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The Epic of King Kesar of Ling.

By GEORGE N. ROERICH.

For more than a century the Kesar Epic, the heroic saga of Tibet and Mongolia, had been known to students of folklore, but up to now our knowledge of the various versions of this epic, its genesis, and its influence on the epos of Tibetan and Mongolian nomad tribes, has not advanced very far. This unsatisfactory state of affairs is mainly due to the inaccessibility of the Tibetan uplands, and the impossibility of making a survey of all the existing versions of the Tibetan epic of king Kesar of Ling. Without such a preliminary survey it is impossible to approach the intricate question of the origin of the Kesar Epic, and its date, or the problem of the Mongol versions and its translation into Mongolian. The first information about king Kesar (Geser~Gessër in Mongolian) had been brought back to Europe by the explorer P. S. Pallas who gave a description of a Kesar temple (P. S. Pallas: *Reisen durch verschiedene Provinzen des russischen Reiches, 1771-1776*, St. Petersburg, III, pp. 118-9; also Pallas: *Sammlungen historischer Nachrichten ueber die mongolischen Voelkerschaften*, St. Petersburg, 1776-1801, I, p. 224). A little later Benjamin Bergmann in his 'Nomadische Streifereien unter der Kalmucken', vol. II, Riga, 1804, pp. 205-214; vol. IV, Riga, 1805, pp. 181-214, gave the translation of two chapters (the VIII-th and the IX-th) of the Kesar Epic. E. Timkovsky, who travelled through Mongolia to Peking in 1820-1, gave a brief account of the same two chapters (Kesar's fight with the twelve-headed demon, his return to Ling, and his fight with Andalma-xan) in his 'Putesestvie v Kitai čerez Mongoliju v 1820 i 1821 gg.', St. Petersburg, vol. I, 1824, pp. 281-297 (there exists an English translation of this work published in London in 1827 with notes by J. Klaproth). The Academician J. Klaproth published in 1823 in the 'Severniy Arkhiv' in St. Petersburg an article on Kesar-Geser, and established his identity with Kuan-ti or Kuan-yü, the hero of the well-known Chinese historical novel San-Kuo-chih. In 1839 the Academician I. J. Schmidt published a German translation of the Mongol version of the Kesar Epic printed in Peking (177 pages) in 1716 by order of the Emperor K'ang-hsi ('Die Thaten Bogda Gesser Chan's', St. Petersburg, 1839 (a reprint of this edition appeared in 1925 in the series 'Die heiligen Buecher des Nordens,' I, Berlin). This version contained the first seven chapters of the Kesar Epic, and has been recently retranslated into Russian by S. A. Kozin ('Geseriada', Moscow, 1935). An excellent analysis of the epic had been given by

W. Schott in his essay 'Ueber die Sage von Geser-Chan' in the *Abhandlungen der Berliner Akademie*, 1851, pp. 263-295. These were the first works on the epic of king Kesar (Geser) which established the existence in Tibet and Mongolia of a voluminous epos. Already Grimm correctly pointed out that the epic must have originated among the nomad tribes of the Tibetan upland. The earliest works dealt with the Mongol version of the epic. A Tibetan version was known to exist, but very little was known about it. In 1884-1886 the well-known Russian explorer of Tibet and Mongolia, G. N. Potanin, succeeded in writing down fragments of an Amdo (North-East Tibet) version of the Kesar Epic ('Tangutsko-Tibetskaya Okraina Kitaya', St. Petersburg, 1893, vol. II, pp. 3ff.). This was followed in 1900 by the publication by the late Rev. A. H. Francke of a West Tibetan version of the epic ('Der Fruehling und Wintermythus der Kesarsage': *Beitraege zur Kenntniss der vorbuddhistischen Religion Tibets und Ladakhs: Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, XV, Helsingfors).¹ We now know that the epic exists in Western Tibet (Ladak, Zangskar, Rupshu, Lahul-Garž'a, Spiti), and throughout the nomad belt of Northern Tibet, and is especially popular among the tribes of the North-East and Eastern Tibet or Kham.

The epic exists in Tibet in oral and manuscript form, and certain chapters of it exist in printed form also. The existence of a printed version of the Kesar Epic had been long denied. Sir Charles Bell in his 'The People of Tibet' (Oxford, 1928), p. 10, stated that there did not exist a printed version of it. A similar statement had been made by Madame A. David-Neel, the well-known French explorer of Tibet, who quoted the opinion of the present Chief of Ling (gLiñ) in North-East Tibet (A. David-Neel and Lama Yongden: 'La Vie surhumaine de Guésar de Ling', Paris, 1931, p. xvi). A printed version of the epic in a somewhat abridged and 'edited' form does exist. The Museum fuer Voelkerkunde in Berlin possesses one printed volume (out of three), secured by the brothers Schlagintweit. The late Dr. Berthold Laufer (*JAOS*, vol. 52, 1 (1932), p. 95) mentions an edition of the Kesar Epic in three volumes printed

¹ This West Tibetan version was obtained by Francke from the village of Sheh in Ladak. Another Ladaki or West Tibetan version, different in detail but similar in the story and in spirit, was obtained by Francke from the village of Khalatse, and the Khalatse version, in the original Ladaki dialect, with English abstracts and notes, was taken up for publication by the Asiatic Society of Bengal and was in print as early as 1905-1909. This has at last been published in 1941, eight years after Dr. Francke's death in 1933, from the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, together with an English rendering of the entire Sheh version, and Index of Names and other connected literature compiled and collected by Francke and published in the *Indian Antiquary* of 1901 and 1902, and with an *Introduction* on the Kesar Saga by Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, and Francke's *Preface*.

in Lhasa. I have never come across this edition of the epic, but had seen printed editions from Kham in Eastern Tibet of the chapter 'The war against the Hor tribes' (Hor-dmag-skor ཧོར་དམག་སྐོར). This printed version of the 'War against the Hor tribes' is somewhat shorter than the manuscript version and has been apparently edited by the 'old-believers' or rÑiñ-ma-pas of Tibetan Buddhism. We are now in a position to state that there exist several versions of the Tibetan epic about king Kesar. Several versions of it are known to exist in the regions of North-East Tibet. At least two versions are known to exist in Amdo alone. A copy of one of the Amdo versions of the Kesar Epic had been brought back by Mr. G. N. Potanin ('Tangutsko-Tibetskaya Okraina Kitaya', II, pp. 3-44, p. 114), and is now preserved in the Public Library at Leningrad. Fragments of another version from Amdo have been recorded by myself and will be published in a forthcoming publication on the Amdo dialect. The Kesar Epic is known to exist among the Bānak (sBra-nag, or 'Black Tents') tribes of the Kuku-nor region, and among the numerous tribes of the Goloks (mgo-log), and the eastern Hor-pas. Unfortunately our knowledge of these two versions is very scant, and we are as yet unable to establish their relation to the Amdo version of the epic. Among the Bānaks Kesar is worshipped as one of the amñē (lit. Tibetan: ཨ་མྱེས་ A-myes) or protecting deities (W. W. Rockhill: *Diary of a Journey through Mongolia and Tibet*, Washington, 1894, p. 130; also his 'Land of the Lamas', p. 94). The popularity of the Kesar Epic among the Golok tribes is very great. Kesar is said to have left his miraculous sword in the land of the Goloks, and many of the mountain peaks and localities of the Golok tribal area are connected with the name of Kesar, for example, the towering snow-massif of Amñē-ma-c'en (ཨ་མྱེས་མ་ཙེན་ A-myes ma-chen), which dominates the whole region, is popularly called གེ་སར་ཕོ་བླ་ Ge-sar pho-brañ, or the 'Palace of Kesar'. Madame A. David-Neel has given us a French rendering of the Kham version of the epic ('La Vie surhumaine de Guésar de Ling', Paris, 1931), and Dr. A. Tafel had reproduced several passages of the Kesar Epic written down by him at Jyekundo in Northern Kham (A. Tafel: 'Meine Tibetreise', Leipzig, 1923, pp. 374ff.). A Tibetan version of the epic is said to exist among the Shara-yughurs of the Nanshan (Potanin: 'Tangutsko-Tibetskaya Okraina Kitaya', I, p. 442). Further West and South the epic is known throughout the nomad belt of the chang-thang (ཇམ་ཐང་ byañ-thañ) or the Great Tibetan Northern Upland, among the nomad tribes of Sikhim, Bhutan, and throughout Western Tibet (the Kailāsa region, Rupshu, Lahul (Garž'a), Spiti, Zangskar and Ladak). In the region of Western Hor or Nub-Hor (the area round the Dang-La Range, North of Nag-chu-ka), it is very popular among the Hor tribes, professing the ancient Bon faith,

and I had seen myself a beautifully written manuscript of the Kesar Epic in sixteen volumes in the possession of a headman (G. Roerich: 'Trails to Inmost Asia', Yale University Press, 1931, p. 360). Further west the epic is well known among the Chang-pas (byañ-pa) or 'northerners' of the Great Lake Region, situated immediately north of the Trans-Himālayas (the districts of gNam-ru, Nag-tshañ and 'Bum-ra). The West Tibetan version has been made known by the late Rev. A. H. Francke ('Der Fruehlingsmythus der Kesar Saga; Der Wintermythus der Kesar Saga' in the Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne, vol. XV, Helsingfors; 'The Spring Myth of the Kesar Saga', *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXX, 1901, pp. 329-341; vol. XXXI, 1902, pp. 32-40 and 147-157; 'A Lower Ladakhi Version of the Kesar Saga' in the *Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1905-1909, parts No. 1134, 1150, 1164 and 1218).

European and American libraries possess several versions of the epic. The Library of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences possesses two versions of the Tibetan Kesar Epic (S. Kozin: 'Geseriada', Moscow, 1935, p. 223). In the United States manuscripts of the epic are to be found in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, and at the Library of Congress (an abridged life of Kesar presented by the late W. W. Rockhill). Complete sets of the Kesar Epic are only very seldom met with. In most cases known manuscripts of the Kesar Epic contain only separate chapters or books (called skor or rnam-thar), such as the chapters on 'The destruction of the Demon king' (བདུད་རྒྱལ་ bDud-rgyal), the 'Birth of Kesar', the 'War against the Hor tribes', and the 'Story of the War against king Sa-tham of the country of Jang'. By far the most popular and the most extensive is the book on the 'War against the Hor tribes'. The number of chapters in the various versions of the epic vary considerably. Some contain only the chapters on the 'Birth of Kesar', in which is included the story of his marriage, the chapter on the 'Destruction of the Demon king of the North', and the chapter on the 'War against the Hor tribes'. In some localities only separate chapters are known, for example, the chapter on the 'War against the Hor tribes'. In Amdo in North-East Tibet the following chapters are popularly known:—

- (a) The 'Birth of King Kesar of gLiñ'. Throughout the Amdo version Kesar is called Dzamlaj-saj (འཛམ་གླིང་མཚོ་. 'Dzam-gliñ tshañ).
- (b) The 'Destruction of the Demon king of the North' (བདུད་རྒྱལ་ bDud-'dul).
- (c) The 'War against the Hor tribes' (ཧོར་དམག་སྐོར་ Hor-dmag-skor).
- (d) The 'Conquest of China' (རྒྱ་འདུལ་ rGya-'dul).

- (e) The 'War against the country of Jang' (ཇམ་སྐོར་ lJañ-skor).
- (f) The 'Conquest of the country of Mön' (མོན་འདུལ་ Mon-'dul).

