The »Buddhisation« of Europe

A Tibetan Account of Europe in the Early 19th Century[1]

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In their 1968 introduction to the cultural history of Tibet, the British Tibetologists David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, two renowned scholars in their field, describe the history of modern[2] Tibet in the following words:

> The European Middle Ages ended with the Renaissance, leading to the exploration of new fields of learning, which soon began to threaten all the traditional assumptions upon which the earlier stages of our civilization were based. But as the old forms disintegrated, we were ever striving to rebuild them anew, so that although an entirely new kind of civilization came into existence, it still managed to keep some firm roots in the past. The Tibetans, on the other hand, in common with all other oriental cultures, experienced no such renaissance; lacking fresh inspiration from without, they continued to live within the terms of what were now becoming stereotyped forms. One by one the great oriental civilizations have been forced to come to terms with the resilient but forceful modern Western world. Tibet was almost the last country in Asia to have its doors forced open (in the event by the British) and it is to its great tragedy that the perpetrators of the actual

1 This article would not have been possible without Lobsang Yongdan, who discussed the Tsenpo's work with me and shared his insights. His monograph on the *Geography* will be published soon (Yongdan forthcoming). I am also heavily indebted to Stefanie Knauss and Sean Ryan for their valuable and insightful comments and suggestions.

2 On the question of Tibetan modernity see Gyatso 2011.

> rape are humorless Chinese Communists, who show little interest in compromising with their own traditional cultural values, let alone with those of the Tibetans.[3]

Snellgrove and Richardson's comparison of Europe and Tibet (as *pars pro toto* for »all other oriental cultures«) is a prime example of blunt orientalism.[4] Basically all mechanisms of othering, including the utmost sexist imagination of the other – Tibetan – culture as a raped woman, can be found in that statement. In the context of the present volume, it is interesting – and not at all hard – to see, how the authors (re-)construct European history *vis à vis* a seemingly ossified Tibetan culture. In their worldview of the superior, enlightened European civilization the metaphor of rape bears the subtle undertone of victim blaming: due to its stubborn clinging to »stereotyped forms« and its refusal to embrace »fresh inspiration« from the new, modern, western world Tibet has at least been complicit in being attacked by the British and colonised by the Chinese Liberation Army.

Initiated by Peter Bishop's *The Myth of Shangri-la. Tibet, Travel Writing and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (1989), a long overdue reassessment of the western imaginary of Tibet both in Tibetan and Buddhist studies has demystified the orientalist approaches of many pioneers in these fields.[5] In the last decade, this self-critical stance has given way to a more complex picture of imaginations of Tibet from an Asian perspective, and of course Tibetan imaginations of their own cultural and geographic realm.[6] However, only very recently have scholars highlighted the fact that it was not only

3 Snellgrove/Richardson 1968, 16–17.

4 For a thorough introduction to Orientalism with a focus on Asian countries and cultures see Clarke 1997.

5 See Lo Bue 2014; Beinorius 2005; Brauen 2000; Dodin/Bishop 1997; Bishop 1989; on this topic see also Lopez's provoking study on the *Prisoners of Shangri-La* (1998) and the ensuing debate between Thurman 2001; Germano 2001; Lopez 2001; for more balanced reviews of the book see Kapstein 1998; Lavine 2000; and for a reevaluation of the whole discourse see Hansen 2003, 7–10; Smyer Yu 2015, 3–5. For important critical race and whiteness theory in Tibetan studies see Kleisath 2013.

6 For Japanese imaginations of Tibet see Murakami 2010; for Chinese imaginaries Smyer Yu 2011; for examples of how Tibetans mapped and imagined the (sacred) space they inhabited see Gyatso 1989; Brauen 1997; Schwartzberg 1994; Kapstein 2011; various studies on pilgrimage in Tibet and its borderlands complete this picture, see for example Huber 1999; Ehrhard 2003; Chenaktsang 2010; Bogin 2014.

the west[7] who imagined the Tibetan »other« but that there were also Tibetan imaginations of Europe, in which narratives were adopted and new images of European history, science and geography were created.[8]

In this paper I discuss an early 19th-century Tibetan geographical compendium by the 4th Tsenpo Nomon Hen Jampel Chökyi Tenzin Thrinley. After introducing the author and the circumstances of his work, I will focus on his geographical representation of Europe. From the perspective of the study of religion, I will then analyse the Tsenpo's reassessment of Christianity, and his »Buddhisation« of Europe.

I understand texts as media situated in dynamic communication processes in which each new reading and interpretation contributes to the adaption, consolidation and/or differentiation of worldviews by renegotiating, and thus changing them. Hence, I understand the Tsenpo's compendium as part of a »globally mediated imaginary«,[9] that is, as the result of multi-layered, mutual and interdependent processes of cultural exchange. With the Indian art historian Monica Juneja, I want to emphasise that highlighting transcultural processes

> involves more than bringing neglected currents into an existing canon; it means questioning the foundations upon which the notion of the modern has been constructed and to undermine the narrative that hinges upon a dichotomy between the West and the non-West and makes the latter as necessarily derivative, or views it as a series of distant, peripheral or »alternative« modernisms. Instead of coining a host of modernisms – Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan – all understood as parallel streams that never meet and bring in national

7 In this paper, I use »west« as a synonym for the geographical and historical context of Europe, although I am aware of the broad discourse that goes with the term, as Stuart Hall aptly summed up in *The West and the Rest*: »By ›Western‹ we mean the type of society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern. Such societies arose at a particular historical period – roughly, during the sixteenth century, after the Middle Ages and the breakup of feudalism. They were the result of a specific set of historical processes – economic, political, social, and cultural. Nowadays, any society, wherever it exists on a geographical map, which shares these characteristics can be said to belong to ›the West.‹ The meaning of this term is therefore virtually identical to that of the word ›modern.‹« (Hall 2019, 142).

8 See for example Yongdan 2011; Engelhardt 2011.

9 Gaonkar 2002, 9; on the imaginary in the study of religion see Pezzoli-Olgiati 2015.

> or ethnic units through the back door, a transcultural view of modernism regards these as enmeshed with the others […].[10]

Adopting a transcultural perspective in my discussion of the Tsenpo's *Geography*, I try to trace historical and cultural processes of adaptation and transformation and thus challenge dichotomous attributions like west/east, Buddhist/Christian, scientific/religious, traditional/modern.

