GREY WOLF IN TIBETAN TRADITION

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"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 Mahakala (mgon-po མོང་པོ) and Kila (phur-pa གྲུའི་ཕུར་པ་) in Kanjur (bka'-gyur བཀའ་གྱིུར) and Tenjur (bstan-'gyur བསྟན་གྱུར) (3)—did not use the epithet grey while later in Sakya Kabbum (sa-skya-bka'-bum ས་སྦྱ་བཀའ་བུམ) (4), Rinchen Terzod (rin-chen-gter-mzod རིན་ཆེན་རྟེར་མཚོད) (5) and the 5th Dalai Lama's (lha-pa-chen-po བླ་པ་ཆེན་པོ) works, (6) the epithet was quite current.

When the Mandala (dkyil-khor ཉི་ལོ་ཁོར) (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 རྒྱད) 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 རྒྱལ་ཁུང) 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 གཞན་རིགས). 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 གཞན་རིགས) and had come to Tibet via India, in the time of Guru Padmasambhava (eighth century A.C.) The Tsenmara (tsi'u-dmar-po ཀྲུའི་དྲམ་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-spin-bdun བླ་མི་བྲེལ་པོ་) in Tibet.

In Tibetan literature the banner of wolf (spyang-k’i-rgyal-mtsan ཆ་ཤིུ་ཞིུ་) (12) is found in the books on Gyalpo Ku-nga (rgyal-po-sku-lha རྒྱལ་པོ་སུ་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 སྤེ་ཧར) or Pekar (pe-kar སྤེ་ཀར) is sometimes addressed as the god of war of all men (skyes-bu-yongs-kyi-dgra-lha སྐྱེས་བུ་ཡོངས་ཀྱི་དགྲ་ལྷ) or simply as great god of war (dgra-lha-chen-po དྲ་ལྷ་ཆེན་པོ) who came to Tibet in the eighth century from Bhata Hor (bha-ta-hor ཆ་ཤུ་) (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་ཡས) 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-Ide-btsan མཁྲིས་སྤོང་ལྡེ་བཙན) to send an army to Bhata Hor for bringing certain objects from the Gomda (sgom-grwa སྒོམ་གྲྭ, 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-leog སྤེ་ཧར་ལེགས) 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་ུབཀན) 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 ཨ་ཝ། དཔལ་ཧ་/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-legs-bam བཀའ་དམ་ལོ་བོམ་) and also by Chogyal Phagpa (chos-rgyal-phags-pa རྟོགས་རྒྱལ་ཕུགས་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 Shiregtemu (Tibetan gri-gum-ptsan-po རྒྱུར་གུམ་བོད་པོ།) whose name was Shaza Thi (sha-za-khri ཉེ་གེར་) 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 དགོས་ལོག་སོགས་པ་) Sonam Gyaltsem (bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ་མཚན་) and fifth Dalai Lama describe the first Mongol king Borta Che (sbor-ta-che བོར་ཝ་ཆེ་), 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 དྭ་ཚ) (31). It is however difficult to say whether the association of wolf with travels is Bon (སྨད) or Buddhist (nang-pa བློ་བོ).

NOTES


(5) སྨད་པོ་དྭ་ཚེ འཐབ། Vol. ཁ། རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙོད་འདེད་ ཐོག་ལྨ་བཅུ་པོ་ འཐབ། pp. 8, 12; and Vol. ཁ། རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙོད་འདེད་

(6) Fifth Dalai Lama Vol. ཁ། རྡོ་རྗེ་བཙོད་འདེད་ ཐོག་ལྨ་བཅུ་པོ་ འཐབ། pp. 177, 188; ཐོག་ལྨ་བཅུ་པོ་ འཐབ། p. 5.


(8) Kanjur རྡོ་རྗེ་འདེད་ Vol. ཁ། p. 56.

(9) Tenjur ཨ། Vol. ཁ། p. 185.
(10) Ms. with author part. II, p. 35. reads as: 


(12) RENE DE NEBESKY; Oracles and Demons of Tibet (London 1956) p. 16.

(13) Ms. in Namgyal Institute of Tibetology p. 160; and Vol. ii: book No. 37, p. 9; and same thing is said by the Fifth Dalai Lama: Vol. ii: p. 13. In the Golden-Annals the Bhata Hor is described as middle (เมือง) Mongolia. see part I, p. 3. in LOKESH CHANDRA (ed. New Delhi 1964)


(18) Vol. ii: p. 3; Fifth Dalai Lama: Vol. iii: p. 171, 188 and also p. 5.

(20) The Golden Annals (ed. Lokesh Chandra) part III, p. 20. reads as: "...

(21) Fifth Dalai Lama: Vol. \ldots \text{(Life story of the III Dalai Lama)} p. 96.


All these books mention their (three sons of གང་འབྲིད་ཤེས་) flight to Kongpo but they disagree about who was the youngest or eldest.