The West Tibetan version edited by A. H. Francke contains the chapters on the 'Birth of Kesar', the story of his youth and marriage to 'Bru-gu-ma (བུ་གུ་མ་ 'Brug-mo of the North-East Tibetan versions), the story of Kesar's visit to China, the destruction of the Demon king of the North, and the chapter on the 'War against the Hor tribes'. It must be added that the chapter on the 'War against the country of Jang' also exists in West Tibet. In Lahul-Garž'a only two chapters are known to exist: the chapter on the 'War against the Hor tribes' and the chapter on the 'War against the country of Jang'.

Madame A. David-Neel's Kham version of the epic contains the chapters on the 'Birth of Kesar', his fight with the Demon king of the North, Kesar's return to the land of Ling and his war against the Hor tribes, his war against the country of Jang, Kesar's war against the king of the South, and against the king of sTag-gzig (Irān).

The West Tibetan version of the epic recorded by A. H. Francke is preceded by a Prologue containing the story of the eighteen heroes (དཔལ་ལོ་ dap'-bo) of the land of Ling, and Madame David-Neel's Kham version contains a Prologue relating the story of the search by Guru Padmasambhava for a maiden destined to become the mother of king Kesar.

The Nub-Hor version of the epic, which I had occasion to see in the land of the Western Hor-pas, is closely related to the North-East Tibetan versions.

In North-East Tibet new chapters are being constantly added to the epic. Thus in Hua-rī in Lower Amdo a monk recently composed a new song for the chapter on the 'War against the Hor tribes', describing the war preparations of the troops of the land of Ling under the command of Tsha-žañ lDan-ma Žañ-khra- the lDan-ma'i dMag-sgrigs chen-mo (ལྷན་མའི་དམག་སྐོག་མཚོ་མོ་), and a song on the conquest of Jang (ཇམ་འདུལ་གྱི་བྱེད་ཀྱི་མཚོ་མོ་ lJañ-'dul-gyi zur-rgyan chen-mo). In Amdo a song composed by a rñiñ-ma-pa bla-ma sTag-šam-pa about A-stag lha-mo, the consort of the Demon king (bDud-rgyal-gyi btsun-mo), who became afterwards one of the eighteen wives of king Kesar, enjoys great popularity (verbal communication by the dGe-bšes dGe-'dun Chos-'phel).

The greater part of the Kesar Epic must have originated among the nomadic tribes of North-Eastern Tibet. This does not exclude the possibility of many motifs being derived from foreign sources. From very ancient times the nomad regions of North-Eastern Tibet had been a sort of refuge for nomad tribes

forced to retreat into the mountain fastnesses of Tibet by political upheavals in the steppe belt of Central Asia. No doubt these newcomers brought with them their tribal epics and songs, which gradually became incorporated into the Tibetan tribal epics—the epic of king Kesar, the mighty warrior king of Ling. We are still unable to disentangle the history and evolution of the epic, to distinguish between the original Tibetan background and outside motifs. The Kesar Epic shows its heroes living in a country with a semi-sedentary, semi-nomadic population. The rich possess castles (called pho-brañ or mkhar)—stone buildings with fortified walls and watch towers. The commoners live in tents, the black tents of the Tibetan nomads. The nomads tend large herds of cattle, consisting of yaks and cross-breeds between yaks and domestic cattle (Tibetan མཚོ་མཚོ་ mdzo). A favourite occupation is the hunting of the wild yak (Tibetan འཕྲོ་ 'broñ) and of the wild ass or kyang (Tibetan རྩ་ rkyañ, *Equus kyang*), and horse races, and combats between warriors. All these are familiar themes from the Tibetan North-East, and one can say that the epic correctly reproduces the life of the Tibetan nomads in the North-East of Tibet.

It is as yet impossible to establish the date of the Kesar Epic, as we know it, but certain aspects of it, as for example Kesar's wars against the Hor tribes (that is Turkish tribes of the North), his conquest of Eastern Tibet (war against the country of Jang), his conquest of the South (Mon-yul or the Himālayan valleys), and war against the king of the Ta-zig (the countries lying between Western Tibet and Irān), and the story of Kesar's marriage to the daughter of the Chinese Emperor, show a certain similarity to the story of the famous Tibetan king Sroñ-btsan sgam-po. This tends to indicate that the epic of king Kesar must have originated or at least taken its present form after the Tibetan Imperial Period, that is after the first half of the ninth century A.D.

The language of the epic often influenced by the spoken dialects of Tibet does not permit any deductions as to the date of the epic and of its origin. The epic of Kesar had spread all over Tibet, and especially among the nomad tribes of the North and North-East. In each district it is being told in the local dialect, but the subject of the epic, the main episodes of king Kesar's life remain the same. Naturally there is noticeable a considerable difference in details which often had been introduced from local folklore and tribal epics. The scarcity of manuscript versions of the epic resulted in a considerable variety of oral versions which differ considerably in respect of details. In some of the versions certain traces of a North-East Tibetan origin are still discernible. The language of the oral versions is not the classical written Tibetan, it is a style closely approaching the every-day colloquial language with certain archaisms. Thus

the Ladakī version edited by A. H. Francke in the *Bibliotheca Indica* has been chanted in the spoken dialect of Ladak. Generally speaking, the style of the language of the oral versions depends a great deal on the degree of literacy of the rhapsodist. Rhapsodists with a good knowledge of the literary language endeavour to preserve the literary character of the language, whereas those, who had learnt the epic by heart during recitals are apt to use their own dialect.

The manuscript versions of the Kesar Epic found in Tibet exhibit definite similarities to the North-East Tibetan versions. The oral versions seem to be an outgrowth of the manuscript versions, much enlarged and furnished with a wealth of details not to be found in the manuscript versions. From the point of view of the language, the manuscript versions are written in a language and style which differ considerably from the classical language, and show great similarity with the style and language of Tibetan songs and ballads many of which go back to the pre-Buddhist period. The language of the manuscript versions points towards the North-East of Tibet and Kham (present tense forms in གདམས་ gda'-ba, past tense forms in the, and vocabulary. Ex. the a-gu of the Ladakī version which represents a local pronunciation of the Tibetan ཨ་ཁུ་ A-khu 'uncle', as shown by Dr. B. Laufer). The frequent use of the word in the West Tibetan version may be an indication of its East Tibetan origin. A-khu or uncle is a common form of addressing people in the East and North-East of Tibet (Amdo: a-k'i).

The language of printed versions stands nearer to the classical form of the Tibetan language.

The similarity of the main episodes indicates the existence of a primitive Kesar Epic which must have originated among the Tangut and Tibetan tribes of the North-East. I venture to propose the following stages in the evolution of the Kesar Epic:—

1. Primitive Kesar Epic—an heroic epic which originated among the Tangut and Tibetan tribes of the North-East.
2. Manuscript Versions of the epic (in some of the extant versions Buddhist elements predominate).
3. Printed abridged version of the epic, edited by Rñin-ma-pa lamas in Kham (Derge-rDzogs-chen dgon-pa).
4. Oral Versions of the epic strongly coloured by local folklore.

The Kesar Epic in its primitive form must have represented an heroic nomad epos. It is as yet impossible to establish which of the known parts belonged to the primitive epic, but it seems probable that the accounts of king Kesar's wars against the Hor tribes, that is the Turkish tribes of Central Asia, the war against the country of Jang, and the Southern Himālayan valleys, as well as the descriptions of the battles and contests between famous warriors belong to an ancient nomad epos, and must have formed part of the primitive epic song about king Kesar. Gradually the original outline of the epic became enriched with a wealth of details borrowed from local folklore, and it has been pointed out that the epic of king Kesar contains many parallels to European folklore. The original story of the epic had been closely interwoven by fairy-tale motifs. The Tibetan versions consist of prose and extensive passages in verse. In the oral versions the passages in verse seem to predominate, and it seems more than probable that the original epic of Kesar consisted of passages in verse. It is also noteworthy that most of the archaisms found in the language of the epic are found precisely in the versified portions. Whereas all the known versions of the Tibetan Kesar Epic show considerable similarity in the main episodes of the epic, the local versions differ considerably in respect of details. Some of the versions had been doubtlessly 're-edited' in a Buddhist milieu, others, as for example the West Tibetan version recorded by the late Dr. A. H. Francke, show an unmistakable imprint of local West Tibetan folklore. A. H. Francke was of the opinion that the epic was closely related to the pre-Buddhist mythology of Tibet and even attempted to interpret it in terms of a nature mythology (spring and winter myths). G. N. Potanin on the other hand insisted on its epic character, and even expressed the opinion that the epic must have originated among Turkish tribes of Central Asia, and compared it to the Alexander-romance (G. N. Potanin, *Etnogr. Obozrenie*, XXI, 2, pp. 22-3). Undoubtedly in its original form the Kesar Epic must have possessed a pre-Buddhistic background, and even in the present text of the epic one finds frequent allusions to the ancient Bon-po faith of Tibet. Thus we find often invoked the founder of the Bon-po faith gŠan-rab mi-bo (lha-skyabs-su bsdod-do Bon-gyi lha-bon ston-pa gŠan-rab bka'-drin-che ལྷ་སྐབས་སུ་བཟོད་རྩ་བོན་གྱི་ལྷ་བོན་མོན་པ་གཤམ་པ་བཀའ་འདྲིན་ཅེ). The epic knows the three main divisions or spheres of the World: sTeñ-lha or Heaven, ruled by དབང་པོ་བརྟུ་ཅིན་ dBañ-po brGya-byin or Śatakratu-Indra, and his consort བཀའ་དམན་རྒྱལ་མོ་ bKur-dman rgyal-mo (or ཨ་ནེ་བཀའ་དམན་མོ། A-ne bKur-dman-mo, also called འབྲས་བུ་རྒྱལ་མོ་ 'Bum-khri rgyal-mo); བར་བཅོན་ bar-btsan or མི་ལུག་ mi-yul, the World of Men, and རྩོག་གྲུ་ Yog-klu, the Underworld, or the World of the Nāgas. One often finds in the text of the epic such ancient shamanistic

concepts as the 'Lofty blue sky' (ལོང་རྫོན་ནམ་མཁའ་ Goñ-sñon nam-mkha'). Gradually Buddhist elements penetrated the epic Indra or brGya-byin was replaced by Guru Padmasambhava, and Kesar himself became a protector of the Buddhist faith and builder of Buddhist monasteries. At the beginning of versified portions one now finds the usual Buddhist invocation to the Tri-ratna (སྐབས་དཀོན་མཚན་གསུམ་ལ་གསོལ་བ་འདེབས་ sKyabs-dkon-mchog gsum-la gsol-ba-'debs).