1. A cosmopolitan geographical work

The full title of the Tsenpos's geographical work is *'Dzam gling rgyas bshad snod bcud kun gsal me long* or, in English, »The Detailed Description of the World. The Mirror which Illuminates all the World and Its Inhabitants«. It is usually referred to as *'Dzam gling rgyas bshad* or simply »Geography«.[11] Its author Jampel Chökyi Tenzin Trinley (1788–1839) is best known under the title of his reincarnation lineage as Tsenpo Nomon Han.[12] As part of the Gelugpa school, this Tulku lineage gained influence in the 18th century in Lhasa and at the Qing court in Beijing. At the time, the lineage's main monastery Serkhok Gompa in Amdo, eastern Tibet, was one of the largest monasteries in Tibet, housing about two thousand monks, with branches in Lhasa, Mongolia and China. Travelling formed a central aspect of his life: during his early years he visited the Qing emperor Jiaqing (1760–1820) in Beijing and undertook extensive pilgrimages and visits to dignitaries in all of Tibet. From the mid-1820s he focused his activities and resided mainly at his seat Dolon Nor in Mongolia or the East Yellow Temple[13] in Beijing. In Beijing,

10 Juneja 2019, 302; on transculturality see also Juneja/Grasskamp 2018; König/Rakow 2016; Brosius/Wenzlhuemer 2011.

11 To access the *Geography* I work with the translation provided by Johnson (1972) and information provided by Kapstein 2011; Yongdan forthcoming and 2011; Martin 1990; Wylie 1970.

12 Therefore I will use the title Tsenpo when referring to the author of the *Geography*. The 4th reincarnation's full name was *'jam dpal bstan 'dzin 'phrin las*; like his predecessor, he also held the titles of the *btsan po no mon han*, and the *hor smin grol chos kyi rgyal po*; see Yongdan 2011, 74, footnote 3; for information on this Tulku lineage see Yongdan 2011, 78–80; for the Tsenpo's biography Yongdan 2011, 80–85; also Johnson 1972, 1–4.

13 This temple, also known as Dong Huang, was built in 1651 by the first emperor of the Qing dynasty; in 1653, when the 5th Dalai Lama visited Beijing, he resided there. In 1734

he fulfilled his task as a seal-holder lama of the Qing emperor. As such, he was part of the *chöyön*-relationship between preceptor and donor, a personal-religious and at the same time political Buddhist system that shaped power structures between Tibet and its Asian neigbouring countries for centuries.[14] Thus the Tsenpo's role at the imperial court was multi-layered: he acted as a representative of the Tibetan government, maintained close relationships to the Qing emperor Jiaqing, acted as ritual master and provided religious teachings to the imperial family, and he held the more secular post of an Assistant of the Consistorial Administration of the Lamas and Monasteries in Beijing.

Although at the beginning of the 19th century the Qing dynasty was already in decline, the Tsenpo definitely benefited from the cosmopolitan atmosphere which persisted at the Qing court.[15] He studied with local physicians,[16] gathered medical and geographical information from Indian Gosains,[17] and established relationships with several Russian Orthodox missionaries. Among his interlocutors were Zakhar Leont'evsky (Anton Legasov), painter and founder of the first private museum of Asian culture and life in St. Peterburg, the (German) botanist and physician Alexander von Bunge, and Osip M. Kowalewski, founding father of Mongolian studies. In this cosmopolitan context, the Tsenpo was fluent in Tibetan, Sanskrit, Mongolian, Manchu and Chinese, he perhaps even knew Farsi and Hindi,[18] and he seems to

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the Yongzhen emperor gave this monastery to the 2nd Tsenpo and it became the main residency of the lineage; see Yongdan forthcoming, 79–80.

14 On the *chöyön*-relationship see Seyfort Ruegg 1991; on the role of Tibetan clerics at the Qing court see Kim 2020 and Yongdan forthcoming, 53–59.

15 On the Qing's cosmopolitanism see Elverskog 2013 and 2011; for an account of this cosmopolitanism from a visual and material studies perspective see the study on the *Album of the Beasts* by Lai 2018.

16 The Tsenpo wrote an influential medical treatise called *Man ngag rin chen 'byung gnaw* or »The Treasury of All Precious Instruction«, in which he gathered information on treatments from China, Nepal, India, and Europe, see Yongdan forthcoming, 9–10; 43–45; 102–106.

17 Gosains were a community of religious ascetics from India who emerged in the 18th and 19th century as important wanderers, traders and soldiers. Wealthy Tibetan lamas or merchants as well as British officials used Gosains as messengers and sources of information. Yongdan assumes that the Tsenpo might have employed some Gosains at his residence in Beijing; see Yongdan forthcoming, 84–86.

18 On this hypothesis see Yongdan forthcoming, 99–100.

have been familiar with Russian and Latin, as he transcribes the names of European countries and cities based on their pronunciation.[19]

In his *Geography* the Tsenpo cites a vast number of sources in various languages and formats, including oral accounts, traditional Buddhist cosmological works, and Tibetan, Chinese as well as European geographical works, such as historical and travel accounts, local maps, and atlases.[20] Apart from oral accounts, two of his main sources on European geography were the *Kunyu tushuo* (»Illustrated Explanation of the World«) and the *Zhifang waiji* (»Records of the Lands beyond the Imperial Administration«), both compiled at the Qing court in the 17th century by the Jesuit missionaries Ferdinand Verbiest and Guiglio Aleni respectively.[21] And also in the 18th century, geography was a vibrant topic in Tibetan scholarship, as can be seen in various compendia and itineraries such as the *General Description of the World* by Sumpa Yeshi Paljor (or Sumpa Khenpo) in 1777, or the account of the 6th Shamarpa Chökyi Wangchuk's transregional pilgrimage to Nepal and Mustang in 1791.[22] Considering the socio-political and intellectual context of its production, the *Geography* can thus be understood as the product of a cosmopolitan context, where a wide range of written, visual and oral sources contributed to a unique piece of geographical and cultural knowledge.

The Tsenpo wrote his *Geography* at some point in the 1820s or 1830s in an accessible style, using vernacular Tibetan to reach as many of his contemporaries as possible.[23] He stated: »In order to be understood by fools and

19 On the Russian names see Johnson 1972, 10.

20 According to Johnson (1972, 9–10), this variety of source material »gives this brief description of Europe a noteworthy richness of fact and anecdote«. On the various sources see Yongdan forthcoming, 112–116. Yongdan (forthcoming, 114) lists one of the sources as »Illustrations of the People of Many Countries in the World« (*Rgyal khams khri phrag gi mi'i ri mo*). The 4th Tsenpo refers to this work in the context of dresses from Thai as well as Pourtuguese and Corse people, he might actually refer to Bernard Picarts famous *Cérémonies et Coutumes religieuses de tous les Peuples du Monde* (1723–1737); see von Wyss-Giacosa 2006.

