

# The Three Religious Kings

## Tibet's Relations with its Neighbours



Costumes of Songtsen Gampo's army



Map of the Tibetan Empire

King Songtsen Gampo built the greatest empire of his time in Asia. During his reign, the capital was moved from Yarlung to Lhasa. The King understood the necessity of a balanced policy between Tibet's neighbours, India and China.

Under Trisong Detsen and Ralpachen, respectively the Second and Third Religious Kings, the Tibetan Empire continued to expand in all directions.



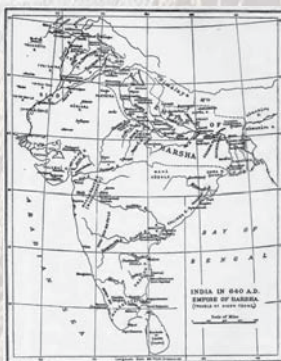
King Songtsen Gampo



Costumes of Songtsen Gampo's army



An episode is worth recalling. When pilgrim Xuanzang returned to China in 642 AD, he briefed the Chinese Emperor about the patronage of King Harshavardhana to the Buddhist faith. To thank King Harsha, the Emperor decided to send a mission to India in 646. But by the time it reached India, Harshavardhana had passed away and one of his Ministers, Arjuna, had ascended the throne. The latter, not being well disposed towards Buddhism, slaughtered the Chinese mission. One of the envoys managed to escape and send a message to Songtsen Gampo who decided to dispatch an army of 12,000 Tibetan troops and 7,000 Nepalis. After a short battle in Hirahati in Bihar, Arjuna was deposed and King Kamarupa of Assam was enthroned.



Map of Harshavardhana's Empire



Helmets of Songtsen Gampo's army



The Yumbulagang Palace of the first Kings of Tibet  
The Empire has extended several times in a few centuries