Before giving a brief outline of the contents of the epic, a few words must be said about the rhapsodists in whose midst it is preserved, and who gradually have assumed the rôle of priests or exorcists of king Kesar. Among the rhapsodists of the Kesar Epic one finds both professional itinerant rhapsodists, distinguished by a special costume, and ordinary laymen, both men and women. The recital of the epic may take anything from three to ten days. The epic is sung or often read drawlingly. A professional rhapsodist may often improvise whole passages while reciting it. I still vividly remember my experience with a rhapsodist of the Kesar Epic whom I had invited to write it down. This rhapsodist continuously improvised passages and whenever I asked him to repeat the passage sung by him, he would always sing it in a slightly different version. Professional rhapsodists seldom use manuscripts of the epic during recitals. They know it by heart and often sing it in a sort of trance. Laymen on the contrary read it from a manuscript, and seldom know it by heart, except for a few passages. Itinerant rhapsodists are distinguished by a special costume. These rhapsodists (སྐུང་པ་ sgruñ-pa, pronounced d'ruñ-pa, or སྐུང་བཤད་ sgruñ-bšad) wear on the head a special high hat, called the 'rhapsodist's hat' or སྐུང་ལྷ་ sgruñ-žwa. The hat is white and is adorned with the images of the Sun and Moon. It is a pointed hat with three triangular shaped sides, edged with red. On his body a rhapsodist wears a white Tibetan coat or chu-pa. It is noteworthy that the colour of the hat and coat is white, white being the colour of the ceremonial garments worn by Bon-po priests and exorcists. An itinerant rhapsodist of the Kesar Epic always carries with him a painted image or than-ka representing the life-story of king Kesar, and an arrow adorned with multi-coloured (blue, green, yellow and red) ceremonial scarfs or kha-btags. With the help of this arrow or dā-tar (མདའ་དར་ mda'-dar), the rhapsodist points out the various episodes of the Kesar Epic depicted on the painting. Some of the more famous rhapsodists are accompanied on their journeys by a troop of disciples who learn the art of singing and reciting the epic. In the Amdo Province of North-East Tibet the rhapsodists of the Kesar Epic often belong to the ancient Bon faith. Very often a rhapsodist of the Kesar Epic is also well known as an exorcist. Among the Goloks and the Hor-pas of North-East Tibet the epic is

recited during funeral ceremonies. Before such a recital a flat platform is prepared and the floor is strewn with *rtsam-pa* or barley-flour. The listeners sit around the platform and the rhapsodist sits facing the platform. The recital continues for several days. It is commonly said that frequently hoof-prints appear on the platform, and these are believed to represent the hoof-prints of the mighty steed of king Kesar, invoked by the rhapsodist. Some of the rhapsodists lead a sedentary life and marry. In such cases the sons often follow their fathers and become rhapsodists in their turn. In Western Tibet, in Ladak the Kesar Epic is sung by village musicians or *bedas*. One of the versions of the epic recorded by Dr. A. H. Francke (his 'first manuscript') was recited by a girl of about sixteen years of age (*Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXX, 1901, p. 330). In some districts of Tibet the Kesar Epic and its singers were persecuted by the Lamaist clergy and this somewhat reflected on the popularity of the epic (king Kesar is popularly believed to be the mortal enemy of the *yi-dam* *lCam-sriñ*). Of late, the followers of the 'old-believers' sect (*rñiñ-ma-pa*) and the *dGe-lugs-pas* have attempted to appropriate the popular epic. In Kham among the *rñiñ-ma-pas* one finds a service or *cho-ga*, and a ceremony of offering a *gtor-ma* in honour of king Kesar who is worshipped as a protector or *chos-skyoñ*. In Amdo among the followers of the *dGe-lugs-pa* sect one often hears the unexpected statement that *Tsoñ-kha-pa* himself, the Tibetan Reformer, had been once the chaplain (*མ་མཚན་ a-mchod*, pronounced *amc'ol'* in Amdo) of King Kesar of Ling!

The name of king Kesar is connected with the principality of Ling (*ལིང་ gLiñ*) in North-Eastern Tibet, situated to the South-East of Jyekundo, between Jyekundo and Kantse. The place was visited by A. Tafel in 1905-6 and by Madame A. David-Neel. The present-day Chief of Ling considers himself to be a descendant of king Kesar's half-brother.

Now let us give a brief outline of the famous epic, as sung in Greater Tibet.

The first chapter or book of the Tibetan version of the Kesar Epic contains an ACCOUNT OF THE SENDING OF KESAR ON EARTH TO COMBAT EVIL. According to some of the versions (the West Tibetan version, the North-East Tibetan (Amdo) version, and the Mongol versions) Kesar was said to have been the youngest son of *brGya-byin* (*Śatakratu-Indra*) named *རྩོན་གུབ་ Don-grub* (in the Mongol version translated by Schmidt and retranslated by Kozin, Kesar Don-grub is said to have been the middle son of *Indra*—*Üile bütügögçi* or *Don-grub*). In the Tibetan version of the epic rendered into French by Madame A. David-Neel and the Lama Yongden, king Kesar is said to have been an envoy of *Padmasambhava*. According to this version *Guru Rin-po-che* or *Padmasambhava* decides to send

an envoy to the country of Ling to combat evil misfortunes. His choice falls on *ཐུབ་པ་དགའ་བ་ Thub-pa dGa'-ba*, son of *འཕྲོར་ལོ་བདེ་མཚོག་ Khor-lo bDe-mchog* and of *རྩོན་ལག་མོ་ rDo-rje Phag-mo* (*Vajra-varāhī*). This version evidently originated among the *rñiñ-ma-pas* or 'old-believers' of Eastern Tibet, where the sect is still strong and possesses numerous followers in the vicinities of *Derge* and *rDzogs-chen dgon-pa*. Before descending to Ling, the future king Kesar requests the gods that he might be given a steed that 'death could not overtake', a saddle studded with precious stones, a helmet, a sword, a coat of mail, a bow and arrows, and two warriors to accompany him and assist him in his mission. *Padmasambhava* then proceeds to the Realm of the *Nāgas* in search of a *nāgī* girl fit to become the mother of king Kesar. His choice fell on *Dzē-den* (*མཚོ་ས་ལྗན་ mDzes-ldan*). *Padmasambhava* orders her to be sent to Ling. On her arrival in the land of Ling, *Dzē-den* enters the service of the wife of *Senglön* (*ཤེང་ལྷོན་ Señ-blon*. Madame David-Neel writes the name *Singlen*), Chief of Ling. In her jealousy *Senglön's* wife banishes the *nāgī* girl to a mountain pass, said to be haunted by evil spirits. On the way to the pass, *Dzē-den* fell asleep and miraculously became pregnant. On her return to *Senglön's* camp a boy was born to her.

According to the Amdo version the gods *ལྷ་ཕྱིན་ Lha-byin* and *A-ne Goñ-men jya-mo* (*A-ne Goñ-sman rgyal-mo* *ཨ་ནེ་གོང་སྐར་གུལ་མོ་*) first sent their eldest son to see the land of Ling, but he returned without reaching Ling. Then the second son was sent, but he also returned without having been able to see the land of Ling. Then the youngest son asked permission to put on his father's helmet and coat of mail. Having put on the coat of mail, the boy jumped into the saddle and rode off to the land of Ling. On his return *Dzamlang-sang* (Kesar) made a request to *A-ne Goñ-men-jya-mo*, that he would not go to the land of Ling unless he be given a handful of blood from the nose of an ant, and a handful of the veins of a louse. *Dzamlang* did not want to leave the Realm of Gods or *Lha-hyul*, and therefore made this request which was difficult to comply with. Having accepted the will of the gods, *Dzamlang-sang*, the future king Kesar, assumed the shape of a white bird (*bya dkar-po*) and descended to the land of Ling. The wife of *C'o-t'oñ*, one of the elders of Ling, saw as it were a large shadow descending on the land of Ling. She told her husband that the shadow must be an evil omen, and that probably Kesar was being reincarnated in Ling. One morning a son was born to *Gig-zā lha-mo* (*འགག་བཟང་ལྷ་མོ་ 'Gag-bza' lha-mo*), who received the name of *Cō-re* (*ཚོ་རེ་ Co-re*, also written *ཚོ་རེས་ Cho-ris*). In those days the land of Ling paid tribute in men to the Demon-ogre king. When the

chief of the demons *wdil'-gen* (བདེན་རྒྱན་ *bdud-rgan*) *C'am-ba Lay-riñ* (ཁྲམ་པ་ལག་རིང་ *Khram-pa Lag-riñ*) arrived in Ling in order to collect the tribute, the chief of Ling *A-k'i C'o-t'oj* (ཨ་ཁུ་ཁྲོ་ཐུན་ *A-khu Khro-thuñ*) decided to give him as tribute the newly-born son of *Gig-zā lha-mo*. The mother wept bitterly, and the boy said to her: 'Do not lament for me! When the chief of the demons will come to-morrow, tell him to open wide his mouth, and place me inside his mouth'. When the chief of the demons arrived at the tent of *Gig-zā lha-mo* she placed her son on a shovel and offered the boy to the demon chief, saying: 'Chief of demons, swallow my child without biting him!' When the demon chief had swallowed *Cō-re*, the latter rose inside the chief's throat and blocked the passage. Panting from pain, the chief murmured: 'O *Cō-re* descend quickly into my stomach!' But *Cō-re* continued to block the chief's throat, and the latter died suffering acute pains. Then follow a number of attempts of *C'o-t'oj* to destroy *Kesar* with the help of powerful demon magicians. From every trial *Kesar* comes out victorious.

The second part of the chapter on the birth of *Kesar* deals with the **STORY OF KESAR'S MARRIAGE** to *D'ig-mo* (འབྲུག་མོ་ *'Brug-mo*), who is also coveted by the old *C'o-t'oj*. A contest is arranged, and *Kesar* wins the contest, and the hand of *D'ig-mo*. The gods remind *Kesar*, always called *Dzamlang-sang* in the Amdo version, of his duty to go and destroy the chief of the demon-ogres of the North. **KESAR PROCEEDS TO THE NORTH TO FIGHT AND KILL THE DEMON KING**, and leaves behind *D'ig-mo*. On his arrival at the camp of the Demon king he finds that the Demon king had gone out hunting. *Kesar* persuades the Demon king's wife *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* to help him in destroying the Demon king. *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* conceals *Kesar* in the castle of the Demon king and instructs *Kesar* how to kill the demon. The latter returns from hunting and through his magic powers feels the presence of danger. He asks his wife about it, and the latter reassures him and the demon falls asleep. Then *Kesar* comes out of his hiding place and destroys the Demon king. *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* gives *Kesar* a magic drink and he forgets the Past and the land of Ling, and continues to live with *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* in the palace of the Demon king. Meanwhile the king of the Hor *Kir-kar* (གུར་དཀར་ *Gur-dkar*), being anxious to marry, sent out a crow in search of a queen for himself. The crow proceeds to Central Tibet (དབུས་ *dbUs*) to have a look at the Tibetan princess *O-cog*, then to Nepāl to the palace of the princess *Khri-btsun*, and to China to see the Chinese princess *Koñ-co* (ཀོང་ཆོང་མོ་ཙོ་མོ་ *rGya-bza' Koñ-co*. *Koñ-co* > Chinese *kung-chu*, Imperial princess), and then to the land of Ling to see the Lion-lady *D'ig-ge* (ལེང་གུ་འབྲུག་གེ་ *Señ-clam 'Brug-ge*). The crow returns to the camp of king *Kir-kar* and informs the king

that most beautiful of them all is *D'ig-ge* of Ling—'when standing she is similar to a banner hoisted, when sitting she is similar to a multicoloured tent'.