21 On these sources see Yongdan 2011, 125–128; Johnson 1972, 6–8.

22 On Sumpa Khenpo's work see Kapstein 2011, 343–350; Yongdan forthcoming, 130–134. On the 6th Shamarpa's work as well as Orgyen Chöpel's geographical and cultural geography of Nepal, and Jigme Lingpa's discourse on India see Ehrhard 2003, 97–100; Ehrhard 2013; Aris 1995; for more accounts of Tibetan geography see Kapstein 2011, 341–342; on Tibetan cartography see Schwartzberg 1994, 640–656, and on pilgrimage and route maps 656–670.

23 On the dating of the *Geography* see Yongdan 2011, 92–93; Johnson 1972, 1 and 4–6; on

scholars, without using poetic cutting and loosening phrases, I plainly use the language of villages to write this work, so that this work might be used by people who have similar interests and ideas.«[24] European readers of the *Geography*, from the 1880s on, were particularly interested in its section on Tibet. Until the 1970s this chapter provided the only known and detailed geography of Tibet written by a native person.[25] Its section on Europe was first discussed in 1970 by Turell V. Wylie in an article entitled »Was Christopher Columbus from Shambhala?«, followed by a full translation of the section by Betty Carol Johnson in 1972. But it was not until 2011 that two scholars in Tibetan studies simultaneously provided new interpretations of this material, acknowledging it in a transcultural perspective as a work of 19th century knowledge production in its own right.[26]

2. Scientific knowledge in the *Geography*

In his book *The People of Tibet* (1928), Sir Charles A. Bell, British Political Officer for Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet, wrote on the Tsenpo's *Geography*: »It aims, indeed, at being a geography of the whole world, but its statements are often fanciful […]. Tibetans like miraculous interpretations, it is a trait deep in their nature.«[27] Against this racist assessment Johnson argues that »the 19th-century Tibetans were in fact not so credulous«[28] and that at least the scholar Tsenpo did »not believe these outlandish tales«[29]. That the *Geography* is not »fanciful« is proven for Johnson by the fact that the Tsenpo carefully cites his sources, and states when writing from hearsay or when a piece

the complex production and reception history of the work see Yongdan forthcoming, 101–102; 251–258.

24 Cited after Yongdan forthcoming, 149. Yongdan (forthcoming, 180) highlights the didactic purpose of the Tsenpo's style: »When writing the *Geography*, Tsenpo must have faced many difficulties, because it was a new world geography that no Tibetan had seen before on this scale. This required him to find a new way to communicate with his intended readers.«

25 See Johnson 1972, 1; on the reception and translation of the *Geography* see Yongdan 2011, 90–92; Johnson 1972, 10–11.

26 See Kapstein 2011; Yongdan 2011.

27 Quoted after Johnson 1972, 7.

28 Johnson 1972, 7.

29 Johnson 1972, 8.

of information is unclear to him.[30] This scientific character of the *Geography* is further strengthened by the fact that the Tsenpo treated the content of his *Geography* in a systematic way, leaving narrative elements or poetic embellishment aside. The section on Europe offers a well-structured overview on what today is considered human geography: a wide range of information on the territory, economy, agriculture, flora and fauna, inhabitants, costumes, textiles, arts and crafts of Europe.[31] It starts with a list of all geographical units to be described, followed by a general description of the continent and sub-sections on the various European countries. The general description begins with a definition of the continent, looking at it from the Asian perspective:

> If one crosses the great snow-mountains called U-ral […], there is the great homeland of the Phe-rang[32] called the continent of Yo-ru-pa […]. If that land is indeed included in this continent (i. e., Asia), it is cut off on three sides by arms of the ocean; there are those who think (it) another continent, because the race is not the same as (that of) the people of this continent.[33]

This initial definition of Europe as the land on the other side of the Ural mountain range holds in tension an interesting argument. The author implicitly states that, depending on which criterion is favoured out of geographical features or ethnicity, Europe can be considered either part of a common Eurasian space or as an independent continent. In this initial passage, the

30 Besides naming some of his sources explicitly, in the section on Europe we also find phrases like »I have heard that« (Johnson 1972, 84/115b), »Although I personally saw a picture« (Johnson 1972, 102/123a), or »Is not prescribed« (Johnson 1972, 94/120a). These can be understood as an indication that the Tsenpo critically examines his information and tries to be as clear as possible in the transmission of his knowledge.

31 The Tsenpo's considerations are so broad that Martin (1990, 127) designates his work a »universal geography/history/ethnograpy«.

32 The designation *phe rang* probably comes from »Franks«, but, having lost all reference to France, simply means Europeans (vs. Turks and Asians in general) or Christians (vs. Muslims or Buddhists); see Johnson 1972, 167–168, footnote 51; she leaves the term untranslated as *terminus technicus*, because it has a wide range of meaning and has to be understood according to the context.

33 Johnson 1972, 80/114b; first order insertions (…) by the translator; second order insertions […] are my own.

Tsenpo does not clearly decide in favour of either option, thereby opening up the possibility of envisioning a single Eurasian continent in accordance with the traditional Buddhist worldview.

The traditional Buddhist cosmology is described in texts such as the *Abhidharmakośakārikā* (4th to 5th century) or the *Kālacakratantra* (11th century). In the Abidharma literature the Buddhist cosmos encompasses a disk-shaped universe with the mythological Mount Meru at its centre, surrounded by rings of water, mountains and four continents, each with two sub-continents on their sides.[34] To describe the different geographical landmasses of earth, the Tsenpo uses the traditional terminology of the Abidharma literature and accordingly equates the Eurasian continent with the southern continent of the Jampu Tree, that is, the continent of the human realm.[35] Such a harmonisation of Buddhist cosmology and western geography has already been suggested by previous Tibetan intellectuals such as Sumpa Khenpo or the 6th Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe.[36] The Tsenpo also secured his approach by consulting the 7th Panchen Lama Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853), the second most important Tibetan Buddhist authority in Tibet at the time.[37] The 7th Panchen did not see any contradiction between Tibetan and European cosmology, and he even encouraged the Tsenpo to use the traditional Buddhist terminology. Hence the Tsenpo further contributed to an ongoing integration of Buddhist cosmology and western geography, keep-

34 The four continents are Pūrvavideha (*shar lus 'phags poi)* in the east, Jambudvīpa (*'dzam bug ling*) in the south, Aparago dānīya (*nub bag lang spyod*) in the west, and Uttarakuru (*byang sgra mi snyan*) in the north. For a traditional depiction see the annotated image on: https://www.himalayanart.org/items/1038/images/1038z#-1079,-867,1078,212 (accessed 12.09.2022). See also the images in Beer 1999, 103–109; Brauen 1997; Schwartzberg 1994, 619–624.

