

## PERCEPTIVE APPARATUS AND INTRICACY OF TIBET (MONGOL) AND LADAKH (MUGHAL) WAR

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### Abstract

The ancient Ladakh (La dwags), including Ruthog (Ru thog) Guge( Gu ge), Purang(spu hrang), Zaskar (Zangskar,) Lahaul Spiti, and Mustang, had been primarily an integrated part of western Tibet (mNga ris region). Ladakh was the dominant power until that iniquitous war happened. Since the Trans Himalayan region, under the purview of the definition of so-called greater Tibet and its intermittent hegemony under the Yarlung Empires from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries but remained an independent kingdom in the threefold dominion Ngari khorsum (mNga ris skor gsum) as a part of western Tibet comprising of vast territory ultimately spilt into several small domains as Ladakh being the leading dominant and most significant player on the west front of Himalayas till the integration or submergence under the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir in 1947 during the Dogras regime after India's independence.

The key dimensional aspect of the war was the sectarian nature of warfare between the two major traditional Tibetan religious groups (bka gyud pa and dGe lug pa). And it presumably started at the cost of extended support by Ladakhi king Deldan Namgyal (1645-1680 AD) to the Bhutanese king in the conflict with Tibet, which led to the Tibet Ladakh Mughal war. Subsequently, as a reprisal, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's government at Lhasa requested his Mongolian counterpart, headed by Galdan Tsewang (dGal ldan Tshewang,1644-1697AD), who was the grandson of

Gurshi Khan (1582-1654/55AD), to launch an attack against Ladakh in the pretext of aggravation of Gelug pa(dGe lugs pa) monks and monasteries in Ladakh by the Ka gyudpa (bka gyudpa.) Accordingly, along with the Mongolian, Tibetan armies marched towards Basgo lower Ladakh and captured the Tingsmosgang castle, the Ladakhi summer kings palace, after three years of intermittent war. The Ladakhi king was forced to seek help from the Mughal Empire of Kashmir; however, the Kashmiri king made a deal based on the king's condition to convert to Islam and build a mosque in Leh. Ladakh succeeded initially in pushing back the Tibetans and Mongolian army with the help of Mughal arm forces. The war would not have much significance as Ladakh has ceded or lost much of its frontier borderland provinces such as Ruthog, Guge, and Purang, known as 'mNga ris skor gsum' to Tibet under the 'Treaty of Tingmosgang 1684'.

This paper looks at some dynamic factorial issues apart from the sectarian clash and conflict mentioned through different sources on the Tibet Ladakh fiasco. To know the exact cause and condition of the origin of the enigma of this war, I will also discuss its impact on the long friendly relationship between Tibet and Ladakh regarding the 1684 Treaty of Tingmosgang.

**Keywords:** Tingmosgang Treaty, mNga ris skor gsum, Trans Himalayas, Sectarian, Hegemony

### Introduction

It's very much true that no country in the world has not been characterized or illustrated by any instances of war or conflict. Tibet and Ladakh are no exception, especially Tibet, which remained a warzone by different forces throughout history. However, the only distinguishing factor is that Tibet was a Buddhist country. As a Buddhist state, it is morally and ideologically committed to avoiding any form of aggression as a sin and prohibited; even harming any sentient human being is against the law of Buddhist precepts. In the case of Tibet, it's more astonishing and unanticipated since this is the only country in the Buddhist world ruled by Lamas<sup>1</sup> (bLama) 'Monks' explicitly and implicitly at parallel times ever since the collapse of the Tibetan empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the Chinese incorporation of Tibet in

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<sup>1</sup> . Lama is the third gem of Buddhism after Buddha and Dharma, which in Tibetan traditional Buddhism is called dge 'dun, the preacher and protector of the Buddha's dharma who lives a different life than the ordinary people (Buddhism, chos srung/ skyob ba/pa).

1950s. Tibet was a secluded, solitary and traditionalistic country ruled by religious kings, lamas and noble leaders through the traditional paradigm system. Their governmental structure is based on the religio-political concept of 'Chos Srid gNyas lDan'; since then, the political and religious designs have been inherently intertwined. Later after the end of the dynastic regime around the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the different traditional Tibetan Buddhist schools empowered Tibet at successive periods in its history but always with the help of some powerful external forces from outside. The Mongol rulers and Empire (Yuan dynasty 1271-1368) (from Genghis, Altan Khan to Gurshi Khan<sup>2</sup>) had remained prominent allies of Tibet. They remained Tibet's protector force for almost seven to eight centuries starting from the most noted Lama Kunga Gyaltsen (dkunga rgyal tshen, 1310-1358 AD) of Sakya School and later under the Gelug pa especially from Sonam Gyatso, the Third Dalai Lama, to the twelve Dalai Lama. However, these different Chinese empires intermittently also authorized their dominance over Tibet for some short periods. (Song dynasty (960-1279) (Ming dynasty 1368-1644) and Qing/Manchu empires (1644-1912) They played their role in Tibet's internal and external functionalities when Mongol imperial power became weakened intermittently in the wake of Song, Ming and Manchu emergence of power and influence.

