A Survey of Bonpo Monasteries and Temples in Tibet and the Himalaya

Edited by
Samten G. Karmay & Yasuhiko Nagano
Bon Studies-7

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Foreword

As many scholars have long noticed, Bon is one of the basic cultural strata of Tibet, without which a well-balanced understanding of Tibet cannot be expected. Unfortunately, however, the study of Bon culture has lagged far behind that of Buddhism. Although several outstanding studies have been published in Europe, far fewer researchers have been engaged in the study of Bon than in the study of Buddhism. This tendency is salient particularly in Japan. Japan boasts a long tradition and high standard in the study of Tibetan Buddhism, but other areas of Tibetan studies remain neglected, with the exception of a few superior linguistic and historical achievements.

To improve this situation, a Bon culture research project was launched in 1996, extending through 2001, with funding for an international field research project supported by the Ministry of Education, Japan. Because the project started virtually from scratch, most of these funds were allocated to a survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture and to the development of the groundwork for research.

Since the general editors of “Bon studies” series, Samten G. Karmay (CNRS, Paris) and I, Yasuhiko Nagano (National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka), began to have the fruits of this project published in 1999, we have received many inquiries concerning the series. Most of these were complaints about the lack of availability of our publications. Because the series appeared as part of the Senri Ethnological Reports from the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, on a non-commercial basis, our volumes were distributed only to a limited number of related researchers and libraries.

Fortunately, several publishers were interested in a reprint of the “Bon Studies” series. After comparing the various proposals carefully, the general editors of the series chose Saujanya Publications, Delhi. This publisher generously offered to reprint all our Bon Studies series including future publications, for which we would like to express our warmest gratitude.

We hope that the reprint is helpful for its wider availability and that it will accelerate Bon studies in general.

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Acknowledgements

We are deeply indebted and grateful to the Director-General, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan for granting us the permission to reprint the entire series of Bon Studies. Their generous gesture in selecting us for publishing this work reflects not only their trust in us but has motivated us to take on the reprinting of their future volumes as well.

We are extremely thankful to Professor Yasuhiko Nagano, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan for his tremendous support and enormous help in reprinting this series. He has extended his full cooperation at each and every step in bringing out this reproduction. Our special thanks are also due to Professor Dr. Musashi Tachikawa of the same museum for his moral support. At the same time we cannot forget to mention the name of Lopön Tenzin Namdak, the founder of Tritan Norbutse Bon Education Centre of Nepal, who has not only blessed this project but helped in providing the material on Bon Studies to the original publisher. We believe that this project cannot be successfully launched in India without his blessings.

Last but not the least, we owe our deep respect and gratitude to the learned scholars of International repute, who have graciously contributed their scholarly articles, research papers and art material for inclusion in this invaluable series. Our special thanks to the team of Bon Studies Series, which is headed by Dr. Samten G. Karmay and Dr. Yasuhiko Nagano, who took the initiative in the compilation of these volumes.

We believe that this Bon Studies Series will become the source material to accelerate further studies of this ancient religion of Tibet, which has not received the desired attention of the scholars and academicians of the world so far.

— Publisher
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Preface

Yasuhiko Nagano

This volume contains the results of our field research concerning Bonpo monasteries, hermitages and people in Tibet and the Himalayas, supported by Ministry of Education, Japan.

Bon is one of the pre-Buddhist religions in Tibet. By the term 'pre-Buddhist' here I mean that it existed in Tibet before Buddhism was imported into the area and that it has survived till the present time. Although various definitions of Bon have been proposed, it could be properly said that, in Bonpo culture, we perceive something essential or basic, that has pervaded Tibetan culture from ancient times to the present day. Bon is therefore an important cultural substratum in Tibet.

Unfortunately, however, the study of Bon culture has lagged far behind that of Buddhism. This tendency is salient all over the world, especially in Japan. To improve this situation, a Bon culture research project was launched in 1996 with funding for joint research from the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, and a subsidy from the Ministry of Education for overseas survey. Most of these funds were allocated to the development of the groundwork for research, to the field survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture, to the interim symposium and to publication of our fruits.

The development of groundwork for research includes Bonpo Canon (Kangyur and Katen texts, rare texts which are not included in Kangyur nor in Katen), iconographical materials, F. W. Thomas' research notes on Zhangzhung language kept in the British Library, and so on. An interdisciplinary symposium was held in the summer of 1999 at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, and leading scholars from wide range of fields attended it presenting papers on various topics related to Bon religion. Those who participated in doing fieldwork for the research project were also invited to attend the symposium so that they could present their findings. Most of the papers read at the symposium were published in 2000. It is my hope that the publication of papers has set a new standard in the study of Bon.

The results of field survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture are presented in this volume. The concrete and detailed descriptions of the Bonpo monasteries and people, based on extensive fieldwork, have never appeared since the beginning of Tibetology, and it is my belief that this publication will prove to be a significant milestone for future studies of Tibetan culture.
In the autumn of 1995, Dr. Samten G. Karmay and I discussed together concerning how to carry out a field research into the Bon religious establishments and drew up a questionnaire carefully. That framework is described in Dr. Samten Karmay's "Introduction". Needless to say, the history and present conditions of monasteries, temples and hermitages are included. The framework also includes the exact location of each monastery and its economic states as well as relationship to local society. Many of monasteries involved in fact do not appear on maps and, even if they do, we often find discrepancy between actual location and their names. We wished, therefore, to locate the places by GPS measurement. Actual economic states of monastery and its ties with locality and/or with lay world have keenly interested scholars, but these matters are extremely difficult for non-Bonpos to approach.

Four authors spent a lot of time and exerted themselves both academically and physically in doing fieldwork on each monastery. Many of monasteries are not easily reachable because of poor transportation; others are not constantly occupied by anyone and the authors had to make several trips to complete their fieldwork and to get information. Almost all the areas have been covered, but particular parts of the southeastern TAR are left unstudied.

The field survey of actual conditions of Bon culture was conducted in TAR, Tibetan areas in China, India and Nepal. Thanks to the positive support of China Center for Tibetan Studies, Beijing, Tibet Academy of Social Sciences, Lhasa, and Triten Norbutse Bonpo Educational Centre, Kathmandu, many valuable descriptions were collected, which were previously unknown to scholars. Without their generous consideration, this volume would never have seen the light of day.

After several rounds of editing, the descriptions included in this volume have come to be of great use for students of Tibetan culture.

I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Japan and the National Museum of Ethnology, my present working place, for their continued support of this project.

The following is a list of publications issued or soon to be issued under the same series as this volume (Senri Ethnological Reports):

**Bon Studies 1**  
*Mandalas of the Bon Religion* (SER No. 12)  
Editors: Tenzin Namdak, Musashi Tachikawa and Yasuhiko Nagano

**Bon Studies 2**  
*New Horizons in Bon Studies* (SER No. 15)  
Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano
Bon Studies 3
_A New Research on Zhangzhung and Related Himalayan Languages_ (SER No. 19)
Editors: Yasuhiko Nagano and Randy LaPolla

Bon Studies 4
_A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts_ (SER No. 24)
Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 5
_A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts — Indices_ (SER No. 25)
Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano
[Revised version of Bon Studies 4 and 5 is available in the shape of CD-ROM.]

Bon Studies 6
_The Call of the Blue Cuckoo_ (SER No. 32)
Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 7 this volume (SER No.38)

Bon Studies 8
_A Catalogue of the Bon Kanjur_ (SER No. 40)
Editors: Dan Martin, Per Kvaerne and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 9
_Feast of the Morning Light_ (SER No. 57)
Author: Samten G. Karmay

Bon Studies 10
_Bonpo Thangkas from Khyungpo_ (SER No. 60)
Editors: Tenpa Yungdrung, Per Kvaerne, Musashi Tachikawa and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 11
_A Lexicon of Gyalrong Tsanlha Dialect_ (tentative title)
Author: Ngawang Tsultrim
Editors: Marielle Prins and Yasuhiko Nagano
Bon Studies 12
*Bonpo Thangkas from Amdo Rebkong* (tentative title)
Editors: Alak Bongya, Musashi Tachikawa and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 13
*A Research Notes of the Zhangzhung Language* (tentative title)
Author: F. W. Thomas
Editors: Tsuguhito Takeuchi, G. Quessel and Yasuhiko Nagano

It should also be noted that Saujanya Publication, Delhi, generously offered a plan of reprint and the publisher has already reprinted Bon Studies 1 and 2. Since this series is governmental publication and its circulation is rather limited, this offer seems very helpful to accelerate Bon studies.

Finally, let me express my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Samten G. Karmay, who has consistently been encouraging me in Bon studies and cooperating as a general editor, and to Mrs. Satoko Suzuki for her practical help.
Introduction

This volume is concerned with a general survey of monasteries, temples, hermitages of the Bon religion, known as gYung drung Bon, that have survived or recently been rebuilt in Tibet, Tibetan inhabited regions in China proper as well as the Himalayan regions.

The monastic system in the Bon tradition has a long history. It goes back at least to the eleventh century A.D. However, Bon tradition itself traces it back to a period beyond the eleventh century, but this claim remains to be proved.

Although the monasticism of the Bon tradition owns its inspiration to Buddhism, the Bonpo already had established it when the Buddhists began to re-establish their monasteries in the eleventh century. This begins with the six Buddhist monks who returned to Central Tibet from Amdo where they were ordained by Bla chen dGe ba gsal (891-975) according to the Deb ther sngon po by 'Gos Lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal (1392-1481).

In the case of the Bon tradition it started with the disciples of gShen chen Klu dga’. Bonpo chronology ascribes this master to 996-1035. He is also thought to be contemporary with Lo tsa ba Rin chen bzang po (958-1055). The disciples of gShen chen Klu dga’ established various religious centers, such as temples, hermitages and monasteries.

One of the disciples of this master, Bru chen Nam mkha’ g-yung drung, is credited with founding a temple in 1072 near the estate of his own family called Bru, a few kilometers to the east of Shigatse and north of the gTsang po river, Central Tibet. It soon developed into a monastery called gYas ru dBen sa kha. The monastery was mainly maintained by the family by providing its abbots. While one brother ensured the line of the family, another would devote himself to religious life and often became the abbot of the monastery. In such an establishment, the monastery is usually considered as belonging to the family as the term dgon bdag, the ‘owner of the monastery” indicates. The ownership always remained the same even when the abbot was not a member of the family.

dBen sa kha came to be considered as the primary source of the monastic tradition among the Bonpo until the fourteenth century. It was an important centre of learning and produced a number of noted writers. Their works became classics for monastic learning in later centuries. The monastery, however, was destroyed by flood in 1386. With the disappearance of this monastery a period of monastic culture of the Bon tradition came to an end.
A new era began with the foundation of two monasteries also in Central Tibet. These will be briefly described here as they had a tremendous influence over other monastic establishments that are surveyed by the four authors in this volume.

One of the monks of dBen sa kha Monastery just referred to was Shes rab rgyal mtshan. He was the head of one of the colleges of the monastery, but he was absent from the monastery when it was washed away by flood. He was on a visit to his mother in rGyal rong, eastern Tibet.

On the way back to Central Tibet, news of the flood reached him when he was in Dar rtse mdo. Discouraged, he withdrew himself into a retreat, but there he received good signs that encouraged him to resume his journey on foot back to Central Tibet. He is said to have found various objects in the ruins such as books and musical instruments that belonged to the destroyed monastery. With these objects, taken as an auspicious sign, he founded a monastery on the southern slope of Mount sMan ri in 1405. The monastery was called bKra shis sman ri (No.1). It is located in a rather secluded place, up the same valley where dBen sa kha Monastery was located.

With the help of his disciple Rin chen rgyal mtshan, a whole system in accordance with the Bru tradition of dBen sa kha Monastery was re-established with a strong emphasis on the need for abstention from alcoholic drink and the observance of celibacy as the principal guideline of the monastic discipline. These rules are laid out in the bca’yig, the monastic code and it was read out to the assembly in a solemn ceremony by the disciplinarian once a year. The discipline of the new monastery thus became the model for most Bonpo monasteries in later centuries. It was hard to stick to the rules set out in the bca’yig of sMan ri Monastery, but it became an established tradition and most monasteries that were founded later were expected to follow its tradition.

However, there were other monasteries which practised different ritual traditions such as the gShen lugs, the “Tradition of gShen” or Zhu lugs, the “Tradition of Zhu”, but all were expected to follow the same monastic discipline.

The Bonpo were often characterized as being lovers of women and wine (chang nag la dga’ba) by the Buddhists, especially the dGe lugs monastics. In fact, in certain places the members of a monastery or temple were of what one calls ser khyim, that is a kind of “semi-monk” who observes only a few out of the many monastic vows. They usually spent a certain amount of time in the year in the monastery and the rest of the time at home in the village helping do household work. The ser khyim were not necessarily married men nor sngags pa.

The founder of sMan ri Monastery bears the title mNyam med, the “Incomparable One”, but in the colophons of books he wrote he describes himself as gShen gyi drang srong, the “monk who follows the gShen”, i.e. gShen rab Mi bo. Amongst his writings there is a detailed commentary of the ‘Dul ba kun
btus. It is entitled 'Dul 'grel 'phrul gyi sgron me. The 'Dul ba kun btus (Kvaerne 1974: T. 7) is a classic text devoted to the monastic discipline composed in verse by Me ston Shes rab 'od zer (1058-1132). It is these two works that serve as the textual basis of Bonpo monasticism.

sMan ri Monastery remained small and modest in its development as its founder had wished. Before he died, he appointed his disciple Rin chen rgyal mtshan as the abbot of the monastery. Thus Rin chen rgyal mtshan bears the title rGyal tshab, the “Apostle”. However, the successors of Rin chen rgyal mtshan were elected by secret lot from among the qualified monks. There were thirty-two abbots spanning over five hundred and sixty years till around 1966. Its uneasy access did not help it become a great centre, but it was highly esteemed for its strict practice of monastic rules. Per Kvaerne (1970) was the first Western scholar to devote an article to the administration of this monastery. The Monastery was plundered and finally totally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976. As of 2002, it still has not been rebuilt.

gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2) was the second in importance to sMan ri Monastery in Central Tibet. It was founded by sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan (b.1796) of Arndo origin in 1834. Although the monastery was a relatively recent establishment in comparison with sMan ri, it became more prosperous and influential particularly in north-eastern Tibet. The monastery is located on a small plateau at the foot of Mount 'O lha rGyal bzang to the north of the gTsang po river facing the sTag gru kha ferry. It is on the axis of routes leading to Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse and Byang thang, the northern plateau. This explains in part the monastery’s rapid development. For this strategic reason, the monastery was used as the base of a large People’s Liberation Army garrison in the area during the Cultural Revolution. It therefore remained intact till the very last days of the revolution. At the beginning of 1980s, permission was given with funding to rebuild it, but it remains largely symbolic and the temples that have been rebuilt were totally empty when I visited them in 1997.

Persecution and destruction

The history of Bon monasteries is of a history of either sectarian persecution or wanton destruction by a foreign invader. The Bonpo religious establishments never had any political ambition and consequently there is no record of their holding any position that had a political significance. This might explain in part why the Bon religion and its monastic tradition somehow survived through the centuries in Tibet in spite of the Bon religion being a non-Buddhist creed among the 80% Buddhist population in Central Tibet.

From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, no record of general persecution is found apart from a few disputes between two individuals or two religious communities. On the contrary, there are a number of examples of showing good will towards one another. Even after the fourteenth century, a
certain number of Bonpo monks of sMan ri Monastery went to study philosophy at Sa skya pa monasteries till gYung drung gling Monastery managed to establish its own mtshan rt hyid studies in the eighteenth century.

In the seventeenth century, Tibet was seething with religio-political conflicts. The rise to political power of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) in 1642 calmed down the turmoil in the country. His reign was marked by a remarkable period of peace and tolerance. In 1664, the Fifth Dalai Lama issued a decree appointing sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1658-1705) as the Regent of Tibet and in the decree the Fifth Dalai Lama recognised Bon as one of Tibet’s official religions (Richardson 1998: 441). This tradition was belatedly revived by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in India only at the beginning of 1980s. There was therefore no notable persecution during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. On the contrary, the fact that he was deeply interested in the Bon religion is proved by the abundant references to Bon in his autobiography, the Dukula'i gos bzang.

The Regent gives a list of monasteries that were founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Amongst these is Sog Tsan dan dgon which he mentions rather obliquely saying that it was originally Karma bka’ brgyud pa, but no mention is made regarding whether it had any connection with Bon (Vaidurya ser po, p.405). However, according to the Nag chu sa khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus (p.351), in 1640, during the military campaign of Gushri Khan in Khams, a number of Bonpo and bKa’ brgyud pa monasteries suffered destruction. Later in 1668, the Fifth Dalai Lama ordered a dGe lugs pa monastery to be built for the people of the Sog district, east of Nag chu kha, as compensation for the large Bonpo monastery called Sog gYung drung gling, four small bKa’ brgyud pa monasteries suffered destruction. The new dGe lugs pa monastery was called Sog dGa’ ldan ‘phel rgyas gling, but it was normally known as Sog Tsan dan dgon which, however, was not built on the ruins of Sog gYung drung gling as the Bonpo often imply.

However, the Regent seems to have forgotten the very tolerant religious policy that his master maintained throughout his reign. In 1686 under his order, all the Bon religious establishments in the Ser tsha district in Khyung po, Khams, converted to dGe lugs pa. Four dGe lugs pa monasteries were then founded for the Ser tsha people in four different places: dGa’ ldan bkra shis gling in ‘Bro rdzong; dGa’ ldan thar ‘dod gling in Ga ngal; dGa’ ldan skabs gsum gling in Ri dmar and dGa’ ldan dpal ‘byor gling in Phu dmar. A Lama from Rong po dGa’ ldan rab brtan dgon founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1668, was appointed to be in charge of the new monasteries (Vaidurya ser po, p.459). Rong po dGa’ ldan rab brtan dgon is usually known as Rong po Rab brtan dgon. Rong po is a place in the Sog district. The Regent does not mention the names of the Bon religious establishments that he had converted and I have seen no other records mentioning them. It is not clear why the Regent had implemented such a drastic
policy of religious conversion by force in this particular place. There were so many other places in the same region where the Bon religion was followed, but no similar action seems to have been taken.

He states: "In Khyung po gSer tsha people believe strongly in Bon (khyung po gser tsha khul du bon lugs la dad 'dun che ba..) and if the gYung drung Bon religion is practised properly,... (citation of a sutra) one cannot stop them, but during the day the practitioners stay in monasteries. There they fight over the offerings that were made by the faithful just like vultures over corpses. During the night they go to villages and sleep with women. So what they do is very serious sin...(citation of texts). Thinking for the benefit of myself and them, - since they are Bonpo just in name, in reality they behave like laymen -, I had them converted to dGe lugs pa" (Vaidurya ser po, p. 459).

It is hard to believe that such was the real reason for which the Regent caused the people of gSer tsha to change their faith. It seems that he was not against the religion itself as such, but rather against the gSer tsha people who probably resisted the policies of his dGe lugs pa dominated government in the area. Whatever it may be, this had set a precedent of forced conversion of monasteries belonging not only to the Bon tradition but also to other Buddhist orders. Each time there was a forced conversion the name of the new dGe lugs pa monastery began with the word dga’ ldan or dge ldan following the example of the names of the new monasteries founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Apart from the method of forced conversion, other strategies were used to gain a foothold among a people whose religious tradition was not dGe lugs pa. This consisted of recognizing a child as a reincarnation in a non-dGe lugs pa family. That was what happened to the Bru family which was very prestigious and a strong bastion of Bon as mentioned earlier. The family seat was located to the north of gTsang po and a few kilometers to the east of Shigatse. It was the Fifth Dalai Lama, who in order to institute the reincarnation series of Panchen Lamas, chose a child of the Bru family as the reincarnation of his spiritual master Panchen Blo bzang chos rgyan (1567-1662). The child became the Panchen Blo bzang ye shes (1663-1737), but the Fifth Dalai Lama made sure that the family continued to adhere to its own religion. However, another Panchen Lama, bsTan pa’i dbang phyug (1854-1882) was born again in the family. This time, it was the end of the family’s own religion. Its seat became known as 'Khrungs gzhi, the “Base of births” and was made as an estate of bKra shis lhun po Monastery.

Another underhand method was used for enriching one’s own establishments. In the nineteenth century, it was the intervention by bKra shis lhun po Monastery in a dispute between two branches of the gShen family located in the Dar Iding village, a few kilometers to the west of Shigatse. The intervention resulted in properties of one of the two families being confiscated and given to a dGe lugs pa monastery nearby (Dondrup Lhagyal, 2000: 444).
These are just a few examples of religio-political persecution of a sort under the domination of the dGe lugs pa government. The Bonpo themselves unfortunately have rarely committed these invents to writing.

However, the tendency for non-dGe lugs pa religious orders to come under persecution was further intensified due to two developments: foreign interference in the internal affairs of Tibet and the gaining of the upper hand by an ultra fundamentalist section among the dGe lugs pa monasteries and in government clerical circles.

**Foreign interference**

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Jungar tribes of the Ili district in western Mongolia began to expand their empire. When they became a threat to the Manchu rule over China, the emperor Kangxi had to appeal to the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) to exert his influence over them since they were of recent conversion to the dGe lugs pa school. Tibetan authorities in Lhasa maintained good relations with them. However, after the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Manchus began to have political interests in Tibet. sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho was therefore in collusion with the Jungars in a design to outdo the policies of the Emperor Kangxi concerning Tibet. In 1717, they accordingly began to make incursions into Tibet intended partly to forestall any aggression from the Manchus and on the pretext of defending dGe lugs pa interests. As their hordes made their way into Tibet, they attacked Bonpo monasteries that they found in their way, looting, burning and murdering monks. As a people of recent conversion, they seem to have had the conviction that they should ransack other religious establishments in Tibet that were non-dGe lugs pa, such as those of the rNying ma pa and Bonpo. The rNying ma pa suffered particularly at their hands in Central Tibet as they executed several eminent rNying ma pa masters, like Lochen Dharmasri (1654-1717) amongst others, for no valid reasons. Many a Bonpo establishment, such as gShen Dar dling, had experienced the plunder of the Jungars. From the accounts of Phuntso Tsering, it is clear that they pillaged and destroyed at least six Bonpo monasteries (Nos. 15, 19, 22, 54, 27, 34). The Jungars were finally expelled by the Tibetans with the help of the Manchu army.

**Sectarian persecution**

The dGe lugs pa government in Tibet had a powerful supporter. Since 1720 till 1911 the Manchu influence over Tibet was firmly established and the dGe lugs pa saw this foreign power as their cherished patron which it was. At the same time, a certain segment among the dGe lugs pa began to claim that they were the upholders of the dGe lugs pa teachings as being the most authentic ones as taught by the Buddha. This of course implied that other Buddhist schools
in Tibet and not to mention the Bonpo held false views. The movement came often to be closely associated with the Shugs Idan cult. The deity's antipathy to non-dGe lugs pa teachings is all the more the object of praise in the ritual texts devoted to this deity.

Amongst other places I should mention here are two areas where this particular movement was very active and where conflicts between the Bonpo and the dGe lugs pa establishments were particularly fierce. The Sog district contained two important dGe lugs pa monasteries, Sog Tsan dan dgon and Rong po Rab brtan dgon as referred to earlier. It was in this area that Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po (1878-1941) of Se ra Monastery was active early the twentieth century. It was he who revived the cult of Shugs Idan in spite of opposition to it by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. In an forthcoming article I have dealt in some detail with his activities in this area and the revolt of the so-called "Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor" of Bonpo obedience against the Tibetan government.

The other place, where the relations between the two faiths were similarly strained, was Gro mo (Chumbi Valley) in southern Tibet. Around 1897 the most active dGe lugs pa master in this area was Ngag dbang skal bzang, also of Se ra Monastery. He was commonly known as Gro mo dGe bshes Rinpoche and was a disciple and friend of Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po. The cult of Shugs Idan which he set up in this place was based in Dung dkar Monastery. The Bonpo monastery in Gro mo known as Pus mo sgang (No.8) had a perpetual struggle with Dung dkar for its existence. The conflict between the two monasteries had inspired the composition of a four-line praise to the deity in the propitiatory text by Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po as follows:

"In the barbarous land where the bad tradition of gShen rab is upheld,
You made flourish the good path that is complete and faultless
With your rapid action of four kinds and many other omens,
I praise you who are the guide of living beings!"

(gshen rabs(rab) lugs ngan 'dzin pa'i mtha' 'khob tu/
las bzhi'i rtags mtshan mo myur du ma yis/
tshang la ma nor lam bzang rgyas mdzad pa'i/
skye rgu'i 'dren par gyur pa khyod la bstod!).

In 1967 Yongs 'dzin Khri byang Blo bzang ye shes, the late tutor of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, wrote a commentary on the propitiatory eulogy to the deity just quoted entitled rGyal chen bstod 'grel (folio 138b). In this work he explains that the phrase "barbarous land" refers to Gro mo and thanks to the "four actions of the deity" the dGe lugs pa tradition was firmly established there. The region was mainly inhabited by a Bonpo population until the dGe lugs pa penetrated there only in the nineteenth century. Dung dkar Monastery was tacitly supported by the Tibetan government in its hostility, but Pus mo
sgang seemed to have miraculously survived till the days of the Cultural Revolution.

However, there is yet another region, rGyal rong where relations between the two faiths were in constant struggle. The exact date of the Buddhist penetration there is not known. Vairocana, a Tibetan Buddhist monk of the eighth century is said to have resided there, but this is more of a myth than history. In the fifteenth century, Tsha kho Ngag dbang grags pa, a disciple of Tsong kha pa (1357-1519) and a native of the Tsha kho district, north of rGyal rong, returned to his native country after studying in Central Tibet. He is said to have made a vow to erect 108 monasteries in his native land in the presence of his master. He certainly founded some dGe lugs pa monasteries in Tsha kho and he is said to have used magic against the Bonpo to overcome the latter's opposition to his efforts in conversion (mDo smad chos 'byung, pp.774). The dGe lugs pa expansion in the area was slow and difficult. However, in the second half of the 19th century, a child in the family of the local chief, Cog tse, was chosen to be the reincarnation of Byang rtse Blo bzang lhun grub, the 74th Throne-holder of Tsong kha pa in dGa’ ldan Monastery. The local chief, the Cog tse rgyal po, “king of Cog tse” was powerful in his own right in the place. As the child grew up, the dGe lugs pa influence in the family increased, too. In 1874, he converted 'Bar kham gYung drung gling, one of the oldest Bon monasteries in the area, to dGe lugs pa and went so far as to erase its old Bon mural paintings and paint them over with the deities of the dGe lugs pa school. This conversion of the monastery provoked a strong reaction from the people of Shar khog, the next easterly region of the Tsha kho district. A local religious war was fought between a section of the people in Cog tse who supported the conversion and the people of Shar khog who wanted to save the monastery as Bonpo. The people of Shar khog were ultimately defeated, but they took the lama of the monastery to Shar khog where he is said to have settled down. Barkham (‘Bar kham) is now the administrative seat of the ‘Autonomous Prefecture’ of Aba (rNga ba) in Sichuan.

However, the Bonpo people in rGyal rong, had to face much more serious hostility in the 18th century. Not only had they to fight on a religious front but also a political one. They resisted for nearly thirty years against the Manchu invasion, supported and encouraged by the influential dGe lugs pa lama sKyag skya Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717-1786) who had then a high position at the Manchu imperial court of Qianlong. In 1760 the Manchu army finally won the war capturing bSod nams dbang ’dus, the king of Rab rbtan. He was led to Beijing together with more than one thousand people as war prisoners. The king was finally executed. Five horses were attached to his head, hands and feet and then let pull in different directions, a privilege kept for kings in Manchu punishment customs. gYung drung lha steng, the royal monastery was partially destroyed and converted to dGe lugs pa and was given the name dGa’ ldan bstan ’phel
gling. dGe lugs pa monks were summoned from 'Bras spungs Monastery to
administer it. Qianlong issued an edict forbidding the practice of the Bon religion
in the area. What is peculiar about this piece of history is that the monastery
was totally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. However, around 1980
the Sichuan government decided to reinstate it for a reason not known to me
and even provided funds so that the local Bonpo people could begin to rebuild
it as one of their own monasteries (No.187).

Surveying of the monasteries
This is the first time such a work of surveying of the Bonpo monasteries
has ever been carried out. It was intended to cover as wide an area as possible,
but given the vast geographic extent of Tibet's cultural boundaries the idea
sounded very daunting indeed. Nevertheless, well supplied with the financial
means, our colleague, Professor Yasuhiko Nagano was determined to carry it
out in the programme of the Bon Culture Research Project at the National
Museum of Ethnology and the four authors, who conducted the survey, spared
no efforts in getting the intended work done. Moreover, the three Tibetan
scholars, who mainly did the surveying in Tibet and Tibetan inhabited areas in
China proper, are all acquainted with the cultural history of the Bon tradition
and that helped them enormously in doing their fieldwork.

We have thus Dondrup Lhagal who surveyed the monasteries in the
provinces of dBus and gTsang. Phuntso Tsering covered mainly the northern
plateau, but also Chab mdo as well as the mNga’ ris regions; Tsering Thar on
the other hand took the survey in Amdo, parts of Khams and rGyal rong. Charles
Ramble later joined by Marietta Kind attended to the monasteries in Nepal and
India effectively covering the Himalayan region. Thus 233 religious
establishments mainly monasteries, but also hermitages and temples were all
briefly examined. However, this does not mean that every surviving or rebuilt
monastery in Tibet was surveyed. Certain places such as Tsha ba rong in Khams
have been left out. It is possible that still other places were not covered.

One of the biggest difficulties that the surveyors faced was that only a few
of the places were within easy reach. The majority of monasteries were found
in totally isolated places. To reach them required enormous physical exertion
often in unfavorable weather, because many of them were located in places
where there were no roads. If there were roads no transport was readily available.
So the surveyors were often obliged to either ride on horseback or walk for
days to see just one monastery or a hermitage at a time. It often happened that
when a place was reached, no one was present and so the same journey had to
be made twice.

There was another difficulty much more serious than the problem of
inaccessibility. It was the scanty or simply non-existent information due to the
systematic destruction of the religious establishments and national monuments
carried out during the so-called Cultural Revolution that spanned over ten years from 1966 to 1976. The criticism leveled against monuments such as fortresses were that they represented feudal society whereas monasteries were the basis of "superstition" (rmong dad).

The sporadic looting and burning committed by the Jungars seemed so insignificant when one compares their action to what the Chinese and their Tibetan collaborators did. This was purely robbery, carefully thought out and well organized with the intention of eradicating Tibet's cultural identity in its own land. The mere word destruction does not seem sufficient to convey what kind of process the action involved, because the manner in which it was executed was so thorough and effective that in many cases not even traces were left. It is known that more than six thousand monasteries of both Buddhist and Bonpo perished during the period. Only a fraction of this number have survived.

It is therefore perhaps necessary to mention in a few words how the expropriation of property and demolition of the monastic buildings were orchestrated by armed hordes of the Red Guards with terror, threat, humiliation, public criticism and imprisonment for those who dared to resist.

As most of the monasteries and temples were centuries old, many were well equipped with what they needed and their religious tradition required them to possess. Much of the equipment was not actually all destroyed. It was simply expropriated. In a monastery of modest size the assembly hall usually possessed common effects such as archives, manuscripts, texts, thangka paintings, statues in both gilt-bronze and clay, woodblocks for printing, musical instruments made of various metals, tombs of abbots made of silver and gold with insets of precious stones, mural paintings, draperies made of silk and embroidered, masks and costumes for the 'cham dance, ritual objects made of silver, gold and brass, ritual implements such as dagger and culinary utensils. Besides these effects of the assembly hall, the residence of the head of the monastery and the individual monks also normally possessed as private property, books, musical instruments and ritual objects.

The process of dismantling was carried out methodically stage by stage. First there was the removal of metal objects, followed by the wood work, books and other items. When the building was entirely emptied of its contents, it was often then detonated. However, in many cases, recorded documents that contained local histories and annual events of the monasteries and above all books were privileged targets of destruction. They were often brought out into the open air where they were either torn or chopped into pieces or simply burned with the public made to look on, but in certain cases some books were saved by being concealed in unsuspected places. This was possible only when two copies of a book existed. In such a case, when a book was ordered to be brought out for destruction, the other copy was hidden away. Most of the expropriated
property was secretly transported to China. Metal objects could either be used by melting them down or just kept for their intrinsic value in the future.

The events mentioned explain in part why written information on any given monastery had become so pitifully rare or practically non-existent in most cases. The surveyors therefore had to turn to other sources of information for their surveying work, but here too they faced incredible difficulties for the following reasons.

There were in fact two periods of monastic persecutions. In Amdo and parts of Khams a number of monasteries perished in fact during the period of 1957 and 1958, but the destruction of the majority of monasteries took place during the Cultural Revolution. The events of the 1957-58 period is not officially admitted by the Chinese authorities whereas the responsibility for the destruction during the Cultural Revolution was later put on the shoulders of the “Gang of Four”. In the 1960s and 1970s the monks, who witnessed and survived the onslaught of these events, were roughly aged between twenty and thirty years. When the survey of monasteries began to be conducted at the beginning of 1998 only few of these were still alive. However, most of these were in no position to give any detailed oral information in a coherent manner due to their old age. Nevertheless, some of these had written down historical accounts of their own monasteries from their memories some of which the surveyors were able to use.

Another destructive effect was the degradation of the Tibetan language in the same period that had the effect on it being nearly extinguished as a medium for the expression of Tibetan culture. Even in the aftermath of the revolution, only a few Tibetans were capable or would take the risk of putting to use their own language.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, there was a radical shift in Chinese policies regarding the religious question. Tibetans, for the first time around 1980, were allowed to rebuild some of the destroyed monasteries. In many cases, the Chinese government even began to provide funds for this purpose particularly for those monasteries strategically located. The restriction of the use of religious texts was also lifted and the Chinese authorities even went on to encourage the publication of Tibetan classical texts on a scale unknown in the pre-1959 era in Tibet. A number of monasteries, it is true, have been rebuilt, but many of them only partially. The primary motive for this reconstruction is obvious. It is to promote tourism. They remain at best as deserted empty shells without the life of a real monastic tradition.

The framework for the survey

In order to have the same approach and standard in surveying the religious establishments, a guideline framework was worked out so that the authors could follow it. All the surveyors have followed it except Phuntso Tsering, who as a
voluntary contributor, conducted the surveying in his own fashion, but his work, nevertheless, does cover much the same ground as the others if only in some respects his scope tended to be rather more limited.

The framework, which is discussed below, consists of fourteen items. This was designed not only to produce an assessment of the general situation of a given monastery but also a review of the local population with regard to its importance to the monastery as well as cultural interchanges between clerics and laymen. However, in many instances information was simply not available and consequently not all of the fourteen items could be supplied. This is particularly so in the case of temples and hermitages. In the entries, items like 7 and particularly 10 are left out for the reasons that no information was available.

1. Name
   This heading shows the name of the monastery concerned. In Tibetan tradition the names of religious establishments can vary considerably from one to another so as often to cause confusion regarding whether one is referring to the same entity or another.

2. Location
   This item indicates the exact location of the establishment and the distance at which it is found from the main town of a region as well as the condition of the road leading to the place.

3. History
   This section deals briefly with the history of the establishment.

4. Hierarchical system
   In some monasteries such as sMan ri and gYung drung gling, abbots were elected by secret lot. The abbots are the supreme head of these monasteries, but in other places the head of the monastery can be hereditary (gdung brgyud, gdung 'dzin), i.e. the monastery was founded by a member of a family in a nearby place. The family usually continues to provide a man to be the head of the monastery and in this sense he is qualified as dgon bdag, "owner of the monastery". In this system, other important figures within the same monastery often take turns to be the head of the monastery and are in charge of the monastic affairs on a periodic basis under the authority of the dgon bdag.

   However, the system of headship varies from one place to another. The head is often selected or appointed by general consent, but rarely did an individual monk take a personal initiative to be the head of a monastery, but after 1959 the system of appointing the head of a monastery had completely broken down. At the beginning of the 1980s when monasteries were allowed to
be rebuilt, either an individual or a group of monks took the reconstruction initiative and as a result of this, in many places the question of the head of a monastery remains unsettled to this day.

Under the authority of the head of a monastery, there are different functions held by monks in varying positions. This hierarchical system also varies slightly from monastery to monastery. There is a host of technical terms relating to the monastic administration and duties and we have grouped them together under the title of "Terms of governing system and duties in monasteries" in order to avoid the repetition of their English translation in each account of the monasteries.

5. Current number of monks
After 1959, none of the monasteries regained their former status. On the contrary, the number of monks and nuns is restricted and checked.

6. Current education
Under this heading, the current education of young monks and nuns in the monasteries and convents is meant to be discussed, but as will be seen in many places the situation is so desperate that there is hardly anything to be indicated. In many cases, this item is left out since it simply does not exist in the monastery under review.

7. Educational exchange
Before 1959, the educational exchange of young monks between monasteries was considered as the key instrument for training young monks. In some respects, this tradition is still kept up, but inevitably it tends to be less frequent and more symbolic and in many monasteries it simply does not exist anymore.

8. Daily rituals
This heading is intended to show the daily rituals performed by the monks collectively or in private, but it has been somewhat impracticable and complicated for the surveyors to record them separately from the annual rituals performed in assembly.

9. Annual rituals
Under this item a summary of the ritual events in the monasteries is given. This is important since ritual traditions and their dates vary enormously from monastery to monastery. In such a survey, no details concerning the identification of divinities and ritual texts devoted to them could be provided. These obviously need separate studies. One of the elements of these ritual events is the
performance of various 'cham dances that takes place either as part of a ritual in private or as entertainment for public spectators.

10. Books held in the monastery
In large monasteries, there used to be separate libraries, but in many cases the books were simply kept as part of the three rten and so were usually found in the chapels. As will be seen, during the Cultural Revolution archives, manuscripts and books mostly perished, but in certain cases some brave people managed to hide them away. It is still with much reluctance and fear that these hidden treasures are gradually revealed. This explains why this section is left blank or not even entered in many cases of the monasteries.

11. Income and expenses
Under this heading the income and expenses of the monasteries and monks were intended to be discussed, but given the situation as we know it, there is little to be said about them in the present circumstances.

12. Local community
Villages or nomadic tents clustered in the proximity of monasteries have always been important for the monasteries as their main livelihood, but in descriptions of Tibetan monasteries they are very often ignored. The surveyors were therefore requested to give a fair amount of information about them. Such information in fact gives an interesting idea whether the villagers regard themselves as still being Bon believers, and as it has been found in certain places that they in fact do not differentiate between Bon or Buddhism in clear cut terms. However, there are still many villages in various regions whose populations declare themselves to be followers of the Bon religion to this day.

13. Local festivals
Local festivals are either organized as common ones for both clergy and laymen or separately. When laymen carry out their celebration the members of the clergy do not normally participate in it, particularly when it is about the propitiation of local deities. Moreover, one village does not even allow members of villages from other regions to join with them. It is considered strictly private. On the other hand the villagers almost always attend the ceremonies in monasteries if these are intended for the public. Monasteries also often have their own "local deities" and the members of the clergy propitiate them normally on their own.

Another type of local festival takes the form of a pilgrimage which consists of walking round a nearby sacred mountain (gnas ri). In this festival it is not only the local people and clerics who join together in the celebration but also
people from neighbouring regions join in. The content of this celebration is purely religious. In an article I have tried to analyse the notions of the local deity and the development of the gnas ri pilgrimage based on early documents such as Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts: “Concepts of Territorial organization and sacred sites” (Karmay 2005: 31-51).

14. Occupation of the local people

Here it is intended that the life mode of the local people as farmers, nomads, semi-nomads and traders should be indicated.

Editorial work

While Dondrup Lhagyal wrote his accounts of monasteries first in Tibetan and then translated them into English himself, Phuntsog Tsering wrote his accounts in Tibetan. Later an English translation of them was made by someone else. The introduction and epilogue sections of his work could not be included in the present volume due to the problem of length and relevance. However, Phuntso Tsering will publish the whole of his original Tibetan version. Tsering Thar wrote his accounts directly in English, but he intends to write a Tibetan version which he hopes to be able to publish before long.

In all the three cases, a heavy and long editorial process has been involved not only in order to make the English language acceptable but also to improve the coherence of the work and make it presentable as scholarship.

However, in editing their works, the editors made strenuous efforts to keep the gist of each account as far as possible, and each author is therefore directly responsible for the accuracy and reliability of his own statements. An attempt is also made to standardize the various approaches adopted by each author, but their personal styles have largely been left as they are.

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List of the monasteries surveyed
List of the monasteries surveyed

TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION

dBus gtsang
(1) sMan ri Monastery
(2) Ra lag gYung drung gling Monastery
(3) Ri rgyal Monastery
(4) Ri zhing Monastery
(5) bDe chen sgang Hermitage
(6) bZang ri Monastery
(7) mKhar sn Monastery
(8) Pus mo sgang Monastery

sNye rong rdzong
(9) sNang gsal Monastery
(10) Chab mdo Monastery
(11) Sha ri Monastery
(12) rTing ngu Monastery
(13) gSang sngags rtse Hermitage
(14) rGyal po shel khur Hermitage

dPal mgon rdzong
(15) Shel phug Monastery

Nyi ma rdzong
(16) 'Om bu bSam gtan gling Monastery
(17) gYu bun Monastery
(18) Phyug tsho Monastery
(19) Ser zhig Monastery

'Bri ru rdzong
(20) Sen tsha Monastery
(21) dGa' ri Monastery
(22) Klu mkhar Monastery
(23) dNgul kho Monastery
(24) rDo rting Monastery
(25) gSa' md'a' bon Monastery

sBra chen chen rdzong
(26) sPa tshang Monastery
(27) Lung dkar Monastery
(28) sGra gyal Monastery
(29) A krong Hermitage
(30) Phur nag Monastery
(31) Klu phug Monastery
(32) sPu la Monastery
(33) rMa rong Monastery
(34) Khrom tshang Monastery

sTeng chen rdzong
(35) sTeng chen Monastery
(36) sTeng chen Hermitage
(37) Ko bo Monastery
(38) Ka legs gYung drung gling Monastery
(39) sMon rgyal bla brang
(40) Nag ru Monastery
(41) Zhe nang Monastery
(42) Zhu tshang Monastery
(43) Ri dmar Monastery
(44) sGang ru Monastery
(45) Be sgo Monastery
(46) rGya sgo Monastery
(47) gNam steng Monastery
(48) dMu g-yad Monastery
(49) Yang rdzong Monastery
(50) Tsha ne Hermitage
(51) Ma rdzong Monastery
(52) Phug leb Monastery
(53) Kha spungs Nunney
(54) Mar khu Monastery
(55) rTse drug Monastery
(56) Wa dge Monastery
(57) Bya chen Monastery
(58) lHa lung Monastery
(59) gYu mtsho Monastery
(60) Ga shel Monastery
(61) Re ne Monastery
(62) Ngang rdzong Monastery
(63) lJong phu Monastery
(64) Zla shel Monastery
(65) sBra hor Monastery

'Jo mda' rdzong
(66) sTag gzhi Monastery
(67) Zha zhi Monastery
(68) rDis bon Monastery
(69) sPong Monastery
(70) Bla khri Monastery
(71) dKar tshang Monastery
List of the monasteries surveyed

lHo rong rdzong
(72) Khra rgan Monastery
(73) Lam lha Monastery
(74) Bal tho Monastery
(75) Brag dkar Hermitage

mDzo sgang rdzong
(76) sTong mda’ Monastery
(77) La ngu Monastery
(78) Sa bla Monastery
(79) Ri sna Monastery
(80) mDangs ’phyar Monastery
(81) Shug rdzong Monastery
(82) Rab pa Monastery
(83) dByibs pa Monastery
(84) lTag tsha Monastery

dPa’ shod rdzong
(85) dBen mdzod Monastery
(86) ’Bur lung Monastery
(87) bKra shis rtse Monastery

Nying khri rdzong
(88) Srid rgyal Monastery
(89) sTag rtse gYung drung gling Monastery

mNga’ ris
(90) Gu ru gyam Monastery

GANSU PROVINCE

The bo County
(91) gTso tshang Monastery
(92) rGod po Monastery
(93) Nags gong Monastery
(94) Chags ri Monastery
(95) Shing skam Monastery
(96) bSam ’grub Monastery
(97) gTer ri Monastery
(98) rTswa ring Monastery

bSang chu County
(99) rTse zhig Monastery
MTSHO SNGON (QINGHAI) PROVINCE

Reb gong County
(100) Bon brgya Monastery
(101) Bon brgya Temple
(102) Mag gsar Temple
(103) rGya mtsho dpal Temple
(104) Gad pa skya bo Temple
(105) gDong mgo Temple
(106) Ngo mo Temple
(107) Gyang ri Temple
(108) Gling rgya Temple
(109) Zhao 'ong nyin tha Temple
(110) Dar grong Temple
(111) Khyung bo thang Temple
(112) sDong skam Temple
(113) Hor nag Temple
(114) sTong che Temple
(115) Khyung bo la ga Temple

gCan tsha County
(116) Zhwa khra Temple

rTse khog County
(117) So nag Temple

Ba yan County
(118) To shes Temple
(119) Shar steng Temple
(120) sTong chung Monastery
(121) sTong chung Temple

Khrl ka (Hua long) County
(122) Ser kywa Temple
(123) Khyung mo Monastery
(124) sGar ba Temple
(125) sBra ser Temple
(126) gZe ma Temple
(127) sKa rgya Temple

Mang ra (Gui nan) County
(128) 'Brog ru stong skor Temple
(129) 'Brog ru'i dPon tshang Tent Temple
(130) Bon brgya Tent Temple
(131) Bon brgya Khyung smon Monastery
List of the monasteries surveyed

Chab cha (Gong he) County
(132) Dung dkar Monastery
(133) sKa gsal Temple
(134) A rig stong skor Temple

SICHUAN PROVINCE

sDe dge County
(135) Khro tshang Monastery
(136) sMon rgyal Monastery
(137) 'Bum rpad Monastery
(138) Shar rdza Hermitage
(139) rDza sTeng chen Monastery
(140) Zer 'phro Monastery
(141) 'Phen zhol Monastery
(142) Ri spu Monastery
(143) Thar bde Monastery
(144) Rab rgyal Monastery

dPal yul County
(145) Kha rag Monastery
(146) Zla 'od Monastery
(147) gTsug 'od Monastery
(148) lCang lung Monastery

dKar mdzes County
(149) Gong lung Monastery

Nyag rong County
(150) Ye shes Monastery
(151) rGyal zhing Monastery
(152) Gong rgyal Monastery
(153) Klu 'bum Monastery
(154) La kha Monastery
(155) dBal khyung Monastery
(156) Brag dben Monastery
(157) Mi nub Monastery

Brag 'go County
(158) rBa mda' Monastery
(159) rGyal rong Monastery
(160) gZhung ring Monastery
rTa'u County
(161) bSam 'grub Monastery
(162) Chu mig Monastery
(163) dGu rdza Monastery
(164) Dam pa rang grol Monastery

Nyag chu County
(165) 'Du ra Monastery
(166) Thang sgang Monastery

Li thang County
(167) 'Gro mgon Monastery

Rong brag County
(168) Bye 'bur Monastery
(169) sPang gi lung Monastery
(170) gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery
(171) Khyung lung Monastery
(172) rJi ngo Monastery
(173) dPag bsam lhun 'grub Monastery
(174) rDo zur mo Monastery
(175) Bya ti lo Monastery

brGyad zur County
(176) Mi rgod Temple

Dartsemdo County
(177) Grib srib Monastery

rNga ba County
(178) rTogs ldan Monastery
(179) gDong li Monastery
(180) sNang zhig Monastery
(181) Cog lo Monastery

'Bar kham County
(182) 'Bo la Monastery
(183) Kun 'brog Monastery
(184) Ka ca Monastery
(185) Ka co Monastery
(186) dGon g sar Monastery

Chu chen County
(187) gYung drung lha steng Monastery
(188) mTsho mtho Monastery
List of the monasteries surveyed

(189) dGra lha khyung Monastery
(190) Bla med Monastery
(191) bZod sgom Monastery

rMe ba County
(192) Mag gsar Temple
(193) Tsha lung Monastery

mDzod dge County
(194) A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery
(195) Nyos zhing Monastery
(196) rGur skyang Monastery
(197) gYung drung bsam 'grub Monastery
(198) mDa’ chen Monastery

Zung chu County
(199) sNa steng Monastery
(200) Rin spungs Monastery
(201) sNang zhig dngul sku Monastery
(202) sKyang tshang Monastery
(203) mKhar yag Monastery
(204) Gla ro Monastery
(205) gSer gling Monastery
(206) Sa 'brug Monastery
(207) Brag g-yung drung Hermitage
(208) dGa’ mal Monastery
(209) New dGa’ ma! Monastery
(210) Shar khog gTso tshang Monastery

gZi tsha sde dgu County
(211) rTsub ma Monastery
(212) Dar rgyas Monastery
(213) Sa dbus Monastery
(214) lDong dpal Monastery
(215) Rab dben Monastery

Wen Chuan County
(216) Bla ma Temple
(217) mChog gsum Temple

Yan yuan County
(218) La tha Temple
NEPAL

Mustang District
(219) Klu brag Monastery

Dolpo District
(220) gYung drung shug tshal gling Monastery
(221) Dar rgyas phun tshogs gling Monastery
(222) Yang dgon Monastery
(223) bSam gling Monastery
(224) mTha’ srung Monastery
(225) sPung mo and sPu mer Temples
(226) gYung drung ’gro ’dul gling Monastery
(227) Srid rgyal Monastery
(228) Dorpatan Monastery
(229) Mon ri zur gsum Temple
(230) Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery

INDIA
(231) sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji
(232) Gling tshang Monastery
(233) Zhu gYung drung kun grags gling Monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Central Tibet
(1) sMan ri Monastery

1. Name
   bKra shis sMan ri

2. Location

   sMan ri Monastery is located in Thob rgyal xiang in rNam gling rdzong, Shigatse. From the sTag gru kha ferry, it is a full day's ride on horseback. On the way there are two farming villages, mDzob bzang and Glang phu. Two high mountain passes called Gong nyag la and dByar rnga la must be crossed before reaching the monastery. Another route, passable by car, starting at Shigatse, goes through rNam gling rdzong up to Thob rgyal xiang. From there to the monastery, halfway up the mountain, is a half-day ride on horseback.

3. History

   The monastery was founded in 1405 by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415), formerly a monk in gYas ru dBen sa kha. His successor, rGyal tshab Rin chen rgyal mtshan, enlarged it with several monks' living quarters. After having been gradually expanded over four centuries, the monastery became an important centre for the propagation of Bonpo doctrines. Apart from having two assembly halls, it had many buildings and there were about three hundred monks divided among four monastic colleges: Gling stod, Gling smad, Gling skad and Gling zur and six hostels (khang tshan): A sta, Rong mi, La dbyil, rGyal rong, Grub thob and Drel pa. The monk students came from various regions of Tibet. Among the Bonpo, the monastery was considered the source of all their monastic and liturgical traditions.

   From the founder of the monastery, mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, to the abbot Shes rab blo gros, there were thirty-two abbots. The last abbot, Shes rab blo gros, fled to India in 1959 and later died there. The monastery itself was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and remained unrestored for about twenty years. Rebuilding of the monastery did not begin until 1984, and it is still under reconstruction.

   In 1969, the new sMan ri Monastery was founded at Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, India. With this establishment, the monastic tradition of sMan ri has been revived through the efforts of its abbot, Lung rtogs bstan pa'i nyi ma (b.1929), who is now counted as the thirty-third abbot of sMan ri.

   The monastery had a system of abbotship. Abbots were appointed by a lottery from among those well versed in religious philosophy and holding the dge bshes degree. The line of abbots is as follows:

1. Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415)
2. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
3. Nam mkha’ ye shes
4. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan
5. bSod 'dzin rin chen rgyal mtshan
6. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
7. bSod nams ye shes
8. bSod nams g-yung drung
9. She tsu drung mu
10. Shes rab 'od zer
11. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
12. Shes rab blo gros
13. Shes rab 'od zer (2nd)
14. gTsug phud 'od zer
15. gYung drung tshul khrims
16. Rin chen 'od zer
17. Rin chen lhun grub
18. Shes rab bstan 'dzin
19. Shes rab dbang rgyal
20. gYung drung dbang rgyal
21. Phun tshogs nam rgyal
22. bSod nams blo gros
23. Nyi ma bstan 'dzin
24. bSod nams phun tshogs
25. Shes rab g-yung drung
26. Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin
27. bsTan 'dzin Tshul khrims
28. Phun tshogs blo gros
29. rGyal ba blo gros
30. bsTan pa blo gros
31. Nyi ma dbang rgyal
32. Shes rab blo gros
33. Lung rtogs bstan pa’i nyi ma

4. Hierarchical system
   - mkhan po
   - slob dpon
   - dbu mdzad
   - dge bskos
   - bla brang gnyer pa
   - grwa tshang spyi gnyer
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- spyi gnyer
- spyi khyab
- las pa
- dkon gnyer
- khang tshan dge rgan

5. Current number of monks
   Sixty novices and monks

6. Current education
   Students receive two lessons daily, each lasting one to two hours. In summer and autumn, the monks usually go back to their homes.

7. Educational exchange
   Bonpo monasteries in Hor and Kong po regions send their young monk students to be trained in sMan ri, where they receive education in traditional learning, such as poetry, and training in elementary and advanced studies in Bonpo metaphysics. Upon graduation, they return to their monasteries.

8. Daily rituals
   Besides their daily studies, the monks perform regular and frequent religious services dedicated to the tutelary (yi dam) and protective (bka’ skyong) deities.

9. Annual rituals performed in former times, based on the Tibetan calendar
   - 1st month: on the 4th and 5th days, commemoration of the anniversary of the birth of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan; from the 6th to the 15th, the examination of the candidates for the dge bshes degree; on the 8th, the bya mjal ceremony; on the 10th, a performance of the ritual cycle of Tshe dbang rig ’dzin; on the 14th and 15th, the memorial service of the birth of sTon pa gShen rab.
   - 2nd month: from the 19th day of the 2nd month to the 9th day of the 4th month, twenty-one monk students went into retreat at dByar skya hermitage to devote themselves exclusively to debate.
   - 4th month: from the 10th day, all the hostels held assemblies of their own for prayers.
   - 5th month: a performance of the dgu gtor rite, which ended with the gtor rgyag ceremony and the ’cham dance.
   - 6th month: on the 10th day, performance of the ritual cycle of Tshe dbang rig ’dzin at ’Khrungs gzhis, the house of the Bru family situated below the monastery.
7th month: from the 25th to the 29th, a performance of the ritual known as sPyi rim chen mo, based on the ritual cycles of Khro bo and Phur pa; the ceremony ended with the following 'cham dances: gShen rab dgu 'cham, gYung drung dgu 'cham, rNam brgyad, sTag 'cham and Seng 'cham, and the gtor rgyag ceremony called Me ri rtse.

8th month: the celebration of the New Year, for thirteen days, during which all the monks were customarily served tea and barley flour.

9th month: a performance of the ritual devoted to sMra ba'i seng ge, deity of wisdom, for a week, ending with the empowerment ceremony.

10th month: offerings of the sacrificial cake a thousand times to sTag la me 'bar.

About the 12th month some monks from the monastery were sent to perform various rituals at the palace of the sacred Bonpo family known as Bru, situated below the monastery. From the 17th century the palace was called 'Khrungs gzhis, the 'Birth place', since the Second Panchen Lama, Blo bzang ye shes (1663-1737), and the Fifth Panchen Lama, bsTan pa'i dbang phyug (1854-1882), were both born to the Bru family.

The monastery provides tea and gruel at noon for monk students. As for the regular monks in the monastery, their families are responsible for their living expenses or in some cases the monks make a living reciting prayers and conducting religious ceremonies outside the monastery. In summer and autumn almost all the monks return to their homes.

10. Books held in the monastery

There is a set of the bKa' 'gyur published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu, 1985-87, and a printed copy of The Collected Works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan printed in Chamdo.

11. Income and expenses

Money and articles donated by patrons are used mainly for the restoration of the monastery and meals for the monk students.

12. Local community

There are two villages, Gang kha and sDing phu, at the foot of Mount sMan ri; the villagers, who are farmers, are all followers of Bon.

13. Local festivals

On the 3rd day of the 1st month and 14th of the 5th month of the Tibetan calendar all the villagers take part in the ceremony of propitiation of the local deity of Mount dBal ri behind sDing phu village.
14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

(2) gYung drung gling

1. Name
Ra lag (or Ru lag) gYung drung gling

2. Location
Starting from the sTag gru kha ferry on the Lhasa-Shigatse highway, one arrives at gYung drung gling Monastery after crossing a small bridge on the 'O yul Ra chu river. When the river rises in summer, this small bridge is impassable; instead, one must take a roundabout way, crossing another bridge, which takes an hour to get to the monastery.

3. History
The monastery was founded by sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan (b.1796) in 1834 on the bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo river, at the foot of Mount 'O lha rGyal bzang. Later, the second abbot, sKal bzang nyi ma (b.1841), extended it. Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (b.1813), the 23rd abbot of sMan ri Monastery, came to help set up philosophical studies and became the chief teacher there. Later, the 5th abbot of the monastery, mKhan chen Shes rab blo ldan, further extended the monastery by building the temple mThong grol lha khang, and Shes rab grags pa, who was a chief teacher, had the large assembly hall ('du khang) built. There was a residence for the abbot (bla brang) and seven hostels (khang tshan) for the monk students, as well as individual houses for the chief teacher and the monks who completed their studies.

Formerly, the monastery possessed a great number of gilt-bronze and copper statues, including those of rNam par rgyal ba. In the temples there were reliquary gilt-copper stupas containing the remains of abbots. The monastery was an important seat of learning for Bonpo monks coming from Amdo, rGyal rong, Khyung po, Hor, Khams and nomad regions in Byang thang. It was particularly renowned for its extensive library and had its own woodblocks for printing religious texts. There were normally about two hundred monks resident in the monastery.

The 9th abbot, Shes rab bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1911-1979), had a large gilded rooftop erected on the main hall; he also had a gilt-copper statue of rNam par rgyal ba made, two storeys high. In 1959 he fled to India, and the monastery itself was razed to the ground in 1965 during the Cultural Revolution. In 1982 Shes rab bstan 'dzin and Kun gsal blo gros, who were monks in the monastery before its destruction, were put in charge of its reconstruction. They managed to have the
assembly hall and two temples rebuilt.

The monastery had a system of abbotship. Abbots were appointed by a lottery from among those well versed in religious philosophy and having the dge bshes degree. The line of abbots of the monastery is as follows:

1. sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan
2. sKal bzang nyi ma
3. Phun shogs dbang rgyal
4. Tshul khrims dbang rgyal
5. Shes rab blo ldan
6. Shes rab bstan pa'i nyi ma
7. Blo gros rgyal mtshan
8. Blo gros nyi ma
9. Shes rab bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan

4. Hierarchical system

- mkhan po
- slob dpon
- dbu mdzad
- dge bskos
- bla brang gnyer pa
- sgrub khang a mchod
- mchod dpon
- las pa
- dkon gnyer
- khang tshan dge rgan
- ja g-yog

5. Current number of monks

Presently the monastery has no abbot, but there are about forty monk students.

6. Current education

Monks are required to study both elementary and religious philosophy, mainly in winter and spring. Since its reconstruction after the Cultural Revolution, the monastery has kept seven dge bshes.

7. Educational exchange

At present, other Bonpo monasteries, mainly in dBus and gTsang regions, send their monks to study in gYung drung gling, and they are to return to their own monasteries after completing their studies. In addition, various monasteries, such as sKyid mkhar Ri zhing (No.4) and Pus mo sgang (No.8) in Gro mo, invite tutors from
gYung drung gling to their monasteries for a few months at a time.

8. Daily rituals
These consist of offering daily prayers and the propitiation of the monastery’s protective deities.

9. Annual rituals, based on the Tibetan calendar
- 1st month: on the 5th day, the memorial service of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan; then, up to the 15th day, a debate on metaphysics ending with the examination for the dge bshes degree.
- 4th month: a congregation for prayers and debate for fifteen days.
- 5th month: on the 15th, a performance of the 'Dzam gling spyi bsang ritual, based on the brNgan bsang chen mo by sTong rgyung mthu chen.
- 8th month: a festival celebrating the founding of the monastery.
- 11th month: on the 7th, the memorial service for the death of the founder of the monastery.
- 12th month: from the 25th to the 30th, a performance of the dgu gtor rite, ending with the performance of religious dances. In addition, the bskang gso ritual is regularly performed for the guardians of the monastery.

During the summer the monks go to recite scriptures at private homes of farmers and herdsmen in areas such as Nagchukha, Hor, and Khyung po. The rest of the time the monks stay in the monastery, and their families provide their daily necessities.

10. Books held in the monastery
These include five sets of the bKa’ gyur published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu, 1985-87, and two sets of The Collected Works of mNyam med Sherab rgyal mtshan and more than ten separate volumes of scriptures.