35 See Yongdan 2011, 94.

36 In the second half of the 18th century Sumpa Khenpo already gathered various oral and written accounts of world geography and discussed cultural, astrological and climatic phenomena in the context of traditional Tibetan knowledge and Buddhist cosmology, and thus established an approach which the Tsenpo could follow later on; see Yongdan forthcoming, 130–134. The same is true for the 6th Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738–1780) who wrote an authoritative guidebook to Shambhala, in which he included new information derived from European geography, trying to harmonise traditional Buddhist and western worldviews and providing another rich source for the *Geography*; see Yongdan forthcoming, 128–130.

37 On this exchange of the Tsenpo and the 7th Panchen Lama see Yongdan forthcoming, 28–30; 244–247.

ing at least nominally the traditional Buddhist framework, which served as a sufficiently »malleable template«,[38] to use Kapstein's term.

The rough outline of the location of Europe is followed by a depiction of the regional order (Atlantic, Germanic, Turkish, Russian, Nordic and British regions), and a list of kingdoms, principalities, and »innumerable large and small countries.«[39] This spatial and political order is then enriched through a systematic description of various aspects of European geography and culture.[40] The last of these features is religion, on which the Tsenpo wrote the largest thematic section. He then describes the various countries of Europe in detail, starting with southern Europe (Spain, France, Portugal, Italy), followed by central Europe (Germany, Austria, Hungary), eastern Europe (the Balkans including Greece, Poland, Russia, Prussia), western Europe (Denmark, Low Countries, Great Britain), and northern Europe (Scandinavia, Iceland, northern coast of Russia).

The Tsenpo's general introduction to Europe depicts it in a very positive light. On gender relations, for example, we can read:

> The native men (marry) before they reached (the age of) 30 years, and the women (before) 20 years; there is no custom of espousing relatives, or of one man taking more than one wife. In those countries, even such as kings and ministers show respect to women and to all the many female monastics (who) follow the way of the teacher Ye-su' u-si [Russian: Iisus, Jesusu].[41]

It seems that at the time male Europeans, regardless of class or social status, wholeheartedly supported and respected women. Tsenpo emphasises the absence of polyandry and marriage within the family, a fact he highlights either because he is following one of his sources or because to him, it con-

38 Kapstein 2011, 341.

39 Johnson 1972, 82/115a.

40 The thematic order is climate, agriculture, trade and travel, gender relations, architecture, education and social welfare, jurisprudence, warfare and military alliances, clothing and textiles, technology, stature and physiognomy of Europeans, religion; see Johnson 1972, 84–97/115b-121a.

41 Johnson 1972, 85/116a. There is a mistake in translation here, as in the source text it says *rab tu byung ba pho mo* (18/116a), which means »ordained men and women«, whereas Johnson only translates »female monastics«.

trast with his own cultural and social environment and thus is worth noting.[42] On political alliances the Tsenpo states: »Because there is mutual friendship among the rulers of those countries, they exchange valuable gifts with other kingdoms, and they say they are always traveling back and forth to each other's palaces, etc.«[43] This selfless greatness of the rulers is also reflected in European jurisprudence, which apparently knows no class distinctions:

> People pay taxes without being forced. There is no such thing as treating each other badly, accusations, the powerful taking over the weaker, or corruption. If fighting occurs, the elders and smarter people settle the dispute, which finally reaches the ears of the kings. The kings will settle the dispute on the merit of the laws without taking into consideration face, value or wealth. The ministers have never played tricks or lied about the truth. Punishments such as beheadings, cutting off hands, and torture are banned. The guilty party has to pay a lot of taxes and is banished from the home country.[44]

Europe here seems to be a land of peace, justice, and freedom. This euphemistic account may well be attributed to the Tsenpo's missionary sources, who tried to show Christian culture in the best light. One may also wonder if there is a trace of critique involved against failings in the political, juridical and religious elites at home. Or was the Tsenpo simply unfamiliar with current political and historical facts in Europe? Yongdan shows convincingly that the Tsenpo did not write on crucial socio-political issues of his time, for example the French Revolution, the American war of independence, or the slave trade.[45] He was, however, well aware of European expansion and imperialism in the various regions of the world, which he describes in a rather admiring, uncritical tone.[46] And he also wrote from his own expe-

42 On familial structures in Tibet see Stein 1972, 94–109; specifically on Tibetan fraternal polyandry Willett 1997.

43 Johnson 1972, 85/116a.

44 See Yongdan forthcoming, 207.

45 See Yongdan forthcoming, 232–233.

46 The Tsenpo is quite accurate in describing the conquered countries and colonies: for Spain he treats the old and new world (Johnson 1972, 104/124a), he names different French overseas colonies (Johnson 1972, 111/126a), for Portugal he highlights Brazil (Johnson 1972, 112–113/126b), and for England India (Johnson 1972, 147/139a). On this topic see

rience, for example when describing various mechanical objects and European inventions:

> There are many different shapes and sizes of watches; compasses; glass tools for measuring the altitude and temperature; glass tools for warming beds and houses; glass tubes in which chemicals measure a patient's pulse; many different sizes of binoculars and telescopes to observe stars, tools for finding roads at sea; tools that make one object become several; a trumpet that can [allow someone to] speak from a long distance; tubes that can allow one to hear voices from far away; lights that have no oil and clothing that generates light; a box that contains music; a mirror on which appears [distant] places and cities; mirrors on which people inside a house can view outside; mirrors that recognize thieves, hide one from the enemy, and burn the enemy; flags that protect from lightning and hail; many different stunning things such as celestial and global maps; golden, thin and twin-color fabrics; and many good materials, and so-called »pA gru« fabric also comes from this land. There are also machines that are mechanized by fire, water, air and wood. Cooking, carpentry, metal-working, powdering, and making oil [are all done] by using these machines.[47]

As such goods were already traded globally and brought as gifts to the Qing court, the Tsenpo surely had seen them with his own eyes.[48] Therefore, rather than speculating about the sources of the Tsenpo's euphemistic account of Europe, it seems more useful to look for the cause of this depiction in a

chapters 4, »Creating a New Synthesis«, and 5, »Observing the Rise of Europe« in Yongdan forthcoming.

