtsos gzhung rgyu gces nor thams cad nor bdag gi phyag tu rtsis ’bul zhus bar brten sgar dpon Khang chen pa Bsod nams rgyal po bka’ blon du bsko bzhang gnang ba dang / dpung rogs dpon rigs rnam la bka’ gtan rgyab snon gnang ba red /. On the six primary Mnga’ ris dpon, see pp. 108 and 110; and also Mnga’ ris srid gros rig gnas lo rgyus bsdu rub u yon lhan khang, *Bod ljongs Stod Mnga’ ris skor gsum nye rabs chab srid kyi lo rgyus dang dgon sde khag zhig gsos grub pa’i gnas tshul / spyi tshogs sgar pa’i ’phel shugs sogs rgyas par brjod pa’i ’bel gtam rin chen gter gyi phreng ba*, pp. 205–224.*

from Lhasa. The Dga'-bzhi clan – the clan of Khang-chen-nas – remained important in the region for a brief period afterwards in the person Dga'-bzhi-ba Tshe-brtan bkra-shis who served as *sgar-dpon* after Khang-che-nas's elevation to the *bka'-shag*.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, there are other documentary sources that also reduce the degree of prominence traditionally accorded Khang-chen-nas for the strategy that brought disaster to the retreating Junyar forces.<sup>32</sup>

Even if one accepts a decisive role for local leaders in these events, Khang-chen-nas was hardly bereft of power. He had his own forces at his disposal; that much is clear. And his domination of the situation was owed to the milieu of a mixing of Mongols and Tibetans in the Qanate of Tibet under the Qořot Qan. Perhaps a glimpse of this comes through in the aftermath of Khang-chen-nas's assassination in 1727, less than ten years after the events just described. Khang-chen-nas as *bka'-blon* in Lhasa was not simply an official obedient to the whims of bureaucracy. He retained his own forces and these clearly appear to have been largely Mongol. The Manchu officer Mala (馬喇), who was already in Lhasa serving as *amban* at the time of the assassination,<sup>33</sup> submitted a memorial on October 14, 1727, detailing some of what he'd been told by Nga-phod, one of the anti-Khang-chen-nas conspiritors:

Khang-chen-nas [Kangqinai 康濟鼐] each year paid [his] Oirat soldiers in contravention to the numbers established by Dalai Qan [达赖汗]. From the treasury he took more than 200,000 liang [两]. The officials who

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, pp. 111–112. Dga'-bzhi-ba Tshe-brtan bkra-shis was Khang-chen-nas's elder brother; see Luciano Petech, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet. 1728–1959* (Rome, 1973), pp. 51–52. He died fighting as an ally of Mi-dbang Pho-lha, in 1727.

<sup>32</sup> The Amnye Machen Institute also has in its possession documents that seem to fit the description of what our source terms “substantive edicts” granted by the Tibetan government to the Mnga'-ris officials (Tib. *dpon*), including one, dated to February 17, 1720, given to the Stod (Mnga'-ris) *sgar-dpon*, the Chu-tig *dpon* residing in Rtsa-hrang and other officials, that takes particular note of Khang-chen-nas's stand against the Junyars (*lhag tu mi dbang Rda'i ching bhā thur nas Sbyong mgar sar dgra gdos gnang...*). This is elaborated as well in Gu-ge Tshe-ring rgyal-po, *Mnga'-ris chos-'byung gangs-ljongs mdzes-rgyan* (Lhasa, 2006), p. 70. Therein mention is also made of the role of the Gtsod-tsho *dpon*, already described as prominent in the attack on the Junyars. Another document held by the Amnye Machen Institute, seemingly dated to January 24, 1820 (it post-dates the era of the 8<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama but no *rab-byung* cycle is specified) also alludes to the efforts of the Gtsod-tsho *dpon* in the fight. Gu-ge Tshe-ring rgyal-po states that because the Gtsod-tsho *dpon* put forth first-rate strategems (Tib. *jus*) and intelligence (Tib. *rig-pa*) he was subsequently known as Jus-rig Tshe-ring Bātur (Tib. *Sba-dur*). He is no doubt the “Ju-rig-thu Bhāthur” mentioned in the first line of the 1720 document and this appellation is surely behind the grant of the related title “Juriqtu Taiji” to the newly-appointed Mnga'-ris *sgar-dpon* mentioned by Petech op. cit., 1972, p. 226. I am again indebted to Tashi Tsering for providing access to the Mnga'-ris documents.