11. Income and expenses
The money the monks earn by conducting religious ceremonies and reciting prayers is used mainly for the renovation of the monastery. No detailed account is set up for this.

12. Local community
There are fifty households in Ru lag village, where followers of Bon and rNying ma pa live together. The villagers are farmers who engage mainly in grain production and also keep a small number of livestock.
13. Local festivals

Only the men and boys of each household participate in the propitiation ceremony dedicated to the sacred mountain, 'O lha rGyal bzang, on the 3rd day of the 1st month and the 15th of the 5th month.

(3) Ri rgyal Monastery

1. Name

Dar sding (also lding) Ri rgyal dgon; its formal name is Khri brtan nor bu rtse.

2. Location

A six-hour drive from Shigatse brings one to the seat of bZhad mthong smon rdzong. From here it takes two hours to reach the monastery on foot. One can also go there by bus.

3. History

Initially, there was only a small temple of the gShen family. In 1360 dMu gshen Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the fifteenth successor in the gShen lineage, not only expanded the temple but also built the assembly hall and renamed Ri rgyal Khri brtan nor bu rtse. It is situated on Mount Ri rgyal behind the village called Dar sding. The seat of the gShen family is in Dar sding village, where the temple known as gSer sgo khra mo was built in 1173 by Kun mkhyen Ye shes blo gros, who was the ninth successor after gShen chen Klu dga' (996-1035). In the village there was the famous stupa called sKu 'bum rig byed khang. From the beginning of the 15th century, the monastery became renowned for its statues, scriptures and stupas of the Bon religion. In 1966, during the Cultural Revolution, the monastery on the mountain, the temple gSer sgo khra mo and the great stupa were all completely destroyed. In 1982 the monks began to rebuild the monastery. Led by Nor bu dbang rgyal, they first restored gSer sgo khra mo in the village, then rebuilt Khri brtan nor bu rtse. It is said that there have been twenty-five abbots from Kun mkhyen Ye shes blo gros to the present Nor bu dbang rgyal.

4. Headship system

Leadership was ensured by a system of abbotship, with the abbots coming mostly from the gShen family.

5. Current number of monks

Twenty monks
6. Current education

As the monastery has not organized any study classes for the monks, they have to look for private tutors for their studies.

7. Educational exchange

So far, this work has not yet begun.

8. Daily rituals

Religious services dedicated to the tutelary and protective deities are performed everyday.

9. Annual rituals, based on the Tibetan calendar

- 1st month: on the 3rd day, a ceremony of offerings to the deities.
- 4th month: on the 10th, offerings according to the Ma rgyud cycle.
- 5th month: on the 10th, offerings according to the Ma rgyud cycle.
- 6th month: on the 4th, a general ceremony of offerings to the tutelary deities.
- 7th month: on the 1, a general ceremony of offerings to the tutelary deities.
- 10th month: on the 10th, offerings according to the Ma rgyud cycle.
- 11th month: on the 20th, a religious assembly for the practice of the Ma rgyud ritual cycle.
- 12th month: on the 15th, the anniversary of the birth of sTon pa gShen rab Mi bo.

Now and then, monks go to recite prayers and scriptures for Bon followers in the nomad areas of Byang thang. They usually stay in the monastery or in their homes, but they must be present for the offerings during the religious assemblies and the religious services observed at certain times prescribed by the monastery.

10. Books held in the monastery

These include three sets of the bKa’ gyur published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu, 1985-87.

11. Income and expenses

Each year the monastery organizes the monks to conduct religious ceremonies and recite prayers at the homes of the herdsmen in the nomad area of Byang thang. The money earned is used for the restoration of the monastery and for the expenses of offerings during the religious assemblies and services observed at certain prescribed times during the following year.

12. Local community

To the south of the monastery there is a village called Ne nang with about one
hundred households, and to the north a village named sKyid gzhong with about forty households. The villagers in both are followers of Bon and are farmers.

13. Local festivals

Each household in the village normally participates in all the following ceremonies: a ceremony of offerings to the local deities on the 3rd day of the 1st month of the Tibetan calendar, an important activity during the Tibetan New Year; the Bumping Harvest-Festival (called 'Ong skor) on the 4th of the 6th month; a general ceremony of offerings to the local deities on the 1st of the 7th month.

(4) Ri zhing Monastery

1. Name
   sKyid mkhar Ri zhing dgon

2. Location

   One can either drive from Pa nam rdzong, about thirty kilometres, or ride on horseback directly from Gyantse by climbing over Yang ga pass. In the past, when there was no road going straight there, one would go on horseback from Gyantse. Ri zhing Monastery presently belongs to the sKyid mkhar xiang administration.

3. History

   Ri Zhing Monastery was founded by Zhu yas Legs po in the eleventh century. Zhu sKye se chen po and Zhu sGro1 ba gshen rgyal initiated the way of expounding scriptures and practising Bonpo teachings, and because of this the monastery became very famous. At the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682), Zhu bsTan 'dzin nyl rgyal was recognized as one of the high-ranking lamas in Tibet. It is said that Zhu bsTan 'dzin nyl rgyal once had an audience with the Manchu emperor and the Manchu court gave him a large number of gifts.

   The monastery owned thirteen estates, which were donated by the Tibetan government. It is said that there were once, in its heyday, East, West and Middle hostels (khang tshan) with three hundred monks in the monastery. Before 1959 there were sixty monks. It was totally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, and now only its ruins remain. About 1984 Tshe ring rdo rje, a descendant of the Zhu family, organized a few households to restore the hermitage called gYu 'brang phyug mo. Later, a small temple was gradually built, but the site of the monastery has been moved to another place.
4. Headship system
   In the past, the heads of the monastery were men of the Zhu family.

5. Current number of monks
   Ten

6. Current education
   After joining the monastery, monks go for elementary studies and the study of Bon doctrines in gYung drung gling (No.2) for a few years. Upon completion of their studies, they return to the monastery to take part in normal religious services.

7. Educational exchange
   With the exception of sending some monks for studies in gYung drung gling, there are no exchanges with other monasteries.

8. Daily rituals
   These consist of daily prayers to the tutelary deities and religious services dedicated to protective deities of the monastery.

9. Annual rituals, based on the Tibetan calendar
   - 1st month: on the 3rd day, the ceremony of offerings to the local deities on Mount sPo bo rtse dmar and also on Mount Zhu bo, which is situated behind the monastery; the celebration is joined in by all members of the local community.
   - 6th month: on the 15th day, the celebration of the festival known as sKyid po bla ma'i dus chen, ‘Festival of the joyous Lamas’; the celebration, which is held at the monastery, is attended by both the clergy and laymen.

   The monks return to their homes whenever there are no religious assemblies in the monastery. Although supplemented by the money they earn by going to recite prayers and scriptures for laymen, they depend mainly on their families for their daily necessities.

10. Books held in the monastery
    These include a set of the bKa' ’gyur published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu, 1985-87, and seven cases of the Chamdo edition of the Collected Works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery itself has no income at all, so each household in the village contributes to the provision of all the expenses for the ceremony of offerings.
12. Local community
There are, altogether, five villages with two hundred households, where followers of Bon and Buddhism (dGe lugs pa) live together.

13. Local festivals
See Annual rituals above

14. Occupation of the local people
Although the area is regarded as semi-agricultural and semi-nomad, the villagers are mainly engaged in agricultural work.

(5) bDe chen sgang Hermitage

1. Name of the hermitage
dPal ri khud yang dben bde chen sgang

2. Location
After driving 480 kilometres from Shigatse, one reaches Mount Mu la, whence a further drive of thirty kilometres takes one to La phu village. The hermitage is located near the village. Travellers on foot usually stay one night in Tingri, then reach the hermitage early the next day.

3. History
bDe chen sgang was originally a hermitage established by the recluse sPa ston dPal mchog (b.1040) of the sacred Bonpo family known as sPa, whose seat was found in La phug village. Later, the hermitage was extended into a monastery by sPa dPal ldan bzang po and then became an important centre of learning for Bonpo followers in Western Tibet. The monastery produced several monk-scholars: for example, Tre ston rGyal mtshan dpal who had compiled a type of encyclopedia, in the monastery, of Bon and Buddhist doctrines, entitled Bon sgo gsal byed and the well-known historian, sPa bsTan rgyal bzang po, who wrote several works in the same place in the 15th century. Later, a branch of the sPa family migrated to Ye tha, in the Hor region, northern Tibet, where it became prosperous, and as a result the monastery at La phug declined and became once again a hermitage. It is still a small hermitage where a few married religious practitioners (ser khyim) reside.

4. Headship of the hermitage
The hermitage has no one leading it.
5. Current number of residents
   One monk and four *ser khyim*

6. Current education
   The only monk has gone to study in gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2). He is expected to return and teach other people.

8. Dally rituals
   These consist of performing frequent religious services dedicated to the tutelary and protective deities in the *sgrub khang* sanctuary.

9. Annual rituals
   The hermitage cannot afford to hold any religious assemblies and is not expected to do so.
   Apart from going out to recite scriptures and prayers, the *ser khyim* live with their families most of the time.

10. Books held in the hermitage
   There is a set of the *bKa' gyur* published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phuntsogs in Chengdu, 1985-87.

11. Income and expenses
   The meagre income of the hermitage is used for its renovation.

12. Local community
   The local village is called La phug, where followers of Bon and Buddhism live together.

13. Local festivals
   The villagers propitiate local deities and erect propitiatory flags on the mountain behind the hermitage on the 3rd day of the 1st month and the 14th of the 5th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
   A semi-agricultural and semi-nomad settlement.
(6) bZang ri Monastery

1. Name
bZang ri dgon (often wrongly spelled Zangs ri); its formal name is lHun grub mthong smon gling.

2. Location
The monastery is situated on Mount bZang po ri, behind bZang ri village. It is accessible by car. After reaching Nye mo bridge on the way from Lhasa to Shigatse, and driving northward for eight kilometres, one arrives at the county seat of Nye mo. From here a drive of three kilometres takes one to bZang ri village.

3. History
bZang ri Monastery was founded in 1096 by mKhas pa Tshul khrims dpal chen. It became a great centre for studies in metaphysics, where, over the years, hundreds of monks studied. It was also a place where tantric meditation and rituals were commonly practised. However, the monastery soon began to decline, and did so for several generations. Later it was looked after by sPa ston 'Od gsal rgyal mtshan, a descendant of the sPa family. This master’s main seat was at sMan gong in Shangs. His chief disciple was Zhang ston Ba thang pa. There then followed several masters, such as Zhang ston Tshul khrims blo Idan, Sum ston lHa 'bum, Sum ston 'Dul ba bzang po, Sum ston bZang po dpal, mKhas grub rGyal mtshan mchog legs of rMe'u and Rong ston Shes rab 'od zer, all of whom were active in the monastery. The monastery was mainly maintained by the members of the rMe'u family. There have been, altogether to date, forty descendants of the rMe'u family down to the present rMe'u Nyi zla dbang grags. The monastery was originally located east of bZang ri village and was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In 1982, its site was moved up to the top of the hill behind the village and was then rebuilt.

4. Headship system
The monastery had successive abbots, who mainly came from the rMe'u family.

5. Current number of monks
Fifteen.

6. Current education
This consists mainly of two aspects: 1) sending monks to gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2) for elementary studies in philosophy; 2) teaching Bonpo knowledge and conducting various rituals under the guidance of the old monks
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within the monastery.

7. Educational exchange
   See No.6 above.

8. Daily rituals
   These comprise mainly the reciting of prayers to invoke the tutelary (yi dam) and protective (bka' skyong) deities.

9. Annual rituals, based on the Tibetan calendar
   - 6th month: on the 4th day, a ceremony of colouring the Bonpo images.
   - 12th month: on the 29th, offerings to the local deities.

10. Books held in the monastery
    There is a copy of the bKa' 'gyur published by Ayung Lama and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu, 1985-87.

11. Income and expenses
    Normally it costs the monastery a large sum, in money and materials, for the provision of meals at religious assemblies and for the renovation of the monastery. So far no clear account is kept at hand. While the monastery provides the monks with one meal every day, the monks have to bear the rest of their living expenses themselves. From what he earns reciting prayers at private homes, a monk is required to turn in one yuan per day to the monastery; he is allowed to keep the rest.

12. Local community
    There are 114 households in bZan ri village, all follow the Bon religion.

13. Local festivals
    A ceremony of offerings by the whole village to the local deities on Mount bZang ri is performed on the 4th day of the 6th month and the 29th of the 12th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
    The villagers mostly make their living as farmers, and are engaged in grain production.
(7) mKhar sna Monastery

1. Name
   mKhar sna bsam gtan gling

2. Location
   mKhar sna Monastery was situated at the foot of Mount sMan ri. Since there is no road leading to the place it can only be reached on horseback or on foot.

3. History
   Originally it was a hermitage in the hills where monks of gYas ru dBen sa kha Monastery practised meditation. Shes rab g-yung drung (b.1838), the 25th Abbot of sMan ri Monastery(No.1)' expanded it into a monastery. It was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. To date, the monastery has not been formally restored.

(8) Pus mo sgang Monastery

1. Name
   The full name is gSang sngags theg chen g-yung drung gling.

2. Location
   After a nine-hour drive from Shigatse, one reaches Ya tung in Gro mo, whence a three-hour journey on foot takes one to Pus mo sgang. One can also drive there.

3. History
   Pus mo sgang Monastery was founded by gYung drung dbang rgyal, who was a hermit living on Mount sKyd mu sman ri in Gro mo. The monastery was then maintained by a series of fourteen masters up to bsTan pa rgya mtsho. He fled to Bhutan in 1959. The monastery was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In 1985 its restoration began. Before 1959, there were sixty monks. gYung drung tshe ring and his son Tshe ring dbang 'dus are in charge of the monastery.

4. Headship system
   The monastery had a system of abbotship.

5. Current number of monks
   Six
6. Current education
Two monks have been sent to study in gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2). Since there are no formal study classes in the monastery, the rest of the young monks learn prayers and scriptures under the guidance of the old monks.

7. Educational exchange
With the exception of sending one or two monk students to study under the master Kun gsal blo gros in gYung drung gling, there are no exchanges with other monasteries.

8. Daily rituals
These consist of the frequent performance of religious services dedicated to the tutelary and protective deities, and the recitation of prayers and scriptures.

9. Annual rituals, based on the Tibetan calendar
- 1st month: on the 5th day, the memorial service of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mthshan based on the gYung drung klong rgyas.
- 2nd month: on the 10th, a performance of the tshes bcu ceremony in which prayers are said to Dran pa nam mkha’ and his twin sons Tshe dbang rig ’dzin and Pad ma mthong grol.
- 3rd month: from the 13th to the 16th, a religious assembly.
- 5th month: on the 13th and 16th, performances of religious services dedicated to the tutelary and protective deities, in which the common people near the monastery participate.
- 11th month: from the 7th to the 16th, a ceremony of offerings to the tutelary deity, during which time religious dances take place the whole day, as well as the propitiation of the local deity Brag btsan rgod ’bar ba on the mountain behind the monastery.

In summer and autumn the monks return to their homes to live with their families; in winter and spring they go back to the monastery for religious activities and studies.

10. Books held in the monastery
There are sixteen cases of the Khro skyab edition of the Khams chen, a set of the Ngan song sbyong ba’i gzungs written in gold and twelve cases of scriptures given by gYung drung gling Monastery.

11. Income and expenses
Since the monastery has a meagre income, the relevant expenses are mainly borne by patrons.
12. Local community

There is one village with thirty-five households, all of whom are Bon followers.

13. Local festivals

On the 3rd day of the 1st month, the 15th of the 4th month and the 16th of the 11th month, all the villagers take part in the ceremonies of offerings to the local deities on Mount sPo bo tshe dmar and Mount Zhu bo ri at the back of the monastery.

14. Occupation of the local people

The villagers are mainly engaged in farming, with lumbering as a side occupation.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in central Tibet

- gZhis-ka-rtse
- Rin-spungs County
- Pa-snam County
- sNa-dkar-rtse County
- Khang-dmar County
- County Seat
- Township Seat
- Administrative Village
- Monastery
- County Border
- River
- Road
- Footpath
Bonpo monasteries and temples in central Tibet

- dPa'-mgon County
- sNye-mo County
- rNam-gling County
- 'Dam-gzhung County
- Rin-spungs County

Legend:
- ■ County Seat
- ○ Township Seat
- ◊ Administrative Village
- □ Monastery
- --- County Border
- —— River
- --- Road
- --- Footpath

Scale: 1/800,000
The Bonpo monasteries and temples in central Tibet

Plate 2
sMan ri Monastery, Plate 2 sMan ri, ruins and new buildings
(Photograph Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

Plate 3
sMan ri Monastery, Plate 3 The 'Khrungs gzhi, residence of the Bru family
(Photograph Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(2) Ral ëg gYung drung gling Monastery. **Plate 2** The monastery, reconstructed
(Phofo Samten G. Karmay 1996)
Plate 1: The monastery on the top of the hill and Dar sding village in the foreground (Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

Plate 2: Dar sding village with the temple gShen gyi gser sgo khra mo in the centre (Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(3) Rgyal Monastery. Plate 3 'Chimed, a monk of the monastery
(Photograph Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

(4) Rgyong Monastery. Plate 1 Ruins of the old Rgyong Monastery
(Photograph Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(4) Rizhing Monastery, Plate 2 New Rizhing Monastery
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

(4) Rizhing Monastery, Plate 3 Cave gyU 'brang phyug mo
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(6) bZang ri Monastery. **Plate 1** The monastery on the top of the hill and bZang ri village in the foreground (Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

(6) bZang ri Monastery. **Plate 2** bZang ri village (Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(6) bZang ri Monastery, Plate 3 Residence of the rMe'u tshang family
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(8) Pus mo sgang Monastery. **Plate 1** Assembly hall of the monastery
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
(8) Pus mo sgang Monastery, Plate 2 gYung drung tshe ring, a monk of the monastery
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)

(8) Pus mo sgang Monastery, Plate 3 Gro stod village in Gro mo
(Photo Dondrup Lhagyal 1996)
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions
The Nag chu region

One hundred and sixty kilometres west of Lhasa, along the Qinghai Tibet highway, lies a marvellous snow mountain called gNyan chen Thang lha, one of the Five Great Holy Mountains of Bon (bon gyi gnas mchog gangs ri chen po lnga). It is about 7,117 metres in height. The abode of the deity gNyan chen Thang lha (known in Buddhist tradition as lHa chen rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal), distinguished among the nine mountain divinities, gNyan chen Thang lha externally appears in the shape of a simple snow mountain, while internally it holds a crystal treasury glittering with various jewels. At the foot of the mountain is a lake topped with waves of nectar, half way up is a pretty rainbow-coloured tent. The mountaintop is covered with white clouds of mizzly jewels. The pastureland, blanketed with flowers, looks like a mandala of various flowers offered to the deity, and the whole area, surrounded by the crystal stupas; the snow mountains is a pilgrimage site of great superiority. There is no definite iconographic description of gNyan chen Thang lha, but the lHa bskyed nang gsal describes it as follows: “gNyan chen Thang lha would be smiling, allowing his canine teeth to be seen slightly, his three brilliant eyes emitting light, his hair bound with fine white silk, being thoroughly dignified, holding a cane with a five-edged vajra in his highly raised right hand, and a crystal rosary in his left hand, clad in a tricoloured cloak of fine silk, his head crowned with blazing jewels, and beautifully dressed up, all over, with varieties of precious stones.”

gNam mtsho phyug mo, the goddess of the lake (also known as rDor rje kun grags ma or Rang byung rgyal mo in Buddhist tradition), the consort of gNyan chen Thang lha, is one of the twelve brTan ma, the ruling goddesses of Tibet. These twelve goddesses are Kun grags ma, Ya ma skyong, Kun bzang mo, bGegs kyi gtso, sPyan gcig ma, dPal gyi yun, Drag mo rgyal, Klu mo dkar mo, Bod khams skyong, sMan gcig ma, gYar mo sil and gYu sgron (in Buddhist tradition the name of each of these goddesses is preceded by the word rdo rje). Among these goddesses Kun grags ma takes precedence. She is superb, having a turquoise-coloured body, one face, two hands and three eyes of wisdom. Holding a banner of crowning victory in her right hand and a mirror of sanctity in her left, she has a great loveliness. Her indigo-blue hair hangs down to some length, and she is mounted on a turquoise-blue dragon in the centre of a swirling white cloud. It is believed that Kun grags ma, the consort of gNyan chen Thang lha, is the principal one among the twelve brTan ma, the protective goddesses of Bon.

The mountain deities surrounding gNyan chen Thang lha, in all directions, are rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal in the east, rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal in the south, rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal in the west, rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal in the north, lHa chen sKyes bu bzhiin bzang in the south-east, ’Brong g-yag zhol dkar in the south-west, rDo rje ’bar ba rtsal in the north-west and lHa mchog Tshangs pa chen po in the north-east. All these deities are said to be engirded: by the 360 companion deities and trillion armed deities in
circumference, by the white conchs of miraculous transformation circling around in
the sky, and by a pack of white wolves of both sexes and a herd of long-haired wild
yaks, excited in anger, from above and all directions.

gNam mtsho phyug mo is a holy lake of Eternal Bon just like the other lakes,
including Dwang ra g-yu mtsho, Ma pang g-yu mtsho and Ma ma mtsho. It is a very
large lake, extending about seventy kilometres from east to west, and about thirty
kilometres from north to south. More than half of its area belongs to dPal mgon
rdzong in Nag chu. As it is possible to travel by car from 'Dam gzhung via gNam
mtsho up to dPal mgon rdzong, the lake can be visited and thoroughly enjoyed.

In shape, gNam mtsho phyug mo resembles rDo rje phag mo, foremost among
goddesses, lying on her back: the rivers Ngang chu and Gri chu look just like her
right hand, holding a sword and lifted high into the sky; the three small ponds on
the upper side of the lake bear a resemblance to the three eyes of wisdom looking
upward; the lHa lcam khan pa looks like her bound hair; Ma chags Se mo do looks
like the left hand of the goddess holding a skull filled with blood in front of her
breast; the counterpart of Ma chags Se mo do is a cave, which represents her right
leg, bent; the lower end of the lake represents her left leg, stretched out; and Hal
po gdong lies just like the mattress of the fainted figure under the goddess' foot.
Because of these, a mere glance at the lake may be enough for devotees of Bon to
have a feeling of real experience with Yum chen rDo rje phag mo. In their hearts,
devoted reverence to the lake may arise, as well as sincerity of supreme virtue.

Similarly, the glorious 'Khor lo bde mchog has as the seats of his body, speech
and mind the following: the snow mountain Ti se (Mount Kailash) as the seat of his
body, gNam mtsho phyug mo his speech and Tsa ri his mind, each of which has an
auspicious season for making pilgrimages. Ti se should be visited in Horse years,
gNam mtsho phyug mo in Sheep years and Tsa ri in Monkey years.

gNam mtsho phyug mo can be divided into three parts: bKra shis do do che
as the seat of his body of speech, Bya do Nam mkha' do as the seat of his speech
of speech, and Ma chags Se mo do as the seat of his mind of speech. These are
subdivided yet again into thirteen do chen and thirteen gdong chen. Furthermore,
gNam mtsho phyug mo has so many other characteristic sites, such as rGa lo gzim
phug, mGon po phug, sGrol ma phug, O rgyan phug, bKa' thang phug, Zhab's drung
phug, Bar do'i phrang, Cong zhi phug pa, Karma phug, Klu khang phug and Nam
mkha' mdzod, that it looks like the sky strewn with clusters of stars.

Both gNyan chen Thang lha and gNam mtsho phyug mo should be
circumambulated in Sheep years, the auspicious pilgrimage time. It can take from
fifteen to twenty days and nights on foot. A pilgrimage to gNam mtsho alone can
take at least seven to nine days. It is difficult to visit the island (do) called Se mo do
in summer because it is the centre of the lake and there is no boat, while bKra shis do
and Bya do may be very accessible. Currently a great many pious people both clergy
and laity frequently offer prayers in front of gNyan chen Thang lha in various ways, such as erecting cairns, burning incense, raising prayer flags or white ceremonial scarves, casting their possessions into the lake, and so forth. The sacred gNyan chen Thang lha has now become a particularly celebrated site to which numerous clerical and lay devotees of Bon pay a visit in search of protection or in order to offer prayers, irrespective of their sect, school or party.

The town of Nag chu is 154 kilometres from 'Dam gzhung. Then from Nag chu, a ten-kilometre drive northward on the highway and a further eighty-two kilometres in a north-easterly direction lead one to sNye rong rdzong. Because of the rather bad condition of the road between Nag chu and sNye rong rdzong, the trip can take some two and a half hours.

sNye rong rdzong

sNye rong lies to the north of Nag chu, south of the famous Thang khug la mountain range. It is about 14,560 square kilometres in area, and is 4,700 metres above sea level. Pastureland covers an area of 11,800 mu. sNye rong, with a population of 25,000, has one qu under its immediate supervision and thirteen xiang, in which there are 165 village committees.

At one time, when sNye rong was under Sa skya pa rule, there were three major tribes in the district, and another one was formed during the time of Phag mo gru pa rule. These four then joined with several other tribes of the area, including 'Bri ru, sBra chen and sTeng chen, to be united into the so-called Thirty-nine Tribes (Tsho ba so dgu), which is very famous in Tibetan history. In the middle of the Ming Dynasty during the time of the Phag mo gru pa, the Thirty-nine Tribes was were absorbed into the Mongolian Tuned and Khalkha tribes in mTsho sngon. It came under Mongolian control in 1637; and in 1732, the central government of the Qing Dynasty ceded it back to the Tibetan government. But in 1751, the Qing official (am ban) in Tibet looked after the Thirty-nine Tribes. In 1916, the Tibetan government established the post of governor-general of Hor (Hor spyi khyab), and put part of the Thirty-nine Tribes under its control. But in 1942, the Tibetan government abolished the post of governor-general of Hor and divided the Thirty-nine Tribes into six divisions and sNye rong rdzong is one of the six. On August 1st, 1960, the sNye rong rdzong office was established.

(9) sNang gsal Monastery

A brag sNang gsal g-yung drung gsal ba'i gling is under the jurisdiction of Dar 'dzum xiang (also known as mTsho dbyang qu), which lies more than twenty kilometres to the north of sNye rong rdzong. Although it is not very far, it takes more than an hour to get there by car because of the terribly muddy road, which makes the going difficult. This monastery is set in a fairly good natural environment.
The monastery was founded in 1906. The predecessor of this monastery was sMad sog gYung drung ’dzin pa’i gling (ruins of an ancient monastery near Nag chu kha were recently identified as those of this monastery) which was founded by Khyung po A bla grags pa and Sha ba sang grol. It was prosperous, with hundreds of monks and nuns. In spite of the extensive work devoted to the three noble deeds “keeping, defending and spreading the teachings of Eternal Bon” through generations of lamas, the monastery was upset by, needless to say, the troops of the Mongolian Jungar. During that time the Mongolians subjected the two Khyung po lamas, dBu se and dBu nag, to imprisonment—and eventually murdered these two faultless lamas. The sight of this incident made their great many followers tremble and the lives of their followers subsequently fell into hopelessness.

Then a monastery called Khri dkar was set up on the bank of the Yag chu river and the teachings of Bon were spread by several generations of lamas. Destiny, however, reduced the monastery to a deteriorated state. Khyung po bsTan rgyal grags pa then laid the foundation for the next one at Khyung rdzong, situated at Gad ngas la, and maintained it for a while, but it, too, collapsed in the Eleventh Rab byung.

Then Mi ’gyur grags pa, rGyal skyid grags pa, Nyi dbang, lHa dbang, Tshe dbang g-yung drung and others, all from Khyung po, established the residence (bla brang) of Khyung po sBra nag in A stod district, which burdened them with the expectations of many proponents of Eternal Bon that their thirst for a monastery would be satisfied.

In 1882, a miraculous baby, who emitted many auspicious signs, was born to a couple, Khyung dkar gDung pa lha bu, the father, and Gur bza’ dPal ’dzoms, the mother. The baby was called Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan. From childhood he stood out prominently among other children, with his varied talents. Endowed with auspicious signs, he was praised by everyone. Until the age of twenty-five, he lived as a herdsman in the manner of a yogi in order to avoid being possessed by unclean transmigratory existence. At that time, his parents repeatedly murmured their hope that their son would succeed to the leadership of the family, but he did not accept this, for he wanted to take an oath to become a monk.

In 1906, Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan was ordained in the presence of sMon rgyal Nam mkha’ dbang rgyal in rDza khog. In his mind, he conceived the idea of building a monastery at a certain rocky place surrounded by many outstandingly sacred sites such as the meditation cave of the great lama Dran pa nam mkha’, his foot-prints and the like. Then a prophecy was made by the yogi A lo, and in accordance with it, in 1911 Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan went to seek the place where a new monastery should be built.

It was a place with many auspicious signs, such as the following: to the right, lHa ri spang mtho, whose summit consists of a crystal rock; at the front, Un chen dur krod nor bu spungs ri and gNyan chen wa ra, which look like dextral white conchs;
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

and mountains, including, at the back, 'Bul ri, the gathering place of deities, the klu, and the gnyan. As the place was filled with many springs, herbs and other auspicious symbols, he decided to build a new monastery there, which he did in 1918. A brag sNang gsal Monastery was thus established.

He then established the monastic discipline in the establishment with the establishment of the Three Trainings. He made pilgrimages to many places, such as the Four Divisions of Central Tibet (dbus gtsang ru bzhi), Ti se, Bon ri and so forth. He studied various doctrines under many teachers, irrespective of their sects, including 'Gro mgon Shes rab g-yung drung, bZod pa rgyal mtshan, and the great treasure-discoverer of A dbang, Rig 'dzin rgya mtsho, who was a Buddhist priest. He received from them the threefold lineages “initiation, transmission and explanation of texts” of the entire doctrine of inner, outer and secret. All the good deeds he had learned and performed over a decade led him to a state of knowledge of the most excellent quality. Every sign of his achievement thrilled the common people. Since he had obtained omniscience and omnipotence, he came to be known everywhere as the one who would save all the people in this and the next life, by the designation of A bla sNang gsal, from Khyung lung dNgul mkhar in the west to mTsho snigon in Amdo in the east.

As for the account of his previous lives, his origin is traced back to Tshad med 'od ldan in the time of gShen. The line then leads successively down to sTong rgyung mthu chen in the time of Bla chen Dran pa nam mkha’ in the early stage of Bonpo dissemination, and sPyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan in the latter stage of Bonpo dissemination. To make the long story of his life short: he trained himself in the three deeds of hearing, thinking and meditating, and moved on into the three deeds of teaching, debating and writing; he preached extensively for his own sake and for the sake of others, which was openly praised everywhere, in consequence of which he turned into the one like the vast ocean of summer.

Main religious objects and activities of the monastery: Shar gling sham po lha rtse.

At the centre of this mezzanine-high building was a gilt-bronze statue of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba as tall as a mezzanine. There was also the sacred gilt-bronze statue of gShen rab Mi bo accompanied on either side by the cubit-high Four Principal Buddhas (bDe gshegs gtsos bzhi).

On the sculptured wooden shelves to the right were the cubit-high Sixteen Arhats (gNas bRtan bcu drug) in gilt-bronze. Along the left wall was a varnished wooden shelf with an outward appearance of Pho brang gling dgu, the Mandala of Peace, and an inward appearance of the gSas mkhar bcu drug, the flame of the potential nature of wrath. In front of sTon pa gShen rab Mi bo was the cubit-high silver statue of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan. Painted on the wall were murals of the Thousand Buddhas. Such was the magnificence of this shrine’s religious
objects.

bKa’'gyur lha khang

On the right-hand side of this two-storey building was a life-sized gilt-bronze statue of sMra ba’i seng ge, and on the left-hand side was that of Byarns ma. Along the walls on either side were three hundred volumes (po ti) of the bKa’'gyur of both Buddhism and Bon, along with one hundred thumb-sized images of gShen rab made of silver, and another nine hundred of copper.

sKu gdung khang, gYu rtse khang and dBu rtse khang

The two-storey sKu gdung khang had a triple-headed stupa of Lo pan mchod rten, which nearly reached the roof of the building, and murals of the Forty-five Peaceful deities (Zhi lha zhe Inga).

gYu rtse khang had a complete set of religious objects: at its centre was a statue of 'Brug sras chem pa the height of an arrow, made of a compound of gold and silver. To the right was a cubit-high silver statue of Phur pa together with another nine of gilt-bronze. On both sides of Phur pa were one hundred stupas in gilt-bronze, and on the walls were murals of the thousand gShen lha 'od dkar.

Similarly, dBu rtse khang was adorned with many religious objects. At its centre was a gilt-bronze statue of gShen lha 'od dkar as tall as a two-storey house. To the right and slightly in front of the statue was a magnificent, elaborately worked gilt-bronze mandala, organized with holy elements to the height of a mezzanine. It was constructed of, from the bottom, the following: the four continents; the four islands; the seven mountains; the seven lakes; the abode of the Thirty-three gods, where the temple rNam rgyal khang bzang was found; and, on the top, the Garuda subduing the three worlds. To the left and slightly in front of gShen lha 'od dkar was a shrine of the Eighty-six Wrathful deities (Khro rgyal gya drug) in gilt-bronze. And above the gShen lha 'od dkar were the Forty-five Peaceful Deities (Zhi lha zhe Inga) in gilt bronze.

The construction of these five buildings, together with the fields around, presented a resemblance to that of the heart of 'Ol mo lung ring, the Holy Land. The beautiful and lovely scene of the purest land raises a deep faith and reverence in one’s mind when it comes into sight.

There were two meditation halls (sgrub khang), the old one and the new, with many religious objects in each. In the old one was a gilt-bronze statue of sTag la me 'bar, a thangka of Srid pa’i rgyal mo and masks of some Bonpo guardian deities. In the new one was a statue of the hundred-headed, thousand-armed IJang nag made of gold and silver, and the Four Queens (rGyal mo rnam bzhi) in gilt-bronze. There were also thangka embroidered with silk, and many other religious objects.

Of the two residences (bla brang), the older one had the Thang gsas lha khang,
inside which were many religious objects, such as the following: a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba; a gilt-bronze reliquary stupa of IHa bu, the father of sNang gsal Rinpoche; murals of about five hundred figures of Thang gsas sgrol ma, a wheel of life and the kings of the directions (rGyal chen sde bzhi); a statue of sTon pa made of pure gold, rediscovered in Kong po Bon ri by sNang gsal Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan; an image of the deity Zhi ba a gsal, which was an old relic of the Khyung po family; an Indian-made copper statue of gShen rab named “Black Gold of Thirteen Horse Head” (gSer nag rta mgo bcu gsum); large and small conchs called dBu yang.

Annual religious activities and monks of the monastery
1. During the three days from the 3rd to the 5th of the 1st month, a memorial service was held in honour of mNyam med Shes rab rgyas mtshan, during which assemblies were held to make flower-offerings.
2. From the 13th day of the 2nd month to the 18th of the 3rd month, prayers were offered in a memorial service for sNang gsal Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, in the course of which an extensive procession of monks was arranged on the 27th day of the 2nd month.
3. From the 30th day of the 2nd month to the 18th of the 3rd month was the period in which the rituals of sKye sgo, rNam klong gnyis, and Zhi khro were performed. From the 8th to the 15th of the 3rd month, the ritual cycle of Khro bo and the recital of the Kanjur and Katen, were staged in the Shar rtse khang. The ritual of the Grub sman mam bzhi, the hundred offerings of Ma rgyud and other rituals were performed on a grand scale in the dBu rtse khang. During the three days from the 15th, a large group of devotees of Bon got together to enjoy the glory of the artistic religious dances performed by the monks; these dances included sNa sel, A tsa ra, Sa ’dul khro ’cham, Srid rgyal dus drug, gZe ma dgu ’cham, Ha shang, Ma rgyud tshogs ’cham, rNga chen mo, dPal mgon gral brgyad, Dur khrod gnas brgyad, the Snow Lion (seng ge), the Tiger, the Leopard, the dBal stag, the dBal ’brug, the dBal g-yag and the dBal kyung.
4. In the 4th and 5th months, primary and principal instructions, along with various other teachings, were given, as well as guidance on general and detailed knowledge.
5. From the 6th to the 9th day of the 6th month, rituals rNam rgyal stong mchod, gYang skor and dGra lha dpang stod were performed. Similarly, there was propitiation of mountain deities and circumambulation of holy mountains, followed by a horseracing competition customarily organized by the monastery and the A brag community. The competition was a social occasion.
6. From the 13th to the 20th day of the 7th month rituals of Kun gsal byams
ma’i tshogs brgya and Yi dam kun ’dus las tshogs were performed.

7. During the three months from the 8th month to the 10th, most of the monks and lamas visited each village to give religious services; otherwise they stayed in the monastery for daily tea.

8. From the 23rd to the 30th day of the 11th month, the dgu bzlog rite, based on the ritual cycle of sTag la, was performed.

9. In the 12th month, from the 3rd to the 5th day, the bskang gsol ceremony was held on a grand scale according to the Zhu tradition; from the 23rd to the 30th day, the dgu bzlog rite, based on the cycle of Phur pa, was held.

Formerly, the monastery had five hostels (khang tshan) each of which had a lama and a teacher: the lama Tshul khrims blo Idan and the teacher rMa rong Thar dkar in Shar rtse hostel, the lama Dwangs ra Zla zla and the teacher Seng ge in bKa’ ’gyur hostel, the lama Don nyid and the teacher bsTan tshul in sKu gdung hostel, the lama ’Bum thar and the teacher A ’jab in gYu rtse hostel, and the lama Nam mkha’ g-yung drung and the teacher A chig in dBu rtse hostel. There were 139 monks. The lama and teacher of each hostel took, in rotation, all the responsibilities for the annual religious activities.

At present, this monastery consists of the following buildings: one temple with one hundred long pillars, the assembly hall with four, the bKa’ ’gyur khang four, and the two meditation halls have four each; a new kitchen and more than thirty monks’ quarters have been built. Something that should be stressed is that a collection of religious objects remains in perfect condition. It includes the following: the relics of sNang gsal Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan; a mezzanine-high, three-headed stupa made of a compound of gold and silver; a mezzanine-high gilt-bronze statue of gShen lha ’od dkar; a life-sized gilt-bronze statue of Byams ma and a reliquary stupa of the lama Nyi grags.

There are ten lamas and more than forty monks at present. The monastery’s main source of revenue is the circulation service around the village. It depends on every household for support.

(10) Chab mdo Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Chab mdo dgon dPal gShen bstan g-yung drung bde chen gling. It is located in Shag chu xiang, in the south-eastern part of the rdzong. Although it is no more than thirty kilometres from the rdzong to, the monastery, it takes about one and a half hours by car because of the bad road condition. This is one of the Bonpo monasteries that has a long history. It was destroyed in 1641 when Mongolian troops led by Gushri Khan bsTan ’dzin chos rgyal invaded Tibet. Reconstruction was undertaken in 1917.

In the time of gNya’ khri btsan po, the teachings of Bon became widespread in Tibet. During this period, however, the monastery experienced a rise and fall,
and met with great misfortune in that many masters of Bon gshen scattered to mDo khams and the nomad area because of the religious oppression by bTsan po Khri srong lde btsan. In the nomad area, those Bon gshen masters who had escaped established many monastic communities in order to get a foot-hold there, so that the precious teachings of Eternal Bon did not degenerate. At that time Khyung po A bla grags pa and Sha ba rang grol, who both came from the upper Dwang ra Khyung rdzong, established Sog gYung drung 'dzin pa'i gling monastery and greatly increased the number of monks. The three deeds of keeping, defending and spreading the precious teachings of Eternal Bon became widespread everywhere.

However, at the same time, Gushri bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal first captured mDo khams and then gradually penetrated gTsang by waging war against Karma bstan skyong dbang po, the king of gTsang, and brought it under his control.

In 1642, the Tibetan government began to organize itself and the doctrine of the dGe lugs pa sect began to spread widely in Tibet. Simultaneously, a large number of monastic communities of the bKa’ rgyud pa and Eternal Bon were, as a matter of course, destroyed by the military power of Gushri bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal. Many Bonpo monks and nuns were ferociously tortured and eventually murdered. After that, although Khyung po bsTan rgyal grags pa, Khri bde gung grags and Khyung po 'Bun snang tried their best to practise the three deeds “keeping, defending and spreading the teachings” they gradually declined.

At that time, Khyung po Nang chen grags pa brought the statue Zhi kro rgyab bkrod and other religious objects to A smad district and took care of the monastery of Khyung po sBa nag bla brang. Khyung po sMan ri grags pa, gShen sras grags pa and sNang gsal grags pa are said to have followed successively in the line of this Bla brang.

A brag sPyi ba grags pa then put up a yak-hair tent on the pastureland so that they could declare that their monastery was settled there. They raised funds and scraped together enough monastic implements, including the offerings to the deities and costumes for religious dance. Besides that, they also obtained many religious objects such as the Zhi kro rgyab bkrod and other invaluable relics. Gathering a number of devotees in the nomad area, they performed prayer services and rituals to the satisfaction of the people.

There were about twenty, mostly tantric practitioners, but some of them were real monks. They practised chanting and meditation. They performed religious services based on the ritual cycles of dBal gsas, gTso mchog, Phur pa, sTag la and Byams ma. They also propitiated Srid pa rgyal mo drel nag, Mi bdud, A bse, rGyal po Nyi pang sad and dGra bla’i rgyal mo. Since they performed these rituals extensively, the monastery became the object of worship for the people, for this life and hereafter.

From among these lamas came bsTan 'dzin grags pa in the lineage of sBra nag
bla brang, who had accomplished complete deliverance from every attachment of this world. But after his leaving for the purest land Bon dbyings (after his death), even the sBra nag bla brang lineage fell into a state like that of a rosary broken into pieces. Later on, this situation caused the sBra nag bla brang to invite, willingly or unwillingly, lamas of the Khyung po lineage from A stod district.

About the same time, in 1880, dBang phyug gYung drung tshul khrims, an accomplished yogi of the Nag ru lineage, one of the three lineages of Khyung po “White, Black and Yellow” was born, emitting many auspicious signs. From childhood, gYung drung tshul khrims had inborn knowledge quite unlike all other children. Being a master in the fields of calligraphy and arithmetic, he became the one most admired by all the laity and priests. When he grew up, he felt so deeply sad about the cyclic existences that he made pilgrimages to Central Tibet, Mount Kailash in Western Tibet, Bon ri in of Kong po; and when he visited monasteries including sMan ri (No.1), gYung drung gling (No.2) and mKhar sna (No.7) and he studied under many matchless teachers to receive initiations and instructions of outer, inner and secret. He then thoroughly learned the Sutra, Tantra and rDzogs chen. Adjusting himself to the monastery, he took the full ordination of Drang srong, consisting of 256 vows.

A prophecy was made at that time by sKal bzang nyi ma, the great abbot of gYung drung gling, that a new monastery would be built in sNye rong district. In accordance with the prophecy, a large group of devotees of Bon having united with some leaders of Shag chu smad community in sNye rong rdzong apprised mKhan chung Grags rnam, the governor-general of Hor that they would establish Chab mdo dPal gShen bstan gYung drung bde chen gling, which they did in 1917.

gYung drung tshul khrims maintained the monastery by the observation of monastic discipline, such as the Three Trainings, in consequence of which he became the very guide of the three deeds of keeping, defending and spreading the precious teachings of gShen. Furthermore, he developed his unique abilities: he left a number of handprints and footprints all around the monastery, including places on the hills in front and at the rear; the flag of his reputation as Chab mdo rTogs ldan fluttered high.

However, due to the unfortune of devotees, he died on the 23rd day of the 8th month, 1947 with the signs of summer thunder booming through the sky above the monastery.

After that, until the Cultural Revolution, the monastery was looked after by his nephew, Bla chung tshe dpag of the Khyung po Nag ru family. During this time the monastery was enlarged and the necessary religious objects, such as statues, scriptures, stupæs and implements of offerings, were greatly increased. Among many Bonpo establishments, this monastery had the high reputation of having grown just like a lotus that comes out of the mire.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

Religious objects and rituals of the monastery:

sKu gdung lha khang

The main religious object of this three-storey temple was the gilt-bronze reliquary stupa of the sage of Chab mdo, gYung drung tshul khrims, in the style of the gYung drung bkod legs stupa, as tall as a two-storey house. To its right was a statue of Li shu about the same size as the stupa. Further to the corner was a gilt-bronze statue of sMon lam mtha’ yas. To the left of the stupa was a gilt-bronze statue of Dran pa nam mkha’ about the same size. Among these, there was also a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba as high as the ceiling.

On the upper floor was a gilt-bronze statue of sTon pa gShen rab as high as the ceiling. In front of it were religious objects that included the mandala, built at a cost of two thousand Chinese yuan, the butter lamp stand that cost one thousand yuan, a set of seven silver cups that cost one hundred yuan, the mandala of the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis), an embroidered thangka, and a great many other equally sacred religious objects.

The assembly hall (’du khang)

At the centre of this two-storey building, which had fifty-two pillars, was a clay image of rNam par rgyal ba as tall as the building itself. Beside it, on both sides, were bronze statues of the four Buddhas and the four wrathful deities, and five large golden thangkas of the Thousand Buddhas. There was also a chamber with 122 wooden stupas in it. In addition to these, the number of invaluable religious objects in this building was beyond counting.

The Meditation hall (sgrub khang)

In this building there was a statue of the guardian rGyal po Shel khrabs and a number of masks of other guardians.

The Lama’s residence (bla brang)

Of the two bla brang, the upper bla brang was a building of three storeys. It consisted of bKa’ ’gur khang, Zhabs brtan khang and Rig sngags lha khang. In the two Rig sngags lha khang were small gilt bronze images of Byams ma, gDugs dkar, sTag la me ’bar, Ma rgyud, Phur pa and many others.

The main religious object in the lower bla brang was the clay image of rGyal ba rgya mtsho, about half the height of the ceiling. On either side of it were cubit-high clay images of the Sixteen Arhats (gNas brtan bcu drug). In front of the relics of the Sage gYung drung tshul khrims was a mandala, built at a cost of two thousand Chinese yuan, small butter lamp stands of silver, silver water bowls in various sizes, and many other things.
The Communal quarters (khang tshan)

There were four khang tshan in Chab mdo Monastery: bDe chen smon gro, 'Dod 'byung phun tshogs, Lung rig grags rgyas and Srid gsum dbang bsgyur. There were more than thirty rooms for the 102 resident monks.

Annual religious services of the monastery
1. The 2nd day of the 1st Tibetan month is the commemoration of mNyam med Shed rab rgyal mtshan. Flower offerings are made for three days beginning on that day.
2. During the five days from the 15th day of the 2nd month, there are assemblies of the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis).
3. In the 3rd month, assemblies are held for prayer services.
4. During the ten days from the 1st to the 10th day of the 4th month, a thousand offerings of rNam rgyal are made; simultaneously, the dancers of the monastery perform religious dances such as rGya nag Ha shang, Sa phyag, rNam brgyad, rGya tsha, Ging 'cham, sTag la'i rnga 'cham, Seng 'cham, gTor rgyag and others. These are very well performed in a manner perfectly true to the origin.
5. From the 13th to the 25th day of the 5th month there are recitals of the bKa' 'gyur.
6. During the seven days from the 5th day of the 6th month each khang tshan holds rituals to meditate on its own Yi dam. Concurrently with this, the lay and clerical devotees propitiate the local deities and they enjoy the summer festival by participating in competitive track events.
7. In the 7th month the Zhi khro ritual was performed.
8. During the three days from the 23rd day of the 8th month, a memorial service is held in honour of gYung drung tshul khrims, the sage of Chab mdo, and flower offerings are made.
9. From the 3rd to the 10th day of the 11th month, the ritual cycle of Me ri is performed.
10. From the 3rd to the 30th day of the 12th month, two rituals of Khro bo and Phur pa are simultaneously performed, finishing with the gTor rgyag che mo rite.

At present, there are three lamas and more than fifty ascetic monks in the monastery. Its buildings include the temples, the assembly halls, a kitchen and another building of about sixty pillars. Monks' quarters number more than twenty. Moreover, the monastery is well equipped with the religious objects it needs. The religious services and rituals are also practised in a manner true to the tradition.

(11) Sha ri Monastery

rDza dmar Sha ri dgon Dar rgyas gling is located in the southern rDza dmar
xjang, which covers the north-western part of sNye rong rdzong.

The monastery stands on top of a small hill, to the north of which stretches a range of magnificent rocky mountains. The plain around the monastery is beautiful, large and spacious. A great many people, both lay and clerical, would be fascinated at the sight of it.

The monastery was founded in 1890 by bSod nams g-yung drung of the sKam clan. The story of the monastery's beginnings is as follows:

The great abbot of sMan ri (No.1), bSod nams lhun grub dbang gi rgyal po, came to stay in rDza dmar in the Thirteenth Rab byung. During his stay he fasted on the 10th day of every month, and made flower-offerings. Having seen this, some senior Bonpo took it as being most important for them and adopted it as a part of their collective works. The accomplished saint repeatedly shouted out an oath to the territorial deities such as Ri rgan Bum rdza se mo, and made them take vows so that they would protect the peaceful communities.

Later, when the great abbot of sMan ri, Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, came to rDza dmar, he not only urged and explained the necessity of building a monastery there, he also made the most careful preparations he could afford.

Then another great abbot of mKhar sna (No.7), 'Gro mgron Shes rab g-yung drung, came to rDza dmar and built a five-storey stupa at bKra shis na mo che. In addition to this, he identified the sacred hill on which a monastery should be built, and made a thorough investigation of the place.

The story of the origin of the name rDza dmar Sha ri goes as follows: Once when gShen gSang ba 'dus pa captured some witches, he bound them all firmly to a chicken-shaped rock, on the part that looked like the head of a bird. But two of them, Me bza' brag sbyor and Chu bza' rlung sbyor, managed to escape, barely, and disguised themselves as deer. Later, however, gSang ba 'dus pa killed them with his sword, which made him famous as a deer hunter, Sha ba ri (hence the name Sha ri).

To the south of rDza dmar Sha ri there is a rocky mountain called Tshe bum in which a number of treasures are kept, including the magical objects of sTag la me 'bar, the mysterious stick of 'Od ldan 'bar ba and the like.

To the east is Shel rdzong, the abode of Yum chen Thugs rje Byams ma. There is also a cave called the Shel phug, the abode of Kun bzang rGyal ba 'dus pa, in which there are many self-grown (rang byon) letters on the rock and self-grown figures of particularly eminent ones still visible. In 1892, sKam bSod nams g-yung drung founded rDza dmar Sha ri Monastery in accordance with the prophecy made by Shes rab g-yung drung, undertaking mass fasting, which had previously been practised by senior Bonpo on the 10th day of each month as the basis of their activities.

The altar and religious objects were completely renewed and the monastery was looked after by mKhan nag bla chung, Khro bla sKal bzang rgya mtsho, bZod pa dge slong and A mchod Ge khod. Although bsTan pa tshul khrims, who was then sent
from sMan ri, became widely known as the Sha ri abbot, the unfavourable climate gave him no choice but to finally return to his home in rGyal rong.

The next to take care of the monastery was mTshams pa Shes rab. However, to his misfortune, a gush of water from underground caused the temple and the schoolhouse to be ruined. The monastery suffered greatly, on the brink of annihilation.

At that time, in the course of a discussion involving officials, citizens and monks, an expectation grew that sKam Tshe dbang 'gyur med (generally called sKam 'Gyur dga’ Rinpoche) would restore and maintain the monastery. They told him the essentials of the discussion, which he fully accepted.

Tshe dbang 'gyur med was exceedingly venerable; he had taken the monastic oaths in the presence of the abbot of sMan ri, Phun tshogs blo gros, had studied under many great teachers and had completed the quintessence of the three Sutra, Tantra and rDzogs chen. For the sake of all beings, he spread the teachings of gShen widely, so that his fame reached every part of the Bonpo community. All Bonpo experienced such heartfelt gratification that they respected him as their head.

He spent everything that had been given to him by many patrons and proponents, lay and clergy, solely on good deeds. Since there was no choice but for the monastery to be transferred to another place and rebuilt, the great abbot of sMan ri, Nyi ma dbang rgyal, and some others inspected Nor bu gdong, the plain below Ri rgan bum rdza. However, the officials, citizens and monks of rDza dmar all raised an objection to this with the reason that the place was too far from Ge mo where the lord Kham pa Ge khod resided, along with other reasons. A discussion was then held among Tshe dbang 'gyur med, Zhwa khra 'Chi med, the chieftain of rDza dmar, and Kham pa Ge khod, the chieftain of Ge mo. They reached an agreement to build the monastery midway between rDza dmar and Ge mo.

As almost all the religious objects of the monastery except for one set manuscript of the bKa’ 'gyur and bKa’ brten and some fine incense had been dispersed by that time, sKam 'Gyur dga’ began to gather together the religious objects and the people and the government of rDza dmar began to work on the temple. Since they participated in the construction in this way, the religious objects and the temple were soon nearly completed, when sKam 'Gyur dga’ was struck down with an illness. Taking over his work, two of his disciples, bSod nams lhun grub and Nam mKha’ rgyal mTshan of the sKam clan, completed the task.

With respect to the family of sKam, it is known to be in the line of the sGo, one of the five great clans of early Tibet: sGa, sGo, gDong, dBra and 'Bru. The forefather of the sKam transformed himself into a deity’s offspring called dGa’ ba mdangs ldan, and descended to this world for the sake of religious trainees, so that they would be led by the clear light of the deity. In order to tame the devil Bhyo ra nag po, he came down to a place called Yul bla ra na se with a turquoise drum booming in his hand.
There he was known by the name of sGo rgyal lha bon thod dkar.

The reason why he was known by the name of sKam is as follows: there was once a time when the lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho overflowed naturally, and sGo rgyal lha bon thod dkar appeared and demonstrated his acquired ability by drying up the flood. After this, his clan came to be called by the name of sKam (which means drying).

Subsequently, in some districts, including Dwang ra g-yu mtsho, sDe dge, and Hor sBra chen, men of the sKam family through successive generations became the most talented leaders. It is said that that there have been some 180 masters in the sKam family, such as sGo A lod shig gzan, gYung drung nyi rgyal, the tutor of Nyi ma bstan ’dzin, the great abbot of sMan ri; sKam Khro rgyal grags pa, Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the abbot of So brgyad, and others.

The way in which the sKam family formed the foundation of prosperity in the Hor sBra chen district was as follows: Once when a quarrel was provoked in the sDe dge district between sKam bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud and Ga lhug, the chieftain of dKar shul, they asked the king of sDe dge at lHa thog to deal with it. sKam bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud won the decision that the monastery should be exempt from taxation. Hearing this, the chieftain of dKar shul developed a hatred for him, and threatened that no monk would be allowed in the monastery. However, sKam bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud felt generous enough to leave an excellent mark at the rTsi chu river as witness of his spiritual accomplishment. The Hor lineage eagerly wanted to leave for rTa sgo in upper Nag tshang. However at that time, Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the elder son of the religious teacher of the Klu phug monastery in the Hor sBra chen district, repeatedly expressed his hope that he would fix his permanent abode in Hor sBra chen. Because of this, sKam bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud took up permanent residence in the Hor sBra chen district so that he could give full support to the hope of Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. Descendants of sKam gradually increased and the teachings of gShen became widespread in rDza.dmar in the sNye rong district. The reputation of the sKam family thus came to be widely known in Hor sBra chen.

Structure and religious objects of the monastery

The monastery consisted of the following buildings: the assembly hall with four long pillars and sixteen short ones; two temples, rNam rgyal lha khang and Dran pa lha khang, each with four long pillars and four short ones; the two-storey bla brang; the meditation hall; and the large quarters for monks.

Formerly, this monastery possessed an abundance of religious objects including the following: a sacred gilt-bronze statue of gShen rab rNam par rgyal ba as tall as a two-storey house, the Four Buddhas of gilt-bronze and a gilt-bronze statue of gShen rab Mi bo. In the Dran pa lha khang were the reliquary stupas of sKam ’Gyur dga’ and some other relics.
Among the many religious objects, the ones of particular importance were the following: the treasure-trove statue of sTon pa gShen rab; the big conch called bKra shis 'od 'bar; multiple relics called Yid bzhin dbang gi rgyal po; three small tsha tsha clay images belonging to 'Chi med Dran pa, the father and sons; the golden flat-bell of self-deliverance; the self-grown white letter A, found in r{Tsa ri mtsho dkar by Karma pa Rang_byung rdor rje; the footprint of mKha' 'gro Klu yang sgong brgyad; the silver statue of gShen lha 'od dkar called bKra shis 'od 'bar, rediscovered by Nyag gter gSang sngags gling pa; the “red gold” stupa discovered by Khro tshang 'brug lha in the rDzu 'phrul phug cave on Mt. Ti se; the self-grown image of Zhi ba Kun tu bzang po, which came out of the teeth of a Shel sku Khro bo rgyal mtshan; the self-grown image of gShen lha, which appeared on the skull of Khyung po Gyer chen zla med; “six relics of the six directions”; and a phur pa dagger made of bronze.

There were also a great many precious manuscripts including a high quality set of bKa' 'gyur and bKa' 'brten, the Khams brgyad, the Mi nub mtshan mdo and the Dri med gzi brjid.

Annual religious activities and rituals
This monastery followed various traditions such as that of Zhu, Bru and the New Tradition.

1. In the 1st Tibetan month a fast was performed.
2. In the 6th month there was an annual festival during which an assembly was held on the 10th day, concurrently with which a religious dance was performed.
3. During the three months from the 10th to the 12th, the dgu gtor rite was performed once each month, three times in all. In the old days when the monastery flourished, there were monthly prescribed services.

At that time, this monastery was an establishment where there were both monks and tantric practitioners. There were about twenty monks and some sixty tantric practitioners.

It is said that there were “the eighty generations of Bonpo tantric practitioners of rDza dmar”. Some of these must have observed the tantric vows properly. Among the monks there were many who observed their vows strictly. The famous chanting master of sMan ri, called the Teacher sBa ba, was also a monk from Sha ri Monastery.

At present, this monastery has eight lamas and twenty-five monks whose conditions are good in every respect.

(12) rTing ngu Monastery
Sog rTing ngu bon dgon Nor bu gling is located in Khro bo la xiang, to the
north-east of sNye rong rdzong. It is about eighty kilometres from the rdzong to the monastery. As the road is very bad, it is impossible to get there by car in summer. Even on horseback it is an extremely difficult task to reach it.

The monastery was founded in 1748 by lHun grub dbang ldan. He was born in 1703 in the sDe dge district of Khams. From childhood, he had innate knowledge and intelligence of remarkable lucidity. He devoted himself to the practice of meritorious deeds. He had love and compassion for all religious trainees. In the manifestation of right discernment that he displayed he was quite unlike any other child.

When he reached the appropriate age, he received the most careful initiations and transmissions of Sutra and Tantra in the presence of the great abbot of sMan ri, gYung drung tshul khrims. Having done this, he made rapid progress in practising meditation. He circumambulated the holy mountains in Amdo and Central Tibet, regardless of the schools they belonged to. At the same time, he studied under many excellent masters of several monasteries. Since he respected them as his chief masters and received profound initiations, text-transmissions and religious teachings, he reached a state worthy of praise from everyone.

Then he went to see lHo rTogs ldan dkar po, whose name was widely known. He prostrated himself, bowed his head and asked for blessed initiation and teachings. lHo rTogs ldan dkar po said,

"O You, the noble one, protector of fortunate religious beings!
Having easily obtained selfhood without searching or exertion,
Today we have met here naturally without motivation,
You have had the fate [to see me] pulsing in your veins without fading,
The fate of sentient beings lies on you; I shall tell you without concealment,
You are the one called the Possessor of Self-created Power (lHun grub dbang ldan) of lHa thog,
Act true to your name, and you will gain the ear of all the people."

Following the instruction, lHun grub dbang ldan continued reciting prayers and devoted himself to making pilgrimages and sitting in hermitages, carrying with him the scriptures and a medical kit. Then he went northward, close to the yak hair tent of the chieftain of the Sog community, and asked for alms.

There were three brothers in the chieftain's family: the elder, middle and younger, whose names were, respectively, Khro bo rgyal, Khro bo dar and Khro bo srung. At that time, Khro bo rgyal, the elder one, had been suffering from an illness for a year, during which all medical care and religious rituals had no effect at all. The three brothers invited the saint lHun grub dbang ldan into their tent, and the elder one, Khro bo rgyal, said,

"Happiness is welling up inside me at the very sight of you,
Flowing through my body is energy that I have never felt before,
I would like to remember what name you bear,
I prostrate myself with reverence,
I wonder what caused me to suffer from illness,
I beg from you the best divinatory service to turn my illness away.”

lHun grub dbang ldan said in reply: “I am the one called lHun grub dbang ldan, but I am not the one who tells whether the divination comes out good or bad. What I can do for you is to give you medical treatment.” Then he made an examination of urine and faeces, and gave the most careful medical treatment to satisfy the elder brother’s wishes.