47 Yongdan forthcoming, 205.

48 See Yongdan forthcoming, 206; for an account of magnificent objects such as glass balls from Berchtesgaden at the Qing court see Juneja/Grasskamp 2018, 12–24. The fact that Tsenpo was familiar with some of his subjects is also evident in his description of German culture, which reads like a description of his interlocutor Bunge: »The people of those lands (have) hair yellow like brass wire, and the shape of the faces is somewhat round. Their disposition […] is consistently mild and sparing of words. They obtain facts only through personal inquiry and investigation; they do not believe anyone else at all, whether god, devil or man. I myself conversed at length informally with a minor official of that same country, one called A-lag-san-dri (Alexander)« (Johnson 1972, 120–121/129b).

larger context. As we shall see, it is heavily related to his treatment of religion in Europe.

3. A Buddhist reassessment of Christianity

Besides the adjustment of western geography and Buddhist cosmology, the Tsenpo's *Geography* holds a variety of remarkable depictions for the study of religion, for example his representation of Christianity in Europe. Of course his description is highly mediated through the information provided by Jesuit missionaries as well as by the Russian missionaries and other interlocutors he encountered. Nevertheless, the Tsenpo's presentation of Christianity can be understood as representative of a global imaginary that sheds light on communication processes of identity and alterity in the Eurasian context.

In the Tsenpo's general introduction on Europe, religion seems to play a minor role. Only now and then do religious aspects come into play, for example concerning gender relations, education and social welfare, or warfare.[49] Concerning the latter he states:

> If foreign kings happen to invade them, it is the custom among all the countries, that military alliances are made by the other rulers closely related to the king of the invaded country. If the enemy is of a different race, such as the Kla-klo, […] it is the kings and ministers of the (whole) land of Yau-ru-pa (who) unanimously make war.[50]

The religious reference in this quotation is hidden in the term *kla klo*, which denotes foreigners, barbarians, and also non-believers, infidels, or sometimes Muslims.[51] Similar to the term *phe rang* Johnson does not translate *kla klo* but takes it as a *terminus technicus* due to its wide range of meanings.[52] This proves to be helpful, for in another passage *kla klo* refers to the Christians as

49 See Johnson 1972, 85/116a; 86/116a.

50 Johnson 1972, 87/117a.

51 See Johnson 168, footnote 52.

52 See Johnson 1972, 90/118b. In any case, the translation of *kla klo* as simply »Muslim« is problematic: there is a long history of problematising the Buddhist-Muslim relationship, a narrative that is delicate and historically incorrect; see Elverskog 2018; 2010.

people who do not follow the Buddhist path. However, here the use of this term in the context of European religious history and in combination with the depiction of an enemy »of a different race« can only refer to the Muslim »other« during the crusades. By naming the enemies of European kings as *kla klo*, Christianity is defined as the unifying feature of all European countries and kings, a narrative that says more about the informants of the Tsenpo than about the religious unity of Europe at the time.

It is remarkable that only at the end of the general introduction to Europe, and after considering a wide range of cultural practices and artefacts, Christianity as *the* European religion finally comes into play. Johnson referred to these passages as »an interesting spontaneous explanation of Christianity couched in Buddhist terminology«.[53] Until today no scholar has shed light on the complex intertwining of Christian and Buddhist understandings in this section and I can only highlight some aspects here.

The first passage on religion reads analogously to the beginning of the general presentation of the European continent, for the Tsenpo characterises »the Christian« in an ambiguous way leaving a wide margin of interpretation as to what Christians actually do and believe:

> Those people are so intelligent and are full of wisdom. Whether worldly or spiritual, there is no one to compare to them. Although they appear not to be Buddhist or barbarian in their hearts, they do not have habitual tendencies or not ones called by particular names, but they do focus on accumulating merit.[54]

The accumulation of merit (Sanskrit *puṇya*; Tibetan *bsod nams*) is a central Buddhist concept and the main motivation for many daily rituals in Tibetan Buddhism to secure a fortunate future rebirth – and it is here declared a Christian practice too. Through his wording the Tsenpo creates similarity and thus invites the intended Buddhist readers to engage with the Christian »other« in an unbiased way. Furthermore, the account may reflect the Tsenpo's own observation: in his many encounters with Europeans at the Qing

53 Johnson 1972, 1.

54 Yongdan forthcoming, 209. For the sake of my argument on merit, I here give Yongdan's translation, which is clearer in its Buddhist terminology; for Johnson's rendering of the passage see 1972, 90/118b.

court, he may have observed an oscillating identity of formal (outward) commitment to Christian norms and an inner (secret) motivation which he saw as fully compatible with Buddhist approaches.

In the following passages, the Tsenpo treats the Christian understanding of the almighty God, the creation and the question of theodicy. He then discusses the Old and New Testaments, including remarkable descriptions of Moses and Jesus. He discusses the ten commandments and the evangelists, and then mentions some systematic aspects of the Christian religion, such as the use of images or the cross as a sign of membership in the church. In the penultimate passage on religion he very briefly mentions three denominations in Europe, but does not go into further detail. Before moving on to the section offering detailed descriptions of the European countries, the Tsenpo makes a remarkable argument for Europeans as *rigs ldan pa*, which means »of noble descent« or »adhering to the kings of Shambhala«. I will return to this passage below.

For now I would like to highlight two aspects concerning the Tsenpo's treatment of Christianity. First, the Tsenpo's comparison of Moses and Padmasambhava and of Jesus and Buddha Shakyamuni respectively, and second his irritation with philosophical and practical issues concerning human existence, karma, and rebirth.

