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► To cite this version:

Isabelle Charleux. PE HAR AND ORACLE DEITIES IN MONGOLIA: PAINTINGS OF THE FIVE KINGS IN YEKE JUU MONASTERY OF HOHHOT. Mural Art, 2018. halshs-02056994

HAL Id: halshs-02056994

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02056994>

Submitted on 5 Mar 2019

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PE HAR AND ORACLE DEITIES IN MONGOLIA: PAINTINGS OF THE FIVE KINGS IN YEKE JUU MONASTERY OF HOHHOT

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Please see the published version in: Munier-Gaillard, Christophe (ed.), Mural Art, London & Bangkok: River Books, 2018, p. 208-247.

Abstract

The cult of the warrior Buddhist deity Pe har of Central Asian origin was introduced among the Tümed during the Buddhist revival of the late 16th century. Several monasteries founded at that period in and around Hohhot (capital city of Inner Mongolia, China) had a Nayicung (gNas chung) temple with images of the Five Kings—five manifestations of Pe har, symbolizing his body, speech, mind, qualities and activities. Here I propose to study the mural decoration of the Nayicung Temple of Yeke juu, the main monastery of Hohhot, which preserves the most complete interior of a temple dedicated to protector deities in Inner Mongolia. Besides iconography and style, this article will illustrate the transformation of a Tibetan oracle deity into one of the popular deities of the Mongols in 18th and 19th century Mongolia.

PE HAR AND ORACLE DEITIES IN MONGOLIA: PAINTINGS OF THE FIVE KINGS IN YEKE JUU MONASTERY OF HOHHOT¹

From the late 16th to the 19th centuries, the Tümed Mongols of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, who live near the Sino-Mongol border, decorated the interior of their temples with mural paintings. Some of them are well preserved, but few were studied and published.² In art history, mural paintings are a useful tool of comparison for dating and locating portable paintings, and the study of Tümed murals may allow identification of specific artistic and iconographic styles of this region.

This article aims at placing a cycle of mural paintings in the broader study of Mongol and Tibetan art and cult of oracle deities. The paintings under study are located in the Nayicung sūme of the Yeke juu, the main monastery of Hohhot (Mo. Kökeqota,³ “the Blue City,” present-day capital of Inner Mongolia, known as Guihuacheng 歸化城 in the Qing period). These murals form the most complete cycle of wrathful protector deities that has been preserved in Inner Mongolia. The deities depicted are seven oracle gods bound by an oath⁴ to protect Buddhism⁵ — the warrior deity Pe har and his four emanations, known as “the Five Kings,” plus two other gods, Tshangs pa dkar po (Mo. Cambayarbu) and mGar ba nag po (Mo. Garbanaybuu). Their iconography was fixed in Tibet in the early 16th century. Mongolian Nayicung (also written Nayicüng or Nayicing, < Tib. gNas chung) designates both Pe har and one of his emanations, by reference to gNas chung Monastery near Lhasa where the deity “resided” and gave oracles. Several monasteries founded at that period in and around Hohhot had a Nayicung Temple with images of Pe har.

Pe har is a controversial deity of Central Asian origin, which came to play a major political role in Tibet under the Great Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) as an oracle deity. He was introduced among the Tümed Mongols during the late 16th-century Buddhist renaissance. Pe har’s identity and role in late 16th- and early 17th-century Mongolia and his subsequent role in the popular pantheon are important topics for the study of the Mongol Buddhist pantheon and cults. I will briefly recall the history of Pe har’s cult in Tibet and its introduction in Mongolia in order to understand how borrowed Tibetan oracle deities became protectors of Mongol monasteries and scriptures, but also oracle deities that contributed to supplant the shamans, and popular wealth gods of the Mongol “folk” and shamanist pantheon.

¹ I thank Amy Heller and Françoise Pommaret for their reading and insightful suggestions.

² Two comprehensive surveys were recently published on the mural paintings of two Inner Mongol monasteries: Wang Leiyi et al. 2009 and Zhang Haibin 2010.

³ I used Mostaert’s system to transcribe the traditional Mongolian script spelling, but I replaced ‘č’ and ‘j’ by plain ‘c’ and ‘j.’ Tibetan words are transliterated according to Wylie’s system. Romanization of Chinese words (Ch.) follows the *pinyin* system. For some foreign words that have entered the English-language academic literature I have departed from the transcription systems noted above and kept now familiar spellings, e.g. khan, Gelugpa, Hohhot.

⁴ Mo. *damjan* or *damjin*, < Tib. *dam can*, [the one who is] bound by an oath.

⁵ Skt. *dharmapāla*, “protectors of the Dharma,” Tib. *chos skyong*; Mo. *coyijing*, or *nom-un sakiyulsun*; *doḡsid* (< Tib. *drag gshed*, “the wrathful”). These fierce deities are entrusted to defend the Buddhist doctrine and suppress the enemies of Buddhism.

These questions belong to the broader issue of which foreign deities were adopted by the Mongols and for what function.

The study of the paintings of Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple compared with other Mongol paintings of Pe har will clarify whether the Tümed Mongols brought innovations in Pe har's iconography and association with other deities, or whether they closely followed Tibetan conventions. Besides, the discussion of the date of the first depictions of Pe har in Mongolia is important because he was not an outstanding god in Tibet before the mid-17th century. Was Pe har a main protector for the Mongols before being central to Tibetan state cult, and did the Gelugpa (Tib. dGe lugs pa) School in Tibet eventually promote this warrior deity under Mongol influence?

Pe har and the (re-)conversion of the Mongols

In the Tibeto-Mongol pantheon, Pe har is considered as the leader of the worldly protectors (*'jig rten pa'i srung ma* or *'jig rten gyi chos skyong*) who have not yet reached enlightenment and stay in the *samsāra* — a category that includes wealth gods and indigenous nature deities. These protectors cannot help the devotee to reach enlightenment, but since they live in this world, they are more receptive to mundane wishes, and can manifest in the world through the intermediary of a medium to give advice and predictions about human affairs.

Tibetan name	Identity	Sanskrit origin	Mongolian name
Pe har rgyal po	King Pe har		Biqar qan, Bihar qan, Nayicung
rGyal po sku lnga: – Mon bu pu tra – dGra lha skyes gcig bu – brGya byin – Shing bya can – (White) Pe har	Five Kings	– (Indra)	Tabun qayan – Guna raja – Biqar, Bihar
rDo rje grags ldan	Pe har's emanation	-	Dorji daydan, Vcir aldartu
Tshangs pa dkar po	White Tshangs pa, protector	(White Brahmā)	Camba, Cayan Camba, Cambayarbu, Cambayarba Cangbayarbu, Esrua
(Dam can) rDo rje legs pa	“Vajra renunciant”	Vajrasādhū	(Damjin) Dorliṅ, Tangyariṅtu nom-un qan
mGar ba nag po	rDo rje legs pa's emanation, god of blacksmiths		Damjin garbanaybuu, Qara darqan tngri, Dorleg, Dorliṅ
Beg tse (lCam sring, bSe'i khrab)	Warrior deity, protector of horses	-	Jamsaran
rNam thos sras	Wealth deity	Vaiśravaṇa	Bisman tngri, Namsarai
Tsi'u dmar po	Red Tsi'u, oracle deity who replaced Pe har at bSam yas	-	Dizimur, Zumer, Zimur
rDo rje shugs ldan	Dharma protector	-	Dorjesug, Šüg
gZa' Rāhu	Planetary god	Rāhu	Raqu

Table 1: Main protector deities mentioned in the text (except for Vaiśravaṇa, all of them are oracle deities)

The Five Kings represent the five manifestations, “emanations” (*sprul pa*), or hypostases of Pe har. They are known as rGyal po sku lnga (“The kings/the *rgyal po* demons, the five bodies”), translated into Mongolian as the Tabun qayan (“Five Kings/Emperors”). *rGyal po* means both “king” and a category of demonic spirits, but the Mongols only retained the meaning of “king.” According to a Tibetan source, the Five Kings were five brothers who came originally from

Central Asia.⁶ Other oracular deities are linked to Pe har and often appear in Pe har's retinue (**table 1**).

Pe har in Tibet before the conversion of the Mongols

The complex history of this foreign, "adopted" deity has been studied by several renowned Tibetologists.⁷ Obviously, Pe har, who had become the protector of bSam yas Monastery in the late 8th century after having been captured and bound under oath by the great thaumaturgist Padmasambhava, was not an important deity⁸ before the Great Fifth Dalai Lama seized temporal power in 1642.⁹ The Dalai Lama investigated Pe har's past and concluded that he had been invited from "Bata Hor" (which may be identified at that time with the region of Ganzhou 甘州, Gansu) in China to Tibet at the time of King Khri srong lde brtsan (755-797) to become the guardian of bSam yas.¹⁰ Various Tibetan sources after the 16th century provide different historical and mythological explanations of this transfer.¹¹ Pe har is therefore a foreign god from "the North" (like Vaiśravaṇa) brought to Tibet between the 8th and 13th centuries.¹² He was subjugated by Padmasambhava (or by Hayagrīva,¹³ and/or Vaiśravaṇa) and took the oath to protect Buddhist monasteries and their treasures¹⁴ (hence the link with wealth deities), sacred texts, and religious precepts.¹⁵

The Gelugpa School that developed in the 15th century soon adopted Pe har as an oracle deity. In the 16th century, Pe har (or one of his hypostases) was moved from bSam yas to a chapel known as gNas chung in 'Bras spungs Monastery¹⁶ where the Dalai Lama had his government.¹⁷ The Second Dalai Lama dGe 'dun rgya mtsho (1476-1542) granted Pe har the title gNas chung 'Od ldan dkar po ("White Holder of the Brightness of gNas chung"). His "Complete Works," that still refers to Pe har as bSam yas's protector, fixes his iconography that will remain the same in the

⁶ Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996, p. 189.

⁷ On Pe har's history and the etymology of his name: Tucci 1949, I, p. 736; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956]; Macdonald 1977-1978; Stoddard 1997; Sørensen and Hazod 2005, p. 218. On Pe har as an ancient mountain deity and his relation to the White Old Man (rGan po dkar po), to white-bearded Pha khen rgyan po riding a dog, his servant gNam lha (thel) dkar po, and mGar ba nag po, who all belong to an "archaic stratum of Eurasia": Hummel 1962.

⁸ Before the 14th century, Tibetan sources describe Pe har as a representative of unorthodox, non-Buddhist beliefs. He belongs to the *the'u rang* class of deities that governs thunders and hurricanes (Lin 2010).

⁹ Before the reign of the Fifth Dalai lama, it was not Pe har but Tsi'u dmar po of bSam yas and Tshangs pa dkar po who were the models for the other protector deities (Macdonald 1977-1978).

¹⁰ Lin 2010, p. 17 sq.

¹¹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1948, p. 141 sq.; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 97-107; Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996, p. 189-191; Martin 1996; Stoddard 1997.

¹² 8th-century Tibetans (one of the great Asian powers of the time) may have attacked the hermitage of "Bata Hor" (belonging to Tangut Minyag people who founded the Xixia kingdom in the 10th century, or to the Uyghur kingdom) and "captured" the powerful oracle deity of their enemies (or Pe har's medium) that they brought back to bSam yas. It is also possible that in 1227, after the Mongol conquest of the Xixia kingdom, the Minyag elite fled to Central Tibet, bringing their deity Pe har with them (Stoddard 1997).

¹³ This wrathful emanation of Avalokiteśvara whom Padmasambhava used during his meditations to subdue the Five Kings is an important *yi dam* of the Nyingpama tradition.

¹⁴ A story says that Pe har came to bSam yas following the treasures of Bata Hor that the Tibetans brought back after the destruction of the hermitage. The god was settled in bSam yas as a keeper of treasures, protector of the scriptures, and later as oracle (around the 12th century) (Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996, p. 189-191).

¹⁵ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 117.

¹⁶ 'Bras spungs, five kilometres west of Lhasa, was founded in 1416.

¹⁷ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 106; Tucci 1949, I, p. 43; Sørensen and Hazod 2005, p. 84, n. 200. According to a 17th-century source, the Second Dalai Lama officially invited gNas chung (Pe har/rDo rje grags ldan) to be the protector of 'Bras spungs: "Gazetteer of the Pe har Temple in gNas chung Monastery" by Tibetan regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (Liao Dongfan 2008, p. 116, quoted by Qi Jie 2009, p. 18, n. 66).

following centuries¹⁸ But no ritual specifically dedicated to Pe har is found in the Second Dalai Lama's "Complete Works."¹⁹

Pe har was one of the personal protectors of the Third Dalai Lama bSod nams rgya mtsho (1543-1588) before his meeting with the Mongols.²⁰ In 1558, Pe har's emanation rDo rje grags ldan²¹ appeared to bSod nams rgya mtsho, declaring he was a form of Pe har and worked as a particular assistant of Padmasambhava.²² According to his biography, authored by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1646, Pe har's oracle was questioned about finding new high reincarnations and government affairs.

Pe har and the conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism

As seen above, Pe har of Bata Hor was not an original Mongol deity, as modern Mongol scholars, who understand "Hor" as being Mongolia,²³ now assert:²⁴ his cult developed in Tibet long before the Mongols appear on the historical scene. He is not even mentioned in 13th and 14th century Mongolian sources, at a time when the Yuan elite was converted to Tibetan Buddhism. Actually, it is the Third Dalai Lama bSod nams rgya mtsho who was directly responsible for the introduction of Pe har, his personal protector, into Mongolia in the 16th century.

The well-known meeting between bSod nams rgya mtsho and Altan Khan (1507/8-1582), king of the Tümed Mongols, at Cabciyal near the Kukur Lake (Amdo, present-day Qinghai Province) in 1578 is the most emblematic event of the conversion of Mongols to Gelugpa Buddhism in the late 16th century. Among the many titles they exchanged, the Mongol khan gave bSod nams rgya mtsho the title "Dalai Lama" (the third, for two reincarnations were recognized before him). The major Mongolian source of this period, Altan Khan's biography (*Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orosiba*, "Jewel Translucent Sūtra"), written around 1607, shows the salient role played by Pe har in the decision of the Dalai Lama to accept the invitation of the khan. Pe har is the *dharmapāla* most frequently mentioned in the biography, under the name Šasin-i sakiγci (yeke) qayan, "(Great) King Protector of the Religion," or Biqar/Bihar qayan. Curiously, he is not mentioned later in the biography, when Altan Khan and the Dalai Lama met at last.

According to the biography, in 1575, when a Mongol delegation went to Lhasa to bring the invitation to the Dalai Lama, "King Pe har, protector of the wonderful Buddha's religion, entered into a human body" and revealed a prophecy pronounced by Hayagrīva.²⁵ The prophecy

¹⁸ This iconography originated in 15th century texts inherited from his father. I thank Amy Heller for this information.

¹⁹ Ricca 1999, p. 18.

²⁰ When he was one year old, in 1544, he was brought to 'Bras spungs, and in the chapel of gNas chung chos rgyal, rDo rje 'od ldan dkar po (the "Vajra of White Brightness") manifested himself as his personal protector.

²¹ At that time, he was believed to have taken monastic vows and received an official status (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 444; Macdonald 1977-1978).

²² Biography of the Third Dalai Lama, fol. 19b-20a, and fol. 43b, quoted by Heller 2005, p. 216; Ricca 1999, p. 18. The Biography includes a detailed description of Pe har and his manifestations (fol. 62b-63a).

²³ In Tibetan, "Hor" designated Mongolia after the 13th century. For identifications of Bata Hor with "some nomadic tribe located near lake Baikal" or with people settled near Burqan qaldun, the sacred Chinggisid mountain in Mongolia: Tucci 1949, II, p. 736.

²⁴ Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 60-61.

²⁵ Nothing appears in the Third Dalai Lama's Biography of the advice Pe har is said to have given bSod nams rgya mtsho, to convert the Mongols. Writing in 1646, long after the events, its author, the Fifth Dalai Lama, may not have had these precisions. According to Okada (1992, p. 652), the omission of Pe har's oracle in the Third Dalai Lama's biography is a distortion of history made by the Fifth Dalai Lama "for the sake of glorification of his own sect, the Dge lugs pa." Kollmar-Paulenz (2001, p. 73) disagrees on the Fifth Dalai Lama's aim because the oracle is traditionally at a very high place.

mentioned a vision of the Dalai Lama and Altan Khan having already taken a vow in front of Padmasambhava, and strongly advised the Dalai Lama to go to the land of the Mongols.²⁶ The Mongol envoys were informed that in the Ox year (1577), Altan Khan should meet the Dalai Lama at Cabciyal Monastery “at the meeting point of the three nations China, Tibet and Mongolia” (near the Kukunor Lake).²⁷ They delivered the Dalai Lama’s message when they returned to Mongolia in 1576. Altan Khan then sent a delegation to welcome the Dalai Lama with gifts, among which was a seal for the “Perpetual Dharma Protector King Pe har” (Nasuda šasin-i sakigci Biqar qayan, 23v). The Dalai Lama confirmed that he would go without hesitation (24v), but the Tibetan lords presented a petition against this perilous journey to “that frontier without Dharma, that dark land without the Buddha” where people eat human flesh and drink blood (25r). The biography of the Third Dalai Lama also recorded dissension among the Tibetans: many opinions arose both for and against his going.²⁸ That is why Pe har was asked again:

Also the protector of the Religion, the Great King
Pe har, who was summoned to enter into a human body,
When repeatedly asked about these travels, meditating [he responded]
“If the wise Dalai Lama goes to Mongolia without delay,
You will spread Buddhism vastly!
You will lead the mistaken ones!
You will enlighten like the sun the darkness of the disgraceful defilements!
I will be with you, Holy one! Go without hindrance!”²⁹

Pe har therefore had to be consulted twice through an oracle, and without his advice and prediction, the Tibetan nobles would certainly not have let the Dalai Lama go.

During his journey to Kukunor, the Dalai Lama fought against and tamed various deities who obstructed his progression. Beg tse accompanied him and protected him during his travel, and he designated Beg tse as the main protector of the Mongol people. During his meeting with Altan Khan in 1578, the Dalai Lama directed the consecration ritual of Cabciyal (Narrow Valley) Monastery, built from 1574 to 1577 to prepare the meeting, and named it “Monastery of the Wheel of Mahāyāna Teaching.”³⁰ Cabciyal Monastery was razed to the ground in 1591 by the Ming (1368-1644) troops who re-conquered part of the region. A description of its organization is found in the “Biography of the Third Dalai Lama,”³¹ and was later copied in the Mongolian chronicle “Golden Rosary.”³² It mentions a temple dedicated to Pe har: dPe dkar lcog/Biahar keyid.