Forty-nine days later the patient finally got far better than their expectation, which, at the same time, raised faith and reverence in the brothers’ minds. Though they repeatedly asked him what kind of thing he wanted as a doctor’s fee, he said “I do not need any kind of doctor’s fee, but I have a wish to build a monastery in accordance with the prophecy made previously by the superior saint. Therefore I shall request you to give me a small piece of land where a monastery could be built. The three brothers were so happy to hear his words that they said, “We shall do as you tell us.”

Then the saint lHun grub dbang ldan, accompanied by the three brothers, went on to examine all the area under their jurisdiction within the Sog district, and encamped for a night at a place called Pha bong thang, where they saw many auspicious manifestations that night.

Therefore, in 1797, a decision was made to establish a monastery on this distinctive land. The future monastery was given a good name, the Glorious Nor bu gling, and an elaborate purification ritual was performed.

With regard to the surroundings of this square piece of land, they appear to be very good, described as follows: to the east is the protective mountain rGya stag khro bo, a white rocky mountain with the appearance of a haughty tiger that is thirsty, to the north is the protective Rus sбал ser po, a meadowy hill shining like a hero’s helmet, to the west is the protective Bya dmar mtshal lu, a beautiful scarlet hill of slate mingled with verdigris, to the south is the protective gYu ’brug sngon po, a blue rocky mountain sticking high into the sky.

All the lamas, leaders, patrons and priests were summoned, and worked without being lazy or negligent. Because of this, they managed to build the assembly hall of the monastery within the very year of the decision being taken. Not only that, by mutual agreement among the assembled monks of the Three Trainings, they increased the number of monks from four to six, then gradually from six to thirteen. In the early days, when there were only four monks, they were called “the four young qualified ones” (mTshan ldan khye’u bzhi), when six, “the six gShen who guide the beings” (’Dul ba gShen drug), and when increased to thirteen, they came to be known everywhere as “the thirteen gShen” (Ye gshen bcu gsum). From that
time, the Bon doors of outer, inner and secret were opened and the great tradition of the teachings of chanting services and meditation came to be established, especially the rNam rgyal and gYung drung klong rgyas which were performed according to the tradition established by the former adepts. This contributed to the increase of the monastery’s activities and the spread of Eternal Bon.

The lineage of the monastery is as follows:

1. lHun grub dbang ldan, the founder of the monastery
2. rGyal tshab lHun grub 'od zer
3. bKra shis tshul khrims
4. Tshul khrims 'od zer
5. dPal ldan tshul khrims
6. gYung drung rgyal ba
7. mChog gyur grub dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen nam mkha' bde chen snying po
8. bsTan 'dzin rgyal dbang
9. bsTan 'dzin lhun grub
10. Kun dga' dbang ldan
11. Kun mkhyen Sangs rgyas grags pa
12. mNyang med Tshul khrims grags pa
13. bsTan pa'i nyi ma

The size of the monastery and its religious objects

'Du khang ka dgu ma

At the centre of this assembly hall, built by bsTan 'dzin rin chen bde chen snying po, was a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba, about the height of an eight-year-old child. On the shelves on either side of the statue were some eighty poti of bKa’ 'gyur written in a mixture of gold and silver. On the walls were murals of the Thousand Buddhas.

sKu gdung lha khang dmar bkod ma

At the centre of this two-storey reliquary temple was a gilt-bronze statue, as tall as the ceiling, of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba sitting on the throne. On either side of the statue were rows of four gilt-bronze reliquary stupas of Ka ru grub dbang bsTan 'dzin lhun grub, rGyal tshab bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal and bsTan 'dzin lhun grub, and the tomb, in the style of the gYung drung bkod legs stupa, of a senior master of the gShen lineage, about the height of the ceiling. Similarly, there were murals of the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis).
bKa’ ’gyur lha khang

In the bKa’ ’gyur lha khang, built by Kun mkhyen Sangs rgyas grags pa, was a number of religious objects such as the gilt-bronze tomb, in the style of the gYung drung bkod legs stupa, of sKyab mgon bsTan ’dzin lhun grub. To the right of the tomb was a life-sized gilt-bronze statue of sMra ba’i seng ge, the deity of wisdom. To the left was a life-sized gilt-bronze statue of Yum chen Shes rab byams ma. On the shelves along the walls on either side were complete sets of the bKa’ ’gyur and bKa’ brten. There were, as well, many other sacred objects, including stupas.

lHa khang Khri smon lha rtse

At the centre of this two-storey, twenty-pillared building was a gilt-bronze statue of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan. To its right was a gilt bronze statue of Tshad med ’od Idan, and further towards the corner was a gilt-bronze statue of Kun dga’ dbang Idan. To the left of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan was a gilt-bronze statue of ’Brug sras chem pa, and towards the corner were gilt-bronze statues of the Four Buddhas (bDe gshegs gtso bzhi). In front of mNyam med was the tomb of lHun grub dbang Idan in the style of the gYung drung bkod legs stupa. On the eastern walls were murals of paternal and maternal figures of Bonpo guardian deities. In the gNas brtan lha khang upstairs was a complete mural of the Sixteen Arhats (gNas brtan bcu drug); drawn there, as well, were many kinds of diagrams with poetic verses written in them (sNyan ngag gi sgra ’khor).

sKu gdung lha khang

In this building, built by mNyam med Tshul khrims dbang rgyal grags pa, was a gilt-bronze tomb, in the style of the gYung drung bkod legs stupa-and as tall as a two-storey building, of Kun mkhyen Sangs rgyas grags pa.

There were many marvellous murals: on the walls on either side of the tomb were gShen lha ’od dkar, at the porch were the Ten Guardian Deities (Phyogs skyong bcu) and above the porch were the Twelve Deeds (mDzad pa bcu gnyis) of gShen rab.

Kun bzang rgyal ba ’dus pa’i lha khang

At the centre of this large three-storey temple, built by mNyam med Tshul khrims dbang grags, was a gilt-bronze statue, as tall as a two-storey house, of Kun bzang rgyal ba ’dus pa with five faces and ten hands. To the right of it was a gilt-bronze statue of Nam mkha’i lha mo, and to the left was a gilt-bronze statue of Byams ma. On the walls were murals of the Thousand Buddhas (bDe gshegs stong sku).
'Dzarn gling dpal 'bar 'du khang

On the ground floor, at the centre of the inner temple of this large eight-pillared, three-storey assembly hall, built by mNyam med Tshul khrims dbang grags, was a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba. To the left of it was a gilt-bronze statue of Shes rab byams ma.

On the first floor up, at the centre, was a gilt-bronze statue, as high as the ceiling, of rGyal ba rgya mtsho with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes. To the right of it was the Wheel of Time (dBang Idan Dus kyi 'khor lo), and at the back of it were the images of the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis). Further to the right corner was a stupa of bKra shis sgo mang, as high as the ceiling. To the left of rGyal ba rgya mtsho was a gYung drung bkod legs stupa. Further to the left corner was a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba, as tall as a two-storey house, accompanied by the Eight Glorious Protectors (dPal mgon brgyad) at the back.

In one room on the top floor was a mural of mNyam med. In another room were murals of the thousand sTag la me 'bar and the Thousand Buddhas, between which were murals of the hundred-and-twenty mandalas. Similarly, another room had a figure and a mural of a Bonpo protective deity. Another room had murals of the master Pad ma 'byung gnas, the Lord Tsong kha pa, and the line of thirteen reincarnations of the Dalai Lama. A mural of a complete set of the Sixteen Arhats (gNas brtan bcu drug) was drawn in the last room on the top floor.

The Lama's residence (bla brang)

The residence was a two-storey building with ten rooms. At the centre of the chapel upstairs was a gilt-bronze statue of Dran pa nam mkha', and on the wall was a mural of Yi dam Sram dkar khyung ba. On the shelves behind the statue were volumes of scriptures of many kinds. In the meditation hall on the ground floor were several figures of Bonpo protective deities, masks, murals and many other sacred objects.

Annual religious activities and rituals

1. In the 1st Tibetan month, flower offerings were made and the ritual based on the rTsa sgrup bla ma sgrup pa was performed, as well as the recitation of the bKa' 'gyur and bKa' 'brten.

2. On the 13th day of the 4th month, the recitation of the gSer 'od gzugs chen nyi ma shar 'bum, the Yab sras tshogs 'khor, the sTong rgyung brngan bsang and the renewal ceremony of gSas khang kha bstod, and invocation of dGra lha, Lam Iha and the Yul lha of the four directions.

3. About the 6th month, sacrificial offerings to the Bonpo protective deities were elaborately made in rituals such as the bZlas chog bum sgrub, the ritual rNam rgyal stong mchod, the Khro phur zhang gsum and others. There were
performances of various artistic dances such as rNam brgyad gar 'cham, Zhwa nag tshogs 'cham, brTan srung 'bag 'cham, dPa’ bo’i ging 'cham and gYung drung dgu 'cham, performed in a way that can hardly be imagined.

4. In the 10th month, chanting services were performed in the most profound manner; there was a complete programme for the ritual performances of sTag la me 'bar, as well as that of Byams ma.

5. In the 12th month the following rituals were performed: the great dgu gtor rite; the evocation of the two tutelar dieties, Khro bo and Phur pa; the mdos ritual based on the Khro bo ngo mtshar rgyas pa; and the srung zlog ritual in which the deity 'Brug gsas chen pa is invoked. Moreover, there were artistic events that featured various dance performances such as Zhwa nag tshogs 'cham, bsTan srung 'bag 'cham and dPa’ bo’i ging 'cham.

Presently there are two lamas and more than one hundred monks in this monastery. The temple, assembly hall and other buildings are held up by fifty-five pillars in all, and the monks’ quarters consist of one hundred and ten individual rooms.

This monastery has an abundance of religious objects including the tombs of the successive lamas of this monastery, the relics of the saint mNyam med, scriptures and a great many other objects. Annual religious services and rituals are practised as they were in former ancient times.

(13) gSang sngags rtse Hermitage

The gSang sngags rtse Hermitage is located in gYu rtse xiang, west of the sNye rong rdzong. The hermitage has a certain number of religious objects. Three monks are under training here.

(14) rGyal po shel khur Hermitage

This hermitage is in Be gzhung xiang, north-east of the sNye rong rdzong. Twenty-four monks and two lamas reside here. Considerable difficulties lie on the way to the hermitage.

After arriving from sNye rong rdzong at the uneven Qinghai-Tibet highway, one must travel nineteen kilometres along the highway and then leave it and head west. From there it is about 176 kilometres to dPal mgon rdzong. It is a very difficult road to travel and the trip takes more than six hours by car. However, there are several stopping places, like tea houses or petrol stations run by the local people, which make the going very convenient for pilgrims.
(9) sNang gsal Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(10) Chab mdo Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
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(11) Sha ri Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(12) rTing ngu Monastery. Plate 1 A stone-carved Matri at the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(12) rTing ngu Monastery. Plate 2 The zhwa nag dance at the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
dPal mgon rdzong

dPal mgon rdzong is situated between the two celebrated lakes, gSer gling mtsho and gNam mtsho, on the Northern Plateau of Tibet. Higher in elevation to the north and lower to the south, the rdzong is blessed with beautiful mountains and large areas of pastureland.

The rdzong is 101,992 square kilometres in area, 14,500 mu of which is pastureland. With a population of about 29,000, the rdzong has one qu and eighteen xiang under its direct control. There are one hundred and four village committees in the rdzong, as well as one Bonpo and nine Buddhist monasteries.

During the time of the Qing dynasty, dPal mgon rdzong was a part of gNam ru rdzong, classified into one of the four tribes on the Northern Plateau, and was taken care of by the Am ban, the Manchu official in Tibet. The regional government of dPal mgon rdzong was established in 1959.

(15) Shel phug Monastery

dPal gShen bstan Shel brag phug pa monastery is located in Khyung shog xiang, the southeastern part of dPal mgon rdzong. Although it is fifty-four kilometres from the rdzong, one can reach the monastery within an hour by car as the road is in good condition.

The monastery was founded by mKha’ yag gYung drung ye shes in 1716. He was a distinguished master who started on a pilgrimage from sGang ru in Khyung po and eventually entered the cave Shel brag phug pa, where he practised meditation. After sitting there for three years, when he reached the age twenty-five, he built a new private room, kitchen and storehouse at ’Bum pa near the cave. In addition, he named the site Shel phug, “Crystal Cave”, and stayed there for several more years.

When he reached the age of forty-seven, the Mongolian troops of Jungar invaded the region, inflicted extreme brutalities, and finally killed him by beheading. They plundered all his properties.

The story of the Mongolian troops is told in many legends. One relates that when the Mongolian troops arrived below the hill of Shel phug, bsTan grags, the cook, invoked the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo, who brought a storm of iron hail down upon them, which consequently caused many deaths among the Mongolian troops.

In 1747, Rig ’dzin Zangs skyong dbang po Tshul khrims bstan ’dzin, the reincarnation of mKha’ yag gYung drung ye shes, was born in sTeng chen, Khyung po dKar ru. From childhood he recognized himself as the reincarnation and when he reached the age of nine, he left on a journey to sTod in search of his own monastery. Upon arriving at Shel phug he said, “This is my seat”, and he stayed there for thirteen years as a hermit, practising meditation. He said that it was necessary to build Shel phug Monastery at the very site where the hermitage lay.

Later, at the age of thirty-three, he made a pilgrimage to Kong po Bon ri and
other places. When he came back, after travelling for three years, he again devoted himself to meditating in the hermitage. He was sixty-eight when he died.

A long time passed before the birth of the next reincarnation took place. During this period, there was a hermit called Nang do mtshams chen, who was reincarnation of Li shu. He spent many years practising meditation in the hermitage. He piously consecrated the place.

Then in 1831, the third master in the line of incarnation, bsTan 'dzin 'od zer rgyal mtshan, was born in a family called sDe rnying Nor lha tshang. He was enthroned as soon as he was recognized as the reincarnation by sNang ston Zla bar rgyal mtshan (1796-1862).

At the age of nineteen, he constructed at the cave a new red-painted meditation hall, Zhi khro lha khang, kitchen and storehouse. He also renewed part of the monastic equipment.

It was during his time that an agreement was made that this monastery should be a branch of Ra lag gYung drung gling (No.2) and he devoted his whole life to meditating on his tutelary deities in all their aspects and was able to call upon religious protectors such as Ma, bDud and bTsan. He strongly advised against making a distinction between the teachings of Buddhism and Bon. He died at the age of eighty-four.

In 1879, the fourth in the line of incarnation, sKal bzang bstan 'dzin grags pa, was born in the vicinity of the monastery. He had only his mother when he decided to go to gYung drung gling in order to be ordained as a monk. Having done this, he later took full ordination.

Then, at Shel phug Monastery, he built an eight-pillared assembly hall with a complete entrance hall and five rooms upstairs, a meditation hall, another three-roomed building, a kitchen, a residence for the head of the monastery (bla brang). He spent his whole life looking after the monastery. He maintained the doctrine of non-differentiation between Buddhism and Bon. He lived to the age of eighty years.

In 1915, a boy was born to be recognized as the reincarnation. The recognition was made by Shes rab blo Idan, the 5th abbot of gYung drung gling, who gave him the name Shes rab bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan. He was the fifth in the line of this monastery, and was enthroned at the age of five. He built a bla brang and greatly spread the teachings of Eternal Bon. In 1945, motivated by the prophetical words of sTag lung sgrol sprul chos sgrol (alias sTag lung mkha' 'gro), he revealed Shel brag as a sacred site. In 1948 he established the ritual called bDud rtsi bum sgrub, and among the hills behind the monastery he hid twenty-five sets of treasure bottles of all-wish-fulfilling.

On the whole, it was during the days of the dGe slong sKal bzang bstan 'dzin grags pa and Shes rab bstan 'dzin (rgyal mtshan) that the monastery flourished.
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vigorously.

The main religious objects of this monastery in those days were the life-sized gilt-bronze statues of Buddhas of the three ages and another two-cubit-high Buddha, a life-sized silver statue of rNam par rgyal ba, a gilt-bronze statue of Byams pa five cubits tall, a life-sized gilt-bronze statue of sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan, a cubit-high statue of sGrol ma, clay images of many kinds, two gilt-bronze reliquary stupas bigger than a person, eight sets of wooden stupas, many poti of scriptures, and sixty-seven thangka of the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis), tutelary deities and religious protector s.

There were also implements used in making offerings, such as various water bowls and butter lamp stands made of silver or copper, eight silver vases and eight complete sets of costumes for religious dances.

At that time, this monastery had such treasures as these, and fifty-three monks under training.

Annual activities and rituals

1. During the days from the 24th of the 12th Tibetan month to the 6th of the 1st month, there were many rituals including the dgu gtor rite and the thousand offerings.

2. For more than a month, from the 29th day of the 3rd month to the 8th day of the 5th month, the monks gathered together for prayers.

3. During the whole period from the 29th day of the 6th month to the end of the 7th month, a summer fast was observed.

4. Assemblies were held for twenty-one days of the 8th month.

5. Assemblies were customarily held for seven days of the 11th month.

To sum up, 149 days of the year were spent practising the regular above-mentioned services.

This monastery raised a considerable number of livestock, including according to one record 379 cattle, 698 sheep and 593 goats as a source of income.

At present, the number of monks is twenty-five. There is an assembly hall and a temple containing religious objects which are kept in very good condition.

Next, one must go to Nag tshang Nyi ma rdzong. It is 381 kilometres from dPal mgon rdzong to Nyi ma rdzong and, moreover, it is very difficult to get through the mud before reaching the highway. To relate our experience, it was too difficult for us to find our way and we wound up facing a serious problem: after finding an old, wide road, we proceeded one kilometre, depending completely on a map, when we found we had lost our way. We did not know what to do as we were at an empty place without a single person around, where we could see nothing but the sky above, the ground below. It was after a good while that we happened to meet a kind-hearted nomad, who knew the area and was able to help us. Following his guidance, we went
back about ten kilometres eastward, turned to the left, went another ten kilometres straight north, and finally came upon the highway from Amdo to mNga’ ris. After driving eighty kilometres on the highway, we saw a by way which led us to Nag tshang Nyi ma rdzong.

The highway is good and wide, with many services such as tea houses, small grocery shops, petrol stations and guesthouses along the way. These services provide comfort to pilgrims.
(15) Shelphug Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
Nyi ma rdzong

Nyi ma rdzong lies to the west of Nag chu. It once belonged to the Nag tshang tribe, which gave it the name Nag tshang Nyi ma rdzong, which has now become familiar to many people of this area. Late in the 17th century, it was governed by the Tibetan government, and functioned as an important access point for travelling to mNga’ ris, Nepal, Ladakh and other places. It is now possible to reach sGer rtse rdzong in mNga’ ris by car in one day or less.

Nyi ma rdzong has an area of about 150,000 square kilometres and a population of about 30,000. Two qu, thirteen xiang and ninety-nine villages are under the immediate supervision of this rdzong.

This area is surrounded by mountains, such as the Kun lun mountain range in the north and the sacred snow mountain Ti se in the south, and the land is, on average, more than five thousand metres above sea level.

In this region, at present, there are many places of pilgrimage: three Buddhist monasteries, including ‘Gro dpal bDe chen ’gyur med gling; four Bonpo monasteries, including ‘Om bu bSam gtan gling; as well as the mountain rTa sgo and the lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho. This is also a perfect treasure house of mineral resources and animals, both carnivorous and herbivorous. The district was established as Nyi ma rdzong in 1983.

(16) ’Om bu bSam gtan gling Monastery

’Om bu bSam gtan gling is in ’Om bu xiang, seventy-six kilometres south-west of Nyi ma rdzong. This xiang lies on the northern side of the lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho.

The monastery was established by bSod nams g-yung drung around 1890. He is regarded as one of the Thirteen Spiritual Leaders of Lake Dwang ra (Dwang ra g-yu mtsho’i ’gro ’dren bcu gsum) and belonged to the lineage of Guru. This lineage is traced back to Guru gYung drung phun tshogs, from which it descends to bZod pa and down to the Guru ’Od zer, who is the fourth in the line.

The main religious objects are the sacred statues of Bla chen Dran pa nam mkha’ with his twin sons. It is said that there used to be an important old manuscript called Bya rgod mchu bris ("written with the beak of vulture").

Every year in the 1st Tibetan month, a large-scale, prescribed service of the bum sgrub ritual is held, during which the monks meditate mainly on the deity Khro bo. Otherwise, services on a smaller scale are performed frequently.

In the old days there used to be more than twenty monks, but now there are no more than ten monks and one lama; the present condition of the monastery is not as good as it was previously.

Some degree of restoration was carried Guru ’Od zer. The main source of income, to maintain the monks and the lama, is donations from each household and
the performance of religious services in the village.

rGya rgod xiang lies thirteen kilometres away. The road is convenient for driving between the two xiang, ‘Om bu and rGya rgod, and rGya rgod xiang has good facilities for travellers. We met more than one hundred pilgrims who were on their way to Ser zhig Monastery (No.19) or Mount rTa sgo, and we took many pictures of each other.

(17) gYu bun Monastery

The monastery is in the eastern part of rTa sgo xiang. It is a whole day’s ride on horseback from the rTa sgo xiang. The location of this Bonpo monastic community is an earthly sphere of purity in the middle of Zhang zhung.

More than three thousand years ago, there was a group of eighty great masters of Eternal Bon, the first ten of which, the gShen, reigned over the area. Among the ten gShen was Mu khri btsan po, the son of gNya’ khri btsan po, who had a very high regard for the teachings of Eternal Bon. During Mu khri btsan po’s time, the thirty-seven tantric communities (‘Du gnas so bdun) were established. Dwang ra gYu bun Monastery was founded in the places where the Gangs gnyan rta sgo and Dwang ra’i mtsho ‘gram of the thirty-seven communities were situated.

The place where the monastery is found is, moreover, one of the twenty-four sacred places mentioned in the Bonpo Ma rgyud tantra. The self-grown five jackal-headed mKha’ ’gro can still be seen in this place, as stated in the text of the Ma rgyud tantra.

The spYi spungs khro bo dbang chen states that Sad ne ga’u of Zhang zhung trained himself in Dwang ra gYu bun. This implies that it was Sad ne ga’u of Zhang zhung sgo pa who first established gYu bun Monastery. He is one of the thirteen masters found among the eighty adepts of the Bon tradition.

Sad ne ga’u was born in Zhang zhung. His father was rGyal mtshan bde ba and his mother was rGyal bza’ klong yang. He studied under several teachers, like A nu ‘phrag thag, so that he was finally able to accomplish his learning.

He exhibited many miraculous signs in the gYu bun community, such as curing leprosy patients just by looking at them, forcing back attackers and floods, taming wild carnivorous animals so that he could use them for transportation, igniting himself, subduing wickedness, being able to cross the lake Dwang ra riding on a drum and being able to build a crystal stupa in a river.

After having meditated for attaining perfection, he vanished just like the light of a rainbow. After that, history tells us, many great masters appeared one after another. Although the monastery sometimes experienced periods without strong leadership, there were other times when it had several holy ones who maintained universalism and remained meditating. Among them was mTshungs med rNam dag tshul khrims, who came to the monastery around 1687. He promoted the development of the
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monastic community and it continued to grow through the time of his disciples, including Tshul khrims lhun grub, up until the time of the fourth master. After that the monastery was suppressed, but was taken care of and rehabilitated by sKyid gsum bla brang, who was the benefactor of the master gYung drung lha rtse.

In short, this monastic community was one that was outstandingly blessed, to which many excellent masters came at every stage of the early development of Bonpo teachings, and where many holy ones of Zhang zhung died, passing into the rainbow light.

The monastery possessed a number of important religious objects, some of which were later moved to other places: for example, Sad ne ga’u’s conch was taken to Thob rgyal sMan ri Monastery (No.1).

In the 1980s the monastery was reconstructed under the responsibility of the reincarnation bsTan ’dzin dbang grags. At present the monastery has one lama and twenty-two monks.

(18) Phyug tsho Monastery

Travelling about forty kilometres straight south from rGya rgod xiang, we arrive in rTa sgo xiang. Turning right at the top of a small mountain pass, and travelling another fifty kilometres, we reach Phyug tsho Monastery. Since the sacred sites of the snow mountain rTa sgo, the lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho and the mountain called dGe bsnyen are visible from the top of the pass, love and respect arise in people’s minds, which may inspire them to prostrate themselves with all their faith, to perform the bsang ceremony as an offering and to raise ritual flags. Many of them, moreover, pile up as many stones as their own age to make a cairn.

Like Gangs Ti se, rMa chen sPom ra, Yar lha Sham po, gNyan chen Thang lha and sPu rgyal, the sacred snow mountain rTa sgo is an important pilgrimage site for both Bonpo and Buddhists.

The lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho, as one of the three greatest pilgrimage sites, is a “soul lake” (bla mtsho). On its shore is a two-metre-high phallus made of dried mud, in accordance with the ancient custom in token of worship of the Bonpo protective deities. The term dwang ra is a Zhang zhung word meaning lake (mtsho).

A number of devotees from Nag tshang Nyi ma rdzong, mNga’ ris mTsho chen rdzong and other regions have infinite belief in the sacred blue lake and the snow mountain. There are always many pilgrims circumambulating the mountain, but on the 15th day of the fourth Tibetan month in particular, a huge number of lay devotees and clergy come to accumulate merit through performing the circumambulation because it is the great pilgrimage day (ri bskor che mo). Some of them repeatedly prostrate themselves and circumambulate the mountain.

The road between the above-mentioned pass and Phyug tsho Monastery is not very good, but it is nice that wild asses, rock goats, cranes and many other wild
animals can be seen on the fields stretching out on both sides.

Phyug tsho Monastery is situated on the hill beside the lake Dwang ra g-yu mtsho. One can see at a glance that among the monasteries of Eternal Bon it is particularly distinguished.

This monastery was built around 1849 by gYo lag sgom chen, a disciple of sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan. After being founded, it was taken care of by Khyung ser sMon lam bstan pa, the lama of good practice, who had prodigious knowledge. Thereafter followed the two lamas, the famous Khyung dkar bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, who had the qualities of wisdom, compassion and power, and his attendant, the Sage gYung drung ye shes. During their time, Bonpo teachings were kept, defended and spread so well that the monastery flourished greatly.

Later, when the dge bshes of gYung drung gling (No.2), gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan from Shar khog in Amdo, became the abbot of this monastery, he renovated it and collected many religious objects.

Then the dge bshes Khyung dkar bsTan pa lhun grub followed him as abbot. He arranged for the future supervisor and abbot of this monastery to be sent from gYung drung gling and that their principal practice should be based on the mKa’ ‘gro gsang gcod.

At present, Phyug tsho Monastery has a number of buildings: the assembly hall, a temple, bKa’ ‘gyur khang, protector’s temple, monks’ quarters and others. As for the religious objects, there is a statue of sTon pa gShen rab and many kinds of scriptures, including the bKa’ ‘gyur and bKa’ ‘brten. Of particular note are the knotted knife and the knotted needle which are believed to be examples of proof of the spiritual accomplishment of the masters. There are also a great many medicine-pots, because the bum sgrub ritual has customarily been performed in this monastery.

In the protector’s temple there are only the images of the Bonpo protective deities. They look very fearsome.

At present, there are fifty monks and one lama in the monastery. Some of the regular religious services are synchronized, for the most part, with those of gYung drung gling.

Now, retracing our way southward from the lakeshore of Dwang ra g-yu mtsho to the above-mentioned mountain pass, and travelling several kilometres south-eastward, we reach the river rTa sgo gtsang po. rTa sgo Ser zhig Monastery is situated on the west bank of the river. Although it is only a little more than ten kilometres from the xiang to the monastery, the summer flooding period makes it very difficult for a car to cross the river.

(19) Ser zhig Monastery

From the description written by the supreme master who belonged to the celebrated eighteen Zhig families, it appears that rTa sgo Ser zhig Monastery was
contemporaneous with sMan ri (No.1). It is therefore apparent that the monastery was named Ser zhig after the family name of the lama who founded the monastery in 1405. Ser zhig Monastery is the biggest one in the Nag tshang Dwang ra g-yumtsho area. Because of this, the Fifth Dalai Lama recognized it as a monastery of the government and permitted it to have a certain number of the local people as its retainers. The monastery is also called Se zhig skor Ide, since it is one of the seven Nag tshang sger tsho.

The monastery consisted of a two-storey temple, the bla brang and monks’ quarters. There were many religious objects and books. Besides these, there were religious objects transferred from Nyi lung 'gram, the seat of 'Dzi bon dBang grgyal mtshan, when it was destroyed. However, invaded by the barbarous Mongolian forces of Jungar, Ser zhig Monastery was turned into a military camp, and the temple and monks’ quarters were soon destroyed.

After that, a number of people launched themselves into its reconstruction, as well as maintaining the doctrine. They included the one called Zhang zhung Lama, a descendant of Gu ru lama, a lama of the Zhu family from 'Jed spang lung, a lama of the Shel zhig family and others.

The main religious objects of the monastery were as follows: a black square stone called A ma sa gsum with the three white letters A, Ma and Sa on it; a small conch made of a devotee’s teeth; a tooth of the sTon pa gShen rab’s horse with a self-risen letter A on it; a Garuda’s claw as big as a yak’s horn; and a self-grown figure of Zhi ba Kun du bzang po within a crystal stupa.

Besides these, the monastery had a small drum, which is said to be a present given to a Ser zhig lama by the local deity gDong dmar lha btsan of rTa sgo. Among the patrons of the monastery it used to be the custom for patrons to appeal to the abbot to let one of them beat the drum when the ritual Ma tri bum sgrub was performed, for it was said that if one could beat the drum three time, he might get rid of all the bad luck or misfortune of the whole year, and his wish might be fulfilled. The patron was expected to offer five silver tam kar and a ceremonial scarf for each beat. All the people in the neighbourhood, lay and clergy, both Buddhists and Bonpo, showed boundless respect for this drum. At mass meetings, three beats of the drum by the abbot preceded the chanting; only then was the prayer conductor to begin leading the chorus.

In the protector’s temple was a mask of the deity A bse, called Nga ’dra ma. This designation was derived from the words spoken by the deity to the mask maker, “this mask looks like me” (nga ’dra), which turned the mask into an object of great rarity.

It is said that there were many old, important religious objects in the monastery, such as the skull of sTon pa gShen rab with a self-produced letter A on it, his teeth with a self-produced Gu ru on them, a statue of sTon pa with a self-produced mantra
Om ma ti ma ye sa le 'du on the upper right part of it, and armour that belonged to sTon pa (said to have been taken to Xian in China).

The teaching and practice of this monastery have actually experienced rise and fall in every stage of its history. The recent significant figures of this monastery are as follows: Grags dbang Rinpoche of the Zhu family; sTag la dbang rgyal of the Zhu family; the lama called Zhang zhung mKhan-po; 'Og tshom dkar po; and the young Shel zhig. The early ones are said to be in the 'Phrang lugs lineage of Nag tshang.

The monastery is administered by a lama, a prayer conductor, a dge bskos, a treasurer and an assistant. Besides them, two monks are charged, in turn, with the detailed tasks of religious activities, such as the accounts of Ma tri bum sgrub, and so on.

Practice of Rituals and Religious Services

Rituals are practised in the manner of the so-called sTod Nag tshang 'phrang tradition, prominent among other old traditions of Zhu. The way of chanting the ritual text of the deity Khro bo is considered special and the text is said to have been composed when the masters had visions of the deity. The same manner is said to have been adopted by the other monasteries of the region, including 'Om bu Monastery (No.17).

1. In the 3rd Tibetan month the following religious activities take place:
   Preparations, which take five days, are made for the great bum sgrub ritual based on the Ma tri rin chen sgrol ma; the great bum sgrub ritual is thereafter performed for fifteen days. Religious dances are performed inside and outside the monastery, one day for each, and another two days are spent giving initiation.
   
   In the course of the bum sgrub ritual, lamas and monks from the monasteries of Phyug tsho, gYu bun and 'Om bu, besides the permanent resident monks of Ser zhig itself, are allowed into the monastery, and so are any others, including hermits and pilgrims, who know how to chant the Ma tri mantra. More than 150 people may enjoy a share of the offerings at times of great mass meetings.

2. In the 12th month the dgu gtor rite of Phur pa is performed. Initiations are given at the end of the month.

   Besides the above-mentioned activities, several other small-scale services are performed throughout the year.

   There are a number of sacred sites surrounding Ser zhig Monastery: to the south-west lies the rTa sgo mountain range. At a good distance from the monastery, towards the range, at the foot of a hill, is a marvelous meditation cave called Shod tram phug pa. It was the abode of the master dMu Shod tram chen po, who was in the exalted 'ja' lus lineage of Zhang zhung oral tradition. Near the cave is a spring filled with limpid water that is said to cleanse sins.
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At quite some distance up towards the rTa sgo mountain range, there is another meditation cave called rTa sgo rDzu ’phrul phug (the Miraculous Cave of rTa sgo); it is about the size of a two-pillared room and is shielded in the four cardinal directions by big rocks and overhead by a heap of big stones. It is also called rTa sgo gDong dmar lha btsan gyi phug pa, in which resided the yogi Nam mkha' blo ldan, one of the three chief masters of gShen Nyi ma rgyal mshan. There is a limpid spring beside the cave.

Further up, at the top of the hill, is a lake called Nag mer mtsho, edged with piles of stones. It is a blessed holy lake with two different aspects: the external, which looks like the right eye of Dwang ra; and the internal, like the eye of mKa’ ’gro sKye ma ’od mtsho. Innumerable Buddhists and Bonpo, both lay and clergy, visit the lake to circumambulate it or to pay respect to it. It is believed that every pilgrimage site brings many blessings, especially in Tiger years.

Climbing up into the mountain range, at a good distance from the hilltop, midway up the slope of the ice-capped mountain Ngo dmar lha btsan, there is an area where heaps of the btsag (a kind of mineral used for medical purposes) can be found around the edge of the snow. It is actually the spot where the divine btsag of rTa sgo can be obtained.

Another source of btsag, according to some people, is in the mountains to the east of the rTa sgo gtsang po waterfall, which can be reached via the route in front of Ser zhig Monastery. Many people believe it to be the divine btsag of rTa sgo, because the mountain rTa sgo casts a shadow over the site.

Formerly there were more than twenty monks in Ser zhig Monastery. At present there are fifteen monks and one lama. Many Bonpo, laity and clergy, come to make pilgrimages.

From Ser zhig Monastery back to Nyi ma rdzong is about 180 kilometres, and it takes about six hours by car. The distance from there to dPal mgon rdzong generally requires stopping for a night, but the direct way to Nag chu may be chosen as an alternative.

From the town of Nag chu, driving seventy kilometres eastward on the Nag chu-Chab mdo highway, one arrives at ’Bri lung xiang. Turning south-eastward and driving another seventy kilometres, one reaches ’Bri ru rdzong. Although the road is good between the highway and the rdzong, two mountain passes must be crossed.

Of the rdzong within Nag chu region, this is one with relatively good local characteristics.
(18) Phyug tsho Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharya 1998)

(18) Phyug tsho Monastery, Plate 2  A phallic symbol on the Dwang ra gYu mtsho Lake's shore, near the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharya 1998)
'Bri ru rdzong

'Bri ru rdzong lies in the eastern part of Nag chu region. It has an area of 11,456 square kilometres, out of which 3,300 mu is farmland, 30,000 mu forest, and 11,566 mu pastureland. The population is about 39,000. The average altitude is no more than 4,000 metres. At present, it is an area of semi-nomadic people with eleven xiang and 176 village committees.

In ancient times when Tibet was divided into twelve small kingdoms, 'Bri ru was under the jurisdiction of one of them, Sum pa. A battle for the unification of Tibet broke out in the time of gNam ri slon btsan, and thereafter, during the time of Srong btsan sgam po in the 7th century, Sum pa was absorbed into Tibet and was formed into one of the four Ru of Tibet. At that time, 'Bri ru was still under the jurisdiction of Sum pa.

In 1732, 'Bri ru came under direct control of the Manchu officials posted in Tibet (am ban).

The revolution having taken place in China in 1911, the government of Tibet took 'Bri ru back under its rule. In 1941, the Tibetan government abolished the governor-general of Hor (Hor sPyi khyab), and established six rdzong there. 'Bri ru rdzong was one of the six. At the end of September in 1951, the people’s commune of 'Bri ru rdzong was established.

The territory governed by the rdzong is very rich in mineral resources and carnivorous and herbivorous animals. It is convenient for communication and is blessed with natural beauty.

In 'Bri ru rdzong, at present, there are nineteen Buddhist monasteries, including O rgyan chos gling in Chags ri, and six Bonpo monasteries, including gSa’ mda’ bon dgon. 'Bri ru rdzong has more monastic communities than any other rdzong in Nag chu region.

(20) Sen tsha Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Sen tsha dgon rNam rgyal kun grags gling. Travelling sixty-four kilometres southward from 'Bri ru rdzong and crossing two mountain passes, one reaches Sen tsha village in gYang shod xiang, which lies halfway up the mountain on the north side of the river rGyal chu.

In its early years, Sen tsha Monastery was situated in the village of Sen tsha itself, but around 1440, Kun dga’ dbang ldan of the Bru family, who was a disciple of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, regarding the recess at the foot of Byug ri phyug mo as auspicious, built a temple there. It is said that there were many auspicious signs when it was built.

This establishment became a monastery, which had many buildings and blessed religious objects, as well as many lay priests. Many lay priests of gYang shod Mar thang later moved, one after another, into the vicinity of the temple. This caused
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not only a blurring in the distinction between clergy and laity, but also a serious hindrance to the development of the monastery.

In 1918, when the great abbot of sMan ri (No.1), sKu ’dun Phun tshogs blo gros, came to rGyal shod, he decided to transfer the monastery in accordance with the plan made by the lord of Sen tsha, bSod nams lha rgyal, and others. However, there was slight internal discord at that decision. Therefore, in order to avoid the merging of monks and lay priests, a monastery called Phun tshogs glang chen ’gying ri spo ra dgon rNam rgyal kun grags gling was established.

The monastery’s religious objects at that time included the following: a statue of sTon pa gShen rab within which was a relic of his body as big as a skylark egg, the reliquary stupa of Khyung btsun bSam gtan nyi ma, several bigger clay statues, scriptures written in gold on a black ground, a treasure-trove consisting of such items as a helmet and a coat of mail, and many scriptures, including a complete set of the bKa’ ’gyur and bKa’ brten.

The youngest son of bSod nams lha rgyal, the chief of Sen tsha, was ordained in the presence of the abbot, sKu ’dun Phun tshogs blo gros, and was given the name Tshul khrims rgya mtsho. He was esteemed as the head of the institution, which then became a veritable monastery. In order to collect donations, Tshul khrims rgyal mtsho travelled to the nomad area of Hor, where there was a good number of contributors, which was useful for the subsistence of the monastery. His paternal lineage was in the Zhu family, which had branched from the family of the rDzum chief. He kept a close patron-priest relationship with Hor, hence the alternate name of the monastery, Sen tsha Zhu tshang gYang shod dgon.

Religious services and practice of rituals

The rituals mainly practised in this monastery were divided into two sections: rituals based on the rNam rgyal and Klong rgyas of the non-Tantric section and the dBal gsas zhi drag of the Tantric section and the propitiatory texts for the religious Bon protectors, especially the deity Brag btsan A bse.

The main annual religious services were the chanting of the ritual cycles of Khro bo, dBal gsas and Phur pa. Besides these, the ritual Ma tri bum sgrub was practised, religious dances were performed, initiations were given and other services were performed.

The organization of the monastery’s personnel was just like every other monastery: dbu bla (head), dge bskos, dbu mdzad, and las sne (monk officials).

After the first transfer, the monastery was in a state of pure asceticism; morality was tightly maintained, just like a knot of silk. However, it later gradually declined and the monks and lay priests began to live together. As a monastery, it remained so only in name.

It was Thugs dga’ of rMe’u who took responsibility for the reorganization of
the monastery. The temple, assembly hall, monks' quarters and other buildings were
restored to their former condition. A collection of religious objects of body, speech
and mind was also completed.

At present, this monastery has six lamas, including Thugs dga', and fifty
monks. The annual activities and religious dances have been revived. Moreover,
the monastery has been undergoing restoration and expansion under the guidance
of Thugs dga', who has broad knowledge of Sutra, Tantra and the Mind class of the
Bon doctrines, as well as magnificent conduct.

(21) dGa' ri Monastery

Sen tsha dGa' ri Monastery is also in gYang shod xiang, but located on the
other side of the river rGyal chu. In 1697 or so, mKhas btsun bSam gtan nyi ma
established the site as a place for meditation practice. There he meditated upon the
tutelary deity dBal phur nag po and finally attained realization.

The monastery is regarded as the sacred site of Phur pa. It is said that there
are clear traces of a tiger, a snow lion, a Garuda and a dragon having landed on
the cardinal points of this monastery. To the north is the mountain sBas yul gtsang
ma dga' ba'i ri. The fact that the mountain is said to have a hidden place (sbas yul)
where Tshe dbang rig 'dzin attained realization explains why it is called dGa' ri (the
Mountain of Joy).

bsTan pa'i nyi ma, who was a disciple of the great saint bsTan 'dzin rin chen
bde chen snying po, practised meditation in this place and attained realization. He
built a temple and collected religious objects, so that the hermitage was finally
transformed into a monastery. He attracted many disciples by giving teachings based
on the dMar thrid dug lnga rang grol, which is a mental-treasure (dgongs gter)
of Grub dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen. He lived a long life.

After that, in the second half of the Fifteenth Rab byung, sKal bzang rgya
mtsho, a lama of the rMe'u lineage, was recognized as the reincarnation of bsTan
pa'i nyi ma. He looked after the interests of dGa' ri Monastery. He took an oath to be
a monk in the presence of Phun tshogs blo gros, the great abbot of sMan ri (No.1),
and rendered great services during his whole life.

The main religious objects of this monastery are a reliquary stupa of mKhas
btsun bSam gtan nyi ma, a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba as high as the
ceiling, a statue of rGyal ba mNyam med pa made of a mixture of medicine and clay,
and statues of rGyal yum Byams ma and Dran pa nam mkha' with his twin sons.
There is also a great collection of scriptures written in gold and silver.

The principal deity of this monastery is dBal phur nag po, but offerings are
constantly made to Khro bo, dBal gsas and sTag la, as well as the performance of the
ceremony of "thousand offerings" to rNam rgyal.

In 1940, bsTan pa'i nyi ma, the reincarnated lama of Srid rgyal dgon chen
(No.88) of Bon ri in Kong po, after paying a visit to his native land, stayed at dGa' ri Monastery in solitary meditation. At that time there were seventeen monks there. At present, his descendant, lama Tshul khrims blo gros, and fifteen other monks reside there.

Travelling about six kilometres eastward from gYang shod xiang up to Ban dkar xiang and another five kilometres eastward from there leads one to Klu mkhar Monastery.

(22) Klu mkhar Monastery

This is a “Tantric monastery” (sngags dgon) built in 1460 by gYung drung khri 'od of the Zhu lineage. When the brutal military forces of the Mongolian Jungar invaded the Northern Plateau (Byang thang), this monastery was completely destroyed.

Later, reconstructed by a descendant of the Zhu lineage, the monastery was protected by a branch of the Zhu family based in gDong rdzong and became known as Klu mkhar dgon. Its main religious object is a sacred statue of sTag la, celebrated as the one bestowed by rGyal ba mNyam med pa. The monastery is called Klu mkhar (the fort of Klu) after a small lake that only appears in summer and is situated behind the monastery. The lake is believed to have been a residence of a water spirit (klu).

Thereafter, the monastery was regarded as having been managed by the lama sPu la, but in fact it was taken care by Shes Iding. Lama sPu la originally came from Sog rdzong and later moved into sBra chen rdzong. He was in the line of Khyung nag, one of the thirteen families of Khyung, which was recognized as such by the Tibetan government. Historical documents do not state clearly how long he maintained Klu mkhar Monastery.

The lamas who appeared after him were Rig 'dzin g-yang skyob, gYung drung bstan 'dzin and bSod nams chos rgyal. Then bSod nams ye shes supported the reconstruction of the monastery, which involved a great deal of expense, with his own property.

The principal image of this monastery, the gilt-bronze statue of sTon pa gShen rab as high as the ceiling, was said to have a bit of body heat in its breast, and so was called the Golden Statue of Baby Warmth (gSer sku Byis drod ma). This statue had been brought from somewhere else. Besides this, there were several other religious objects, including the statue of gShen lha 'od dkar made of “red gold” (dzi gim) and a statue of sTag la.

The religious services performed in the monastery were the Zhi khro, rNam rgyal stong mchod and others. Formerly there were thirty-one resident monks there.

At present, Klu mkhar Monastery is surrounded by homes of common people. In the monastery there are several thangka and small implements used for offerings.
Upstairs is a small altar room. There is one lama and thirty monks, most of whom are said to be lay priests.

On either side of the outer gate there is a stone pillar on which the term *rnam gzhag* is carved in *dbu can* letters. There is also a marvellously colourful bluish stone called Shar *rGya stag khra bo*. It is heart-breaking to see the poor condition of this monastery.

From Klu mkhar Monastery, travelling five kilometres eastward on the highway, dNgul kho village can be seen lying half way up the mountainside on the northern side of the road. dNgul kho Monastery is near this village, on the west side.

(23) dNgul kho Monastery

*dNgul kho gdon gYung drung dar rgyas gling* was built by Kyu ra 'od zer in 1240 in the present-day dNgul kho village. It is a traditional “Tantric monastery”, small but influential, and has been in a state of stability with no serious ups and downs for a long time. History does not tell clearly the individual names of every lama who has cared for and protected the monastery so far, but it is said that descendants in the Ko bo lineage, one of the three descent groups of the region called Ko bo, Rag shi and Shel sku took care of the monastery and rendered great service in keeping, defending and spreading the doctrine of Eternal Bon.

Later, in the Fifteenth Rab byung, Me ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, a hermit from Brag dmar ri 'dun in Khyung po, and sTag zhig Rin chen dbang Idan, a disciple of Grub chen sMon lam rgyal mtshan, on their way to Kong po, established a close patron-priest relationship with the villagers and monks of rGyal shod. Acceding to the wishes expressed by the Shel sku villagers, these hermits decided to take care of the dNgul kho Monastery.

Several years after that, sTag zhig Rin dbang, accompanied by some others, arrived in rGyal shod and became the head of this monastery.

At the end of the Fifteenth Rab byung, dNgul kho Monastery was moved from dNgul kho village to the western outskirts, midway up the slope of the mountain. It now takes about twenty minutes to go up to the monastery by car.

When the monastery was built, Ban dbkar stag phu chos rje Ngag dbang bstan 'dzing rgya mtsho, who was of the dGe lugs pa school, gave a huge amount of tea, grain and the like, by way of offering congratulations for the completion of the monastery.

Having fully completed dNgul kho Monastery with excellent buildings and religious objects, sTag zhig Rin dbang summoned all the monks of the Eternal Bon monasteries and hermitages in rGyal shod district to his monastery and performed the “medicine rite” (*sman sgrub*) based on the Khro bo 'od zer *'khyil ba*. This was the first time such a rite, on such a grand scale, was performed in the region. He bestowed upon the participants all the teachings they wished for. Not only that,
according to the manner of each monastic community, he continually arranged plentiful offerings and brought back the lost rules of the regular services of dNgul kho Monastery and recruited more monks and lay practitioners than before.

Since this lama himself relied upon those laymen who had taken some vows, he obtained the real nature of power of wisdom and compassion by means of Tantric practices. He is said to have been a man of outstanding virtue and deeds, and who had rediscovered the Tshogs bdag rol pa and the statue of Tshe dbang rig ’dzin among the rocks of Sen ge gnam rdzong in gSa’ phu.

According to the description in his biography, he was born in 1883. A special ordinance was given to the monastery by His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thub bstan rgya mtsho.

During the time of sTag zhig Rin dbang, dNgul kho dar rgyal gling made progress in deserving its name. Later, around the 1920s, both the lama and his disciple died, one after the other.

Since this monastery was a mixture of old and new Bonpo tradition, the regular prayer services and rituals are also practised accordingly.

Main religious objects

The monastery’s religious objects, which were in perfect condition, included the following: a bronze statue of Zhi ba Kun bzang a skor; one of Tshe dbang rig ’dzin, rediscovered in gSa’ phu by sTag gzhi Rin dbang; a conch of enlightenment that belonged to sTag gzhi Rin dbang; and the three relics of sTag gzhi Tshul khrims called sha ri ram, me ri ram and chu ri ram, which came out of his brain. However, after the death of sTag gzhi Rin dbang, the monastery declined, due to many problems.

This monastery had a slob dpon, a dbu mdzad, a dge bskos and a spyi phyag. The latter took all the responsibilities for supervising the monastic work. There used to be about forty monks.

This monastery was recently restored to some degree by A bu bSam med and others, and has about thirty monks at present. It is situated in a beautiful environment, and near it there is a sacred graveyard.

At present, dNgul kho Monastery is, on the whole, in a state of more serious decline than ever before.

From dNgul kho Monastery, travelling about six kilometres eastward along the river rGyal chu, we come to Ban dkar xiang, in which rDo rting Monastery is located. The monastery is situated on a hill to the south-west of the river rGyal chu. It takes about twenty minutes on foot to reach the top of the hill.

(24) rDo rting Monastery

rDo rting dgon Ngo mtshar Phun tshogs gling was founded in 1420 by Kun
dga’ dbang ldan of the Bru family. It stands in the middle of Bon lung skya mo in rGyal shod, as if protected all around by the Eight Sisters of Mo nam smug po. It is a pleasant place, with a hill resembling a Garuda stretching its wings at the back of the monastery, an eight-spoked wheel in the sky, double-petalled lotus flowers on the ground, and five big juniper trees, symbol of the “five families” (rigs lnga), at the front.

When Bru ston mTshungs med bsod blo, the heart-emanation of sTong rgyung and one of the eighteen gYas ru teachers who were greatly famed in the latter stage of Bonpo development, travelled all over mDo kham, he paid a visit to this place and gave a blessing. Before the establishment of this monastery, it is said that there was already the residence (bla brang) of the Shel sku family in rDo rting.

Some call this monastery rDo gter because Bru Kun dga’ dbang ldan built it at the very site where Shel sku Khro bo rgyal mtshan rediscovered a nine-edged black iron vajra (rdo rje) from a mine (gter). Kun dga’ dbang ldan not only established rDo rting Monastery but also taught cosmogony and monastic discipline according to the Bru tradition and, moreover, developed the practice of rituals. rDo rting became a veritable monastery preserving the pure tradition of rGyal ba sMan ri ba and came to be reputed as sMan ri bar ma.

There were two residences (bla brang) in rDo rting Monastery called Bru tshang and Shel tshang. A big juniper tree planted by Bru Kun dga’ dbang ldan himself, in order block the view of inauspicious geomantic signs, is still seen to the north of the Bru tshang residence.

At the time of Kun dga’ dbang ldan, there were about one hundred monks at this monastery. They performed the following religious services every three years: the great medicine-completion ceremony of Khro bo ’od zer ’khyil ba, the great initiation of Gu ya and the mdos ritual based on the mKha’ klong gsang ba’i mdos chen. These were normally performed just like the regular services of rGyal ba sMan ri ba.

The lamas of the Bru and Shel sku residences took turns, for three years each, to look after the monastery. At the time, the monastic buildings were extraordinarily beautiful. At the centre of the monastery were nine long pillars, on which vases were carved. They were topped by a carved Garuda and supported by a base that was a carved turtle. The roof rafters, fashioned into a pa tra, the family crest, were supported around the edge by eight pillars. There were four large mandalas drawn on the ceiling (facing down). They were of the mDo g-yung drung klong rgyas, the Zhi ba g-yung drung yongs rdogs, the Khro bo dbang chen and the Mu tra lha’i dkyil ’khor. In the verandah outside were carvings of reticulated swastikas.

With respect to the Shel sku residence of this monastery, there has been a steady succession of lamas:

1. Shel bla sMon lam bkra shis
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2. Nam mkha’ ’od zer
3. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
4. Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan
5. rNam rgyal tshul khrims
6. Grags pa mam rgyal

These were all in the line of descent from gNam gsas rgyal po of the Shel zhig family, a branch of the line of sTang chen dMu tsha gyer med. Then followed the Shel lamas invited from the Shel zhig family in the north:

1. rGyal mchog nyi ma
2. Nam mkha’ rgyal po
3. Nam mkha’ bsod rgyal
4. lHun grub dbang rgyal
5. rGyal ba tshul khrims

These lamas first began by making preparations to set up their residence in the monastery. Then, in collaboration with the Bru family, they established rDo rting Monastery. For a period of time, care for the monastery was shared with the lama Be ’o, who had come to stay here; later on, its religious teachers were just Shel sku lamas.

Of the above-mentioned Shel lamas, some were monks, and some were text-discoverers, that is to say, married. Not only that, they recreated one of their unique traditions called bDud rtsi khi khar: the practice of religious festivals wherein the way the ritual was carried out was inspired by the early masters, both men and women. Shel bla gYung drung rgyal mtshan rediscovered a crystal image called Dri med shel sku at the Shel sbug of Kong po Bon ri, the holy mountain. bTsan rje dmar po, the local deity of Bon ri, is also one of the protective deities of rDo rting Monastery. Some of the Shel zhig lamas were thus referred to by the abbreviation Shel bla.

The religious object of major importance in rDo rting Monastery at that time was the statue of Khro bo gtso mchog as high as the ceiling. It had been rediscovered by Shel bla Khro bo rgyal mtshan from the source of the river Khro tshang, which runs through the side of the monastery. In the temple there was said to be a golden statue and many other religious objects.

As for scriptures, there were sixteen volumes of the Khams chen, written in gold, called ‘Dzam gling rgyan (the ornament of the World). It was also called gSer chos zho ‘bru skar tsheg. The name denotes that every single letter (yig ‘bru) of the golden text (gser chos) is written with as much gold as one zho of gold, and every tsheg with one skar ma of gold. The gold was provided by the protector of water, the great dge bsnyen of Yag zam kha, who offered a pair of goldfish in honour of the Shel sku lama and the monastery. According to oral tradition, the lamas and the monks, considering the possibility that the powerful local lord might come to seize
the gold if the news leaked out of the monastery, smelted it secretly so that they could use it to write the Khams chen with it.

Later, the monastery experienced a change that was considerable. As is quite a common course of events in the human world, the Shel sku family broke up into several factions. Even the Shel sku bla brang in the monastery itself was spilt up, and the family finally abandoned the monastery altogether. The members of the family became common people like any other. The Bru tshang bla brang also became helpless with no protector.

At about the same time, Be 'o Lama, who had come from the north, took up permanent residence in rDo rting Monastery. At first he tried to help the monastery, but this elicited much criticism internally and as a result the monastery suffered further. Caught by the tide and destiny, the interests of the monastery and the deeds of the lamas were all reduced to a state of withered winter flowers.

rDo rting Monastery, in spite of its previous reputation as sMan ri Bar ma, eventually declined into a lay establishment. Not only that, the religious objects that were easily carried became scattered everywhere. The two lamas, lHa thog and lHa mgon, went elsewhere, and the monastery itself was threatened with complete destruction.

At that time, the community leaders of the four tents, having learned a lesson from the past, launched a reconstruction of rDo rting Monastery in order to avoid its total decline. They took on responsibility for the work and took the decisions that the two Shel sku lamas who had fled to Glas rgyud should, by turn, take care of the monastery as religious teacher and that the number of lay practitioners (ser khyim) should not be reduced to less than forty. They distributed the monastic funds and other properties to all the villagers so that the villagers would be able to help maintain the yearly expenses of the establishment.

Then they restored the temple, and made continuous efforts to bring back the scattered religious objects and resolve other issues. Having succeeded in regaining the image of Khro bo gTso mchog, they relocated the dBu rtse temple and made a new clay image. The large and small conchs, which were the ritual instruments of Sad ne ga'u, and those of Ti ti mi slag can, were well kept in the monastery.

The principal religious services practised at the monastery were based on texts such as the Bon skyong sgrup pa, the mKha' klong gsang mdo, the Ngo mshar rgyas pa and the Zhi kho. Formerly, rDo rting Monastery was one of the thirteen monastic communities of rGyal ston lding dgu.

The monastery now exists in its restored condition and contains an assembly hall, a temple and several religious objects. At present there are twenty-seven monks and one lama.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

(25) **gSa’ mda’ bon Monastery**

\[gSa’ mda’ bon dgon Mi g-yo bsam gtan gling\] is situated to the south of the river rGyal chu. Although a road has been built from gYang shod [xiang] to the monastery, there is no bridge over the river rGyal chu capable of carrying traffic. So a ride of about five hours on horseback is required.

The monastery was founded by Zhu btsun gYung drung khri ’od in 1465. rGyal shod, the seat of the monastery, is one of the so-called Four Rong (gorge) and Eight or Eighteen Shod (lowland) that a number of holy men have visited. In ancient times, the district was called Sum pa’i stong bu chung and was part of sGo pa, one of the three regions of Zhang zhung known as sGo, Phug and Bar. During the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, Tibet was divided into four \(ru\) and the core of the third \(ru\), called rGyal shod sTag pa tshal, corresponds to the present-day rGyal shod.

The derivation of the monastery’s name is as follows: This monastery was built on a protruding from the hill site called gSa’ mda’ (gSa’ lung mda’), which was counted as one of the Thirteen Treasures (Rin chen bcu gsum) in a region where various flowers of surpassing beauty bloom, such that the place was called rTsi thog steng (Plateau of fruits and flowers). The monastery was commonly called gSa’ mda’ bon dgon, which was a combination of the alternate name of the site and the name of the religious tradition, while its real name is Mi g-yo bsam gtan gling.

The area has a mountain called Phu ru lho yi ’dzam bu klu ri and a lake, gSa’ phu mgon lha dkar po. These are regarded as two of the Thirteen Treasures of gSa’ (snow leopard). Around them, to the right lies rGod kyi dar rgyas bcu gsum, to the left lies La gong gi drag rtsal bcu gsum, and in front, Mo nam smyug mo mched brgyad, just like servants surrounding their king. They are places of outstanding sacredness where teacher Kun tu bzang po meditated and bestowed blessings. In the caves of these places Dran pa nam mkha’ and his twin sons are believed to have concealed texts containing profound teachings and had also left marks of their spiritual attainment.

As the site is a meeting point for travellers between China and Tibet, the name gSa’ mda’ bon dgon frequently appears in documents and is, therefore, a well-known place. Over the years the fortunes of the monastery have risen and fallen.

In regard to the origin of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon, it is difficult to specify from historical documents. According to a document, before gSa’ mda’ was founded, there was another monastery called Mar khu thang established by either Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mshan or Khu btsun gYung drung khri ’od.

According to recent study on the origin of the Bon religion and its lamas, it was the masters of the Zhu g-yas lineage that had established many monastic centres, including Sog gYung drung gling and Khra rgan nyi yu in the latter stage of Bonpo development, when the dying embers of teaching began to rekindle all over Tibet. The Zhu g-yas is a powerful lineage whose forefather is Zhu g-yas Legs po, the
authorized proprietor of the Bon tantric and Mind class teachings, which had been handed down from gShen chen Klu dga'. The latter was the principal one among the one hundred text-discoverers who had opened the door to Bonpo teachings.

In 1465, Zhu btsun gYung drung khri 'od founded Mi g-yo bsam gtan gling. It generally followed the Zhu tradition called Zhu lugs Sog zam and the rituals were practised following the manner of Sog gYung drung gling Monastery.

Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mtshan meditated in the gSa' bu mdzod 'chang smug mo hermitage. During the latter half of his lifetime he went to Khyung po and founded a monastery, and worked hard for the sake of sentient beings. The monastery was taken care of by the adherents of Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mtshan, including Ko ston sByin pa rgyal mtshan and Ko bo Kun bzang, who had appeared in succession. Since these Ko lamas were benevolent enough to look after the monastery, they developed it by giving continuous teachings based on Sutra, Tantra and the Mind texts so that the monastery developed further, making its name known everywhere. It is said that when Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mtshan passed away, many self-grown relics appeared (from the cremation of his body) which were worshipped as the most auspicious objects in this monastery.

In 1718, misfortune befell Mar khu thang Monastery when the vicious Mongolian troops of Jungar came to rGyal shod district and plotted to destroy the monastery. The two Bonpo local leaders, IHa rje skyen ga yu and Thod pa thad ga yu, undertook armed operations and killed some of the vicious Mongolian soldiers, including the chief, but could not prevent the rest of the Jungar entering the monastery. They plundered the monastery beyond all imagination, destroying it totally. All the religious objects were instantly turned into a ball of fire. However, one of the main religious objects, the word-uttering statue of gShen rab (sTon pa gShen rab), escaped destruction, along with the two short pillars, and they were regarded as the auspicious symbol of the monastery’s restoration.

Preparations for restoration of the monastery were made. Of all the things that were lost, they searched in particular for one of the main religious objects, called 'Phar chen dkar po rGyang grags ma (the Big White Conch of Far-flung Fame), made of sTon pa gShen rab’s teeth, which had gone missing in the chaos. It was found on a rock at gSa’ yar kha, which influenced the decision to rebuild the future monastery there.