To characterise the figures of Moses and Jesus Christ, he refers to important men of Buddhist religious history, namely Padmasambhava and also the Buddha himself.[55] When introducing Moses, the Tsenpo describes him as the »Lake born« (*mtsho skyes*), an epithet for the great Tibetan saint Padmasambhava.[56] Padmasambhava is venerated as the person who first brought Buddhism to Tibet. He founded the so-called Nyingma (*rnying ma*) school, the old school, which still stands out against the so-called »new schools« (*gsar ma*, which are Sakya, Kagyu, Gelug).[57] Based on his Buddhist knowledge, the Tsenpo correctly interprets Judaism as the origin of Christianity through the comparison of Padmasambhava and Moses. Also Jesus Christ is presented in a similar way. Whenever the Tsenpo refers to him, he uses

55 In a similar attempt, the Tsenpo compares Jesus's mother, Mary (Maria) to a Dakini (*mkha' 'gro ma*; »sky dancer«), when he states: in Loreto there is »the house of the mkha'-'gro-ma […] called Mā-li-yā (Maria), who appeared in ancient times« (Johnson 1972, 115–116/127b). According to legend, in the 13th century the Casa di Loreto was brought by angels from Nazareth to Loreto; see Johnson 1972, 188, footnote 136.

56 See Johnson 1972, 92/119a; and 173, footnote 75.

57 See Snellgrove 2002, 211–212.

the designation »teacher« (*bston pa*), which usually refers to the main teacher in Buddhism, the Buddha.[58] Furthermore, Jesus Christ is depicted as one who was »wandering in many countries«[59] in Europe and Africa for years, performing miracles and winning over many natives. From a Buddhist perspective, this may recall the popular story of the Buddha's activities after his enlightenment when he lived as a wandering monk, followed by his retinue, performing miracles and successfully engaging in debates with his brahmin opponents.[60] While the Tsenpo comments only very succinctly on the suffering of Jesus, he describes the resurrection in detail:

> After three days had passed, having entered his former body, he frightened the soldiers of that land […]. Then, having gone to the […] (Galilee) country (where) he preached to the natives and his own former disciples (about) equality (among) one another, I have heard it said that he visibly manifested the teacher's own body to four of the chief disciples, such as […] (Peter), (and then) became invisible.[61]

Imagining the resurrection of Jesus Christ as visible manifestation of a bodily form hints at Buddhist practices of visualisation and manifestation of spiritual power in physical form.

In the passages on Christianity in Europe the Tsenpo makes repeated use of phrases such as »They believe that…«,[62] »They say…«,[63] and »I have heard«.[64] These repetitions give these sections a particularly distanced feeling and seem to express a certain irritation which becomes especially clear when he discusses Christian religious practice and theology. He declares for example:

> In that religion they do not trample on any representation, even pictures, of the cross and they do not have many strict rules to observe, except for not eating the meat of dead cattle or the blood of any ani-

58 See Johnson 1972, 85/116a; 92/119a–119b; and Johnson 1972, 97/121a.
59 See Johnson 1972, 92/119a.
60 For an account of the Buddha's missionary activities see Schumann 1982, 107–221.
61 Johnson 1972, 92–93/119b.
62 Johnson 1972, 90/118b.
63 Johnson 1972, 91/118b.
64 Johnson 1972, 93/119b.

> mal whatsoever. As for the symbol of membership, it is the sign of the cross, made from such luxuries as gold, silver, copper, iron, precious wood, (which) they wear fastened at their necks. Otherwise, how they perform accomplished meditation, what they commit to memory, etc., is not prescribed (or, clear).[65]

Here, the Tsenpo implicitly refers to specific events of Christianity in China and Japan in the 18th century, when secret Christians were exposed by their reaction to persecutors stepping on the cross.[66] From the outside, only a few markers of belonging are apparent to him, the cross being the most obvious, but no particularly strict religious behaviour. He wonders how spiritual accomplishments are achieved, for he could not make out a habit of meditation or mnemotechnic, which is particularly characteristic of the Tibetan Buddhist monastic curriculum.[67]

The greatest question mark for the Tsenpo lies in the Christian understanding of human existence, the role of karma and the idea of rebirth. Drawing on the Buddhist notion of rebirth in one of the six realms of existence, he tries to understand the Christian concept of the soul. He notices the lack of a thorough understanding of karma, since in Christian philosophy there is no differentiation of inner and outer causes and actions.[68] Although he includes a lengthy description of the opposition of God and Satan, good and bad, paradise and hell, it becomes clear that for him, these teachings are not compatible with his Buddhist understanding of cyclic existence. In particular, the description of Satan and the consequences of bad actions do not seem to convince him. In this passage he refers twice to hearsay with the phrases »it is said« and »I have heard that«.[69]

65 Johnson 1972, 94/120a.

66 See Johnson 1972, 174–175, footnote 80.

67 On mnemotechnic and the monastic curriculum of the Gelug sect in Tibetan Buddhism see Dreyfus 2003.

68 »While they are not clear on formal conditions, such as requital through deeds of virtue and vice, or external and inherent causation, according to the way (they) put it, they do experience both the inherent effects of self-contained (action), such as accumulating deeds of virtue and vice, and the effects of externally-caused experience. What is done while, having cast off the former body, the next is not (yet) acquired, (is) only the result of external causes« (Johnson 1972, 95/120b).

69 Johnson 1972, 96–97/121a.

Apart from these passages on Christianity, religion plays a strikingly minor role in the Tsenpo's description of European countries. Apparently, he had no information on religious wars in Europe, for in the passage on Italy he refers to the pope as »ruler of the Phe-rang-ki clergy«,[70] that means, the »European clergy«. Concerning the various Christian denominations, he only states that »among the Phe-rang there are three great divisions« but »(I) will not elaborate here«.[71] Probably due to this lack of differentiation, religion is absent for example in the passages on Germany (Protestantism), Russia or Greece (Russian or Greek Orthodox Church). And as far as the *Geography*'s part on Europe is concerned, also Islam and Judaism are absent.

The passage on religion in Europe is the last part of the general introduction to Europe, after which follows the section of detailed descriptions of the various countries. As a sort of transition, there is a passage in which the Tsenpo departs seemingly abruptly from the topic of religion. However, as I will discuss in the next section, his terminology reveals that this passage puts everything previously said and everything to come in a different, still religious, but now Buddhist light. In this short passage the Tsenpo describes Europeans as *rigs ldan pa* (pronounced: Rigdenpa), which means »of noble descent« or »adhering to the kings of Shambhala«.[72]

4. The »Buddhisation« of Europe

Until today the focus of scholars reading the *Geography*'s section on Europe has been the Tsenpo's equation of Europe with the mythic land of Shambhala.[73] As we have seen in the passages on religion, in several instances, the Tsenpo describes Christianity through Buddhist terms, and thus integrates Buddhism and Christianity. This can be read as a strategy to persuade his intended readers why they should engage with Europe and Christianity at all, keeping open a space of interpretation and dialogue. With the section

70 Johnson 1972, 114/127a.

71 Johnson 1972, 97/121a.

72 The Tsenpo uses the phrase *rigs ldan pa* already in earlier passages (see Johnson 1972, 27/120a), but it is only at the beginning of this passage that he explicitly connects Europeans (»Franks«) with Shambhala in phrases such as *phe rang rigs ldan par*, *rigs ldan pa la phe reng*, and *phe reng rigs ldan gyi sder gtogs par* (Johnson 1972, 30/121a).