Learning of the absence of *Kesar* from Ling, the Hor king decides to raid Ling and carry away *D'ig-ge*. The raid is successful, the troops of Ling suffer defeat, and even the brother of *Kesar*—*Jya-ts'a-sañ* (ཇལ་ཙ་ཤ་རྩ་ *rGyal-tsha-tshañ*) is killed, and *D'ig-ge* carried away to the land of Hor. **D'IG-GE, A CAPTIVE IN THE LAND OF HOR**, sends a crow with a message to *Kesar* in the land of the northern demons. The crow flew to the demon land and sat on the tent of *Kesar*, and uttered a caw. *Kesar* got angry, took his bow and arrow, and shot the crow, when the bird fell on the ground. *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* took the letter and gave it to *Kesar*. *Kesar* read the letter and learnt that the Hor-pas had plundered the land of Ling, that they had killed his brother *Jya-ts'a-sañ*, and had carried away his wife *D'ig-ge* as captive. Greatly afflicted by the news, *Kesar* takes his magic arrow 'fulfilling wishes' and turning himself in the direction of the land of Hor sends the arrow. The arrow reaches the camp of the king of Hor during a big feast and drives into a big boulder. A hundred blacksmiths try to break it, but fail in their effort; a hundred carpenters try to saw it, but also fail in their effort. Then *D'ig-mo* wraps her hand with a white kerchief and pulls the arrow out. 'What sort of an arrow is this?'—the king of Hor asks her, and *D'ig-mo* answers: 'This is the arrow of *Kesar*'. But *Me-bza' 'bum-skyid* gives *Kesar* again the magic drink and he again forgets the Past and the land of Ling. Then his steed, the wise *rKyañ-rgod* reminds *Kesar* of his duty to go back to Ling. *Kesar* proceeds to Ling, and assumes the shape of a trader, and camps on the meadow belonging to old *C'o-t'oj*, the chief of Ling. *C'o-t'oj* sends *Kesar's* father *Rarkyē* (ཤེན་ལོན་ར་རྗེས་ *Señ-blon Ra-skyes*) to the trader's tent in order to collect the tax due for the grazing of caravan animals on the meadow. The trader invites *Rarkyē* to his tent, and offers him a cup of tea. Old *Rarkyē* recognizes in the cup, the cup of his son *Kesar*, and begins to weep. The trader inquires about the reason of his affliction, and *Rarkyē* tells him that he had a son named *Dzamlang* who had gone to the country of demons and had not returned. The trader (*Kesar*) then tells him that he had been to the land of demons, and that this cup had been given to him by the demons. On hearing this *Rarkyē* begins to weep again, but the trader suddenly transforms himself into *Kesar*. The old man in great haste runs to *C'o-t'oj's* tent, shouting loudly 'O *C'o-t'oj*! to-day my darling, and your adversary, has come back!' *C'o-t'oj* understood that king *Kesar* had come back, and proceeds with a ceremonial scarf to the tent of *Kesar*, but there he finds only a stranger. Full of rage he rushes back to his camp and begins to maltreat the old *Rarkyē*.

Meanwhile Kesar assuming his true shape mounts his steed and proceeds towards C'o-t'oj's tent. C'o-t'oj full of anguish shouts to his daughter: 'Quick, place me in the brown leather bag for meat!' The daughter having placed C'o-t'oj inside the bag, then placed the latter on the table in front of Kesar. Kesar observed that something was trembling inside the bag, and said that this was an evil omen. He then takes an awl and pierces the bag. C'o-t'oj begins to howl, and Kesar continues to prod the bag with his awl, and lets C'o-t'oj out when the latter was half-dead. Kesar on his return to Ling begins preparations for his WAR AGAINST THE HOR. A large force of horsemen is mustered, and with Kesar at its head proceeds towards the frontiers of Hor. On the march, Kesar receives a message from his divine protector Goj-men lha-mo telling him to send his troops back, and to proceed against the Hor alone. King Kir-kar of Hor has a bad dream and he asks his minister Šemba (བཤམ་པ་ bŠan-pa) to interpret it. Šemba explains that the dream was full of evil omens, and that it presaged the coming of Kesar. En route Kesar overcomes various difficulties, he crosses a virgin forest the trees of which drew together on his approach. He overcomes seven ogres which appear in the shape of beautiful maidens, two rocks that tried to crush him, etc. On approaching the castle of the king of Hor, Kesar assumed the form of a lama. The daughter of king Kir-nag sees him and invites the lama to her parents' tent. She goes to bring a horse for the lama, but on returning finds a boy on the road. Unable to find the lama, she asks the boy (Kesar) to become a shepherd in her home. The king Kir-nag takes the boy into his service, and Kesar spends his days guarding sheep. The boy (Kesar) wins a horse-race. One day king Kir-nag was invited by king Kir-kar to a feast. The shepherd boy begged the king to take him along. On arrival to Kir-kar's camp, Kesar destroys a mighty warrior famous throughout the country of Hor. With the help of an iron chain KESAR PENETRATES WITHIN THE CASTLE OF KIR-KAR AND KILLS THE KING. King Kir-ser is also killed by Kesar, and the soul of Kir-nag is banished. KESAR TAKES D'IG-MO AND THE WEALTH OF KIR-KAR AND PROCEEDS TO THE LAND OF LING. On the way Kesar remembers that D'ig-mo had a son born during her captivity. He then returns to Hor, seizes the boy, and kills him. On his return to Ling, he lives for many years happily and the country becomes prosperous.

Then again the GODS COMMAND KESAR TO PROCEED AGAINST THE COUNTRY OF JANG. The Ling troops are again mustered. The Hor horsemen under the command of Šemba Me-ru-tse (བཤམ་པ་རེ་ཅེ་ bŠan-pa rMe-ru-tse) join forces, and the huge army invades Jang. The chapter gives a vivid description of battles, and we have no doubt that these descriptions belong to the ancient strata of the epic. Again Kesar's divine protectress

A-ne Goj-men jya-mo orders Kesar to proceed against king Sa-tham of Jang alone with the help of his magic powers. Meanwhile king Sa-tham, accompanied by his ministers and nobles, proceeds to the shores of a lake to perform a religious ceremony and ablution. The lake nymph (མཚོ་སྐྱོན་ mtsho-sman) assuming the shape of a beautiful nāgī (ལྷའི་བུ་མོ་ klu'i bu-mo) offers to the king a crystal vase filled with scented nectar (སྐྱོན་སྐྱོན་གྱི་བདུད་རྩི་ sman-spos-kyi bdud-rtsi). Kesar arrives at the lake, then transforms himself into an iron fly (ལྷགས་གྱི་སྐྱར་བུ་ leags-kyi sbran-bu) and penetrates king Sa-tham's inside, causing the death of the king. The country of Jang becomes a vassal State of Kesar.

The Amdo version contains also the chapters on THE CONQUEST OF CHINA (རྒྱ་འབྲུག་ rGYA-'DUL) BY KESAR, AND KESAR'S MARRIAGE TO PRINCESS KOŃ-CO, DAUGHTER OF THE CHINESE EMPEROR, and the chapter on THE CONQUEST OF THE COUNTRY OF MÖN (མོན་འབྲུག་ Mon-'dul). The gods again remind Kesar of the necessity to conquer the southern regions or Mön. The troops of Ling are again mustered and joined by the forces of Hor and Jang. The war is victorious and the valleys of the South are incorporated in the kingdom of Kesar who returns to Ling.

The East Tibetan version translated into French by Madame A. David-Neel follows similar lines. After a boy had been born to the maiden Dzē-den, Tr'o-t'uj, one of the elders of Ling, learns of the birth of the boy and recalls an ancient prophecy about the coming of the future king Kesar to Ling, when his own power will wane. He therefore decides to destroy the newly-born Kesar. But all his attempts to destroy the boy prove futile. Tr'o-t'uj proceeds to a magician living in a cave in order to persuade him to destroy the newly-born boy who spells misfortunes to Ling. The magician advises Tr'o-t'uj to send the boy to his cave, but Kesar, when sent to the magician's cave, manages to destroy the powerful magician. Thereupon Tr'o-t'uj banishes Kesar and his mother the nāgī. During the exile, Guru Padmasambhava appears in a vision to Kesar, and exhorts him to strive to become king of Ling. Kesar should first obtain the eight treasures: a life-preserving knot (ཚོ་བདུད་ tshe-mdud), a helmet, a rdo-rje, a sword, a bow and arrows. Padmasambhava also tells Kesar to marry D'ug-mo, daughter of bsTan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan of the country of Gā (གླ་ rga). Transforming himself into a cow, Kesar proceeds to the tent of Tr'o-t'uj and advises him in the name of Padmasambhava to obtain the eight treasures and to marry D'ug-mo. In order to obtain the hand of the maiden, the crow advises Tr'o-t'uj to arrange a horse-race, the winner of which should receive the hand of the maiden and become king of Ling. Tr'o-t'uj, believing the crow to be a messenger of Padmasambhava, accepts the advice

as excellent, and orders a race to be held at Ling. C'o-rī or Kesar also takes part in the race, mounted on his bay colt, born of the mare, which his mother, the nāgī, had brought with her to Ling. Kesar won the race and became king of Ling and married D'ug-mo. The gods order Kesar to proceed to the North to destroy the Demon king (བདུན་རྒྱལ་ bdud-rgyal). Kesar is helped by the wife of the Demon king, who conceals Kesar in the demon's castle, and helps him to kill the Demon king on his return. Kesar falls in love with the demon's wife who gives him a magic drink which makes Kesar forget the Past, and the land of Ling. But sPyan-ras-gzigs (Avalokiteśvara) restores the memory of Kesar, and urges him to proceed to Ling. On the way to Ling, Kesar meets the spirit of his half-brother Jya-ts'a, killed by the Hor-pas, who tells him of the misfortunes which befell Ling in Kesar's absence, the evil deeds of Tr'o-t'uṅ, who seized all power in Ling, and enslaved the parents of Kesar, and the capture of D'ug-mo by the Hor king. Kesar returns to Ling and prepares to fight the Hor tribes. The Ling troops march against the Hor tribes. A giant wild yak ('broñ), the incarnation of a powerful demon, bars the road of the advancing troops. Kesar destroys the yak. Then transforming himself into an elderly lama, and creating with the help of his magic powers a phantom caravan. Kesar continues his journey to the country of Hor. On reaching the bank of the frontier river, Kesar destroys twenty-eight ferrymen, incarnations of demons, who guard the route to Hor. Kesar then decides to proceed alone and sends his troops back to Ling. Kesar creates a rich caravan and camps outside the palace of king Kur-kar of Hor. The king sends his minister sDig-can bŠan-pa to inquire about the caravan and the traders. bŠan-pa rides out to the caravan's camp, and on the way to the camp meets one of the camp-followers. The man suddenly kicks bŠan-pa's horse and sends the minister to the ground. The minister returns to the palace and warns the king that Kesar must be hidden somewhere among the numerous camp-followers of the mysterious caravan. The king then sends D'ug-mo to see the caravan for herself and inquire about the whereabouts of king Kesar. D'ug-mo on reaching the caravan's camp is told that the caravan belongs to the lama 'Od-zer rgyal-mtshan, and satisfied returns to the palace with presents for king Kur-kar. But the minister recognizes in the presents evil omens. Then gradually one by one Kesar destroys all his enemies. Transforming himself into a boy, Kesar is adopted by a blacksmith, and becomes his apprentice. He kills a powerful and famous warrior of Hor, destroys a Hor general and a hundred Hor horsemen, the prime-minister of Hor, the Hor lama who had discovered his real identity, and then kills king Kur-kar, and returns to Ling. Kesar then destroys king Kur-ser of Hor. The third Hor king Kur-nag

flees to distant mŃa'-ris in Western Tibet, and Kesar resolves to pardon him. sDig-can bŠan-pa becomes ruler of Hor.

