

Thursday 15 November 2018 – 16.30 - 18.00, Maison de l'Asie (4th floor)
22, avenue du Président Wilson, 75016 Paris

**“The Bodyguard regiment (Ka dang sku srung dmag sgar) of the Ganden
Phodrang army”**

by

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The Bodyguard regiment (Tib. Ka dang sku srung dmag sgar) was created by the 13th Dalai lama around 1913-1914 and dissolved, with the rest of the remaining Tibetan troops, in 1959 after the 14th Dalai Lama's flight into exile. When started, it was the first regiment (regiments were named in alphabetical order, hence “Ka”) in the newly organised and numerically increased army. It complemented the former Ganden Phodrang force of 3000 Tibetan soldiers, called “*rgya sbyong*”

(lit. “trained by the Chinese”) at least since the end of the 18th century.

This paper will present a first attempt at a historical study of the Bodyguard regiment, based on an ensemble of Tibetan oral and written autobiographical accounts (notably some thirty-five interviews with Tibetan soldiers who served before 1959 in the Bodyguard regiment, and five book-length and article-length accounts of the Tibetan Bodyguard regiment's officers published in the Tibet Autonomous Region and in India), as well as on British archival sources. Beyond the study of its organisation, its social composition and development over its period of existence, the presentation will particularly underline how this regiment was conceived as a showcase of the project of military modernisation launched by the 13th Dalai lama, functioning as a “model regiment” for the other permanent Tibetan troops, while retaining certain specificities related to its primary – and highly prestigious – role as the personal bodyguard to the Ganden Phodrang government's ruler.

Photo caption: The Bodyguard / Ka dang sku srung regiment (between 1948 and 1950)

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