During the several years of hard work that was being done making preparations, Sangs rgyas gling pa, alias Byang chub rdo rje, who upheld the tradition of the New Bon, was travelling in the regions of the four rong, such as Kong po and the eight shod where he made rediscoveries of texts. In 1727, he came to rTsi thog steng and carried out the ceremony of consecration of the new location. The officials, lay practitioners and people of the Bu rdzum tribe made him the religious teacher of this monastery, and he bestowed upon the new monastery the name Mi g-yo gsam
gtan gling, the same as before, plus abundant funds and materials to make continual offerings. The monastery maintained its ritual practices of the Zhu tradition, but Sangs rgyas gling pa also introduced some of those of the New Bon.

At that time there were about sixty monks and lay practitioners in all, so some people began to call the monastery the Sixty Monastic College of gSa’ ’mda (gSa’ mda’ grwa tshang drug cu).

Later, Mi ’gyur rgyal mtshan, an incarnate lama, visited rGyal shod. He resided at Kong po Bon ri and was one of the twenty-five Red Hat masters who were regarded as the masters of Sangs rgyas gling pa’s teachings.

Mi ’gyur rgyal mtshan began to have a close patron-priest relationship with the officials and people of the Bu rdzum tribe. Formerly, when Sangs rgyas gling pa was the head of the monastery, the officials, people and priests of Bu rdzum expressed a strong hope that the holy man Mi ’gyur rgyal mtshan would be the proprietor of both rGyal ri and gSa’ mda’ monasteries, which he accepted.

To the religious dances performed during the Ma tri bum sgrub festival of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon, Mi ’gyur rgyal mtshan added some elegant styles following those performed in rGyal ri Monastery. He gave gSa’ mda’ bon dgon a mask of mKha’ ’gro seng gdong ma crafted by ’Brel ’Gyur med rgyal mtshan, as an object of worship. He worked, in particular, on reframing the written moral code of the monastery by rectifying its defect; this was regarded as an invaluable deed for the entire community and was indeed very beneficial to the interests of the monastery.

The reconstruction of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon began with the building of the twelve-pillared assembly hall. It had a porch and stairway. Then the monks’ quarters and other buildings were built, all in a good fashion.

The main religious objects of the monastery were as follows: the big conch made of gShen rab Mi bo’s teeth; the relic stupas of the successive Ko bo lamas; a bronze statue of gShen rab; a gilt-bronze statue of mKhan chen Mu zi gsal bzang; statues of gShen Iha ’od dkar, Khro bo gtso mchog and gShen gsangs ba ’dus pa, all made of a mixture of medicine and clay; as well as stupas, including rNam rgyal mchod rten. In the assembly hall were murals of the Twelve Deeds (mDzad pa bcu gnyis) and the deities of gSas mkhar mchog lnga. At the porch were, in common with every other monastery, the murals of the Four Great Kings (rGyal chen sde bzhi), the wheel of existence and so forth, and, not common to all monasteries, murals of the territorial deities of peaceful nature (yul lha), such as gSa’ yi nor bu bcu gsum and Chis kyi rin chen bcu gsum. In the tantric room upstairs were images of principal religious protective deities of peace and wrath, and on both sides of them stood the Six Bonpo Protectors (Bon skyong sde drug) and Zhu btsan Grags rgyal in a frightening aspect, as if guarding the Bonpo doctrine.

A brief history of the influential Zhu lineage, which had maintained gSa’ mda’ bon dgon in Bu rdzum, is as follows:
Once there was the chief gYung drung bsod nams, one of the successive Burdzum chiefs. It is said that originally these were offspring of the local deity. gYung drung bsod nams had only a daughter named Rin chen lha mo, who remained without offspring. There were no chiefs for the community and so there was the danger that the chieftain lineage might be ended. However, she was a person capable of leading her community. The members of her community, both lay and clerical, decided that they should try to look for a suitable man of a good family who would marry her. At that time, in 1777, the gTer ston Yung drung grags pa of the Zhu family, who was learned and compassionate, began to have a very close relationship with gSa’ md’ bon dgon. The leaders of the monastery therefore requested him to marry Rin chen lha mo so that he could look after the monastery.

He provided a powerful remedy for the local community and the Bonpo doctrine. He established a close patron-priest relationship with Tshe ring rab brtan, the king of Hor, and became the king’s spiritual master.

gYung drung grags pa rediscovered hidden texts in the sacred site Brag dkar lha lung, situated in the vicinity of Klu phug Monastery (No.31) in sBra chen, and recognized the place as a pilgrimage site as well as tracing the path around it. At that time, the people of the Burdzum tribe, both lay and clergy, thought that since the monastery was founded by a man of the Zhu family and its tradition belonged to this family, it would be most appropriate if the Zhu family also now looked after it, and they congratulated the lama. From that time on, in the Burdzum tribe, the lineage of the local chief was united with that of Zhu g-yas.

Concerning the way in which this Bonpo monastery, whose inmates were a mixture of monks and lay practitioners, was transformed into a proper monastery, it happened as follows: When Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin dbang gi rgyal po, the incarnation of rJe btsun Byang pa Khro tshang ’Brug lha and the twenty-fifth throne holder of sMan ri Monastery (No.1) in gTsang, where the Second Buddha mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan resided, came to the lower rGyal shod, he said that if the monastery followed the monastic tradition of sMan ri it would be a great benefit in the future for the interests of monastery itself and living beings. Every Bonpo devotee in the place, lay and clerical, willingly accepted the proposal. The leaders of the region, members of the monastery and ordinary people took vows to respect the recommendation.

mGon lha, the younger son of the chief Zhu g-yas Pad ma rin chen, took monastic vows and was given the name bsKal bzang gtsug phud. The lay practitioners in the monastery also took monastic vows. Moreover, many people from the tribe became monks, so that the number of monks grew by nearly one hundred. The abbot wrote the regulations of the monastery based on the Vinaya and Sutra.

When the abbot was about to leave for sMan ri Monastery, he called at Mi
g-yo bsam gtan gling and gave an instruction saying that they should follow the Bru tradition, in accordance with the sMan ri practice, but the Zhu tradition of the dGu gsum festivals is of such magnificence that it should be maintained as before. For this reason, the Zhu tradition of the festivals has been kept till the present day.

Later on, the above-mentioned mGon lha vacated the throne and went to live with the family of the Sen tsha chieftain. However, he continued to do a lot of work that was beneficial to the monastery: he had many invaluable monastic articles made in the assembly hall, such as victorious banners decorated with various ornaments, the ’phan, the phyé ’phur and canopies, all made of thick Hor cloth.

bsTan pa ’brug grags became a monk in this monastery. He was one of the four nephews of the king of Hor, Tsung chen hu Tshe dbang lha rgyal. The latter was a son of Zhu g-yas bSod nam dpad rgyal, the chief of Bu rdzum. However, bsTan pa ’brug grags could not do much for the monastery.

After that the local community needed another lama. The leaders of Bu rdzum, therefore, sent a messenger with one rdo tshad of silver and many other things to Ri zhing Monastery (No.4) in the upper Nyang in gTsang in order to invite a lama of the Zhu family. A lama called sTon pa of rTsa phu bla brang in Ri zhing, who was learned in the tradition of srid gshen, considering the benefit to sentient beings, accepted the invitation and came to rGyal shod. As a departing gift, the rTsa phu bla brang gave him the so-called He la nam mkha’i ’phur mo che, which is a statue of Phur pa rediscovered by gShen chen Klu dga’. It was made of five different precious metals with three faces and a Garuda hovering above its head.

The lama sTon pa lived among the people of rGyal shod as if he were a simple layman. He worked a great deal for the beings, not caring for either wealth or fame. He had four sons. One of the middle two took monastic vows in the presence of the abbots of the upper and lower monasteries, and received the name bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud. He received initiations and teachings of the outer, inner, and secret so well that the proper practice of rituals spread everywhere. As hoped by the people, priests and officials, he became the head of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon. He travelled often to the nomad areas of Hor in order to collect donations. In 1916, he completely rebuilt the monastery with new buildings, such as the temple with forty-eight long and short pillars, the dBu rtse with its stairway, the dance hall and so forth. However, he did not live to see the religious objects and murals completed.

After the death of bsTan ’dzin gtsug phud, bsTan pa rgya mtsho of Zhu g-yas took over the work. Many lay and clerical devotees made donations, so that the murals and religious objects were completed. In the dBu rtse temple were the following: a gilt-bronze statue of rGyal ba rgya mtsho with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes, as high as a two-storey house; a life-size gilt-bronze statue of Tshe dbang bod yul ma; clay images of rNam par rgyal ba, sMra ba’i seng ge, Thugs rje byams ma, mNyam med chen po, gTso mchog mkha’ ’gyings and sTag la me ’bar,
each of which stood as high as a two-storey house, installed on fully draped thrones.

On the shelves, on both sides of the assembly hall, are said to have been a collection of countless scriptures, including the bKa’gyur and bKa’brten of Eternal Bon, the ‘Bum and mDo gzer mig written in gold and the ‘Bum of the three versions: detailed, standard and compact. There were the murals of the Thousand Buddha, Cho ga bcu gnyis, the Twelve Deeds of gShen rab Mi bo, the deities of gSas mkhar mchog Inga and the protective deities of Bon. Around the upper structure of the temple were murals of the lineage of the masters of monastic tradition. At the porch were the murals of the Four Great Kings and the wheel of existence.

Upstairs, in the bsKangs gso khang, were clay images of sTag la spu gri dmarnag and the religious protectors of Bon. On the lattice-work fence were clay images of dBal gsas and Tshe dbang Bod yul ma. The murals were of the assembled deities of Zhang zhung Bon skor.

Zhu g-yas bsTan pa rgya mtsho was the younger of the two sons of Pad ma rnam rgyal, a chief of Bu rdzum. He was born in 1905 and his lay name was bSod nams grags pa. He later took monastic vows in the presence of sKu ’dun Phun tshogs blo gros of sMan ri Monastery, and was given the name bsTan pa rgya mtsho. He received teachings in the presence of the mKhan chen Phun tshogs blo gros, the yogi bZod pa rgyal mtshan from Khyung po and the hermit gYung drung ye shes. He mastered the esoteric learning of Bon and became the head of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon, which consequently brought great prosperity to the monastery. In the latter half of his life he handed over all the responsibilities of teaching to his nephew Nyi zla tshe dbang, alias bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, and practised meditation for the rest of his life at the cave gSa’ phu. He passed away in 1966.

Nyi zla tshe dbang is the present head of gSa’ mda’ bon dgon. He was born in the family of the chief of Bu rdzum and was the younger of the two sons of Zhu g-yas Rin chen dbang rgyal. In 1934, he took monastic vows in the presence of bsTan pa blo gros, the abbot of sMan ri, and was given the name bsTan pa rgyal mtshan. He studied the precepts of Bon under the same master and bZod pa rgyal mtshan, the yogi of Khyung po. Similarly, he received teachings from the three other masters: Zhu g-yas gYung drung rgyal mtshan from Yung drung dpal ri in Khyung po; Shel zhig gYung drung rnam rgyal, a personal disciple of Grub dbang Shar rdza pa; and bsTan pa rgya mtsho, his paternal uncle. He also studied the general culture of Tibet, including Tibetan linguistics. He has been in charge of all aspects of the headship of this monastery up to the present day.

Annual Religious Services and Practice of Rituals

For about fifteen days, from the 3rd day of the 1st Tibetan month, there were ceremonies of lnga mchod and from the 16th, for three days, the ’smon lam festival is celebrated. Besides these, normally after finishing daily tea, the monks assemble
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

to perform various rituals: the eight-day ritual based on the sGrib sbyong mun sel sgron ma, called the dPon tshang ma a dkar; the Zhi khro ritual, for over twenty days; the seven-day ritual of Ma rgyud; the five-day ritual of gDugs dkar; the Twelve Rituals (Cho ga bcu gnyis), for twelve days; the recitation of the bKa’ gyur; and the five-day ritual of Phur pa. On these occasions, a number of local devotees come to make flower offerings.

In the 6th Tibetan month a summer retreat is observed for about thirty days. Then comes the end of the month, when the dgu gtor rite called Khro bo dmar chen, which is the short one (dgu chung), is performed.

In the 8th month there is a big festival, Ma tri bum sgrub, for twelve days. On this occasion, religious dances that consist of thirteen different ones are performed over two days and on another day the public initiation is given.

On the 24th day of the 10th month another dgu gtor rite is performed, this time an elaborated one (dgu chen), based on the recital of the Khro bo ngo mtshan rgyas pa.

From the 3rd day of the 12th month the ritual sTag la tshogs stong is performed, and at the end of the month the dgu gtor rite of sTag la is performed, leading to the New Year’s general celebration.

To sum up, they assemble for rituals for more than ten months of the whole year.

As for the organization of this monastery, it consists mainly of a dbu bla (head), four las sne (official), dbu mdzad and dge bskos. In addition to these, there are several senior monks from Khyung po and Ya nge thod pa in the lineage of old Bonpo masters, who take responsibility for managing the big festivities. For prescribed monastic activities the first four above-mentioned members should take responsibility. The main annual ceremonies are Nag po spam chen, Tshogs stong, INga mchod, sMon lam, Zhi khro, Ma rgyud, gDugs dkar, Phur pa, Dung yon, bsNyen bsnyung, the dGag dbyae, sNgags rgyun, dBu rtse mar chen, sNgags rgyun mar chen, 'Khor chen, Khyi khrud, gSar 'phar, and sPyi gso. The expenses of the eight-day ritual of A dkar are met by the chief of Bu rdzum. Funds for the above-mentioned activities are raised from livestock and farmland production. In the old days, it was with tea and silver that they raised funds to erect the so-called Four Stupas (mChod rten bzhi) of Nag po spam chen. Out of the funds, they must save cash to hand over so that the budget for the rest of the year might be met. There was a special rule in the monastery that according to the amount of the funds, four or two monks must take responsibility in turn for the funds.

With regard to monastic discipline, the legal document of the monastery serves as its basis. For example, if a monk breaks one of the four primary rules, he must be punished with a fine of eighteen tam rdo and he must find a substitute to be his replacement. Although the monastery used to be called “the Sixty Monastic College
of gsam dbang, because it had only sixty monks, it actually now has more than one hundred monks. The regulations of the monastery are very strict. The monks are not even allowed to wear undershirts at any time, and even in the courtyard of the public houses, including the four or five monks’ quarters, they were under close surveillance.

During the recent period of its history (i.e., the Cultural Revolution) the monastery declined markedly for many internal and external reasons. However, it was rebuilt in 1985. Several religious objects hidden and kept safe by the senior monk Byang chub grags pa, bsTan 'dzin bzang po and the dKar ya nge family were returned to the monastery. rDo rgyal kha ba rNam rgyal dbang grags of the Zhu family purchased a complete set of the bka’ ++'gyur in two hundred volumes printed in Chengdu, and presented it to the monastery.

After all this, at present this monastery is in pretty good condition in terms of size and equipment, and has come out as one of the principal Bonpo monasteries of Nag chu region. In the monastery there are three lamas, including Lama Nyi zla tshe dbang, mentioned above, who is very learned in Bon culture, and there are about forty-seven monks.

A trip of about 250 kilometres from Bri ru rdzong takes us to sBra chen rdzong.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari region.
(20) Sen tsha Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(22) Klu mkhar Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(25) gSa’ mda’ Monastery, Nyi zia tshe dbang, the head lama of the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
sBra chen rdzong

sBra chen rdzong is located in north-eastern Tibet. It is 10,326 square kilometres in area and averages 4,500 metres in altitude. The people of the rdzong all believe in the Bon religion. There are two qu and six xiang within the jurisdiction of the rdzong—sBra chen qu, Gla shi xiang, sKar rgod xiang, gYa' mnga' xiang, Chab mda' xiang, Ye tha xiang, lCang smad qu and Mam tha xiang—within which there are 161 village committees.

The place name sBra chen is an abbreviation of sBra gur chen po, which means "the big yak-hair tent". There used to be many of these and they were also called Khri langs stong bzhugs, which means that such a tent could hold ten thousand people standing and one thousand seated.

Hor sBra chen originally belonged to Sum pa, a part of the Tibetan empire. During the Mongol empire it was under the local Hor kings who paid allegiance to the Mongol emperors of China. During the Ming dynasty of China it was incorporated into Sichuan province, and during the Manchu rule it was one of the Thirty-nine Tribes (Tsho ba so dgu). In the time of the emperor Guang xu, it was taken back by the Tibetan government. In 1941, the Tibetan government established Hor sBra chen rdzong. After China's "peaceful liberation" of Tibet in 1951, it came under the jurisdiction of the liberation committee of Chab mdo, and in 1959, the people's commune of sBra chen rdzong was set up. In 1960, it was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Nag chu regional committee.

The whole population of the rdzong, 30,000, followed the Bon religion. Before the democratic reform was carried out, Bonpo monasteries were not allowed to tile their roofs and, they did not have anything like real estate, farmland, taxpayers or servants, but just a few livestock that could not even cover living expenses. Because of this, they had to live on the help received from each household and on the visiting prayer services they provided. Bonpo monasteries had neither privileges nor duties to provide labour or pay tax to the Tibetan government.

Around the time of democratic reform in the rdzong there were nine Bonpo monasteries with 1,031 monks, and six hermitages with twenty-three monks. After the democratic reform, all the monasteries were totally destroyed except Klu phug, Lungdkar and Phur nag Monasteries, and these three remained monasteries only in name.

In 1978 restoration of monasteries was started and there are now eight Bonpo monasteries that have been rebuilt. In these there are 520 monks. There is one hermitage in which three illustrious sages live: Rag shu rTogs Idan Dri med g-yung drung, Kha bo rTogs Idan Shes rab phun tshogs and A drung Tshul khrims dga’ba.

The local population in the vicinities of the monasteries in dBra chen rdzong is as follows:

1. Klu phug Monastery: 2,835 people in 399 households
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

2. Phur nag Monastery: 2,835 people in 445 households
3. sPa tshang and sPa ma Monasteries: 4,624 people in 736 households
4. Lung dkar Monastery: 3,476 people in 469 households
5. rMa rong and Khrom tshang Monasteries: 3,827 people in 510 households
6. sGang ru Monastery: 1,459 people in 236 households

On the whole, sBra chen rdzong is an important bastion of the Bon religion. Today the Bonpo monasteries in this rdzong are kept in good condition in many respects.

(26) sPa tshang Monastery

sPa tshang dgon gYung drung rab brtan gling belongs to Ye tha xiang and can be reached within ten minutes, walking from sBra chen rdzong. It was founded in 1847 by sPa ston gYung drung nam bzang, who was of the holy sPa lineage. The sPa is one of the six sacred families: Bru, Zhu, gShen, sPa, rMe’u and Khyung. The Bon Sources and some other historical documents give reasons why the sPa family is important:

lHa bu sPa ba spa thog, a son of Sangs po and Chu lcam, was born in heaven. He descended to earth from rTsa gsum lha and preached Bon. Then he went to Zhang zhung rNam rgyal lha rtse. From there he went to the Crystal Cave on Mount Ti se where he practised meditation on the tutelary deity Me ri for three years and so attained the divine body and was called Kri smon lcags kyi bya ru can. At that time, in Zhang zhung, people used to say, "In the sky the divine son is beautiful. On earth the king is great." lHa bu’s descendants were ancestors of the sPa family and some of its members held the position of prelate at the court of kings of Tibet.

sPa ston Khyung ’bar, who had obtained spiritual power of mysticism in the latter stage of Bon development, demonstrated his acquired abilities. He transformed himself into a wrathful deity in order to subdue heretics and into a gamda bird to subdue the naga spirits.

Other masters who belonged to the sPa family were as prodigious:
1. Zhig po Kun rtse
2. Shes rab rgyal mtshan
3. sPa rTogs ldan drang srong
4. sPa ston rGyal ba shes rab
5. sPa ston dPal ldan bzang po
6. Nyi dpal bzang po

There were other masters of the sPa lineage who were based at La phug in Western Tibet called the “Thirteen good masters” (sPa bla bzang po bcu gsum); to name six of them, we have the following:
1. Zla rgyal bzang po
2. sTobs chen bzang po
3. dPal mchog bzang po
4. dPal 'bar bzang po
5. mKhas grub Nam mkha' bzang po
6. gYung drung bzang po

However, their seat in Western Tibet declined and some members of the family migrated to mDo smad.

One of these was sPa ston gYung drung rgyal po, who had two sons: dGra 'dul bstan rgyal and bSod nams dbang grags. They proceeded from Amdo to the domain of the Hor Ye tha tribe and finally settled there. Their offspring were gYung drung nam bzang, l Hun grub grags pa, Shes rab grags pa and Yon tan. gYung drung nam bzang became the prelate of the king of Hor and later he founded sPa tshang Monastery. After that, the centre of activities of the sPa family was shifted from west to east. All Bonpo sources agree that the monastery in Hor Ye tha constituted the most important monastic centre of the sPa lineage.

The manner in which sPa tshang Monastery was founded in the region of the present Hor Ye tha tribe is as follows:

In the time of sPa gYung drung nam bzang, sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan arrived in Hor on a visit. When he took a night's lodging near the site of the future sPa tshang Monastery, he regarded the place, from the point of view of topography, as auspicious, and thought of founding a monastery there. His idea finding agreement with the king of Hor, construction began with the six-pillared assembly hall and its contents. Nam mkha' sgron gsal and Nyi ma 'bum gsal of the sPa family added another assembly hall and its ornaments. Nyi ma 'bum gsal also obtained a complete set of bKa' 'gyur and had a temple of the gSas mkhar mchog Inga built. He also had several big gilt stupas made.

Later, sPa ston gYung drung bstan pa 'brug grags had other assembly halls built, with passages around them, on the three storeys of a building that had one hundred pillars. He also had the following religious objects erected: a stupa of bDud 'dul sgra sgrags, and statues of sTon pa rdzogs sku and rNam par rgyal ba, all gilt-bronze works. They were as high as a three-storey building. There were many small images as well. There was also the temple of bKra shis sgo mang that had twenty-pillars and contained a stupa of bKra shis sgo mang, a giant reliquary stupa and gilt-bronze images of rGyal ba rgya mtshan and sMra seng as tall as a three-storey building. He also had a large number of new religious objects built in the gTso bzhi temple.

The Bonpo doctrine was spread widely through the setting up of a flawless preaching school, under the system of the monastic tradition of sMan ri (No.1) and gYung drung gling (No.2) as well as the teachings of Shar rdza, the one who attained the "rainbow-body". Thus the members of the sPa family made the Bon religion flourish there.
The lineage of the masters of sPa tshang Monastery in Ye tha is as follows:
1. sPa gYung drung nam bzang
2. sPa ston Nam mkha' sgrol gsal
3. sPa ston Nyi ma 'bum gsal
4. sPa ston gYung drung bstan pa 'brug grags (*alias 'Brug Rinpoche*)
5. sPa bsTan pa rgyal mtshan (*alias Nyi 'bum sprul sku*)
6. sPu la Zla ba rgyal mtshan
7. bsTan pa 'brug grags
8. Kho bo rTog ldan Shes rab phun tshogs

The last master did not belong to the lineage of the sPa family, but observed the rules of monastic discipline according to the sPa tradition.

Among the above-mentioned lamas, Nyi ma 'bum gsal, who was very active in the development process of the monastery, is described in some historical documents as follows:

He was born in 1825. He took full ordination in the presence of Zhu ston rGyal mtshan nyi ma and mKhan chen sKal bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma and heard teachings from these masters. He acquired an extraordinary knowledge of Buddhism and Bon under the tutelage of Me ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, 'Gro mgon Shes rab g-yung drung, Grub/dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen and gTer ston Tshe dbang grags pa. As mentioned above, he had temples built and various statues made as well as making copies of the *bKa’* ′gyur and *bKa’* ′bren. Having established the practice of preaching and meditating, he passed away at the age of sixty-seven.

Another important figure in the development of sPa tshang Monastery was gYung drung bstan pa 'brug grags. He was born in 1832. He took ordination at an early age in the presence of his paternal uncle, Nyi ma 'bum gsal. He received the entire course of initiation, transmissions and explanations of Sutra, Tantra and Mind. While practising these three, he also studied and became very learned. He wrote many books, about ten volumes on Bon, and established a school of metaphysical studies in the monastery. He had a gilt stupa of bKra shis sgo mang built, and another stupa of bDud 'dul sgra sgrags, as mentioned above. His deeds and name came to be known all around, and he passed away at the age of sixty.

Annual Religious Services and Rituals
1. At the end of the 11th Tibetan month the ritual of sTag la me 'bar was performed for five days.
2. In the 12th month, at the end of the year, the *dgu chen* ritual based on the ritual cycles of Kho bo and Phur pa was performed over seven days, and on the 30th day the ceremony of confession was held.
3. In the 1st month flower offerings, A dkar bum sgrub and bCo lnga mchod pa were performed, occupying seventeen days in all.
4. In the 2nd month the ritual based on the *mKha’ klong gsang mdos* was performed for nine days.

5. In the 3rd month Dus chen che mo was performed for seventeen days, as well as religious dances (*dbang ’cham*) and the ritual based on the *Rig ’dzin gsang sgrub*.

6. In the 6th month the rituals of Ma rgyud and rNam rgyal were performed and the summer retreat was observed for seventeen days.

7. In the 7th month the ritual based on the *Zhi khro* was performed for fourteen days.

8. In the 8th month the ritual of Ma tri bum sgrub was performed for nine days and there were religious dances.

9. In the 10th month a debate on metaphysics was conducted for ten days.

The organization of the monastery at that time consisted of the following:
- *mkhan po*
- *dpon slob*
- *dbu mdzad*
- *dge bskos*
- *grwa dpon*
- *phyag mdzod*
- *spyi gso*
- *gnyer pa*

There were 250 monks in the monastery.

In the assembly hall and at its porch, there were excellent murals of deities. In the assembly hall from the right, there were the following:

1. Srid rgyal Drel dmar: a goddess with a dark blue body, three faces and six arms; the three faces are of different colours, the right being white, the left red, and the centre blue. She holds a *zhing dbyug* (a stuffed object made of human skin), a sword and a sash in her three right hands, and in the left three are a swastika, a trident and a skull cup. She is adorned with rosaries of fresh skulls around her neck and rosaries of dry skulls on her limb joints. She is mounted on a red mule whose four legs are supported by the Four Great Kings.

2. *mKha’ dbyings lha mo*: a goddess with a red body, nine heads and eighteen arms. She is mounted on a white mule in a state exhibiting bravery.

3. Dus yum lha mo: a goddess with a blue body, nine heads and eight arms. She is mounted on a blue mule and has a frightening air.

4. Srid rgyal drel nag ma: a goddess with a dark blue body, three heads and six arms. Her faces being white to the right, red to the left and blue in the centre, she possesses a perfect beauty. She holds a banner, a sword and a peg in her three right hands, and a mirror, an iron hook and a skull filled with blood in
the left three. Mounted on a black mule, she presents a wrathful appearance.

5. Bya ra ma gsum: 1) dKar mo srid rgyal: a goddess with a white body, one head and two arms. Sitting astride a bird, she exhibits a comfortable wrath. 2) sMug po srid rgyal: a goddess with a brown body, one head and two arms. Riding a leaping mule, she exhibits a terrifying air. 3) Nag mo srid rgyal: a goddess with a blue body, one head and two arms. In some murals she is mounted on a Garuda and in others an iron wolf.

6. rDzu 'phrul sman bzhi: 1) gNam phyi gung rgyal: a single headed, two-armed goddess with a white body. Riding a snow lion, she exhibits a brave look. 2) Ye phyi gung sangs: a single-headed, two-armed, yellow-bodied divinity. Mounted on a dragon, she has an air of glory. 3) Phyi ma ye sangs: a divinity with one head, two arms and a red body. She is a terrifying divinity riding a Garuda. 4) gNam sman che mo: a goddess with a dark blue body, one head and two arms. Riding a sheep, she shows an air of magnificence.

7. Ma rgyud yi dam gsang mchog: a divinity with a blue body, seven heads and sixteen arms. Possessing Garuda’s wings, he shows an air of passionate wrath.

8. sTag la me 'bar: a divinity with a red body, one head and two arms. His attributes are a gold wheel in his right hand, lifted up into the sky, and nine crossed swords in the left hand.

9. Phur pa, the Deity of Action: a divinity with a blue body, three heads and six arms; the lower part of his body is in the form of a frightening dagger.

10. dBal chen Ge khod, the Deity of Virtue: a divinity with a blue body, nine heads and sixteen arms. He presents fierce looks while holding, to his bosom, his consort, who has a red body, three heads and six arms and is in a rage. In his peaceful form, he is called A ti mu wer in the Zhang zhung language, and Sangs rgyas mkha’rgyal in Tibetan.

11. gTso mchog mkha’’gyings, the Deity of Mind: a divinity with a blue body, three heads and six arms. His consort has a red body, one head and two arms. When in his peaceful form, he is called gYung drung yongs rdzogs.

12. lHa rgod thog pa, the Deity of Speech: a divinity with a blue body, four heads and eight arms. His consort has a green body, one head and two arms. In his peaceful form he appears as sMra ba’i seng ge.

13. dBal gsas rngam pa, the Deity of Body: a divinity with a blue body. Adorned with a tiger, snow lion, Garuda and a dragon above his head, he presents a wrathful appearance. His peaceful form is Kun bzang rgyal ba’ dus pa.

14. Mi bdud ‘byams pa khrag mgo: Ge ta ge rgya in the Zhang zhung language, he has a dark blue body, one head and two arms. He brandishes an axe in his right hand, and holds either a bow and arrow or a black banner in his left. He is mounted on an otter or a black horse.
Besides all these, there are the Four Principal Peaceful Deities (bDe gshegs gtso bzhi) of Sutra rituals, rNam par rgyal ba and rGyal ba rgya mtsho with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes.

Below the porch the murals of the wheel of existence and the Four Great Kings were drawn. All this vividly shows the particular tradition of the Bonpo tradition.

sPa tshang Monastery in Hor Ye tha was an important seat of the sPa family, and it still plays an important role as the centre of the sPa tradition. At present, this monastery’s chief lamas are Kho bo rTogs ldan Shes rab phun tshogs, bsIan pa ’brug grags and Nam mkha’ dbang grub. sKal bzang dbang grags, the aged dance master of sPa tshang Monastery, is very skilled in the art of the ’cham dance. Twice a year, therefore, they customarily perform religious dances. They maintain the art of ’cham well and have good costumes for it. In fact, we saw the staging of the ’cham dance based on the Rig ’dzin gsang sgrub, which consists of several dances, such as gSer skyem, mTshams bcad, sPyan ’bebs, sPyan ’dren, rNam brgyad tshogs ’cham, sKu bstod, Nang ’cham and others. These are of the Bonpo tradition but have unique features. The present sPa tshang Monastery has over one hundred monks, and the religious activities are kept in the way they used to be.

(27) Lung dkar Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Ye tha Lung dkar dgon gShen bstan rin chen gling. Travelling thirty-odd kilometres from sBra chen rdzong, we reach Ye tha xiang. Lung dkar Monastery is located on top of a hill at the western outskirts of the xiang. It is possible to approach the gate of the monastery in a car, but the track to the top of the hill is not very good.

The seat of Lun dkar Monastery is called Upper Ye tha, and that of sPa tshang Monastery Lower Ye tha. The limpid stream gliding past the front of sBra chen rdzong is called Ye chu. Ye tha, which is one of “the Thirty-nine Tribes”, is an important local community.

Lung dkar Monastery derives its name from the local deity (gzhi bdag) Lung dkar. He is a deity that wears a hat made of felt, holds a gem in his right hand and is mounted on a white horse.

The predecessor of this monastery is said to be Sog gYung drung gling (already mentioned in connection with the Zhu family in the section of ’Bri ru rdzong).

It was located in Cham mda’, the border area of the two rdzong, sBra chen and Sog. At present, to the best of my memory, this area is no more than a vast plain with a stone dyke and many prayer flags fluttering. Concerning Sog gYung drung gling Monastery, the sKal bzang mgrin rgyan, a Bonpo work, describes it as follows:

“It is not certain when this monastery was founded, but it certainly existed in the Third Rab byung (1147-1206). There were four monastic colleges and more than two thousand monks. It is said that the establishment was so big that horn-calls for
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

assemblies had to be blown in the four directions.

There were two official residences, Zhu and Khyung po. Many accomplished scholars from other monasteries, including the lamas of the 'Brug stan family, came to the monastery. The principal ones among them — mKhas btsun Nam mkha' 'od zer, mNga' ris bSod nams rgyal mtshan, Khyung sgom gYung drung 'od zer, Zhu Khri 'od rgyal mtshan, Khyung po dPon dge, dPon rin and others — stayed there and developed the monastery to a great degree. However, it was totally destroyed by the Mongolian troops of Jungar.”

After the destruction of Sog gYung drung gling by the barbarous Mongolian Jungar, the Mongol hordes plundered several important religious objects, which they carried away and gave to Sog Tsan dan dgon, an important dGe lugs pa monastery situated in the same region.

The belongings of lamas of Khyung and dBu, who were members of thirteen individual establishments in Sog gYung drung gling, and some irreplaceable sacred objects, including the golden statue of sTag la me 'bar and the skull of dBu ri lama, were given to Lung dkar Monastery. This was why Lung dkar Monastery considered Sog gYung drung gling to be its predecessor.

Lung dkar Monastery’s history can be presented in three parts. First, in 1715, Chos 'bum, chief of the Hor Ye tha tribe, and his son Mu khri rgyal ba tshul khrims. who was a lama, founded the hermitage called Ri khrod dkar po in Lung bzang. The objective of this was to perform religious services for the lama and peace in the region. In that year bsKal bzang rgya mtsho, the Seventh Dalai Lama, passed through the Hor area from mGar thar in Khams on horseback. Chos 'bum successfully solicited him to issue a decree officially recognizing the hermitage. But after the death of Mu khri rgyal ba tshul khrims, the hermitage collapsed due to internal discord.

Second, Ye tha Nor bu tshe rgyal, the scholar bSod nams lhun grub of dBu ri house and dBra Khyung rGyal ba bstan 'dzin founded gYu lung Monastery in 1808 at the same place. The king of Hor, Tshe ring rab brtan, issued a proclamation, with a preamble by rTa tshag Ho thog thu of Kun bde gling in Lhasa, that this monastery, which was an establishment for the leaders of the Ye tha community, should be lead by the lamas of sPo la and dBu ri. It actually became a real monastery from the time of dBu bla rGyal ba tshul khrims, the reincarnation of Mu khri, and it was called gYu lung. However, in 1868 it was destroyed by an avalanche of snow.

Third, rNam rgyal dbang 'dus, the king of Hor, then gave orders that the monastery should be restored at once, for it was an extremely bad omen that the monastery was destroyed by an avalanche and he gave twenty 'bri (young female yaks), along with a measure of Chinese silver, as a contribution to the restoration of the monastery. In 1925, on the 22nd day of the 9th month, dBra khyung sKal bzang dbang grags and dBu ri bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal — supported by the local people and in accordance with a prophecy by gYung drung dbang rgyal, the Twentieth abbot
of sMan ri — began to restore the monastery. On this occasion, important prelates of the Bon religion, such as Nyag gter gSang sngags gling pa, his wife mKha’ gro bDe chen dbang mo and Me ston Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan all came and the monks of the monastery, joined by the local people, welcomed them with a procession.

On the same occasion, at the holy mountain called gSang brag nor bu lha rtse situated behind the monastery, the secret abode of the three wrathful deities blessed by the three holy ones, a profound text was rediscovered by gSang sngags gling pa and he, after tracing the path of circumambulation of the mountain, wrote a guide to it. There was a performance of the debate between gods and demons, in which the gods won and their sons went up to occupy the upper part of the Lung dkar valley and those of demons defeated went down to the lower part of the valley.

Around the holy mountain there are other mountains such as gYu lung, Lung dkar and dByi dkar with all their spirit proprietors. The proprietor of Mount dByi dkar is a white Tibetan lynx as the name indicates. There is a “soul-lake” (bla mtsho) called Ma ma mtsho, which is said to be the source of the lake of Ma pang gYu mtsho. There are footprints of gShen rab Mi bo and mKha’ gro bDe chen dbang mo, and the treasure cave of gSang sngags gling pa as well as the meditation caves of the eighty adepts. There is also the head-print in the rock of dBu ri bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

The principal religious objects of this monastery were as follows: the bronze statue of gShen rab Mi bo that remained unburned when Sog gYung drung gling Monastery was destroyed; a five-finger-breadth-high bronze statue of gNam phyi gung rgyal; a statue of Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan that had not been caught in the fire; an icon of gShen Iha ’od dkar drawn on cotton; the skull of the dBu ri bsTan ’dzin phun tshogs, which contains his skylark-egg-size relic; a ghost-exorcising knotted knife used by dBu ri sKar ma rgyal mtshan; a small white conch derived from a Khyung Zla sras can and a self-grown letter A. Similarly, there were a great many scriptures, including a complete set of bKa’ gyur and bKa’ brten.

There were four important lamas in this monastery: dBu rGyal ba tshul khrims, sPo bSod nams g-yung drung, sGang ru bsTan pa kun khyab and dBu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. From among these, I shall give a brief account of rGyal ba tshul khrims and Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan:

dBu rGyal ba tshul khrims was born in 1864 to the father Rin chen phun tshogs and the mother dMar rtsa bza’, as their second son among four – the eldest bSod nams gYung drung, the second himself, the third sKar ma rgyal mtshan and the youngest bsTan ’dzin phun tshogs. From childhood, he had an intellectual power incomparable with any other children. gSang sngags gling pa mentioned his name in his book on a prophetic lineage entitled the sKyes phreng gsol ’debs as follows:

“The emanation who converts the sentient beings may come having the following names:
Yongs su dag pa, the gShen of the gods, in heaven;
Dam pa rgya gar, the great saint;
U ri bsod nams rgyal mtshan, the incomparable;
Shes rab seng ge, in the land of rGyal rong;
Ban rde Rin chen, in the valley of Kong po;
bsod nams ye shes, in gTsang;
rGyal ba tshul khrims, in the land of Gyi ghir.
To this lineage of rosary of pearl I pray.”

dBu rGyal ba tshul khrims was exceedingly intelligent when he was young. He could grasp, when he was just showing how to write, read and recite, which brought him public praise. When a deep compassion for the cyclic existence arose in his heart, he became absorbed in meditation in hermitages and accomplished his self-training. In the presence of sPa ston Nyi ma 'bum gsal, Nyag gter gSang sngags gling pa and Grub dbang sMon lam rgyal mtshan he took initiations and received the very essence of the ocean of precepts. He excelled in all learning. Not only that, he showed signs of unparalleled spiritual accomplishment. His name, rGyal ba tshul khrims, became widely known all over the district, like an ensign fluttering. He was only seven when he took over responsibility as the head of Lung dkar Monastery, and passed away at the age of ninety-six.

As for dBu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, he was born in 1924 as the eldest of four sons of the father sKal bzang bstan 'dzin and the mother Zo bza' dgyes skyid. When he was six he began writing and reading, and before long he attained the highest perfection. He took ordination to enter the priesthood in the presence of dBu rGyal ba tshul khrims and received the name Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. He received complete instruction in the rediscovered holy texts in the presence of Tri bo bSod nams rgyal mtshan, and learned metaphysics mainly from Khyung slob Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. He spent six years learning such subjects as grammar, phonetics, poetics, dkar rtsis and nag rtsis, chanting and mandala-painting. As he also studied Sutra, Tantra and Mind, he became a veritable scholar.

In the presence of rGyal ba tshul khrims, Khyung po bZod ba rgyal mtshan, sPa ston 'Brug Rinpoche and Khyung slob Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, he asked for numerous initiations and instructions on texts. In the presence of the rGyal tshab Blo gros rgya mtsho he took a complete course of initiations and transmissions of texts by Grub dbang Shar rdza, and took the dge tshul vows of monk. He worked hard for Lung dkar Monastery to develop its study and practice and made sure that it followed the Bru tradition. In 1984 he passed away. He was sixty-one.

Besides those mentioned above, this monastery has produced many other great meditators: Tre bo bSod nams rgyal mtshan, brDa snga gYung drung rab brtan, sGyes sum Byams pa tshul khrims and lCags tsha Tshul khrims bstan dbang, who all gave their lives to meditation.
Practice of rituals and religious services of this monastery

1. In the 1st Tibetan month there is the commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan.
2. In the 2nd month the A dkar bum sgrub ritual is performed.
3. In the 3rd month the ritual cycle of Khro bo and Phur pa is performed.
4. In the 5th month the propitiatory ritual for Bonpo religious protectors is performed.
5. In the 6th month the ceremony of rNam rgyal stong mchod is held.
6. In the 7th month the Ma tri bum sgrub ritual is performed.
7. In the 8th month the Me tog mchod pa ceremony is held.
8. In the 11th month rituals based on the cycle of Khro bo are performed.
9. In the 12th month there is a performance of the complete ritual cycle of sTag la me 'bar.

In each of the three winter months there is the performance of the dgu gtor rite. In all, the monks gather together for eighty days of the year for the purpose of performing rituals.

As for daily ceremonies, there is a morning assembly preceded by the sounding of a big white conch, along with the playing of a long oboe and a drum. Tea is served seven times a day, and meetings are observed seven times a day. The main rituals are based on the following texts: Phur nag, Khro bo, Kun rig, rNam rgyal, Me tog mchod pa, rGyal ba rgya mtsho, Kun rig, Byams ma, 'Dul chog, rNam 'joms, sMan lha, Dus 'khor, Phar phyin, Kun dbyings, sMon lam mtha' yas, dGe bsnyen and rNam dag.

The head and other leaders of the monastery in 1998 were as follows: the abbot Nyi ma lhun grub, who was sixty-one years old; Tshul khrims 'byung gnas of Lung nag, who was twenty-nine; bShad sgrub rab 'phel, also of the Lung nag lineage, who was seventeen; bsTan 'dzin mtshungs med of the sPa family, fifteen years old; and Drang srong g-yung drung of sGrub, who was sixty-six.

Other members of the monastery were as follows: teacher, Drang srong gYung drung; senior chanting conductor, Blo gros brtan pa; the younger chanting conductor, Tshe dbang phun tshogs; and disciplinarian, gYung drung phun tshogs. There were more than forty ordinary monks.

For the main source of income, the monks receive financial help from their own families and they perform visiting services in the village one hundred days a year, for which they are paid ten yuan each day. In summer, when the people leave for gathering the dByar rtswa dgun 'bu (“grass in summer, worms in winter”, Cordyceps sinensis) in the mountains, most of the monks return home and help look after their families’ livestock. The monastery itself has no property apart from about thirty yaks.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

(28) sGra rgyal Monastery

sGang ru sGra rgyal Monastery is situated in lCang smad qu, sBra chen rdzong. The qu is ninety kilometres north of the rdzong, and the monastery is reached by travelling two hours further northward on horseback.

In this nomad area of sGang ru, initially, a lama from Khyung po founded a monastery called Chu lung dgon, which, after a long time, declined. After that, another lama, also from Khyung po, founded a monastery in the same place and called it Na g-yang dgon, which also collapsed, having nobody to look after it. Thereafter, for a long period there was neither a communal leader nor a lama. Many believers longed for a new monastery to be built.

At that time, however, there was a monk named Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, who was the former chief teacher in gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2). He was himself a native of sGang ru. He had a great reputation as an accomplished scholar. After leaving his duty in gYung drung gling he devoted himself to meditation for eight years on the island of the lake Gyer ru mtsho. He had a close connection with the chief of the Kre ba tribe, one of the seven Sa skya tribes that inhabited the area around the lake gNam mtsho. The monks and laymen of the sGang ru Byang ma district held repeated discussions and sent bsTan pa lhun grub as a delegate to invite Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, who, however, refused to accept the invitation. This left the people of sGang ru helpless. The following year, Tshe rab, the brother of Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, appealed to him and this time he agreed to come.

Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan returned on horseback to his native land. He looked for a good site and in 1957 he founded sGra rgyal Monastery in front of Mount Gung sman yul sa. This mountain had the look of a white conch and is situated at the back of the monastery.

The monastery closely followed, in all its ceremonies, the tradition of gYung drung gling. There was the performance of the ritual cycle of Khro bo, the commemoration of sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan and annual rituals such as the Zhi khro khrim mchod and rNam rgyal stong mchod. The head of the monastery was lHa dge of Khyung nag. He was assisted by gDung pa me gsas and sKar yu.

As for religious objects, the monastery possessed a gilt-bronze statue of rNam par rgyal ba, another statue of Sa trig er sangs and a complete manuscript set of the bKa’gyur. There was also a large gilt-bronze reliquary stupa of bZod pa rgyal mtshan, which bDud ‘dul of Khyung po had had made.

At present the monastery has fifty-five monks. It has several chapels and some religious objects.

(29) A krong Hermitage

From sBra chen rdzong, driving twenty-four kilometres westward on the highway and then another ten kilometres northward, we come to sKar rgod xiang. A
krong Hermitage is reached by travelling nine more kilometres eastward. It is at an altitude not less than 5,000 metres, and because of the difficulty the ascent presents to cars, one must go on foot from the bottom of the hill.

The hermitage was established by rTogs Idan Tshul khrims dga’ ba in 1981 at a place where previously there was nothing but a cemetery and a small temple. At the spot backed by the holy mountain A krong and fronted with another holy mountain, Yi ge, he built a temple adorned with religious objects of body, speech and mind, and a mural of local deities of considerable quality. Although it is not very long since the hermitage was established, it has been a place of pilgrimage for many people because of the cemetery, which is regarded as very special.

With regard to the way the monks perform funeral rites, they maintain the distinct traits of Bonpo tradition. Firstly, at the death of a person, the family invites a monk called the dbugs chad lama, and then on the 3rd day another monk called the zhag gsum lama, to whom it presents a horse saddle. On the forty-ninth day the family invites a monk called the zhe dgu lama. The funeral rite is based on the Kun rig. Many flat, hand-sawn wooden boards are inscribed with scriptures in gold and silver to be burned in the cremation. So for the funeral rite, a rich family spends over 100,000 yuan and one that is not so rich about 50,000. For very poor families, it has been a custom to leave the corpse strewn with barley flour up in the mountains.

No more than three monks reside in this hermitage.

(30) Phur nag Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Phur nag dgon gYung drung ’o tshal gling. Travelling from A krong Hermitage back to sKar rgod xiang, then sixteen kilometres towards the north, which includes a river-crossing on the way, we arrive at Phur nag Monastery. It was easy going for us, with a Tantrist guide who had a fearful look. This is an excellent Bonpo tantric establishment, a glance at which can inspire one with delight and awe. It was founded in 1864 by bSod nams g-yung drung, a Tantrist of A skyid, and his assistant, Dar dga’. Before the tantric establishment, it is said that there was a custom of the local community making offerings on the 15th day of the month at the same site. bSod nams g-yung drung, the founder of the establishment, belonged to a long lineage of able Tantric practitioners. He was much respected by the local people as he was able to perform the funeral rite for the dead and carry out religious services for the living. Lama Dar dga’ was also esteemed as he belonged to the lineage of rMe’u.

As the main tutelary deity of the establishment was dBal phur nag po, it was called Phur nag. The temple and assembly hall had their religious objects and were fully equipped. In the temple there were statues of gSas mkhar mchog Inga and Bonpo religious protectors in all their majesty. As there was a fair number of Tantric practitioners in Phur nag it was one of the three famous Tantric establishments in the
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

Hor region known as Klu rTing Phur gsum, i.e. Klu phug (No.31), rTing ngu (No.12) and Phur nag (No.30). The ritual tradition of Phur nag followed closely those of the families gShen, Bru, Zhu and rMe’u.

The monastery has murals of its own protective local deities, which are as follows:

1. rGyal mtshan po: a deity with one head and two arms. His body is white like a conch, and he holds a white conch in his right hand and a jewel in his left. He is mounted on a white horse.

2. Yi ge rag sna: a local deity with a red body, one head and two arms. Holding a red lance in his right hand and a lasso in his left, he is mounted on a stallion.

3. mKhan chen: a local deity that resides to the left of the mountain behind the monastery complex. He has one head, two arms and a snow-white body. Mounted on a light-bay horse, he holds a lance with a banner in his right hand and a white conch in his left. He exhibits a peaceful air.

4. 'Brig gu: a local deity with a white body, one head and two arms. Holding a white conch in his right hand and a jewel in his left, he is mounted on a white yak with a turquoise mane.

There were a number of mural paintings of other local deities as well.

As for activities, offerings are made on the 15th day of each month. The practitioners gather together for religious services eight times during the year. Formerly the establishment had about seventy inmates. At present, there are sixty-six, who continue reviving the earlier tradition.

(31) Klu phug Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Klu phug dgon gYung drung bde chen gling. From Phur nag Monastery, there is a direct road that leads to Klu phug Monastery, but it is a trip of extreme difficulty and danger. To the right of the road stretches a high mountain range with yawning craggy abysses. To the left runs the reddish river Sog chu, swirling waves. Before reaching the monastery seven narrow ledges must be traversed, the mere sight of which can make one’s hair stand on end. People call these the “Seven ledges intermediate between death and rebirth” (bar ma do’i ’phrang bdun). Thus we arrive at rDza gseb xiang. This xiang is completely surrounded by green-clad mountains. Herds – black, white or other colours – on the verdant plain look just like the stars scattered in the sky. To the far north-west of the xiang is a high, white, rocky hill that looks like an elderly monkey sitting on his haunches, the appearance of which may strike one as strange.

To reach Klu phug Monastery, which is situated in sBra chen qu, one must travel further away from the riverbank. It is one hundred kilometres from the rdzong to the monastery, but twenty-four kilometres of this can be covered conveniently by
Here I shall give an account of where and how this monastery originated: this monastery is situated on the upper part of Brag dkar lha lung valley in sBra chen qu. On the hill at the back of the monastery there was a cave in which, it is believed, a water spirit klu lived. That is why the monastery is called Klu phug.

There was a Tantric establishment called mKhar dmar bla brang founded in 1626 by Khri rgyal rje chen, the twelfth king of the Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor. He was a tantric practitioner and followed both Bon and 'Bri gung bKa’ rgyud pa traditions.

mKhar dmar was situated at a saddle-shaped craggy red hill called Gung lhag. It was a two-storey building. On the top of the roof it had various emblems unique to the ancient Bon tradition, such as the perch of birds. In the centre and at the four corners of the roof there were spears erected and decorated with yak’s hair on their tips, surrounded by deer and wild yak horns. In the assembly hall on the upper floor there were four pillars and it was the place where twelve Tantric practitioners gathered together. There were the following religious objects: clay images of the four-armed sPyan ras gzigs, sGrol dkar, rNam par rgyal ba and Khri gtsug rgyal ba; scriptures, including the Khams chen in sixteen volumes and the bDal 'bum in twelve volumes; eight stupas made of a mixture of medicine and clay, each of which was as tall as an arrow. On the west side of the floor there was a single-pillared meditation room in which Khri rgyal rje chen erected gilt-bronze statues of Kun bzang rgyal ba 'dus pa and dBal gsas rngam pa (this statue still exists) less than a cubit—in height. These had been concealed in the ground at Sham po during the suppression of Bon in Central Tibet and was rediscovered by rMa ston lHa rgod Shes rab seng ge. Moreover, there were images of Dran pa nam mkha’ with his twin sons made of the li from Zhang zhung, a span in height (two of these statues still exist). These were rediscovered in Phyug mo dpal ri by Bon zhig gYung drung gling pa.

The Twelve Tantrists, including sGrub khang Khri rgyal, took turns performing the ritual cycle of dBal gsas. They performed the dgu gtor rite at the end of the 12th Tibetan month. As for the ritual tradition — recitation, chanting, playing the musical instruments — they followed that of Zhu, both systems of lCags zam and Nag tshang. The main religious protectors to whom they dedicated rites were the three white, black and multi-coloured Thel.

In 1786, lHa mkhar bstan rgyal, the elder son of Khri rgyal rje chen, was enthroned and maintained the mKhar dmar establishment as his father did. He married gShen bza’ dPal ’dzin, a lady of the gShen family. He abandoned his family’s tradition to follow 'Bri gung bka’ brgyud and was content to keep only the Bon tradition. Dpal ’dzin, the queen, became a nun in her later life and lived in a cave to devote herself to meditation. Her cave can still be visited.

Tshe ring rab brtan, the son of lHa mkhar, succeeded his father. However, he
was more concerned with politics. He had two tent residences. One of these two was in sBra chen and it was in this that he used live and it became the seat of his government.

In mKhar dmar, there was lHa bla bsTan pa phun tshogs, who is said to be a native of rGyal rong. He looked after the tantric establishment (which usually had twelve tantrists). lHun grub 'od zer (alias Shang blang Drang srong) of rTing ngu Monastery came to join him and he was ordained by bsTan pa phun tshogs. So mKhar dmar started having monks in its midst. lHa bla also established there the ritual practice of the *Zhi kho rdo rong* 'dus according to the New Bon tradition. This was to be performed in the 8th month every year.

Here is an account of how Klu phug Monastery was founded. In 1827 Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, the twenty-third abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No.1), travelled to the region of Hor. He came and stayed in Klu phug Monastery. There he presided over the ceremony of the enthronement of bsTan 'dzin dbang grags, the incarnation of lHa bla bsTan pa phun tshogs, at mKhar dmar bla brang. On the same occasion, he encouraged bsTan 'dzin dbang grags and the twelve tantrists to take monastic ordination. Klu phug then with its mKhar dmar bla brang became a real monastery and the abbot gave it the name gShen bstan gYung bde chen gling and wrote a monastic code for it entitled the *Thar lam them skas*, setting out regulations in accordance with the Bonpo monastic tradition. Not only that, he issued an edict establishing the monastery as being the first branch of sMan ri in the region. He entrusted the monastic management to Ma bdud btsan rgyal bzhi, the Bonpo protectors, and bestowed upon the monastery a large flat bell discovered in rGyal rong Brag steng and it has been one of the principal religious objects of this monastery up to the present day.

bsTan 'dzin dbang grags maintained the time-honoured custom of mKhar dmar bla brang, except that the twelve tantrists were now all monks. He added an eight-pillared assembly hall and established the commemoration of sTon pa gShen rab's birthday on the 15th day of the 1st Tibetan month, and the performance of the ritual *Ma tri bum* sgrub on the 15th day of the 8th month.

Later, bsTan pa dar rgyas, a prince of the royal house of Hor, became the head of the monastery. In his childhood, he was recognized as the reincarnation of a high lama in rGyal rong. So a number of gifts, including a copy of the *Khams chen*, written in gold, were presented to Khri dbang rab brtan, the sixteenth king of Hor, in the hope that he would permit the child to leave for rGyal rong. However, the king was powerful enough to hold back the child (his own son) from leaving and returned the gifts. So bsTan pa dar rgyas eventually decided himself to become a monk and later ascended the throne of Klu phug Monastery. In addition to the *dgwu gtor* rite, formerly performed by the Twelve Tantrists, he established a new custom of a complete ritual practice of the Red Yamantaka (gShin rje gshed dmar). Following
this, religious dances were performed, to which he added new dances: sNang bgyad, Tshogs 'cham, and the Yamantaka.

rNam rgyal dbang 'dus, a brother of bsTan pa dar rgyas, entered the priesthood and succeeded his brother in the monastery, but the seventeenth king of Hor, Nor bu dbang rgyal, died prematurely, so he had to leave the monk body and succeed to the throne. As a confession (of having broken the monastic vows) a two-storey temple with six pillars was build in the monastery. There were gilt-bronze statues of rNam par rgyal ba and the Four Principal Buddhas, a span in height. Families of the 'Brog shog and Bon tha tribes of the Thirty-seven Tribes of Hor took an oath that they would send their second son (if there was one) to become a monk. From that point the monastery began to have many monks.

bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, of the royal house of Hor, ascended the monastic throne. From childhood he was faithful, industrious and intelligent, so that he became the focus of praise from all the people. He took monastic vows at the age of thirteen. After that, according to custom, he made offerings to the three monasteries, including sMan ri. In the presence of sKal bzang nyi ma, the second abbot of gYung drung gling, he took full ordination. He then set out on pilgrimage to Mount Ti se and the soul-mountain of Bon in Zhang zhung and also the lake Ma pang g-yu mtsho. There he made circumambulations and prostrations.

He then returned to his monastery where he had various stupas built, including a reliquary stupa of a gShen lama in the form of gYung drung bkod legs and another reliquary stupa of bsTan pa dar rgyas in the form of rNam rgyal mchod rten made of silver, the height of a person and adorned with varieties of vivid gems. He had a temple built to house the stupas he had made. His main spiritual masters were gTer ston Nam mkha' khri khyung of Zhu and Grub dbang sMon lam rgyal mtshan of Khyung po. gTer ston gYung drung grags pa of Zhu, who was the prelate of the king Tshe ring rab brtan, made Mount Brag dkar Iha lung, where the monastery is situated, into a sacred site and established a new custom of circumambulating the sacred hill in the region.

bsTan pa rgyal tshan made copies, by himself, of the bKa' 'gyur and bKa' brten in vermilion ink and had a temple with eight pillars built to house them. This temple also contained a gilt-bronze statue of sTon pa gShen rab and a reliquary stupa of Zhu Nam mkha' khri khyung the height of an arrow. An assembly hall was also built, with two storeys and six long pillars and sixty-six short ones. In the inner sanctuary there was a complete set of ITung bshags lha 'khor of gilt-bronze. On the right wall were murals of the Bya rgyud and sPyod rgyud deities. On the left wall were the principal deities of the Ye shes and Ye she chen po'i rgyud. On the walls around the upper structure were the Four Principal Buddhas and the masters who maintained the monastic tradition. On both sides of the door were Bonpo religious protectors, both male and female. In the front hall were murals of the eight dPal mgon chen po
This monastery followed the Bru tradition in its activities as exactly as that of sMan ri Monastery: in the 8th month, the ritual of Khro bo, and in the 3rd month that of Phur pa, finishing with a whole day's dance performance.

In 1912 the Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor came under the control of the Manchu officials resident in Tibet and then, later, the Tibetan government began to rule over the tribes. This Tibetan (dGe lugs pa) rule over the region soon had an adverse effect on the Bonpo monasteries.

Then Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin, a Hor lama, took care of the mKhar dmar Bla brang residence. sGo ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan succeeded him. The latter was born in 1937 at lHa thog in sDe dge, in a family of the sKam lineage. He later became the head of Klu phug Monastery. He reorganized the cemetery in the vicinity of the monastery by subduing the ground and building a stone mandala there. The place was the abode of mKha’ ’gro Seng gdong ma and the ground looks like the crooked knife of a mkha’ 'gro ma and the bare hills nearby resemble a woman's breasts.

mKhan chung Grags rnam, the first Hor governor, assigned by the Tibetan government, appointed the head of Klu phug Monastery as the abbot of thirty-eight monasteries among the Thirty-nine Tribes by issuing an edict and a seal. This official position of the abbot is called So brgyad mkhan po.

After that, Thugs rje nyi ma of sKam, using his own resources and assisted by gYung drung ye shes of Kha btags, made gilt-bronze statues of the deities of gSas mkhar mcchog lnga and sTag la the height of an arrow, and two large reliquary stupas of bsTan pa rgyal mtshan and Tshe dbang lha rgyal as tall as a two-storey house.

rMe’u ston sKal bzang rgyal mtshan succeeded sGo ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan as the head of the monastery. He was born in 1912 and was recognized as the reincarnation of his predecessor by Phun tshogs blo gros, the twenty-eighth abbot of sMan ri. In the presence of the abbot he took monastic vows, then ascended the throne of Klu phug Monastery. He twice carried out restoration work at mKhar dmar bla brang, during which he built a new twelve-pillared temple containing religious objects such as gilt-bronze statues of rNam pa rgyal ba, rGyal ba rgya mtsho and sMon lam mtha’ yas, each of which was as tall as a two-storey house. He paid visits to the Three Principal Bonpo Monasteries in Central Tibet and distributed, in accordance with old custom, much of his own wealth among the monks there. He, moreover, took full ordination in the presence of Nyi ma dbang rgyal, the thirty-first abbot of sMan ri. At his own monastery he had two copies of the bKa’ ‘gyur made. When the Bonpo monasteries were persecuted by the garrison, consisting of five hundred guards, posted in sBra chen by the Tibetan government, he was obliged to escape for a short period of time; consequently he was unharmed. He died in 1954.

gYung drung rgyal ba of the royal house of the king of Hor succeeded rMe’u ston sKal bzang rgyal mtshan as head of the monastery. He was born in 1936 and
was recognized as the rebirth of Sras smyon pa. The latter was regarded as the reincarnation of gYung drung bstan pa rgyal mtshan. gYung drung rgyal ba took monastic vows in the presence of rGyal tshab gYung drung rgyal mtshan of mKhar sna (No.7). At the age of five, he entered Klu phug Monastery and then travelled from one monastery to another. He obtained initiations and teachings from a number of masters living in Khams and Amdo. In 1956, he took full ordination in the presence of bsTan pa blo gros, the ex-abbot of sMan ri. While helping maintain Klu phug Monastery, he was particularly involved in political affairs of both laity and clergy.