Then follows the war against king Sa-tham, king of Jang. King Sa-tham of Jang sees a dream which urges him to take possession of the land of Mar-kham, coveted by king Kesar of Ling. Kesar is ordered by his protecting deity to take up arms against Jang. The troops of Ling are mobilized, and the Hor troops under bŠan-pa are called out to assist in the campaign. Kesar transforms himself into a kyang and penetrates the precincts of the palace of the king of Jang. The king with his queen proceeds to the roof of the palace and watch the kyangs grazing, but a frightful wind carries away the queen from the roof who is killed. The king in despair invites fortune-tellers (mo-pas)—manifestations of Kesar, to explain the calamity, and the mo-pas advise the king to place the body of the dead queen on a bed and to spend his time in meditation in order to restore her back to life. Then Cu-la Pön-po, the envoy of king Sa-tham, arrives at the camp of king Kesar. Kesar, advised by his protecting deity, renders his camp invisible, and lets out his famous steed rKyañ-rgod to graze outside the camp. Cu-la Pön-po catches the steed and mounts it, but is carried away by the winged steed and is thrown into a lake. The troops of Ling continue their advance against Jang. The general of the Jang forces offers to Dema, one of the Ling warriors, a combat, and is killed in the fight. The troops of Jang flee, pursued by the troops of Ling. The gods advise Kesar to proceed alone against king Sa-tham. Transforming himself into an iron bee, Kesar proceeds against king Sa-tham, who was engaged in the invocation of a nāgī on the shore of a lake. The goddess appears before the king holding a vase filled with nectar. King Sa-tham hurries in front of the goddess in order to partake of the nectar, but Kesar in the shape of the bee penetrates the king's inside causing terrible pains, and kills Sa-tham. The minister Ber-thul of Jang resolves to destroy Kesar and orders the cremation of king Sa-tham's body with the iron bee inside it, but Kesar manages to escape through the head of the dead king. Kesar then wins a combat with Ber-thul, the bKa'-blon of Jang, and the troops of Ling enter the fortress (mkhar) of Jang. Prince Yu-la becomes king of Jang. On his return to Ling, Kesar practises meditation (mtshams) in order to save the souls of the numerous living beings killed by him.

After this comes the story of the war against the Mon, or the kingdom of the South. Kesar has a vision of his protecting deity, who asks the king whether he had forgotten that king Shing-ti of the South has to be conquered. The deity insists that Kesar should discontinue his meditation and proceed against the kingdom of the South. Kesar accepts the command of his divine protectress. The troops of Ling, Hor and Jang are

mustered, and advance against the fort of king Shing-ti who prepares for battle. The troops of Kesar succeed in crossing a river and pursue the enemy troops. The king of the South perishes in the fire of the castle. His daughter, the princess Me-tog Lha-mdzes, is saved by Kesar and married to the son of A-khu Tr'o-t'uṅ. War against the Ta-zig kingdom (ཐག་གཟིགས་ཐག་གཟིགས་ represents a Tibetan transcription of the name Tājik. Ta-zig in Tibetan literature means Irān, as well as the regions North of the Oxus):

The old Tr'o-t'uṅ wishes to marry a second wife. He finds a bride among the people of Ling and decides to send Dabla, adopted son of Kesar, as his representative to discuss the matter with the parents of the girl. In order to please Dabla, Tr'o-t'uṅ decides to steal the famous horses belonging to the king of Ta-zig (horses from Ferghāna and Transoxiana were famous throughout Central Asia). Tr'o-t'uṅ's men succeed in taking away several of the famous horses belonging to the Ta-zig king. The king sends out his men to find out the whereabouts of his horses. The men proceed to Ling and find out that the horses had been stolen by order of Tr'o-t'uṅ. Thereupon the king despatches a detachment of his troops to Ling to recover the stolen horses. Tr'o-t'uṅ is captured and punished for his misdeeds. He manages to return to Ling, and tells Kesar of the intention of the Ta-zig king to attack Ling. Kesar resolves to break his meditation and to proceed against the country of Ta-zig. During the campaign Tr'o-t'uṅ is captured by demon-ogres, but Kesar liberates him.

This East Tibetan or Kham version as above, as rendered into French by Madame A. David-Neel and the Lama Yongden, ends with the scene of the dematerialization of king Kesar and his companions.

The West Tibetan version of the Kesar Epic recorded by the late A. H. Francke in Ladak originates from the village of She (Šel) near Leh, and Khalatse. This version contains a Prologue which tells of the creation of the World and the story of the eighteen warriors or dpa'-bo of Ling, which is not found in the East Tibetan versions of the epic. Otherwise the West Tibetan version runs along familiar lines: The birth-story of king Kesar, his marriage to 'Bru-gu-ma ('Brug-mo of the East Tibetan version is evidently a better reading), Kesar's fight with the giant of the North, 'Bru-gu-ma's capture by the king of Hor, Kesar's war against the Hor tribes and Kesar's journey to China.

The Prologue tells of the origin of Ling. In ancient times there lived an aged couple who owned a small plot of land. On this plot grew a single grass which gradually became as high as a tree and bore fruit. The fruit was collected in a barn where it assumed the shape of worms. The worms ate up each other, until only one worm remained. This last worm trans-

formed itself into a boy, who became a mighty hunter. He destroyed a demon with nine heads and out of the demon's body built the land of Ling. He then married eighteen girls who became the mothers of the eighteen heroes or dpa'-bo of Ling. These heroes were extraordinary beings. The eighteen heroes proceeded to the castle Pa-chi dPal-ldoñ-mkhar to secure treasures and store them up at Ling. The hero dPal-le arrived first at the castle and recovered the treasures. Then one day dPal-le, while grazing his goats, saw a white bird fighting a black bird. dPal-le at once understood that the black bird was a demon and slung a stone with his sling and killed the bird. Thereupon the white bird transformed itself into Indra (brGya-byin) and allowed dPal-le to make a request which would be granted. dPal-le requested that one of the sons of Indra be sent as king to the land of Ling—to give a child as chief to the chiefless land'. His request was granted and Indra decided to send his youngest son Don-grub. Don-grub thereupon died in heaven and was reborn on earth. One day mother Gog-bzañ lha-mo ('Gag-bza' lha-mo of the East Tibetan version is a better reading) sat in her house at work when a heavy hailstorm began and one hailstone fell into her cup. She ate the hailstone and felt pregnant. All the animals recovered by dPal-le from the castle Pa-chi dPal-ldoñ also became pregnant during the hailstorm. Don-grub was born from the side of his mother. Although he was destined to become the famous king Kesar of Ling, he often exchanged his natural appearance and transformed himself into ugly creatures. To his mother he appeared as an ugly frog and the poor mother tried to hide the child. But the goddess of Heaven dKur-dman-mo took charge of the child. An old warrior predicts that the newly-born child will become king Kesar of Ling (this passage had evidently been influenced by the Buddha legend. The name of Indra's youngest son Don-grub corresponds to Sanskrit Siddhārtha. The boy is born from the mother's side. The old warrior, who predicts the future of king Kesar and bewails his old age which prevents him from serving under Kesar, reminds one of the seer Asita, and his visit to the newly-born Buddha in the Nālaka-sutta. See also the Asita episode in chapter VII of the Lalita-Vistara). Demons in the shape of lamas attempt to destroy the newly-born child but fail in their efforts.

Kesar competes for the hand of 'Bru-gu-ma whom Khra'i-thuñ (the Khro-thuñ of the East Tibetan version), one of the chiefs of Ling, wishes to marry. Among the many difficult deeds which the competitors had to perform were: to secure the wing of the Sun bird, to kill the wild yak Ri-ri and to stretch his hide over the land of Ling. Kesar succeeded in all this and became the husband of 'Bru-gu-ma.

Kesar's journey to China. A virulent epidemic attacks the people of China and the Emperor of China becomes ill. Kesar

alone is able to cure the Emperor, and is invited to China. Kesar conquers all obstacles on the way. On his arrival in China, the Emperor recovered. Kesar flees with the Emperor's daughter Koñ-co and takes with him the treasures of China. He is captured and placed in a deep pit with dragons. He, however, escapes from the pit transforming himself into a fly. Finally Kesar with the Emperor's daughter and the treasures succeeds in reaching Ling. Meanwhile Khra'i-thuñ had seized the castle of Ling and turned out 'Bru-gu-ma; on Kesar's return the traitor is punished.

The divine protector of Kesar reminds him of his duty to destroy the demon of the North. Kesar proceeds to the North. 'Bru-gu-ma, who wants to accompany him, is sent back to Ling. After many obstacles on the way, Kesar arrives at the castle of the demon, but finds the demon absent on a hunting expedition. The demon's wife Bam-za Bum-skyid ('Bum-bza' 'Bum-skyid) helps Kesar who destroys the giant's nine lives. Then Bam-za Bum-skyid offers Kesar the magic drink and Kesar forgets the Past, 'Bru-gu-ma, and the land of Ling. While Kesar was living with Bam-za Bum-skyid in the demon's castle, the king Halde of Hor, hearing of Kesar's absence from Ling, decides to attack Ling and carry away 'Bru-gu-ma. Ling is attacked and 'Bru-gu-ma tries to evade the king of Hor, and gives him various deeds to perform in order to gain time in the hope of Kesar's return. But finally she has to proceed to the land of Hor. Kesar's brother attempts to bring her back to Ling, but is killed by an arrow shot into the only vulnerable spot of his body disclosed to the Hor-pas by 'Bru-gu-ma. 'Bru-gu-ma becomes the wife of king Halde. The hero dPal-le of Ling sends out birds as messengers to king Kesar in the North. The birds tell Kesar about the fate of Ling and the capture of 'Bru-gu-ma by the king of Hor. Kesar remembers the Past and hurries to Ling. Kesar proceeds to Hor to recover 'Bru-gu-ma. He is ordered by the gods to proceed alone and sends back his horsemen to Ling. In the land of Hor he takes service as a smith's assistant. He fashions an iron chain and with the help of the chain climbs the roof of the Hor castle and overcomes the king of Hor. Kesar returns to Ling and 'Bru-gu-ma is punished for her misdeeds.

The Mongol version of the Kesar Epic exists in a printed form and in numerous manuscript versions. The printed version, printed in 1716 in Peking by order of the Emperor K'ang-hsi, contains only the first seven chapters or books. The manuscript version contains fifteen chapters most of which are preserved in the Library of the Oriental Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The first chapter of the Mongol epic relates the birth of Dzürü-Geser. Cotoñ (<Tibetan Khro-thuñ. The Mongol Cotoñ is clearly a transcription of the name as pronounced in North-East Tibet. Ex. C'o-t'oñ of the Amdo version), one of the elders of Ling, banishes Dzürü into the desert. Dzürü-Geser

destroys the seven albin-demons and converts to Buddhism a band of brigands. Dzürü-Geser tells his brother Dzasa (<Tibetan rGyal-tsha) Shikir that he is Geser, king of Ling. Dzürü-Geser kills a powerful ogre and is banished a second time by Cotoñ. Dzürü-Geser builds a temple in honour of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Dzürü-Geser competes for the hand of the beautiful Roy-mo-yoa (<Tibetan 'Brug-mo). Dzürü-Geser tells the secret of his life to his wife Roy-mo.

2nd chapter: Geser destroys the Black Tiger of the North.

3rd chapter: Geser visits China and marries the daughter of the Chinese Emperor.

4th chapter: Cotoñ banishes from the territory of Ling Geser's beloved Aralyo-yoa (Tümen Jiryalañ). Aralyo-yoa becomes the wife of the twelve-headed ogre (Mongol: manyus). Geser proceeds to destroy the ogre. In the ogre's camp Geser meets his beloved Aralyo-yoa, and with her help destroys the ogre. Geser continues to live with Aralyo-yoa in the ogre's camp near the Golden Stüpa. Aralyo-yoa gives Geser a black coloured magic drink, and Geser forgets the Past, and the land of Ling.