Before he became a main protector and state oracle deity in Tibet, Pe har therefore would have advised bSod nams rgya mtsho to convert the Mongols. Since Hor designates Mongolia in Tibetan after the 13th century, this protector of monasteries certainly appeared to the Third Dalai Lama as a logical protector for the first Mongol monastic communities.

²⁶ *Erdeni tunumal*, 22r-22v, transl. Elverskog 2002, p. 143-145; also Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 281-283, and Okada 1992, p. 649.

²⁷ *Erdeni tunumal*, 23r.

²⁸ See the translation of this passage in the biography by Okada 1992, p. 645; also Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 72-74.

²⁹ *Erdeni tunumal* 25v, transl. Elverskog 2002, p. 151; Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 289.

³⁰ Theg chen chos ’khor gling/Yeke kölgen-ü nom-un kürdün süme. It received from the Ming court the title Yanghuasi 仰華寺. For details and possible location of this monastery: Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 81-82; Charleux 2006, p. 42-43.

³¹ Biography of the Third Dalai Lama, fol. 96r (Tucci 1949, vol. I, p. 47-49, 255; Okada 1992, p. 646; Kollmar-Paulenz 2001, p. 82).

³² *Altan erike* 1817, ed. Coyiji 1999, p. 127.

Pe har appears to be closely connected to Padmasambhava and the Nyingmapa (Tib. rNying ma pa) tradition. The “Nyingmapa side” of the Fifth Dalai Lama³³ is well-known, but the Third Dalai Lama was also interested in Nyingmapa teachings. The Gelugpas sent to the Tümeds in 1604 a young monk, the Mayidari qutuytu dGe ’dun dpal bzang rgya mtsho (1592-1635), who was recognized as the reincarnation of a Nyingmapa master.³⁴ Among the Tümed, famous hermits such as Töbed diyanci and Caqar diyanci followed Kagyüpa (Tib. bKa’ brgyud) and Nyingmapa teachings,³⁵ and Padmasambhava and Nyingmapa deities occupy an important place in the pantheon of the first Mongol Gelugpa monasteries.

Pe har and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama

About fifty years after the conversion of the Tümeds, Pe har was eventually acknowledged by the Fifth Dalai Lama as the principal protector of the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan government, and major decisions of the state were made in consultation with his oracle. In 1651, the Fifth Dalai Lama composed a ritual to Pe har, describing gNas chung’s oracle as Pe har’s *sku rten*,³⁶ wearing a helmet and armour.³⁷ He once had a vision of gNas chung rDo rje grags ldan/Pe har in armour, in 1653, when he was preparing to travel back from China through Hohhot.³⁸ He then encouraged Gelugpa monasteries to adopt Pe har as a protector deity.

At the end of his life, in 1681, the Fifth Dalai Lama founded gNas chung Monastery by moving ’Bras spungs’s gNas chung Chapel half a mile to the south. The construction ended in 1683 during the regency of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1677-1705).³⁹ After the Fifth Dalai Lama’s death, rDo rje grags ldan/Pe har continued to be one of the major protectors of his lineage and held a special position within the government.⁴⁰ Pe har has therefore become the official protector of the unified Tibetan state, and gNas chung Monastery functioned as the official residence of the state oracle.⁴¹

In the 18th century, the four main oracle deities of Tibet were Pe har of gNas chung, and three deities emanated from or connected to him: Tshangs pa dkar po in Lha mo lcog Monastery (50 kilometres east of Lhasa),⁴² Tsi’u dmar po in bSam yas,⁴³ and Shing bya can in dGa’ gdong Monastery near mTshur phu.⁴⁴ Other deities who are depicted on the murals of the Yeke juu’s Nayicung Temple also spoke through oracles in Tibet: Mon bu pu tra took possession of the

³³ See Karmay 1988.

³⁴ Charleux 2014, p. 51-52.

³⁵ Charleux 2006, p. 67-79.

³⁶ *sKu rten*, “body support, image of deity,” here designates a man possessed by a deity.

³⁷ Ricca 1999, p. 18, n. 30; Heller 2005, p. 217.

³⁸ Karmay 1988, p. 35-36.

³⁹ On the history, architecture and decoration of gNas chung Monastery: Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 104-107, 444-448; Martin 1996, p. 80; Ricca 1999. gNas chung was rebuilt in Dharamsala in 1983.

⁴⁰ Heller 2005.

⁴¹ On the state oracles and other oracles of Tibet: Tsybikov 1992 [1919], p. 218-220; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1948; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], chapters XXI and XXII; Avedon 1994; Havnevik 2002. rDo rje grags ldan/Pe har was consulted thereup to 1959.

⁴² Tshangs pa dkar po was appointed by the Fifth Dalai Lama as the guardian of the dGa’ ldan Governmental Palace (dGa’ ldan pho brang).

⁴³ Tsi’u dmar po replaced Pe har at bSam yas (Pommaret 1998, p. 84). According to A. Macdonald (1977-1978), in 1558 Pe har was identified with Tsi’u dmar po.

⁴⁴ Kapstein 2009. His oracle was frequently consulted by the Tibetan government for weather predictions, because he was said to exercise power over the water spirits.

medium residing in the sKar ma shar Shrine in Lhasa;⁴⁵ Vajrasādhu and mGar ba nag po gave oracles in various Tibetan monasteries.

Pe har/the Five Kings' in the Tümed monasteries

Let us now introduce depictions of Pe har and his emanations in and around Hohhot, the palatial town founded by Altan Khan in 1571.

Nayicung Temple in Hohhot's Great Monastery (Yeke juu)

The Western Temple dedicated to Pe har, also known as Nayicung süme or Jangqang süme (temple of the protector deities, Tib. *btsan khang*),⁴⁶ is located in the western courtyard of the "Great Monastery" (Yeke juu),⁴⁷ the Bara□un sang (Right/Western Treasury) (1, 2).⁴⁸ Its foundation date is unknown; it may stand above or south of the ruins of Altan Khan's funerary temple. The Chinese, Mongolian and Russian sources⁴⁹ that allow us to reconstruct the monastery's history tell us nothing about the construction and decoration of the Nayicung Temple.



1. Front view of Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

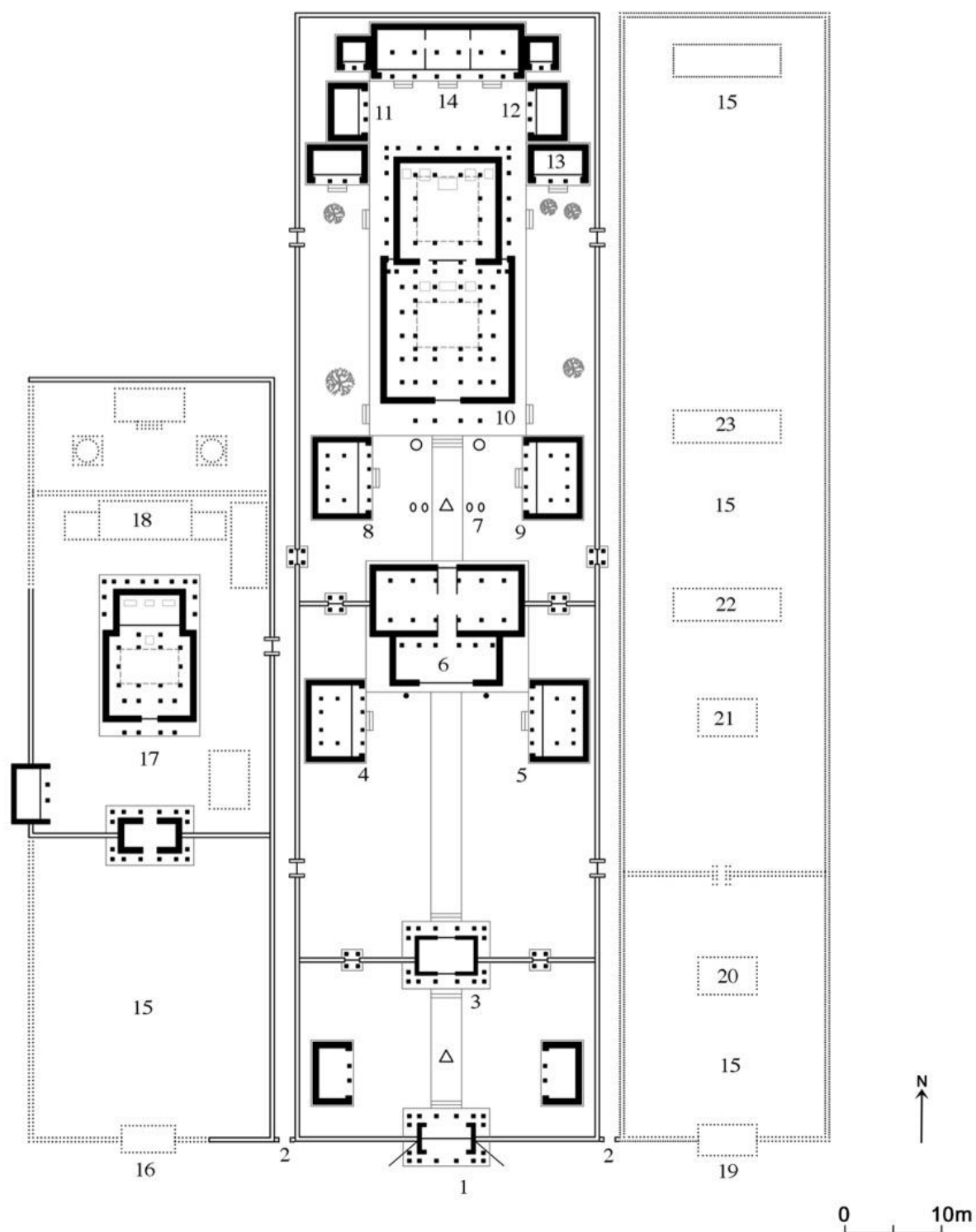
⁴⁵ He was also the special guardian of the Jo khang (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 122).

⁴⁶ It is called in Chinese Naqiong fodian 乃琼佛殿, Naichunmiao 乃春廟, Ximiao 西廟 (Western Temple). The plaque above the entrance names the temple Raki or Ragi süme in Mongolian (Rāhu Temple?) and Naichunmiao in Chinese.

⁴⁷ Ch. Dazhao[si] 大召[寺]. It received from the Ming and Qing dynasties the Chinese titles Hongcisi 弘慈寺 and Wuliangsi 無量寺 respectively. Cf. Altanorgil 1982, p. 89-97; Charleux 2006, Cd-rom [1].

⁴⁸ I visited it several times between 1992 and 2016.

⁴⁹ Charleux 2006, Cd-rom [1]. In Tibet and Mongolia, temples for protector deities are generally closed to visitors, or the deities' faces are hidden under a cloth.



2. Plan of the Yeke juu, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia before the recent reconstruction. © I. Charleux

1. Entrance pavilion; 2. Lateral gates; 3. *Lokapāla* Hall; 4. Amitābha Temple; 5. Amitāyus Temple; 6. Yama Temple; 7. Sacrificial vessels; 8. Guhyasamāja Temple; 9. Saṃvara Temple; 10. Main Assembly Hall and shrine; 11. Kitchen; 12. Refectory; 13. *Donir* (secretary)'s building; 14. Nine-bay Hall (*Jiujianlou*); 15. Monks' residences; 16. Entrance Pavilion of the Western Treasury (*Baraḡun sang*); 17. Nayicung Temple; 18. *Labrang*; 19. Entrance Pavilion of the Great Treasury (*Yeke Sang*); 20. Bodhisattvas' Temple; 21. Monastic Treasury (*sang*); 22. Five-bay Hall; 23. Administration, Office of the Seals.

Let us recall the main dates of construction and restoration of the Yeke juu. Founded by Altan Khan in 1579-1580 south of his palace of Hohhot, it was the principal monastery of the 16th-century Mongol cultural and religious renaissance, and it enshrined the most precious icon of the Tümeds: a replica in gold, silver and precious stones of the Jo bo Śākyamuni of the Jo khang Temple in Lhasa. The Third Dalai Lama, when he visited Hohhot in 1585, re-consecrated the Yeke juu, and enshrined Altan Khan's funerary *stūpa* in the western part of the monastery.⁵⁰ In the Qing period, the Yeke juu became an imperial monastery where monks prayed for the Manchu ruler's longevity, and the seat of the Hohhot Buddhist administration. The monastery was restored in 1640, and again in 1652 when the Fifth Dalai Lama sojourned there on his way to Beijing. In 1696-1698, the Second Neyici toyin qutuytu (1671-1703) enlarged the monastery. Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662-1723) granted him the imperial privilege of using yellow tiles to cover the Main Assembly Hall. The Yeke juu lost its importance in the 18th century after the Buddhist administration of Hohhot moved to the nearby Small Monastery—the Baya juu—in 1703. The Third and Fifth Dalai Lamas, who have especially favoured the Yeke juu, had their statues placed in the Main Assembly Hall.

The Yeke juu (“Great Jo bo”)⁵¹ being seen as an equivalent of the Jo khang, the Baya juu (“Small Jo bo”) as an equivalent of Ra mo che Temple in Lhasa, and Hohhot as an equivalent of Lhasa,⁵² Nayicung Temple may have been built as an equivalent of Tibet's gNas chung Temple. But when was it built? Its framework has Ming-dynasty characteristics and the position of its columns point to the late Ming or early Qing dynasty.⁵³ The Nayicung Temple could have been built during the 1640 restoration of the Yeke juu.

Russian scholar Aleksei M. Pozdneev described the “Dzankhan” (Jangqang) Temple as having a separate enclosure but belonging to the Yeke juu in the late 19th century. The temple of the “patron spirit” (Pe har?) of the monastery was especially worshipped by the Yeke juu's monks and by the inhabitants of Hohhot. According to posters pasted on the walls, every year laymen, and especially soldiers, asked for specific rituals and gave offerings to this temple. Pozdneev also reports that in 1869, a pair of willow trees was planted in front of the “Dzankhan” because poles were unaffordable.⁵⁴ Present-day monks of the Yeke juu recount that weapons are kept in a hall dedicated to the guardian of the monastery (that may be identified to Nayicung Temple). This hall is usually closed but a ceremony is performed on the second day of each Lunar month, during which the guardian deity comes and uses the weapons to punish the lamas who behaved improperly: present-day monks thus remember Pe har's function as the guardian of lamas' precepts.⁵⁵

As for its architecture, the Nayicung Temple (27x15 m) is a smaller replica of Yeke juu's Main Assembly Hall: it has a 3-bay porch, a small assembly hall (5x5 bays) lightened by a skylight, and a rear shrine (sanctum). The temple follows the “two-buildings and three-roofs style” that characterizes Hohhot temples.⁵⁶ It is located in a courtyard with an entrance pavilion and two lateral halls. Behind the temple is a 5-bays hall (the former residence of the head lama up to 1703) and houses for lamas and their disciples. The residence was destroyed; in 2002 a two-storied

⁵⁰ *Erdeni tunumal*, 43v-45 v.

⁵¹ In Mongolian, *juu* < Tib. Jo bo (“Lord”) came to designate a temple enshrining a precious statue, and a monastery.

⁵² Charleux 2015.

⁵³ Su Bai 1994, p. 53-54.

⁵⁴ Pozdneev 1977 [1896-1898], p. 38-39.

⁵⁵ Olivér Kápolnás, personal communication, 2012.

⁵⁶ Charleux 2006, p. 253-254.

building called Scriptures Pavilion was built on the site. The Nayicung Temple was restored in 2001-2002.

Around 1980, the Nayicung Temple was turned into a temple dedicated to the Buddhas of the Three Eras. Their three 2 m-high statues, made in 1980, stand in the rear shrine **(10)**. The Yeke juu has another Protectors' Temple, the Yama Temple, located on the central axis, which does not contain any image of Pe har **(2)**. This hall may have been turned into a Protectors' Temple when the Nayicung Temple became a temple of the Buddhas of the Three Eras.

Pe har and Nayicung temples in other Tümed monasteries, 1570s-1640s

Before describing the mural paintings of the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple, let us mention other temples and mural paintings of Pe har in 16th and 17th century Tümed monasteries that adopted him as their main wrathful protector. The first one, already mentioned, is Cabciyal Monastery that had a shrine dedicated to Pe har.

The murals of the Octagonal Temple of the Mayidari juu (Maitreya Monastery)⁵⁷ preserve the earliest known depictions of Pe har in Mongolia, anterior to the Pe har cycle of Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple. These murals represent the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava; they were certainly painted between 1572 and 1606.⁵⁸ Pe har's emanation brGya byin riding his elephant is depicted with Tsi'u dmar po, mGar ba nag po and Rahū on the south-west wall **(3)**; and Lha mo lcog Tshangs pa dkar po, his two emanations, his warrior deity and dog are depicted in parallel on the south-east wall **(4)**. In both compositions, Padmasambhava appears above the main deity.⁵⁹

The Mayidari juu also had a Nayicung Temple. The building was initially erected in 1606 southwest of the monastery to serve as the residence of the Mayidari qutuγtu, and was transformed into a temple after his death in 1635. It is a small two-storied Tibetan-like architecture, with no mural paintings. When it was restored in the 1980s, it housed the helmets and iron armour used by the oracle lamas (*nayicung lamas*, see below) and a statue of White Pe har⁶⁰ on his lion.⁶¹

A temple to Tshangs pa dkar po was located at the centre of the monastery.⁶² It was built by a Mongolian prince in 1808 to worship Tshangs pa dkar po, protector of horses and sheep against illnesses and ferocious beasts, and also housed the spirit-banner (*sülde*, *tuγ*) of Altan Khan.⁶³ Tshangs pa dkar po (who was identified with Brahmā) may have been the personal protector of Altan Khan who had received from the Third Dalai Lama the title "Perfect Brahmā (Esrua) Great Mighty Cakravartin Khan."⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Or Mayidari-yin juu, Ch. Meidaizhao 美岱召, located 70 km west of Hohhot: fortified palace founded by Altan Khan, progressively turned into a monastery, restored in 1606, and in the 18th century.

⁵⁸ Charleux 2014, p. 44, 46.

⁵⁹ These paintings show a strong Chinese influence. For hypotheses on Nyingmapa depictions in Mayidari juu (a Gelugpa monastery): Charleux 2014, p. 51-52.

⁶⁰ I use the term "White Pe har" to designate Pe har's main emanation, the three-eyed six-armed white god mounted on a lion, usually called "Pe har" in the literature.