The superficial lexicographical logic of Gu-ge Tshe-ring rgyal-po's etymology for “Jus-rig [-thu]... Bātur” belies its insubstantial nature: it is little better than a folk etymology for what is at heart an appropriate Mongol title: *Ĵoriγtu bātur* (i.e. bayatur) or “Brave Hero”. I am grateful to Dr. Agata Bareja-Starzyńska for kindly pointing this out to me.

<sup>33</sup> On Mala, see Wu Fengpei 吴丰培 and Zeng Guoqing 曾国庆, *Qingdai zhuzang dachen zhuanlie* 清代驻藏大臣传略 (Lhasa, 1988), pp. 2–5.

came last year were close to him and didn't report it. How should one describe this?<sup>34</sup>

Other such reports make it clear that Khang-chen-nas's authority indeed rested in good part on the significant number of loyal Mongols under his command referred to in this memorial. (This is, of course, another sign of the persistence of elements of the Mongol order in Tibet.) Khang-chen-nas's Mongol forces are mentioned in other reports as well. A memorial that can be dated to October 6, 1727, from Yue Zhongqi [岳鐘琪], Governor-General of Shaanxi and a close confidant of the emperor, describes the information gathered from enquiries made in 'Dam, the region to which those Mongol forces appear to have retreated after Khang-chen-nas's death: "According to what the mass of Mongols were saying, 'Following the murder of our leader, Khang-chen-nas, we would prefer to put ourselves under the Dalai Lama'"<sup>35</sup> Another memorial from Yue Zhongqi submitted on April 12, 1728, indicates the ultimate disposition of the Mongols in question: "looking into the many Oirats who had been under Khang-chen-nas, today some have come under the control of Bsod-nams dar-rgyas [the Dalai Lama's father] and some have gravitated to Pho-lha-nas"<sup>36</sup>

The intense interaction between Tibetans and Mongols, their mixing within fighting units during the period of Lajang Qan's rule, is captured in an animated passage from the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod* describing a lively scene during the heyday of Lajang Qan's:

... At that time, the ruler of men [Lajang Qan] and his entourage, riding excellent mounts, went to the great, happy groves of the 'Dam region. And after getting there they passed the time enjoying all manner of games and amusements. Some, atop horses possessed of the force of clouds, fired arrows and firearms; some, as a band of horsemen, fully surrounded both predators and animals of prey, caught them by their necks and tails, and firing arrows, slew them. Some, groups of Mongols and groups whose lineage was that of the imperial rulers of Tibet [*Pur-rgyal Bod-rigs*], competed against each other as they played at games of infinite levels of skill. And there they dwelled, engaging in their competitions.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin 中国藏学研究中心, et al., eds., *Yuan yilai Xizang difang yu zhongyang zhengfu guanxi dang'an shiliao huibian* 元以来西藏地方与中央政府关系当案史料汇编 (Beijing, 1994), vol. 2, p. 389: 康济鼎每年领厄鲁特兵饷时,并不照达赖汗份例额数支领,从库内取有二万两之多。去年来的大人跟前,竟不告出,是怎么说呢?

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386: 据众蒙古说,我主子康济鼎被杀了,我们情愿归达赖喇嘛属下。

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428: 查康济鼎属下原管额鲁忒之众,今归索诺木达尔扎管束,亦有归颇罗鼐者。

<sup>37</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, *op. cit.*, p. 221: ... *de'i tshe mi'i bdag po'khor dang bcas pa gzhon pa bzang po la bcibs te 'Dam ljongs kyi dga' ba'i tshal chen por gshegs so / gshegs nas kyang dus dus su rtsed 'jo rnam pa sna tshogs rtse bar byed / res 'ga' ni rta bzang po sprin gyi shugs dang ldan pa'i steng nas mda' dang / me'i 'khrul 'khor 'phang par byed / res 'ga' ni gcan gzan dang ri dwags mang po rta pa'i tshogs kyis yongs su bskor ba las gnya' ba dang / mjug ma nas 'dzin cing / nyag phran 'phangs te srog kyang 'phrogs par byed / res*

It is not surprising, given this atmosphere, that Khang-chen-nas, in the far west of Tibet at the time of the Junγar attack and ultimate retreat, seems to have availed himself of the Qořot who had lost their leader with the death of Lajang Qan. Again, the *Mi-dbang rtog-brjod*, this time recounting the crucial encounter of Khang-chen-nas with the Junγars:

Shortly thereafter, some of the Junγars with remnants of Lajang Qan's Mongols were about to move back to the Junγar lands through Mnga'-ris. At that time, Khang-chen-pa, the one in charge, thought to himself: "Ai! The ruler of men, Lajang Qan, who showed great kindness to me, has suffered grievous harm at the hands of the Junγars. I can see that those of his Mongols who are now but a remnant have been expelled to the far reaches. If lesser beings [i.e., the Junγars] can in no way accept this absolute victory of ours, we will have a meeting of the minds with the people of [Mnga'-ris] bskor-gsum and wipe out these Junγars. And we will free these remnants of Lajang Qan's forces". Thus he pledged this in his heart and the word spread that ultimately, acting as he had pledged, he gathered up his courage and wiped out the evil ones.<sup>38</sup>

I would posit from this, and from the later Qing report concerning the Oirats attached to Khang-chen-nas, that his power in the ensuing period (i.e., the time from the ouster of the Junγars up until his own death), rested upon a continuing Mongol presence in Tibet and a Tibetan and Mongol governing force within society. In essence then, the intermingled milieu that the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod* describes and the comment of Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor at the beginning of this paper are telling. This conflicts with what

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*'ga' ni Mong gol gyi skyes bu'i tshogs dang / Pur rgyal Bod rigs kyi skyes bu'i tshogs 'gran zlar byas nas rgyu rtsal gyi rim pa mtha' klas pa la rtse bar byed / 'gran par byed cing gnas so / /*

<sup>38</sup> Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal, op. cit., p. 371: *de nas mi ring ba na Jun gar pa'i skye bo 'ga' zhig dang / Lha bzang Khang gi zham ring pa Mong gol dag yul Mnga' ris kyi sa'i cha las brgyud de Jun gar gyi yul grur gtong bar gzas pa la / dus der tso bo Khang chen pa de nyid 'di snyam du bsam par gyur te / kye ma / mi'i bdag po kho bo la drin chen po dang ldan pa Lha bzang Khang de yang Jun gar pa'i tshogs 'di dag gis nyam nyes par byas / de'i zham ring du gyur pa'i Mong gol lhag ma 'di rnams kyang mthar spyugs par byed pa la ltos / skye bo ngan pa rnams kyi blo la ni rang nyid rgyal zhing phum sum tshogs pa'i mtha' 'di tsam mo zhes chog shes nam yang ma mchis pa yin na / Bskor gsum gyi skyes bo'i tshogs dang blo gros mthun par byas te / Jun gar pa'i skye bo 'di dag tshar bca'd / Lha bzang Khang gi zham ring pa 'di dag ci bder btang bar bya'o snyam pa'i dam bca' snying la bkod nas / mthar dam bcas pa dang mtshungs pa'i bya ba la zhugs zhing snying stobs bskyed de ma rungs pa rnams tshar bca'd do zhes pa'i gtam kyang grags par gyur to / /*

The general impression given by much Tibetological literature implies that Lajang Qan, through actions that included the removal of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the execution of *sde-srid* Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, ultimately lost whatever significant support he had enjoyed within Tibet, a view most recently expressed by Paul Kocot Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709–1958* (Lanham, MD, 2010), p. 8: "...the Zunghar Lazang Khan had alienated the Tibetan monasteries and nobles so much that he instigated his own downfall... Lazang's popular support in central Tibet collapsed". However, as the passage just cited from the *Mi-dbang rtogs-brjod* shows, hostility to Lajang Qan was by no means universal. The regime of Mi-dbang Pho-lha can even be characterized as something of a loyalist regime: loyal to the murdered Lajang Qan.

has often been the traditional account of the period, i.e., that the Qošot conquered Tibet for the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, then offered him rule over the land and contented themselves with life in the 'Dam region until Lajang Qan became eager for power and took it from the Dalai Lama's government. Although a certain portion of this is true – Lajang Qan did seek to expand the scope of his power – the idea that the Mongols were largely in the background from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century or that Tibetans and Mongols inhabited largely separate spaces is a simplification that does not benefit our understanding of the situation. The place of the Mongols in Tibet was not as inconsequential or as invisible as some modern accounts, out of silence, might imply. The fact that Khang-chen-nas's great-nephew, Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor, was capable of conversing in Mongol is, as I've noted, indicative of the enduring influence and effect of Tibet's second Mongol Century, which we may broadly place from the mid-1600s to the mid-1700s. Just as significantly, Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor, under questioning by Qing officials in Beijing noted, without any hint of displeasure at the fact, that his personal adornments in part reflected Tibet's history as a kingdom of Gušri Qan and the Koko Nor Mongols.