The hierarchical system of the monastery is as follows:
- mkhan po and sprul sku
- phan tshun che mo
- dge rgan, five teachers selected from the four colleges: Ke’u tshang sGron gsal gling, dGa’ ldan ’bul sde gling, bsTan pa yar dar gling and gSer sde bde chen gling
- dbu mdzad
- dge bskos
- phyag mdzod
- sphi gnyer
- rgyun gnyer
- tshang dpon

Formerly there were about three hundred monks.

Among the eighty-seven Bonpo monasteries in the Tibet Autonomous Region, Klu phug Monastery is, at present, one of those that have good facilities such as assembly hall, temple and other buildings. Its religious objects are in good condition. A broad range of teachings on study, practice and meditation are taught by the following individuals: the abbot sKal bzang g-yung drung; rTogs ldan Rag shu; Dri med g-yung drung (alias Dri med rdo rje), the highly illustrious one who has reached the age of ninety years; Rag shu Kun bzang snying po; sGo rigs Ye shes kun ’byung; sPa tshang ’Phrin las rgya mtsho; and Zhu gYung drung rang sgrol. Altogether, there are 130 monks presently living there.

Principal among the religious objects still kept in this monastery is the pair of statues of rGyal ba ’dus pa in tranquil aspect and dBal gsas mgam pa in wrathful aspect. They are regarded as rediscoveries of rMa ston lHa rgod. As well, there are numerous other religious objects of great importance: the silver image of gShen lha ’od dkar, rediscovered by Bon zhig Khyung nag; bronze statues of Dran pa nam mkha’ and Pad ma mthong grol, alias Pad ma ’byung gnas, both considered to be rediscoveries.

The mountain called Nor bu lha rtse, behind the monastery, is regarded as a holy mountain blessed by Dran pa nam mkha’ and his twin sons - Tshe dbang rig ’dzin
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and Pad ma 'byung gnas. The mountain to the right is called Nyi ma lha rtse and the one to the left is Zla ba lha rtse. There are three hills designated as gatekeepers: PhyI Gung ma, Bar rGyal po brag dmar and Nang bSe ru. There is a cave that is supposed to be that of Dran pa nam mkha' and a lake called sPyang thang mtsho nag.

There are twelve tantrists: dGe 'dun grags pa, dGe slong dBang dga', Ban sal Blo bzang dpal ldan, Nag ru tshul khrims, sTag rtse bsTan pa dge grags, Nag ru bsTan 'dzin ye shes, Ba ha bon dkar, gTsang tsha Tshul khrims bstan rgyal, Khor bsSam gtan tshul khrims, rGyu ne bsTan 'dzin lhun grub, Hor Tshul khrims nyi ma and Ba ra bsTan 'dzin lhun grub. All are, in fact, monks strictly observing their tantric vows.

The main protective deities of this monastery are as follows: Srid rgyal drel dmar, Srid rgyal drel nag, Ye shes dbal mo, Bya ra ma gsum, rDm 'phrul sman bzhi and Mi bdud 'Byams pa khrag mgo. There are murals of the following deities:

1. gNam sman che mo: a goddess with a blue body, one head and two arms. Mounted on a sheep, she has the look of great bravery.

2. dGra lha rgyal mo: a goddess with a midnight-blue body, one head and two arms. She holds a sword in her right hand and a breath-gathering bag in her left. Dressed in black silk, she is mounted on an iron wolf.

3. Yum sras Ma bdud khro gnyer ma: a goddess with a midnight-blue body, one head and two arms. Holding a club in her right hand and a lasso in her left, and presenting a frightening appearance, she is mounted on a black waterfowl.

4. lCarn mo lam lha: a goddess with a yellow body, one head and two arms. She holds a lance and a key in her right hand, and an axe and a gem in her left. Mounted on a gold bee, she is in a state of ever-lasting stability.

5. gCan lha mig dgu: a three-headed, six-armed deity with a brown body. He presents his right face as a bird, his left face as a pig and the centre one in a wrathful state. He is mounted on a nine-headed black-pig.

6. rMa rgyal spom ra: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. Well clad in armour and a conch-shell helmet, he holds in his right hand a lance with a flag fastened to it and in his left hand, a gem. Mounted on a snow lion, he presents a brave look.

7. bTsan rgod hur pa gsod skyen: a deity with a red body, holding a lance in his right hand and a lasso in his left. He is mounted on a blue horse with a blackish lower half.

8. dMag dpon rgyal po yang ne wer: a deity with one head, two arms and a yellow body. In his right hand he holds a symbolic lance with a flag attached to it and in his left, a lasso. Mounted on a blue horse with a blackish lower half, he presents a frightening appearance.

9. Brag btsan A bse rgyal ba: a deity with a red-body, holding a noose made of
a snake in his right hand and a big owl in his left. He is mounted on a horse with a blackish back and whitish feet.

10. rGyal chen Nyi pang sad (also called Nyi ma'i rgyal po): a deity with a white body. His right hand holding a lance with a flag fastened to it and his left hand holding a lasso, he is mounted on a white horse with a reddish back.

11. bTsan rgod Grags pa rgyal mtshan: a deity with a red body, holding in his right hand a lance with a flag fastened to it and in his left, the heart of an enemy. He is mounted on a red male horse.

12. Pho lha gNam thel dkar po: a deity of Hor with a white body and hair tied up at the top. Dressed in glossy white silk, he is adorned with turquoise, coral and pearls. He holds a crystal sword in his right hand and in his left, on which he wears a silver bracelet, he holds a white lasso; his arms are equipped with white wooden conchs. Mounted on a white horse with a reddish back, he presents a brave appearance.

13. sGra bla dpa' stod: a deity with a white body, a single head and two arms. Clad in a leather helmet and golden armour, he holds a sword in his right hand and a lasso in his left. A tiger, a snow lion, a Garuda and a dragon hover above his head, and he is mounted on a white horse.

14. rGyal chen Shel khrab 'bar ba: a deity with a white body and wearing a coat of crystal mail. His right hand is giving a signal of unravelling an enigma, and the left holds a multi-coloured ice-conch. He is mounted on the best breed of Amdo horse.

15. Dzam sngon ku be ra: a deity with a midnight-blue body. Holding a golden sword in his right hand and an ichneumon in his left, he displays an imposing air. He is mounted on a horse with a turquoise mane.

16. bSe ru: a deity with a blue body, riding a fish. He terrifies even violent serpents.

In regard to daily activities of the monastery, they perform the bsang ritual in the morning and, in the evening, rituals to propitiate the protective deities.

Since the monastery has neither farmland nor livestock, they have to rely on each household for financial support, so more than one hundred of the monks go out to give prayer services in villages. In payment, they receive one hundred yuan a day in the highest paid cases, twenty to fifty in moderate cases, and about ten yuan in the lowest.

With regard to Klu phug ri khrod, which is an hermitage, it is situated close to the monastery itself, on the mountain to the south. Its main religious objects are the relics of gYung Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and sGo Thugs rje nyi ma. At present there are four monks in the hermitage.
(32) sPu la Monastery

The monastery is also known as sPu la ri khang dgon. From Hor sBra chen rdzong, travelling twenty kilometres eastward on the highway, another eight kilometres northward, and then crossing a big river, we reach sPu la Monastery in Ye tha xiang. This monastery is situated at the foot of a mountain that is the source of the river. It was founded by Khyung nag Shes rab rgyal mtshan in 1853.

Shes rab rgyal mtshan’s family belonged to one of the four lineages of Khyung: Khyung dkar, Khyung nag, Khyung ser and Khyung khra. Thog la ’bar of Khyung dkar, Mu khyung rgyal of Khyung nag, lHa khyung rgyal of Khyung ser and Khyung ’phags khra bo of Khyung khra each built a temple near a soul-lake and soul-rock. I will not take up in detail the process by which they built the temples and spread the Bon doctrine, but I shall give here an account of the masters of sPu la who belonged to the lineage of Khyung nag Mu khyung rgyal.

Khyung nag Mu khyung rgyal, who had propagated his doctrine in Zhang zhung, was invited, together with lHa khyung, to Tibet by the king Pu Ide gung rgyal. The two helped spread the doctrine of Bon in Tibet. Khyung nag Mu khyung had two sons, sTag sgra dun gtsug and dPal gyi ’ger sti, who practised the tantric teachings called sPyi spung. sTag sgra dun gtsug was an accomplished devotee and did great deeds for sentient beings. His son, gNya’ gshen gtsug phud, became a great teacher in Zhang zhung where he had great influence in both religion and politics. gNya’ gshen gtsug phud’s son was Khyung mChog rgyal, whose son was Khyung rgod. Thus, there was a long unbroken continuing line. In the time of Khyung po sTong rgyung, there was an internal conflict that caused him to migrate from the west to the east.

In this line, there was Khyung po sGom nag and his two sons, Gyer mi nyi ’od and Khyung nag Klu rgyal. Of these two, the latter is said to have founded Sog gYung drung gling Monastery. From Khyung nag Klu rgyal a line continued as follows: Mu la ti ro, Khod rtsal hur min, Zla ri a kag, Gu ra ta kra, lHun grub ’phrin las, (who is said to be the founder of gZu bon Monastery), and Mu ri ha ra, whose two sons were dPon dge and dPon ’ud. It was these two brothers who were the leaders of Sog gYung drung gling Monastery when the Mongolian troops of Jungar began to attack their monastery and destroy it.

After that, Drung mu tshul ming of Khyung came to sPu la kha by way of dKar shod. He stopped there for the night. During the night he was shot and killed by accident when there was an archery contest organized by the local chief, gZu pa. This news reached Khyung nag Sa trig, who took the case to court and obtained the sPu la kha land as compensation for the killing. Khyung nag Sa trig then became known as sPu la Lama.

Shes rab rgyal mtshan of Khyung nag then founded sPu la Monastery. It was destroyed by the Jungar troops, but restored by Khyung A brla. The latter’s son,
dBang rgyal lhun grub, is said to have rediscovered a statue of sTon pa gShen rab on
the island in the lake gNam tsho. It is still preserved in the monastery. dBang rgyal
lhun grub's son was A ti mu wer. The latter's son was Ge khod dBang rgyal, who was
regarded as a manifestation of the deity A ti mu wer and is said to have rediscovered
a statue of rNam par rgyal ba, which is also kept in the monastery. Ge khod dBang
rgyal had a son called Khyung A dar. From him the line continued through Bla sgur,
gYung drung tshe mchog, dBang dbang and gYang 'job. In the monastery there was
also the dagger called gNam lcags phur pa, rediscovered by Khyung Rin chen dbang
rgyal, and relics of various sizes produced from the cremation when he died.

When the abbot of sMan ri, Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, came to sPu la Monastery, he
bestowed upon it the name dPal gShen bstan gYung drung gling. Following that,
there were masters such as Khyung nag bSod nams g-yung drung and bSod nams
chos rgyal at the monastery. There were about sixty-five tantric practitioners strictly
observing the tantric vows.

The main religious objects, in addition to those mentioned above, were as
follows: three excellent statues of Byams ma; those of Nang chen grags pa and sTag
la, a cubit in height; a small one of Dran pa nam mkha'; rGyal ba rgya mtsho, a cubit
in height; two excellent ones of sTon pa gShen rab; and a multi-coloured statue of
Kun tu bzang po. All were made of copper. Besides these, there was a thangka of the
Twelve Deeds and a large thangka made of the silk of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal
mtshan. As for scriptures, there was the Khams chen in four volumes, written in gold,
called 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig ("the only gem of the world"). There were also the
following objects: a black stone with a self-risen letter A formed of tricoloured onyx
on it; bone relics the size of a goose egg; four knotted knives made when the spirits
sPyang 'gag were subdued; eight reliquary stupas made of gold, silver and copper;
eight cubit-height stupas made of sandalwood and juniper; a maroon coloured
conch; a dragon flint; a horse-whip made of native onyx; a sacred gold horse-saddle;
a serpent made of turquoise; a cannibal demon's right hand made of coral; a maroon
coloured precious stone; and a pair of oboes made of gold. This monastery had this
manifold wealth of religious objects and innumerable treasures.

The range of holy mountains behind the monastery includes gYung drung
dzung rdzong, sTag la me 'bar, A rnung 'bri ri phyung mo and Pha bong bon ri. It is
said that if one performs circumambulation around Mount Pha bong bon ri it is equal
to doing that once around Kong po bon ri. There are footprints of sTon pa gShen rab
and the four scholarly men. Near the lake mTsho chen ma there is the footprint of
Srid pa rgyal mo drel dmar.

The monastery closely follows the sMan ri tradition. The monks assemble
sixty times a year amounting to seventy-nine days. There are fifty monks, including
the abbot gYung drung rgyal mtshan, sKal bzang dbang grags, who oversees the
observation of the fasting ceremony, Rin chen blo gros, the disciplinarian, and
bsTan pa tshul khrims, the chanting conductor. Among the fifty monks there are the teachers who have twenty-two monk students.

(33) rMa rong Monastery

The monastery’s full name is rMa rong dgon gYung drung lha brag gling. From sPu la Monastery, driving twenty-five kilometres further eastward on the highway leads us to the lower terrace of rMa rong village. To reach rMa rong Monastery, a further thirteen kilometres must be driven northward on a terribly bad road, which can take an hour.

In 1390 dBra khyung Nam mkha’ rin chen built a hut in this place for the purpose of retreat. It then gradually developed into a monastery.

This monastery is found near Mount sPu rgyal gangs bzang and is one of four monasteries situated at the four cardinal points of the mountain. It is also known as Nang mdun dgon. sPu rgyal is a holy mountain for both Bonpo and Buddhists. Its being a holy site was prophesied by early sages and this is particularly clear in the guide written by gTer ston bDe chen gling pa. rMa rong Monastery was later enlarged by Drung mu, who had overcome many obstacles brought on by the local deities. He tells this story in his ‘Dzam bu yig chung, as well as in the communication he had with the local deity, entitled ‘Dzam bu lha rtse.

Khyung po Kun bzang grags pa and his brother were living in dByis stod, where they were involved in a dispute with Rong po dgon, a dGe lugs pa monastery. Intending to migrate to Western Tibet, they arrived at the residence of the rMa rong local chief. A rgya, the chief of rMa rong, was a patron of Kun bzang grags pa. A rgya and his people requested Kun bzang grags pa to be the head of rMa rong Monastery. However, Kun bzang grags pa and his brother declined the offer. They continued their journey. A rgya then informed Khri rgyal rje chen, the twelfth king of Hor. The king told Kun bzang grags pa that not only could he not leave for Western Tibet, he should settle down in the pastureland where the king had his herd of mdzo animals, as well as look after rMa rong Monastery. From that point the monastery had to perform religious services for the benefit of the king and, in return, the king issued an edict in recognition of the monastery.

Khyung po gYung drung rnam dag, the son of Khyung po Kun bzang grags pa, had a temple called rNam rgyal lha khang built in the monastery, containing many religious objects. He made majestic masks of the religious protectors such as the Ma (Srid pa rgyal mo), the bDud (Mi bdu ’byams pa khrag mgo) and the bTsan (Brag btsan A bse rgyal ba). The mask of the bTsan is regarded as special since no dust ever stays on it.

Of the three sons of gYung drung rnam dag, the eldest, Nam mkha’ rgyal po, made many copies of scriptures for the monastery. He had two sons, Nyi ma ’jig rten and dBang po. Nyi ma ’jig rten is said to have been chivalrous. His son was Khyung
po g-yung dpal. When Khyung po g-yung dpal died, it is said that where his corpse was buried the tree stag ma grew from his tongue. His son was gYung drung phun tshogs, whose sons were Blo Idan grags pa and Tshe dbang grags pa. Tshe dbang grags pa brought considerable development to the monastery. After that, Blo Idan grags pa was involved in a dispute with bSod nams bkra shis, the brother of the rMa rong chief, so Blo Idan grags pa strongly wished to leave for Western Tibet, but was prevented by the king of Hor. The king told him that unless he would live in rMa rong he would have to live in either Khrom tshang or sGong ru. So Blo Idan grags pa stayed in Khrom tshang for several years, during which rMa rong Monastery declined a little. After that, bSod nams dbang 'dus, the son of the rMa rong chief, requested the lama to come back to the monastery, but the lama was unwilling. Through the mediation of a representative of the king and the Be hu of the Sog tribe, the lama was reinstalled as the head of the monastery. He undertook as much restoration as he could. He lived to one hundred years of age. His son is Khyung po Bla rgan gYung dga', who is presently at the monastery. There were nine lamas in the line of succession, from Kun bzang grags pa to Blo Idan grags pa. The king of Hor recognized a number of them by issuing official letters to them.

The monastery’s main religious objects, all of which were of great sublimity, were as follows: a large white conch whose sound travelled very far, rediscovered by gTer ston gYung drung grags pa of Zhu; the horn of a female deer, which was the private property of Khyung A sha ba rang grol; the reliquary stupa of Khyung po Nang chen grags pa, called gSer 'od 'bar ba or rTen bya 'phur ma; and a statue of Dzam bha lha made of A ya sbûg ge, rediscovered in dKyis 'khor thang in rTa shod by rTa shod Bu mo pad ma mtsho. In the temple of the monastery there were the following religious objects: statues of sTon pa gShen rab, rNam par rgyal ba, Byams ma, Khro bo gtso mchog, sTag la, Dran pa nam mkha’ and his twin sons Tshe dbang rig ’dzin and Pad ma ’byung gnas; a number of gold-painted thangkas; and scriptures including the bKa’ ’gyur and bKa’ ’brten.

This monastery is surrounded by the holy mountains sPu rgyal, ’Dzam bu, Jag pa, gYe rtse and lHa brag.

There are six lamas in the monastery: rGyal mtshan nor bu, dGe dbang, gYang rgyal, bSam ’phel nor bu, dGa’ ’degs and Sri thar, who all belong to the Khyung po lineage. The disciplinarian is sTag skyabs, and Nor dga’ is the chanting conductor. Of the forty inmates presently at this monastery, three are proper monks and the rest are lay religious practitioners.

There are four annual rituals, held in different seasons: the rNam rgyal ritual in summer and autumn, and the rituals of sTag la, Phur pa and Byams ma in winter and spring, each lasting twenty days. The monastery is regarded as a branch of Klu phug Monastery (No.31).

As for the main source of income, the monks have to depend on their families
for support. People usually offer from ten to fifteen yuan for the occasional religious services the monks perform in villages. As there are only three proper monks, the temple of the monastery and its contents are in a pitiful condition.

(34) Khrom tshang Monastery

The monastery’s full name is Khrom tshang dgon gYung drung kun grags gling. From the lower terrace of rMa rong village, travelling thirteen kilometres eastward on the highway, one reaches Khrom tshang Monastery lying on the hillside to the north. This monastery is in a beautiful environment.

In the Seventh Rab byung (1387-1446) Kun mkhyen Ye shes snying po, who was a disciple of mNyam med gShes rab rgyal mtshan and supported by Nyi ma legs chen, chief of Khrom, founded the monastery Dar lung dgon in Khrom. It was then maintained by a series of lamas of the Khrom family and others:

1. Khrom sras bsTan pa lhun grub
2. Khrom sprul gYung drung mthong grol
3. Kun mkhyen Sangs rgyas grags pa
4. sNgags 'chang bKra shis rgyal mtshan
5. Khrom tshang bsTan 'dzin nor bu
6. dBang chen dge legs

The monastery was a well developed centre, with its temples full of religious objects and scriptures including the bKa’ ’gyur and bKa’ brten. However, it was completely destroyed by the evil Jungar troops of Mongolia and remained a monastery only in name. After that, the lamas of the Khrom family lived in tents made of the yak hair or in hermitages.

After a long period of misfortune, Shes rab g-yung drung, the Twenty-fifth abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No.1), paid a visit to the region. He instructed the Khrom family to rebuild the monastery and restore its tradition. After examining the place, he decided upon a site for it, and in 1845 rNam rgyal grags pa, the chief of Khrom and Blo mgar began to rebuild the monastery as they had promised in the presence of the abbot. It was called gYung drung kun grags gling. The head of the monastery was dGe bzang gYung drung dbang rgyal. A series of six heads of the monastery followed him, down to Yon tan rgya mtsho. In 1998 there were fifty-two inmates, both monks and tantric practitioners.

The principal religious objects of this monastery were two reliquary stupas and statues of rNam par rgyal ba, sMon lam mtha’ yas, rGyal ba ’dus pa, Kun snang khyab pa, sTon pa of the nine ages, Khro bo gtso mchog, dBal gsas, lHa rgod, sTag la and the eight Lo pan gshen. Other religious objects were a large conch, relics of sTon pa gShen rab; a dextral conch made of the teeth of lHun grub grags pa, and an image of Kun bzang that had risen from the central energy channel of dGe bzang Bon chung. Besides these, there was a set of the bKa’ ’gyur and eighty volumes of
As for the annual activities, the inmates assemble five times a year:

1. In the 4th Tibetan month Me tog mchod pa and rNam rgyal stong mchod were celebrated for ten days. During these ceremonies 11,000 butter lamps were lit.

2. In the 6th month there was the observation of the snyung gnas fasting for eleven days and 20,000 butter lamps were lit.

3. In the 7th month the ritual of A dkar bum sgrub was performed for ten days with 50,000 butter lamp being lit.

4. In the 9th month the Zhi khro ritual was performed for eleven days.

5. In the 11th month Ma rgyud was performed for eight days.

Because the monastery customarily offered a huge number of butter lamps, people called the monastery the Butter Lamp monastery (Mar me'i dgon pa). As for the funds for the above ceremonies, the monastery had about six hundred 'bri (female yak) which had to be taken care of and whose number had to be kept at six hundred by a certain number of the local villagers.

The personnel of the monastery were as follows:

- dbu bla
- dbu mdzad
- dge bskos
- gnyer pa
- spyi gso

All held their positions for a certain number of years.

At present there are four head lamas: gYung drung yon ten rgya mtsho, bSod nams g-yung drung, Ye shes dbang ldan and Shes rab blo gros. The disciplinarian is Tshul khrims dbang rgyal, and the chanting conductor is sTobs ldan ye shes. There are one hundred and six monks.

The holy mountains around the monastery are Gangs ri sPu rgyal, lDe'u chen and rTsa ri rtsa gsar. The holy lakes are Srid rgyal bla mtsho, sPu rgyal bla mtsho and Rum mtsho rgan. The protective deities are Srid rgyal drel nag, Mi bdud 'Byams pa khrag mgo, A bse and rGyal po Shel khrab can; these four are called Ma bdud btsan rgyal bzhi.

As daily activities, they perform the bsang ritual in the morning and chant the Zhi ba a gsal. When we visited the monastery, they were in the course of the rNam rgyal stong mchod ceremony. Of the rituals performed in the monastery, the four important ones are based on the gYung drung klong rgyas, rNam rgyal, Byams ma mdo lugs and rNam dag pad ma klong yangs.

This monastery is a branch of sMan ri. Apart from sixty-two yaks, it has no material means of food production or income generation. Income to cover all expenses comes from performing religious services in villages, for which they are
paid from two to fifteen yuan.

Driving 190 kilometres south-eastward on the highway, one reaches sTeng chen rdzong. As three high mountain passes must be crossed on the way, it takes eight and a half hours.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

(26) sPa tshang Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(26) sPa tshang Monastery, Plate 2 Stupa bKra shis 'od 'bar in the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(27) Lung dkar Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(30) Phur nag Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(31) Klu phug Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(32) sPu la Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(33) rMa rong Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(34) Khrom tshang Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(34) Khrom tshang Monastery. **Plate 2** A monk at the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
Tengchenrdzong

Tengchenrdzong is in Khyung po, north-eastern Tibet. It covers an area of 11,562 square kilometres, of which 110,000 mu is farmland, 11,500 mu pastureland and over 35,000 mu natural forest. It has a population of about 53,000 and consists of sixteen xiang and sixty-five village councils.

During the period of the Mongol empire and the Ming dynasty of China, Tengchen formed a part of the Sog sde territory. In 1647, it came under the direct control of the Manchu government. In 1751, it came to be ruled by the Manchu officials resident in Tibet and in 1916, control was handed over to the Tibetan government. In 1959 Tengchenrdzong was established and absorbed into Chabmdo region. At one point in history it was called Sum pa glang gi gyim shod, a territory of Zhang zhung sgo pa, which was one of the three provinces of Zhang zhung called sGo, Phug and Bar.

The story of the Khyung lineage begins with three brothers: lHa lung rgyal, Khyung Thog la 'bar, and dMu khyung rgyal. Around the 10th century, Shes rab rgyal mtshan, of the dMu khyung lineage, migrated to Sum pa glang. As the Khyung lineage prospered there, the place came to be known as Khyung po.

(35) Tengchen Monastery

The monastery's full name is Tengchen dgon gYung drung bstan rgyas gling. Tengchen Monastery comes under the administration of the municipality of Tengchen and is situated on the hillside to the west of the rdzong. It was founded in 1061 by Khyung dbus Shes rab rgyal mtshan.

The story of the Khyung lineage is told as follows: A long time ago, a big Garuda (khyung) flew into a flower garden and there it produced three crystal-like eggs, from each of which appeared a very beautiful boy. The eldest was called lHa khyung, the second Thog la 'bar and the youngest dMu khyung rgyal. The latter had two sons and a daughter, sTag sgra dun gtsug, dPal gyi gir ti and Khyung bza’ Ye shes mtsho rgyal. The daughter, Khyung bza’, married Lig mi rgyal, the king of Zhang zhung. Her elder brother, sTag sgra dun gtsug, flourished in Tengchen. He had a son called Gyer nam zur rtse, who had two sons, sTong rgyung rin mo and sTag la skyes. The former had three sons, Khyung sgom mu langs, Khyung 'phags khra mo and Khyung sder sngon mo. Khyung sgom mu langs’s son was Khu byug, and his three sons were sTag pa, Zur dkar ba and mDo bkra ba. sTag pa’s son was Myes tshab, and he had four sons, sTon pa 'bar, Dam pa Khyung sgom (alias Shes rab sgom), dBen pa ma lugs (alias sTon lug), and Dam pa Khyung dbus (alias Dad pa rgyal mtshan). sTon pa ‘bar’s son was sTon thar, and he had six sons, sTon sras, Shes rab rgyal mtshan, sTon mnyan Dam pa bang bkra, dPon dge, dPon dbus and sTon 'bum. The mother of these six was a rGya lady, so they came to be known as “The Six rGya tsha Brothers” (rGya tsha spun drug). Of the six brothers, Khyung
dbus Shes rab rgyal mtshan was guided by a prophecy as follows:

"The one who holds the lineage of dBra dkar Khyung po
Must go to mDo kham smad.
The doctrine rises and falls like the sun and the moon,
Even if they fall tonight, they would shine tomorrow.
At the bottom of Sum glang lies rNгу rdzong,
In front of the six magnificent fortresses of crystal.
sTeng chen is situated like the gold fish in a lake,
There is the site for a seat of the Khyung family.
Now go towards that site.
The river of knowledge will wind there,
And the flag of the Khyung lineage will be stable there."

When Khyung dbus arrived in sTeng chen there was a Chinese man there called gTsug gtor nyi ma 'brug grags (hereafter, Nyi ma 'brug grags). He was a man both powerful and learned. He realized that the time had come and that his was a suitable place to welcome Khyung dbus.

At that time, Khyung dbus was travelling in the places called Khri, rDo, rMa and La. Nyi ma 'brug grags constructed a throne at Khyung khri thang in rMa and gave a reception for the lama. Then the lama was invited to go to a fortress called Khams gsum dbang 'dus. From there he proceeded to sTeng chen, which he thought corresponded to the description in the prophecy. The lama first founded two colleges called Kun khyab gling and bsTan rgyas gling. The first one was for practising meditation according to Sutra and the second according to Tantra. bsTan rgyas gling produced a series of eminent monks and Kun khyab gling had tantric practitioners such as Tha yud wer zhi and the eighteen masters in the Do khung line, who were all tantrists with long locks.

Nyi ma 'brug grags then offered his adherence to Khyung dbus by telling him:

"I have my own Chinese culture in China.
I must return to my own country.
I offer you this seat of mine as your abode.
And this large field for which I paid a bowlful of gold,
As a seat for yourself, king of Khyung.
The plateau up there,
Is the place where I play the gold dice.
Make it your royal seat, you, the king.
Below the junction of the three gSer ru valleys,
Above the confluence of the two rivers,
This is the land I, the old China man, bought.
Make it your royal seat, you, the king.
The red rock, which is like a fortress of fire (down there),
Is like a Garuda lying in its nest.
Make it your royal seat, you, the king.
It is there where you should build your fortress and palace...”

And he added,
“The spring of water in rDza dkar so ma,
Is the place for your horse to drink.
All this is given to you, please accept them.”

Khyung dbus replied: “I am simply a monk who has abandoned the family life, so I would not know how to manage a fortress and be a leader of a community. If you mean to give your land and fortress to the Khyung family, my brother’s sons A brla and Nang chen grags pa are at Khyung lung in Zhang zhung. I hope you will be able to send two messengers with a present from me to go to Khyung lung.

Then Khyung dbus, as a sign of assurance, gave a dagger with a white haft to the messengers dispatched by Nyi ma ’brug grags. They called on Khyung A brla, offered the present and told him why they came to see him. Khyung A brla consented to come to sTeng chen. He, with the two messengers, travelled by the southern road. They happily arrived in the land of Khyung po.

Then Khyung dbus and Nyi ma ’brug grags met Khyung A brla. Nyi ma ’brug grags, having given all the land to Khyung A brla, went back to China accompanied by his own servants. Khyung dbus and all the people saw him off. Khyung dbus passed away on the shore of the river rNgul chu after exhibiting immense miraculous signs of his spiritual accomplishment.

Later Nang chen grags pa paid a visit to China and had an audience with the emperor. Upon returning to sTeng chen, he fixed his residence at sTeng chen itself. Thereafter, sTeng chen’s spiritual and temporal laws became very famous. A brla continued working for the monastery and exhibited signs of spiritual accomplishment. He finally died at the age of sixty-two. He had many religious objects of body, speech and mind made.

One of A brla’s four wives, ‘Dan bza’, had three sons, Khyung zhig Ye rgyal ba, dBang rgyal grub and Byang nang pa Byang shes. Ye rgyal ba was an eminent monk. He practised meditation on Khro bo and Phur pa. Kindling his divine power, he reinforced his deeds for religious beings. He died at seventy. A brla’s son bSod nams rgyal mtshan by the lady of Rong was a very learned man. He possessed awe-inspiring dignity, convincing speech and foresight, and his reputation spread. He passed away when he was eighty-two. Drung chen Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, another son of A brla by Rong mo za, was a man with a broad knowledge of Bonpo scriptures. With the great power and skill obtained from constant meditation on Srid rgyal drel dmar, in particular, he laboured for sentient beings. At the age of seventy-two, he died in sTeng chen. From here the offspring of A brla were succeeded as the head of the monastery by a series of masters:
1. Rin chen rgyal mtshan dar
2. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
3. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
4. bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan
5. Ye shes rgyal mtshan
6. lHun grub bsod nams dbang rgyal
7. dBang gi rgyal mtshan
8. Yid bzhin rgyal ba
9. rGyal ba don grub
10. Khyung po Blo gros rgyal mtshan
11. Blo ldan snying po (b. 1360)
12. Khyung chen Yon tan rin chen
13. Khyung dkar
14. Khyung po A 'je
15. Khyung po rNam rgyal
16. sPyang Be zhu Blo bzang
17. sKyang 'phags Tshe dbang bstan rgyal

Blo ldan snying po, the eleventh, was born of the dBra clan in the lower part of Khyung po. He received the Oral Tradition, which he wrote down, filling about fifty-four volumes, including the mDo Dri med gzi brjid. He is said to have had a five-storey temple built, called bKra shis 'od 'bar. It had statues of deities of the forty-five vehicles, as well as the Khams chen nag phran ma written in gold. He died at forty-seven.

sKyang 'phags Tshe dbang bstan rgyal, the seventeenth, studied at gYung drung gling Monastery (No. 2) and obtained the degree of dge bshes there. Having thoroughly mastered dozens of subjects, he received completely perfect teachings of texts and instructions from Lama rGyal mtshan in sTeng chen. At that time, gTer ston bDe chen gling pa arrived in sTeng chen. He visited the place called gTer sgrom kha and prophesied that there would be a monastery there. Since Tshe dbang bstan rgyal had been given the very same prophecy by sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan, Tshe dbang bstan rgyal fulfilled the prophecies of the two masters by uniting the two establishments, gYung drung dbstan rgyal gling — the monastery of Khyung dkar lineage holders in the Upper sTeng chen — and the one called Kun khyab gling — which had been the abode of eighteen series of Khyung tantric practitioners — into one and moving them to gTer sgrom kha in 1862.

The new monastery was large with a number of monks. It had over four hundred households to support it. Moreover, he had over a hundred temples built, of various sizes. These establishments followed a strict monastic tradition; assemblies were to be held fifteen times a year. The monastery had many important visitors, so it became known all over Tibet.
Then, in sTeng chen Monastery, there was the accomplished scholar gYung grags pa (gYung drung Tshul khrims dbang grags), who had the whole bKa' 'gyur and bKa' brten copied to the best quality and made an excellent catalogue of the collection. After gYung grags pa, Khyung sprul Tshe dbang g-yung drung followed as the head of the monastery in 1913. During this time, China and Tibet were at war with each other which caused the monastery to be burnt down. However, Khyung ser sga sprul Tshe dbang g-yung drung took the initiative to rebuild it. A large and splendid temple was built, containing many religious objects. At that time, bsTan pa, having obtained the degree-of dge bshes in metaphysics in gYung drung gling, returned to his native monastery. When Nyi ma dbang rgyal, the Thirty-first abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No.1), came to this monastery, the abbot appointed bsTan pa as head of the monastery. mKhan po bsTan pa had many religious objects made and did great deeds for sentient beings.

Before 1959, there were about 180 monks in sTeng chen Monastery. At present there are sixty-one monks, led by the following: the abbot, rGya mtsho nor bu, who is thirty-three years old in 1998; the chanting conductors, 'Chi med g-yung drung and bsTan pa tshul khrims; and the disciplinarians, bSod nams bkra shis and sNying rje bstan 'dzin. There are, in fact, no more than fourteen who reside permanently in the monastery.

As daily activities, in the morning the monks recite the rtsa rlung prayer. Then they perform the bsang purification ritual and the water offering based on the bDud rtsi chu rgyun and the rTsis 'go bdun pa.

Other rituals that the monks perform on different occasions are based on the texts sMon lam mtha' yas, 'Dul chog (during the summer retreat), Ma tri, rNam rgyal and mKha' klong gsang mdos. They also perform rituals for wrathful deities, gShed dmar, Khro bo and the propitiation of the religious protectors.

The mountain behind the monastery is called Brag dmar ri 'dus, the abode of the local deity Rin chen 'bar ba, and at its left are those called gZi yar sku, Mar sku and Gong rgyal. In front of the monastery is the holy mountain known as Ri rtse drug.

The monks’ main source of income is religious services in the neighbouring villages of Ye tha, which have a population of more than 3,200 farmers and nomads, in over 500 households. For these services the people customarily pay the monks from five to twenty yuan a day.

(36) sTeng chen Hermitage

This is a hermitage that lies to the east of sTeng chen Monastery, less than a stone’s throw away.

The hermitage has a large temple of magnificent design. The main religious objects are the reliquary stupa of sMon lam rgyal mtshan at the centre, another
reliquary stupa of Me ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan to the right and that of Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan to the left. There is also an old thangka of the Twelve Deeds of sTon pa gShen rab.

Before 1959, there were about fifty monks in this hermitage. Presently there are two lamas, lHun grub rgya mtsho and Yon tan rgya mtsho, and the chanting conductor, bKra shis dbang ’dus. It is considered to be a branch of dGyes ri Monastery in Kong po.

With regard to the main daily activities, in the morning the monks perform the bsang ritual and the water offering; at midday they recite the mantra of the tutelary deities; and in the evening, they chant the bKa’ skyong.

Every year, in the 4th Tibetan month, from the 23rd to the 30th day, the monks perform the Cho ga bcu gnyis ritual. From the 5th month to the end of the 6th month, the ritual of rNamrgyal is performed. In the 9th month, from the 21st to the 30th day, they perform the dgu gtor rite based on deities, sometimes Yi dam Dran pa drag po and other times the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo.

(37) Ko bo Monastery

Ko bo Monastery is under the administration of the sTeng chen villages. It is about nine kilometres from the rdzong. It lies on a small hill west of the rdzong and access to it is difficult.

This monastery was founded by Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mtshan in 1408. It is below the sacred mountain — the abode of the local deity ’Jag rgyal smug po — which is on the highland between the rivers rNgul chu and rDza chu in Khams.

The line of masters of the monastery is as follows:
1. Ko bo Ye shes rgyal mtshan
2. Zla grags Rin chen rgyal mtshan
3. Zla grags Rin chen dpal bzang
4. Zla grags Nyi ma ’od zer
5. Zla grags Tshul khrims dbang rgyal
6. Ha Rinpoche
7. Zla grags Rin chen phun tshogs

Main Religious Activities
1. In the 1st Tibetan month, from the 3rd day, annual activities begin with the commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan. The monks perform the ceremony based on the Klong rgyas, as well as chanting the Bla ma mchod pa and the ’Tshogs ’don. The ritual cycle of Phur pa is performed while two monks perform that of Ge khod separately.
2. In the 2nd month, on the 24th day, the commemoration of Zla grags is celebrated with the ceremony based on the rNam dag and Klong rgyas. On
the 27th day there is a recitation of the 'Tshogs 'don. The monks practise silent reading of the Khro bo and the Ma tri rin chen sgron ma. On the same occasion they make offerings to the klu spirits.

3. In the 5th month, on the 29th day, the summer ritual (dbyar sgrub) begins. There is a ritual of A dkar and a performance of the sDe brgyad bzlog mdos. Besides these, the bsKang 'bum is chanted. In the gNas brtan lha khang, two monks chant the gNas brtan bcu drug, a rediscovery of Sangs rgyas gling pa. The dbyar sgrub is adjourned on the 6th day of the 6th month.

4. In the 6th month, on the 7th and 8th days, there are religious dances. On the 9th day, all the laity and clerics come, making the circumambulation called 'bum bskor. The zhi khro and gsol kha rituals are performed during the day, the bKa 'skyong in the evening and the bsKangs 'bum during the night.

5. During the Summer retreat (dbyar gnas) there is a recitation of Sutra, such as the mDo dri med.

6. In the 10th month, on the 23rd day, the ritual cycle of Khro bo is performed according to the local tradition, as well as the ceremony of the Yab sras tshogs 'khor. The chanting of the bsKangs 'bum by two monks takes place separately. On the 29th day, there is a religious dance and the gtor rgyag ceremony. On the 30th day, the gathering is adjourned.

As there are many great and complete murals in the assembly hall and at the porch of Ko bo Monastery, I shall give here the names of the main deities and some remarks concerning their iconography.

The four great local deities (gnyan chen sde bzhi):
1. rMa chen sPom ra: a deity riding on a white horse
2. Thang Iha Yar bzbur: a deity riding on a red horse
3. Ti se: a deity riding on a snow lion
4. Yar Iha Sham po: a deity riding on a dragon

The local deities of the holy mountains surrounding Ko bo Monastery:
1. sMug po ri btsun (alias Brag btsan thog rgod 'bar ma): a goddess with one head, two arms and a red body. She holds a white conch in her right hand and a gem in her left. Wearing a black hat on her head, she is mounted on a black horse.
2. Rin chen 'bar ba, the proprietor of Mount Rin chen 'bar ba: a deity with a red body, one head and two arms. Mounted on a black horse, he exhibits a terrifying air.
3. 'Ga' rgyal Rin chen spungs: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. He holds a lance with a flag fastened to it in his right hand and a gem in his left. Mounted on a blue horse, he has an air of bravery.
4. sPen ne ri bkra: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. Dressed in a king’s garment, he holds a gem in his right hand and a lance with a flag fastened to it in his left. He is mounted on a light-bay stallion.

5. Jo mo g-yu rtse: a goddess with a white body, one head and two arms. She holds a lance with a flag fastened to it in her right hand and a vase in her left. Mounted on an antelope, she has a peaceful appearance.

6. Ri dmar dBu lha btsan rgod: a deity with one head, two arms and a conch-like white body. He holds a lance with a flag fastened to it in his right hand and a gem in his left. Clad in a king’s garment, he rides a red horse.

7. dMag dpon rTa rgod 'bar ba: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. His right hand is clenched in a fist and in his left hand he holds a gem. Standing on a blazing fire, he shows extreme bravery.

8. sTag lo kha yan: a goddess with a yellow body, one head and two arms. She holds a sword in her right hand and a gem in her left. Mounted on a tigress, she is in an extreme rage.

9. rDzong dmar: a deity with a red body, one head and two arms. He holds a lance with a flag fastened to it in his right hand and a lasso in his left. Riding a reddish-brown horse, he is in a rage.

10. Grogs rdis Nor skyong dpal ldan: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. He holds a vase in his right hand and a gem in his left. Clad in a nomad’s garment, he sits peacefully on a cushion.

11. Rag pa g-yu rtse: a deity with a blue body, one head and two arms. He holds a lance with a flag fastened to it in his right hand and a gem in his left. Riding a light-bay stallion, he exhibits an air of bravery.

12. sTag thus bon mtshan: a deity with a blue body, one head and two arms. He clenches his right hand while holding a vase in his left.

13. sTag thus bon rgan: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. He holds his hands in the manner of a meditating monk.

14. rTa sgo: a deity with a white body, one head and two arms. He holds a drum in his right hand and a flat gold bell in his left. Riding a divine yak, he exhibits an air of dignity.

15. Gangs rgyal: a deity with a white body and plaited hair. He has one head and two hands. His right hand holds a lance with a flag fastened to it and the other holds a gem. He is mounted on a light-bay stallion.

There are also murals of the thirteen mGur lha:

1. gNyan rje Gong sngon, mounted on a red Garuda

2. gTsang lha Bye yug, on a white horse

3. Srog Iha Gangs dkar, on a yellow gander

4. sGyog chen sDong ra, on a divine white yak
5. 'Brong nam Yang rtse, on a blue buffalo
6. Dung lha Byang rtse, on a red horse
7. lCog lha Tshal rtse, on a blue dragon
8. lHa ri gYu rtse, on a yellow deer
9. sPom ra Nag po, on a black mule
10. 'Gyu chen lDong khram, on a red mule
11. dByig chen Ra rngam, on a white horse
12. Ba ru Ser glang, on a white ox
13. 'Bri chen sDong ra, on a red horse

The twelve brTan ma goddesses, the guardians of the Bon religion:
1. Kong btsun De mo, mounted on a tigress
2. Gangs dkar Sha med, on a yellow gander
3. rMa ting 'Phrul mo, on a white horse
4. sKyi mthing Ya ma, on a sorrel yak
5. Ma btsun 'Brog chen, on a blue ox
6. rMa ri Rab khyams, on a blue horse
7. lHa ri Ya ma, on a light-bay horse
8. sKyi mthing Nag mo, on a blue deer
9. Gangs kyi gYu sgron, on a blue parrot
10. Ka ga Ser mo, on an antelope (Hodgson's)
11. Kha rag Khyung btsun, on a black mule
12. gDa' la bTsun mo, on a deer

Ko bo Monastery has, moreover, a magnificent mural of 'Ol mo lung ring. People of different countries call it by different names: bDe ba can by the people of U rgyan, Mi 'gyur g-yung drung can by the people of Shar gling, dBang bsgyur 'khor lo can by the people of Byang gling, Me tog bkod pa can by the people of Nub gling, and Yid bzhin bkod pa can by the people of 'Dzam gling.

Further, it was named Sham bha la by the Indian people, Mu khyud gter gyi gling by the Chinese people, dBang ldan 'khor lo gling by the people of Za hor, Gar ma gar shom spro by the people of Yu gur, 'Gyur med 'od ma tshal by the people of Bru sha, Kha la g-yu gshog by the people of Kha che, dPag bsam ljon pa'i gling by the people of Li bal, Nub byang rtag gzigs khyim gyi yul by the people of Zhang zhung, Nub phyogs 'Ol mo lung ring or 'Od mo gling by the people of Tibet, rTag gzigs ga sho nor gyi gling by the people of Mon yul, and dMu yul 'phyo ba gling by the people of 'Jang.

At present there are two lamas in this monastery, Zla grags Rin chen phun tshogs, who is fifty-eight, and Bla chung mKhyen rab rgya mtsho, who is twenty-two in 1998. There are two abbots, dGe legs tshul khrims and rNam rgyal gtsug phud. There are more than eighty monks. In the vicinity of the monastery there are over three hundred households. The population of this area is about 3,500.
The main source of income for the monks is the religious services they perform in villages. The lamas of high rank are customarily paid from fifty to one hundred yuan a day and the common monks from ten to twenty yuan a day.

The location and murals of this monastery possess special qualities that distinguish it from other Bonpo monasteries. This monastery is now undergoing significant restoration and enlargement.

(38) Ka legs gYung drung gling Monastery

Ka legs dgon gYung drung gling is under the administration of the sTeng chen villages. From sTeng chen rdzong, travelling about twelve kilometres westward on the highway, we reach the village of Ra khrom. After crossing a small bridge, a walk of more than half an hour in a south-westerly direction leads us to the monastery. Situated on a hill and surrounded by a number of holy mountains, it lies to the east of the Four Great Sacred Places of Tibet, south of the Thang Iha range, on the highland between the rivers rNgul chu and rDza chu, and near sTeng chen Monastery (No.35). It was the place where sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po received the mDo Dri med gzi brjid as an oral tradition and wrote it down.

The monastery was first supported by benefactors gSas sar Nam mka’ g-yung drung, the owner of the land, ‘Be ru bon srung and sTag rtsa rGyal mtshan. The Shel masters played an important role in the monastery. The origin of the Shel lineage is as follows: long ago in China, there was a man called Kun dga’ ’od ’phro. He lived amidst flowers in an ocean that emitted lights. He miraculously produced a white crystal egg from which a little man appeared. He had turquoise hair and a white chin-tuft; he was dressed in white silk and was holding a lotus. He was found by the king of China, who called him Zing ba mthu chen. He became a prelate in the court and came to have the name Legs tang mang po. bSam gtan rgyal mtshan, one of his descendants, migrated to Tibet, where he subdued many gods and demons. He was followed by Khro bo rgyal mtshan and Zhig chung Nam mkha’ mtha’ bral.

In 1454, Yag snya bSod nams rgyal mtshan founded the monastery at gYang ra brag rtsa. He named the monastery Ka legs gYung drung gling. He raised funds for the commemoration of the great master mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and made sure that the rituals he established in the monastery closely followed the teachings of the master. There were only seven monks, including the lama Tshe dbang rgyal mtshan of rDzogs mda’ and Tshul khrims. There was a complete set of religious objects and implements for making offerings, such as the gandi, a drum, a stone gong and a conch. There was also the tradition of studying the tshad ma logic.

In 1564, reasons for moving the monastery to a new place arose. The old site was small and unsafe. So, in the time of lHun grub rgya mtsho, a discussion was held among all the laity and clergy and it was agreed that the monastery should be moved to Ka bzos sribs. It was therefore rebuilt and the religious objects of body, speech
and mind were installed. Celebrations and the study of the *tshad ma* logic were re-established. There were about twenty-five monks at that time and the monastery became known even among the people of Amdo and rGyal rong.

There was a series of masters as the head of the monastery:

1. 'Gro mgon bsTan pa 'brug grags
2. lHun grub bzhi
3. gYung drung mi zhig rdo rje
4. Yid bzhin rgyal ba tshul khrims
5. bSod nams ye shes
6. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
7. Zla ba grags
8. Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan
9. bsTan 'dzin grags pa
10. Nyi ma bstan rgyal
11. gYung drung rgyal mtshan

However, in 1914, the Tibetan troops led by the commander rTa nag (who were of dGe lugs pa obedience), came to the area and they began to murder many of the local people. They also completely burned the monastery. Phun tshogs bstan 'dzin grags pa (1888-1954) and his three disciples, Nyi ma grags pa, bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan and gYung drung rgyal ba, could no longer live there. They left for Hor where there were benefactors of the Bon religion.

The teacher Phun tshogs bstan 'dzin grags pa was a capable physician. He was able to cure illnesses of man and animal, and prevent epidemics.

At that time, there was, in sTeng chen, the famous governor-general of Hor, Grags pa rnam rgyal. He assigned A drung to the restoration of the monastery and sent him to Hor in order to bring back the above-mentioned monks. The governor-general ordered the chief of dKar ru and his people to provide labour, as well as to transport the timber that was needed.

In 1914, Phun tshogs bstan 'dzin grags pa himself laid the foundation of the main hall. He maintained the monastic tradition of sMan ri as was established by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan. He also established the study of the five minor and five major sciences, the summer and winter festivals for fifteen days each and the *dgu gtor* rite based on Khro bo and Phur pa, as well as the chanting of the *bKa' skyong*.

There were two gilt-bronze stupas in the form of gYung drung bkod legs and a statue of rNam rgyal as tall as a two-storey house. He also had new copies of the *bKa' gyur* and *bKa' brten* made and obtained new offering implements, as well as having thangka made. New monk quarters were built. At that time, there were more than seventy monks in the monastery.
A reliquary gilt-bronze stupa of Phun tshogs bstan 'dzin grags pa (1888-1954) as tall as a two-storey house was made.

A prayer for a quick birth of his reincarnation was offered, in consequence of which his reincarnation was born in 1956. In the process of searching for the reincarnation, Ka legs Monastery made offerings of twelve thousand sacrificial cakes (tshogs) to the tutelary deity Phur pa and to the protective deities. It was known that the reincarnation himself said, “I am going to Ka legs”, and showed many miraculous signs, which were actually heard by the attendant monks. The father of the reincarnation, who was called Tshang stobs rgyal mtshan, belonged to the lineage in which Me ston Shes rab 'od zer in Yar 'brog was born and the mother belonged to the lineage of Zhig po. At that time there were about seventy monks in the monastery. Among them were Rin chen tshul khrims, bTan pa rgyal mtshan, Ye shes dbang ldan and bZod pa mthar phyin, who were all very learned, having studied logic and Sanskrit, as well as being accomplished in meditation according to the Oral Tradition of Zhang zhung.

In short, this monastery has experienced rises and falls in the course of its own history, but it had the capacity to produce a series of eminent monks who were able to uphold the Bon doctrine and it is one of the oldest and important Bonpo monasteries.

The monastery is surrounded by the following sacred sites: Sa yi brag ri sgor mo, where the mDo Dri med gzi brjid was written down by Blo ldan snying po; Sa sho mda', where there is the self-risen Ma tri mantra and swastika; bDe chen lha ri gnam rdzong; Chu na ma; and the holy mountain Dong rdzong smug po mchad brgyad, regarded as the site blessed by Dran pa nam mkha' and his son Tshe dbang rig 'dzin. There is a place called gYang ra nang, which was the previous site of the monastery.

Before 1959, there were seventy monks in the monastery. At present there are sixty-two, including the lama Tshe dbang stobs rgyal. Rituals are performed according to the old custom, and all the religious objects, murals and the like in the assembly hall are kept in reasonably good condition.

(39) sMon rgyal bla brang

This is a residence of an important lineage and is under the administration of the sTeng chen villages. It is located four kilometres to the south of the rdzong. It was established in 1842 by Nam mkha' dbang. Before 1959, there were seven monks in the residence. At present there are no more than seven monks and a lama. It is very limited in scale, and in poor condition in every respect.

(40) Nag ru Monastery

The monastery is usually known as Nag ru dgon bSam gtan gling.
From sTeng chen rdzong, travelling three kilometres eastward on the highway, turning right, then southward to cross a bridge and travelling another five kilometres, we reach lHa mthong village, which lies at the foot of a mountain. It takes an hour on foot to reach the monastery from the village, climbing up the mountain behind the monastery. There is another route that leads to it from its front side.

Nag ru Monastery was founded in 1751 by Li shu stag ring. The present lamas are Pad ma kun legs and gYung drung grags pa. Before 1959, there were 105 monks in the monastery. At present there are forty.

The successive heads of the monastery were as follows:
1. mTha' zhu bDud 'dul sprul sku
2. bZod pa
3. Pad 'byung
4. sTag dbang
5. Grags sdis
6. gYung drung grags pa
7. Pad ma kun legs

The main religious object of this monastery was the gilt-bronze statue of Li shu stag ring. There were also statues of the four deities Srid rgyal, bTsan and bDud. The monastery obviously followed the tradition of sMan ri Monastery (No.1).

The monastery is surrounded by the following sacred sites: The mountain behind the monastery is called rDzong gseb, whose proprietor is Ba lha btsan. There are caves regarded as those of Dran pa nam mkha', sTag la me 'bar and gShen gSang ba 'dus pa, and footprints of a hawk, a falcon and a wolf.

As daily activities, in the morning the monks recite the 'Tshogs 'don and perform the bsang ritual, at midday the ritual texts of dBal gsas, and in the evening those of Byams ma and sTag la.

The monastery performs the following annual services:
1. In the 1st Tibetan month, from the 1st to the 3rd day, they recite the Klong rgyas.
2. In the 4th month, from the 13th to the 16th, they recite the bDe shegs bsdus pa.
3. In the 5th month, from the 26th to the 29th day, there is the commemoration of an abbot.
4. In the 9th month, from the 22nd to the 29th day, they perform the dgu gtor rite.

For the main source of income, the monks and lamas must go out to perform religious services in villages, which comes to no more than ten yuan every four days.

This monastery has fallen into decay. At present the only religious objects are
two masks and two drums, one big and one small.

(41) Zhe nang Monastery

The monastery's full name is Zhe nang dgon gYung drung dpal ri.

From sTeng chen rdzong, Zhe nang Monastery is reached by travelling three kilometres eastward on the highway and another eight kilometres along the waterway on the left. It is located to the west of the river Zhe zhung, in front of the mountain Gangs chen dbang po. It is a place of beauty and interest, surrounded by glorious forest-covered mountains, and the harmonious singing of birds is heard.

This monastery was founded in 1735 by Bru zhig Yon tan rgya mtsho. It was the seat of the Khyung sprul series. Later it was maintained by the hermits gYung dga' Rinpoche and rNal 'byor bZod pa Rinpoche. The latter undertook its renovation.

The lineage of Khyung sprul starts with the sage Kun dkar 'Od ldan and then later continued as follows:

1. gYu sgra snying po
2. Shes rab blo ldan
3. Grags pa rgyal mtshan
4. lHun grub rgyal mtshan
5. gYung drung phun tshogs
6. gYung drung bstan 'dzin phun tshogs
7. Gangs rgyal who was four years old in 1998

Around the monastery are the following sacred mountains: Mount Gangs chen dbang po, regarded as the abode of Dran pa nam mkha' and his twin sons Tshe dbang rig 'dzin and Pad ma 'byung gnas, is situated at the back of the monastery; to its right is Mount gYag se, to the left, Ra mdung, and in front, sPen ne ri bkra. There are also the two lakes of sPas thang mtsho, the large and the small.

The monastery has the following religious objects: a relic of sTon pa gShen rab as big as a hen's egg, a conch made of his teeth and a tooth of bZod pa Rinpoche. Before 1959, there were 130 monks in the monastery. At present, there is the lama 'Chi med rig 'dzin and more than eighty monks.

(42) Zhu tshang Monastery

Zhu tshang Monastery is in lNga stod village, sPa zla xiang. The xiang lies seventy-six kilometres west of sTeng chen rdzong. To reach lNga stod village, a further ten kilometres of difficult driving northward is required.

This monastery was founded by bsTan 'dzin grags pa in 1567. Before 1959, there were sixty monks in the monastery. At present there are sixty-one. There used to be three lamas, but now only one. The condition of this monastery is reasonably good in many respects, like the assembly hall, the temple and the religious objects. The main source of income is, as with other Bonpo monasteries, the performance of
Ri dmar Monastery

Ri dmar Monastery is in Wang khog village, Khri rdo xiang. From the rdzong, after travelling sixty-five kilometres westward on the highway, another two-hours eastward and towards the mountain pass is required to reach Wa khog village.

This monastery was founded by Shel rgya Shel zhig dbu dkar in 1573. Before 1959, there were eighty monks in the monastery. At present there are no more than twenty monks and one lama. The temple and religious objects of this monastery are in a somewhat poor condition. They have no source of income other than the religious services the monks perform in villages.

sGang ru Monastery

The monastery is known as sGang ru dgon Dar rgyas. It is situated to the east of Srib mda’ village in Khri rdo xiang. From the rdzong to Khri rdo xiang is a distance of sixty-five kilometres along the main road. From there, it is five kilometres further to Srib mda’ village.

This monastery was founded by Rin chen bstan ’dzin in 1310. Before 1959, there were eighty-seven monks in the monastery. At present there are fifty-six monks and one lama.

Be sgo Monastery

Be sgo Monastery is situated in gTam stod village, gTam stod xiang, which lies to the south of sTeng chen rdzong. It is a distance of forty-five kilometres from the rdzong to the xiang. As there is no road, the monastery is extremely difficult to reach.

This monastery was founded by dBal ’bar stag slag in 1590. Before 1959, there were seventy monks in the monastery and now there are twenty-eight.

rGya sgo Monastery

rGya sgo Monastery stands within gTam stod village, gTam stod xiang. From the rdzong, gTam stod xiang is reached by travelling forty-five kilometres northward, which, however, is very difficult because of the absence of a road to the xiang.

This monastery was founded by bSam gtan tshul khrims in 1869. Before 1959, there were twenty monks in the monastery. At present there are fifty monks and one lama. The condition of the assembly hall, temple and religious objects remains good. Rituals and services have been preserved as they used to be.

gNam steng Monastery

The seat of gNam steng Monastery is a place called gZi, which lies to the
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

south-west of gTam stod village in gTam stod xiang. gTam stod xiang is reached by travelling forty-five kilometres southward from the rdzong. To reach gZi, it is necessary to travel ten more kilometres in a south-westerly direction from gTam stod village, which is very difficult because there is no road.

This monastery was founded by sMon lam 'od zer in 1496. Before 1959, there were twenty-one monks in the monastery. At present there are thirteen monks and one lama. The assembly hall, temple and religious objects of this monastery are in poor condition.

(48) dMu g-yad Monastery

dMu g-yad Monastery is located to the south-east of gNu khug village in gTam stod xiang. It is a distance of forty-five kilometres from the rdzong to gTam stod xiang. From the xiang, the monastery is reached by travelling four kilometres in a south-easterly direction. As there is no road to this xiang, it is very difficult to reach the monastery.

This monastery was founded by Kun dga' rgyal mtshan in 1910. Before 1959, there were forty-five monks in the monastery. At present it is taken care of by seventeen monks and one lama, who maintain the time-honoured customs of Bonpo rituals and services. The assembly hall, temple and religious objects are in reasonably good condition. The monks have no source of income other than performing religious services in villages and support from each household.

(49) Yang rdzong Monastery

The location of Bya ze Yang rdzong Monastery is east of Kha thang village in a place called Bya ze which is in Ser tsha xiang. From the rdzong, it is reached by driving forty-five kilometres in a north-westerly direction.

This is a magnificent monastery. It was founded by Khyung po 'Bum rgyal grags pa in 1413. sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po came to this monastery and he is said to have been aided by the local deities in his efforts to improve the monastery. By miraculous means, he constructed the magnificently-designed main hall on top of the high craggy hill. It had many sacred objects.

Before 1959, there were 350 monks in the monastery. Now there are seventy monks and three lamas.

(50) Tsha ne Hermitage

This hermitage is located to the east of Ru pha village in Ser tsha xiang. From sTeng chen rdzong, Ser tsha xiang is reached by driving forty-five kilometres in a north-westerly direction. Travelling another three kilometres eastward from the xiang one reaches Ru pha village.

The hermitage was established by Shes rab phun tshogs in 1838. Before 1959,
there were ten hermits in the hermitage; now there are five.

(51) Ma rdzong Monastery

Ma rdzong Monastery is situated to the west of 'Bu tshab village in Ser tsha xiang. It is a distance of forty-five kilometres from the rdzong to Ser tsha xiang. From there to 'Bu tshab village is a further five kilometres. As there is a road, it is reasonably convenient for cars to reach the village.

This monastery was founded by gYung rgyal in 1774. Before 1959, there were forty-five monks in the monastery. At present there are twenty-one monks and one lama.

The temple and religious objects of the monastery look reasonably good. Similar to other Bonpo monasteries, the monks have no means of earning a living other than performing religious services in villages and gathering support from their own parents and relatives.

(52) Phug leb Monastery

Phug leb Monastery is situated to the west of 'Bu tshab village in Ser tsha xiang. Ser tsha xiang is forty-five kilometres north-west of the rdzong. 'Bu tshab village is five kilometres from the xiang. As there is a road, it is a relatively convenient trip.

This monastery was founded by Khyung po 'Bum chen in 1413. Before 1959, there was one lama and two hundred monks in the monastery. At present there are twenty-one monks and one lama. This monastery, being one of the centres of the Khyung lineage, follows the old school of Bonpo tradition. The assembly hall, temple and monks’ cells are elegantly made on a grand scale, and it has a great number of statues of sTon pa gShen rab, Dran pa nam mkha’, sTag la me 'bar and rNam rgyal. There are many books of excellent quality.