⁶¹ Miao Runhua and Du Hua 2008, p. 159-161. It now enshrines statues of the eight *dharmapālas* on the first floor but no depiction of Pe har.

⁶² It is called in Chinese Caishenmiao 財神廟 (God of Wealth Temple) or Baima Tianshenmiao 白馬天神廟 (White Horse Deity Temple). It has been destroyed.

⁶³ Miao Runhua and Du Hua 2008, p. 121. The spirit-banner was believed to embody the life spirit (*sülde*) of a chief warrior, which becomes a protective ancestor spirit.

⁶⁴ *Erdeni tunumal*, 34r.



3a (left). brGya byin, surrounded by mGar ba nag po (right), Tsi'u dmar po (bottom), Rahū (left), and an unidentified red naked deity with a cane hat, holding a club ending with a half-vajra and riding a mule (top). Above the latter is Padmasambhava. **3b (right, detail of 3a).** brGya byin. Mural painting, Octagonal Temple, Mayidari juu, west of Hohhot. © Zhang Haibin 2010, p. 298



4a (left). Tshangs pa dkar po and attendants. Above Tshangs pa dkar po is Padmasambhava; **4b (right, detail of 4a).** Tshangs pa dkar po. Mural painting, Octagonal Temple, Mayidari juu, west of Hohhot. © Zhang Haibin 2010, p. 296

Besides, in the back shrine of the Main Assembly Hall, mural paintings depict Vaiśravaṇa, a main protector of the Tümed state, other deities linked to wealth, holding a mongoose, as well as Beg tse, Mahākāla and dPal ldan lha mo.⁶⁵

In the lower register of the west wall (repainted in the Qing period), on the famous painting of Altan Khan's family, Beg tse appears on the right side, and a warrior deity is depicted between the two main characters (**5b**). The latter sits on a chair, wears an armour, a helmet topped by a kind of banner, and holds a lance in the left hand, and a bow and an arrow in the right; eight flags are attached to his back. A similar deity with reversed attributes is depicted in the Octagonal Temple, in the retinue of Tshangs pa dkar po (**5a**). In another article, I showed that this deity may be identified with the deity of Altan Khan's spirit-banner, i.e., Altan Khan's warrior deity (*sülde*

⁶⁵ Charleux 2014, p. 41. These are located in the lower register; the upper register depicts the main events of the lives of Śākyamuni, the Third Dalai Lama, and Tsong kha pa (1357-1419).

tngri), depicted as emanating from Tshangs pa dkar po in the Octagonal Temple.⁶⁶ Another possible identification is rDo rje grags ldan, the oracle god who takes possession of the gNas chung oracle, and chief minister in the retinue of Pe har.⁶⁷ Besides, rDo rje grags ldan/Pe har and Beg tse are intimately linked, and in many ways, these warrior deities overlap each other.⁶⁸



5a (left, detail of 4). Warrior deity, as an attendant of Tshangs pa dkar po, mural painting, Octagonal Temple; **5b (right).** Warrior deity, lower part of the western wall of the back shrine of the Main Assembly Hall. Mayidari juu. © Miao Runhua and Du Hua 2008: 10, 180

The Siregetü juu, the second largest monastery of Hohhot, located 300 metres northwest of the Yeke juu,⁶⁹ also had a Nayicung Temple. It was erected in the eastern part of this monastery, probably during the enlargement of 1644 or 1697.⁷⁰ This temple was composed of an assembly hall and a back shrine, but unlike other Tümed temples, the back shrine was larger than the assembly hall, perhaps to house a medium's performance. The temple was destroyed in 1887 when a major fire damaged part of the monastery. Nothing is known of its iconography. In the paralleled temple of the western part of the monastery, called "the Old Temple," are preserved two *thang kas* (portable painting scroll) and two statues representing White Pe har and mGar ba nag po.

Mural paintings of Pe har's emanation brGya byin, Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po are also found among other *dharmapālas*⁷¹ in the main temple of the Caqar blama juu, which

⁶⁶ See Charleux, p. 54-55.

⁶⁷ However rDo rje grags ldan's usual attributes are a snare in the left hand, and a banner topped by a lance in the right one, and his cuirass has a mirror on his breast. See a silk appliqué of the Urga school: Berger and Bartholomew (ed.), 1995, cat. 86.

⁶⁸ Both were appointed as supreme protectors of the Fifth Dalai Lama's government. rDo rje grags ldan is also considered as being an emanation of Beg tse (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 125-126). On their fluctuating identity: Heller 1992.

⁶⁹ Ch. Xilituzhao 席力圖召. It was founded around 1585 for the great translator Siregetü güüsi corji, and enlarged in 1616, 1644, and 1688-1697.

⁷⁰ Charleux 2006: CD-rom [2], and plan fig. 59, n°17.

⁷¹ They are: Yama and his consort, six forms of Mahākāla, Vajrabhairava, dPal ldan lha mo, Vaiśravaṇa riding on his snow lion, and Beg tse.

follows the particular Sino-Tibetan style of Hohhot's main assembly halls.⁷² Tshangs pa dkar po holds a mongoose, brGya byin holds a sword and a noose and rides on a white elephant; below him, mGar ba nag po on his goat brandishes an axe (6). All the *dharmapālas* are of white colour (the purest colour for Mongols, signifying good fortune). Surrounded by grey flames, they wear a robe with large sleeves and boots. The mountainous landscape is populated with herds and scenes of daily life. Light reds and greens predominate. The paintings, probably dating from the early Qing period, display more Chinese influence than those of Mayidari juu's Octagonal Temple.



6a (left). brGya byin on his elephant; **6b (top right).** Tshangs pa dkar po holding a mongoose and riding a horse; **6c (bottom right).** mGar ba nag po on his goat. Mural painting of the assembly hall, Caqar blama juu (Üsütü juu, Tümed, west of Hohhot). © Jin Shen

The cult of Pe har in the Tümed monasteries thus started in the 1570-1600s with the renaissance of Buddhism in Mongolia, just after Altan Khan met the Dalai Lama. The earliest temple to Pe har was erected in the Cabciyal Monastery; later, Pe har and deities related to him were depicted in Mayidari juu and Caqar blama juu. A second period of development of his cult was the 1635-1640s, when Nayicung temples were built in Mayidari juu, Yeke juu, and Siregetü juu, probably in relation to the journey of the Fifth Dalai Lama through Mongolia. In 1653, the Dalai Lama had a vision of rDo rje grags ldan/Pe har when he was about to leave Beijing for Hohhot. The importance of the Pe har's cult in Tümed monasteries may have dawned on him, and in turn he encouraged construction and restoration of Pe har temples in Tibet and Mongolia.

⁷² Ch. Wusutuzhao 烏素圖召, Chinese title: Qingyuansi 慶緣寺, small monastery built between 1583 and 1606 in the Üsütü juu complex, 15 km northwest of Hohhot.

The mural paintings of the Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu

Description of the paintings

Let us now examine the cycle of Pe har in the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple, which is unique in Mongolia. The first room of the Nayicung Temple is the assembly hall with benches and tables for assemblies; the north side is hung with weapons, a mirror and a wolf skin, attributes of oracle deities and their mediums (7). The murals of the ground level were partially repainted on several occasions, and Pe har appears only once among 43 other deities (8).⁷³ A recently painted *thang ka* of White Pe har on his lion hangs in front of the entrance to the sanctuary.

The murals I discuss here are located in the sanctuary (back shrine, 9), on the north (9.10 m. long, 5.7 m. high), west and east walls (both 4.50 m. long and about 5.3 m. high), starting at about one metre from the floor.⁷⁴ The Nayicung Temple is oriented towards the south, so the main deities are depicted on the northern wall. They are painted on a thin coating that bears no trace of an original layer below. A strip of foliated scrolls separates the painting and the unpainted wall below. The paintings are partly hidden by the three large Buddha statues (10). They are rapidly deteriorating, with some parts missing, and many cracks, especially on the east wall. In the upper parts of the walls, there is water damage from roof leaks. Pollution from smoke and butter-lamps as usually seen in Mongol temples has added a kind of greasy varnish to the paintings.

On the altar, small statues of the Five Kings, Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po have the same iconography as the paintings behind, with some differences: a mirror is attached to each chest, except for Tshangs pa dkar po; the hats of the Five Kings are conical, and mGar ba nag po's statue holds a trident (11). They are also not in the same order as the painted iconographical programme, because they follow the arrangement with White Pe har in the middle of the *maṇḍala*.⁷⁵

⁷³ They depict *dharmapālas* (Yama, Mahākāla, dPal ldan lha mo) and attributes and regalia of *dharmapālas* (Kubera, dPal ldan lha mo, Mahākāla, Beg tse, Yama, six-armed Mahākāla, White Pe har on his lion), the four *lokapālas*; the Citipati, the White Old Man, the Eighteen *arhats*, and Avalokiteśvara. Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Jinas, *ḍākinīs*, monks and *arhats* appear in the upper register. The small skylight preserves ancient murals depicting *dharmapālas*, *yi dams*, Buddhas and monks (see Charleux 2006, CD-rom [1I]).

⁷⁴ The mural paintings of the Yeke juu's Pe har cycle were described by Qi Jie, who detailed their iconography by comparing it with Nebesky-Wojkowitz's study of the Pe har cycle in his book *Oracles and Demons of Tibet* 1996 [1956]. Qi Jie also compared the iconography, style and colors of the Yeke juu's painting with those of some Tibetan and Chinese Qing-dynasty paintings, embroideries and statues. I thank her for having given me a copy of her Master thesis in 2009. Since I had previously identified these paintings (Charleux 2006, CD-rom [1I]) and had partially written this article before 2009, and because I sometimes disagree with her identifications, I will briefly describe the paintings according to my own observations and discuss some of her conclusions. Parts of Qi Jie's Master thesis were published as two articles to which I did not have access during the writing of this article: "Nei Menggu Dazhaosi Naiqiongmao fodian bihua yanjiu" 內蒙古大召寺乃瓊廟佛殿壁畫護法神研究 [Study of the *Dharmapālas* in the Paintings of Naiqiong Temple in Dazhao Monastery, Inner Mongolia], *Zhongguo Zangxue* 中國藏學 2011-4, 120-128; and "Nei Menggu Dazhaosi Naiqiongmao fodian bihua tiejiang shen yanjiu" 內蒙古大召寺乃瓊廟佛殿壁畫鐵匠神研究 [Study of the Blacksmith Deity in the Paintings of Naiqiong Temple in Dazhao Monastery, Inner Mongolia], *Tianjin meishu xueyuan xuebao* 天津美术学院学报 2013-3.

⁷⁵ Between 2006 and 2012, the two lateral statues of Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po were replaced by new golden statues in a very different style.



7. Weapons, mirror and wolf skin in the assembly hall of Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



8 a, b. Mural paintings depicting *dharmapālas* and their attributes and regalia. Eastern (8a) and western (8b) walls of the assembly hall, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



9. View of the sanctuary (back shrine) from the assembly hall of Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



10a, b. Interior of the sanctuary with the modern statues of the Buddhas of the Three Eras. Back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



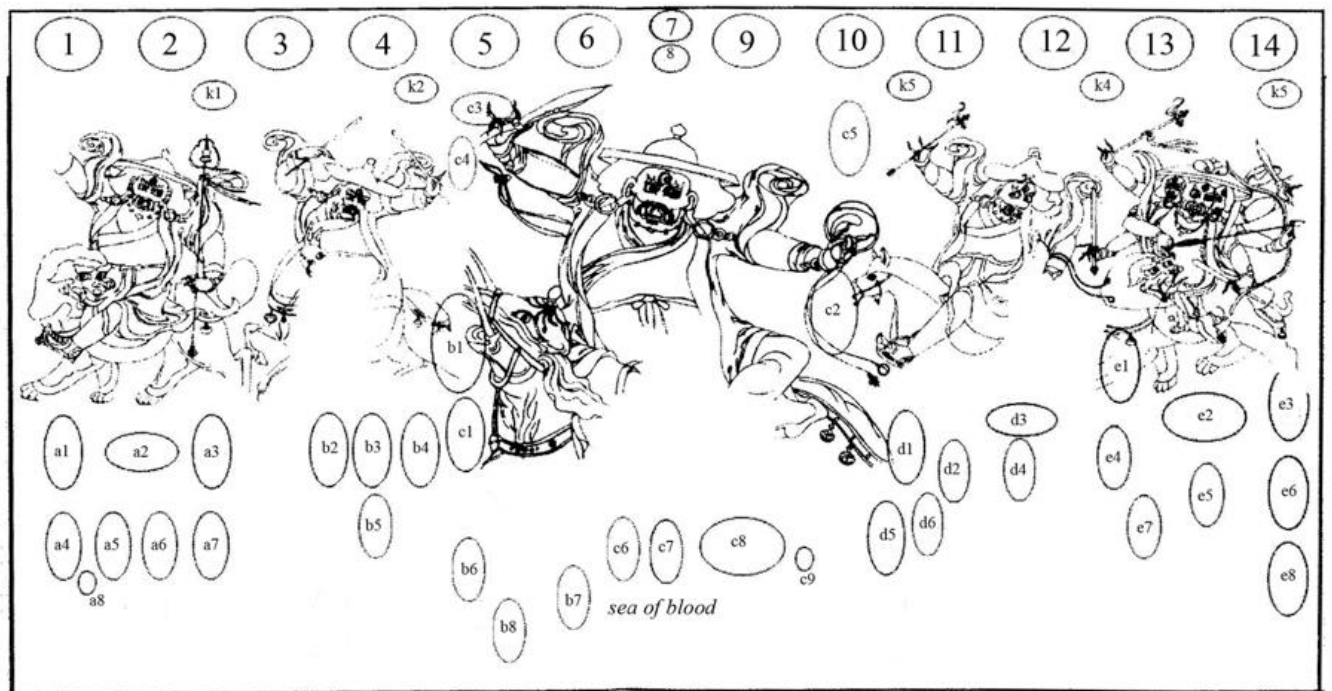
11a (top left, detail of 10). dGra lha skyes gcig bu; **11b (bottom left).** Pe har; **11c (top right).** Tshangs pa dkar po; **11d (bottom right).** mGar ba nag po. Back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

The paintings are divided into three registers, from top to bottom **(12, 30, 37)**:

- In the upper part, 12 Buddhas, deities and couples of deities in *yab yum* (“father-mother”) led by Padmasambhava preside the north wall; Tsong kha pa and his two disciples, the west wall, and Rahū, the east wall;
- In the main part of the walls, seven large protectors are depicted: the Five Kings on the north wall, Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po on the west and east walls respectively;
- In the lower part are 41 main characters on the north wall, 8 main characters on the west wall, and 5 main characters on the east wall: they are the protectors’ attendants and emanations. Crowds of people are depicted on the northern part of the east and west walls.

Minor characters and animals, such as monkeys, black birds, a dragon, a fish, a dog, are inserted above and below the main characters **(13)**.

The sky is blue with white, grey and black clouds. Behind the deities’ flames the middle register is green, and in the lower register is a sea of blood. The seven protectors hold attributes and ride on an animal. brGya byin, the central deity, is bigger than the four other kings, who seem to stand behind him. Great attention is given to the sense of movement in the painting of animals, and to details such as expression of fury, bridles and saddles **(14)**.



12 (see 14-29). Schema of the mural paintings in the sanctuary, north wall of the back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © Qi Jie 2009 (adapted)



13a (top left). A dragon; 13b (top right). Two black birds; 13c, d (bottom right). Two monkeys; 13e. A dog. Back shrine (13 a-d: north wall, 13e: west wall), Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



14a-c. Vehicles of Pe har's emanations. Elephant (left), lion (top right, detail of 28) and mule (bottom right). North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

The deities have a generally human appearance, except for the almost-naked White Pe har who has three heads and six arms (28). All of them have three eyes, long grey hair and wear earrings, necklaces and bracelets; open mouths reveal long fangs. They are surrounded by halos of red flames and macabre ornaments, and have a fierce aspect, except for Tshangs pa dkar po on the west wall (32). They wear Chinese embroidered silk garments decorated with golden motifs: robes with large floating sleeves, with robes underneath attached on the right (following Mongol and Tibetan fashion) with a belt. The main part of the robes, the borders, and the robe's lapels each have different colours. Three of the protectors (Mon bu pu tra, dGra lha skyeg gcig bu, and brGya byin) wear round wide-brimmed hats made of cane and bamboo (or lacquer) shaped like a cymbal with a gilt knob on top, which is characteristic of the Pe har-type of deities (17, 20, 23).⁷⁶ The execution of the painting is highly detailed, particularly the golden motifs on deities' robes. The protectors' fierce attitudes, the flames, floating scarves and sleeves give an impression of dynamism and movement. The fact that they directly look at the viewer has a great impact. This dramatic setting which is characteristic of Tibetan wrathful deities⁷⁷ is much more impressive on a 5.7 m.-high painted wall than on a *thang ka*.

⁷⁶ This hat is characteristic of *rgyal po* demons of which Pe har is the leader: Farkas and Szabó 2002, fig. 35, 77, 81. It is called *gser theb* by Nebesky-Wojkowitz, but closely resembles the *gser zhva* worn by reincarnated lamas (Tucci 1973 [1970], p. 176, fig. a).

⁷⁷ On the techniques and visual strategies (fantastic naturalism, agitated lines, dramatic color, violence...) that the artists used to enhance the dramatic background: Linrothe 2004.

NORTH WALL (MAIN WALL)

The 14 characters of the upper register are difficult to identify. The presiding figure is Padmasambhava (12 no. 7), below is red Hayagrīva (12 no. 8), the others are Buddhas (12 no. 13), and *yi dams* in *yab yum* position (12 nos. 4, 6, 8, 9, 10; 15), surrounded by *dharmapālas* (12 no. 1; 12 no. 13). Below, five fierce naked deities (one above each god) are mounted on two *garuḍas* (or a *garuḍa* and an owl), a dragon and two phoenixes; they hold severed heads and limbs in their hands (12-k1 to k5, 16).