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As a final note, we might point out that this also says something about Tibet's place within the process of Mongol assimilation into the Qing imperium and the concomitant transformation – or perhaps subversion – of the Mongol world view. The process did entail the fostering of a Lhasa-centered faith among the Mongols, as detailed by Johan Elverskog in his important analysis of the nexus between traditional Mongol beliefs, Manchu state building and Buddhism. But what was at work in this was not just a simple imperial desire to tie the Mongols to a Tibetan Buddhism that was removed in language, sacred sites, etc., from what a localized Mongol Buddhism would have wrought.<sup>39</sup> As it is, there were already some very strong ties between Lhasa and the Mongols of the Koko Nor at least, many of whom were quite conversant with the ways of Lhasa and the faith manifested there. Indeed, the sandalwood image of 'Phags-pa Lokeśvara, the recovery of which was so significant in the rise of Khang-chen-nas, was particularly valued by the Koko Nor rulers: it was ultimately the Mongol noblewoman Dalai Kun-ci rgyal-mo, who arranged for the image, held to have been the tutelary deity of Srong-btsan sgam-po, to be returned to Lhasa and the Potala in 1645 after a long period of custody outside Central Tibet (largely a result of the hostilities that preceded the final triumph of the Dge-lugs-pa and the Qošot), including a time in which it was kept by the Tümed

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<sup>39</sup> Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: the Mongols, Buddhism and the State in late Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2006), pp. 117–118: ...“[T]he court's political support of the Lhasa-based Gelukpa justified the Qing ideologically since it was this development – the institutionalization of Gelukpa orthodoxy – that mandated the Mongols to become Lhasa-oriented Qing Buddhists. As a result, the incorporation of the Mongols into the Buddhist Qing entailed the thorough transformation of their culture to a Tibetan-style Gelukpa one and the suppression of locally produced Buddhisms, which potentially created competing centers of authority”.



in the Koko Nor region.<sup>40</sup> It is worth noting that the image – like the adornments worn by Rdo-ring Bstan-'dzin dpal-'byor – can be perceived as a link between the imperial Tibetan dynasty and the lineage of Gušri Qan.

All in all, given the Mongol presence in Lhasa to the point of Mongol remaining as a language of certain members of the Tibetan elite (and quite possibly others), one ought to temper the admittedly valid notion of the Qing production of “Lhasa-oriented Qing Buddhists” among the Mongols with a recognition of the often close relations – military, religious and otherwise – that existed between Tibetans and Mongols in the heart of Central Tibet during the course of Tibet’s Mongol Century.

And with this I return to the idea voiced at the outset. I am not stating that Tibet was simply Mongol. Far from it. But I am saying there is a Mongol aspect to Tibet’s history; an angle from which it would be worth reframing some of our perceptions. Again: if valid histories of India between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> and the mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries can be written from the standpoint of Fort William and also from the standpoint of Agra, so too we might consider the similar validity of histories of Tibet between the mid-17<sup>th</sup> and the mid-18<sup>th</sup> centuries constructed from the standpoint of the Potala and histories covering the same period constructed from the standpoint of 'Dam.

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<sup>40</sup> Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, *Ngag-dbang blo-bzang rgya-mtsho'i rnam-thar* [= *Du-kā-la'i gos-bzang*] (Lhasa, 1989), pp. 256–257. The passage cited is translated (with some obvious errors) by Ahmad, op. cit., p. 142. See also Bod rang-skyong-ljongs rig-dngos do-dam U-yon lhan-khang, ed., op. cit., pp. 36–37, which erroneously places the return of the image in the year 1642 and asserts that it was in Khalkha custody. This work also writes the name of the Mongol noblewoman who saw to the return of the image as Dalai Gun-ci rgyal-mo and identifies her as the chief wife of Gušri Qan. The ruler’s chief wife is identified by Sum-pa mkhan-po, op. cit., p. 995, only as Thor-gwod (i.e., Torgud) dpon-mo, an identification repeated by Dung-dkar, op. cit., p. 507.