73 See Wylie 1970; Martin 1990, 129–130; Yongdan 2011, 128–129.

on the Europeans as *rigs ldan pa* however, it becomes clear that the author was concerned to keep this interpretive space open for a very specific notion: identifying Europeans as the kings of Shambhala and Spain as the kingdom of Shambhala itself.

Following the passage on Europeans as *rigs ldan pa*, the Tsenpo begins his journey through the individual European countries with Spain.[74] He provides detailed information on the landscape, flora and fauna, the people and their clothing, their capabilities in astrology and astronomy, and the various provinces.[75] He goes on to describe a landscape in the middle of Castilia:

> In the middle of the province Kasti-li-ya there is a rocky mountain (which), not being too high, is easy to climb, and has mostly blue-green colored rock, and broad sides. On its summit is the royal palace called Ma-ti'i-ri-tā, or Ma-ti-ri-ka-la-pa (Madrid). […] Though I have personally seen a picture of that palace, drawn on the cover of a book […] my impression is not very distinct. They say that city, ranked among the multitude of cities of the land of Yau-ru-pa, is the best, and (its) wealth is the greatest.[76]

The names of the city of Madrid (»Ma-ti'i-ri-tā, or Ma-ti-ri-ka-la-pa«) are a crucial point in following the Tsenpo's equation of Spain and Shambhala, because »Kalāpa« is the name of the capital of Shambhala.[77] Hence, the Tsenpo highlights Madrid and its palace as being one of the richest and most powerful royal residences of Europe. He continues by describing two lavish temples in front of the royal palace that contain »golden platforms with precious ornaments«, elegant workmanship, »images of the seven dharmarājas«,[78] mosaics in black and white, thirty-six altars and no less than 3000

74 Classical Greek and Latin and medieval geographies and travel accounts often took the Pillars of Hercules (ie. Straits of Gibraltar) as a fixed point to begin a section. As a result, they sometimes started their description of Europe with Iberia (although not always). Therefore, the Tsenpo's starting point in Spain might be due to the influence of his European geographical sources. I thank Sean Ryan for this insightful note.

75 See Johnson 1972, 98–101/121b-123a.

76 Johnson 1972, 102/123a.

77 See Yongdan forthcoming, 199–200; Wylie 1970, 29.

78 See Johnson 1972, 102/123a.

musical instruments. His textual source explains all that, but it does not make clear to the Tsenpo,

> what is on top of the altars in the temple, or which specific kings the seven royal images are likenesses of. After investigating, I think they might be an image of the first Buddha on the golden pedestal, and as for the seven statues of kings, they might be images of the seven dharmarājas such as Zla-bzang.[79]

After this the Tsenpo describes the Spanish expansion to South America and concludes: »[T]heir possessions, their troops and material wealth in all respects exceeded (that of) other kingdoms, I have heard it said.«[80]

Not only did the Tsenpo equate Europeans to Shambhala kings, but also Spain to Shambhala and Madrid to Kalapa, the capital city of Shambhala.[81] Historically, the toponym of Shambhala appeared in the *Mahābhārata* and Indian Puranic literature, where it referred to the village where Kalki, the future incarnation of the god Viṣṇu, will be born and later on engage in an apocalyptic war to purify the world.[82] The authors of the Buddhist *Kālacakratantra* adapted this narrative in the 11th century and created a Buddhist text and ritual that soon became popular and authorative in Tibet. In this adaptation, Shambhala is imagined as a mighty kingdom consisting of ninety-six great lands, led by a dynasty of bodhisattva kings. Whereas in the Indian literature Shambhala is clearly located in time and space and refers to an actual place, it became refashioned in Buddhist imaginary as an ambiguous land, existing in our time and space but only visible for those with pure perception. As early as the 13th century this fostered a Tibetan literary genre of route descriptions and itineraries to Shambhala.[83] In the early 19th century Shambhala entered the western imagination and was once more adapted, turning into a paradise-like spiritual land which fostered new interest in Shambhala from different perspectives such as western occult spiritual

79 See Johnson 1972, 102–103/123b.

80 See Johnson 1972, 104/124a.

81 That this equation was received and accepted is proven by notes in the margins of the manuscript; see Johnson 1972, 100/122b; 101/123a; and Wylie 1970, 29–30.

82 On this and the following information on Shambhala see Lopes 2015, 181–205; Rakow 2012; Berzin 2010; Newman 1996; Schwartzberg 1994, 629–636.

83 On the itineraries to Shambhala see Newman 1996.

traditions, Nazi expeditions in the Himalayas, archaeologists and Tibetologists, and emerging western Buddhist groups. When assessing the Tsenpo's *Geography* from this western reception history, which tried so hard to imagine and actually find Shambhala as a sacred pure land in Tibet, at first it is striking that the Tsenpo did quite the opposite: he imagined Shambhala in the west. However, from the point of view of Tibetan intellectual history, this is not surprising at all, for the Tsenpo intervened in a lively debate on whether Shambhala is located on this earth or not.

As stated above, the Tsenpo's attempt to harmonise traditional Tibetan cosmological and geographical knowledge and western scientific information about earth was in line with earlier attempts in the 18th century. All these authors also engaged with the topic of Shambhala. In his *General Description of the World* (1777), Sumpa Khenpo located the mythical Kingdom of Shambhala in the north of Tibet, that means in a specific geographical terrain that people – especially Buddhists – could actually reach. And the 6th Panchen Lama wrote an authoritative guidebook to Shambhala in 1777. Writing on world geography and *not* treating the question of Shambhala therefore was not an option for an important and well-known Tibetan intellectual such as the Tsenpo was. Nevertheless, how and why he came to identify Europe and especially Spain as the kingdom of Shambhala can only be surmised.[84]

Looking at the complete *Geography* there is a remarkable mirroring. As the Tsenpo writes mainly for a Tibetan Buddhist audience, he commences his world geography in Nepal and India, the Buddhist lands next to Tibet. He concludes the section on India with the words:

> What I have mentioned are the twelve principal events of the life of Buddha and where they occurred, with some important holy sites in Magadha that were mentioned in the sutra texts. By using colloquial language and accessible words, I wrote this account for the benefit of the pilgrims.[85]

84 Tsenpo was well aware that his reflections were provocative; the passage in which he characterises the Europeans as *rigs ldan pa* is formulated as a defence against possible objections. And at the end of the *Geography* he defends his position once more; see Wylie 1970, 26–29.