15a-c. Deities depicted in the upper part of the north wall (12-1-2, 12-4, 12-14), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



16a-d. Four of the five fierce naked deities mounted on a blue-green bird (top left), a *garuḍa* (top right), a owl (bottom left) and a dragon (bottom right). Upper part of the north wall (12: k4, k1, k2, k5), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

Direction	East	West	Centre	South	North
Name	Mon bu pu tra	dGra lha skyes gcig bu	brGya byin	Shing bya can	(white) Pe har
Colour	Black (blue)	Red	Dark blue	Black (blue)	White
Mount	White lioness	Black/dark grey mule	White elephant	Black horse with white heels	White lion
King of the	Body (<i>sku'i rgyal po</i>)	Speech (<i>gsung gi rgyal po</i>)	Mind (<i>thugs kyi rgyal po</i>)	Virtue (<i>yon tan rgyal po</i>)	Activity (<i>'phrin las rgyal po</i>), also called king of the <i>karma</i>
Aspect	One face and two hands	One face and two hands	One face and two hands	One face and two hands	Three faces and six arms
Attributes on the painting (right hand, left hand)	Right hand ? Left hand <i>khakkhara</i> topped with a <i>stūpa</i>	R.h. red staff L.h. yellow staff	R. h. sword (<i>khaḍga</i>) L. h. snare	R.h. <i>paraśu</i> L.h. snare	- 3 r.h: iron hook, arrow, sword - 3 l.h: knife, bow, and stick. He is shooting an arrow

Table 2: The five manifestations of Pe har depicted, from left to right, on the north wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot

The whole painting forms a *maṇḍala* (table 2). The main deity, White Pe har, who resides in the northern quarter, is not in the centre of the *maṇḍala* but in a subordinate position. The central deity on the wall, brGya byin, mounted on a white elephant, is much bigger than the four others. Each of the five manifestations of Pe har corresponds to a specific function of the deity: body, mind, speech, knowledge/virtue and activity. As explained in texts describing Pe har's iconography: "In order to guard the religious precepts, you ride on a white lion. To subdue the enemies and obstacle-creating demons, you ride on an elephant with a long trunk; in order to carry out magic actions, you mount a three-legged mule..."⁷⁸ Each manifestation is linked to a region of space, and is accompanied by his *śakti* (female energy), his mount-leader, his minister and his "emanation" (or messenger). The emanations are his messengers, dispatched to execute his bidding, and can be considered as secondary emanations of Pe har himself. Their iconography follows with a few differences the (undated) Gelugpa text translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz that places brGya byin in the centre.⁷⁹ Many additional characters were added.

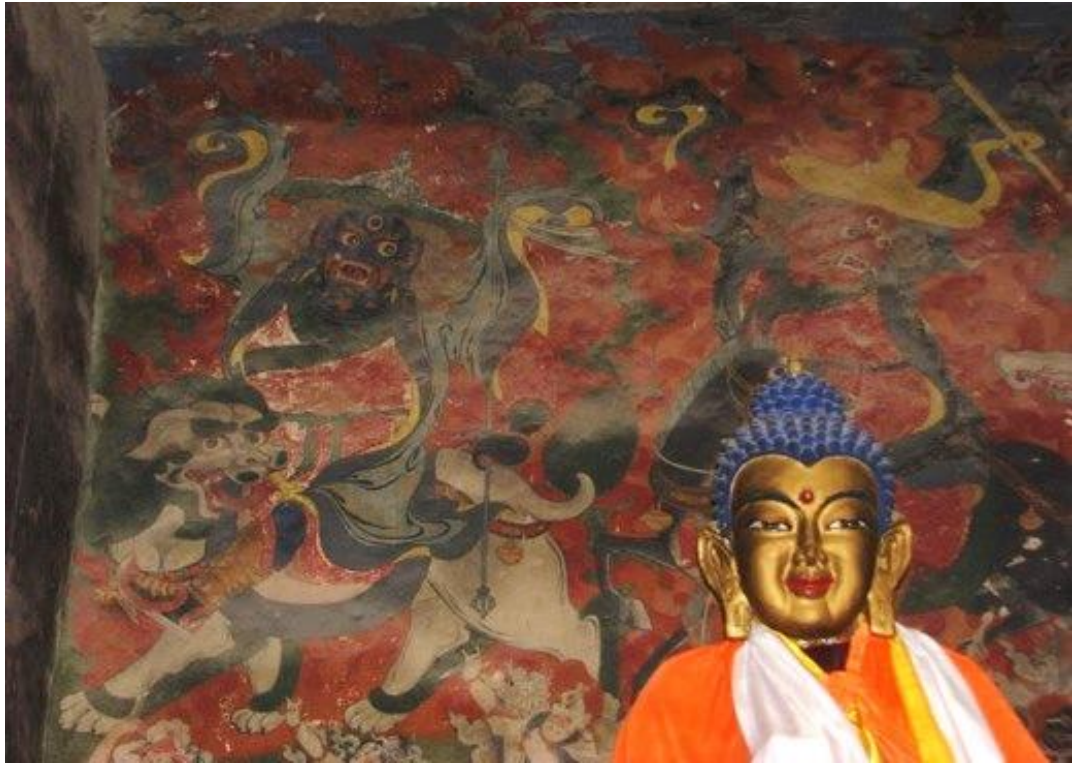
From left to right:

1. Mon bu pu tra (17): according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, he rides on a white lioness; "In his right hand he holds a thunderbolt of gold, and in his left the staff *bseg-shang* made of the wood called *sher-shing*."⁸⁰ On the painting, the staff is a *khatvāṅga* topped with a *stūpa*. His silk robe and hat do not correspond to the text (he is supposed to wear a black fur coat and a headdress of black silk). He also wears tiger-skin boots. His emanation, *śakti* and minister more or less correspond to the textual description:

⁷⁸ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 120.

⁷⁹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], chapter 7.

⁸⁰ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 109.



17. Mon bu pu tra (blue) and dGra lha skyes gcig bu (red). North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



18a-c. Emanation (left), messenger (middle) and śakti (right) of Mon bu pu tra. North wall (12: a1, a2, a3), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

- his emanation (12-a1, 18a) is a monk with a red robe brandishing a long knife and holding a golden ewer, with a *khakkhara* in his back and a cane hat on his head (according to the text, he is dressed in an orange garment with cemetery ornaments, lifts a *bseg shang* of *sher shing* wood and a knife, carries a *kapali* on his back and a *spyi blugs* vessel hangs in front).

– the minister (12-a2, 18b), a three-eyed white man wearing only a red loincloth and golden jewels, brandishes a *vajra* and rides on a blue horse with white spots. His long hair is in a knot (according to the text, he wears a snake-turban and throws a thunderbolt of crystal).

– the *śakti* (12-a3, 18c) is a white demoness holding a knife and a skull-up (described in the text as dressed in white, holding a *dam shing* and a skull-cup [*kapāla*]). Below them, a white-coloured general/martial god wearing six white flags with a red border in his back (12-a4) kills a grey-coloured naked man (12-a8), two bearded “barbarians” (hairy, dark-skinned men with moustache and beard) dance (12-a5, a6, 19), and a monkey holds a leaf (12-a7).



19a-d. Four barbarians. North wall (12: a7, e5, e7, e8), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

2. **dGra lha skyes gcig bu** (*dgra lha* means “enemy-god” or, “god who protects against enemies”) occupies the position of a “chief-minister” of the Five Kings.⁸¹ He wears a red robe, a blue upper garment, and a cane hat. His dark grey mule turns its head back (20). Like in Nebesky-Wojkowitz’s text, “in his right hand he holds a stick of cane, in his left he wields a club of sandalwood”; but his garment does not exactly correspond to the textual description: “he wears a garment of black silk, with a train, and a cane-hat.”⁸²

– The mount-leader is a grey three-eyed fierce deity with orange hair who is holding the mule (12-b2).⁸³

– his minister (12-b3, 21a) is a young monk wearing a sacerdotal garment of red silk and holding a stick (a *khakkhara* on the painting) as in the text translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz, but he rides on a donkey instead of a camel.

– his “messenger” (12-b4, 21b) is a fierce dark blue deity with red-orange hair, dressed in a tiger-skin. With his right hand he brandishes a stick made of a backbone ended with a skull; his other attribute is absent; according to the text it should be a banner of victory.

– his *śakti* (12-b1, 21c) is red, with three eyes; she holds a *dam shing* and offers a skull-cup. On the painting she wears a white garment and runs behind the horse.

⁸¹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 124-126.

⁸² Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 110.

⁸³ Qi Jie (2009, p. 10) mistakenly identifies the mount-leader as the red deity behind the mule.



20. dGra lha skyes gcig bu. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



21a-c. 21a. Minister (left), emanation (middle) and śakti (right) of dGra lha skyes gcig bu. North wall (12: b3, b4, b1), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

Below are a yellow, bearded monk (12-b5), a red fierce deity riding a big fish in a sea of blood (12-b6), a white-coloured general with six flags in his back (12-b7), and a man with a skeleton head, holding a club (12-b8).

3. **brGya byin**, “the hundred-giver,” occupies the centre of the wall (22, 23). Tibetans identified him as the Hindu god Indra—most probably, to create a Tibetan name for Indra, translators used an already existing Tibetan appellation of a divinity belonging to the pantheon of pre-Buddhist Tibet.⁸⁴ He brandishes a sword in his right hand and holds a snare in his left (according to the text, “with his right hand he throws the snare of the *bdud* at the enemies, with the razor held in his left he cuts the life-roots of the inimical obstacle-creating demons”). He has grey hair and a cane hat, wears a blue upper garment with short wide sleeves and a black robe

⁸⁴ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 99-100. The Uyghurs also identified Qormusda/Ahura Mazda with Indra, and Qormusda/Indra was adopted by the Mongols in the 14th century as the leader of 33 gods (Heissig 1973 [1970], p. 406). However brGya byin and Qormusda appear to be different deities in the Mongol pantheon.

with golden embroideries, but no “fur-coat of bear-skin and a garment with a train of black silk.” “He is in the mood of a happy dance and rides an elephant with a long trunk—similar to a huge, broken-off piece of a snow-mountain. [...] He sends hail and lightning and resides in the centre of a fire, fierce like the conflagration at the end of a *kalpa*.”⁸⁵



22. brGya byin as the central deity of the mural painting, behind the statue of Buddha Śākyamuni. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



23 (detail of 22). brGya byin. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

⁸⁵ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 108-109.

On the painting, the elephant has long tusks and a jewel on his head; a large red jewel shaped like a heart decorates his collar (as seen on the mount of the central deity in many *thang kas* of the Five Kings) (14a). His followers include:

- above the croup of the elephant (12-c2), his *śakti* “*Shan ti ro zan ma*, the red one, (who) wears a short trouser-like garment (*ang ring*) of silk. She is smeared with blood and fat and holds an iron hook [not visible] and a skull-cup with a heart in it.”⁸⁶ - Mon bu pu tra holds his elephant; he has three eyes, a blue skin and wears a yellow garment (12-c1).

- above brGya byin’s right hand, a fierce three-eyed blue deity with orange hair holds a staff and rides on a snow lion (12-c3, 24a), and a white-bearded hermit dressed in a tiger-skin loincloth rides a grey-spotted deer (12-c4). To the right of the elephant, a red wrathful deity wearing a white garment dances. His/her attributes are not visible (12-c5); it could be the red *śakti* but she is supposed to wear a short trouser-like garment.



24a, b. Fierce deity riding a snow lion (left: 12: c3) and man holding a teapot (right: 12: c7). North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

The large Buddha statue hides the lower part of the elephant and the attendants, depicted in a sea of blood. Below the elephant, a monkey holds a plant (12-c6), a man wearing a yellow garment with red stripes presents a large teapot (12-c7, 24b), and a red fierce blue deity holding a staff and riding a bay horse (12-c8, 25a) pulls a naked man attached by the neck (12-c9, 25b). The latter may be the *srog bdag Yang le*, described in the text translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz. I could not identify brGya byin’s emanation and minister.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 108-109.

⁸⁷ Qi Jie (2009, p. 11) locates his minister, riding on a white lion and holding a spear, as c3, above the deity’s right hand, but according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, he is supposed to wear a black silk garment and ride a black mule.



25a, b. Bay horse pulling a man attached by the neck (12: c8, c9). North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

4. **Shing bya can** (“he who has a wooden bird”) (26).⁸⁸ The battle-axe (*paraśu*, Tib. *dgra sta*) he brandishes symbolizes the quick and total destruction of the enemies of religion.



26. Shing bya can on his horse. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

According to the text, “his head is covered by the *tshar zhu* made of cane. On top of this hat he wears the skin of a *khyung*” (*garuḍa* bird): on the painting, his hat is actually a *garuḍa*, it is topped by the bird’s head and the feathers cover his hair (26). He is supposed to wear a cloak of snake- and tiger-skin, but in the painting his garment is comparable to that of the other deities. “He rides a black horse with white heels and is accompanied on the side by the turquoise-green world-dragon”: the dragon seen below him is white with green hair (12-d3) (13a). “He sends long-

⁸⁸ On stories of Pe har who turned himself into a bird (dove or vulture) or mounted on a wooden bird: Tucci 1949, II, p. 643, 734-735, 742, note 62; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 102, 104-107. On the “shamanizing bird”: Hummel 1962.

tailed monkeys, grey-haired apes, and rats as his messengers”:⁸⁹ in the painting a white monkey is eating a peach (12-d2, 27). Below Shing bya can, a wrathful black deity with orange hair and a red robe, brandishing a vajra and an axe (12-d1), is dancing near the monkey (27).⁹⁰ On the right of the Chinese-style dragon is another black wrathful deity (12-d4).⁹¹ Below them are a monkey (12-d5) and a general (12-d6, 27). I could not identify his *śakti*, emanation and minister.



27. Wrathful dancing deity (left), monkey (right) and general (bottom) (12: d1, d2, d6). North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



28. White Pe har, behind the statue of Maitreya. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

⁸⁹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 109-110.

⁹⁰ Qi Jie (2009, p. 11) wrote he/she is the black *śakti* but according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz she should have four arms and different attributes and ride a donkey.

⁹¹ Qi Jie (2009, p. 11) wrote he is Shing bya can's emanation, but his attributes are not visible.

5. Pe har (28). His aspect and attributes correspond to the Gelugpa text. He wears a yellow hat that looks like an umbrella, an upper garment of white silk with a human skin drawn on it — here the garment with wide sleeves only covers his shoulders and his back — and a tiger-skin loincloth. His grey hair seems to come out from the pierced top of his hat.⁹²

- his mount leader Mon bu pu tra has three eyes, long black hair, and a beard. He wears a red robe with golden designs, and holds a rope attached to a ring in the lion's nose **(12-e1)**.

- his *śakti* is a female dancing wrathful deity; she holds a dagger and a skull-cup **(12-e3)**. She is blue with orange hair, wears a red garment but is half-naked (according to textual descriptions she is dressed in the fur-coat of a *bdud*, and wields a *dam shing* and a cup).⁹³

- between the lion's legs **(12-e2)**, a grey female wrathful deity brandishes a chopper (*karttrikā/gri gug*) in her right hand. Her orange hair is decorated with a skull, she has three eyes, and is naked except for a loincloth and scarves; she rides on a black mule among flames **(29)**.⁹⁴ I could not identify Pe har's "emanation" and minister. On the left, a naked deity with orange hair and a grey skin, dressed in a human hide, with a snake around her neck, holds a chopper and a lance **(12-e4, 29)**. Below are three "barbarians" (one presenting a dish with a mountain-shape offering) **(12-e5, e7, e8, 19)** and a general in a yellow armour with a red and blue garment, sitting on a chair **(12-e8)**.



29. White Pe har **(28)**'s attendants: *śakti* **(12: e4)** (left), grey female wrathful deity on a black mule **(12: e2)** (center), naked deity with orange hair and a grey skin **(12: e3)** (right upper corner), barbarians **(12: e7, e5, e8)** and general **(12: e6)** (lower right), behind the statue of Shing bya can. North wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

The two other deities that complete this cycle are Tshangs pa dkar po on the west wall, and Dam can mGar ba nag po on the east wall.

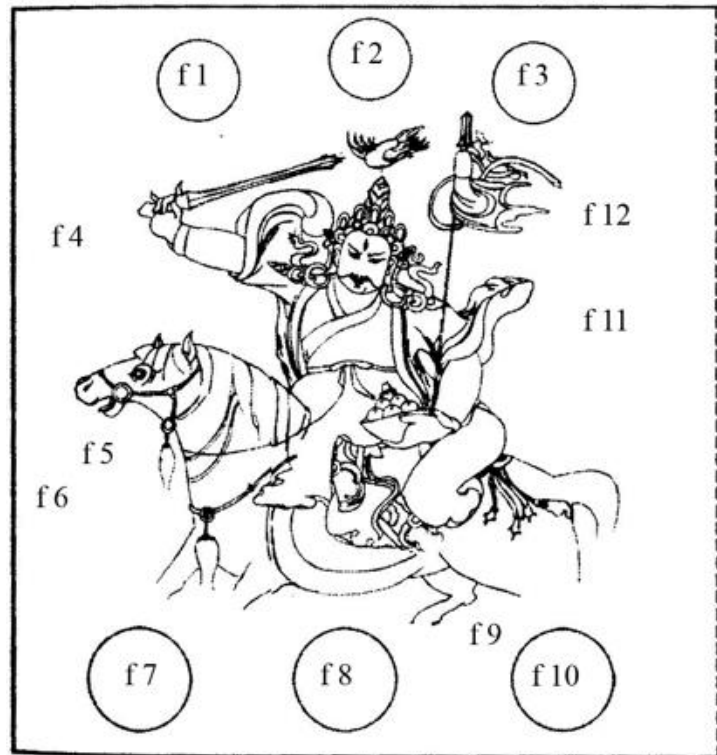
⁹² On this three-faces six-armed form which is more in accordance to his function as *dharmapāla*: Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 117.

⁹³ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 110-111.

⁹⁴ Qi Jie (2009, p. 11) identifies **e2** to the deity's minister and **e4** to the "emanation" but they do not correspond to Nebesky-Wojkowitz's description.

WEST WALL (30, 31)

In the upper register sits Tsong kha pa surrounded by his two disciples mKhas grub rje and rGyal tshab rje (30-f2, f1, f3).



30 (see 31-36). Schema of the mural paintings on the west wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot.
© Qi Jie 2009 (adapted)



31. View of the right section of the west wall (30: f2, f3, f8-f12), back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot.
© I. Charleux

6. Crowned **Tshangs pa dkar po** has a red garment, holds a sword in his right hand, a bowl filled with jewels in his left hand, and cradles a lance in the crook of his left elbow. He rides on a white horse. Except for the gold armour, his representation follows his usual Tibetan iconography⁹⁵ (32). A white goose flies above his characteristic white conch-shell turban. He wears a white upper garment on a red robe. He is depicted as less wrathful than the Five Kings: he does not have bulging eyes, and the surrounding flames are grey.