Like all other Khyung po monasteries, rituals and services are held many times a year. Various aspects of this monastery, such as the temple and religious objects, are kept in relatively good condition.

(53) Kha spungs Nunnery

Kha spungs Nunnery is located in Kha spungs village in Ga ngad xiang. From sTeng chen rdzong, travelling more than eighty kilometres westward on the main road and then more than ten kilometres further northward, one reaches Kha spungs village, in the south-east part of which lies Kha spungs Nunnery.

The nunnery was founded by Tshul khrims dbang mo in 1928. Before 1959, there was the head nun and twenty-two other nuns in the nunnery. At present there are twenty. The assembly hall, temple and the religious objects of the nunnery are in fairly good condition. The activities, such as annual religious services, have
been successively preserved. As the nunnery has no property, for their living the nuns must receive support from their own families and earn money giving religious services in villages.

(54) Mar khu Monastery

Mar khu Monastery is located to the west of Ngas pa village in Ga ngad xiang, sTeng chen rdzong. From the rdzong, Ga ngad xiang is reached by travelling more than eighty kilometres westward on the main road and then more than ten kilometres northward. Ngas pa village is a further five kilometres from the xiang and the monastery lies to the west of the village.

This monastery was established by lHun grub rgyal mtshan in 1691. Before 1959, there were thirty-nine monks in the monastery; now there are twenty-five. The condition of the assembly hall, temple and religious objects is reasonably good. The monks perform the bsang ritual every morning and other rituals every evening. Their source of income is the same as other small Bonpo monasteries.

(55) rTse drug Monastery

rTse drug Monastery is situated in Sa sgang xiang in sTeng chen rdzong. Travelling thirty kilometres in a south-easterly direction from the rdzong, one reaches the foot of the hill on which rTse drug Monastery is located. It is a two hour’s traverse on horseback from the west side of the hill up to rTse drug Monastery at the top.

All around the monastery is a land of great beauty where birds, big cuckoos and small 'jon mo, are heard singing. Along the mountains and gorges stretching right and left, there are many legends woven around Ge sar, the King of Gling, and Seng lcam 'brug mo, his wife. There are also numerous tales of the local deities.

The monastery was founded by Blo ldan snying po in 1383. It is one of the places blessed by innumerable sages and is often called Shel le rdzong drug. Its formal name is Shel brag gShen bstan Dri med gling. It is regarded as one of the five holy places in the world:

“Ri bo rtse lnga, abode of the mkha ’gro in China,

rTsa ra’i tsha khang, abode of the mkha ’gro in India,

Me tog spungs mdzes, abode of the mkha ’gro in O rgyan,

Bho di, abode of the mkha ’gro in Shambhala,

Shel le rdzong drug, abode of the mkha ’gro in Tibet…”

“The hill at the back looks like an elephant lying,

With a gem held in its mouth.

The hill to the right looks like the rising moon,

With little stars in the sky.

The hill to the left looks like a snow lion leaping,
With turquoise mane on its chin.
The mountain range looks like white silk spread..."

The monastery is surrounded by many marvelou signs and self-grown objects. Beneath the heap of boulders in front, there is a footprint of sTon pa gShen rab the length of a cubit, which is still visited by devotees. At the back of the monastery is a self-grown statue of rGyal ba rgya mtsho, a miraculous foot print of sTon pa 'Chi med gtsug phud and the self-grown letters A and Ma as evidence of teachings of Buddha having been spread. On a rock regarded as the throne of Bla chen Dran pa nam mkha' there is a self-grown swastika and a self-grown letter A. To the left of the craggy hill is a self-grown statue of the mkha' 'gro Seng gdong ma. In front of the monastery there is a cemetery called Dul khrod bsil ba gling. Beside it is a large rock resembling a human lying on his back; it is regarded as the seat the mkha' 'gro Seng gdong ma.

On the surface of a boulder is a verse that Sangs rgyas gling pa wrote with his fingers, as if he were drawing in mud:

"All the virtuous work that I have accomplished
with my body, speech and mind in sincerity,
I share it with the sentient beings of the three realms,
May it aid them all to purify all their misdeeds, and
Rapidly obtain Buddhahood, endowed with three perfect bodies!"

On the surface of another boulder within an arrow's range, there are the self-risen letters Ya, Ra, Kha, Sru and A, which can actually be seen. On the surface of the high crag Bon ri, there are clear footprints and letters, around which is a self-grown statue of Khro bo gTso mchog mkha' 'gyings and a statue and a mandala of Sangs rgyas sman bla. Moreover, in rTa rgyas rdzong, there is a cave of Gyim tsha rma chung with a spring in the middle of it, a self-grown conch on the peak of Shel brag dri med dngos dga', and caves of Dran pa nam mkha', Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, Padma 'byung gnas and Blo ldan snying po.

Blo ldan snying po, founder of the monastery, was of the dBra clan. He was born in 1360 in Khyung po. From childhood he naturally displayed cleverness and dexterity unlike other children. He quickly mastered writing and reading. He was such a miraculous one that he inspired awe and respect in the minds of the people at the first sight of him. He met the scholar Rin chen blo gros, and in his presence took monastic vows and was given the name dBra btsun Nam mkha' rin chen. He became an eminent scholar versed in Sutra, Tantra and Mind.

In a vision, he received an oral transmission, which he wrote down, filling fifty-five volumes. They are about the Bon doctrine and the deeds of sTon pa gShen rab, such as the following works on Sutra: Dri med gzi brjid in twelve volumes, mTshan mdo in six volumes, lHun po brtsegs mdo, bKra shis dal 'bar khab and Ma tri rin chen sgron ma. There were also works on Tantra: dBal gsas rtsod zlog, Phur
pa spyi 'dul gshed dmar, gSang mchog rig pa khu byug and Thabs chen mkha'rgyu.

He wrote other works on Dran pa nam mkha', the local deities of the place, as well as various religious songs (mgur) and instructions (zhal gdam). He had a number of statues and stupas made, as well as a copy of the Khams chen in gold. He practised meditation in other sacred-places, such as Bya ze yang rdzong.

His close disciples were sGo rigs rGyal mtshan 'od zer and 'Be tsha Grags rgyal. Other disciples were Khyung po Yon rin, sTogs ldan Nam mkha' rin chen of A ba, rGya ra bSam gtan rgyal mtshan, rGya po Rin chen 'od zer rgyal mtshan, Gru zhig Nam mkha' 'od zer and La dpyil rGyal mtshan 'od zer. Having completed these deeds, Blo ldan snying po passed away.

The reincarnation of Blo ldan snying po was Mi shig rdo rje, who produced fifteen volumes of writings on Bon doctrines, including the sNyan brgyud zhi khro dgongs 'dus.

The Third Blo ldan snying po was Sangs rgyas gling pa, who greatly developed rTse drug Monastery. His benefactors were the chiefs of Khyung dkar, Khyung nag and Khyung ser in the Khyung po region. He was invited to go to rGyal rong by the king of dGe bshes. In rGyal rong he gave teachings to the people. When he was about to return to rTse drug Monastery, he was invited to the hall rNam rgyal khang bzang in the palace of the dGe bshe king. The king gave him the following gifts: an image of rGyal ba rgya mtsho that uttered words by itself, a pair of dragon-figured cymbals and a bronze gong named Khro chen dgu 'phar ma. The king also called on thirty young men to be ordained and become monks of rTse drug Monastery. The king of Brag steng gave Sangs rgyas gling pa the following gifts: thirty pairs of cymbals and thirty pairs of little flat bells of the Bon tradition. The king of Rab brtan gave him a large pair of cymbals named Ha mo rang grags and another called Srid pa rang grags, a large flat bell, canopies called rTa rgyugs ma and Khyung Inga ma, and the curtain called Seng thod ma. The Chinese emperors gave him large plaques (pan), on which there were words in Chinese characters written in gold.

Sangs rgyal gling pa, who was venerated by all, wrote many works, which are in two categories. First, the Oral Traditions he received, which are as follows: gNas brtan bcu drug, gSang mchog rol pa, Dran pa bdud 'dul, Gu ru zhi drag, Tshe dbang g-yung drung, Gur khang, sTag la, and rDzong 'phrang le'u gsum pa. Second, the texts he rediscovered, which are as follows: Tshe sgrub rdo rje'i go khrab, Bla ma dgongs 'dus, bKa' thang kun snang gsal sgron and Che mchog dran pa drag po.

There were also sacred objects that he rediscovered: a blue statue of Pad ma 'od 'bar; a skull of the Brahman; a figure of the mkha' gro Thugs rje kun sgrol and her belongings, such as her flat bell, dagger and vajra; as well as the tsha tsha image that belonged to Vairocana.

Sangs rgyas gling pa, the great treasure-rediscoverer and savior of beings.
having carried out the keeping, defending and spreading of the doctrines of Bon, and having done great deeds for sentient beings, finally passed away.

Sangs rgyas gling pa’s successors at the monastery were:
1. dMu btsun Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
2. Mi pham ’gro ba’i mgon po
3. Zhu sprul bSod nams dbang rgyal
4. Me ston Nyi-ma rgyal mtshan
5. Pad ma gar gyi dbang phyug
6. sNyan rgyud dPal ’bar stag slag
7. bSod nams blo gros dbang gi rgyal po
8. Khyung dkar Yon tan

Me ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the fourth in the line, was regarded as the embodiment of Dran pa nam mkha’. He gave up eating food, yet lived on at rTse drug for a long time. He established the hermitage of Gyim shod yang dben mthong grol near the monastery.

In 1926, Nyag gter gSang sngags gling pa was invited to the monastery. He rediscovered various texts from the cave called Seng ge g-yu rtse and he established in the monastery the “religious dance of the 10th day” and the sman sgrub ceremony. On this occasion there were over five hundred monks and nuns, a larger number of pilgrims, plus the local people all gathered together. The number of Bonpo pilgrims and spectators rose to nearly one hundred thousand.

In 1934, Kun grol hum chen ’Gro ’dul gling pa was invited to the monastery. On this occasion, when he gave teachings concerning the Zhi khro, there were people from Hor, Khyung po and Tsha ba rong; about 700 monks and nuns came to listen.

The monastery also invited Khyung nag Tshul khrims phun tshogs - a disciple of ’Ja’ lus pa Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan - who gave extensive teachings there and initiated the making of copies of the bKa’ gyur and bKa’ brten, consisting of five hundred volumes, and paintings of more than fifty thangka of the life of Sangs rgyas gling pa; as well, he initiated the restoration of temples. His disciples were Phun tshogs dbang rgyal, Tshul khrims dar rgyas, bSod nams blo gros dbang gi rgyal po (the fifth rebirth of Sangs rgyas gling pa), Gar dbang rNam rgyal gYung drung rgyal mtshan and Tshul khrims rnam rgyal.

gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan and Tshul khrims rnam rgyal are presently resident in the monastery. They have set up a new monastic school there, in which they have established the practice of meditation based on the Che mchog dran pa drag po, and the performance of the tshogs ’khor ceremony on the 10th, 15th and 22nd day of every month. There are seven permanent resident monks.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngan regions

The monastery has many invaluable religious objects:

In the gSer gdung khang: a solid gold reliquary stupa of Sangs rgyas gling pa in the form of gYung drung bkod legs as tall as the ceiling, which contains his remains; a reliquary stupa of Sangs gling Pad ma gar dbang; a statue of Tshe dpag med made of a mixture of medicine and clay; a statue of Sangs gling nga 'dra ma carved by 'Gro mgon; and murals depicting the life stories of Sangs rgyas gling pa.

In the bKa’ 'gyur khang: a statue of sMon lam mkha’ yas as tall as a two-storey house, its back curtain adorned with the assembled deities of Cho ga bcu gnyis; and murals depicting the twelve deeds of sTon pa gShen rab.

In the bedroom: a bronze image of Guru Rinpoche; images of him in eight forms, made of dzi gim (red gold); and murals of Mi shig rdo rje and the Bonpo deities, including sMra ba’i seng ge, Gu ru Drag dmar and dPal mgon bdun cu.

On the outer walls of the bedroom: murals of the Sixteen Arhats, the thousand images of sTon pa gShen rab, Guru, Nyi pang sad, the guardian of rTse drug and Me srung ral gri.

In the 'Tshogs chen lha khang: a life-sized statue of Dus kyi 'khor lo; eight pairs of stupas; and murals of the Bonpo deities according to the Ma tri rin chen sgron ma by Blo ldan snying po, Phur pa, gShed dmar and Las gshin nag po chen po.

In the gSeng khang: a gilt-bronze statue of gShen lha ‘od dkar of good quality; statues of Shes rab smra ba’i seng ge, Dus ‘khor, Tshe dpag med and rNam par rgyal ba, each an arrow’s length in height; hundreds more statues of gNas brtan and others; and murals of the assembled deities of the Che mchog dran pa drag po and of the three Seng, Ma and gShin.

In the Pod brtsegs kun dga’ rwa ba bskang gsol khang: a stuffed image of rGyal chen Shel khrab and the supports of other religious protectors.

In the ‘Khor khang: statues of Yum chen Shes rab byams ma and rGyal ba rgya mtsho, made of a mixture of medicine and clay; murals of the Eight Guru; and three conch-shell ornaments.

In the upper storey of the gSeng khang: Nor bu me ‘bar made of gilt-bonze and a banner of victory.

In the back room of the large assembly hall: a statue of gShen lha ‘od dkar made of a mixture of medicine and clay; statues of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba, sTon pa gShen rab and gYung drung mthong grol, each of which is as tall as a three-storey house; 108 stupas and murals of Blo ldan snying po, Mi shig rdo rje, Sangs rgyas gling pa, Kun grol grags pa, bDe chen gling pa and the deities of Cho ga bcu gnyis.

In the bShad grwa’i ’du khang: a statue of Yum chen Kye ma ‘od mtsho and a life-sized one of ‘Ja’ lus pa Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

There are also caves of Mu cho Idem drug, Dran pa nam mkha’, Tshe dbang rig ’dzin, Pad ma ‘byung gnas and Blo ldan snying po.

There were six sanctuaries of the religious protectors in the monastery, in each
of which lay many statues beyond all value. Among the objects in these sanctuaries were the following: a word-uttering statue of rGyal ba rgya mtsho made of dzi gim, a cubit in height, which was rediscovered in rGyal rong by Sangs rgyas gling pa; large and small conchs made of the teeth of sTon pa gShen rab, rediscovered at Pha bong g-yag ro in the south by Go bde 'phags pa alias dBang ldan gShen sras lha rje.

There were, as well, the following: the statue of Pad ma 'od 'bar, rediscovered in the dBus phug cave of Bon ri by Sangs rgyas gling pa; a statue of Rig 'dzin Dran pa bdud 'dul, rediscovered in rTa shod dkyil 'khor thang by Blo ldan snying po; a small flat bell worn by the mule of the goddess Srid rgyal drel dmari and rediscovered by gShen chen klu dga'; a statue of Hum chen, the 6th Kun grol; a statue of gShen lha 'od dkar rediscovered at rTse drug by 'Gro 'dul gling pa; and a statue of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba rediscovered at rTse drug by sPa tshang gter chen. There were also the rediscoveries by gSang sngags gling pa: a bronze statue of Zhi khro gSang ba 'dus pa, two phur pa daggers and a statue of 'Chi med gtsug phud made of iron.

Later a new development took place in the monastery. Gar dbang rNam rgyal and his associates began to take an interest in the teachings of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. They began to unify various meditation establishments in the monastery and appointed Khyung nag Tshul khrims phun tshogs as the head of the monastery. Then a new meditation centre was established, where the new head of the monastery began to give teachings based the “Five mDzod’ of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. His disciples were brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan, sMon lam bstan 'dzin, gYung drung dge legs, sKal bzang g-yung drung and Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan.

The successive abbots of the new establishment were as follows:
1. Khyung nag Tshul khrims phun tshogs
2. brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan
3. sMon lam bstan 'dzin
4. gTsug phud tshul khrims
5. gTsug phud 'od gsal (d.1923)
7. gTsug phud tshul khrims (a second time)

Later gTsug phud tshul khrims continued giving teachings based the “Five mDzod’ of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

Annual Services and Rituals at present
1. In the 1st Tibetan month there is the commemoration of mNyam med chen po, based on the Klong rgyas.
2. In the 2nd month, the gDugs dkar cycle is performed.
3. In the 3rd month there is the commemoration of Sangs rgyas gling pa.
4. In the 4th month there is the performance of the rituals for offerings of the sacrificial cake (tshogs) one thousand times to Ma, gShin and Seng.
5. In the 5th month, with the monks from several monasteries, the ceremony based on the Bla ma rig 'dzin 'dus pa is held, and on the 10th day, the tshes bcu ceremony with a religious dance.

6. In the 6th month the summer retreat take place.

7. In the 7th month the ritual based on the Zhi khro dgongs 'dus is performed.

8. In the 8th month there is the performance of the ritual based on the Ma mo rbod gtong.

9. In the 9th month, with the monks from other monasteries, the ritual cycles of Khro bo and Dran pa drag po are performed.

10. In the 10th month there is the performance of the rite based on the rTa mgrin ga'u dmar nag.

11. In the 11th month the srung zog rite based on the ritual cycle of Phur pa is performed.

12. In the 12th month there is the performance of the rite based on the ritual cycle of Gu ru drag po.

During the months from the 9th to the 12th, all the monks also follow a programme of meditation based on the rDzogs chen sku gsum rang shar by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. During this course of meditation the monks practise rtsa lung, gtum mo, 'phrul 'khor, lus sbyong, rlung sbyong, chu sbyong, rlung ras, chu ras, rgyab thur, and bcud len.

rTse drug Monastery had the following branches: Wa dge dgon Phun tshogs g-yung drung gling, rDa shis Bum steng dgon, sBra kho Dar rgyas dgon, Gyim shod Yang dben mthong grol ri khrod, Bon dgon gSas gdong g-yung drung gling, Na ba dgon gYung drung bstan rgyas gling, sBis tho dgon gYung drung lha steng, Lam lha dgon gYung drung gtam brag gling, dByibs dgon gYung drung lhun po rtse, rTa 'tshel dgon, Phug la dgon, Ru tha Ngang rdzong dgon and dGyes ri dgon, all of which were deemed to correctly maintain the tradition of rTse drug Monastery.

The storekeeper and the treasurer of the Bla brang were fully responsible for all the procedure and financial affairs. In the sGrub grwa khang, seven lamas and monks practised the four stages of the tantric meditation while they learn other subjects. Likewise, the abbot and teacher gave lessons to more than fifteen monk students, on the first four of the “Five mDzod” by Shar rdza.

In the sGom grwa khang, twenty lamas and monks, headed by the abbot, practised the rDzogs chen meditation based on the dByings rig rin po che'i mdzod, one of the “Five mDzod”.

In the Srung ma khang, three monks continuously performed the bskang gso ritual for the Bonpo religious protectors.

In the 'Khor khang, three persons continuously turned the three wheels of rolled scripture. Besides those who had responsibility in the monastery, there were other lamas who had to make visits to the branch monasteries twice a year in order to see
if the monastic codes were observed; others appointed monk officials, exchanged offerings and performed rituals for the people and for the dead. The other duty of these monastic officials was to collect donations.

This monastery’s main sources of revenue were its manors — brDa shes, Kha lung, Wa dge, sPra kho, sBa nag and Brang rtswa thang — which produced as much as 250 khal of seed, and Upper and Lower rTa shod in dKar smad, Kha lung and Wa dge, from which they received payment for the rituals of rain-bringing and protection from drought and hail.

The total grain earning of the monastery was: from Bam sting, Bal tho, sHog lnga, and Chu gzhung. The monastery also received gifts such as rape-oil. When the year’s harvest was bad the monastery lent about 500 'bo of grain to the villages below the monastery, such as Wa dge, for which it received interest.

In brDa shes and other places, the monastery possessed real estate with animals for ploughing, seventy or eighty mdzo mo for dairy purposes and about forty horses and mules for transport.

Two families of herdsmen kept the monastery’s 180-plus yaks and 'bri, and one hundred goats and sheep. In the nomad areas, such as dNgul phug, 'Gis nang, Om thog kha and brDa ris mda’, the monastery had nomadic people called Thab gsos dud gsurn who provided much of the annual expenditure, such as butter for making butter-lamp offerings.

The material revenue of the abbot and high lamas covered the cost of living for about forty monks.

As for the great hermits in the caves of Mu cho ldem drug, Dran pa nam mkha’, Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, Pad ma 'byung gnas and Blo ldan snying po, they were customarily supported by the well-off families, such as the chiefs of dKar stod, dKar smad, sGar khang, Bya ze, and Nag ru.

Before 1959, there were about five hundred monks in this monastery. At present there are six lamas, including Gar dbang rNam rgyal, and about 210 monks. This monastery has an assembly hall with thirty-six pillars, gSer gdung khang, a meditation hall, a college building and other buildings, all of which are adorned with excellent interiors. The main religious objects, of immense value, are as follows: the word-uttering statue of Jo bo nga 'gro, which, having been hidden by many lay and clerical devotees during the Cultural Revolution, was presented to the monastery; a cubit-high statue of Kun bzang rGyal ba rgya mtsho made of rdzi gim; a pair of large and small conchs, which are the transformations of gShen rab’s teeth and his melodic voice; a blue statue of Pad ma 'od 'bar; a statue of gShen lha 'od dkar made of pure gold; a statue of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba; a statue of Rig 'dzin Dran pa bdud 'dul; a bronze statue of Phur pa ten cubits high; and a seal of Dran pa nam mkha’. All of these can still be seen in the monastery.

Annual services and rituals are performed according to the age-old tradition. In
particular, in 1984, there was the sman sgrub medicine ceremony based on the dBal phur 'od zer 'khyil ba'i sman sgrub, during which as many as eighteen thousand lay and clerical devotees from Hor, Shog Inga, Lam lha, Khyung dkar, Khyung nag, Khyung ser, lHa ru and Bag sre crowded into rTse drug Monastery in order to receive initiation and the “medicine” distributed at the time, as well as to enjoy the religious dances. All who gathered there made the festival a great occasion.

(56) Wa dge Monastery

From sTeng chen rdzong, travelling south-east for forty-three kilometres on the main road, we reach Sa sgang xiang. Crossing a small bridge on the right, half an hour’s walk eastward leads us to Wa dge Monastery.

This monastery was founded by Blo ldan snying po in 1383 as one of the main branches of rTse drug Monastery. Before 1959, there were forty-two monks and at present there are ten. This small monastery is now in poor condition.

(57) Bya chen Monastery

This monastery is situated in the eastern part of gYam tha village in dMu tha xiang, on the northern edge of sTeng chen rdzong. As it is 170 kilometres from the rdzong to dMu tha xiang, it is difficult to reach unless travelling by car.

Bya chen Monastery was founded by gYung drung rgyal mtshan in 1885. Before 1959, there were sixty monks. At present there is one lama and twenty-five monks.

(58) lHa lung Monastery

This monastery is located in dMu tha village, dMu tha xiang, which is on the northern edge of the rdzong. It is 170 kilometres from the rdzong to the xiang, so it would be very difficult to travel there without a car.

lHa lung Monastery was founded by gYung drung dbang rgyal in 1636. Before 1959, there were six lamas and fifty-eight monks in the monastery. At present there is one lama and thirty monks. The monastery is suitably equipped with an assembly hall, a temple, religious objects and implements for making offerings.

(59) gYu mtsho Monastery

The monastery is located to the west of sPyang tha village, Ga tha xiang. From the rdzong, one reaches Ga tha xiang by travelling 130 kilometres in a north-westerly direction. This monastery is forty kilometres north of the xiang. As there is no road between the xiang and the monastery, it is a very difficult trip.

The monastery was founded by rGyal rong bla ma in 1494. Before 1959, there were ninety-eight monks in the monastery and at present there are thirty. The monastery is fairly well equipped with an assembly hall, a temple and other
buildings. There are religious objects and offering implements appropriate to such an establishment.

(60) Ga shel Monastery

The monastery is in the western part of Shar 'dra village, Ga tha xiang. It is reached by travelling 130 kilometres in a north-westerly direction from sTeng chen rdzong, which is an extremely hard journey because there is no road; one must go on horseback or on foot.

This monastery was founded by Nam mkha' mtha' bral in 1585. Before 1959, there were four lamas and 145 monks. At present there is one lama and fifty-two monks. This monastery is counted as one of the rather large Bonpo monasteries in the northern part of sTeng chen rdzong. It has an assembly hall, a temple, a meditation hall and other fairly large buildings, inside of which are religious objects, implements and the like, which are in good condition. Annual services and the practice of rituals have been, as is the case with the large majority of Bonpo monasteries, maintained in accordance with the old tradition.

(61) Re ne Monastery

This monastery is situated on a hill on the eastern outskirts of Re ne village, Zam zhig xiang. It is seventy-five kilometres from the rdzong to the monastery.

The monastery was founded by sNang zhig Zla ba rgyal mtshan in 1704. Before 1959, there was one lama and 120 monks in the monastery. At present there is one lama and sixty monks.

This monastery is counted as one of the larger Bonpo monasteries belonging to sTeng chen rdzong. The buildings include an assembly hall, meditation hall and a temple, inside of which there are religious objects and implements, all well kept. The practice of annual ritual services has been, on the whole, maintained as it was before.

The lama and monks must earn their living, as those in other Bonpo monasteries do, by going out to perform religious services in villages.

(62) Ngang rdzong Monastery

The monastery is in Ru tha village, 'Bo tha xiang. 'Bo tha xiang is seventy-five kilometres from the rdzong and Ru tha village is thirty kilometres south of the xiang. It is accessible by car.

This monastery was founded by Rin chen rgyal mtshan in 1941. Although there were fifty-three monks in the monastery before 1959, there are no more than fourteen at present. This is a small monastery, with a temple, meditation hall and religious objects in poor condition.
(63) IJong phu Monastery

IJong phu bon dgon Monastery is located to the east of IJang shod village, Sa mdo xiang. From the rdzong, the xiang is reached by travelling south-east for forty-five kilometres on the main road. It is a mere ten kilometres from the xiang to the monastery, but the trip can be difficult because there is no road.

This monastery was founded by Blo ldan snying po in 1446. There were only ten monks in the monastery before 1959. This number has increased to fifteen today. Although this is one of the old Bonpo monasteries established in sTeng chen rdzong by Blo ldan snying po, it has shown little development over the past five hundred odd years.

(64) Zla shel Monastery

Zla shel bon dgon Monastery is located in Zla shel village, Sa mdo xiang. From the rdzong, Sa mdo xiang is reached by travelling forty-five kilometres in a south-easterly direction on the main road, and the monastery is fifteen kilometres from the xiang. However, one may find it very difficult to reach because there is no road from the xiang.

The monastery was founded by Blo ldan snying po in 1446. The number of monks in the monastery before 1959 was thirty-two, which, today, has increased to thirty-nine, plus one lama. Although Zla shel bon dgon is also counted as one of the ancient Bonpo monasteries, the past five hundred odd years have brought it little prosperity. It is now in a rather poor condition, in every aspect of the monastic buildings and religious objects.

(65) sBra hor Monastery

sBra hor Monastery is located to the south of sBra hor village, Gyang sngon xiang. From the rdzong, Gyang sngon xiang is reached by travelling south-east for sixty-five kilometres on the main road. The road between the xiang and sBra hor Monastery, which is just one kilometre, is very good.

This monastery was founded by Blo ldan snying po in 1446. Before 1959, there were fifty-eight monks in the monastery, but now there are only eighteen. Although this is also one of the old Bonpo monasteries from the latter stage of Bonpo development, internal and external affairs have prevented it from developing during the past five hundred odd years, so it is still small.

From sTeng chen rdzong, a six-hour drive eastward on the Nag chu-Chab mdo Highway leads us to Chab mdo district. Then driving another six hours eastward, we reach 'Jo mda' rdzong. It is an extremely dangerous and difficult trip from Chab mdo to 'Jo mda' rdzong because we must cross mountain after mountain.
(35) sTeng chen Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
Teng chen Hermitage, A silver pall at the hermitage
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(37) Ko bo Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
KO bo Monastery, Plate 2 Zia grags rin chen phun tshogs, the head lama of the monastery

(Photo Phuntsor Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(38) Ko legs gYung drung gling Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(40) Nag ru Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(41) Zhe nang Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(41) Zhe nang Monastery, Plate 2 Stupas in the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(41) Zhe nang Monastery, Plate 3 bZod pa Rinpoche's tooth
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
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Plate 2. The monastery and its followers' tents

(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

Plate 56. The monastery

(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
'Jo mda’ rDzong

'Jo mda’ rdzong lies in the north-east of Tibet. It covers an area of 13,155 square kilometres, of which 77,080 mu is farmland and 10,823 mu is natural forest. It has a population of about 58,000. There are 152 local councils, eighteen xiang, two townships and one city.

'Jo mda’ is also called sDe dge 'Jo mda’ because the ruler of sDe dge once governed it. In 1909, the self-governing body of sDe dge was abolished and 'Jo mda’ began to have close relations with Sichuan province. In 1959 the people’s commune of 'Jo mda’ rdzong was established.

Historically, 'Jo mda’ is a place well known for its handicrafts and other skilled work such as iron-work, silver-smithing and other metal work, as well as wood carving. It is particularly celebrated as being one of the homes of Tibetan musical dramas.

At present in the domain of this rdzong there are six Bonpo monasteries to which many lay and clerical devotees associate themselves. The Sa skya school of Buddhism also flourishes there. The monastic buildings and religious objects of Bon and Sa skya monasteries are in good condition in every respect.

(66) sTag gzhi Monastery

sTag gzhi Monastery is situated near Kha srub village, dBang po steng xiang. From the rdzong, dBang po steng is reached by driving thirty kilometres northward. From dBang po steng, the monastery is a whole day’s trip further northward on horseback.

The monastery was founded in 1180. Before 1959, there were five monks in this monastery. At present there are two lamas, sKu gsung blo gsar and Ye shes nyi ma, and thirty monks. This is one of the earliest Bonpo monasteries of the latter stage of Bonpo development. However, it is still rather small because of the rise and fall in the history of the Bon doctrine.

The monastery has fifty statues, including those of sTon pa gShen rab, Dran pa nam mkha’ and sTag la me ’bar. It also has about sixty thangka. The main source of income is, as with other Bonpo monasteries, the performing of religious services in villages, from which the monks and lamas make their living.

(67) Zha zhi Monastery

Zha zhi Monastery is situated in Khra dge xiang, which is reached by driving forty kilometres northward from the rdzong. The monastery is a whole day’s ride on horseback from Khra dge.

The monastery was founded in 1409. Before 1959, there were eighty monks and at present thirty-five. The monastery is one of the old Bonpo monasteries in the Chab mdo region. It is a rather large monastery, but over the past six hundred years, due
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to grave adversity, both internal and external, it has been unable to develop itself. It has the look of being very small from outside. As regards religious objects, it has twenty statues including those of sTon pa gShen rab, gShen lha 'od dkar, rNam par rgyal ba and Byams ma, as well as twenty-odd thangka. The monks raise, as a source of income, sixty-three 'bri and yaks, given by devotees. Besides these, they receive support from households and go out to perform religious services in villages.

(68) rDis bon Monastery

rDis bon Monastery is located in the vicinity of Ri mda' village, Thung phu xiang. Thung phu xiang is within a stone's throw of the rdzong and Ri mda' village is seventy kilometres from the xiang. The road between the rdzong and the monastery is reasonably good. One can drive right up to the monastery.

The monastery was founded in 1600 and is situated on the eastern side of the mountain Ma gling khrib bya ba. To the south-west of Ma gling khrib bya ba at sPa rdis steng, there is a large hermitage. To the left of the monastery is a holy mountain called Shugs chen, and in front is a big river called mDo chu, which comes from mDo gzhung, the upper part of the valley.

In the 17th century, when the Be ri king ruled over the region, the master lCe tsha mKhar bu of Mi nyag became the prelate of the king. He established a hermitage on top of the mountain sPa rdis, halfway up the mountain Ma gling khrib bya ba.

In 1641, the Mongol chief Gu shri Khan (of dGe lugs pa obedience), leading his horde, destroyed the monasteries of the bKa' brgyud pa and Bonpo in the area, including rDis bon Monastery, and overthrew the Be ri king. Later, sTag gzhi bKa' bo rgyal and Khram Tshe dbang rgyal po, who were disciples of Ba ya dKar 'dzang and had been hiding themselves when the Mongol horde was about in the region, rebuilt rDis bon Monastery and it became a fairly large establishment. Later, in bSod nams dbang Idan's time, there were two important residences (bla brang) of lamas in the monastery, one was called rTse gzhung and the other Bla gzhung. There was a series of masters belonging to the Se family:

1. Se zhig Mu la thogs med
2. Se Nam mkha' thogs med
3. Se kho Nam mkha' dbang phyug
4. Se kho Ra mna mkha' spyod
5. Se sprul Tshe dbang mchog legs

At present, there is a monk called rTogs Idan bsTan 'dzin who was sixty-two years old. In spite of his being in the course of three years' retreat, he was kind enough to grant us an exceptional audience. This monastery is counted as one of the large Bonpo monasteries in the Chab mdo region.

Before 1959, there were forty-four monks and at present there are forty-seven.
This monastery now has an assembly hall, a temple and a meditation hall (*sgrub khang*), all well designed and spacious. There are religious objects such as statues, scriptures and reliquary stupas.

As for annual services and daily activities, they follow the sMan ri tradition only. In the morning they say prayers, then they chant the *Kun rig*, followed by more prayers. In the evening they perform the *gsol kha* ritual to the protective deities, including Srid rgyal drel dmar.

The annual rituals are as follows:

1. In the 1st Tibetan month the ritual of *sTag la me 'bar* is performed, followed by a five-day ritual of Phur pa.
2. In the 5th month there are commemorations, the observance of the summer retreat, and the performance of rituals based on the *Klong rgyas* and *rNam rgyal*.
3. In the 9th month there is a performance of the ritual based on the *Khro bo* ngo mtshar rgyas pa and the 'cham dance of Khro bo.

(69) *sPong* Monastery

*sPong* Monastery is located near Tar grong, *spang ge xiang*. The *xiang* is reached by driving eighty kilometres northward from the *rdzong*; from the *xiang* to Tar grong takes several hours on horseback. The long distance makes it difficult to reach the monastery.

The monastery was founded in 1697. Before 1959, there was a lama and eighty-three monks and at present there are thirty. In spite of its long history, it has seen little growth due to the rise and fall of Bonpo fortunes. There is only a temple, an assembly hall and a meditation hall, all very small. Religious objects in its possession include twenty statues, large and small, including those of gShen lha 'od dkar, Dran pa nam mkha' and Yum chen Byams ma, and six thangka. The monastery depends upon ten yaks and a small number of horses and mules for income. The monks must make their living, as in other Bonpo monasteries, by obtaining support from households and by going out to perform religious services in villages.

(70) *Bla khri* Monastery

*Bla khri* Monastery is located in the vicinity of *Bla khri* village, *spang dge xiang*. *spang dge xiang* is reached by driving eighty kilometres northward from the *rdzong*. Then it is a few hours on horseback from the *xiang* to the monastery.

The monastery was founded in 1754. Before 1959, there were eighty monks and at present there are fifty. The head of the monastery is sPrul sku rGyal ba g-yung drung. Its assembly hall, temple and meditation hall are all fairly large. There are many religious objects, including about twenty statues, tall and short, of such figures
as sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba, gShen lha ’od dkar, rNam par rgyal ba, Khro bo, sTag la me ’bar, Dran pa nam mkha’, his son Tshe dbang rig ’dzin and Srid rgyal drel dmar, twenty-five thangka and scriptures, including the bKa’ gyur and bKa’ brten.

Compared with other Bonpo monasteries in 'Jo mda’ rdzong, this monastery is in better condition in every respect. It has thirty ’bri and yaks, thirteen goats and sheep, five horses and mules, and a car.

(71) dKar tshang Monastery

dKar tshang Monastery is located near Bla khri village, like Bla khri Monastery, for whose location, see above.

The monastery was founded in 1696. Before 1959 there were fifteen monks, but at present no more than ten. Although this is an old monastery with a long three-hundred-year history, it is still very small. Its religious objects include the following: seven statues, tall and short, of sTon pa gShen rab and Dran pa nam mkha’; forty thangka; and several books.

For their source of income, as in other Bonpo monasteries, the monks depend on the support of households and earn money by performing religious services among the people in the villages. They have no property apart from eight yaks and thirteen sheep, given by devotees.

From 'Jo mda’ rdzong to Chab mdo, it takes six hours by car. To go up to lHo rong rdzong, we must drive a further seven hours via Ri bo che. On our way, at a pass near Chab mdo, we were all of a sudden struck by a heavy snowfall, which caused us difficulty and risks. Between Ri bo che and lHo rong rdzong the road is fairly good and does not, therefore, present that much difficulty.
(68) rDis bon Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
lHo rong rdzong

lHo rong rdzong is in the north-east of Tibet. It covers an area of 8,108 square kilometres, of which 85,000 mu is farmland, nine million mu is pasturceland and 1,270,000 mu natural forest. It has a population of about 36,000. There are eleven xiang and one town.

During the period of the btsan po, it was under the Tibetan imperial government and later under Mongol rule. Around 1644, the area was incorporated into the land holdings of Chab mdo Monastery. In 1725, control of the rdzong was transferred to the government of Tibet. In 1959, the people's commune of lHo rong rdzong was set up. The rdzong is within the administration of Chab mdo region.

lHo rong is highly productive. It possesses about twenty mineral veins, such as gold, silver, copper, coal, asbestos and others. It's people are largely semi-nomadic, and the area is home to a great many animals, such as leopards, bears, wild yaks, deer, musk deer, otters and other carnivores and herbivores.

(72) Khra rgan Monastery

The formal name of the monastery is Khra dgon gYung drung kun grags gling. It is also known as Nyi phug sgrub. It is located in Wa sgo xiang, dMar ri qu. From the rdzong, dMar ri qu is reached by travelling twenty kilometres eastward. Then, driving ninety kilometres in a north-easterly direction, one reaches Khra rgan Monastery. The monastery was founded in 1699 by Khra chags med bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

Khra chags med was the son of Gling Ra khra rgan po of the royal lineage of Gling 'Gu zi. During his childhood, Khra chags med lived in Yag yul. At that time prophecies were made by Ma mchog Srid pa rgyal mo that Khra chags med should go and preach the Bon doctrine in sacred places in mNga’ ris, Western Tibet and Central Tibet in order to establish places for the practice of meditation.

In accordance with these prophecies, Khra chags med visited several sacred places in mNga’ ris, and in particular, lHun grub sgang, the monastery of the Zhu family in gTsang (also known as Ri zhing Monastery, No.4). He obtained initiations and teachings of Bon in the presence of Blo gros bstan rgyal of the Zhu lineage, who upheld the Zhu tradition. Motivated by the prophecies, he went to Khams and searched for a place to settle down. He found the place, where he later founded Khra rgan Monastery, very auspicious. Before he founded the monastery a small religious establishment was already there. It is said that the monastery is called Khra rgan (old falcon) because the mountain behind the monastery looks like a falcon warming itself in the sun.

There was no line of reincarnation in this monastery, but a series of successors. Khra chags med was succeeded by Zhu btsun gYung drung khri bde as the head of the monastery. From him a succession of masters coming from the Zhu family
followed. The lineage of the monastery was, therefore, as follows:

1. Khra chags med bKra shis rgyal mtshan
2. Zhu btsun gYung drung khri bde
3. Zhu ston Tshul khrims grags pa
4. Zhu btsun gYung drung dbang grags
5. Zhu gYung drung bsod nams
6. Zhu Nyi ma grags pa
7. Zhu Phun tshogs dbang rgyal
8. Zhu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
9. Zhu rGyal ba dbang grags
10. Zhu bsTan pa dbang grags
11. Shi cu drung mu
12. Zhu ston gYung drung rgyal ba
13. Zhu Shes rab bsTan 'dzin
14. sNan zhig Grub thob
15. Zhu Zla ba grags pa
16. Kun mkhyen Nyi ma bsod nams grags pa
17. rGyal sras Phun tshogs rnam rgyal
18. Zhu rNam rgyal dbang grags
19. Zhu lHun grub rgyal mtshan
20. Zhu gYung drung ye shes
21. Zhu Nyi nyi lags
22. bsTan 'dzin lhun grub
23. bsTan pa dbang rgyal
24. A drung
25. Zhu bsTan 'dzin gtsug phud
26. Zhu bsTan 'dzin grags pa
27. Nyan sgom Rin chen rgyal mtshan
28. Zhu ston bsTan pa lhun grub
29. Zhu Khri 'od
30. Zhu khri gYung drung grags rgyal
31. mKhan po sKal bzang g-yung drung

In 1951 mKhan po sKal bzang g-yung drung was still the head of the monastery and his successors right up to 1991 have maintained the tradition of studying, practising and preaching the Bon religion in the monastery.

This monastery is large and its architectural design is elegant. It stands in marvelous surroundings with a forest of many different trees where one hears large and small birds singing here and there. It is a wonderful place of beauty rarely seen elsewhere.

As for religious objects, there are twenty-two gilt-bronze statues such as gShen
lha 'od dkar, sTon pa gShen rab, rNam par rgyal ba, Byams ma, Dran pa nam mkha', sTag la me 'bar, Khro bo and Srid pa rgyal mo. There is also one silver statue, one bronze statue, twelve copper statues, three fine thangka, a reliquary stupa, scriptures and a complete set of ceremonial implements, including a white conch, a pair of cymbals, a large oboe, a trumpet made of bone and a silver incense burner. Before 1959, there were thirty-one monks and this number has been maintained, led by bSam gtan tshul khrims.

Annual Services and Practice of Rituals according to the Zhu tradition
1. In the 1st month there is a congregation and performances of religious dances.
2. In the 2nd month there are religious services for thirty days.
3. In the 3rd and 4th months there is a performance of rituals of sTag la me 'bar for seven days.
4. In the 5th month there is the commemoration of Khra chags med bKra shis rgyal mtshan for two days.
5. In the 6th month there is the performance of the ceremony stong mchod and the observance of the smyung gnas fast.
6. In the 7th month there is the performance of the ritual Ma tri 'bum sgrub for seven days.
7. In the 9th month the ritual cycle of Khro bo is performed.
8. In the 12th month the dgu gtor rite is performed.

Daily activities:
In the morning, prayers are said, followed by the practice of meditation and performance of the ceremony of water offering. In the evening, the propitiation of the religious protectors such as Ma, bDud and bTsan is performed. The religious protectors are known as bka 'skyong. In addition to these religious services, the ritual cycles of Khro bo, dBal gsas, sTag la, Phur pa, Ge khod, sPyi 'dul and Khyung dmar are also performed.

The monastery's personnel consists of a lama, an abbot, a disciplinarian, two chanting conductors, a storekeeper for the bla brang and two storekeepers for the monastery.

With regard to their source of income, at present the monks themselves raise sixty-two 'bri and yaks. Apart from this, they must derive their living mainly from the support of their own parents and the religious services they perform in villages. They are customarily given a 'bri or a yak, along with one hundred yuan, for a programme of religious service lasting three days, performed by five monks.
(73) Lam Iha Monastery

Lam Iha Monastery is in Shog lnga xiang, Nag lcog qu. From lHo rong rdzong, Nag lcog qu is reached by driving two hours in a south-easterly direction. It is a day’s ride on horseback up to Lam Iha Monastery. There is also a shorter way, from dPa’ shod rdzong.

The date of this monastery’s establishment remains uncertain, but it is counted as one of the earlier monasteries in Khams. Before 1959, there were sixty-eight monks in the monastery. At present there are thirty-three. The condition of the assembly hall, temple and religious objects is reasonably good. As in other Bonpo monasteries, the monks must earn their living by going out to perform religious services in villages as well as receiving support from their own families.

(74) Bal tho Monastery

Bal tho Monastery is near Bal tho village, Shing rong xiang. From the rdzong, Shing rong xiang is reached by driving northward for one hour. Then, to reach the monastery, a five-hour ride further north on horseback is required.

No clear record of the date of establishment of this monastery has been found, but it is said to be one of the earlier ones. At present there are twenty-four monks.

The monastery is somewhat in decline in all aspects of its exterior and interior. Like other monasteries, for means of livelihood it is dependent on support from the monks’ families and going out to perform religious services in the villages.

(75) Brag dkar Hermitage

This hermitage is in Ri dmar xiang, lHo rong rdzong. Ri dmar xiang is reached by driving twenty kilometres eastward from the rdzong.

This is a very small hermitage. Nothing seems to have been written about this establishment before 1959. At present there are three hermits.

From lHo rong rdzong to mDzo sgang rdzong, it is 330 kilometres. Since the region is so mountainous within lHo rong rdzong, travelling can be laborious. Going by way of sPom mda’ airport, the road is easy, but it can take eleven hours.
(72) Khra rgon Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(72) Khra rgon Monastery, Plate 2 Monks of the monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
(72) Khra rghan Monastery, Plate 3 The Monastery’s Lama bsam gtan tshul khrims (right)
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
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mDzo sgang rdzong

mDzo sgang rdzong lies in the south-west of Tibet. It covers an area of 11,726 square kilometres of which farmland occupies 42,000 mu, and forest 392 mu. The population of this rdzong is about 380,000, most of which is engaged in agriculture. Forestry and livestock farming are doing quite well. The rdzong has one qu, sixteen xiang and 160 village councils under its direct control.

This rdzong, which had been under the rule of the government of Tibet, was set up as the people’s administration of mDzo sgang in 1959. The rdzong is blessed with such animals as wild yaks, leopards, bears, otters and musk deer, which thrive in the vast forest, and, moreover, with considerable mineral resources, such as gold, silver, iron and coal. There are nine Bonpo monasteries in this rdzong. This is the most prosperous rdzong, in terms of Bonpo tradition, next to sTeng chen rdzong.

(76) sTong mda' Monastery

The monastery is also known as mDo dar dgon. Driving for twenty-six kilometres eastward from the rdzong, we come to mDo dar village in dBu yag xiang, from which a one hour’s drive up the mountain brings us to sTong mda' Monastery. This monastery is situated in the midst of several agricultural villages.

The monastery was founded by gTsug phud tshul khrims, from whom the lineage of the heads of the monastery has led down to the ninth. Religious objects possessed by the monastery are as follows: a clay image of sTon pa gShen rab six cubits high; two white stupas, six cubits high; and more than ten masks of various kinds. Before 1959, the monastery had twenty-eight monks; this has now decreased to only seven. The practice of rituals is much the same as those of other Bonpo monasteries.

Fifteen kilometres west of the monastery is a holy mountain called sGro ra Pad ma 'byung gnas. It looks just like a Garuda flying with its wings fluttering. Every year on the 15th day of the 6th month, the local people get together to circumambulate the mountain, perform religious dances and engage in other festivities.

(77) La ngu Monastery

The monastery is located near Srib gru kha village, Krung gling kha xiang. The village is fifty kilometres south-west of mDzo sgang rdzong. The absence of a road makes travelling there very difficult. The place called Srib gru kha used to be the site of one of the main ferries across the river rGyal mo rNgul chu.

This is one of the oldest Bonpo monasteries and is said to have been founded by Rin spungs dBang rgyal. It stands in front of Mount Rin chen spungs. Initially, it was built on verdant grassland. Later, it was moved to a larger place up the mountain. Though small, La ngu Monastery has special old architectural characteristics. A story
tells why the monastery is called La ngu: at the time of its inauguration, musical instruments such as conch, oboe, drum, and cymbals were played, making the local deities of the four directions and those who resided on the mountain pass (la), cry (ngu) for joy. The monastery's religious objects are of considerable quality and include statues of sTon pa gShen rab, Byams ma and sTag la me 'bar. There was also an image of the Buddha, said to have descended to the monastery by itself.

In the old days, there were sixty-two monks in this monastery. This number had diminished to thirty-five in 1959, and at present there are only fifteen monks, led by Tshul khrims mnam dag 'od zer. This lama is very learned in the Bon tradition, its history and other sciences.

Practice of Rituals

1. In the 1st Tibetan month, from the 4th day to the 6th, there is the commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan.
2. In the 3rd month, from the 14th to the 22nd, the ritual cycle of Phur pa is performed.
3. In the 5th month there is the thousand offerings of sacrificial cake to sTag la me 'bar.
4. In the 9th month, from the 1st to the 9th day, the rtsa rlung meditation is practised and from the 14th to the 21st, there is the performance of the gunacakra offerings to Khro bo.

Daily Activities

From five o'clock to seven in the morning, the monks practise meditation. In the evening, from seven to eight, they perform the bsang ritual and recite prayers.

(78) Sa bla Monastery

The monastery is located near gCig yon village, sTobs 'bangs xiang. It is sixty kilometres from the rdzong to the village. As there is no road the trip can be very difficult.

It is said that this monastery was founded in 1497. Before 1959, there were ten monks in the monastery. The number has been reduced to only five now. In spite of its long history of some five hundred years, it has remained something like a small hermitage and has only a few religious objects, such as the statues of sTon pa gShen rab, rNam par rgyal ba, Byams ma and sTag la me 'bar.

(79) Ri sna Monastery

The monastery is located in Krung gling kha xiang, on the eastern bank of rGyal mo rnuig chu, in the southern part of mDzo sgang rdzong. In the old days the place was called Rab pa. The distance between the rdzong and the xiang is no more
than sixty kilometres, but it is very difficult to traverse.

No record concerning the date of establishment of this monastery has remained. Still it is one of the fairly old Bonpo monasteries.

Before 1959, there were nineteen monks; today there are ten. In the temple there are just a few religious objects, like the statues of sTon pa gShen rab and Yum chen Byams ma. In terms of facilities, it is poorly equipped.

Rituals are practised in the same manner as those of other Bonpo monasteries. The monks rely mainly on support from their own families for their living and occasionally go out to perform religious services in villages to supplement their income.

(80) mDangs 'phyar Monastery

This monastery is located near Bal stod village, in the northern part of the former Rab pa village, in the present Krung gling kha xiang, which lies on the eastern side of the river rGyal mo rngul chu, in the southern part of mDzo sgang rdzong. It is a mere sixty kilometres from the rdzong to the village, but it is still a difficult distance to be travelled.

There are no historical documents clearly recording the date of the monastery’s establishment and there is little oral information. Still, based on the architectural aspect of the building, it is said to be one of the fairly old Bonpo monasteries.

Before 1959, there were thirty monks, and at present thirty-two. The assembly hall, temple and religious objects are in quite good condition. The monastery’s activities have no unique characteristics, but are much the same as other Bonpo monasteries.

As for their source of income, the monks mainly receive support from their families and the occasional performance of religious services in the monastery or in villages.

(81) Shug rdzong Monastery

The monastery is near 'Os bab village, Krung gling kha xiang. Originally, the present Krung gling kha was called Rab pa, and is located on the east side of the river rGyal mo rngul chu, in the southern part of mDzo sgang rdzong. It is sixty kilometres from the rdzong to Krung gling kha, and 'Os bab village is in the northern part of the xiang, close to Bal stod village. The absence of a road makes travelling very difficult.

It is not clear when this monastery was founded. Before 1959, there were eighty-five monks and at present there are thirty-five. There is an assembly hall, a temple and other buildings of appropriate design and size. There are religious objects of considerable quality, such as the statues of sTon pa gShen rab, Byams ma, mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and Khro bo. As for scriptures, there is the bKa’
'gyur and other books of ritual practice.

In regard to rituals and services, they practise what is commonly done in other Bonpo monasteries, and have no special activities. For their living, the monks depend mainly on their own parents and relatives for financial support. Occasionally they are invited to perform religious services, such as conducting funerals, which helps supplement their income.

(82) Rab pa Monastery

Rab pa Monastery is located near Rab pa village (which is now called Krung gling kha) on the east side of the river rGyal mo rngul chu, in the southern part of mDzo sgang rdzong. From the rdzong to Rab pa is a distance of only sixty kilometres, but as there is no road, the going is very hard.

Although there is no recorded date for the establishment of this monastery, it is said to be one of the oldest Bonpo monasteries. Before 1959, there were no more than eight monks, but at present there are fourteen. The name of this monastery is said to be related to the fact that the area where the monastery is located is so large that it would take a day on horseback to circumambulate it. The place is therefore the best among the local areas and that is why it is called Rab pa, the “Best”.

In the temple of the monastery are several statues of sTon pa gShen rab, Dran pa nam mkha’ and Byams ma, a few thangka and Bonpo scriptures. Otherwise the facilities are very poor.

As for the monks’ main source of income, they depend, just as in the other small Bonpo monasteries, on their own parents and relatives for support. Besides this, to make their living, they must supplement this support by going out to perform religious services.

(83) dByibs pa Monastery

dByibs pa Monastery is located near dByibs pa village, which is to the west of Gug pa village in Zhwa gling kha xiang. Zhwa gling kha is situated on the east side of the river rGyal mo rngul chu, in the southern part of mDzo sgang rdzong. From the rdzong to Zhwa gling kha is a distance of more than fifty kilometres. Although the distance is not great, travelling it is very hard because of the absence of a road.

The date of this monastery’s establishment is unknown, but according to oral history it is one of the oldest Bonpo monasteries. Before 1959, the monastery had forty-seven monks. At present, it is a moderate-sized Bonpo monastery of thirty-one monks, with an assembly hall, a temple, monks’ quarters and other buildings. It has religious objects appropriate to its size and needs, such as statues of sTon pa Khri gtsug rgyal ba, Dran pa nam mkha’, his son Tshe dbang rig ’dzin, sTag la me ’bar and Srid pa rgyal mo, thangka, the bKa’ ’gyur, and other books concerning religious
practice. Rituals and services are practised in this monastery as they are in other Bonpo monasteries of average size. It has no special activities.

As for the monks' main source of income, they receive financial support from their own parents and relatives. The monastery itself has no other means of earning revenue. Occasionally the monks are invited to perform religious services, such as funerals, in villages, which helps supplement their income.

(84) lTag tsha Monastery

lTag tsha Monastery is located near Su mgo village, on the bank of the river rGyal mo rngul chu, to the south of Gug pa village, Zhwa gling kha xiang. Zhwa gling kha xiang is in the southern part of the rdzong and Su mgo village is more than forty kilometres from the rdzong. It is a very difficult distance to travel because there is no road.

In spite of there being no recorded date for its establishment, this monastery is also customarily said to be a fairly old Bonpo monastery.

Before 1959, there were seven monks in the monastery, but at present there are fourteen. The main religious objects in the monastery's temple are statues of sTon pa gShen rab, mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Byams ma and others, as well as several thangka and books. Apart from these it has hardly any facilities.

As for rituals and services, the monks perform the bsang ritual in the morning and recite prayers in the evening. They perform the common daily activities. There are no rituals or services specific to this monastery. The monks' main source of income is, much the same as in other poor Bonpo monasteries, financial support from their own parents or relatives. The monastery itself has no means of generating revenue. Occasionally the monks are invited to perform religious services, such as funerals, in villages, which helps supplement their income.

Proceeding north from mDzo sgang rdzong by car, through the grassland of sPom mda', where an airfield is situated, and along the river rGyal mo rngul chu, one arrives at dPa' shod rdzong. Driving from mDzo sgang rdzong to dPa' shod rdzong takes six and a half hours. When we reached the district of dPa' shod rdzong, the way had been blocked to traffic by road construction, which prevented us from proceeding. After a long wait of five and a half hours, the road was finally opened.
(76) sTong mda’ Monastery
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)

(77) La ngu Monastery, The monastery’s Lama tshul khrims rtam dag ’od zer
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
dPa' shod rdzong

dPa' shod rdzong is in eastern Tibet and is part of Chab mdo region. The rdzong was created by the Tibetan government about eighty years ago. It covers an area of 12,564 square kilometres, of which 734,000 mu is forest. It has a population of 33,000 and administratively consists of one qu, one town and fourteen xiang, which contain 125 village councils.

dPa' shod is said to have got its name from the village that used to be near (shod meaning “nearby place”) Mount dPa' rgod. dPa' shod Bla brang was founded in 1694. In 1959, the people’s administration of dPa’ shod rdzong was established.

This rdzong stretches over the basin of three rivers, rGyal mo rngul chu, rDza chu and 'Bri chu. While higher and mountainous in the north-east, the rdzong contains deep gorges formed along the river rGyal mo rngul chu.

This rdzong is rich in natural resources, such as iron, coal and aluminum, and is inhabited by many wild animals, including monkeys, deer, musk deer, otters, the rna ba (Ovis ammon hodgsoni), wild sheep and wild yaks. Moreover, it is an area highly productive in medicinal materials like the dByar rtswa dgon 'bu (Cordyceps sinensis), antlers and musk, as well as agricultural products.

(85) dBen mdzod Monastery

dBen mdzod Monastery is situated halfway up the hill, to the west of dBen mdzod (Wa 'bru) village in 'Jo 'ju xiang, dPa’ shod rdzong. From the rdzong, the monastery is reached by driving twenty kilometres eastward on the highway and then riding south for six hours on horseback.

This monastery was founded in 1256. Before 1959, there were only four monks, but at present there are twenty. It is counted as one of the oldest Bonpo monasteries in Chab mdo region, but has not shown much development because of the lack of transport facilities and because of other unfavourable conditions. Currently it has an assembly hall, a temple, monks’ quarters and other buildings, and is fairly well equipped with religious objects such as statues of sTon pa gShen rab, Dran pa nam mkha’, his son Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, rNam par rgyal ba, sTag la me 'bar, mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and Srid pa rgyal mo, as well as several thangka and Bon scriptures.

Rituals and services of this monastery are much the same as those of other Bonpo monasteries of this region. It does not have any special activities.

As the monastery itself has no means of providing a living for the monks, they depend on their own parents and relatives for support.

(86) 'Bur lung Monastery

'Bur lung Monastery is situated halfway up the hill to the east of dBen mdzod (Wa 'bru) village in 'Jo 'ju xiang, dPa’ shod rdzong. From the rdzong, 'Bur lung
Monastery is reached by driving twenty kilometres eastward on the highway and riding south on horseback for six hours.

This monastery was founded by Khro tshang 'Brug Iha in 1096. Before 1959, there were only ten monks, but at present there are thirty. This was the oldest Bonpo monastery in the whole of Tibet. The newly built assembly hall and temple are very fine looking buildings. The religious objects include a clay image of sTon pa gShen rab as tall as the ceiling, statues of Dran pa nam mkha', mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Byams ma and Khro bo, as well as several thangka and Bon scriptures.

The monks, like those in other Bonpo monasteries, depend on support from their own parents and relatives for their livelihood, as the monastery has no means of providing a living for them.

(87) bKra shis rtse Monastery

bKra shis rtse Monastery is also called Wa dag bon dgon. It is located near the village of Wa dag in Gla ge xiang, dPa' shod rdzong. From the rdzong, Wa dag village is reached by driving twenty kilometres eastward on the highway. The monastery is situated halfway up the hill to the south of Wa dag village.

This monastery was founded in 1589. Before 1959, there was a fairly large assembly hall and a temple containing religious objects that included the following: a statue of sTon pa gShen rab as tall as the ceiling, statues of rNam par rgyal ba, Byams ma and the three guardian deities - Ma, bDud and bTsan - each of which was as tall as the ceiling, and other gilt-bronze statues numbering over three hundred. There used to be eighteen monks; at present there are twenty.

The mountain at the back of the monastery is the abode of Dam can Yul lha dkar po, a local deity with one head and two arms. He is depicted as mounted on a nanny goat, holding a knife in his right hand and a black flag in his left. The mountain in front of the monastery is the abode of gZhi bdag Bon thung, a local deity with a blue body. He holds a knife in his right hand and an ensign in his left. The mountain to the right is called IHa g-yag dkar po and the one to the left, rDo rje gzer 'phrang.

As regards rituals and services, in the morning the monks recite prayers, then practise the rtsa lung meditation, followed by further recitation of ritual texts of the tutelary deities. In the evening they propitiate the protective deities, as well as performing the bsur ceremony, which involves casting barley flour into fire.

For their main source of income, the monks depend on their own families for support. Customarily they are not paid for performing religious services in villages, but are paid ten yuan a day for funeral services.

To go to Nying khri from dPa' shod rdzong, one passes through the regions of sPo smad, mThong smad and Klu nang.

The roads in Khams are fraught with difficulty and extreme danger. When we came to the boundary between dPa' shod rdzong and sPo smad rdzong, we were
struck all of a sudden by a small flood from above, and our car was stuck in the mud. We were quite helpless and could not move, but after finally getting help from Chinese soldiers, over thirty in number, who dredged up mud and pulled our car up, we were able proceed on our way. As there were no bridges on the way, we fell into difficulty and danger again.

Another time, when in despair, we received help from a Khams pa tribesman with a devout disposition. He guided us along the route, which led us out of danger.

Then again, when we were passing in front of a sand hill on the confines of mThong smad, our car sank into the sand and we had no way to get out of it. A shovel was the only tool we had and we struggled with it to get our car out of the sand. At the same time, rocks began to roll down frequently from above us, so we had to keep watching out for them. At last we managed to drag the car out and headed in the direction of Nying khri.