5th chapter: A black crow informs the three Shiraigol khans (Shiraigol designates the Shara-yughur tribes of the Nanshan. Amdo Tibetans and Bänaks call them Hor) of the absence of Geser from Ling, and about beautiful Roy-mo-yoa who is fit to become the wife of the Shiraigol prince. The Shiraigol khans invade the territory of Ling. Dzasa Shikir, half-brother of Geser, decides to fight the aggressors. The troops of Ling are concentrated near Geser's camp from where Dzasa Shikir advances against the Shiraigol troops. Cotoñ brings in the false news that the troops of the Shiraigol khans had withdrawn and Dzasa Shikir orders his troops home. The Shiraigol khans again invade Ling and force a passage towards Geser's camp where lives Roy-mo-yoa. The latter attempts to offer resistance but is overcome and captured. Roy-mo-yoa sends out an arrow, which belonged to Dzasa Shikir, to Geser in the ogre's camp. Geser receives the missile and learns of the tragedy that befell Ling during his long absence. But his beloved Aralyo-yoa gives him again the magic drink and he again forgets Roy-mo and the land of Ling. Finally his wise and faithful steed rebels against him and runs away into the steppe. Geser captures the horse and decides to proceed at once to Ling. On his arrival in Ling, Geser meets his father, the old Sanluñ, who in his absence had been badly treated by Cotoñ, who had assumed power in the land of Ling. Then in the disguise of a lama, Geser visits the camp of Cotoñ, and punishes Cotoñ for his evil deeds. After that Geser starts against the Shiraigol khans. He appears in the camp of the Shiraigol khans in the disguise of an old lama. Then assuming the shape of a boy, Geser enters the service of Šiman Birudza, one of the ministers of Hor, and assists the blacksmith Čoñruñ darxan. Gradually he destroys the principal

warriors of the land, but is thrown into a deep pit filled with poisonous snakes, but with the help of his magic powers survives the ordeal. Geser then destroys the Shiraigol tribe and returns to his native Ling.

6th chapter: Geser and the xutuylu-lama, the manifestation of a powerful demon. Geser visits the magician who transforms Geser into a donkey. Geser's warriors after discussing the calamity send word to Aju Mergen to ask this powerful sorceress to destroy the demon and liberate Geser. Aju Mergen proceeds to the demon's camp in the disguise of the latter's sister, and requests the demon to present the donkey to her. The demon agrees, and the sorceress returns home leading the donkey. She restores Geser to life, and Geser fights the demon, and after many adventures succeeds in setting on fire the lama's hut made of reeds and destroys the evil demon.

7th chapter: Geser liberates his mother from hell.

The manuscript version of the Mongol Epic is much more extensive and contains some fifteen chapters.

The 8th and 9th chapters relate the fight of king Geser with the twelve-headed demon-ogre (manyus), and Geser's fight with king Andalma.

10th chapter: Geser fights the Demon king.

12th chapter: The destruction of the king of demons Gumbü-xan.

13th chapter: The defeat of Načîn-xan of the North.

15th chapter: The destruction of the evil black leopard.

Chapters XI-th and XIV-th are missing in the collection of Geser manuscripts belonging to the Russian Academy of Sciences (N. Poppe: 'O nekotorix novix glavax Geser-xana', Vostochnie Zapiski, I, Leningrad, 1927, pp. 190-200).

The text of the Mongol version bears clear traces of having been translated from a Tibetan original. The names of the principal heroes and of localities mentioned in the text are either Mongol transcriptions, or Mongol translations of Tibetan names.

Ex. Mongol: Gesër (modern Khalkha Mongol: Gessër) < Tibetan གེ་སར་ Ge-sar ~ ཀེ་སར་ Ke-sar.

Mongol: Gesër γarbo Donrub < Tibetan ཀེ་སར་རྫོན་གུབ་ ཅཀར་པོ་ Ke-sar Don-grub dkar-po, n. of king Kesar (the name Don-grub is also found in the Mongol version in the Mongol translation —Üile bütügëgëi. It is noteworthy that Donrub of the Mongol text represents a transcription of Tibetan words adopted in Southern Mongolia, according to which only the ra-btags or 'ra-subjoined' are pronounced. (The Lhasan pronunciation would be Tḡ-t'up).

Mongol: Gegše (-Amurčila), n. of Geser's mother < Tibetan གཤག་བཟའ་ 'Gag-bza' (East Tibetan version), Gog-bzañ (-lha-mo) of the West Tibetan version. In the West Mongol (Oirat) version Geser's mother is called Kakša (N. Poppe: 'Geserica', Asia Major, III, fasc. 1, p. 3).

Mongol: Sanluñ, n. of Kesar's father < Tibetan སེན་བློན་ Señ-blon. (In the Amdo version: Señ-blon Ra-skyes. Señ-blon is a title, and Kesar's father's name was Rarkyë.)

Mongol: Dzasa, n. of Kesar's half-brother < Tibetan ལྷལ་ཚ་ rGyal-tsha.

Mongol: Roy-mo, n. of Kesar's wife < Tibetan འབྲུག་མོ་ 'Brug-mo (see note under Don-grub). Also called Roy-mo nag-bo < Tibetan འབྲུག་མོ་ནག་པོ་ 'Brug-mo nag-po.

Mongol: Cotoñ, ruler of Ling < Tibetan (Amdo version) C'o-t'oñ. Kham version: Tr'o-t'oñ. Written Tibetan: སྐྱ་ཐུང་ Khro-thuñ. West Tibetan version: Khra'i-thuñ.

Mongol: Dzürü, n. of Kesar in his boyhood < Tibetan ཚོ་རེས་ Cho-ris ~ ཚོ་རེ་ Co-re.

Mongol: Šiman Birudza, n. of the chief minister of Hor < Tibetan (Amdo version) འགན་པ་མེ་རུ་ཚོ་ bŠan-pa rMe-ru-tse. The West Tibetan version has Šan-kra Mi-ru which is a corruption of the name given in the East Tibetan version.

Mongol: Xara gertei xan—a translation of the Tibetan གུར་ནག་རྒྱལ་པོ་ Gur-nag rgyal-po, 'The Black Tent' king (of Hor).

Mongol: Šira gertei xan—a translation of the Tibetan གུར་སེར་རྒྱལ་པོ་ Gur-ser rgyal-po, 'The Yellow Tent' king (of Hor).

Mongol: Cayān gertei xan—a translation of the Tibetan གུར་དཀར་རྒྱལ་པོ་ Gur-dkar rgyal-po, 'The White Tent' king (of Hor).

The names of localities and rivers mentioned in the text of the epic are given in the Mongol text either as transcriptions or in Mongol translation.

Mongol: Mun~Mon, the southern alpine valleys of the Himalayas < Tibetan མོན་ Mon.

Mongol: Liñ, n. of the kingdom of Kesar < Tibetan ལྷིང་ gLiñ (pronounced Liñ). The Lik of Schmidt's and Kozin's translations should

sariq yuyur or 'yellow yughurs' (uighur). Chinese: Huang hsi-fan) to the south of Kan-chow in Kansu Province, many tribal customs are directly connected with the Kesar Epic. Among these tribes one can still find such names of villages, as Gur-kar, Gur-ser and Gur-nag de-wa (Tibetan: sde-pa), which correspond to the names of the three kings of the Hor tribes: Gur-dkar rgyal-po, Gur-ser rgyal-po and Gur-nag rgyal-po. A white strap is sewn on the tents of the Shara-yughurs symbolizing the cut made by king Kesar's sword (ཚ་ལྷ་ཤ་ལྷ་མོ་ Hor-sbra khra-ril). The deity གཤམ་ཐེལ་དཀར་པོ་ gNam-thel dkar-po, mentioned in the epic as the protecting deity of the Hor tribes, is even nowadays worshipped by the Shara-yughurs. Should anyone approach a Shara-yughur tent riding on a light bay horse, the horse will be tied with its head facing the open country, and not the tent. This is done to avoid the danger of Kesar's steed, the wise rTa-rkyan-rgod, suddenly appearing and trampling over the tent. A custom exists among the Shara-yughurs to take their food hurriedly, because, they say, they live in constant danger of an attack by king Kesar. It is said that there exists among the Shara-yughurs a version of the Kesar Epic, in which king Kesar is represented as a dangerous and cunning enemy. Thus the memories of the old tribal wars between the Tibetans and the Turkish tribes still survive, and are a source of constant tribal antagonism. (The Shara-yughurs live south of Kan-chou, also between Su-chou and Kan-chou, between Shuang-ching-tzū and Kao-t'ai oasis.)

In the extreme west of the Tibetan upland, in the Karakorum mountains a version of the Kesar Epic in the Burushaski language has been recently discovered and published by Lt.-Colonel D. L. R. Lorimer (Lt.-Col. D. L. R. Lorimer: *The Burushaski Language*, vol. II, Oslo, 1935, pp. 100-179; also Lorimer, 'Folk-Lore', vol. XLII (1931), No. 2). This Burushaski version is evidently a translation of an oral Tibetan version, possibly a Balti version related to the West Tibetan version of the epic. The Burushaski rendering of Tibetan names and words reproduces a Balti pronunciation (Ex. Brū-mo for 'Brug-mo, n. of the wife of Kesar, and Brūj for Tibetan 'broñ, wild yak).

The Burushaski version contains the story of Kesar's (Kiser in Burushaski) birth, his marriage to Brūmo ('Brug-mo), the capture of Brūmo by the king of Hor, and Kesar's war against the king of Hor. Kiser successfully competes for the hand of Brūmo, and returns to his own country. After some time, Lingpikiser (< Tibetan: gLiñ Ke-sar) tells his wife that he has to start for a journey to the country of Haihaiyül. On his arrival there, Kiser deprives the local rulers of sovereignty and makes himself master of Haihaiyül. In his absence the king of Horyül (< Tibetan Hor-yul) invades Kiser's country and carries off

Brūmo. The warriors of Ling make an attempt to recapture Brūmo, and Būmliftan, brother of Kiser, is shot by an arrow which drives into the only unprotected spot of his body, revealed to the Hor warriors by Brūmo. The Wazir of Hor Shantu Miru (< Tibetan bŠan-pa rMe-ru-tse) confronts the Ling warriors. Kiser comes back to Ling, and sets out for the country of Horyül. On his way he overcomes various obstacles and finally arrives in the land of Hor, where he enters the service of a goldsmith and becomes the latter's son-in-law. The goldsmith is summoned by the king of Hor to his court where Kiser's bow is to be drawn. Kiser accompanies the goldsmith and succeeds in drawing the bow. Then he fashions an iron chain of 100 cubits in length and proceeds to the king's palace. There he threw the chain up to the beam of the palace roof and climbed up the chain, assuming the form of a cat. Brūmo warns the king that Kiser had come, but the king sees only a cat. Kiser then penetrates the king's room and begins wrestling with the king who is overcome. Kiser then takes Brūmo and the treasures of the Hor king and returns to his own country. The two sons of the king of Horyül and Brūmo are killed by Kiser, and Brūmo is punished for her treason in helping to kill Būmliftan, Kiser's brother.