32. Tshangs pa dkar po. West wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

Tshangs pa dkar po's retinue includes a man with a blue long-sleeved robe and a red hat (30-f4, 33a); an old grey half-nude ascetic clad in white (30-f5), holding the horse's bridle, and a monkey holding by the hair a severed human head (30-f6, 33b). A hound whose thigh is pierced by a blade runs between the horse's legs (30-f9, 13c). In the lower register, several characters are separated by mountains. A three-eyed red warrior wearing a helmet, an armour and a floating garment rides on a white horse, he holds a sword and a lance (in the lower left, 30-f7, 34) and a red warrior surrounded by flames, holding a sword [or a staff; it is hidden by the platform] rides on a brown horse (in the lower right, 30-f10). These may be two wrathful forms of Tshangs pa dkar po: Li byin ha ra, and bSe'i khrab can (i.e. Beg tse).⁹⁶ Between them, a fat monk, very roughly painted, is obviously a recent addition (30-f8). On the right, a naked woman holding a snare (35), and a human warrior wearing a red garment and a red hat, holding a tiger-faced shield, are both running towards Tshangs pa dkar po (30-f11, f12). Except for bSe'i khrab, the other characters do

⁹⁵ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 146-147.

⁹⁶ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 152.

not correspond to Tshangs pa dkar po's emanations as described in the text translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz.⁹⁷



33a (left). Man with a blue long-sleeved robe and a red hat (30: f4); **33b (right).** Old grey half-nude ascetic and monkey holding a severed human head, in Tshangs pa dkar po's retinue (30: f5). West wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux



34. Red warrior on a white horse, below Tshangs pa dkar po (30: f7). West wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

⁹⁷ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 148-150.



35 (detail of 31). Naked woman holding a snare (**30: f11**). West wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot.
© O. Kápolnas

The woman and the warrior are leading a crowd, from top to bottom, of monks praying and playing music, of black-hat men (magicians), and of naked women and men with a skin alternately white and grey—a contrast obviously aiming at distinguishing them (**36**). This crowd corresponds to the textual description of Pe har’s “army”:

On the outside, in the main quarters and in the spaces lying in between appear ministers, hangmen, slaves..., and lions, *ācāryas* of Mon, and monkeys. There are one hundred *dge slong* [ordained monks] lifting their rattling-staffs [*khakkhara*], and one hundred black-hat magicians wielding their demon-daggers; one hundred women shake out their hair, and one hundred men brandish their swords and shields.⁹⁸

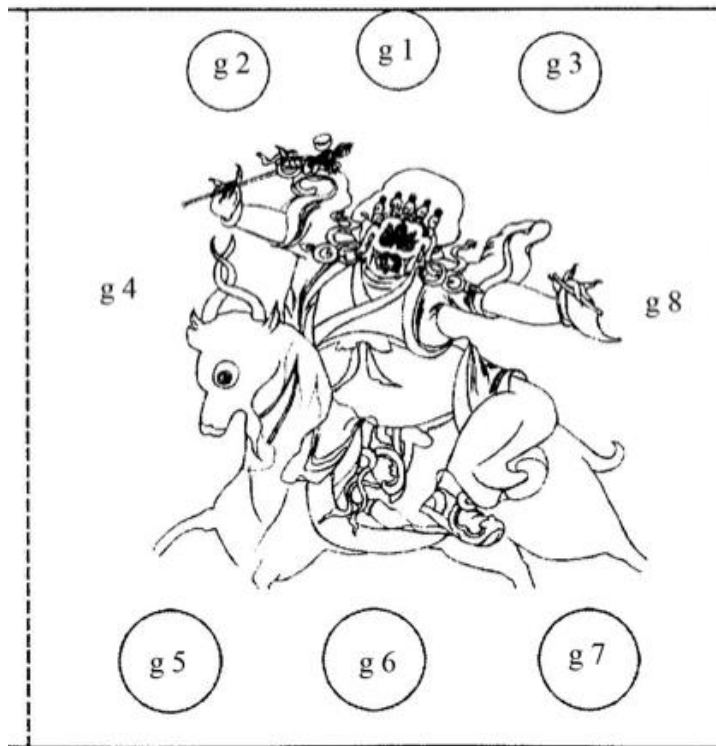
This crowd of monks, magicians, men and women, represent different categories of people fighting respectively for the *dharma*, against demons, and with each other.

⁹⁸ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 111, 120.



36a-c (details of 31). Crowd of monks praying and playing music (top), of black-hat men or magicians (middle) and of naked women and men with a skin alternately white and grey. West wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

EAST WALL (37, 38)



37. Schema of the mural paintings on the east wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © Qi Jie 2009 (adapted)



38. View of the east wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

7. **mGar ba nag po**, “the blacksmith” (abbreviation of Dam can mGar ba nag po), has a dark blue body and dark brown hair, a golden beard, and long fingernails (39). He wears a crown made of skulls, earrings, a red brocade robe with a blue green brocade coat over it, and boots.⁹⁹ He holds a *vajra*-hammer in his right hand and a tiger-skin bellows in his left, which are attributes of blacksmiths. mGar ba nag po rides on a reddish brown goat with twisted, crossed horns, in a sea of blood in which are seen skeletons, body parts and skulls representing obstacles or enemies.



39 (detail of 38). mGar ba nag po. East wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

In the upper register, above mGar ba nag po, the planetary god Rāhu,¹⁰⁰ with a pyramid of heads and a grinning face on the belly, is shooting with a bow (37-g1). Rāhu is mentioned in a text as the “officer” of the chief deity of the Pe har *maṇḍala*.¹⁰¹ On his right, a red wrathful god with a golden helmet and a red garment rides a red-brown horse (37-g2), and on his left, a similar deity rides on a blue mule among brown flames and brandishes a sword in his right arm (37-g3). Left of mGar ba nag po is a grey, naked human dancing among grey flames (37-g4), and the same crowd of naked white and grey humans, black-hat men and lamas as on the west wall. Below are depicted soldiers and generals. Below mGar ba nag po, a blue iron-wolf with long hair, dressed as mGar ba nag po, brandishes a lance-axe and rides on a bear (37-g7, 41); a white general in a red armour with flags in the back (Dam can bstan ma?), holds a lance (37-g6, 40)¹⁰²; and a white

⁹⁹ The text translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996 [1956], p. 157-158) describes him with a specific hat and a flowing garment of black silk with nine folds.

¹⁰⁰ Rāhū (Rahūla) is one of the Navagrahā (Nine Planets of the Vedic mythology), demon of the eclipses (he swallows the sun, causing eclipses), tamed by Padmasambhava. He has nine heads and a thousand eyes all over his dark body, and is shooting an arrow. His lower body has the form of a snake.

¹⁰¹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 115.

¹⁰² Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 155; Willson and Brauen (eds) 2000, p. 332, no. 330.

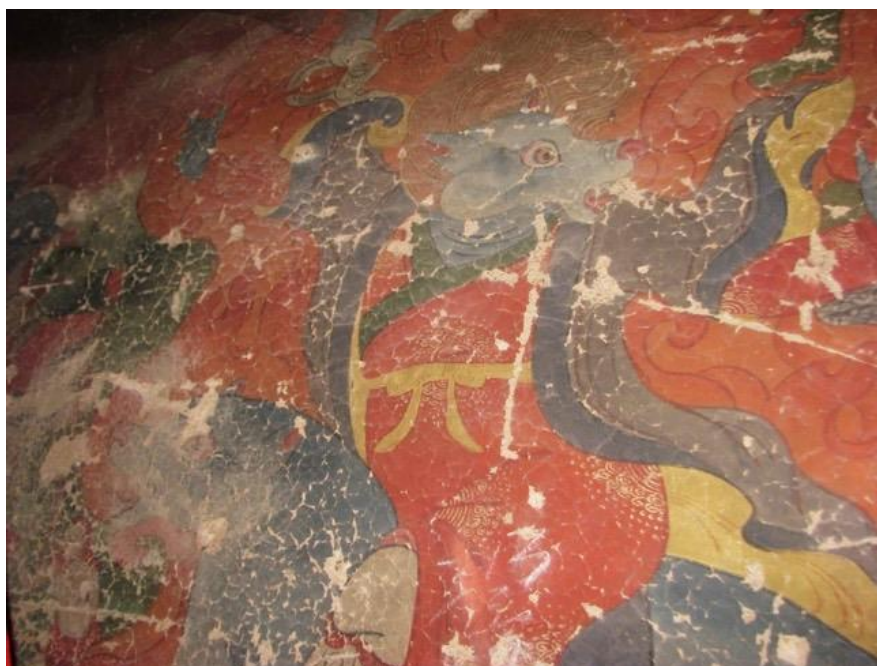
wrathful deity with a red hat brandishes a sword (37-g5). Offerings of the five viscera in a skull-cup are displayed to the left of the general. These deities are not clearly identified, but the animal-headed deity and the white general are found in other Mongol paintings of mGar ba nag po.¹⁰³

The organization of the murals favours symmetry: at the two extremities of the north wall, Mon bu pu tra and Pe har adopt a similar attitude and each ride on a white lion/lioness which looks backwards; dGra lha skyes gcig bu and Shing bya can adopt a similar attitude and ride on a dark mule or horse. The painting displays a strong sense of composition and movement. The brilliant whiteness of Tshangs pa dkar po (“White Tshangs pa”) on the west wall contrasts with the blackness of mGar ba nag po (“Black mGar ba”). The west wall, presided by Tsong kha pa and his disciples, represents the Gelugpa School, while the east wall, with Rāhu and mGar ba nag po, represents the Nyingmapa teachings. While we would have expected to see Tsong kha pa as the presiding deity of the north wall, it is Padmasambhava (and Hayagrīva) who preside over the whole composition, thus highlighting the importance of the thaumaturgist who tamed and bound by an oath these deities. Let us recall that Padmasambhava was commonly depicted in Mongol Gelugpa monasteries along with Sa skya paṇḍita and other non-Gelugpa great masters of the past.



40. White general (Dam can bstan ma?) below mGar ba nag po. East wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

¹⁰³ See two *thang kas* from Mongolia, 19th century: one in the Rubin Museum of Art: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/27.html>; the other one published by Meinert (ed.) 2011, cat. 360.



41. Blue iron-wolf riding on a bear, below mGar ba nag po. East wall, back shrine, Nayicung Temple, Yeke juu, Hohhot. © I. Charleux

Comparison with Mongol and Tibetan thang kas of the Five Kings and associated deities

As we have seen above, the earliest known Mongol depiction of Pe har (brGya byin) is in the Mayidari juu, associated with Padmasambhava, mGar ba nag po, Rahū and Tsi'u dmar po in a 17th-century pavilion dedicated to Padmasambhava, but the four other kings are not depicted (3). The Five Kings were depicted together with rGya byin in the centre on the south-east upper level panel (the skylight) of the Main Assembly Hall of the Yeke juu. These murals are damaged and difficult to study; they are probably not earlier than 18th century.

I do not know other mural painting of the Five Kings in Mongolia; but several *thang kas* of the Five Kings can be compared with the paintings of the Nayicung Temple. I give their date and place of origin according to catalogues or captions in museums, but these were usually deduced from stylistic elements. This is why it is not possible to establish a chronology of the *thang kas*.¹⁰⁴ Most are roughly dated to the 19th or 20th century.

A few paintings are in horizontal format, perhaps to cover a temple wall,¹⁰⁵ while most of the *thang kas* have a vertical composition with the central deity surrounded by his emanations at the four angles. *Thang kas* of the Five Kings are more or less “developed”: White Pe har or brGya byin can be depicted alone, or accompanied by his mount-leader, minister and *śakti*; he can be surrounded by the four other Kings, sometimes followed by their own emanations, plus mGar ba nag po, Tshangs pa dkar po, and/or Rāhu. In Mongolia, as in Tibet, two- and three-dimensional

¹⁰⁴ A black-ground (*nag thang*) Tibetan *thang ka* depicting the Five Kings topped by Padmasambhava, a yellow-hat lama and Hayagrīva is according to Glenn Mullin to be dated “mid-1600s,” but is probably later (http://museum.oglethorpe.edu/TibetGallery/Peihar_page.htm).

¹⁰⁵ *Thang ka*, groups of various protective deities, among them, White Pe har and his four emanations, first half of the 20th century, private collection (Kelényi (ed.) 2003: cat. 48 and fig. 2 p. 6).

representations of White Pe har alone are much more frequent than representations of the Five Kings.

The iconography of a 19th-century Mongol *thang ka* in the Rubin Museum of Art (New York)¹⁰⁶ is quite close to the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple's: brGya byin, the main figure, is surrounded by dGra lha skyes gcig bu (upper left), Pe har (upper right), Shing bya can (bottom right), Mon bu pu tra (bottom left), Tshangs pa dkar po (centre left; he holds a mongoose), mGar ba nag po (centre right) and Rāhu (bottom centre). The presiding figure is a red-hat lama. The Chinese-style floating robes, scarves and sleeves are comparable to that of the Yeke juu's painting, but jewels and ornaments are more numerous and detailed and colours are different.

In other Mongol *thang kas*, the position of the four kings surrounding the central one varies: see a 19th-century *thang ka* from Qalqa Mongolia¹⁰⁷ (the robe's style and decoration are close to those of the preceding *thang ka*); a miniature *thang ka* from Qalqa Mongolia (the flames surrounding brGya byin are not red but grey; the landscape is developed, with mountains, rivers and lakes);¹⁰⁸ and a late 19th-century *thang ka*, presided by Hayagrīva, and much simpler in its ornamentation.¹⁰⁹ In a *thang ka* that could have been painted in Mongolia, brGya byin is accompanied by two blue wrathful female deities who lead and follow the elephant, but who do not correspond to his *śakti* and emanation (42). Padmasambhava is sitting in the upper register; Shing bya can is dancing on a naked zombie,¹¹⁰ and in the middle lower register sits rDo rje grags ldan.

According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz, in Gelugpa iconography, brGya byin generally resides in the centre of the *maṇḍala* and thus occupies the central position in *thang kas* (43).¹¹¹ But *thang kas* of the Five Kings depicting White Pe har as the central deity are much more numerous and many of them are attributed to the Gelugpa School. I gathered one Buryat and 19 Mongol depictions of the Five Kings with White Pe har as the central deity (14 *thang kas*,¹¹² 5 small

¹⁰⁶ *Thang ka*, Mongolia, 50.80 x 37.47cm, ground mineral pigment on cotton, 19th century, Nyingmapa Lineage. © Rubin Museum of Art (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/802.html>).

¹⁰⁷ *Thang ka*, Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50075.html>). The caption attributes it to a "Gelug lineage" but there is no presiding lama or deity.

¹⁰⁸ The Five Kings with brGya byin in the centre, miniature *thang ka*, Mongolia, mineral pigment on cotton. © Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50988.html>.

¹⁰⁹ *Thang ka*, late 19th century, Ferenc Hopp Museum (Inv. No.: 80.6). Kelényi (ed.) 2003: cat. 159 and fig. 79 p. 91.

¹¹⁰ See also a *thang ka*, 19th century, Rubin Museum of Art (acc.# P1996.16.7) (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/283.html>).

¹¹¹ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 108.

¹¹² *Thang ka*, Ferenc Hopp Museum (Inv. No.: 93.49, Kelényi (ed.) 2003: cat. 159 and fig. 78 p. 91); *thang ka*, private collection (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/81532.html>); *thang ka*, 18th century, 8x26.50cm, National Gallery, Prague (Inv. no. 5619, <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/57630.html>); *thang ka*, late 18th-early 19th century, exhibit "Portals to Shangri-La: Masterpieces from Buddhist Mongolia," February 12-August 6, 2006 (<http://www.tibetan-museum-society.org/java/arts-culture-Asian-Art-Oglethorpe.jsp#top>, Oglethorpe University Museum of Art); *thang ka*, collection Hans Leder (Inv. Nr.: 56087, Néprajzi Múzeum Budapest, <http://www.moncol.net/mongolia/museum/itemdetailview/id/74>); *thang ka*, Philadelphia Museum of Art (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/87020.html>); *thang ka*, Robrecht Lambin & Diane De Clerck, Art Asian Gallery, Anvers (<http://web.archive.org/web/20091027084713/www.geocities.com/artasiangallery>); *thang ka* in Erdene zuu Museum (4-64, Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 390); *thang ka* in a private collection (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/81539.html>); *thang ka*, 19th century, Rubin Museum of Art (acc.# P1996.16.7) (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/283.html>); *thang ka*, 17th century(?), acquired by Hermann Consten in a monastery (Hummel 1962); *thang ka*, Buryatia, 40.5x32.6 cm, 19th century, Buryat History Museum, Ulan-Ude (Khangalova 1995, fig. 63); *thang ka*, groups of various protective deities, among them, White Pe har and his four emanations, first half of the 20th century, private collection (Kelényi (ed.) 2003: cat. 48 and fig. 2 p. 6); *thang ka*, Jaya-yin küriye (near Tsetserleg, Mongolia); *thang ka*, Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts.

paintings,¹¹³ and a miniature carved image).¹¹⁴ Padmasambhava, Hayagrīva or a red-hat lama are generally the presiding deity, but in four examples, the presiding deity is a yellow-hat lama or Tsong kha pa¹¹⁵ (43), and sometimes there is no presiding deity at all. The position of the emanations surrounding the central deity differs from one *thang ka* to the other. On many paintings, mGar ba nag po appears at the bottom.¹¹⁶ On a Mongol *thang ka*,¹¹⁷ a blue dragon flies above White Pe har who is accompanied by two wrathful blue deities, the same as are depicted on the mural of Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple; Shing bya can rides on a zombie; at the bottom centre a deity sitting on a table holds a lance and shoots an arrow (rDo rje grags ldan?). On a few *thang kas*, only the central deity is surrounded by red flames, while the four others appear among grey flames.



42. The Five Kings with brGya byin in the centre, *thang ka*, mineral pigment on cotton, Tibet (or Mongolia?). © American Museum of Natural History (70.0/6843). Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History

¹¹³ Four miniature paintings in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50959.html>; <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=50960>; <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=50723>; <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=50439>); one in the American Museum of Natural History (70.0/5070) (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=94198>).

¹¹⁴ Miniature carved image in a reliquary box, Mongolia, 19th century, private collection: Meinert (ed.) 2011: cat 344.

¹¹⁵ *Thang ka*, Philadelphia Museum of Art; *thang ka*, Lambin & De Clerck, Anvers; a *thang ka* in Erdene zuu Museum; *thang ka* in a private collection (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/81539.html>) (see note 112).