It took us seventeen and a half hours to travel from dPa' shod rdzong to Nying khri.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

Chab-mdo County

dPa' shod County

Brag-g-yab County

IHo-rong County

sPo-mes County

mDzo-sgang County

rDza-yul County
Nying khri rdzong

Nying khri rdzong lies in the south-western part of Tibet, at the confluence of the rivers Nyang chu and Yar lung gTsang po. It covers an area of 10,238 square kilometres, 28,000 mu of which is farmland, 565,000 mu is pastureland and 5,020,000 mu forest. Its population is about 26,000. Administratively, it consists of one town.

In 1959, the three old rdzong — Kong po rTse la rdzong, bDe gling rdzong and Jo mo rdzong — were joined together to form Nying khri rdzong and at the same time its people’s administration was established; but in 1964, the administration was dismantled and Nying khri rdzong came under the direct control of Lhasa. Then, in 1976 the administration of Nying khri rdzong was restored again.

The rdzong is situated along the river Yar lung gTsang po. It contains beautiful mountains and the region is rich in natural forest. Along the river there is good farmland where the agriculture is fairly prosperous, as is the pasturage. Various medicinal herbs grow here, cattle thrive and the area is abundant in carnivores and herbivores. Roads are good for travellers. Moreover, this rdzong has much that is of interest, scenically and historically, including Kong po Bon ri, celebrated in Tibet and beyond.

Bon ri, the Great Sacred Place

From rTag gzigs 'Ol mo lung ring, sTon pa gShen rab, accompanied by five attendants, came to rescue his seven horses, which were stolen by the demons of Kong po. sTon pa gShen rab and his attendants travelled down the river Yar lung gTsang po to Kong po, the land of demons. While travelling, sTon pa gShen rab was obstructed along the way by the three evils - klu, bdud and btsan - out of envy, but in spite of all the serious obstacles, he subjugated the land, which belonged to black demons by performing miracles that were beyond all imagination.

Then sTon pa gShen rab and his attendants reached the palace rTse la 'bar ba, where they were welcomed:

"The lady Kong btsun De mo was the first to honour him. Holding a nectar-producing bough of juniper in her hand, she proposed a way in which restitution could be made for the seven horses. The matter was settled through offers of compensation: firstly, by offering the lady Kong bza' khri lcam to sTon pa gShen rab as his wife; secondly, by offering bushels of gold and turquoise; and thirdly, Kong rje, the king of the demons, offered himself and his subjects, who then became sTon pa gShen rab’s attendants."

sTon pa gShen rab then buried many treasures, including the gold and turquoise he received, at the foot of the craggy hills that looked like scattered jewels, so that they would be the essence of the soil of the four quarters of Tibet. Saying prayers to the nectar-producing bough of Kong btsun De mo, he thrust it into the ground there
as a sign of eternity.

On top of Mount gNyan, he also planted a juniper tree as tall as himself, where handprints of his four distinguished disciples still remain. The tree is called sKu shug ldem drug.

He preached the Bon of the Nine Vehicles and he, himself being the lord of the dMu lineage, identified a mountain and gave it the name dMu ri smug po. This is the central peak of Mount Bon ri. The summit is also called lHa ri gyang tho. He entrusted the local deities who reside on various peaks to guard the treasures he had concealed: gYung drung lha gnyan rtsal as the guardian of treasure in the centre, Gangs gnyan stag rtse as the king of the east, Nyang lha btsan drug as the king of the north, bDud nag rngams sgra sgros as the king of the west and gYu 'od sman btsun as the goddess of the south. Kong btsun De mo is the overall protectress of the place and rDzu 'phrul klu dbang is the special protector of treasures.

The sacred mountain Bon ri and its surroundings became a centre of the teachings of Bon. gNya' khri btsan po is said to have descended from the sky onto the summit lHa ri Gyang tho. He was the first king of Tibet. Co'u and 'Tshe mi were the first religious attendants of the king; between them and the king there was the "priest-patron" relationship. The king and his religious attendants resided at the foot of Mount dMu ri smug po and inspired the spreading of the Bon teachings.

Since then a number of the gshen religious practitioners have come up to this holy place and established places for religious practice. dMu ri smug po, the main peak of Mount Bon ri, is the very highest among the peaks, which include lHa ri Gyang tho, Nor bu ri and gShen ri bde ldan. On the slopes and in the valleys of Mount Bon ri, there were the following religious sites: Srid rgyal, sTag bro sa, dGyes ri, dGon rnying, Srin mo phug, dBus phug, Yang dben, Bya de phug, lHa ri Gyang tho, gSang gling, Phug gu, Nyi ma phug, sNang ngog, Thugs dkar brag, Brag dkar zhab sjes, rDzong chung steng, Shel sku sbug and the cemetery Mi yul skyid mthing. Mount Bon ri is, therefore, not only a special place for the Bonpo, but Buddhists as well, who join in its veneration.

Mount Bon ri still receives a stream of pilgrims who accumulate merit by making circumambulations and many prostrations. Mount Bon ri and its surroundings present unearthly scenery, with the beautiful high mountains filled with pine trees, bamboo, medicinal herbs, flowers, herbivores and various kinds of birds.

There were periods of great celebration in the vicinity of the mountain. One of the major festivities in a cycle of twelve years was an event called Nyang po lha gsol, held in the tiger year, from the 1st to the 8th day of the 8th month. During this period, people got together in the seven Bonpo monasteries, including sNang ngog, and went through the ceremonies, true to the time-honoured tradition, of initiation, the fortune-call ritual and religious dances. The lay folk also performed dances, horse-racing, horseback archery and the fortune-call parade.
In the mouse year, on the 8th day of the eighth month, there was the performance of the fortune-call ceremony by the religious practitioners, and dances and songs by the lay folk, as in the case of the tiger year. The origin of this festival goes back to a Bonpo hermit:

In the Sixth Rab byung (1327-1386) a lama of Shel zhig from the Khams province rediscovered a crystal image of sTon pa gShen rab called Dri med shel sku, in the place called Shel sku sbug, and took it back to Khams. Similarly, three text-rediscoverers from Khyung po found, in Thugs dkar brag, a conch believed to be self-grown from the teeth of sTon pa gShen rab and took it back to Khyung po. Following that, in Kong po, a mountain crumbled, rainfall became rare, fields produced little harvest, disease spread among people and cattle, famine struck and many other disasters ensued, which reduced the people to a state of helplessness. During this time, the hermit dPon gsas Ri pa 'brug gsas was in meditation at the cave Thod g.yu phug in Nying khri. The hermit understood the reason for the disasters and said, “The fertility of the soil had been weakened because of the excavation of the treasures, the image Dri med shel sku and the tooth conch.” He therefore made the people perform the ritual of propitiation dedicated to the local deities and the fortune-call ceremony. When these ceremonies ended, rain began to fall, people had a good harvest and the epidemic abated.

The local people propitiated the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo in her various aspects: at Srid rgyal Monastery, it was dKar mo Srid rgyal; at rDzong chung steng Monastery, sMug mo Srid rgyal; and at sTag bro sa, Srid rgyal drel nag. The people of the three villages of Nya mgor propitiated the goddess A ma Yu mo. They also kept the tradition of performing the bsang ritual on the 15th and 30th of every month at different sacred sites of Mount Bon ri where there were special signs, such as footprints of early sages on rocks. This holy mountain, to which all devotees pay homage and make pilgrimages, is one of the most important religious sites in the world and, as such, it is well known.

(88) Srid rgyal Monastery

Srid rgyal dgon chen is situated close to Nying khri rdzong, halfway up the holy mountain Bon ri. Cars can reach the foot of the mountain.

One of the thirty-seven centres of Bon was rKong yul Se mo thang. These centres were established during the time of Mu khri btsan po, a son of gNya’ khri btsan po. It is at Se mo thang in Kong po that Srid rgyal Monastery is located.

The lineage of lamas of this monastery goes back to Ri pa ’Brug gsas. He is said to have been the emanation of the tutelary deity sTag la med ’bar. A historical document states:

“In the land called Bon ri

There will be a hermit named ’Brug gsas
Who will possess a ‘magic-stone’,
Will be courageous and avert wars,
And guide 300,000 people to salvation.
Anyone who contacts him will be rewarded.”

This hermit was born in 1270 in rDza rong into the clan of sMa ra. sMa ra is a subdivision of the clan Rang bya. He was the second son of dKon cog dge, the father, and A lcam U gu, the mother. Having been in religious service until the age of thirteen years, he was given the name ’Brug gsas rgyal. From the time he was fourteen until he was nineteen years of age, he practised meditation. He then listened to various masters in China, 'Jang and Mi nyag. He then became conscious of the impermanence of life. He therefore travelled to Central Tibet and began to practise more meditation, as well as to perform circumambulation around sacred sites such as Ti se, Ma pang, Bye ma g-yung drung and sPos ri ngad ldan. He then travelled down to Kong po in accordance with a prophecy of Srid pa rgyal mo. In 1330, he “opened the door of Bon ri” (that is to say, he identified the mountain), because people had forgotten the fact that the place was one of the thirty-seven religious centres of Bon. This was due to the long period of time that passed since sTon pa gShen rab’s visit to the place and also due to the chequered history of the Bon religion.

’Brug gsas took up residence in the cave gYu phug, near which the three streams of Nyang meet. He remained there in meditation for three years and countenanced deities of tranquil and wrathful aspects from whom he received more prophecies. He was able to make the eight kinds of demons serve him. While devoting himself to retreat-practice of Khro bo and Phur pa on the mountain, he received signs from the goddess dKar mo Srid rgyal for founding a monastery at this place. He therefore founded Srid rgyal Monastery there. The interior and exterior of the monastic buildings were of good design and their religious contents were rich. More than one hundred monks from all directions gathered together there.

He left traces of his body and footprints on rocks around the site of the monastery and passed away at the age of eighty. He promised that he would come back in the form of a bird to see the monastery every year on the 13th day of the 4th Tibetan month. A festival called dGon chen Bya mjal was, thereafter, held on this day and it was the occasion when people went to see the bird.

The line of the heads of the monastery was as follows:
1. Ri pa ’Brug gsas
2. Rag shi Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
3. Bru ston Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
4. La tri hri rda (Zhang zhung language: Dam pa blo gros)
5. sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub
6. rNal ’byor Nam mkha’ lhun grub
Dam pa blo gros, the fourth in the line, founded the monastery called rDzong chung kha. gDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub, the fifth, founded sTag rtse Monastery (No.89) in his later life. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, the eighth, carried out all the duties delegated to him by sPyan gsal Kun 'phel gling, an official serving under the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). As a reward, the Dalai Lama granted the monastery the special privilege of establishing an independent monastic code, building a rooftop and making a double tamarisk-stems-work on the outer wall of the monastic building. At that time there were four hundred monks in the monastery. Mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, the sixteenth in the line, founded dGyes ri Monastery. Khyung sprul gYung drung phun tshogs, the twentieth, founded dGon sding Monastery.

At present there are nineteen monks in the monastery. It has a complete set of the printed edition of the bKa’ 'gyur and a complete set of manuscripts of the bKa’ brten. Besides these, there are ritual texts and more than two hundred volumes of manuscripts.

Annual Ritual Services
1. In the 1st month the birthday ceremony of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan is celebrated on the 5th day, and the memorial service of sTong rgyung mthu chen was held for fifteen days.
2. In the 2nd month there is a recitation of the bKa’ 'gyur and on the occasion of the festival of sTon pa gShen rab’s conversion of demons.
3. In the 3rd month the ritual cycle of one of the five tutelary deities is
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

performed for ten days.

4. In the 4th month, on the 10th day, the birthday of Dran pa nam mkha’ was celebrated; on the 13th, the memorial service of Ri pa 'Brug gsas was held. For the latter, the Zhi khro khri mchod ceremony was performed. This festival, called dGon chen Bya mjal (“Meeting the bird of the great monastery”), was the occasion when the local people would dance and sing, and expect to see the vulture, as Ri pa 'Brug gsas had promised that he would come in the form of the bird every year.

5. In the 5th month, starting from the 5th day, the memorial service of mNyang med Shes rab rgyal mshan was held for ten days.

6. In the 6th month, on the 10th day, the birthday ceremony of Tshe dbang rig 'dzin and Pad ma 'byung gnas was held.

7. In the 7th month, starting from the 15th day, the confession ceremony was held for five days.

8. In the 8th month there was the performance of the ritual cycle of dBal gsas and the offering of the sacrificial cake a hundred times to the guardians of the Bon religion for eight days.

9. In the 9th month, starting from the 13th day, there was the performance of the Ma tri 'bum sgrub ceremony as a memorial service of sTon pa gShen rab for fifteen days.

10. In the 10th month, on the 15th day, a general religious service was held.

11. In the 11th month, there was the performance of the thousand offerings of the sacrificial cake to sTag la me 'bar and the short dgu gtor rite for fifteen days.

12. In the 12th month, there was a the performance of the birthday celebration of sTon pa gShen rab on the 15th day, based on the gYung drung klong rgyas and the dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of Khro bo for fifteen days.

Daily assemblies are held to make offerings to the deities.

Tea is served twelve times a day, and meals with meat and butter are provided according to availability. Apart from this, the monks must make their living by going out and performing religious services in villages and receiving support from their parents and relatives.

(89) sTag rtse gYung drung gling Monastery

sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub, the fifth head of Srid rgyal Monastery, was a native of Amdo. He founded sTag rtse gYung drung gling in 1680.

The line of the heads of this monastery is as follows:

1. sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub
2. Tshe dbang lhun grub  
3. Rin chen tshul khrims  
4. sKal bzang lhun grub  
5. rGyal ba gtsug phud  
6. Tshe dbang mchog legs  
7. lHun grub dbang rgyal  
8. gYung drung dbang rgyal  
9. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan  
10. Tshe dbang rnam rgyal  
11. Tshe dbang bdud 'dul

This monastery formerly possessed such religious objects as the following: a marvelous precious stone found on the peak of Bon ri by sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub; the latter’s image, called lCe me thub; and statues of Phur pa, rTa mgrin and Padmasambhava. There were more than two thousand manuscripts including the bKa’ ‘gyur and bKa’ brten.

At present the monastery possesses relics of sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub, a large white conch, more than ten statues, including Phur pa, rTa mgrin, and bKa’ ‘gyur and bKa’ brten. There are no more than twelve monks in this monastery now.

Near the monastery there is a rock-face upon which sDong sgom bsTan pa lhun grub inscribed the five syllables stag, rtse, g-yung, drung and gling with his fingers, and a stone with his handprint on it. At the back of the monastery there is a meditation cave of the four scholarly ones; to the north there is a rock with an amazing shape, called Ye shes dbal mo; up the valley there is the meditation cave of sDong sgoms bsTan pa lhun grub. The area around the monastery is covered with dense forest of various kinds of trees and is considered to be the abode of the three protective deities, Ma, bDud and bTsan. It stands in a magnificent place surrounded by mountains, the abodes of the local deities, including lHa gnyan gYung drung rtse in the centre, rGyal po Kong gnyan rgyal in the east, bDud nag rNgams sgra sgrog in the west, Ma mo gYu ‘od sman in the south and Nyang lha bTsan drug in the north.

Services and Rituals

1. In the 1st month there is the memorial service of mNyang med Shes rab rgyal mtshan for six days starting from the 1st day of the month, and the performance of the offering of sacrificial cake one hundred times to sTag la me ‘bar and one thousand times to the protective deities for nine days.
2. In the 2nd month, offerings of the sacrificial cake are made to Ge khod gsang drag for eleven days.
3. In the 3rd month, starting from the 8th day, offerings of the sacrificial cake are made to dBal gsas for ten days.
4. In the 5th month, starting from the 8th day, the ritual of rNam rgyal stong
mchod is performed for seven days.
5. In the 9th month, starting from the 22nd day, offerings of the sacrificial cake are made to sTag la me 'bar for ten days.
6. In the 11th month, starting from the 9th day, the sTag rtse me mchod is performed for seven days.
7. In the 12th month, starting from the 22nd day, the dgu gtor rite is performed for ten days.

As for daily activities, the day is divided into four parts: in the first, the bsang ritual; in the second, water offering and the bsur ceremony; in the third, prayers; and last, propitiation of the protective deities.

The local deity residing on the hill behind the monastery is called Pho lha 'Ba' ba dpal ldan and the local deity of sTag rtse village is the goddess A ma Pad mo.

For their means of living, the monks receive an annual stipend of 2,880 yuan from the lama, and the local devotees offer over ten thousand yuan for the expenses of the performance of the rituals mentioned above.

To go to rTse thang in lHo kha from Nying khri rdzong one takes the route that passes through Glang rdzong. The road is reasonably good, but it is very often winding and, moreover, one must go up and across the big mountain pass called sPor thang la. It can, therefore, take some twelve hours to reach rTse thang.

From rTse thang to sNye mo rdzong is a drive of three and a half hours, crossing the large bridge at Chu shur.
Srid rgyal Monastery

(Photo S. G. Karmay 1987)
(89) sTog rtse g'Yung drung gling Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Phuntso Tsering Sharyul 1998)
Plate 2 The Du khang in construction
(Photo S. G. Karmay 1987)
The juniper tree sKu shug ldem drug at Nying khrì
(Photo S. G. Karmay 1987)
Prayer wheels at Nying khri sKu shug Idem drug
(Photograph by S. G. Karmay 1987)
sGar rdzong, mNga’ ris

sGar rdzong lies in the west of Tibet, along the river valleys of the Seng ge gtsang po and sGar gtsang po, and is one of the eighteen rdzong in this region. It is 17,018 square kilometres in area, 8,900 mu of which is farmland. Administratively, it consists of four qu, one town and eleven xiang. There are thirty-six village councils.

The name sGar is said to have come from the many military camps (sGar) that dGa’ ldan tshe dbang set up in this area as reinforcements for the government of Tibet. After that the area came to be called sGar. The rdzong was created in 1959.

The region of sGar is populated by semi-nomads. There are many livestock animals, such as yaks, goats and sheep, oxen, bulls, mdzo and mdzo mo, horses and mules. There is also a considerable amount of wheat, barley and beans harvested. The rdzong is rich in minerals, including coal, white salt, gold, lead and salt. It is, moreover, the habitat of a great many animals, such as wild yaks, yellow leopards, wild asses, black bears, Tibetan lynxes, antelopes, Tibetan antelopes, foxes and wolves. There are also many unique characteristics of sGar rdzong to be seen in the popular old legends, myths, music, dances and other facets of the culture.

sGar rdzong possesses a number of sites of historical interest, including the monasteries of Dri bda’ spos ri, Gyam smyug lha khang, mDun chu Monastery and Gu ru gyam, the Bonpo monastery. Many of the important Bonpo monasteries can still be visited.

(90) Gu ru gyam Monastery

Gu ru gyam Monastery is located in Mon mtsher qu, sGar rdzong. It is 250 kilometres from sGar rdzong to Gangs sTi se. From there, one must travel sixty kilometres further to Mon mtsher xiang, then seven kilometres to Dri bda’ spos ri, and another seven kilometres westward. The distance is long, but the road is in good condition.

The place where Gu ru gyam Monastery is located is called Khyung lung dngul rnkhar, which is one of the oldest Bonpo religious sites. It was there that the capital of the Zhag zhung kingdom was found. It was there too that gShen chen Dran pa nam mkha’, one of the most important Bon masters, flourished. Then the Bon religion’s fortune declined and its religious establishments fell as lamp-light dying from lack of oil. Now they are nothing but names.

In 1936, Khyung sprul ’Jigs med nam mkha’i rdo rje founded the monastery mDo sngags grags rgyas gling at Gu ru gyam. It has now become fairly large and the condition of its buildings, religious objects and offering implements is reasonably good. At present, the monastery is taken care of by the scholar bsTan ’dzin dbang grags, and there are seven monks and three nuns.

In regard to annual services and rituals, those practised at this monastery are much the same as other Bonpo monasteries.
The main Bonpo religious sites in Pu rang rdzong

Pu rang rdzong is in the south-western Tibet. It is 12,497 square kilometres in area, which includes 11,000 mu of farmland. It has a population of 7,300, and consists of three qu and ten xiang. There are fifty-one village councils.

Pu rang is one of the oldest and most celebrated places in Tibetan history. There are a number of sacred sites in this rdzong: Mount Ti se; sPos ri ngad ldan; Mount sMan mo nag snyil, the abode of the goddess Gangs can ma; Gangs tshe ring, where the cave of Mi la ras pa is situated; Mount rTse brgyad, the abode of the goddess Tara; the lake Ma pang g-yu mtsho; the spring mThong ba rang grol, said to be the source of the river Ganges; the cliff Gad pa gser gyi bya phibs; and the lake Gung brgyud dngul gyi mtsho mo. There is also the famous Budhist monastery 'Khor chags.

Pu rang rdzong is populated by semi-nomadic people, and produces one-third of the grain output of the whole mNga’ ris region. It also has good pasturage for yaks, goats and sheep, cows, bulls, horses, donkeys, mules, mdzo and mdzo mo.

Moreover, this rdzong is very rich in mineral resources, such as iron, white salt and gold, and animals, such as yellow leopards, wild yaks, Tibetan lynxes, wild asses, wild sheep, foxes, otters, antelopes, rgo ba, wolves, wild geese and cranes.

Mount Ti se

Mountain Ti se was, originally, in ancient times, a specific holy place of Bon. With the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, it became a holy mountain of both Bonpo and Buddhists, but due to the history of the Bon doctrine, the monastic communities around the mountain were gradually taken over by various Buddhist orders such as bKa’ dgams pa and bKa’ brgyud pa. The venerable Mi la ras pa even claimed to be the proprietor of the mountain.

Ma pang g-yu mtsho

Ma pang g-yu mtsho is an important sacred site for both Bonpo and Buddhists, and is visited every year by many lay and clerical devotees of Bon and pilgrims from other countries. They make circumambulations of the lake, prostrating themselves with all their devotion.
(90) Guru gyam Monastery, Plate 1
(Photograph F. Pommaret 1999)
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Refer to pp. 666–668 for the abbreviations of Tibetan sources.

The bo County

Introduction

The bo, sometimes called The bo gorge (The bo rong) is a long, deep gorge with numerous side-gorges through which flows the The bo Chu nag or 'Brug chu. Geographically it belongs to the sGang gsum rong drug ("three hills and six gorges").

The bo County is located in southeast Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu province in China. The county covers an area of 51,480000 sq km, 60% of which are covered by forest. The county is divided into twelve districts (xiang): sTeng ka, Gyi ba, Kha pa, sTag ra, Nyin ngo, dBang bzang, Huayuan, A zha, rDo ra, Ri dbang, Bya 'bab and La rtse khog. It comprises a total of two hundred and twenty-one villages. The population is 3201, about 80% of which are Tibetan. Most of the inhabitants are farmers who practise both agriculture and animal husbandry.

History

The bo was occupied by A zha in the sixth century, and descendents of A zha’s people may still be found in the following thirteen villages in A zha valley (A zha khog), one of the side-gorges in A zha district (xiang): Nags sked, A rta srib, Khe lam, Phyug bcu, Pe gseb, Nags gong, Nyin pa, bTsun mo, sMad lung, rGyab klu gong ma, rGyab klu 'og ma, lTag srib, Sa dkar sgang. Shortly after A zha’s invasion, the Tibetan army defeated A zha’s forces and annexed the whole The bo area to Tibet. Ancient Chinese sources refer to The bo as Di Zhou (Di is the Chinese pronunciation of The, Zhou the Chinese word for prefecture), and state that it was established as a prefecture in 577 A.D. It is also mentioned that at the time, in addition to the present The bo county area, the prefecture included mDzo dge and Nan ping located in present day southern Gansu. In recent history The bo was conquered from the North by the King of Cone and remained under the control of Cone until the nineteen-forties. The bo was integrated into Cone Autonomous Region in 1950 and established as a separate county in 1962.

It is not certain when Bon first reached the area; according to oral history, it was during the Imperial period when the Yarlung kings unified Tibet and the 'Phags pa rnams gsum spread Bon in Amdo. Later, with the development of Buddhism in the area, many Bonpo monasteries were converted to Buddhism, especially to the dGe lugs pa tradition.

There are more than twenty Buddhist monasteries in The bo, all of which are dGe lugs pa with the exception of sPe gu Monastery which is Sa skya pa.
The first Buddhist monastery in The bo appears to be sTeng ka Monastery, which was founded by dPal Shes rab 'bar, a famous disciple of 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235-1281), and which was later converted to the dGe lugs pa tradition. The dGe lugs pa began to establish monasteries in the area from the late sixteenth century onwards — three monasteries at the end of the sixteenth century, six in the seventeenth century, six in the eighteenth century, three in the nineteenth century, whose foundation date remains unknown.

(91) gTso tshang Monastery

1. Name

gTso tshang Monastery’s full name is gSang sngags smin grol dar rgyas gling. gTso is the family name of gTso 'phags Zla ba rgyal mtshan whose descendents founded the three monasteries — Ze kha, Bya brang and gSer gzhong — that constitute gTso tshang. Since the monastery is presently located in Legs lung village, it is also known as Legs lung Monastery. In the local dialect, the name of the village used to be La lo, but since no one no longer knows the original meaning of the term, the monastery’s name was recently changed to Legs lung, “Good Valley”, because of the term’s positive connotation.

2. Location

In the early nineteen-eighties, the authorities granted permission to rebuild Ze kha, Bya brang and gSer gzhong monasteries together as one monastery at the site of Bya brang Monastery in Bya brang village, where the main assembly hall ('du khang) had escaped destruction. However, since there was no longer enough land there to rebuild all three monasteries, Legs lung village was chosen as a new site. The site is located in Drongtsha ('Brong tsha) valley, 2 km east of the The bo county seat. The mountain behind the monastery (rgyab ri) is part of the sTag sgang range. The monastery, nestled in the mountain, is situated on the north bank of the eastward flowing 'Brug chu river and faces south (latitude: 34°02'93"N, longitude: 103°15'22"E).

The original site of Ze kha monastery (latitude: 34°02'41"N, longitude: 103°14'67"E) is located 1 km northeast.

The original site of Bya brang Monastery is located 2 km east of county town on the opposite river bank (latitude: 34°02'27"N, longitude: 103°15'35"E).

The original site of gSer gzhong Monastery (latitude: 34°35'45"N, longitude: 103°30'27"E) is located 5 km east of county town on the north bank of the river.

3. History

According to oral tradition, the three brothers and great Bonpo masters Do
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Bhons monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai. Gansu and Sichuan. By the thirteenth century, three masters came to Amdo to spread the Bon doctrine. They opened many hermitages (ri khrod), some of which later became monasteries (for instance, sNang zhig Monastery No. 180, one of the largest Bonpo monasteries in Tibet, was originally a hermitage founded by Do 'phags chen mo). The three masters played a key role in the first spread of Bon in Amdo. There are descendents of gTso still living in The bo, Khri ka, Shar khog (=Zung chu) and rGan rgya in Amdo. Kyang za Yig rtsis ma, the mother of the three masters, also a fervent Bonpo, established her main residence at a site known as dGu skyang. gTso 'phags Zla ba rgyal mtshan is believed to have travelled extensively throughout the area, actively spreading the Bon religion. Although he founded only a number of sacred sites (and no monastery), he made a profound impression on the local culture and traditions. One of his mother’s sacred sites and his main ritual and cremation sites are located at Chu gter rdzong, on Brag dkar bya rgod, a sacred mountain (gnas ri) in Amdo. The first Bonpo monasteries were founded much later (only four to five generations ago) by gTso 'phags’s descendents. At present the remaining known descendents of gTso 'phags live in the three villages that are financing the reconstruction of the three monasteries. Five of the families live in Ra nang village which is responsible for Ze kha Monastery, four in Bya brang village which is responsible for Bya brang Monastery, and two in gSer gzhong village which is responsible for gSer gzhong Monastery. There is no doubt that the 'Phags pa rnamgs gsum were lay people and that their religious tradition was permeated by indigenous customs and beliefs. However, the monasteries — which emerged much later — seem to have been strongly influenced by Buddhism.

Since gTso tshang Monastery in fact comprises three monasteries — Ze kha, Bya brang, and gSer gzhong — it is important to mention here the information concerning their respective historical backgrounds.

Ze kha

The date of Ze kha Monastery’s foundation and the identity of its founder remain obscure; even A skal, the only surviving monk who has some knowledge on the history of gTso tshang and who wrote the only historical account of the monastery (TGLG) is uncertain. The first master of Ze kha Monastery, Shar ba khri skyang, was born in sTod mtsho 'phel into one of the three Khri skyang villages of Zung chu County in rNga ba Prefecture; the second master was born in rGya myi ya ru (the exact location of which remains unknown). The third master was born in En 'dzin mtsho 'dus. During his lifetime the monastery’s assembly hall was destroyed by fire and rebuilt. He travelled to Central Tibet and Khams. He was renowned as a saint, and was believed to be endowed with miraculous powers (grub rtags); He is said to have founded the monastery’s 'cham (monastic dance). The fourth master remains unidentified. The fifth, Bla ma skyabs, was born in lDong ba village of Brag
sgom ba; his father was called Adam and his mother Klumo. He broke his religious vows, so three influential monks of Ze kha — Dran pa skyabs, bSod nams dar rgyas and A rdo — invited Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, a descendent of Do 'phags chen po, then aged five, from rNga khog to take his place in 1930. However, the new incumbent also broke his vows when he turned twenty-five, and was replaced by his brother Bon slebs Nam mkha’ bstn ’dzin, the present master of gTso tshang Monastery. Before 1958, Ze kha Monastery comprised a two storey assembly hall with five rooms on each floor, a common house (spyi khang) with nine rooms and a two-storey building with five rooms called rNga sgra khang. According to oral tradition, the monastery was built on the site of an ancient Chinese Han fort.

Bya brang

Although the real name of Bya brang Monastery’s first lama remains unknown, he was locally known as gSer so can and was born in dGu skyang. According to oral tradition, he left dGu skyang with a retinue in search of an auspicious place to build a monastery. Disappointed by the first two sites where he expected to receive some favourable omen, he continued his search. As he was passing through a place called Nags 'bul beyond Tsha bzo mountain, he came upon a dead body which turned out to be that of the son of the A bze village chief who had been killed by a gang of robbers. He covered up the corpse, left his favourite dog behind to guard the corpse, and went to look for the deceased man’s father. He eventually met the chief and his entourage who were looking for the son. The chief, moved by the Lama’s solicitude for his dead son, requested him to become his spiritual master and offered him land on which to build the monastery, as well as fields and an estate to support it. The chosen site was known as Bya brang (“Bird’s chest”) because of its garuda-like shape. gSer so can accepted the offer and thus Bya brang Monastery was built. His successor and incarnation was born in Mar sgur village not far from the monastery. Not much is known about the third incarnation except that he too was born in Mar sgur. However there are many fantastical tales relating his miraculous deeds circulating among the local Bonpo community. The fourth incarnation was born in En ‘dzi’i snya bza’. The fifth was born in 1918, and his father was Klumo bsod nams. He studied under Hor btsun bsTan ’dzin blo gros and obtained the Rab 'byams pa degree at gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2), and thus acquired a reputation as a learned lama. He built a new assembly hall. He died in 1958 at gYung drung gling. Before 1958, the monastery comprised a new assembly hall built of wood with five rooms on each floor, and a two-storey common house (spyi khang) with five rooms on each floor, likewise built of wood.

gSer gzhong

The first master of gSer gzhong Monastery, a descendent of gTso 'phags called
Thor cog can, arrived from Dwang ra in the North to look for a place to build a monastery. He stopped at the site of gSer gzhong one night to rest and dreamt that a fox had stolen one of his boots, thus preventing him from travelling further. However, he found the fox's den with his boot inside. Thor cog can took this as a favourable omen and decided to build the monastery there. Its construction was financed by A nag dbang chen and gShen tsha glang thar.

Thor cog can's reincarnation was born in sTag ri snya nang. The following incarnation and third lama of the monastery was born in En 'dzii'i nyin ri. The fourth, Shes rab bstan 'dzin was born at sGang ri kha in 1907 and was enthroned at the age of six. He studied under Kun bzang tshang from sNang zhig in The bo and later went himself to sNang zhig to further his studies. He also travelled to central Tibet with an entourage. On the way, at Sog sde in Nag chu kha, he subdued a demon, a feat which earned him considerable fame and popularity. After spending three years at gYung drung gling and seven years at Grwa sa 'og ma i.e. sTag rtse ri khrod in Kong po to study and collect funds for the monasteries, he returned to The bo where he died in 1954 at the age of forty-seven.

Another incarnation of the same lama was born almost at the same time, in 1916. His father was named Klu 'bum and his mother gNam sman 'tsho. He was enthroned at the age of twelve and his appointed tutor (yongs 'dzin) was Tshe dbang shes rab. He left the monastery at a young age to search for his own spiritual teacher and whom he found in the person of bSe ba drung ram pa Shes rab phun tshogs at sKyang tshang Monastery (No. 202). He studied and practised assiduously for many years until his master’s death, after which he returned to The bo where he spent four years at bDe gsal ri khrod, a hermitage he had founded. He then travelled to Central Tibet with two students via rKyang phyag. There is a record of all the Bonpo and Buddhist monasteries and sacred sites of Amdo, Khams, gTsang, dBus, Nag chu kha, mNga' ris which he visited on his way. He also studied under Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan for two years. While in Central Tibet, he made a three-year retreat to practise the secret Ma rgyud tantra in a cave at lHa ri gyang tho where King dMu khri btsan po is said to have practised the sPyi spungs tantra of the Bon religion. A message from his monastery informing him of a disaster and requesting him to return drew him from his retreat. Back in The bo he chose to stay at the hermitage which he had recently established and not at his residence in the monastery. He became renowned throughout the area as an outstanding lama. He died in 1958 in Cone.

In addition to the above-mentioned lamas of the main lineage, there are many other famous masters and practitioners whose stories are well known by the local population. Before 1958, the monastery comprised a three-storey assembly hall with seven rooms on each floor, a three-room sgrub khang and a five-room spyi khang, all built of wood.
In the early nineteen-eighties, the elder monks from all three monasteries gathered to discuss how to rebuild the three monasteries together (permission was granted for only one monastery). They sought the advice of Bon slebs Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin, the head lama of Ze kha at the time, and requested him to supervise the reconstruction of gTso tshang Monastery. The new assembly hall has twelve pillars. The most sacred objects within are a statue of sTon pa gShen rab which was discovered by dBal khyung sMon lam rgyal mtshan at gNas chen gSang ba yang rdzong, and brought to the monastery by Bon lsebs Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin.

4. Hierarchical system

- bla ma
- dbon po
- dbu mdzad
- dge skos
- gnyer pa,
- ’go bdag bla ma
- las sne
- spyi ba
- dkor gnyer or lha gnyer
- mar chen
- ja mar
- ja g-yog
- chu len

Two common practices in monasteries are mang ja, tea offering and ’gyed phogs, money and other offerings distributed among the monks during assemblies.

5. Current number of monks

There are thirty-three monks and novices in gTso tshang Monastery.

6. Current education

At first A skal only taught the young monks reading and reciting. Later he began to teach a little grammar from texts such as the Sum bcu pa and rTags ’jug. In 1996, Bon slebs Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin sent sTag tsha Kun grol from rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) to gTso tshang to be the head of a meditation college, to teach Tibetan, Bonpo theory and practice to all the monks, and to guide the three-year meditation retreat (lo gsum) following the tradition (phyag len) of rTogs ldan Monastery. According to this tradition, The lo gsum must begin on the 11th day of the 4th month according to the Tibetan calendar and the first period of the first year begins with the practice of meditation according to the Khrid yig dmar mo mdzub tshugs for one hundred nights. The second period of the first year
begins on the 1st of September with the practice of meditation according to the rTsa lung gsang mdzod by Kun grol grags pa for one hundred nights. The first period of the second year is devoted to the introduction (sngon 'gro) to the rDzogs chen tradition according to the bKa'lung rgya mtsho by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1934) for one hundred nights, and the second period to rDzogs chen meditation for one hundred nights. In the third year, the Khrid yig damar mo mdzub tshugs is again used as a base for practice as sngon 'gro and bcud len for one hundred nights, followed by the Tshe dbang bod yul ma, including the mun mtshams (meditation in darkness), for one hundred nights. Teachings during the lo gsum are based on the following works: the Ma rgyud cycle; Khrid yig damar mo mdzub tshug of Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700); the bKa'lung rgya mtsho, the sDe snod mdzod and the bsKyed rdzogs lha gnyen shel gong by Shar rdza; the Bon rang lugs kyi khrid gzhung du ma las btus pa'i byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i dmigs khrid gshen bstan gsal ba'i sgron me (also known as Tshul chen lam rim) by Tshul chen Tshul khrims bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan.

7. Educational exchange

gTso tshang Monastery has close ties with rTogs ldan Monastery, the seat of Bon slebs Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin. Thus Bon slebs sends educated monks to gTso tshang to teach and gTso tshang sends some of its young monks to rTogs ldan to study. rGod po (No.92) and gTer ri (No.97) used to be branch monasteries of gSer gzhong Monastery.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month, 3rd-5th day: celebration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan's anniversary during which the monks perform the dge spyod ritual and invite mNyam med for the gling skor; the 6th day marks the beginning of smon lam during which the bDe gshegs stong gi mtshan brjod is recited once a day. Ze kha Monastery had their 'cham dance on the 8th day followed by the gtor bzlog rite on the 9th day. Bya brang Monastery performed their 'cham on the 13th day, which was also followed by gtor bzlog rite. gSer gzhong Monastery exhibited its gos sku (a large embroidered tangkha) on the 15th day and its smon lam ceremonies ended on the 16th day with the gtor bzlog rite.

- 3rd month, 1st-17th day: the Du tri su recitation practised, without interruption, by the monks and lay people together (male and female alike); participants must practise in silence (thun), while circumambulating the monastery (skor ba) the whole time. The transmission (dbang) of the Du tri su cycle is given on the 8th.

- 4th month, 7th-16th day: the mChod pa stong mchod ritual is performed (7th-12th day: the stong mchod ritual in conjunction with the Klong rgyas
ceremony, 13th-16th day: the ceremony of fasting known as the smyung gnas yar tshogs together with the dGe bsnyen lha lnga ritual).

- 5th month, 1st-15th day: the dbyar gnas ritual in which all the monks of different grades, drang srong ba and gtsang gtsug pa must participate in the great ritual known as Ma tri sgrub chen. The practitioners of the dbyar gnas must also recite the Kun dbyings sku lnga 'i cho ga and the sPang skong once a day. The transmission of the bzlog chog was given on the 16th day.

- 8th month, 1st-7th day: the ritual service (zhabs brtan sku rim), consisting of one thousand bskang ba and tshogs for the tutelar (yi dam) and protective deities (bka' skyong) in conjunction with the ritual cycle of the deity gSang drag, had to be completed within the period. The ritual ended with the performance of the srung zlog bsad gsum of the gSang drag cycle.

- 10th month, starting on the 26th day: seven-day ritual of the dBal gsas cycle with the 'cham dance on the 29th.

- 12th month, 21st-29th day: ritual known as dgu gtor during which the srung zlog of the deity sTag la is performed.

In addition to the above-mentioned annual ceremonies there are monthly rituals known as the Cho ga bcu gnyis, “The Twelve Rituals” sponsored by each of the monks in turn:

dPal ldan dus 'khor in the 1st month
Byams ldan rgyal ba in the 2nd month
Kun dbyings sku lnga in the 3rd month
rNam dag byams ma in the 4th month
Kun rig sgron ma in the 5th month
dGe bsnyen lha lnga in the 6th month
Kun gsal byams ma in the 7th month
sMon lam mtha' yas in the 8th month
gYung drung rnam 'joms in the 9th month
sMan bla in the 10th month
dGe spyod in the 11th month
rGyal ba rgya mtsho in the 12th month

10. Books held in the monastery

Seven copies of the Bonpo Canon (the second edition printed in Chengdu), one copy of the Dran pa bka’ thang in eight volumes, one copy of the Tshe dbang bka’ thang in four volumes, one copy of the Slob dpon bka’ thang in four volumes, one copy of the mKha’ gro’i bka’ thang.

12. Local community

In the past the communities of three monasteries were organized, following the
traditional Tibetan military system, into three units (dmag ru), which, in the past, functioned as military divisions during critical times and which were stationed in open valleys: Nyin pa unit comprising Ra nang, Yang le, rDza ri, Kha lung, Lag lab, Gyi rong, lDong bzo and A ro, the manor villages of Ze kha Monastery; Srib pa unit comprising mDa' lung, Yar sgur, Mar sgur, Bya brang, dPa' brgya, sBas skyes, sNgo sngo and Nges sa, the manor villages of Bya brang Monastery (since the Bonpo monastery in Kha ba'i klong was a branch monastery of Bya brang, its villages, as well as half of Kha ba, Shug steng kha and Ri bo sgang also belonged to Bya brang Monastery); sMad ma khag gsum unit comprising Chag sgo, Nyin lung kha, Shing 'bras, gSer gzhong, Ci nges nang, Kha nang, sGur mgo, Ban chung (no mention in KBTL), Nyin srib, and gSer gzhong Monastery's villages. Altogether three hundred and sixty families. All of them now belong to sTeng ka district (xiang) of The bo.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind (rgyab ri) of Ze kha is called Ho ri. Mount Brag nag behind Ho ri is the abode of the local deity Brag nag. The mountain range to the east of Ze kha is called sTag sgang and and is the rgyab ri of gTso tshang Monastery, and the range to the west of Ze kha is called gZig sgang.

gTso tshang Monastery is located at the foot of the sTag sgang range and the la btsas that was built at its summit with the help of Bon slebs Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin in 1986 is propitiated on the 13th day of the 4th month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers, who, in the past, were organized into military units (see above section). A wide variety of crops grow in the valley — wheat, barley, beans, potatoes, peas, and maize. Most of the farmers also keep animals of some kind — cows, horses, donkeys, mules, sheep and goats.

Sources

(1) Interviews with A skal and sTag tsha Kun grol on 26 August 1996 at the monastery. A skal was a monk at Ze kha Monastery and was born in De bzo in 1932.

sTag tsha Kun grol was born in rNga khog in 1960. He is a monk at rTogs ldan Monastery in rNga khog, and was sent to gTso tshang by Bon slebs Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin to teach the monks there and guide the three-year retreat (lo gsum).

On 29 August, I visited Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, a monk from gSer gzhong Monastery, born in 1908, on account of his knowledge of the monastery's history. Unfortunately, owing to his old age, he had lost much of his memory and could not assist me.

(2) Texts:
1. Name
There used to be a Bonpo monastery called Bya 'bab gser thang whose foundation date and founder remain unknown, and which, according to oral tradition, was forcefully converted to Buddhism, together with many other Bonpo monasteries, when the Cone Chief conquered The bo (probably during the time of Tshe dbang don grub (1642-1692), the ninth chief of Cone and Blo bzang don grub, (?-1692), his successor (See DMCB pp.661-663; CNTK pp.372-373; ZNYZ pp.41-55). Several monks, unwilling to submit, fled from the monastery and built a new Bonpo monastery. Because they were considered rgod po "brave people", the new monastery was called rGod po.

2. Location
rGod po Monastery is located in La rtsa khog district. The seat of the district is mKhar steng, 95 km east of county town. The La rtsa chu is a small northward-flowing tributary of The bo river. rGod po Monastery is located in Chas ra village, on the east bank of the La rtsa chu, around 120 km from the county town, the seat of The bo county (latitude 34°08'02"N, longitude 103°55'41"E).

3. History
Two articles written in Tibetan without any references to their sources say that the monastery was built in ca. 1770 by gYung drung bstan 'dzin, and that the first lama of the monastery was born in mKhar steng village and was known as mKhar steng Lama. His reincarnation was discovered twenty years after his death. There were two assembly halls and sixty-three cells accommodating seventy-five monks in the first half of the twentieth century (DBSJ p.101; TLPY pp.69-70). According to oral tradition, a Lama from Shar khog rebuilt the monastery at the present site after the monastery was destroyed by monks from a Buddhist monastery in mKhar steng when the lama of rGod po was still a child. At present the monastery is in a state of
disrepair.

7. Educational exchange
   rGGod po was a branch of gSer gzhong Monastery.

12. Local people
   There are fourteen families in Chas ra village.

14. Occupation of the local people
   farming

Sources
   (1) All the information besides the two articles mentioned above was collected from an interview on 27 August 1996 with Blo bzang (b.1929) and rDo rje (b.1923) who were both monks at the monastery for a few years.

(93) Nags gong Monastery

1. Name
   The monastery’s real name is bSam 'grub, but since it is located at the foot of Nags gong village it is locally known as Nags gong or Nags gong bSam 'grub dgon.

2. Location
   Nags gong Monastery is located on north bank of the 'A zha river in 'A zha valley, about 90 km southeast of the county town (latitude: 33°48'18"N, longitude 103°41'58"E).

3. History
   The monastery was founded in ca. 875 A.D. by sKyang 'phags Nyi ma rgyal 'mtshan and is now a branch monastery of dGu skyang Monastery (No.196), the main seat of dGu skyang Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. Prior to 1959, the monastery comprised one assembly hall, and living quarters consisting of thirty-nine cells accommodating fifty monks (DBSJ p.101; TLPY p.69). It was rebuilt in 1991. At present it comprises one assembly hall, the residence of the head lama, and ten cells.

   When I visited the monastery, the assembly hall was under construction, but all the monks were away performing a ritual at a private home. I found the head lama of the monastery in Pe gseb village. He was born in 1968. He is not considered an incarnation but was chosen a few years ago by the monks. Since he has been busy with rebuilding the monastery, he has had little time to study and knows almost
nothing of the monastery's history, even though he is considered the most learned person in the area.

5. Current number of monks
   The monastery has twelve monks, five or six of whom live outside the monastery with their families.

6. Current education
   The head of the monastery is a young monk called bSod nams ye she. Since all the monks are very young, they study mainly Tibetan and ritual practice under the head master.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The monks go to dGu skyang to perform the 'cham dance with the monks there on the 13th day of the 3rd month. Occasionally, they also perform funerary rites and rituals for health, fortune, abundant crops etc, in private homes at the behest of the families.

12. Local community
   The local lay community of the monastery consists of five villages: Nags gong with twenty families, Pe gseb with thirty-eight families, Gro mang with twenty-two families, dNgul ba with twelve families and sTag dpung with ten families (one hundred and three people in total).

14. Occupation of the local people
   Farming

(94) Chags ri Monastery

1. Name
   Chags ri Monastery. Its formal name is dPal ldan g-yung drung gling.

2. Location
   The monastery is situated on the east bank of sTag ra chu dkar river in sTag ra valley (sTag ra district, Xiang), 60 km southeast of the county town (latitude: 33°51' 65''N, longitude: 103°22'06''E).

3. History
   The monastery was founded by a chief of the mGo rje village named Tshe lung
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(or Tshe lhun) in ca. 1868. It was moved to another site but because of some sort of threat to the monks’ lives, the monastery was moved back to its original site. Later, another disaster occurred: three of the monks held up three horses belonging to the chief of Cone for reasons that remain unexplained. The chief of Cone retaliated by burning down the monastery. There is little information concerning the monastery’s history besides the fact that it was connected to A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery (No.194) in mDzod dge, and for this reason a monk of sKyang tshang called Dri med ’od zer undertook the reconstruction of the monastery in 1993.

5. Current number of monks
   At present there are thirty-two and novices monks living in the monastery. As head of the monastery, Dri med ’od zer visits the site every year to inspect the reconstruction work and perform rituals.

7. Educational exchange
   sKyang tshang Monastery of which it is a branch.

12. Local community
   The local lay community of the monastery consists of six villages: mGo rje, sGang leb, Kun gtsang, Phu ba, mGo rtse and bSe shang. There are forty families in mGo rje, thirty-four in sGang leb, eleven in Kun gtsang, twenty in mGo rtse, and about twenty in bSe tshang.

13. Local festivals
   There are three la btsas on Mount Ha mtsho the rgyab ri or mountain behind the monastery: two la btsas at the top belonging to two of the villages, Khro bo and sGang leb, and a common la btsas at the foot of the mountain propitiated by the entire local lay community. All three la btsas are renewed on the same dates: 13th day of the 1st month and the 13th day of the 4th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
   Farming.

Sources:
(1) Interview In autumn of 1996 with: gYung drung ’gyur med (b.1935) and a monk of the monastery.
(2) Texts:
   - BHMT
   - DBSJ
   - KBTL
1. Name

The monastery was originally named Khis ri after an old village, but later it came to be known as Shing skam Monastery, the name of the village where it was located. The name is only known by its pronunciation and thus its exact meaning remains obscure. Shing skam in Tibetan, if spelt the way it is pronounced, literally means “dead tree”; this interpretation corresponds to one legend according to which the monastery was built on a site where many trees died. The monastery is also known as Kha ba lung, since it is situated in Kha ba lung.

The local Bonpo community simply calls it Kha ba lung, but it should not be confused with the Buddhist monastery of the same name in the vicinity. To distinguish them, the Buddhist monastery, which is located above the village, is referred to as Kha ba lung dgon pa gong ma (upper Kha ba lung Monastery) and the Bonpo monastery, which is located at the bottom of the village, as Kha ba lung dgon pa ’gab ma (lower Kha ba lung Monastery) (’gab ma has the same meaning as zhol ma in Amdo dialect). Some people also refer to the monastery as Shel sgo dgon pa because it was the first monastery in the valley to have its windows fitted with glass panes.

2. Location

Shing skam Monastery was situated near the Kha ba village of Kha ba district (xiang), located 34 km east of county town, the seat The bo County (latitude: 33°58' 78"N, longitude: 103°29'66"E).

3. History

The monastery seems to have been founded in 1466 (DBSJ p.100; TLPY, pp.65-66). The original monastery was located on a slope in En ’dzi valley near a Buddhist monastery. It was later moved by Tso ke don grub, the village chief, to its present site near the village because its original location was too remote and made it an easy target for thieves. The monastery was destroyed in 1958 and so far has not been rebuilt nor has the reincarnation of its trulku been found. At present, the local Bonpo community goes to other Bonpo monasteries in the area.

The monastery’s lineage of masters ran for at least four generations, since the
names of four of the masters are mentioned: Nyi ma, A gsas, Blo bzang and rDo rje (DBSJ p.100; TLPY pp.65-66).

12. Local community
There are more than fifty Bonpo families in Kha ba village which formerly constituted the monastery’s lay community.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farming

Sources:
(1) Interview with 'Od zer (b.1936), a monk at the Buddhist monastery. I could not find anyone among the local Bonpo community who knew more about the destroyed monastery.

(96) bSam 'grub Monastery

1. Name
   gYung drung bsam 'grub dgon

2. Location
   The monastery is situated about 55 km from the county town of The bo, in the center of Kha ba Township, at the confluence of Nya len black river and Myi chen river which flows southwards to The bo valley.

3. History
   Three lamas, Shes rab dbang phyug, rGyal mtshan and Nya le bla ma, from three different hermitages, came together and founded bSam 'grub Monastery in ca. 1395. It is not clear how and when this occurred but the monastery is affiliated to A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery (No.194) in mDzod dge. Until the nineteen-fifties the monastery comprised an assembly hall, thirty-three cells, and housed seventy-seven monks. The monastery had a series of masters as follows:
   1. rGyal ba, from Myi che ba village, he was also the lama of another Bonpo monastery called Shes rab Monastery.
   2. Chos 'byor rgyal ba
   3. bSam gtan rgyal ba
   4. Shes rab dngos grub
   5. Nya len Bla ma
   6. rGyal mtshan of Myi che ba village
7. Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan
8. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan from Nyin srib village at sTeng ka in The bo, travelled to Central Tibet to receive teachings and then returned to secular life in Kong po
9. A monk of the Myi che ba village, name is unknown.
10. Rin chen nor bu of Myi che ba village
11. Ye shes tshul khrims of Mi rgod kha village
12. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal of Myi che ba village; he travelled twice to Central Tibet to study and receive teachings, and became a renowned teacher when he returned to the monastery.
13. sKal bzang ’jam dpal of Myi che ba village; according to legend, he went to Lhasa, India and Hongkong to study, and was renowned as a sculptor.
14. dNgos grub tshogs pa of Nya len pa village, was a renowned teacher and artist (he executed the murals in the previous assembly hall). He died in 1958.
15. bsTan ’dzin rgyal mtshan, the present master of the monastery. He is currently rebuilding the monastery. Permission to rebuild the monastery was obtained in 1981 and work began in 1982. An assembly hall and forty-one cells have been rebuilt.

7. Educationa exchange

Since the monastery is a branch monastery of A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery, Dri med ’od zer, a reincarnation from A skyid sKyang tshang, regularly visits the monastery to inspect the work and to give teachings. However, the monks are currently busy with the reconstruction rather than studying.

8 / 9. Rituals

- The smon lam festival from the 6th to the 16th day of the 1st month, and the dbyar gnas retreat from 15th to 21st of the 6th month. An annual ’cham dance is performed on the 8th and 9th days of the 1st month during the smon lam festival.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery possesses complete copies of the Bonpo bKa’ ’gyur and bKa’ rten.

11. Income and expenses

Economic circumstances of the monastery depends on offerings made by disciples. The government has given ten thousand Chinese Yuan for the reconstruction of the monastery. Account for offerings has never been done.
12. Local community

The local community of the monastery consists of three large villages, Nya len, Nyin ga’i kha and Myi che pa, altogether seventy-three families.

13. Local festivals

On the summit of the mountain behind the monastery are three la btsas, all three named after gSas mkhar lha ri snying po and propitiated twice a year, on the 11th day of the 4th month and the 11th day of the 11th month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources:

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1996 with: Pad kho (b.1926), who spent several years as a monk in the monastery, was born in Nya-len village; bSod nams (b.1937) was born in Myi che ba village.

(2) Texts
   - BHMT
   - DBSJ
   - KBTL
   - KNGL
   - KTSD
   - TLPY

(97) gTer ri Monastery

1. Name

The monastery was called gTer ri, the “hill of hidden treasures”, because a cymbal (sbub chol) was discovered at the site on which it was built.

2. Location

The monastery is located near Tshong ’dus village, on the east bank of En ’dzi river in En ’dzi valley of Kha ba district (xiang) in The bo County, about 50 km from the seat of the county (latitude: 34°06’55”N, longitude: 103°25’61”E).

3. History

The monastery appears to have been founded in 1524 by Blo bzang don grub, a reputable lay person (DBSJ p.100; TLPY p.66). According to legend, shortly after its foundation the monastery fell into decline. Two lamas from gSer gzhong Monastery
came to look after it, as it was a branch monastery of gSer gzhong. The complex comprised one assembly hall, one temple and living quarters housing more than twenty monks (DBSJ p.100; TLPY p.66). The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. It has not been rebuilt and the Bonpo people living in the area go to the local rNying ma pa monastery for their religious affairs.

8 / 9. Rituals

The sмон lam prayer ceremony at the beginning of the 1st month was performed in conjunction with gSer gzhong Monastery. There was the 'cham dance on the 11th day of the 11th month.

12. Local community

The local lay community of the monastery consists of six villages: lTag ga kha, Nyi ri kha, Be ri kha, 'Og sa kha, Tshong 'du and gNyan bza' (more than thirty families in total).

13. Local festivals

The local people celebrate the renewal of the la btsas dedicated to the local deity of Mount Sa dkar on the 1st day of the 4th month. The la btsas is situated at the top of the mountain behind the monastery.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming

Sources

(1) Interviews with: lH ba, born in 1932; A skal, a monk from Ze kha Monastery, born in 1932.

(2) Texts:
- BHMT
- DBSJ
- KBTL
- KNGL
- KTXD
- TLPY
- ZNYZ
(98) rTswa ring (also rTsa ring, rTsa ri, Tsa ri) Monastery

1. Name
The formal name of the monastery is rGyal myi gYang drung dmu ri.

2. Location
The monastery is situated near Zur lung kha village in Nyin ngo district (xiang) of The bo County, 56 km east of the county-town, the seat the county (latitude: 34° 05’64”N, longitude: 103°34’58”E).

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of ten villages:
1) Lung yul kha with eleven families (KTSD p.47 and KBTL, p.39: Lung g-ye kha).
2) gTer yul kha with thirty-five families (KTSD p.47: rTing g-ye kha; KBTL p.47: rTig g-ye kha).
3) rDzong tsa kha with forty-five families (KTSD p.47: dKyil bcugs kha).
4) Nyin la kha with nine families.
5) Zur lung kha with seventeen families.
6) Yar ru kha with twenty-eight families (KTSD p.47 and KBTL p.39: Ya ru kha).
7) Srib ga kha with eighteen families.
8) Gad srang kha with seven families (KBTL p. 39: Sked srib).
9) gDong ga kha with twenty-two families.
10) Khog sde kha with nineteen families (KTSD p. 47: Khog steng kha).

13. Local festivals
Mount dMu ri, which is the mountain behind (rgyab ri) the monastery, is the site for celebration of the renewal of the la btsas. The propitiation takes place on the 15th day of the 4th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
Mostly agriculture.
(91) gTso tshang Monastery

(All the photos, (91) through (217), were taken by Tsering Thar, unless otherwise noted.)

(93) Nags gong Monastery
(98) rTsa ring Monastery
bSang chu County

(99) rTse zhig Monastery

1. Name

rTse zhig Monastery or gYung drung bon bstan 'phel rgyas gling is also called rTse dbus Monastery. rTse zhig belongs to the group of nine or eighteen great Bonpo tribes in Amdo known as Zhig (zhig chen dgu dang yang na bco brgyad).

2. Location

rTse zhig is the only Bonpo monastery in bSang chu (it also known as Xia he in Chinese) County of Kan lho (Gan nan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and is situated in rTa khra'i gzhung, 30 km north of the county town where Bla brang Monastery is located.

3. History

The monastery was founded by sGom chen gYuling drung rgyal mtshan, he is also called sTong nyid bya 'phur. His principal teacher was Zhu sgom 'phrul zhig chen po (KTGN p.8), a son of Zhu skye se chen po. The teaching lineage may be traced back to Zhu yas legs po, a famous disciple of gShen chen Klu dga'. Sras lha rje skyid po was a disciple of Zhu yas legs po and the teacher of Zhu skye se chen po; dGongs mdzod ri khrod chen po, another disciple of Zhu skye se chen po, was a contemporary of Zhu sgom 'phrul zhig chen po. dGongs mdzod ri khrod chen po was born in the the Earth-Tiger year of the first Rab byung (1038). Since dGongs mdzod ri khrod chen po and Zhu sgom 'phrul zhig chen po were both contemporaries of sTong nyid bya 'phur who founded the monastery (TZLD p.4, KTGN p.8), we may assume that the monastery was built at least nine hundred years ago. From the time of sTong nyis bya 'phur, the monastery was run by a continuous succession of abbots for about five hundred years until the 10th Rab byung (1567-1626) after which the monastery split into two branches: one headed by dGar ba Bla ma gYung drung rgyal mtshan regarded as a reincarnation of sTong nyid bya 'phur, and the other by rTse zhig A lags Shes rab. Even the ritual objects (mchod chas) of the monastery were divided among the two Bla brang. In addition to the rTse zhig Chos rje, there were three Bla brang which came to be known as Nang chen gsum, the “three residences of the Bla mas”. dGar ba Bla ma gYung drung rgyal mtshan went to study at sMan ri Monastery (No.1). He returned to rTse zhig Monastery where he taught for many years and became famed as a teacher throughout the whole of Amdo. Unfortunately, his reincarnation passed away in childhood. The next incarnation was found in a child born in sTong chung, Ba yan, northern Amdo (Hua long county in Qinghai). He does not seem to have lived at
rTse zhig but to have remained in the Ba yan area where he greatly contributed to the spread of Bon and was locally known as sTong chung Zhabs drung (TZLD p.6).