The historical background of the Kesar Epic takes us far back into the past of the great nomad empires of Central Asia. According to a story current among the dGe-lugs-pa lamas, the Kesar Epic had nothing historical in itself. It was composed by a famous Tantric lama who was at the same time a great bard. The native place of this Tantric was North-Eastern Tibet, and the epic was composed by him there (see G. N. Roerich: *Trails to Inmost Asia*, Yale University Press, 1931, p. 359). The nomads of Kham and Hor understand the epic differently. According to them it is not a production of a single bard, but is a poetical record of ancient wars that were fought in the past. Tibetan tradition has preserved the memory of yet another Kesar, the leader of Central Asian tribes which were constantly menacing the borders of North-Eastern Tibet. In the བདུ་བཀའ་ལེན་པ་ Padma bKa'i thañ-yig or 'Commands of Padmasambhava', king Kesar is often mentioned as leader of Central Asian nomadic tribes, enemies of Tibet. In the second chapter of the Padma bKa'i thañ-yig (Kha, p. 22a), king Kesar's name is associated with that of the Dru-gu ~ Gru-gu (both names reproduce the name, Türk. See P. Pelliot, *J. As.*, 1914, ii, p. 144; F. W. Thomas *JRAS*, 1931, p. 828) tribes. The Tibetans were victorious and some of the Dru-gu were settled in the Mön region (in Tibetan literature the country of Mön or Mon-yul designates the southern Himälayan valleys. The inhabitants of these valleys are called Mön-pas). In chapter V, p. 13a of the same book, it is said that king Kesar 'was like a mad steed for Tibet. With the help of

magic, Kesar was defeated. The Tibetan army in battle array defeated Kesar'. Here in this passage Kesar is definitely stated to have been the leader of the enemies of Tibet. On p. 6b of the same chapter, king Kesar is mentioned as one of the Four Great Kings of the World: 'To the East under the constellation of the Pleiads (sMin-drug)—the Emperor of China—the Lord of Wisdom; to the South under the constellation Gaṇḍūṣa—the King of India—the Lord of Religions; to the North under the constellation of the Great Bear (sMe-bdun)—Kesar, the king of armies; to the West under the Moon—the King of Irān (sTag-gzig)—the Lord of Riches' (In the rGyal-rabs, p. 21a: rGya-gar chos-kyi rgyal-po, sTag-gzig nor-gyi rgyal-po, Ge-sar dmag-gi rgyal-po, gzugs-mdzes Khrom-gyi rgyal-po). In this passage king Kesar takes the place of the Lord of Horses of the well-known theory of the Four Great Kings of the World (On the theory of the Four Great Kings of the World, see P. Pelliot: 'La Théorie des Quatre Fils du Ciel', T'oung Pao, vol. XXII, 2 (1923), pp. 97-125). In the མཎི་བཀའ་འབྲས་ Maṇi bKa'-'bum (J. Bacot: 'Le mariage de Sroñ-btsan sgan-po', p. 16) it is said that the Emperor of China had offered king Kesar to marry a Chinese Imperial Princess, and in the rGyal-rabs of Ladak king Kesar is referred to as one of the suitors of Koñ-co, the Chinese Princess, who afterwards became the wife of king Sroñ-btsan sgam-po (Karl Marx: History of Ladakh, *JASB*, vol. LX, No. 3 (1891), p. 116). The country of king Kesar is mentioned among the countries of Ga-ža'i yul (probably a misprint for A-ža'i yul),¹ 'Bru-za'i yul (Hunza-Nagar), Bha-la'i yul (Bactra-Balkh), Žaṅ-žuṅ-gi yul (Guge in W. Tibet), sTag-gzig-yul (Irān and the countries of the Oxus), and Tho-gar-gyi yul (Tokharestān in North Afghanistan, or possibly the Tokharian kingdom in the region of Kucā-Turfān in Eastern Turkeṣtān) (Padma bKa'i thañ-yig, p. 165a; rGyal-rabs Bon-gyi 'byuñ-gnas, ed. S. C. Das, Calcutta, 1915, p. 15). In the La-dwags-kyi rGyal-rabs (A. H. Francke: 'Antiquities of Indian Tibet', vol. I, p. 20) the country Khrom Ge-sar 'Dan-ma is mentioned along with Kha-che (Kashmir), Bal-yul (Nepāl), Za-hor (Mandi), O-rgyan (Uḍḍiyāna, Swāt), sTag-gzig (Irān), rNa-nam (sNa-nam, Samarkand), Thon-mi Gru-gu (Türk, the region of Guchen-Turfān), and Rag-ši. The rGyal-rabs Bon-kyi 'byuñ-gnas (ed. S. C. Das, p. 15) calls Kesar—king of the country of Phrom (sometimes written Khrom) of the North (བྱང་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་མངའ་སྡེ་ལྷུ་ལྷ་ byañ-phyogs Ge-sar Phrom-gyi yul). Here the word Phrom ~ Khrom represents either a Tibetan transcription of a place-name, and if so, should be perhaps compared to the mysterious Par-Purum of the Xosho Tsaidam inscription in North Mongolia (V. V.

¹ Pelliot, *J. As.*, 1912, ii, pp. 520-3; T'oung Pao, 1920-1, pp. 323-5. A-ža'i yul = Tu-yū-hun.

Radlov: 'Die alttuerkischen Inschriften d. Mongolei', St. Petersburg, 1895, vol. III, p. 429; V. Radlov and P. Melioransky: 'Drevnie türkskie pamyatniki', St. Petersburg, 1897, p. 17. The country of Par-Purum is mentioned in the inscription together with Tibet (Tüpüt) and the Kirghiz (Qirgiz), or possibly means 'army', as in the expression khrom-gyi dpa'-bo 'warrior of the army' (Phrom or Khrom in Classical Tibetan means 'multitude, army', also 'market').¹ If so, the expression Ge-sar Phrom-gyi rgyal-po would mean 'Kesar, King of armies', as in the list of the Four Great Kings of the World given by the Padma bKa'i thañ-yig and the rGyal-rabs. We know that a Phrom Ge-sar is mentioned in the Khotan Annals, and a king of Khotan is said to have married a daughter of Phrom Ge-sar (A. Stein: Ancient Khotan, p. 580). (Pelliot, *J. As.*, 1914, i, pp. 498-9; 1923, i, pp. 83-88, suggested a connection between Phrom (Chinese: Fu-lin) and Rome (Rōm ~ Rūm). Also B. Laufer: 'Sino-Iranica', pp. 436-7. Chinese Fu-lin probably goes back to a Soghdian *Frīm (Latin Rōmā > Greek 'Ρωμαη Rhōmē > *Rhūmī > Syriac Frūmī > *Frūim, *Frūm, *Frīm > Old Chinese *Fūrim > Fu-lin. From Rhōmē > *Rūmī > *Rūim, Rūm, Rīm we have the Slav forms Rīmū, Rzim, etc.) In the rGyal-rabs Bon-gyi 'byuñ-gnas, ed. Sarat Chandra Das, p. 30, it is said that Kesar, king of gLiñ, paid tribute to the king of the Mi-ñag, a Tangut tribe of the North-East of Tibet, the founders of the Hsi-hsia kingdom of the X-XIII-th centuries. All the above quotations point to the existence of a persistent and ancient tradition associating the name of king Kesar with the people of Dru-gu ~ Gru-gu, or Central Asiatic Turks, and the country of Phrom ~ Khrom. The various Tibetan attempts to interpret the name Kesar show that the name must be a transcription of a foreign name or title. Albert Gruenwedel (*Globus*, LXXVIII, p. 98) had expressed the opinion that the name Kesar ~ Geser represented a Mongol-Tibetan rendering of the Roman title Caesar ~ Καῖσαρ. Professor F. W. Thomas, *JRAS*, 1931, p. 831, also suggests that the name Ge-sar or Ke-sar may be a dynastic title. The existence of the title Caesar as loan-word in Central Asian languages is attested by a colophon verse appended to an Oriental Iranian or Śaka manuscript of the Maitreya-samiti, translated by Ernst Leumann (Ernst Leumann: Maitreya-samiti, Strassburg, 1919, part II, pp. 152ff.), where we find the expression Keysar-kulna or 'royal family' (see also E. Leumann: 'Das nordarische (sakische) Lehergedicht', part 3, p. 410—Keysar-kula). Professor Lueders (Epigraphische Beitrage, Sitz. d. Akademie, Berlin, 1912, pp. 824ff.; Sten Konow: Kharoshthi Inscriptions. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. II, part I, Calcutta, 1929, pp. 162-165) had discovered the title kaṣara in the Kharoshthi Arā inscription (Kuṣāna period). It is also well

¹ F. W. Thomas, *JRAS*, 1931, pp. 830ff.

known that a dynasty of Kesar descendants in Upper Ladak (La-dwags-stod) is mentioned in the La-dwags rgyal-rabs (A. H. Francke: 'Antiquities of Indian Tibet', vol. II, pp. 93ff.). In modern Tibet there exists a vague tradition that Kesar had been an historical personage (Sir Charles Bell: 'The Religion of Tibet', Oxford, 1931, p. 14). It is not clear whether this tradition originated in connection with the Manchu identification of king Kesar with Kuan-ti, or belongs to the pre-Manchu period.

It is as yet impossible to say when and where the hero of the Tibetan nomad epic Ke-sar rgyal-po became identified with Kuan-ti, the popular hero of the famous and most widely read Chinese novel 'The Tale of the Three Kingdoms' or San-kuo-chih. This Kuan-ti or Kuan-yü had been a general in the service of the founder of the Shu-Han dynasty in the epoch of the Three Kingdoms (III-d century A.D.). Deified by the Chinese, his worship became popular in the Ming period, and Emperor Shên-tsung of the Ming dynasty (1573-1619) raised Kuan-ti to the rank of 'Grand Emperor'. During the Manchu period the popularity of the god became still greater, and he was proclaimed the Military Protector of the Ch'ing dynasty. The Emperors Chia-ch'ing (1796-1820) and Tao-kuang (1821-1850) paid him special devotion. The first made him Wu-ti or 'Military Emperor', and Tao-kuang ordered that he should be considered equal to Confucius himself! Temples were erected to him in all towns, seats of administration. All throughout the empire special services were held in his honour on the 13th day of the 1st month, and on the 13th day of the 5th month. Military mandarins worshipped Kuan-ti on the 24th day of the 6th month. It seems probable that the identification of Kesar with Kuan-ti originated in the reign of the Emperor K'ang-hsi (1662-1722), and was part of the Imperial programme to strengthen the ties uniting the Ch'ing dynasty with the nomad tribes of the Mongol-Tibetan borderland. It was under K'ang-hsi in 1716 that the first Mongol printed version of the Kesar Epic appeared in Peking.

The Kesar Epic has left a strong imprint on the popular poetry of the Land of Snows. A number of songs related to the Kesar Epic are even nowadays sung throughout Tibet. During the spring a Kesar festival is held in all the villages of Ladak, and the male population exercises itself in archery. Special songs, called 'Ling songs' or gLiñ-glu are sung during this festival. These songs usually mention episodes from the Epic of king Kesar (A. H. Francke: 'A Ladakhi Bonpa Hymnal, *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXV, August, 1901, pp. 359ff.; A. H. Francke and Anna Paalzow: 'Tibetische Lieder', Mitt. d. Or. Seminars in Berlin, pp. 99-100. The gLiñ-glu collected by A. H. Francke in Ladak in the villages of Phyañ and Kha-la-rtse, see Francke: 'Marriage Ritual in W. Tibet', *Indian Antiquary*, XXX, 1901, pp. 131ff.). Similar songs exist in Amdo in the North-East of

Tibet. They do not form part of the epic, but are inspired by famous episodes from the epic.

King Kesar in Tibetan Art. Pictorial representations of the Kesar Epic and of king Kesar are comparatively rare, and this fact can be probably explained by the attitude of the ruling dGe-lugs-pa sect in Tibet towards the epic, which considered Kesar to be a survival of a non-Buddhist past. Images of king Kesar, both pictorial and in bronze, found throughout Tibet and Mongolia, can be conveniently classed into two groups:—

- (a) representations of king Kesar's miraculous life, closely following the extant written version of the epic;
- (b) representations of king Kesar as Kuan-ti, the Manchu War God and protector of the Manchu dynasty.