¹¹⁶ *Thang ka*, Ferenc Hopp Museum; miniature painting, American Museum of Natural History; *thang ka*, private collection (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/81532.html>; *thang ka*, National Gallery, Prague; *thang ka*, exhibit "Portals to Shangri-La," Oglethorpe University Museum of Art); *thang ka*, collection Hans Leder, Néprajzi Múzeum Budapest (see note 112).

¹¹⁷ *Thang ka*, 19th century, Rubin Museum of Art (see note 112).



43. The Five Kings with brGya byin in the centre, *thang ka*, Badjār coyiling süme (Wudangzhao); Baotou Municipality, Inner Mongolia. © Wang Lei et al. 2009, II, p. 224, fig. 128

Thang kas of the Five Kings from Central and Eastern Tibet and Beijing¹¹⁸ have similar organization and deities, with White Pe har (44)¹¹⁹ or, less often, brGya byin in the centre,¹²⁰ and mGar ba nag po occasionally appearing in the lower part. In a 19th-century *thang ka*, the numerous retinue of brGya byin includes Tshangs pa dkar po, mGar ba nag po and Rāhu.¹²¹ The Five Kings occasionally appear at the bottom of *thang kas* depicting other deities: Hayagrīva,¹²² rDo rje grags

¹¹⁸ On a *thang ka* depicting brGya byin surrounded by the four Kings and mGar ba nag po kept in Yonghegong (the main Tibeto-Mongol Gelugpa monastery of Beijing), each of the kings is followed by his retinue, and Padmasambhava presides the *thang ka* (Qin Zhong and Xiong Gengsheng 2001: 147, fig. 163).

¹¹⁹ *Thang ka*, Tibet, American Museum of Natural History (AMNH 70.0/7217) (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/94406.html>); *thang ka*, Tibet, 19th century, Norton Simon Museum (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=59362>); *thang ka*, Tibet, 18th century, Rubin Museum of Art (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm?icode=822>).

¹²⁰ *Thang ka*, Tibet, 18th century, Bruxelles (Ver. 279, in Lambrecht 2005: cat. 61); *thang ka*, Tibet, Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, published and analyzed by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1948: face p. 144), with Padmasambhava, dPal ldan lha mo and Beg tse in the upper register; *thang ka*, Amdo, 19th century, in Meinert (ed.) 2011: cat. 346.

¹²¹ *Thang ka*, Eastern Tibet, 19th century, private collection (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/73484.html>).

¹²² Tibetan *thang ka* depicting Hayagrīva presided by Padmasambhava, 18th century. Below are also depicted rDo rje grags ldan and Tshangs pa dkar po's oracle or Shing bya can, private collection (*Rituel tibétains* 2002: 118, cat. 60).

ldan,¹²³ rDo rje legs pa,¹²⁴ and Mahākāla.¹²⁵ They surround the central deity, or are depicted in the lower register, along with Beg tse, rDo rje grags ldan, or Tshangs pa dkar po.



44. The Five Kings with brGya byin in the centre, *thang ka*, mineral pigment on cotton, Tibet. © American Museum of Natural History (70.0/6841). Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History

The iconography of mural paintings often differs from that of portable painting, the first one allowing much more developed and dramatic scenes such as crowds of people, landscape with herds of animals, narrative scenes between the main icons and other additions. The only *thang ka* I found that can be compared to the Yeke juu's mural is from Tibet (45). Padmasambhava presides the *thang ka*, that depicts brGya byin in the middle, dGra lha skyes gcig bu in the upper left, White

¹²³ Mongol *thang ka* depicting rDo rje grags ldan surrounded by the Five Kings, 19th century, Chojin Lam Museum, Ulaanbaatar (Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 399; *thang ka* from Amdo or Mongolia depicting rDo rje grags ldan presided by Tsong kha pa, with the Five Kings, Vajrabhairava and Tshangs pa dkar po, 19th century (Meinert (ed.) 2011: cat 347).

¹²⁴ Mongol *thang ka* of rDo rje legs pa in the Urga style (19th century?) presided by Padmasambhava; among the many deities depicted are the four Kings surrounding White Pe har, mGar ba nag po and Hayagrīva (Tsultem 1986, fig. 29, private collection of Khaiduv).

¹²⁵ Tibetan *thang ka* depicting Mahākāla, in the Rubin Museum (Linrothe and Watt 2004, cat.no.16).

Pe har in the upper right, Mon bu pu tra in the bottom right, and Shing bya can riding on a green dragon in the bottom left.¹²⁶ Each of them is accompanied by his mount-leader, his minister and his *śakti*. mGar ba nag po appears in the bottom between Mon bu pu tra and Shing bya can. Crowds of laymen wearing a blue hat, naked white humans (on the right) and monks and soldiers (on the left); dark blue wolves and birds, running tigers, and monkeys form the deity's retinue. Although the style of faces, garments, animals, and the colours are quite different from the Yeke juu's painting, many details of this painting can be compared to it.



45. The Five Kings with brGya byin in the centre, *thang ka*, 67x47cm, Tibet. © Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, Bruxelles, n°Ver.278

¹²⁶ According to Nyingmapa texts (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 115). See also a *thang ka* in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/87020.html>).

From the comparison with other paintings of the Five Kings in Mongolia, it appears that Tshangs pa dkar po,¹²⁷ mGar ba nag po, Rāhu, and rDo rje grags ldan are the deities most often associated with the Pe har cycle.¹²⁸ They are not mentioned in Altan Khan's biography (except for Rāhu)¹²⁹ but are already depicted on the murals of Mayidari juu (3, 4).

According to a Tibetan source, Tshangs pa dkar po would be Pe har's original incarnation when he was the ruler of the thirty-three gods. Tshangs pa dkar po was certainly the name of an ancient Tibetan deity who was later used as the Tibetan name of Sita Brahmā.¹³⁰ This identification probably only relies on the colour white, and there is no iconographic, ritual or mythological connection between the two deities.¹³¹ As seen above, Tshangs pa dkar po was probably the personal deity of Altan Khan, linked to wealth and prosperity.

Most of his Mongol depictions have the same iconography as that of the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple, with the white conch-shell turban,¹³² "big golden earrings, a red silk brocade robe with a wide green edge [...] around his neck and a floating white silk mantle with a blue edge,"¹³³ and typical Mongol boots. He holds a scepter or a *vajra*-handled sword in his right hand, an offering bowl full of jewels in his left, and a lance with a silk flag rests in the crook of his left elbow. A white goose flies above his head. Later paintings represent him with a golden armour (described in Nebesky-Wojkowitz) or a different garment. On some paintings, such as the mural of the Caqar blama juu (6), Tshangs pa dkar po holds a jewel-spitting rat/mongoose in his left hand¹³⁴— an attribute that characterizes Vaiśravaṇa and deities connected to him.

However the painting style of Tshangs pa dkar po in the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple is quite different from other Mongol works.¹³⁵ In three 19th-century miniature paintings,¹³⁶ the Chinese-style robe and long, flying sleeves resemble those of the painting of the Nayicung Temple.

¹²⁷ I disagree with Qi Jie (2009, p. 30), who believes that the association of the Five Kings with Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po would be a specificity of the Tümed monasteries.

¹²⁸ In a Mongol *thang ka* depicting White Pe har, Tsong kha pa and his two disciples appear at the top centre, and three deities riding on a white lion are in the god's retinue: white Tshe ring ma on a lion (goddess of longevity), Vaiśravaṇa, and rDo rje legs pa, 19th century, Rubin Museum of Art (acc.# P1995.29.1), <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/213.html>.

¹²⁹ Altan Khan's biography mentions only five wrathful deities: dPal ldan lha mo, Brahmā/Esrua, Indra/Qormusda, Vajrapāṇi and Rāhu (but not Beg tse).

¹³⁰ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 96, 99, and chapter IX, esp. p. 147. On Tshangs pa dkar po's origin in the imperial period, his link with Pe har and with the Khra 'brug Monastery in Southern Tibet: Sørensen and Hazod 2005, p. 275-279.

¹³¹ Kapstein 2009.

¹³² Because of his main iconographical characteristic, the white conch-shell turban, he is sometimes called "Labai tedkügei yeke Eserün—Great Brahmā Keeper of the Pure White Conch."

¹³³ His iconography is detailed by Birtalan (2013, p. 107). In her study of Mongol equestrian deities of the Hans Leder collection, Birtalan (2013) examines their armour, weapons, horse gear and saddlery, and compares them to medieval and modern Mongols' gear and Tibetan *thang kas*.

¹³⁴ For instance, a *thang ka* of the Zanabazar Fine Arts Museum: Tsultem 1986, fig. 34. This attribute is not mentioned by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996 [1956], p. 145 sq.).

¹³⁵ Two *thang kas*, in the Bogd Khan Palace Museum (26x18 cm, 2-375, and 167x123 cm), Ulaanbaatar (Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 377; 379); a *thang ka* in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50805.html>). Qi Jie (2009, p. 23-24 and Table 2 p. 50) mentions other *thang kas* of Tshangs pa dkar po in the Yonghegong and in the Imperial Palace of Beijing.

¹³⁶ Two miniature paintings in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50562.html>; <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50529.html>); a miniature painting published in Farkas and Szabó 2002, p. 20, fig. 2.

Tshangs pa dkar po also appears in the centre of *thang kas*, surrounded by emanations of Pe har.¹³⁷ Some *thang kas* depict his own retinue.¹³⁸

mGar ba nag po (Black blacksmith deity) is more frequently represented in Mongol areas than in Tibet, in miniature paintings¹³⁹ as in *thang kas*.¹⁴⁰ “The dark-hued blacksmith bound by an oath,” also known as mGar ba’i mtshan can, “he who bears the marks (or attributes) of a blacksmith,” is rDo rje legs pa (Vajrasādhū)’s¹⁴¹ “officer” (*las mkhan*) or chief emanation. Mongols often call both forms “(Damjin) Dorliγ.” mGar ba nag po is the god of the blacksmiths and the protector of their craft, and protects against black magic and attacks from spirits.¹⁴² He is also the protector of medical schools and doctors and, like rDo rje legs pa, the protector of *gter mas* (hidden treasure-texts). Perhaps his representation is linked with the fact that Hohhot was a main centre for the production of copper, iron and tin artefacts from the 17th century to the 1850s, due to the growing religious demand for metal artefacts, and to the presence of Chinese artisans who had settled in Mongolia.¹⁴³

mGar ba nag po is worshipped primarily by the Nyingmapas. The connection between Pe har and mGar ba nag po does not seem to be doctrinal, but both were tamed by Padmasambhava and represent Nyingmapa teachings. They are often depicted on the same paintings (3) and are represented on the same page of the 1720 edition of the Mongolian *Kanjur* (*bKa’ ’gyur*).¹⁴⁴ In *thang kas*, mGar ba nag po is usually represented with the cane hat that is worn by the Pe har deities, which is not the case in the Yeke juu’s mural,¹⁴⁵ and sometimes with the same retinue as in the Yeke juu’s painting, such as the animal-headed god and the white general.¹⁴⁶

In conclusion, the Mongol *thang kas* depicting the cycle of the Five Kings centred on brGya byin, often presided by Padmasambhava or Hayagrīva, and associated with mGar ba nag po and Rāhu, are not rare, though they are less numerous than paintings centred on six-armed White Pe har. brGya byin appears to be the central deity of the Pe har cycle in the earliest Mongol paintings (3, 6), and White Pe har dethroned him in the 19th century, becoming the first of the Five Kings.

¹³⁷ A Tibetan (or Mongol?) *thang ka* representing Tshangs pa dkar po surrounded by brGya byin, White Pe har, rDo rje grags ldan and other deities, American Museum of Natural History (70.0/7208, <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/94387.html>).

¹³⁸ A *thang ka* in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50805.html>); a *thang ka* in the Bogd Khan Palace Museum (Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 377).

¹³⁹ Two miniature paintings, Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50969.html>, <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50509.html>); a miniature painting, 19th century, 15.6x12.5 cm, collection Leder/Umlauff (Inv. Nr.: 35146, Völkerkundemuseum vPST Heidelberg, <http://www.moncol.net/mongolia/museum/itemdetailview/id/4502>).

¹⁴⁰ A *thang ka*, Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50117.html>); a *thang ka*, 19th century, 51x30 cm, collection Leder/Umlauff (Inv. Nr.: 33670, Völkerkundemuseum vPST Heidelberg, <http://www.moncol.net/mongolia/museum/itemdetailview/id/3981>); a large appliqué (198x130 cm) and a *thang ka* (74x49 cm) in the Bogd Khan Palace Museum (Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 292 and cat. 291); a *thang ka*, 51x33 cm, Erdene Zuu Museum (Fleming and Lkhagvademchig Shastri (eds) 2011, cat. 293).

¹⁴¹ On the legendary history of this powerful spirit, subdued by Padmasambhava, turned into a protector of *gter mas*, and one of the three main protectors of the Nyingpamas: Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 154-159; Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996, p. 191-192.

¹⁴² Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 155.

¹⁴³ On corporations of smiths in Hohhot, their organization and their production: Charleux 2010, p. 85-86.

¹⁴⁴ Chandra 1994 [1961]: no. 257, 503, 506; Ge Laxiseleng, 2001, I, p. 80, 337.

¹⁴⁵ Other Mongol paintings depict him with no hat but a five-skull crown (*thang ka*, 19th century, Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, Lipton and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996, cat. 104 p. 192-193).

¹⁴⁶ *Thang ka*, 19th century, Rubin Museum of Art (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/27.html>). For comparisons of the depiction of mGar ba nag po in the Yeke juu’s painting and in Mongol and Chinese Qing-dynasty paintings: Qi Jie 2009, p. 25-28.

Because the Gelugpa School had a quasi-monopoly in Mongolia but also integrated some Nyingmapa and other “red” school teachings and rituals, these paintings of the Five Kings are typically Gelugpa paintings that borrowed elements from the Nyingmapa tradition and pantheon. The Yeke juu murals reflect the main preoccupations of the Buddhist renaissance: protection of the monasteries and their wealth, of treasures, and of smiths.

Date and style of the murals of the Yeke juu’s Nayicung Temple

The style of the Yeke juu Nayicung Temple’s murals appears to be quite unique. Most of the paintings I used as comparison are from Qalqa Mongolia (19th-first half of the 20th century). The main reason why no other mural painting or *thang ka* can be closely related to it is that very few Inner Mongol Buddhist paintings were published, and when they are, it is often without any contextual indication. Besides, it is forbidden to take pictures within temples,¹⁴⁷ and *thang kas* representing wrathful deities are often hidden behind a cloth. Most of the religious art is found in monasteries, and the *thang kas* and portions of mural paintings kept in the museums of Inner Mongolia are not exhibited.¹⁴⁸ There definitely existed Tümed painting styles that we presently know only through some extant mural paintings. We must wait for future publications of Inner Mongol paintings to establish a solid corpus of Tümed paintings.

The murals of the Yeke juu’s Nayicung Temple are different from the 17th-century paintings in the Mayidari juu and the Caqar blama juu; they are likely to be dated to the second third or second half of the 18th century. Qi Jie proposes to date them between 1720 and 1793.¹⁴⁹ Although I think her corpus of paintings and sculptures used as a comparison (Table 1, 2 and 3) is too limited and geographically far from Inner Mongolia to reach such a conclusion,¹⁵⁰ the comparisons of details of the murals she made with real artifacts or similar motifs in other paintings are valuable elements of dating. For instance, she showed that the depiction of the dragons is characteristic of the Yongzheng (1723-1736) and Kangxi periods;¹⁵¹ that the hat and ewer of Mon bu pu tra’s emanation (**12-a1**) closely follow Qing models, and that brGya byin’s hat resembles Tibetan official hats of the Qing period.¹⁵²

It is possible that these murals replaced earlier paintings¹⁵³ that also depicted Pe har and his emanations. Pe har being one of the personal protectors of the Fifth Dalai Lama who promoted his cult and was especially interested in Nyingmpapa teachings, the Nayicung süme’s murals of the Yeke juu may first have been painted at the time of the construction of the temple (1640s?), after his sojourn in Hohhot in 1652, or during the restoration of the monastery in 1696-1697. These possible dates correspond more or less to that of Siregetü juu’s Nayicung Temple (1644 or 1697), Mayidari juu’s Nayicung Temple (1635?) and sKu ’bum’s gNas chung Temple (1692).¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ I could obtain an exceptional authorization to take photographs of the Nayicung Temple’s murals.

¹⁴⁸ Museum’s exhibits generally focus on the art from the Xiongnu to the Mongol empires. Two exceptions are the Museum of Baotou, which has a room consecrated to *thang kas*, and the Museum of Badyar coyiling süme.

¹⁴⁹ She believes that the paintings are pre-1793 because the cult of Tshangs pa dkar po as an oracle deity decreased in Mongolia when Emperor Qianlong eliminated the influence of Tshangs pa dkar po’s oracle and established the golden urn system (Qi Jie 2009, p. 22-23).

¹⁵⁰ Her corpus includes 20 depictions of Pe har (but only one of the Five Kings), 5 of Tshangs pa dkar po and 18 of mGar ba nag po; most of the works are roughly dated “Qing dynasty.”

¹⁵¹ The head of the dragon depicted on the north wall (**13**) looks like dragons of the Yongzheng period, while the dragons depicted on the robes are more characteristic of the Kangxi period (Qi Jie 2009, p. 34).

¹⁵² Qi Jie 2009, p. 32-35, and fig. 11-12.

¹⁵³ There is no trace of a layer under the present one, but the present coating may cover an older layer.

¹⁵⁴ sKu ’bum Monastery in Amdo had strong connections with Mongol monasteries.