85 Yongdan forthcoming, 157.

From this statement we can conclude that the Tsenpo tried from the outset to adjust Buddhist and western geographical knowledge, here the Buddha Shakyamuni's hagiography and actual pilgrimage sites. Following Yongdan, the depiction of those Buddhist sites worked as *de-mystification*, insofar as the Tsenpo treated them as actual geographical and not mythical sites.[86] As we have seen, when treating Europe, the Tsenpo tried to harmonise Buddhist cosmology and western geography. In this case, however, we have to speak of a veritable *re-mystification* of Europe. For, while the Tsenpo's approach is systematic and his geographical and cultural descriptions are accurate, his reference to Shambhala and the characterisation of Europeans as inhabitants of Shambhala achieves the transcendency or, more precisely, Buddhisation of Europe. Viewed in this light, the positive image of European politics, social welfare and culture that the Tsenpo sketches in the general introduction works as legitimisation: because Europe is such a great continent, it is legitimate to argue that it is the place of the *rigs ldan pas*. And this legitimisation has a catalytic effect: by identifying Europe as the place of Shambhala, the Tsenpo further nobilises and sacralises Europe, making it an even more respectable place, worthy of noble Buddhist inhabitants.

5. A transcultural representation of Europe

The Tsenpo's representation of Europe was intended for a general Tibetan audience. He used a common language, drawing on Buddhist cosmological terminology and existing Tibetan geographical knowledge. He did not completely abandon the Buddhist worldview, but he expanded it significantly through the enormous geographical knowledge he has incorporated. Therefore, the *Geography* is a valuable document that bears witness to the negotiation of different worldviews, and, moreover, to global transcultural communication processes, since it is both the result of and the stimulation for entangled geographical and cultural knowledge production.

In the *Geography* cosmological and geographical discourses are interwoven. The Tsenpo continued a tradition of Tibetan geographical works, trying to harmonise western scientific and Tibetan Buddhist worldviews.

86 See Yongdan forthcoming, 194–197.

In her attempt to grasp Tibetan modernity, Janet Gyatso defines the modern as something »that is bigger than the actor's local context and is cast as something to aspire to, for its intrinsic virtues, and especially as something that seeks to distance itself from past customs and assumptions now deemed unsatisfactory.«[87] However, in a transcultural perspective the modern might not be understood in terms of distanciation and rejection, but as conscious adaption and critical mediation of various knowledge cultures. In that sense, the Tsenpo's *Geography* could be understood as a modern geographical compendium. He condenses differing knowledge systems into a single geographical compendium that provides a means for engaging with local intellectual and religious discourses as well as issues of global politics and power. Therefore, it also has to be understood in the light of geopolitical and socio-cultural shifts at the time.

When the Tsenpo stayed in Beijing, the Qing dynasty already suffered from inner revolts and the British stood at its door. Hence, the Tsenpo was well aware of European expansion and imperialism and in the *Geography* one can sense his admiration for this expansionist policy, especially with regard to Spain. In the light of this very political and historical situation the Tsenpo's equation of Europe with Shambhala could be understood as a strategy to quite explicitly suggest to his intended readers that a rapprochement with Europe could become politically important.[88] In the context of the apocalyptic imagination fostered by the *Kālacakratantra* and the resulting question of who would save the world, the Tsenpo's equation of Shambhala with Spain suggests that salvation would come from Europe, from the kings and inhabitants of Shambhala. Hence the Tsenpo's re-mystification of Europe and his Buddhisation of Christianity – for all the criticism and incomprehension that permeate Tsenpo's description of its theology – have to be considered in this larger, geopolitical horizon.

In a transcultural perspective the *Geography* appears as a cosmopolitan work that is part of a global imaginary. As a seal-holder Lama with a personal relationship to the emperor, the Tsenpo had access to a wide range of textual, visual and oral sources on European geography, history, and culture produced by Asian and European intellectuals, scientists and artists alike. Thus, the *Geography* is the result of a dense web of European and Asian

87 Gyatso 2011, 14.

88 Yongdan forthcoming, 233.

representations of the world. And it was an impulse to create an ever more entangled web of cross-cultural European and Asian imaginations: As mentioned already, scholars in Tibetan studies were heavily interested in the *Geography*'s part on Tibet, India and Nepal, whereas in Tibet it became one of the most popular and wide-spread accounts of Europe and the world as a whole.[89]

Looking at Europe from an early-19th century Tibetan perspective opens up new approaches to its spatial order, its cultural practices and mythical dimensions. Through the production and reception history of the Tsenpo's *Geography* Europe appears as a figure of never-ending layers of meaning and imaginations that come from far more distant places than we might have thought of. Following the Tsenpo's imagination of Europe, we as European readers, might ask ourselves: what if, for once, we imagined the heart of Europe not in Brussels, Berlin, Paris or London, but in the European south? What if today's politically fragile, economically precarious, and culturally and socially innovative Mediterranean regions were to gain power in European politics and culture? What if, after all, European histories, politics, economies, cultures, and religions were to be reassessed through a Tibetan Buddhist lens? Rethinking the Tsenpo's description of Europe, it might finally become a place where there truely is no corruption, where there is no powerful taking over the weaker, and where authorities settle disputes without taking into consideration face, value or wealth. Europe might aspire to become a place where people are full of wisdom, abandon their habitual tendencies and focus on accumulating merit for the sake of all sentient beings.

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89 The fact that the manuscript translated by Johnson was edited by four readers, testifies to the fact that it was widely read; see Johnson 1972, 12. She highlights that no other section of the *Geography* has undergone so many emendations, »which suggests that this copy may have been used rather extensively as a reference work on Europe« (1972, 167, footnote 47). On the popularity of the *Geography* in Tibet see also Yongdan forthcoming, 252–258.

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