The second group is by far the largest, and most of the images belonging to this group date back to the XVIII-th and XIX-th centuries.

To the first group belong the so-called Ke-sar thañ-ka or painted banners of king Kesar depicting the miraculous life of the king. Such thañ-kas are mostly found in the possession of itinerant rhapsodists of the epic, and are only rarely seen in the homes of Tibetan laymen. Some of these banners, representing king Kesar's life, belong to the rÑiñ-ma-pas or 'Old-believers' sect of Tibetan Buddhism, who were the first to accept the epic and adapt it to their needs. In such cases on the top of the painting will be seen an image of ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ་ Kun-tu bzañ-po or Samantabhadra, or the central figure will represent a Buddhist deity, for example the goddess མཐིང་གི་ལྗང་པ་མ་ mThin-gi Žal-bzañ-ma, an attendant of the goddess Lha-mo, riding a mule and holding an arrow (mda') and a mirror (me-loñ). (See the Ke-sar thañ-ka in the Tibetan collection of the Musée Guimet in Paris.) Some of the representations of the Kesar Epic belong to the Bon-po faith, and are distinguished by Bon-po symbology. Sometimes the central figure of a painted banner represents king Kesar himself depicted attired in a white garment with a tiara-like hat surmounted by feathers, a costume still worn by professional rhapsodists of the epic in North-Eastern Tibet. Usually round the central figure are grouped episodes of the miraculous life of king Kesar: his fights with demons and werewolves, which appear in the shape of a black yak, a black horse, and a black she-goat, the destruction of three ravens, birds of evil omen, Kesar's marriage to 'Brug-mo, his combat with the powerful Demon king of the North (rDud-rgyal), Kesar's war against the three kings of the Hor, etc. The composition of such banners reveals clear traces of Buddhist influence and is very similar in composition to the Buddhist thañ-kas depicting the lives of famous Buddhist teachers and sages. Such Ke-sar thañ-kas are hung during the recitals of the epic by itinerant rhapsodists,

and this again seems to be an adaptation of a well-known Buddhist custom of presenting edifying Buddhist dramas, as for example the story of prince Vessantara or the Dri-med Kun-ldan rnam-thar. Sometimes famous episodes of the Kesar Epic form the themes of wall-frescoes in private residences of wealthy Tibetans. The late A. H. Francke ('Antiquities of Indian Tibet', vol. I, pp. 79ff.) had seen one such fresco depicting the war against the country of Jang in a garden-house (rab-gsal) at Changs-pa, a village situated half a mile from Leh in Ladak. It must be added that such frescoes are only rarely met with.

Images belonging to the second group representing Kesar as Kuan-ti are quite numerous and mostly date from the XVIII-th and early XIX-th centuries when the Manchu dynasty did much to spread the cult of its protecting deity, conveniently likened to the nomad warrior-king Kesar. Numerous are the bronze images of king Kesar represented seated in western fashion on a throne—the work of Dolön-nür image-makers (XVIII-th century). Large clay and bronze images of Kesar-Kuan-ti are found in the numerous Ke-sar lha-khañ or Kesar temples in villages in Amdo in North-East Tibet (G. N. Potanin: 'Tangutsko-Tibetskaya Okraina Kitaya', vol. I, p. 397). Temples dedicated to Kesar-Kuan-ti also exist in Lhasa where they are called rGya-mi lha-khañ or 'Chinese Temples', and in Urga (now Ulān Bātor Xoto), capital of Northern Mongolia, and in many localities of Inner Mongolia, and the Sino-Mongolian borderland, where such temples are popularly called Kuan-ti miao or Gessēr sümë. All of these temples belong to the Manchu period.

There exist also pictorial representations of Kesar-Kuan-ti on which king Kesar is represented by the side of his steed, wearing armour and holding a halberd, accompanied by his son Kuan-p'ing, holding a casket with king Kesar's seal, and his squire holding a halberd. Kesar's magic bow and arrows given to him by his divine protector are also represented in the lower corners of such paintings. On some of the paintings of Kesar-Kuan-ti one can see the image of the Great Tibetan Reformer Tsoñ-kha-pa (1357-1419) and of his two chief disciples, mKhas-grub-rje and rJe-tshab-rje—a sign that the ruling dGe-lugs-pa sect attempted to incorporate Kesar-Kuan-ti in its pantheon during the Manchu period, no doubt with official approval.

In Mongolia some of the dGe-lugs-pa monasteries used to perform special Kesar 'mystery plays' or Gessēr in cam. Such 'mystery plays' were held in the sixth month of the year in the former Dalai Coṅxor Waṅ xoṣun, and in the monastery of Ilayuysan Gegēn in Western Mongolia. The lama-participants of these 'mystery plays' represented the 32 warrior-companions of king Kesar, all clad in armour (xujāy). Theatrical representations of the exploits of king Kesar are known to exist among the Mongols-San-ch'uan in Kansu Province (see Potanin, *ibid.*, p. 378). In Tibet proper such 'mystery plays' based on

the Kesar Epic seem to be unknown. In the mounted races called rDzoñ-rgyab žam-bes or 'Gallop behind the Fort', held in Lhasa behind the Potala Palace, the horsemen (rta-pa), clad in ancient Tibetan armour and armed with bow and arrows, are said to represent the warriors of king Kesar. In Western Tibet a festival is held in spring which is called 'Kesar Festival' in Upper Kunāwār. In Ladak it is called mDa'-phañ-ces or 'arrow shooting'. During the festival the gLiñ-glu or 'Ling song' is sung, and the male population amuse themselves with arrow shooting. There are processions round the fields to bless them, the lha-tho or altars are decorated with fresh twigs and pencil-cedar is burnt (see A. H. Francke: gLiñ-chos in Hasting's Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. VIII, p. 78a).

Many vestiges of ancient monuments throughout Tibet, such as stone steps on the slope of mountain passes, ruined castles (mkhar), drawings on stones, and even rocks and stones of peculiar shape, etc. are popularly said to date back to the time of king Kesar (Nicholas Roerich: 'The Sword of Ghessar Khan', *Educational Review*, December, 1936; W. Rockhill: *Journey through Mongolia and Tibet*, p. 165).

In 1933 Professor M. Rostovtseff ('The Great Hero of Middle Asia and his exploits', *Artibus Asiae*, MCMXXX/XXXII, No. 2/3, pp. 99-117, with a note by G. Roerich) drew attention to a series of Siberian and Chinese plaques in the so-called 'animal' style, representing scenes of combat, hunting and wrestling. These plaques may well represent illustrations to an ancient nomad epos, of which the Kesar Epic is a typical representative.

To sum up the results of our survey of the Kesar problem, we must stress the following points, the working up of which may lead to the solution of the problem:—

- (a) The Kesar Epic in its original form represented a typical heroic epic, a poetical record of ancient wars between Tibetan and Turkish tribes.
- (b) Tibetan Ke-sar ~ Ge-sar < Caesar, the Roman title adopted by the Kuṣāna kings, and then assumed by the khans of Central Asiatic Turkish tribes, through Khotan, which formed part of the Kuṣāna Empire. From the Central Asiatic Turks the title Kesar was adopted by the Tibetan and Tangut tribes of the North-East.
- (c) The manuscript versions of the Kesar Epic contain more archaisms and are nearer to the primitive form of the epic than the oral versions or the printed version. The manuscript versions show definite similarities to the North-East Tibetan versions of the epic.
- (d) The language of the epic and names of localities mentioned in the text point towards the North-East of Tibet as the place of origin of the epic.

- (e) The date of the epic cannot be established, but the numerous parallels with the story of king Sron-btsan sgam-po (569-650 A.D.) indicate that the epic must have taken shape after the Imperial Period of Tibetan history. The kernel of the epic must be older.
- (f) The Mongol version of the epic represents a translation from a Tibetan original. Mongol transcriptions of Tibetan proper names and names of localities show that this original must have been a North-East Tibetan version.
- (g) The Burushaski version discovered by Lt.-Col. Lorimer represents a rendering of a Tibetan oral version, probably Balti.

In conclusion it must be stressed that it is imperative to hasten the study of the Kesar Epic. The pressure of modern civilization causes the keepers of ancient traditions to retreat into the fastnesses of their mountains, and bards well-versed in the Kesar lore are only rarely met with.

SUMMARY.

For more than a century the Kesar Epic, the heroic saga of Tibet and Mongolia, had been known to students of folklore, but up to now our knowledge of the various versions of this epic, its genesis, and its influence on the epos of Tibetan and Mongolian nomad tribes had not advanced very far. Due to the inaccessibility of the Tibetan uplands, it is as yet impossible to make a survey of all the existing versions of the Tibetan epic of king Kesar of Ling. The epic is known to exist among the various tribes of the nomad belt of the Tibetan upland, and is especially popular among the tribes of the North-East: among the Amdo-was, the Goloks, the Bānaks, and the Hor-pas. The eminent Russian explorer of Central Asia, G. N. Potanin, had given us fragments of an Amdo version of the epic, and the writer of the present note has recorded fragments of yet another version current in Amdo. The late Dr. A. H. Francke has published the local Ladakī versions of the epic. In 1931 the French explorer, Madame A. David-Neel, published a French rendering of a Kham version.

The language of the epic often influenced by the spoken dialects of Tibet does not permit any deductions as to the date of the epic and of its origin. In each district the epic is being told in the local dialect, but the subject of the epic, the main episodes of king Kesar's life remain the same. A considerable difference in details is noticeable which often had been introduced from local folklore and tribal epics. The epic exists in Tibet in manuscript, oral, and printed form. The scarcity of manuscript

versions resulted in a considerable variety of oral versions. The language of the oral versions is not the classical written Tibetan, it is a style closely approaching the every-day speech of the nomads with certain archaisms. These oral versions seem to be an outgrowth of manuscript versions. The latter exhibit definite similarities to the North-East Tibetan versions, and the language of the manuscript versions points towards the North-East of Tibet and Kham. The language of the printed versions stands nearer to the classical form of the Tibetan language. The similarity of the main episodes indicates the existence of a primitive Kesar Epic which must have originated among the Tangut and Tibetan tribes of the North-East. The following stages in the evolution of the epic seem probable:—

1. The Primitive Kesar Epic—an heroic epic which originated among the Tangut and Tibetan tribes of the North-East.
2. The manuscript versions of the epic (in some of the extant versions Buddhist elements predominate).
3. The printed abridged version of the epic, edited by rñiñ-ma-pas in Kham (Derge-rDzogs-chen dgon-pa).
4. Oral versions of the epic strongly coloured by local folklore. The Kesar Epic in its original form represented a typical heroic epic, a poetical record of ancient wars between Tibetan and Turkish tribes. In its original form the Kesar Epic must have possessed a pre-Buddhistic background, and even in the present text of the epic one finds frequent allusions to the ancient Bon faith of Tibet.

The language of the epic and names of localities mentioned in the epic all point towards the North-East of Tibet as the place of origin of the epic.

The date of the epic cannot be established, but the numerous parallels with the story of king Sron-btsan sgam-po (569-650) indicate that the epic must have taken shape after the Imperial period of Tibetan history, though the kernel of the epic must be older.

The Mongol version of the epic represents a translation from a Tibetan original. Mongol transcriptions of Tibetan proper names and names of localities show that the original must have been a North-East Tibetan version.

The word Kesar ~ Gesar represents probably a transcription of the Roman title *Caesar* adopted by the Tibetan and Tangut tribes of the North-East from Khotan.

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“The Sword of Gesar”

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