While the painting respects Tibetan iconography—it is certainly based on a text which is close to the one translated by Nebesky-Wojkowitz—the colours, the green background, the clouds and the garments (floating sleeves, scarves, dragon-robos and scarves in precious silks, armour) and decorative elements (Chinese silks decorated with dragons, and the geometrized character “longevity” *shou* 壽) denote a clear Chinese influence. The Five Kings wear Chinese imperial robes fastened on the right, following Mongol custom. Qing-dynasty Mongol princes cherished Chinese silk and received official silk robes from the Manchu court. Similar silk robes are found in other Mongol paintings.¹⁵⁵ The robes and attitudes look like those of the illustrations of the Beijing xylographed version of the Mongolian *Kanjur* (1717-1720).¹⁵⁶ The Yeke juu’s murals were probably painted by Chinese artisans according to monks’ instructions: Chinese characters giving colour indications dating of the Ming dynasty were found under the paintings of the Main Assembly Hall of the Yeke juu.¹⁵⁷

Later developments of the cult of the Five Kings and oracle deities in Mongolia

Temples dedicated to the Five Kings in other regions of Mongolia

Temples to Pe har were also found in monasteries of other Mongol regions. At Erdeni juu, the first monastery of the Qalqas in Northern Mongolia, the Sa skya master sent by the Dalai Lama to consecrate the monastery in 1586 had introduced ancient rituals associated with Pe har.¹⁵⁸ The *labrang* in Erdeni juu, built in 1780, has three chapels dedicated respectively to Mahākāla, Bhaishajyaguru and the Five Kings, and a separate temple to Pe har/the Five Kings was erected in 1879,¹⁵⁹ perhaps above a previous temple consecrated to the same deities. The left chapel of the western lateral hall erected in 1675 in front of the Three Temples was a shrine to Coyijing Camba (Tshangs pa dkar po); it had a large portrait of Tshangs pa dkar po and mural paintings depicting his *bskang rdzas* (articles of sacrificial offering). The eastern lateral hall had *thang kas* of the Five Kings and of Dorliṅ. On the upper floor of the Central Temple was a painting of Rahū; brought back from Tibet, it was one of the holiest relics of the monastery.¹⁶⁰

In Inner Mongolia, Mergen gegen Lubsangdambijalsan (1717-1766) placed (statues of) the Five Kings in the Jangqang Temple of Mergen sūme.¹⁶¹ He described

¹⁵⁵ Compare Nayicung Temple’s painting of Tshangs pa dkar po in figure 32 with brGya byin’s robe in a small painting of brGya byin Pe har in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts, Ulaanbaatar (<http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50507.html>).

¹⁵⁶ Chandra 1994 [1961], no. 257, 503, 506. But they are very different from the images of Pe har in the Nyingmapa sādhanas by gTer bdag gling pa (1646-1714)’s *sGrub thabs ’dod ’jo bum bzang* (Loden Sherap Dagab 1991, p. 275-285). Pe har is not depicted in great Mongol pantheons such as the *Bris sku mthong ba don ldan* (“The Icons Worthwhile to See,” ed. Willson and Brauen 2000).

¹⁵⁷ Article by Du Xiaoli, from the Museum of Inner Mongolia, Hohhot, in *Cultural Relics News*, 19 August 2001, and commentary by Hao Jianwen, in *Cultural Relics News*, 14 September 2001, quoted in *Chinese Archeology & Art Digest* 2001, p. 9. On Chinese artisans in Mongolia: Charleux 2010, p. 63-70.

¹⁵⁸ Sardar 2007, p. 286.

¹⁵⁹ Alexandre 1979, p. 17.

¹⁶⁰ According to Jamtsarano (Jamsrangiin Tseveen, 1880-1942)’s notes taken during the 1912 Kotwicz expedition (Tulisow et al., transl. 2012, p. 335, 337). Other sources date the construction of the left hall of 1774-1784.

¹⁶¹ Western Duke Banner of the Urad, Baotou Municipality.

how when the monastery was founded the wrathful deity Damjin Dorlig, mounted on a lion “descended into the bodies of human beings and showed them the rules of accepting and rejecting.” This god was the first to be made as a statue at Mergen. Soon a group of wealthy lay patrons offered much silver, and Erlig Khan the King of the Underworld was installed as the main deity in the Janghan Temple, along with five wrathful gods including Damjin Dorlig on the left side and five Khans—of Duty, Wisdom, Rule, Wealth, and Feeling—on the right. This array was complemented with statues of Padmasambhava, Tsongkhapa, and two other eminent teachers [...]. This series of gods of the Janghan Temple did not survive into the late twentieth century [...].¹⁶²

In Western Inner Mongolia, there was a Nayicung Temple in the Western Monastery (Barayun keyid, Ch. Guangzongsi 廣宗寺) of Alaša Banner, a famous institution built in 1757 that preserved the mummy of the lama whom Mongols believed to be the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706?).¹⁶³ The newly rebuilt temple of the Western Monastery I visited in 1995 had a statue of Pe har (in the Yellow Temple) and a statue of an oracle deity with a mirror on his chest, riding on a black horse (in the Nayicung süme or Jangqang). Since Pe har was at that time the personal protector of the Dalai Lamas, it is logical that he was represented in the Sixth Dalai Lama’s funerary monastery of Mongolia.

In Uрга (Yeke küriye, present-day Ulaanbaatar), besides the Coyijing blama-yin süme (Choijin lamyn süm, see below), the Five Kings along with Beg tse, Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po were worshipped in the Badmayogo Faculty of Gandan Monastery, founded in 1739 and dedicated to Hayagrīva.¹⁶⁴ There were also famous images of “Dam can rdo rje legs pa” (here, mGar ba nag po) riding on a goat and Beg tse in the White Temple near the Tula River, and images of Nayicung coyijing (i.e. rDo rje grags ldan or Pe har), Tshangs pa dkar po and Dam can rdo rje legs pa in the Tünlqa-yin qural.¹⁶⁵ Beg tse was particularly worshiped in the Western Palace (Barayun örgöge, i.e. Abatai Khan’s palace in Uрга). According to the legend, the Second Jebcündamba qutuytu (1724-1757) was miraculously saved from lightning by Beg tse.¹⁶⁶ The Eighth Jebcündamba (1869-1924), who was elevated to theocratic ruler in 1911, along with Mongol nobles vowed their wholehearted service to the newly independent state in front of the statue of Beg tse.

Other great Qalqa monasteries such as Bayiravun keyid (Cyr. Mo. Breveen khiid) and Dasicoyingqorling keyid (Cyr. Mo. Dashchoinkhorlin khiid) had a Temple of the Five Kings (Tabun qayan-u duyang).¹⁶⁷ The Jaya-yin küriye (Cyr. Mo. Zayayn khüree) of Tsetserleg had a *coyijing lama* and a Nayicung süme. A famous Nyingmapa monastery, Ebügen keyid (Cyr. Mo. Övgön khiid), was a main place for the cult of Pe har in Qalqa Mongolia.¹⁶⁸ After its complete destruction by the Junghars led by Galdan in 1687-1688, Zanabazar rebuilt the monastery with temples to Beg tse and the Five Kings.¹⁶⁹ Destroyed again in the late 1930s, the monastery was

¹⁶² Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, p. 345, also p. 62.

¹⁶³ Many Mongols and Tibetans believed that the Sixth Dalai Lama did not die near Kukunor en route to Beijing after he was forcibly deposed by the Qing in November 1706 as described in official histories. Instead he is said to have escaped and started a new life, traveling as a beggar monk throughout East and South Asia, and finally settled in Alaša in 1746, where he built several monasteries and died in 1746.

¹⁶⁴ Majer and Teleki 2006, p. 68.

¹⁶⁵ Tib. ’Khrungs lha, Temple of the Protector Deity of the Birthday (Jambal 1997, p. 8; Majer and Teleki 2006, p. 54).

¹⁶⁶ Pozdneev 1971 [1896], p. 61.

¹⁶⁷ Daajav 2006 II, p. 98-99, 232.

¹⁶⁸ Also known as Khögnö tarnyn khiid, located between the capital and Erdeni juu in Gurvanbulag District, Bulgan Province.

¹⁶⁹ Daajav 2006 I, p. 44.

rebuilt on a much smaller scale in 1994. The lama of Ebügen keyid I interviewed in 2013 said that as the Five Kings were the most powerful *doysids* (wrathful deities), women were forbidden to enter the monastery, and only celibate monks who kept their precepts and had no wound on their body could worship Pe har.¹⁷⁰ But when the Dalai Lama visited the monastery (in 2011 probably), he made a ritual to tame the Five Kings. Since then, women are allowed to enter the monastery, but cannot worship Pe har. Nowadays, except for Ebügen keyid, the cult of Pe har and the Five Kings does not appear to be widespread in Mongolia. In modern monasteries, a Jangqang Temple houses statues of the main protectors (Vajrabhairava, Mahākāla, dPal ldan lha mo, Beg tse, Hayagrīva, Vajrapāni, and so on), but not of the Five Kings. Some Pe har/Nayicung temples may have been turned into temples to other deities after Emperor Qianlong (1736-1796) prohibited oracles in Mongolia in 1792-1793.

The oracle deities and their mediums in Mongolia

The paintings of the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple are linked to ancient oracular practices. Although I could not find evidence of the presence of an oracle lama in the Yeke juu, we know that 17th- and 18th-century reincarnated lamas such as the Siregetü qutuγtu were found thanks to indications of oracles.¹⁷¹ It is unclear whether the aim of the painting studied here was to create an atmosphere to help the deities descend into the medium. As seen above, the lay and monk population of Hohhot still worshipped Pe har in the late 19th century.

In all Mongolia, as in Tibetan areas, Pe har was the main deity who gave oracles through the speech of mediums, called *gürtüm*(be),¹⁷² or *coyijing*,¹⁷³ two terms that are by convention usually translated as “oracle” in studies of Tibeto-Mongol Buddhism.¹⁷⁴ Pe har is sometimes simply called Coyijing or Dharmapāla when speaking of Mongol oracle deities. Although other deities could speak through the speech of a *gürtüm lama*, the Pe har oracle appears in Mongolia, as in Tibet, as the prototype of oracle deities.

In 1792-1793, Emperor Qianlong prohibited oracles in Mongolia when he established the Golden Urn system for the selection of the main reincarnations.¹⁷⁵ However, the *gürtüms* reappeared during periods of crisis, in the 19th and early 20th century.¹⁷⁶ In the 19th century, most of the great monasteries had their own *coyijing* or *gürtüm*, who could be “possessed” by “Dam can” ([the one who is] bound by an oath—a term that here¹⁷⁷ designates one of the Five Kings), by a mountain deity, by dPal ldan lha mo, or by Beg tse.

In the late Qing period and early 20th century, monasteries that wanted to have a *coyijing* used to send an embassy to Tibet to ask for a Tibetan lama to be sent to Mongolia, and *gürtüms* received

¹⁷⁰ In Bhutan, Pe har is said to be too powerful to be a personal deity (Françoise Pommaret, personal communication, July 2013).

¹⁷¹ Qi Jie 2009, p. 20.

¹⁷² Also spelled *gurtum*, *gürten*, *γurtam*, < Tib. *sku rten pa*, *sku rten bla ma*.

¹⁷³ Also spelled *coyijung*, < Tib. *chos skyong*. On the distinction between the *gürtüm* and the *coyijing* (the latter was attached to a monastery, but the two categories often overlapped): Dulam and Oyuntungalag 2006, p. 131.

¹⁷⁴ See Humphrey 2006, p. 75; Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, chapter I.3.

¹⁷⁵ On Qianlong's relationship with “Lhamo [Lha mo lcog] coyijung,” the medium of Tshangs pa dkar po in Tibet who visited Beijing and received previous gifts: Wang Jiapeng 2008. Qianlong strongly criticized the abuses and malversations of Lhamo coyijung's oracles. When he established the Golden Urn, the emperor eliminated Lhamo coyijung's power and banned oracles.

¹⁷⁶ Humphrey 2006, p. 78-80.

¹⁷⁷ According to Haslund-Christensen 1935, p. 59.

their investiture from the Dalai Lama or the Panchen Lama.¹⁷⁸ A Tibetan *gürtüm* was “possessed” by the Five Kings in the Mergen sūme of Inner Mongolia up to the 1930s: his main tasks was protection against misfortune. At the time of the Third Mergen Gegen, the *gürtüm* in trance is said to have protected the monastery by stopping a cursed rolling stone that was about to destroy it, and ordered the stone to stay in front of the Jangqang Temple. He was “an ambiguous figure, not considered to be a true lama.”¹⁷⁹ Bayiravun keyid and Ebügen keyid also had a *gürtüm* possessed by Pe har.¹⁸⁰

In the Tümed region, there were six oracle lamas called *nayicung lamas* in the Mayidari juu. They came from the outside, and succeeded in this role from father to son—preferably among children born in the year of the ox. They were said to be as strong as oxen. They were possessed by fierce protective deities (*sakiyulsun*—among them, probably Pe har who is depicted on the mural paintings: 3). Their helmets, iron armour (weighing up to 20 kg), knives, and black whips were kept in the Nayicung Temple of the Mayidari juu.¹⁸¹ They performed an exorcist march during the “Consecration ritual” of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, that commemorated the meeting between Altan Khan and bSod nams rgya mtsho at Cabciyal in 1578. According to old Mongols’ memories, this five-day ritual lasted from the 13th to the 17th day, and the apex was on the 15th day. It included *nayicung lamas*’ purification of the ritual area, ‘*cham*’ ritual dances, recitation of the “Consecration Sūtra,” circumambulation of the monastery with the Maitreya cart, and food offering to the deities (Mo. *baling*, Tib. *gtor ma*). The circumambulation started with two *nayicung* lamas dressed in black robes and wearing a mask, walking at a rhythmical pace imitating a military march; they opened the way for the procession of the cart while the four others followed at the end of the procession. With their black whips they chased away all evil to protect the procession of the cart, which was pulled by twenty men. The procession turned around the walled compound, stopping at each angle to read *sūtras*.¹⁸²

The presiding deity in *gürtüms*’ home most often was Padmasambhava.¹⁸³ The Mongol Gelugpa clergy showed some defiance toward this practice closed to the Nyingmapa tradition. Some high clerics such as the Kanjurva qutuytu saw this practice of “possession by an evil spirit” as a shamanist, unorthodox tradition.¹⁸⁴

The main tasks of the *gürtüm* were exorcism and divination, healing and averting danger (46). He lived most of the time in a monastery.¹⁸⁵ According to observers, he was possessed on particular days (especially festival days), and the performance was a large public ritual. At the

¹⁷⁸ Dulam and Oyuntungalag 2006, p. 138; Humphrey 2006.

¹⁷⁹ Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, p. 113-117.

¹⁸⁰ Daajav 2006 II, p. 98-99. The sKu ’bum Monastery of Amdo also had a medium possessed by Pe har. During the Muslim rebellions of 1862-1878, the medium entered in trance to fight against Muslims, and was killed. Since then it is said that Pe har, being angry with the monks who took arms, does not speak anymore though a medium (Tsybikov 1992 [1919], p. 3). Tsybikov also gives a precise description of a gNas chung oracle in bLa brang Monastery (p. 47-48).

¹⁸¹ Wang Leiyi et al. 2009, I, p. 40. These objects have disappeared during the Cultural Revolution.

¹⁸² Miao Runhua and Du Hua 2008, p. 127-130; Wang Leiyi et al. 2009, I, p. 40.

¹⁸³ Pozdneev 1978 [1887], p. 637-638 n. 47.

¹⁸⁴ Jagchid and Hyer 1983, p. 93-96; Humphrey 2006, p. 76.

¹⁸⁵ I here follow Heissig 1973 [1970], p. 393-396; Heissig 1944, p. 40-41; Dulam and Oyuntungalag 2006, p. 138, quoting Montell 1934. *Gürtüms*’ performances were also described by Pozdneev in the 1880s (1978 [1887], p. 229-230, 637-638 n. 47), and, in the 1930s, by Ferdinand Lessing (1935, p. 138-151) and Henning Haslund-Christensen (1935, p. 54-59) in Inner Mongolia, and Joseph Geleta (Forbath 1936, p. 200-202) in Mongolia. See the bibliographies in the different chapters of Empson (2006). For Humphrey and Ujeed, the *gürtüm*’s prophecies and miracles at Mergen sūme “can be seen as an attempt to penetrate, pin down, and direct the numerous uncertainties and dangers affecting the monastery and its clientele” (2013, p. 117).

beginning of the ceremony, the *gürtüm* held a *vajra* and a *phur bu* dagger, and during the “possession” he brandished a sword with which he savagely hit around him. He performed a wild dance, trembled and jumped, and spoke in an unknown language that his attendants translated/interpreted. People came to him one after the other, bringing offerings, and asked questions; those who had fallen ill were brought in his presence in order that the *gürtüm* may beat them with his sword to drive away the evil forces. The *gürtüm* could lay several days in lifeless trance.¹⁸⁶



46. “*Gürtüm lama in full action*,” Inner Mongolia. © Montell 1945: pl. 22

Mongols use the verbs *oroḡula-* “cause/allow to enter,” *baḡu-*, “descend, come down” and *kürte-*, “receive” to describe the supernatural entity’s descent into the body in trance of a *gürtüm*.¹⁸⁷ The conventional term in Western studies is “possession”; it may be more appropriate to say that the oracle “channels” the deity. Humphrey and Ujeed describe according to old lamas’ accounts how the *gürtüm* of Mergen süme conducted healing rituals using a sword in the 1930s:

He first made an offering to a fierce deity, which was done by slitting his tongue with the sword, receiving grains of millet or rice from an assistant, blowing blood onto the grains in his palm, and throwing them toward the god. After this, the lamas would chant a text that brought the *gürtüm* into full trance, his tongue would become whole again, and in this state he conducted skillful operations on patients—cutting them, then blowing on the wound, which would then heal. The patients were too terrified to feel pain. The *gürtüm* also helped in the “throwing the *sor*”¹⁸⁸ rites, by going first to the place and “taming” the *sor* before a lama threw it. He also did this while in trance, stabbing the *sor* repeatedly with his sword. Lama

¹⁸⁶ Lessing 1935, p. 149.

¹⁸⁷ Nima 1989-1991, p. 222.