How can one know about the initiative and enterprise of this war, which is not so complicated to figure out with analytical causes and effects, yet it's an enigma for the scholarly world. On the other side, it involves a lot of complicit disparities among the state of mind of different scholars but Tibetan in particular. Ladakhi, too, to some extent, never dicked to give it a sectarian colour or conflict for various socio-political compulsions. Thus, everyone penned down on such a topic preferred to opt for different narratives from different perspectives and never called it a sectarian war between the two arch-rival religious groups of traditional Tibetan Buddhism. Later, it was extensively infected and inflicted on its borderland

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<sup>2</sup> . Gurshi Khan invaded and occupied the entire region of Tsang in Central Tibet when it was under the rule of the Tsang pa ruler, and he also occupied the eastern Tibet of Kham province. And later, he became a devout patron and protector of Tibet and offered the 5th Dalai Lama the sovereign authority of Tibet and Sonam Rabstan was made the regent or chief attendant/advisor of the Dalai Lama. In return Dalai Lama also granted him the title of "bs'Ten 'zin Chos kyi rGyal po" which means "the king of Dharma, preserver and protector of Buddhism." He died in Tibet in 1654/55, and later in 1658, his son Khushod s'Ten'zin Dorje was bestowed the title of his father by Dalai Lama. And accordingly, the 5th Dalai Lama became the full sovereign ruler of Tibet, and his new government came to be called Galden Phrodrang. While reciprocating, the Dalai Lama granted him the title of "bs'Tan bzin Chos kyi Rgalpo" which means 'the king of Dharma, preserver of teachings'

regions like Ladakh, Bhutan, and Sikkim, including other parts of mNga ris regions<sup>3</sup>. In Tibet, the sectarian mindset among Tibetans has inflicted so much in their minds invariably whether monks or ordinary laypeople knew which sect they belonged to and their prioritized activities for the respective sects/schools.

However, on the contrary, in the case of Ladakh, people are more straightforward and rational than the Tibetans in Tibet. Following one particular sect as one's religious identity and an adherent culture provides a striking example of a culture and society that is subjected to their manifestation of a pluralistic society with one identity culture. As a result, one can see the sectarian conflict based on their respective climate of religious fervour that always remained there as one weapon against each other in their people and territory. As a result, Tibet lost its territorial integrity and, ultimately, the country as what they proudly called 'Fatherland' (Pha yul) in their own internal religious and political war.

Nevertheless, they never accepted the reality while giving a valid reason for such blunders that had been in practice continued throughout the antiquities, particularly after the collapse of Tibet's imperial period 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The belligerent rivalries against each other claim one's superiority to control one's sovereign power or theocratic rule state. The different monasteries affiliated with different sects had control over most of the fertile land, which in Tibet, the upper class consisted of monastic and aristocratic families. In short, in Tibet, the land is considered to belong to the rulers. And during the Dalai Lama's rule, areas especially in central Tibet, everything belongs to the Dalai Lama. Similarly, in Tibet's adjoining border areas, like Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh etc., the land is considered the king's or monastic property since kings were the protectors of dharma(chos) and sangha(dge 'dun); hence they belonged to their respective monasteries.

Consequently, with time, there was an escalation of differences on various issues involving politics over religion mentioned in multiple early traditional Tibetan historical texts and records. And in other native annals, such as Chinese and other adjoining kingdoms, such as Bhutan and Ladakh Sikkim<sup>4</sup>. Such as Deb ther (Annals/records) Chos' bjung (dharma histories) rGyal rabs (Royal chronicles) etc

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<sup>3</sup>. mNga ris forms the westernmost province, once an independent cultural centre of importance before coming under the control of Central Tibet in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It's also the pilgrimage kingdom of Mount Kailas (Tib. Gang Rinpoche) and Late Mansarovar (Tib. mTsho ma pham).

<sup>4</sup>. Carrasco Pedro (1959) Land and Polity in Tibet, University of Washington Press, p.28

Hence, the hypothesis underlying here is to investigate the hype of increasing sectarian conflict among the followers and guardians of traditional Tibetan Buddhism in the generated cause of influences in respective parts of Tibet and Ladakh. On the contrary, Ladakh has never experienced sectarian conflict at any phase of its recorded history. However, Ladakh has all four major sects with its followers and established monastic institutions. Moreover, it's imperative to know that such confrontation, which converted into war, was a direct battle between Tibet and Ladakh with extended external backing from their respective allies, Mongol and Mughal emperors. Moreover, this proximity between Tibet and Mongols is understandable since both have had historical relations since establishing the Mongol empire Genghis Khan himself. However, on the other side, Ladakh had not found any relationship with the Mughal Empire of Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir earlier at any point in its recorded history. The region has remained geographically and culturally a part of the Tibetan plateau. Hence, it is called greater Tibet by modern scholars.

Moreover, it has a distinctive ethnic homogenous Tibetan identity and culture and, most importantly, adherence to Tibetan Buddhism. Later, after the disintegration of the Tibetan empire at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, Ladakh constituted a kingdom in the mNga ris region of western Tibet that comprised the other areas of Ruthog, Guge, and Purang. However, it says that these regions were also ruled by semi-rulers sometimes, such as aristocratic families etc., but unclear with proper references. In contrast, Ladakh was more regionally dominant and influential on spiritual and political fronts and even territorial-wise larger than others. Today, Ladakh is a buffer belt between two arch-rival neighbours China on the eastern Himalayas frontiers and Pakistan on the Northwest side.

### **Cultural unity and political division of mNga ris kingdom**

This western region was divided into three major provinces when the first king of mNga ris Skid lde Nyima mgon<sup>5</sup> ruled the entire area around the early 10<sup>th</sup>-century post to the fall down of the Tibetan empire in 842 AD. When the whole structure of the state collapsed,<sup>6</sup> Ladakh, including the entire mNga ris regions, were a part of the Tibetan domain or suzerainty. Later he divided the mNga ris

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<sup>5</sup> . Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan, 1995, Dgon rabs kun gsal nyi snagn, published by All Ladakh Gonpa Society, Leh Ladakh, pp.14-15

<sup>6</sup> Luciano Petech (1977) The Kingdom of Ladakh (C.950-1842 AD) Roma, Instituto Italiano per IL Medio ED Estremo Oriente, p.14