¹⁸⁸ Tib. *zor*: model of a human skull made of dough placed upon a red pyramid of dough with the sides edged with a white motif of flames. It is burnt in a tantric ritual of purification.

maintained the *gürtüm* in trance by beating drums and cymbals and by chanting, imploring the deity to stay in possession of the oracle. The *gürtüm* performed divinations, following which he would instruct patients to undertake reparative rites, such the “washing the face,” repelling evil, or making a reliance-promise (*dagatgal*) to a Buddha. The *gürtüm* of Dabaga monastery was a rather foolish man, and certainly not learned in Buddhism, we were told, but when he was in trance what he said was “very special, always correct.” During the 1930s civil war, the nobles would frequently ask him to divine from which direction and at what time an enemy would come; about that year’s rains, and coming disasters for livestock and people. After this *gürtüm* was killed, no further oracle was appointed in the area.¹⁸⁹

Like the Tibetan *gürtüm*, the Mongol *gürtüm* wore an elaborate costume with five triangular flags in his back and a silk over-garment decorated with severed heads on the apron; a large metal mirror with a seed-syllable on the chest; and a huge helmet decorated with skulls and firmly attached under the mouth to avoid hurting the tongue with his teeth (or a black hat drawn below the eyes). During the performance, the deity emerged from the seed-syllable to enter the medium, who hit the mirror with an ivory ring during his trance.¹⁹⁰ On the Yeke juu Nayicung Temple’s paintings, as in most Mongol and Tibetan paintings,¹⁹¹ the Five Kings do not wear a mirror attached to the chest; however, their statues in the Nayicung Temple, as well as statues of oracle deities in other monasteries wear a mirror.¹⁹² As for the flags, they are the attributes of warrior gods, in particular, *btsan* deities (minor pre-Buddhist spirits who swore to protect the *dharma*) who belong to the retinue of Tsi’u dmar po.¹⁹³ They can be attached to the back or to the helmet,¹⁹⁴ and are seen at the back of several attendants in the Yeke juu’s painting (**46, 47, also 5 and 40**). For Amy Heller, the heavy helmets worn by mediums recalls the sacred radiant helmet of ancient Tibetan kings that turned them into supernatural warriors.¹⁹⁵

In Urga, under the Qing period, *coyijing* rites were secretly organized by the Boyda Gegen (Eighth Jebcündamba qutuytu, 1869-1924) and nobles to give oracles on state affairs, strengthen the Mongolian religion and state, and defeat enemies and demons.¹⁹⁶ Lubsangqayidub (Cyr. Mo. Luvsankhaidav, 1872-1918), brother of the Boyda Gegen,¹⁹⁷ was recognized in 1883-1884 as possessed by the oracle deity Coyijing Setab (Chos skyungs bse’i khrab, i.e. Beg tse). In 1884, the deity was formally “invited” from Tibet. The state oracle became official during the period of Autonomy (1912-1921). He officiated in the Coyijing blama-yin süme in Urga, built in 1899-1901

¹⁸⁹ Humphrey and Ujeed 2013, p. 117 note 2.

¹⁹⁰ See the oracle priests’ ceremonial garments described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 410-415; Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 69-78.

¹⁹¹ On the large 18th or 19th century appliqué in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts, rDo rje grags ldan wears a mirror (Berger and Bartholomew (ed.), 1995, cat. 86).

¹⁹² The mirror is also an important requisite of the shaman; it helps him to see other worlds and to find the strayed soul of the patient, to contain incoming helper spirits, and serves as a shield against curses and attacks from evil-intentioned people or spirits. On the role of the mirror in divination rituals and as an attribute of the shaman and Buddhist deities: Humphrey 2007, p. 180 and n. 10; Sárközi and Sazykin (eds) 2004, p. 42.

¹⁹³ Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996 [1956], p. 411.

¹⁹⁴ They are found in the Tibetan garment of the medium too. They were borrowed from the four embroidered flags of the generals in Chinese operas (*yunqi* 雲旗, cloud-flags, deriving from arrows given to messengers to prove the authenticity of their order) and paintings (for instance, of Chinese god Guanyu 關羽).

¹⁹⁵ Heller 2006, p. 35, 40.

¹⁹⁶ Myagmarsambuu 2005, p. 65- 67; Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 42.

¹⁹⁷ See the details on his trances, magical feats and the titles he received in Jambal 1997, p. 9-12; Myagmarsambuu 2005, p. 65-67; Dulam and Oyuntungalag 2006, p. 143-145 (see the picture); Majer and Teleki 2006, p. 95-99; Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, chapter 1. Dondogdulam, the first consort of the Eighth Jebcündamba who was enthroned at his side as Eke dagini in 1912, also acted as an oracle (Berger 1995, p. 146).

(48, 49).¹⁹⁸ Three main gods then “possessed” Lubsangqayidub twice a year: Nayicung coyijing, Dizimur/Zumer/Zimur (rTse ma ra, Tsi ma ra, i.e. Tsi’u dmar po) and Dorjesug/Šüg (rDo rje shugs ldan).¹⁹⁹ Dorjesug was much fiercer than the two others: when he “was within him the Oracle Lama took on a very fierce aspect, hopping and leaping about, bobbing up and down and foaming at the mouth.”²⁰⁰ “The oracle never spoke with his mouth, but when one listened there hummed out at his armpit something which sounded like words. It was the Speaker lama [Lubsangpeljai/Luvsanpeljee] who listened to this and wrote it down and made it known to the assembled people.”²⁰¹ In 1916, 1917 and 1918, a *’cham* ritual dance of the Coyijing blama-yin süme, very different from the great *’cham* of Urga, was held in Urga, and Lubsangpeljai played the role of the Five Kings.²⁰² Lubsangqayidub enjoyed a great prestige; he was for the Jebcündamba the equivalent of the gNas chung oracle for the Dalai Lama. Lubsangqayidub’s death in 1918 put an end to the state oracle of Urga.



47. Small painting representing an oracle priest, watercolour on paper, 11x8.5 cm, Mongolia, early 20th century. © Private collection. Meinert (ed.) 2011: cat. 348

¹⁹⁸ Also called Jangqang Temple, at Jegün küriye, the eastern, main part of Urga. The temple was burnt to the ground in 1903, was rebuilt in 1904-1908 and partially destroyed in 1936. It re-opened in 1942 as the Museum of Religious History.

¹⁹⁹ The cult of this deity developed in 19th-century Tibet among the Gelugpas. Due to suspicion of sectarianism, the Fourteenth Dalai lama (b. 1935) banned it. It has been revived in Amurbayasqulangtu Monastery in present-day Mongolia.

²⁰⁰ Jambal 1997, p. 10 and note 7.

²⁰¹ Jambal 1997, p. 10. The medium legitimates decisions that are actually taken by masked political agents such as the “interpreter.” When in trance, if the medium spoke in an intelligible way and gave prophecies, he would immediately lose his credibility.

²⁰² Jambal 1997, p. 11.

From gūrtüms to layicings and shamans

According to W. Heissig, the Buddhist Church first instituted the Tibetan oracle type in Mongolia as the Mongol *gūrtüms*, as a substitute for the shamans.²⁰³ Later, when it became more tolerant towards shamanism, appeared the hybrid *layicing* (pronunciation of gNas chung in the Qorcin dialect). The *layicing*, sometimes called “white shaman,” was “a feeble form of the gurtum.” He/she was a male or female layman who worshipped Buddhist deities side by side with those of the Mongol indigenous religion (such as the skies, the fire), but it is unclear whether he could be possessed by Pe har.²⁰⁴ He beat cymbals instead of the shamanist drum,²⁰⁵ and wore a lamellar armour and a helmet, or a simple Mongol gown with a grey belt and implements of Buddhist rituals, such as the bell, the *phur bu*, a sword and a spear.²⁰⁶ His main task was healing diseases. *Layicings* were still observed in Eastern Inner Mongolia in the 1940s.

Although, the attitude and costume of the *gūrtum* and *layicing* were close to that of the shaman,²⁰⁷ and in a certain way, the *layicing* reconciled Buddhist and shamanic practices, the possession of these Buddhist practitioners is fundamentally different from the shamans’ performances.²⁰⁸

Shamans also adopted the Five Kings and Dorliy as shamanist spirits, and invoked them in their songs. An invocation from Küriye Banner in Inner Mongolia asks Damjin coyijing, Güng jalbu coyijing (Duke rGyal po), Nayicung coyijing, Bayiγur jalbu coyijung (Pe har rgyal po chos skyong) and Tabun qayan burqan to cure from sufferings and diseases.²⁰⁹ Interestingly, in this case, the Five Kings are invoked as medicine gods who can cure different diseases.

²⁰³ Heissig 1944, p. 39-41.

²⁰⁴ Nima 1989-1991, p. 226 mentions the worship of Hayagrīva.

²⁰⁵ Heissig 1944, p. 40-41.

²⁰⁶ Nima 1989-1991.

²⁰⁷ Humphrey 2006, p. 76; also Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 40.

²⁰⁸ For Roberte Hamayon (1995), the shaman does not enter in possession; during his “representation,” he/she asks for the help of his/her auxiliary spirits that he/she is supposed to control. C. Atwood also stressed the “enormous gap that separated shamanic magic and healing from Tantric rituals that could be performed for the same purpose”: Tantric ritualists, who perform rituals based on a vast body of written literature with the proper hand gestures and the correct Sanskrit formulas, cannot be viewed as “simply a more systematized development” of the shamans, whose performance is based on “improvisatory oral imagination” (1996, p. 132). In addition, oracle lamas have to take an oath (Humphrey 2006, p. 76).

²⁰⁹ Heissig 1944, p. 57-58. On invocations to Dorliy: Even 1988-1989, p. 90.



48. The back chapel of the main temple, Coyijing blama-yin süme (Ulaanbaatar) where Lubsangqayidub used to give oracles. The throne of the Boḍḍa Gegen, the robes, sword, paraphernalia of Lubsangqayidub, and statues of the oracle deities are preserved. © I. Charleux



49. Statue of Pe har in the Coyijing blama-yin süme. © I. Charleux

The Five Kings in Mongol popular Buddhism

Pe har and the Five Kings became powerful but dangerous deities of the Mongol popular pantheon. Because Hor is commonly identified with Mongolia, Mongols came to believe that they are indigenous Mongol deities who later became oracle gods of Tibet.²¹⁰ Pe har's birthplace was located in Otgontenger Mountain in Zavkhan Province, Mongolia, and came to be seen as the mountain deity, the lord-master of Otgontenger.²¹¹ (Lhacen, < Tib. Lha chen) Cangbayarbo was identified with the master-spirit (*ɣajar-un ejen*) of the mountain Cangbayarbo/Tsambagarav in Western Mongolia (Erdenebüren District, Khovd Province).²¹² Mongols thus adopted oracle deities from Tibet to such a point that they turned them into Mongol mountain deities.

The Mongols retained the names of “Five Kings” to designate them.²¹³ It is no doubt that the importance of pentads in the shamanist pantheon (Five Fate Gods *Jayayaci tngri*, Five Descending Spirits of Anger, Five Deities of the Door, etc.), and in the Buddhist popular pantheon (Five Personal Protective Deities [*'go ba'i lha lnga*, Mo. *ɣobi-yin lha*], Five Deities of Longevity)²¹⁴ favoured the adoption of the Five Kings as main popular deities. On a *thang ka* from Urga, the Five Kings stand in parallel to the Five Personal Protective Deities, who dwell in different parts of a man's body, and are prayed to multiply offspring, bring fortune, wealth, long life, vitality, food, and other worldly goods.²¹⁵

Most representations of Pe har are 19th- and 20th-century miniature *thang kas* (*burqan-u jiruɣ*) which were purchased by individuals for their particular needs such as “repairing misfortune,” or were assigned to them according to their time of birth and worn in an amulet box²¹⁶ for personal protection.²¹⁷ Stevan Davis, who studied a corpus of 5,120 Mongol miniature paintings, gathered 39 *thang kas* of White Pe har, 8 of brGya byin, and 38 of mGar ba nag po.²¹⁸

The Five Kings are believed to be receptive to mundane wishes such as to provide health, wealth, happiness, and fortune, but are ambivalent gods who must be propitiated, otherwise they can cause calamities.²¹⁹ Texts of incense offering (Mo. *sang*, Tib. *bsangs*) dedicated to Pe har and Esrua/Brāhma (Tshangs pa dkar po) are read to please these mundane deities in order to gain their

²¹⁰ Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 60.

²¹¹ Otgontenger (Mo. Otqun tngri) is the highest peak of the Khangai Range. Since the 18th century, it is said to be the residence of Vajrapāṇi, the main protector of the Qalqas. In 2008, Thubten Ngodup (1958–), the present-day medium of the gNas chung oracle in Dharamsala, went to pay homage to this “birthplace of Pe har in Mongolia” (Dashdulam and Naranchimeg 2011, p. 61).

²¹² His depiction as a mountain spirit is very different from his usual iconography (Birtalan 2013, p. 106–107). Besides, the spirit lord of Bogd Khan Mountain, one of the four mountains that protected Urga, was Dünjin Garbo (or Dunjongarbo, Dünjingarva, < Tib. Dung skyong dkar po), “the White protector of the conch shell” (Jambal 1997, p. 16). Because of his “white shell” he may have a connection with Tshangs pa dkar po. Interestingly, in an offering text to Dung skyong dkar po, “protector of the descendants of Chinggis Khan,” ICang skya Kutugtu Rol-pa'i rdo-rje (1717–1786) identified him with Pe har (Uspenskiy 2016).

²¹³ Heissig 1944, p. 58.

²¹⁴ On the non-Buddhist origin of these pentads: Heissig 1990, p. 229, n. 4; Heissig 1944, p. 59.

²¹⁵ Tsultem 1986, fig. 29, private collection of Khaiduv.

²¹⁶ Several miniature paintings of Pe har are preserved in the Zanabazar Museum of Fine Arts: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50503.html>, <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50600.html>, <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50390.html>; of brGya byin: <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50508.html>; <http://www.himalayanart.org/image.cfm/50507.html>.

²¹⁷ In Tibet, they are believed to “protect man efficaciously against evil spirits and enable him to attain the accomplishment of every wish” (Getty 1928, p. 168).

²¹⁸ Davis 2010. He describes a miniature *thang ka* that represents Hayagrīva in the middle, topped by Padmasambhava, and surrounded by four smaller deities: brGya byin, rDo rje grags ldan, Beg tse, and rDo rje legs pa (fig. 83).

²¹⁹ Kelényi (ed.) 2003, p. 92.

protection and support.²²⁰ The public performances of *gürtüms* during monastic festivals certainly had an impact on people who had seen the demonstration of the Five Kings' power.

For the Mongols, these mundane deities are not clearly differentiated, and in the popular pantheon, their iconography is sometimes less detailed than their official Buddhist representation.²²¹ The general term *damjin* ([the one who is] bound by an oath) can designate Pe har, the Five Kings or *rDo rje legs pa* and other wrathful oath-bound deities, whose oath must be periodically renewed. The representation of fierce deities riding a white horse, such as the Dayicing tngri accompanied by a dog and a bird, can sometimes be confused with that of Tshangs pa dkar po. Tshangs pa dkar po's iconography and Pe har's history that links him to Vaiśravaṇa²²² relate both of them to the large category of wealth gods (such as Vaiśravaṇa, Kubera, Jambhala...); they are even more connected to wealth gods in the popular pantheon than in the official one.²²³ These deities are generally associated with the auspicious colour white (or yellow), often have the mongoose/rat spitting a jewel as an attribute and ride on a white lion or a white horse.

The cult of mGar ba nag po/*rDo rje legs pa* in Mongolia is linked to shamanist cults and to the importance of metalworking. Among the Buryats, he was certainly merged with one or several ancient spirits of blacksmiths.²²⁴ Mongol ethnographer L. Altanzayaa investigated his cult among blacksmiths of the Khentii Province (Republic of Mongolia), and the different Buddhist and shamanist rituals and prohibitions related to this deity (such as the prohibition of eating goat's meat, since the goat is Dorliḡ's mount). According to one of his informants, Damjin Dorliḡ is one of the Five Kings.²²⁵

Conclusion

In the late 16th century, Pe har symbolized the link between the Tibetan religious leader and his new Mongol allies. Although no Mongol painting or sculpture can be dated with certainty from this period, we can assert that the cult of Pe har as protector of the first Mongol monastic communities was promoted by the Third Dalai Lama and adopted by 16th-century Mongols. Pe har and his emanations may have been depicted in painting or statue in late 16th and early 17th century Tümed monasteries before he became the official protector of the Tibetan state. His cult was probably reactivated in Mongolia by the Fifth Dalai Lama; the Yeke juu's Nayicung Temple was probably built in the 1640s, as the Siregetü juu's Nayicung Temple. Its back shrine was (re)ainted in the 18th century, and although Emperor Qianlong prohibited oracle performances, Pe har continued to be depicted in small chapels of Tümed monasteries and worshiped by the lay and monk population of Hohhot up to the late 19th century. He does not seem to have been a main

²²⁰ About a liturgical text to Pe har and Rāhu in the Mergen Monastery tradition (Inner Mongolia): Borjigin Ujeed 2009, p. 165 and 167.

²²¹ Farkas and Szabó 2002.

²²² See the story of Pe har who was shot by a *yakṣa* archer of Vaiśravaṇa's retinue (Tucci 1949, II, p. 734-735, 742, note 62, quoting the "Complete works of the Fifth Dalai Lama").

²²³ Farkas and Szabó 2002, p. 20.

²²⁴ The literature on the status of blacksmiths in Mongolia and Buryatia is quite developed. See Boyer 1952; Sonomtseren 1972. Among Buryats, blacksmiths were often the same as shamans, and were treated with reverence and fear. Buryats have a group of heavenly spirits called smiths (*darqan*), and the Buryat smiths are believed to be descended from one of them. On deities of smiths in Mongolia: Even 1988-1989, p. 89-91.

²²⁵ Altanzayaa 2012.

protector of monasteries in other parts of Inner and Qalqa/Outer Mongolia, but Pe har and his four emanations spoke through oracles in many monasteries up to the first decades of the 20th century.

Although the Yeke juu Nayicung Temple's mural paintings have Chinese stylistic features, they respect the Tibetan iconography of the Five Kings. These paintings are certainly linked to ancient oracular practices, and through visualization may have helped the descent of the god into the medium (although the space in the back shrine of the Nayicung Temple is clearly too small to accommodate such a performance, which more probably was staged in the front assembly hall). When Pe har/the Five Kings, Tshangs pa dkar po and mGar ba nag po were adopted in the popular and even in the shamanist pantheon in connection with Padmasambhava, their identity was diluted among the general category of oath-bound warrior-protectors who grant health, wealth, and fortune.

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Isabelle Charleux is Director of researches at the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research) - GSRL (Group Societies, Religions, Secularism, UMR 8582) in Paris and deputy director of the GSRL. She obtained her PhD in History of Art and Archaeology (Paris IV-Sorbonne University) in 1998 and is Qualified Research Supervisor since 2012. She has since then published a book on the history and architecture of the Inner Mongolian monasteries (*Temples et monastères de Mongolie méridionale*, Paris: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques & Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, 2006), another book on Mongols' pilgrimages to Wutaishan (*Nomads on Pilgrimage: Mongols on Wutaishan (China), 1800-1940*, Brill, 2015), as well as scholarly articles on various topics, including the Sandalwood Buddhas and Jowos of Mongolia, Inner Mongolian mural painting, and visual representation of past and present ancestors and figures of authority in the Mongol world. Her current research includes Mongol Buddhist architecture and society; art and craft production in past and present-day Mongolia; Mongol material culture; reconstruction of Buddhist monasteries in present-day Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, and Mongol pilgrimages in China, from the 18th to early 20th centuries. She is co-director of the periodical *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*.