The following incarnation was Zhabs drung bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal (1894-1949) who was very active on both the religious and political scenes in Amdo in the early 20th century (cf. To shes Temple, No.118). His reincarnation is sKal bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (also known as A mgon bla ma or A lags Pad ma) who was born in the Iron-Tiger year of the 16th Rab byung (1950) into the mGon rgya family of A mgon tribe in Amdo, and who is the present rTse dbus tshang (TZLD p.5). A lags Shes rab, a contemporary of dGar ba bla ma gYung drung rgyal mtshan founded a separate Bla brang and visited almost all the Bonpo monasteries in Amdo. In addition to the Bla brang, he built a three-storey lHa khang at Khyung mo Monastery (No.123). Rab 'byams pa Shes rab rnam rgyal, A lags Shes rab's nephew, was sent as a child to sMan ri Monastery to study under Rin chen lhun grub and Grub thob Nam mkha' lhun grub, and after several years he obtained the Rab 'byams pa degree. Unwilling to return to Amdo, he remained there for most of his life. His uncle, disappointed, concealed the rTen gsum (three types of sacred objects, viz. images, books and stupas) inside some statues. Later however A khu rGyal ba, a disciple of A lags Shes rab from sTong che in Khri ka, went to sMan ri Monastery to beg Shes rab rnam rgyal to return and take his uncle's place. He accepted and before leaving dPal ldan ye shes, the sixth Panchen Bla ma, gave him a gold seal and an official letter giving him authority over all the Bonpo monasteries and communities in Amdo (KTGN p.9, TZLD p.9). According to TGLR, he was the seventeenth abbot of the monastery in the 12th Rab byung. (1687-1746). His reincarnation died in childhood. The following incarnation was Nam mkha' g-yung drung, an extremely learned Bla ma. Like his predecessors he was invested with authority over all the Bonpo monasteries in Amdo. He died at the age of eighty. Nam mkha' g-yung drung's reincarnation also died in childhood. The following incarnation was rTse zhig Khri chen Theg mchog ye shes. He studied under rTse zhig gYung drung bstan rgyas, Ches rje Rgyal ba tshul khrims, sBra ser Nam mkha' dbang phyug and rNga ba'i rTogs ldan Tshul khrims ye shes and specialized in the practice of sMra seng dkar po. He looked after the Bonpo monasteries mainly around Khri ka, Reb gong and rTse zhig, and repaired the Tshogs chen 'du khang and the thirteen lHa khang of Khyung mo Monastery. Theg mchog ye shes's reincarnation was Khri ba Kun bzang rgyal mtshan. Like his predecessors, he too was responsible for all Bonpo monasteries in Amdo. He died in the thirty-first year of the 16th Rab byung (1957). The following incarnation was a nephew of rTse zhig Bla ma Drung ram pa Shes rab rnam rgyal. He was very bright and studied many years at Bla brang Monastery, but died young. rTse zhig 'Gyur med kun bzang rgya mtsho, the following incarnation was a nephew and disciple of the Drung ram pa. Both he and his uncle counted several remarkable students among their disciples, such as So nag Grub chen thog
'dzin (see So nag gsas khang), Bon brgya sPal mkhar rgyal ba (see Mag gsar Temple, No.102) and mKhar nag grub chen of Khyung mo Monastery (KTGN p.11-12, TZLD p.11-12).

The next incarnation was rTse zhig gYung drung bstan rgyas who died at the age of seventy. He had several renowned followers including Bon brgya Rang shar rig grol and Khri chen Theg mchog ye shes. The next reincarnation was discovered in a child from Kho nag but he disappeared shortly after and as a result people believe that he was not the true reincarnation. The Bla ma’s third residence (Nang chen gsum pa) was built by the rTse zhig Chos rje Rin po che, rGyal ba Tshul khrims bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, who was born in Wood-Hare Year of the 13th Rab byung (1795). He was a nephew and pupil of rTse zhig Nam mkha’ g-yung drung, and became in turn the master of dGar ba bla ma gYung drung bstan ’dzin. He was an assiduous practitioner all his life, and is supposed to have meditated in more than five hundred remote and wild places (gnyan sa), and wrote many works including commentaries on gSang gcod yid bzhin nor bu ‘i chu ’grim dmigs skor, ‘Grel ba mkha’ ’gro’i zhal lung, Srung ma’i sgrub thabs, gYang sgrub ’phrin bcol, Nyams mgur, Zhal gdam, Blo sbyong, etc. He developed close ties with ’Jigs med skal bzang rgya mtsho, a rNying ma pa from sDe dge with whom he exchanged teachings and thus also became popular among the rNying ma pa community. Chin wang Chos rgyal bSod nams dar rgyas, seems to be a contemporary chief of Mongolian tribes, gave him the title of Chos rje and appointed him his official spiritual preceptor. Both Bon brgya Rang shar rig grol and sBra ser Nam mkha’ dbang phyug, two important figures of that period were his disciples. He died in the Wood-Dog Year of the 15th Rab byung (1874). There are three reincarnation lineages of Chos rje Rinpoche representing his body, speech and mind. The first body incarnation was Chos rje Tshul khrims ’od zer, born in the Wood-Pig Year of the 15 th Rab byung (1875). He studied under Khri ba Theg mchog ye shes and Pan ti ta Kun bzang rgyal mtshan, and practised mainly gSang gcod yid bzhin nor bu. He died in the Wood-Pig Year of the 16th Rab byung (1935). The reincarnation of Chos rje Tshul khrims ’od zer was Chos rje Tshul khrims lhun ’grub (also known as Shes rab g-yung drung bstan pa’i sgron me), the third son of Zhabz drung bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal. He was born in the Earth-Tigre Year of the 16th Rab byung (1938). Following his father’s wishes, he studied under sKyang sprul Lung rorgs skal bzang rgya mtsho but unfortunately he died in the Earth-Dog Year of the 16th Rab byung (1958) at the age of twenty.

The reincarnation of gYung drung lhun grub is Shes rab bstan pa’i zla ba, born in the Iron-Dog Year of the 16th Rab byung (1970) to the rTse dbus bla ma family. His father, sNgags bon Shes rab blo gros, was the eldest son of rTse dbus A lags and Kun bzang ’tsho. He took his monk’s vows from rGya ’obs Rinpoche of sNang zhig Monastery and entered rTse zhig Monastery in 1983. He was recognized as the
incarnation of rTse zhig chos rje gYung drung lhun grub by rGya 'obs Rinpoche, Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan 'dzin and, more especially, by Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho, and thus became the fourth rTse zhig chos rje and present head bla ma of rTse zhig Monastery.

Chos rje Rinpoche's first speech incarnation was Chos rje bsTan pa ’od zer or Ba lung chos rje who was born into the Ba lung family of the Mar nang khag gsum ("three tribes of Mar nang"), he spent all his life practising rDzogs chen and gCod in caves. The next incarnation was born at To shes in Ba yan (no further information available).

Chos rje Rinpoche’s first mind incarnation was Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs mkhas grub 'jigs med, a disciple and nephew of Bon brgya Rang shar rig grol. He also studied under Kun bzang rgyal mtshan (sTong che), rGya ’obs bstan pa rab rgyas, rTogs ldan Tshul khrims bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan as well as other masters of different religious traditions, and became learned in all disciplines and aspects of Tibetan culture. He gave many dbang and lung at rTse zhig, sTong che and Reb gong, and was especially revered by the Reb gong bon mang (tantric practitioners of Reb gong) as their main teacher. He restored Bon brgya Monastery (No.100). He had eight monks and about a hundred sNgags pa as his main pupils including Bon brgya Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshon, rTogs ldan dKon mchog sprul sku, sTong chung zhabs drung, sBra ser sprul sku, sTong nyams snang gsal lhun grub, 'Bum pa. Rig 'dzin kun bzang klong grol. He died at the age of sixty.

The next and present mind reincarnation is Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho, born to the Khyung family. In his childhood he studied under Bon brgya Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan as well as sKyang sprul Lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho and received many initiations and transmissions (dbang). He rebuilt Bon brgya Monastery. Like the previous bla mas of rTse zhig, in addition to Bon brgya Monastery, his main seat and residence, he is also responsible for Khyung mo, rTse zhig, Dung dkar monasteries, the Reb gong Bon mang, Khri ka and Ser brgya, as well as all the Bonpo lay communities of the area. In the nineteen-eighties he undertook the reconstruction of Khyung mo Monastery and its Bla brang prior to the enthronement of the Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyug, the main reincarnation of Khyung mo Monastery. In Bon brgya Monastery, he rebuilt the 'du khang, lha khang, bla brang, and some of the reliquary mchod rten. He acquired three copies of the Bonpo bka’ 'gyur and more than one thousand volumes of various Tibetan works. He is one of the most learnt Bonpo scholars in present Tibet.

5. Current number of monks

One reincarnate bla ma and fifty-six monks lived in the monastery in the first half of the twentieth century (TGLR p.6). At present there are more than thirty-mons.
6. Current education

The present educational system is as before: the monks are divided into groups according to their level and study under one teacher, in addition to performing regular rituals. For obvious reasons (see above), rTse zhig chos rje is the main teacher. rGya 'obs Rinpoche and Bon brgya Rinpoche are revered as the spiritual masters by all the monks.

7. Educational exchange

Occasionally the monastery invites teachers from sNang zhig Monastery (No.180). Traditionally, the Bonpo communities in rGan gya, Reb gong, Khri ka and Ba yan followed the masters of the rTse zhig lineage who have always been active throughout the area. Consequently Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho, undoubtedly the most erudite Bonpo scholar of the rTse zhig lineage, and probably in the whole of Amdo, is the main teacher and spiritual master of the region.

8 / 9. Rituals

The smon lam in 1st month together with the anniversary of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan during which the thousand epithets of the Buddha are recited, Phyag mchod tshogs bsags, and the ritual of mKha' 'gro gsang gdod yid bzhiin nor bu; rGyal ba rgya mtsho, Du tri su and dbyar gnas in summer; rNam par rgyal ba'i stong mchod in autumn; dBal gsas bsnyen sgrub with las mtha' srung bzlog and gar 'cham in winter. There are rituals of Kun rig, Kun dbyangs, sMan bla, Dus 'khor, rNam 'joms, Bla ma rtsa sgrub and Dug lnga rang grol.

Other rituals include the gso sbyong performed on the 1st, 8th, 10th, 15th of each month and dgu gtor on the 29th day of the last month of the year. Since the monastery was mainly a sgrub sde (tantric group) for many generations, it has inherited a rich tradition of rituals and there are about one hundred and fifty ritual days in the year.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery possesses a copy of the Bon po bka' 'gyur, Dri med gzi brjid as well as Khams chen and more than two hundred volumes in total.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called lHa btsun dkar po or rNga'i kha, and is propitiated on the 11th day of the 4th month. There are two la btsas near the monastery. The two la btsas represent rGan gya'i A myes dga' bo and bKra shis dbang chen dgra 'dul. The former is propitiated on the 9th day of the 5th month, and the latter on the 4th day of the same month. There are two rlung rta which are dMar yag rlung rta and Seng ge rlung rta, the former is propitiated on the 7th day of
the 8th month and the latter on the 15th day of the 6th month. The main difference between a la btsas and a rlung rta is that the top of the life-pole of a rlung rta is adorned with a flag of rGyal mtshan rtse mo, whereas that of a la btsas is adorned with feathers, otherwise the bsang offering and invocation of the deities are basically identical in both instances.

Nearby the monastery, there is a sacred mountain called Brag dkar bya rgod. There were three texts concerning Brag dkar bya rgod: the long version by sKyang 'phags, the intermediate version by rGyal ba blo gros, and the short version by rGyal dbang (NBBK p.122). According to legend, there are self-originated images of rDzogs sku mkha’ 'gying dkar po at the top of the mountain. Twenty Maha Pantita are supposed to have meditated in twenty sacred meditation caves scattered all over the mountain. Li shu stag ring is supposed to have concealed treasures in the white rock, Gyim tsha rma chung in the blue rock to the North, Legs tang rmang po in the red rock to the West, Dran pa nam mkha’ in the green rock, and there is a guardian deity for every treasure. There is the meditation cave of sKyang bza’ yig rtsis ma, and the caves of sKyang 'phags and gTso 'phags. The mountain’s numerous holy sites are believed to be especially beneficial against gnyan type diseases. The mountain is also considered a favourable place to practise the four gcod rgyud, especially the mKha’ 'gro gsang gcod. Surrounding the mountain is an outer circumambulatory path (phyi skor) and an inner circumambulatory path (nang skor) and it is deemed especially auspicious to circumambulate the mountain three times, in the Horse, Sheep, Bird and Monkey years.

Hor btsun bsTan 'dzin blo gros rgya mtsho, the author of NBBK, the dkar chag of the mountain, meditated on the mountain for fifteen years during which he says he was very happy. He had planned to write the dkar chag for a long time and finally composed it in 1964 at the request of sKal bzang ye shes, bSod nams rgyal mtshan and Blo bzang rgya mtsho.

14. Occupation of the local people

Nomads who breed mainly yaks and sheep for a livelihood, and horses for transportation.

Sources

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(2) Texts:
- TZLD
- NBBK
- KTGN
- TGLR
(99) rTse zhig Monastery
Reb gong

Introduction

Reb gong represents a fairly large agricultural area: sheltered by the surrounding mountains, it enjoys a climate favourable to cultivation. The geography of the region however makes travel conditions difficult and the villages, which, for the most part, are scattered in the hills, are not easily accessible. The religious community of the area is composed of three distinct groups: Bonpo, rNying ma pa and dGe lugs pa. The Bonpo community consists of Bon brgya Monastery, fifteen village temples known as gsas khang and their adherents.

Since the Reb gong bon mang and Bon brgya Monastery share the same history, there is no need to repeat it here. Unfortunately, there is little information regarding the history of the fifteen gsas khang, probably owing to the spread and increasing influence of the monastic system. As a result Bon brgya Monastery has been the focus of attention, whereas the gsas khang, whose importance has decreased in recent centuries, and which now merely function as a gathering place for practitioners, have not been the subject of any kind of written record. The gsas khang of Reb gong are divided into four groups:

(1) Yar nang bon mang comprising:
- Bon brgya gSang sngags dar rgyas gling (Bon brgya village)
- Mag gsar g-yung drung bstan dar gling (Mag gsar village)

Practitioners of these two gsas khang are descendents of Khyung po bsTan pa dar rgyas, a famous practitioner in local history. Traditionally, the two villages do not participate in the spring ritual (dpyid cho) and the autumn ritual (ston cho) of the Reb gong bon mang. The last Bon brgya Tulku attempted to enroll them but was not very successful. Yar nang bon mang used to include a third gsas khang for the gDung nges grub pa kun 'dul gling, in mDo ba village in the lower reaches of Bon brgya valley, and the three gsas khang were collectively known as Yar nang bon sde khag gsum. However, since most of the gDung nges families converted to Buddhism (at present only five Bonpo practitioners and eight Bonpo families remain in the village) the gsas khang was not rebuilt.

(2) sTod phyogs bon mang in the east of Reb gong comprising:
- Theg chen bon 'khor lhun grub gling (rGya mtsho dpal or A rga steng village)
- gSang sngags rig 'dzin dar rgyas gling (Gad pa skya bo village)
- Theg chen smin grol rgya mtsho gling (gDong mgo village)

These three gsas khang were the seats of Grub chen 'Khor los bsgyur ba'i rgyal po, one among the first masters who came to Reb gong in order to spread the Bon religion, and the practitioners are considered to be his spiritual descendents.
- rGyal bstan ye shes rgya mtsho gling (Ngo mo village)
- Rig 'dzin thugs rje byang chub gling (Gyang ru village)

These two gsas khang were the seats of Grub chen Ye shes mtsho rgyal, another among the first masters who came to Reb gong to spread the Bon religion, and the practitioners are his spiritual descendants. It is said that in the thirteenth century Gyang ru Rig 'dzin thugs rje suppressed the evil spirit of a deceased monk in Ra rgya Monastery so the monks could continue living there. Moreover, he is said to have been the rus dpon (family priest) of gTsang Pan ti ta, the head master of gTsang Monastery in Amdo and was greatly revered by the community.

(3) sMad phyogs bon mang comprising the five following gsas khang in the northeast of Reb gong:
- mDo sngags phun tshogs dar rgyas gling (Gling rgya village)
- Kun 'dus g-yung drung 'gyur med gling (Zho 'ong nyin tha village)
- sGrub pa'i rgyal mtshan mi 'gyur gling (Dar grong village)
- Khyung dkar rig 'dzin smin grol gling (Khyung bo thang village)
- gSang sngags bdud 'dul lhun grub gling (sDong skam village)

rTogs ldan Kun bzang klong grol and his son sNang gsal lhun grub were born there in the fifteenth century, and as spiritual descendants of the famous practitioner Grub chen Khyung dkar tshang ba they greatly contributed to the spread of Bon in the region.

(4) sNyan bzang bon mang comprising the three gsas khang in the north of Reb gong:
- gSang chen smin grol dpal ldan gling (Hor nag village)
- Rig 'dzin kun 'dus mam rgyal gling (sTong che village)

Since sTong che village and sTong che village of Khri ka share the same origin, the Bonpos of the former are disciples of Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyung, the head master of Khyung mo Monastery in sTong che in Khri ka who has a throne in the gsas khang of sTong che in Reb gong.

- Khyung dkar bstan pa rgya mtsho gling (Khyung bo la ga village)

This last gsas khang is very old although its date and founder remain unknown.

All the above-mentioned gsas khang are referred collectively to as the Reb gong bon mang's one thousand and nine hundred holders of the Phur pa (Reb gong bon mang phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya). Bon brgya Trulku dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho is the master of all the Reb gong bon mang. Stod phyogs and sMad phyogs are the Reb gong bon mang's two largest groups. The two gsas khang of the Yar nang bon mang group function independently, not only from the rest of the Reb gong bon mang, but also from one another, and do not participate in any of the other group's collective activities. sNyan bzang bon mang joins sMad phyogs bon mang for major religious activities. Thus for the main ceremonies, the four groups of Reb gong merge into two groups under the leadership of sTod phyogs bon mang and
sMad phyogs bon mang.

The rituals celebrated by the Reb gong bon mang may be divided into four categories:

(1) Two major annual rituals celebrated collectively by the entire Reb gong bon mang with the exception of Yar nang bon mang: the spring ritual (5th to 8th day of the 1st month) and the autumn ritual (8th to 10th day of the 10th month).

The preparations take one day so the practitioners gather on the day before, and those (especially the elderly) living in the remoter villages usually arrive a day before that and spend the night with families near the gsas khang where the ritual is to take place. The main practice is that of the dBal gsas cycle, as well as a short version of the 'Bum pa and sTag la ritual cycles. Each of the gsas khang hosts the rituals on a rotational basis. The gsas khang of Reb gong bon mang are conceived of and function as a whole, rather than as separate institutions, and share a common hierarchical system: two dge bskos, disciplinarian appointed for one year, one dbu mdzad, incantation master appointed for three years; one khri pa, leader and one gnyer pa, a treasurer appointed for one year; and one g-yung drung slob dpon, an officiator who is replaced every three years. One of the dge bskos must belong to the sTod phyogs bon mang, and the other from sMad phyogs bon mang, these two groups being the largest of the Reb gong bon mang's four groups. In addition, there is one dbu mdzad who leads the chanting during ceremonies. The khri pa is the head of the whole Bon mang, and is also responsible for organizing the spring ritual while the gnyer pa is responsible for organizing the autumn ritual. During the rituals the throne of the khri pa is placed at the same level as that of Bon brgya Trulku. Even in his absence, the khri pa is honoured by the presence of his throne. The g-yung drung slob dpon is responsible for every ritual.

(2) The next major ceremony is the ritual dedicated to the Yi dam Kun 'dus which takes place from the 10th to the 13th day of the 5th month. The gsas khang host the ritual in turn. Participants must be over twenty-nine years old. The dbu mdzad for this ritual is selected for three years. The g-yung drung slob dpon and khri pa are the same as for the above-mentioned rituals. A separate gnyer pa is also appointed since the organization of the ritual requires a considerable amount of time and effort.

(3) The third category comprises the mKha' 'gro gsang gcod and Zhi khro. The former is held from the 1st to the 4th day of the 4th month, and the latter, from the 1st to the 4th day of the 5th month. The two rituals are performed by both the sTod phyogs bon mang and the sMad phyogs bon mang separately (see below). Other rituals performed by the groups separately include rituals dedicated to Tshe dbang, Kun bzang, dBal gsas and 'Bum pa (25th - 30th day of the 11th month), performed by the sTod phyogs bon
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mang, and rituals dedicated to Kun bzang, Tshe dbang and dBal gsas (17th - 20th day of the 10th month), performed by the sMad phyogs bon mang.

The three-year dbu mdzad cycle dedicated to Yi dam kun 'dus ritual must be led by the dbu mdzad of one of the two ritual groups of Reb gong Bon mang to which he belongs, and the other group ought to find another one to be the dbu mdzad for themeselves. They also ought to find two new gnyer pa for the two groups. Both groups do not have a leader (khri pa) nor a ritual master (g-yung drung slob dpon) for the rituals they perform.

These rituals do not require the presence of the khri pa and g-yung drung slob dpon, but the khri pa of Reb gong bon mang must be honoured by his throne, and two experienced practitioners are selected to occupy the first two seats of the front row and to take on the role of the g-yung drung slob dpon.

(4) The fourth category of ritual includes those performed by the gsas khang individually. All the gsas khang perform a ritual on the 10th of each month, in addition to other rituals on different dates that are listed in the descriptions of the gsas khang below.

The position of each practitioner in the collective rituals of the Reb gong bon mang is very important. I will describe here the order I observed when I attended the spring ritual in 1998 at the gsas khang of Hor nag la ga village.

The two front rows and their tables are always very attractive during rituals. The two bang kha occupy the first two seats at the head of the front row; bang kha is supposed to be a Zhang zhung word for master of the sphere (Tib. dkyil 'khor gyi bdag po). One of them must be the sgrub dpon, the ritual’s consultant or advisor. Prior to the nineteen-fifties, the two bang kha had to guard the gtor ma representing the tutelary deities (yi dam) and protective deities (bon skyong) placed on the table between the thrones of Bon brgya Trulku and the khri pa day and night, but at present their presence is required only during the day. The two bang kha must be experienced tantric practitioners, and are therefore usually elderly personages respected by the whole community. The dbu mdzad and g-yung drung slob dpon sit in the center of the two front rows. The dbu mdzad’s seat is higher than the others but lower than the thrones of the Trulkus and the khri pa. The seats between the two bang kha at the head of the row and the dbu mdzad and g-yung drung slob dpon in the middle are reserved for the elder practitioners, usually former officials of the Reb gong bon mang with a reputation as experienced and powerful tantric practitioners. The seats between the g-yung drung slob dpon and dbu mdzad in the center and the musicians at the end of the row are occupied by those who chant best. The rows behind are occupied by the other practitioners. New practitioners attend the ceremony from the back seats.

The ritual is followed by the sde 'bod, invitation of the village, during which the villagers invite the practitioners to their homes to perform rituals for their
families. These include purification rituals for the past year and the calling of fortune and happiness for the coming year. The family welcomes the practitioners by blowing trumpets and Chinese bamboo flutes, and by firing firecrackers. The practitioners, led by the dbu mdzad, perform the rituals inside each house. Each visit lasts around ten or fifteen minutes. The family offers the officiants a single fruit, usually an apple, as a symbolic offering. Since the villagers wait several years for this occasion, the practitioners must perform the sde bod regardless of the time it takes (sometimes the visits are not completed until well after dark).

Since Bon brgya Trulku is the head of both Bon brgya Monastery — which is the only Bonpo monastery in Reb gong — and the Reb gong bon mang, the influence of the monastic system in the area is growing stronger.

(100) Bon brgya Monastery

1. Name

The formal name of the monastery is Bon brgya sMan ri bshad sgrub smin grol gling.

2. Location

It is located in the upper reaches of Bon brgya valley in Chu khog district (xiang) of Reb gong, about 30 km southwest of Rong bo, the capital of rMa lho Prefecture.

3. History

There are no reliable written records concerning the origins of the Bon religion in the Reb gong area, but according to oral tradition, one of the “six great universal scholars” (’Dzam gling rgyan drug), Phrom gSer thog lee ’byams, a Bonpo from Phrom, spread Bon in his homeland, at a time corresponding to the earlier spread of Bon. During Khri srong lde btshan’s time, Dran pa nam mkha’ lived in Reb gong and built a large monastery at A ba ngos bzang. During the time of King U dum btsan, because of the persecution of Bon, the three grub thob, (“perfected beings”) — all three brothers of the Khyung lineage — fled from Central Tibet to Reb gong. They first stopped to rest at Chad lung thang, a short distance from the present site of Bon brgya Monastery. Later the three brothers established their residences in three villages in Reb gong — ’Khor lo bsgyur rgyal in sPyi sting village, Ye shes mtsho rgyal in Ngo mo village, and Khyung dkar tshang ba in Khyung bo village — and began to propagate Bon in the region. Their descendants and spiritual heirs are still living in Reb gong (Bon brgya ’i gsung, p.5). Around the same time, a Bonpo called dByings klong rin chen from sTong che in Khri ka arrived in Reb gong and married sTag ga’i rGyal mo byams. Their descendants became the Bon brgya village
that established itself in Bon brgya village in the valley of the same name. Several members of the village founded a hermitage at the site of the present monastery and formed the first religious community of Bon brgya Monastery. Other members eventually became nomads. Originally Bon brgya village comprised only twenty families but at present there are more than seven hundred families, including the nomad families (Bon brgya'i gsung, p.6) which altogether constitute the local lay community of the monastery. Although the monastery has a long history and is renowned for its many remarkable tantric practitioners and monks, its development as a monastic institution is fairly recent and probably does not go far back beyond the time of Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs who lived at the beginning of the twentieth century and who built the Don gnyis lhun grub lha khang with statues of the Three Buddhas of the Three Ages, rNam par rgyal ba, the Thousand Buddhas and a stupa (mchod rten) dedicated to rNam par rgyal ba outside. Just as the statues and the stupa were being completed, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan sent a letter to the monastery along with two hundred types of sacred objects (rten) with which to fill the statues and then visited the monastery in person. This event created a sensation among the local community and marked the history of the monastery. Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs not only became a student of Khri rgan 'Jam dbyangs thub bstan rgya mtsho who was the teacher of the sixth Shang tshang (the religious and political head of Reb gong at the time) but also became close to the sixth Shang tshang himself. As a result, Bon brgya Monastery enjoyed a period of prosperity and development. Later, however, the monastery was damaged twice by the army of Ma Bufang, the warlord of Qinghai (Ma Bufang tongzhi Qinghai sishinian). In 1944, sKyang sprul Lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho, a great master of mDzod dge, remained at the monastery for a year during which he visited many monasteries and gsas khang temples in the Kokonor area, giving teachings not only to the monks at the monastery but to all the Bonpo communities throughout the whole of Reb gong. Most monasteries and gsas khang in the Kokonor area paid homage to him. During his visit to Reb gong in 1980, the tenth Panchen Lama proposed to rebuild Bon brgya Monastery and offered the monastery a statue of Amitabha together with one thousand and eight hundred Chinese Yuan for its reconstruction. Official permission was granted by the local government the following year; the first buildings to be reconstructed were the Don gnyis lhun grub lha khang and the residence of Bon brgya Trulku. In recent years, Bon brgya Trulku established a philosophical school (bshad grwa) and a meditation school (sgrub grwa) where the lo gsum (three-year retreat) is practised. The main assembly hall is large and has twelve columns.

4. Hierarchical system

- The holder of the “gold throne” (gser khri) is Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub
rgya mtsho, often called Bon brgya Trulku, the reincarnation of Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs. He is also the chief teacher (*slob dpon*) of the monastery.

- The abbot (*mkhan po*), selected for three years. The present *mkhan po* is Tshul khrims nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin who is the reincarnation of sKyang sprul Lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho.
- *khri pa*, the “leader”, also selected for three years. The present *khri pa* is Tshul khrims blo gros.
- *dge skos*, the disciplinarian
- two *dbu mdzad*, the incantation masters
- two *gnyer pa*, the treasurers
- two *dkor gnyer*, the care takers, all of whom are also replaced every three years.

5. Current number of monks

There are about eighty monks and novices in the monastery and an additional thirty who come from other monasteries to receive teachings from Bon brgya Trulku.

6. Current education

Monks attending the philosophical school study the following subjects: metaphysics such as *bsdus grwa*, *blo rtags*, *phar phyin*, as well as grammar, poetry, painting, astrology, medicine, and calligraphy. Those who have successfully completed the programme may compete for the *dge shes* degree. Students at the tantric school are required to complete the three year practice (*lo gsum*); several among them have completed the practice twice or even three times.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month, 3rd - 11th day: the sMon lam chen mo, including a four-day rituals of the *Klong rgyas mandala*, the dBal gsas cycle on the morning of the 7th day, the chanting of the *bKa’ skyong gdangs yig* in the afternoon of the same day, the cycle of the *Rig ’dzin bon skor* on the 10th day; debates are held in between the rituals.
- 4th month, 20th - 23th day: the ritual of the *rTsa gsum cho ga bzhi sbrags*
- 5th month, 13th - 16th day: the ritual of the *Yi dam kun ’dus kyi tshogs mchod*
- 13th day of the 6th month to 1st day of the 8th month: the *gbyar gnas* observation
- 9th month, 15th - 23th day: the cycle of dBal gsas sgrub chen with the *’cham* performance on the 22nd day, the monastery’s officials are reelected at end of the ritual if their terms came to an end.
- 12th month, 24th - 29th day: the performance of gTor bzlog chen mo based on the bsTan pa'i lcags ri yi dam stag la'i srung zlog tshad ldan gyi sgrub pa

Besides the major rituals performed collectively by the Reb gong bon mang, there are various monthly rituals performed by the monastery separately: the Klong rgyas mchod pa on the 8th day, the Tshe dbang bod yul ma on the 10th day, the mDo chog cho ga bcu gnyis on the 15th day, the Kun rig gnas 'dren rgyas pa on the 25th day, and 8-day for the offering of the tshogs to the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo during the summer.

The daily practice: one hour is devoted to prayer (tshogs 'don), two hours to lessons, one hour to debate, one hour to recitation of texts. The rest of the day the monks study alone. Sunday is their day off.

10. Books held in the monastery

There are three copies of the Bonpo Kanjur, more than a thousand volumes of various Bonpo works, one copy of the Buddhist Kanjur and Tenjur, one copy of Shar tshang sKal ldan rgya mtsho’s complete works, one copy of ’Jam dbyangs bzhes pa’s works, one copy of Zhabs dkar pa’s works, and one copy of the Rin chen gter mdzod.

In the assembly hall, there are statues of rNam par rgyal ba, sMra seng, Byams ma, mNyang med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs, and thangka representing Byams ma, Kun rig, Kun dbyings, Dus 'khor, rGyal ba rgya mtsho, sMan bla, rNam 'joms, dGe spyod, sMon lam mtha’ yas, gNas brtan, Kun bzang zhi ba, dBal gsas, Grub chen brgyad cu, sTag la, Srid rgyal, and sTag gzig zhing bkod. In the chapel (mchod khang) of the Bon brgya residence, there are more than thirty finely executed thangkha representing mDzad pa bcu gnyis, gNas brtan, Zhi thang, Yi dam kun 'dus, rJe mNyang med yab sras gsum.

11. Income and expenses

In addition to general offerings made by the lay community, the monastery possesses one hundred female yak (’bri), as shi med and a truck, and has a total yearly income of around twenty thousand Yuan. The monastery also has a live-in wood-block engraver and a sculptor.

12. Local community

Since all the Bonpo villages in Reb gong belong to their own village temple and to Bon brgya Monastery at the same time, information concerning this question is dealt with in the detailed descriptions of the gsas khang. According to my estimate in 1996 during my fieldwork for the Japanese research project on Bon, there are forty-six major villages divided into numerous branches comprising six hundred and ninety-one families (about 4368 people) in Reb gong, in addition to seven hundred
nomad families (around 4000 people) in the Bon brgya pasturelands.

13 / 14.

These sections are dealt with when giving accounts of the individual temples.

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with: Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho (b.1935), the head of Bon brgya Monastery and master of all the temples in Reb gong area.
(2) Texts:
   - BGLD

(101) Bon brgya Temple

1. Name of the temple
   Bon brgya gsas khang gSang sngags dar rgyas gling or briefly Bon brgya gsas khang.

2. Location
   The temple is located in Bon brgya village in the middle of Bon brgya valley about 3 km east of Bon brgya Monastery (No.100).

5. Current number of priests
   There are twenty one Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Kun bzang and Tshe dbang in alternation on the 10th of each month. Rituals dedicated to Kun bzang and the sbyin sreg ritual known as the sNang srid zhi ba chen po from the 15th to the 24th day of the 1st month. Kun bzang and sPyi 'dul together from the 17th to the 22nd day of the 6th month, followed by the sbyin sreg ritual. Kun bzang and dBal gsas from the 11th to the 22nd day of the 11th month.

12. Local community
   Three villages: La kha with twenty families, Thang tshang with six families, and Tshe dbang with ten families (one hundred and forty people altogether).

13. Local festivals
   There are three la btsas connected to the temple: the la btsas of Bya khyung in Bon brgya thang built by rTse zhig rGyal ba tshul khrims, located 1 km from
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the temple the la btsas of gYung drung dgra 'dul, who is regarded as the spiritual son of rMa chen spom ra, is at the top of gSer khang thod hill, built by Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs, also located 1 km from the temple the la btsas sKyes ri on Ri dmar hill, 1 km from the temple; originally placed at the foot of the hill it was moved to the top by a practitioner called dByings rig mnam grol or 'Bum pa rgyal. All three local deities are propitiated on the 17th day of the 6th month.

At the top of Mount rGya rdung, 3 km from the village, there are two la btsas dedicated to the local deities known as A myes Bon sgang and A myes So ye that belonged to the no longer existing gDung nges Temple (see the introduction to this section).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

(102) Mag gsar Temple

1. Name

gSas khang gYung drung bstan dar gling

2. Location

The temple is located in Mag gsar village of Chu khog Township of Reb gong County, at the foot of Bon brgya Monastery, 100 m south of the monastery, (latitude: 35°25'58"N, longitude: 101°55'14"E).

3. History

The practitioners claim that they are the spiritual descendents of Khyung po bsTan pa dar rgyas, a famous local Bonpo practitioner.

5. Number of practitioners

There are twenty-six tantric practitioners in the temple.

8/9. Rituals and ceremonies

The tshogs 'khor rituals of the deities: Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, dBas gsas, Zhikho and sPyi 'dul in alternation on the 10th of each month. Kun bzang and sPyi 'dul together from the 3rd to the 11th of the 11th month with 'cham. sPyi 'dul on the 25th to 30th of the 12th month.

12. Local community

The local community consists of four villages: Thang skor with twenty
families; dGa' skor also with twenty families, rTswa ring with five families, gNas lung with seven families. Altogether forty families and two hundred and twenty-six people.

13. Local festivals

There are three la btsas, cairn around the temple. 1. the la btsas of Zho lung built in the past by the village children for fun. It was later moved up to Mount Zho lung 1.5 km from the temple, following a prophecy made by Khyung mo sGrub pa mthar phyin. The local deity (yul lha) Zho lung is propitiated on the 9th day of the 5th month. 2. the la btsas of 'Dzoms lung is situated on Mount Ri rgod, 4 km from the temple, also propitiated on the 9th day of the 5th month. 3. the la btsas of rGya 'du is on Mount rNga skyes, 5 km from the temple, propitiated on the 17th day of the 6th month.

14. Occupation of the local population

Agriculture

(103) rGya mtsho dpal Temple

1. Name
gSas khang Theg chen bon 'khor lhun grub gling

2. Location

rGya mtsho dpal Temple is located in rGya mtsho dpal village which is also called A rga steng (latitude: 35°32'16"N, longitude: 102°04'59" E).

5. Number of practitioners

There are twenty seven Bonpo tantric practitioners in the gsas khang.

8 / 9. Rituals

Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and Tshe dbang in turn on the 10th of each month. Kun bzang and 'Bum pa from the 23rd to the 28th day of the 5th month. Kun bzang and 'Bum pa the 16th to the 21st day of the 11th month.

12. Local community

Five villages: mKhar gong ma with fourteen families, mKhar zhol with ten families, Shar tshang with ten families, 'Khyer yag with twelve families and Kha dbugs with eight families (fifty-four families and three hundred and twenty six people altogether).
13. Local festivals

The la btsas dedicated to the local deity mThar-smug is located on top of Mount mThar-smug about 5 km from the temple and propitiated on the 11th day of the 4th month. The la btsas of Tshe lung 3 km from the temple and propitiated on the 9th day of the 5th month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

(104) Gad pa skya bo Temple

1. Name

gSas khang gSang sngags rig 'dzin dar rgyas gling

2. Location

Gad pa skya bo village (latitude: 35°32'58"N, longitude: 102°04'64"E).

5. Number of practitioners

There are thirty-four Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8/9. Rituals

Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and Tshe dbang in turn on the 10th of each month. Kun bzang and dBal gsas from the 14th to 18th day of the 5th month. 'Bum pa from the 16th to 21st day of the 11th month. sPyi 'dul and sTag la from the 25th to 28th day of the 11th month.

12. Local community

Three villages: Gong ma with twelve families, gNya tshang with ten families and Ser grong with nine families (thirty one families and two hundred and seventeen people altogether).

13. Local festivals

The two la btsas of mThar-smug and Tshe lung are propitiated on the same day by both Gad pa skya bo and rGya mtsho dpal villages.

14. Economic occupation of local people

Agriculture
(105) gDong mgo Temple

1. Name
   gsas khang Theg chen smin grol rgya mtsho gling

2. Location
   gDong mgo village of sPyi tshang (latitude: 35°32'17"N, longitude: 102°04'00"E).

5. Number of practitioners
   There are twenty two Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Kun bzang and 'Bum pa from the 21st to the 26th day of the 1st month. Kun bzang on the 10th day of each month. Kun bzang and 'Bum pa for five days at a suitable time in the 5th month. sTag la from the 16th to the 21st day of the 11th month.

12. Local community
   gDong mgo village comprising forty-four families (three hundred and ten people altogether) is considered as the lha sde of the temple.

13. Local festivals
   The two la btsas of mThar smug and Tshe lung are propitiated on the same day by the people of gDong mgo, rGyal mtsho dpal and Gad pa skya bo villages.

14. Economic occupation of the local people
   Agriculture

(106) Ngo mo Temple

1. Name
   gsas khang rGyal bstan ye shes rgya mtsho gling

2. Location
   Ngo mo village (latitude: 35°30'19"N, longitude: 102°03'77"E)

5. Number of practitioners
   There are twenty six Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.
8 / 9. Rituals

Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, 'Bum pa, each alternately on the 10th day of each month. Kun bzang and 'Bum pa from the 5th to the 10th of the 5th month. 'Bum pa, Rams pa and Khro bo from the 25th to 30th day of the 11th month.

13. Local festivals

There is a la btsas of the gsas khang, on top of a hill in front of the village temple, 3 km away and propitiated on the 9th day of the 5th month. The la btsas of gYung drung lha rtse is situated on top of the hill behind the gsas khang and propitiated on the 17th day of the 6th month. The la btsas of Ngo mo, also called sMad kyi Ngo mo, 4 km from the gsas khang and propitiated on the 15th day of the 5th month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people

Agriculture

(107) Gyang ri Temple

1. Name

gsas khang Rig 'dzin thugs rje byang chub gling

2. Location

Gyang ri village (latitude: 35°28’95’’N, longitude: 102°03’85’’E)

5. Number of practitioners

There are sixty-seven Bonpo tantric practitioners in Gyang ri Temple.

8 / 9. Rituals and ceremonies

Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, dBal gsas and 'Bum pa, in turn, on the 10th of each month. A seven to eight-day ritual for the village in the 1st month, on a date determined beforehand by Bon brgya Trulku. dBal gsas and 'Bum pa, in alternation, from the 1st to the 8th day of the 5th month. Kun bzang and the ritual based on the sNang srid zhi ba chen mo for seven days starting on the 25th day of the 6th month. Kun bzang, dBal gsas and 'Bum pa from the 11th to the 7th day of the 11th month.

12. Local community

Two villages: Gyang ri gong ma with ten families and Gyang ri zhol ma with twenty-four families (two hundred and forty people altogether). The former village's tutelary deity is dBal gsas, and that of the latter 'Bum pa.
13. Local festivals

There are seven la btsas connected to the temple:

1. the la btsas of sTag lung constructed by A myes Thugs rje, about 20 km from the temple; the local deity is propitiated by the Bonpo, rNying ma pa and dGe lugs pa together on the 17th day of the 6th month, (the main officiants however must be Bonpo).

2. the la btsas of sTag lung chung ba, located about 150 metres from the one just mentioned, and likewise propitiated on the 17th day of the 6th month.

3. the la btsas of A myes gNyan steng on A myes gNyan steng hill, 2 km behind the temple, propitiated on 25 June.

4-7. the la btsas of the local deities Bon rga, Bon chung, Nyag ga and dBu rtse in Bon brgya khog 73 km from the temple; the last four are propitiated on the 6th day of th 7th month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people

Agriculture

(108) Gling rgya Temple

1. Name
   gSas khang mDo sngags phun tshogs dar rgyas gling

2. Location
   Gling rgya village (latitude: 35°35'96"N, longitude: 102°08'03"E)

5. Number of practitioners
   There are one hundred Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Tshe dbang on the 10th of each month. Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and sPyi 'dul from the 13th to the 16th day of the 1st month. The initiation of the Yi dam kun 'dus and Zhi khro from the 14th to the 16th day of the 4th month. Tshe dbang and dBal gsas for abundant crops from the 5th to the 8th day of the 5th month. Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and sPyi 'dul from the 16th to the 18th day of the 11th month. The complete cycle of 'Bum pa from the 23rd to the 30th day of the 11th month. Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and sPyi 'dul from the 27th to the 30th day of the 12th month.

12. Local community
   Three villages: dBang chen with twenty-four families, Tshe mkhar with
twenty-four families, and rTen rgyal with twenty-seven families (seventy-eight families and three hundred and twenty-seven people altogether). There are one hundred and forty families of the rTen rgyal village living as nomads on the shores of the Kokonor, but they have been converted to Buddhism.

13. Local festivals

There is only one la btsas dedicated to the local deity rNgo tshang. According to some it was built by Grub thob Tshang pa, to others by Dung dkar Tshang pa. It is located 10 km from the temple and propitiated on the 9th day of the 4th month.

14. Economic occupation of local people

Agriculture

(109) Zho 'ong nyin tha Temple

1. Name
gSas khang Kun 'dus g-yung drung 'gyur med gling

2. Location
Zho 'ong nyin tha village (latitude: 35°36′34″N, longitude: 102°11′17″E)

5. Number of practitioners
There are twenty five Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, Zhi khro and 'Bum pa alternately on the 10th of each month, Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and Rams pa from the 11th to the 18th day of the 1st month. The ritual of the Yi dam kun 'dus and Zhi khro from the 14th to the 16th day of the 4th month. An important ritual dedicated to the Ma tri cycle from the 25th to the 30th day of the 10th day. Kun bzang, 'Bum pa and Rams pa from the 13th to the 20th day of the 12th month.

12. Local community
Two villages: sGang skor and dPon skor, comprising a total of twenty-three families and one hundred and thirty people.

13. Local festivals
There are three la btsas:
1. a common la btsas for both Bonpo and Buddhists dedicated to the local
deity called dPa’ bo hri rgan. The la btsas was rebuilt by a dGe lugs pa Lama named mChu dmar Blo bzang rgya mtsho. It is located at the top of the hill Tsha nyed la kha, 2km from the temple and propitiated on the 17th day of the 7th month.

2. the la btsas of Yar kha located 2 km from the temple and propitiated on the 9th April.

3. the la btsas of Bon dkar 5km from the temple, propitiated on the 11th day of the 6th month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people
   Agriculture

(110) Dar grong Temple

1. Name
   gSas khang sGrub pa’i rgyal mtshan mi ’gyur gling

2. Location
   Dar grong village

5. Number of practitioners
   There are twenty-seven Bonpo Tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Kun bzang and Tshe dbang alternately on the 10th of each month. Kun bzang, ’Bum pa and sPyi ’dul from the 16th to the 20th day of the 1st month. Kun bzang and sPyi ’dul from the 16th to the 20th day of the 12th month.

12. Local community
   The community comprises twenty families (one hundred and eighty people altogether).

13. Local festivals
   The la btsas of ’U gzur located 3 km from the temple, at the center of the mountain facing the temple and propitited on the 17th day of the 6th month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people
   Agriculture
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(111) Khyung bo thang Temple

1. Name

gSas khang Khyung dkar smin gro lrig 'dzin gling

2. Location

Khyung bo thang sMad pa village (latitude: 35°39'90"N, longitude: 102°04'29"E)

5. Number of practitioners

There are one hundred and forty Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8/9. Rituals

Kun bzang and Tshe dbang alternately on the 10th day of each month. Kun bzang and dBal gsas from the 21st to the 30th day of the 1st month. Kun bzang, dBal gsas and Khro bo from the 21st to the 30th day of the 3rd month. mKha’ ’gro gsang bcod from the 15th to the 16th day of the 4th month. Kun bzang and 'Bum pa from the 5th to the 10th day of the 5th month. Kun bzang and sTag la from the 16th to the 21st day of the 11th month. Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, 'Bum pa and sTag la from the 20th to the 30th day of the 12th month.

12. Local community

There are two main villages, Gong skor and Phyi skor. The former comprises the following sub-villages: sTag a 'bum with seventeen families, Bonpo with twenty families, and dPon skor with ten families, and the latter mKhar sgo gong ma with twenty families, mKhar sgo zhol ma with ten families and ITag kha with fifteen families. These villages are considered as the lha sde of the temple.

13. Local Festivals

The la btsas is dedicated to the local deity dMag dpon dGra 'dul thogs med rtsal. It is a common la btsas for both Bonpo and Buddhists. Built according to instructions given by Bon brgya Trulku. It is located 1 km from the temple and propitiated on the 9th day of the 4th month. The la btsas of the local deity sTag shar on top of sTag shar sgang hill, which is the rgyab ri of the temple. It is 13 km from the temple and propitiated exclusively by Phyi skor village on the 11th day of the 2nd month. The la btsas of the local deity Bya khyung is located at the top of one of the three peaks known as 'Khyams tho spun gsum, the three 'Khyams tho brothers, around 67 km from the temple and propitiated on the 4th day of the 5th month.

There is another type of la btsas made of stones (rdo 'bum), associated with Phun tshogs bla ma. It is 3 km from the temple and is propitiated by Gong skor.
village only on the 18th day of the 2nd month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people
   Agriculture

(112) sDong skam Temple

1. Name
   gSas khang gSang sngags bdud 'dul lhun grub gling

2. Location
   sDong skam smad pa village

5. Number of practitioners
   There are fifteen Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The fasting ceremony (smyung gnas) from the 15th to the 16th day of the 4th
   month. dBal gsas from the 5th to the 10th day of the 5th month. dBal gsas and Khro
   bo from the 21st to the 30th day of the 11th month.

12. Local community
   There are four villages with a total of ninety-nine families in sDong skam
   village but most of them have been converted to the dGe lugs pa tradition and also
   the rNying ma pa in the recent centuries. Only thirty Bonpo families comprising a
   total of hundred and four people remain as the temple’s former villages. As a result
   the temple is used by all three religious groups but on different dates.

13. Local festivals
   The la bsas dedicated to the local deity called dMag dpon is said to have been
   built by Tshe dbang bkra shis, a chief of sDong skam village. It is located 200 m
   from the temple and is propitiated by both Bonpo and Buddhists on the 15th day of
   the 5th month.
(113) Hor nag Temple

1. Name

gSas khang gSang chen smin grol dpal ldan gling

2. Location

The temple is located in Hor nag village about 15 km north of Rong bo, the capital of the Reb gong region (latitude: 35°37'02"N, longitude: 102°00'46"E).

5. Number of practitioners

There are twenty-eight Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals

Tshe dbang on the 10th of January. Khro bo and Pho nya gze ma from the 22nd to the 30th day of the 3rd month. On the 5th day of the 10th month, the ritual dedicated to Kun bzang is performed for rTse zhig chos rje, a master from rTse zhig Monastery in rGan rgya pasture near Bla brang Monastery. The ritual dedicated to Kun bzang is also performed by each of the Bonpo families in turn on the 29th of each month.

12. Local community

Six villages: 'Khyams skor with twenty families, Na tsang ma with five families, Tshe thar 'bum with six families, Sha rgya with thirteen families, dPon skor with one family and Cha g-yog with five families (fifty families and three hundred people altogether).

13. Local festivals

The la btsas of rGya ye at the top of Zu lung built by rGya ye gNam go byams and propitiated on the 15th day of the 6th month. The la btsas of sKya ye at the top of bKra shis sgang, built by Hor nag Byams pa rgyal, often referred to as Hor nag A myes Byams pa rgyal and propitiated at a suitable date in the 5th month.

14. Economic occupation of local people

Agriculture
(114) sTong che Temple

1. Name
   gSas khang Rig ’dzin kun ’dus rnam rgyal gling

2. Location
   sTong che village (latitude: 35°37’06”N, longitude: 102°00’74”E)

5. Number of practitioners
   There are twenty three Bonpo tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Kun bzang and dBal gsas alternately on the 10th day of each month. Kun bzang, Tshe dbang, dBal gsas and sTag la from the 22nd to the 30th day of the 3rd month.

12. Local community
   Three villages: rKe bcag with thirty families, Khyung mo with eighteen families, and Ka ye with eighteen families (sixty-six families and four hundred and twenty people altogether).

13. Local festivals
   The la btsas of A myes rTen ’gyings, 2 km from the temple, propitiated on the 10th day of the 6th month. There is also a temple (lha khang) dedicated to A myes rGya thang. It is apparently the common local deity of the whole sTong che valley. In sTong che village of the Khri ka district there is also a temple dedicated to A myes rGya thang with the same appearance and origin.

14. Economic occupation of the local people
   Agriculture

(115) Kyung bo la ga Temple

1. Name
   gSas khang Khyung dkar bstan pa rgya mtsho gling

2. Location
   Khyung bo la ga village (latitude: 35°37’68”N, longitude: 102°01’34”E)
5. **Number of practitioners**

There are thirty-two tantric practitioners in the temple.

8 / 9. **Rituals**

Kun bzang and Tshe dbang occur alternately on the 10th of each month and dBal gsas on the 29th of each month. Kung bzang, the sbyin sreg ritual of the sNang srid zhi ba chen mo and sPyi 'dul from the 17th to the 24th day of the 1st month. Khro bo and Pho nya gze ma from the 22nd to the 30th day of the 3rd month. A five-day ritual dedicated to dBal gsas at a suitable time in the 5th month.

12. **Local community**

Four villages: mKhar nang with thirty-one families, dGar ba with twenty-three families, Nyin skor with eleven families and sDong skam with twenty-four families (five hundred and sixty people altogether).

13. **Local festivals**

The la btsas, whose name is unknown, is located 1 km from the temple and propitiated on the 11th day of the 4th month. The local people say that it was built by unidentified Bonpo tantric practitioners in the remote past.

14. **Economic occupation of the local people**

Agriculture
(100) Bon brgya Monastery, Plate 1
Bön brgya monasteri. Plate 2. Bon brgya de gnyen bzhin gnyug rgya (100)
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(101) Bon brgya Temple, Plate 1
The Bonpo lamas at the Red Gong temple. Plate 2.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(102) Mag gsar Temple

(103) rGya mtsho dpal Temple
(104) Gad pa skya bo Temple

(105) gDong mgo Temple
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(106) Ngo mo Temple

(107) Gyang ri Temple
(108) Gling rgya Temple

(109) Zho 'ong nyin tha Temple
(111) Khyung bo thang Temple

(113) Hor nag Temple
(114) sTong che Temple

(115) Khyung bo la ga Temple
(116) Zhwa khra Temple

Zhwa khra Temple is located in the Zhwa khra village which is 18 km south of the county town of gCan tsha. Bonpo community in this area is small. According to oral tradition, a tribe called Zhwa khra, was banished during the persecution of Bon religion by King Khri srong lde btsan. They arrived in gCan tsha after having settled in sGong dkam village of Reb gong for many generations. There was a series of chiefs starting from gYung drung rnam rgyal through Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin, gYung drung rgyal mtshan, rGya mtsho, dMar ris, gYung drung rgyal, Tshe thar and Khro rgyal. The latter became a monk and a nephew of his took his place to be the chief of the tribe.

A monk of La mo bde chen, a large dGe lugs pa monastery located in the same area, went to Lhasa for studying. He was kown as Zhwa khra lHa rams pa when he obtained the degree of lha rams dge bshes in Lhasa. Nobody seems to remember his real name today. He had a Ma ni khang built in Zhwa khra village when he came back from Lhasa, and the Ma ni khang was shared by both Buddhist and Bonpo people for centuries. The date of the foundation is not clear, but, according to dBang grags, a retired leader of gCan tsha county and comes from Zhwa khra village, and some old Bonpo such as Padma Tsering who were from the village as well, the Ma ni khang was founded about eight generations ago.

A lay Bonpo tantric called rNam thar rgyal had a statue and thangka of the divinity dBal gsas made in the Ma ni khang, and so tantrics of both Buddhists and Bonpo practised together for many years.

Today, there are eighteen lay tantrics in the Ma ni khang. They practise both Buddhism and Bon religion. Ma ni khang has forty-two families as its local community. And then, rNam thar rgyal finally founded a Bonpo temple in the village called mTsho kha near Zhwa khra village and this was how Bon religion began to spread there. The temple was damaged in middle of the twentieth century and has not been yet rebuilt.

Another Bonpo lay tantric called rDo rje founded a new and small Bonpo temple separately in Zhwa khra village in the second half of the twentieth century to follow rNam thar rgyal’s example. rDo rje has his family and a few followers. In the temple, the ritual cycle of dBal gsas is performed from to time to time. There are no regular rituals either in the Ma ni khang or the gSas khang.

Source
(1) Interview in 1996 with : dBang grags and Padma Tsering, a lay tantric, both from Zhwa khra village
So nag is a large community situated in the pasture of gCan tsha County. There were only lay tantrics in the gSas khang, but recently there are also some monks from the community, but since the monks do not have a monastery, both lay tantrics and monks practise together in the gSas khang. No records seem to exist about the history of the gSas khang. I visited it in 1996, but unfortunately there was not any old tantric from whom one could get some information on local history concerning the gSas khang. I hope to be able to fill up this gap when this book appears in Tibetan edition in the future.
(117) So nag Temple
(118) To shes Temple

1. Name

The formal name of the temple is gSas khang gSang sngags bdud ’dul gling.

2. Location

It is located in To shes village in gSer gzhung (Jin yuan) district (xiang), Ba yan (Hua long) county, Qinghai province, 8 km north of gSer gzhung district (xiang) 45 km east of the Ba yan county town.

3. History

In rTse zhig Monastery at rGan rgya pasture, lived a renowned master called dGar ba gYung drung rgyal mtshan who taught for many years and had many disciples. Unfortunately, his trulku passed away in childhood. The following reincarnation was discovered in sTong chung of Ba yan, northern Amdo (Hua long county, Qinghai province). Apparently he did not return to rTse zhig but greatly contributed to the spread of the Bon religion throughout the Ba yan area, where he became known as sTong chung zhabs drung (TZLD p.6b). The latter’s reincarnation was Zhabs drung bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal (1894-1949), who was very active at the beginning of the 20th century in both the religious and political fields in Amdo. He was a disciple of sBra ser Pandita Kun bzang rgyal mtshan and Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs, and in turn became the master of monasteries of rTse zhig, To shes, Shar steng, sKa gsar, Khyung mo, Reb gong Bon mang and the Bonpo community in Cone. He founded Dung dkar Monastery (No.132). He was the family priest (gzhi dpon) of the tenth Panchen Lama’s family in sBis mdo (Xiong hua county in Qinghai). He also won the esteem of Ma Bufang, the famous Chinese warlord of Qinghai in the early 20th century, who offered him a seal with the following inscription: “the seal of rTse dbus who is the lama of all the tantric Bonpo monasteries and lay communities in the East” (Shar phyogs sngags bon dgon grong spyi’i bla ma rtse dbus pa’i tham ga). He was also offered a Yig gshib (shubs) lag the, which, as his son bsTan ’dzin (see below) explains, was a substitute for the postmark reserved for his personal use. His calling card states that he is “the overall master of all the Bonpo monasteries in Qinghai” (Guan li qing hai bai jiao ge si zong fo zhang) and he is referred to as rTse dbus tshang. He died on 22 September 1949. Following the instructions he left in his testament, sKyang ston rGyal ba’i dbang bo lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho remained in the area for three years, to find his reincarnation whom he discovered in the person sKal bzang bstan ’dzin rgya mtsho (also known as A mgon bla ma or A lags Pad ma), who was born in 1950 to the mGon rgya family of A mgon village in ’Khyog chu (Chu ma xiang, Ba yan county) is the present rTse dbus tshang (TZLD p.5a-b). According to bsTan ’dzin
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

dbang rgyal, the son of the rTse dbus bla ma and a reincarnation from Kun bzang rin chen of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180), rTse dbus bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal also founded To shes Temple at the age of twenty-five. Since the latter was born in the Wood-Horse Year of the 15th Rab byung, which corresponds to 1894, the monastery must have been founded in 1918. There are Chinese inscriptions inside the gsas khang stating that the temple was painted eight years later, in 1926, and its walls covered by decorated bricks, in 1941. More recently it was restored by bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal.

4. Hierarchical organization
- head lama
- two dge skos
- two dbu mdzad

Since the temple belongs to two villages, To shes and sBra 'og, there is one dge bskos for each village, and because To shes is larger than the other village, the dge bskos for To shes is reappointed each year, while that for sBra 'og is reappointed every two years. One of the two dbu mdzad is in fact the deputy dbu mdzad; he is appointed for two years and then is appointed dbu mdzad for another two years, on a rotating basis and according to seniority. The lama is the deputy of the temple’s principle master, and is responsible for disposing of the gtor ma during rituals.

5. Number of practitioners
There are eighty tantric practitioners in the gsas khang.

6 and 7. Current education and Educational exchange
The older practitioners teach the younger ones. Apart from Shar steng gsas khang with whom it shares the same master, bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, it has no ties with any other gsas khang or monastery, since it is relatively isolated from the rest of the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area.

8/9. Rituals
Since the members of the gsas khang are lay practitioners and work as farmers, they practise individually on an irregular basis and gather only for the following rituals:
Tshes bcu, on the 10th day of each month: on the 10th of the 1st, 4th, 9th and 10th month, the practitioners perform the ritual of the tshogs 'khor offering to bla ma, yi dam and mkha' 'gro, commonly referred to as rTsa gsum tshogs 'khor based on the text rTsa gsum kun 'dus mchog bsgrub zab mo yid bzhin nor bu by sKyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. The tshes bcu ritual of the remaining months is concerned with tshogs 'khor offering to mKha' 'gro Kye ma 'od mtsho. The full title
of the ritual text is \textit{mKha' gro rtsa rgyud gsang chen rol ba zang thal mkha' gro rgyud 'bum.}

The gsas khang holds three major annual rituals: the \textit{tshogs 'khor} ceremony for mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 5th day of the 1st month, for dBal gsas from the 12th to the 19th day of the 6th month with 'cham on the 19th day; for dBal gsas again from the 2nd to the 11th day of the 11th month, with 'cham on the 9th day. There are three less important annual rituals: the \textit{tshogs 'khor} ceremony based on the Yi dam kun 'dus from the 13th to the 15th day of the 5th month, commemorating the death of sKyang sprul Lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho, who was the main master of the Ba yan Bon mang; the \textit{tshogs mchod} ritual based on the Dug lnga rang grol from the 1st to the 6th of the 10th month, the full title of the ritual text is: \textit{Theg pa chen po dmar khrid dug lnga rang grol gyi dgongs pa don 'dus} by bsTan 'dzin rin chen. In addition there are two annual rituals of the Yi dam kun 'dus and Dug lnga rang grol held by To shes and Shar steng in turn and a ritual of the sTag la cycle from the 15th to the 20th day of the 11th month. Only ten practitioners gather for the three minor rituals. For the first of the three major rituals, two of the gnyer pa are responsible for collecting offerings and cooking for the participants; for the other two rituals, participants must bring their own food (but only rtsam pa, no meat or bread).

12. Local community

The lay community consists of two main villages: To shes with four branch villages: Yar nas, Mar nas, Srib lta and La ga, (forty families with a total population of more than four hundred), and sBra 'og, with twenty families and a population of one hundred eighty (altogether sixty families and a population of five hundred eighty).

13. Local festivals

There are four \textit{la btsas}, all constructed with help of bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal Rinpoche: The renewal ceremony of the \textit{la btsas} of Thang bzang rang skyes, takes place on the 9th day of the 5th month, that of Brag dkar rtse 'dzin on the 4th day of the 6th month, and that of dPal mkhar, also on the 9th day of the 5th month, that of Yos mo nyal sa on the 11th day of the 7th month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Source

(1) Interviews: bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, the master of To shes and Shar steng village temples and one of the most learned Bonpo scholars in the Ba yan area. He was
born in 1932 and was recognized as the trulku of Kun bzang rin chen of sNang zhig Monastery where he was enthroned at the age of fifteen.

(119) Shar steng Temple

1. Name
gSas khang gSang sngags bdud ’dul gling

2. Location
   It is located in Shar steng village 45 km east of Ba yan (Hua long), the seat of Ba yan county, near the gSer gzhung (Jin yuan) village.

3. History
   The temple was founded by rTse dbus tshang bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal, the founder of To shes Temple (No.118); he founded Shar steng Temple a year after To shes Temple in 1919.

4. Hierarchical system
   There is one leader and two dge bskos and two dbu mdzad. One of the two dbu mdzad is in fact deputy dbu mdzad, the deputy dbu mdzad is appointed for two years and then is appointed dbu mdzad for another two years, on a rotating basis and according to seniority. The lama is the deputy of the Temple's principle master, and is responsible for disposing of the gtor ma during rituals.

5. Number of tantric practitioners
   There are seventy-three tantric practitioners in the gsas khang.

6/7. Current education and Educational exchange
   The older practitioners teach the younger ones. Apart from To shes Temple with whom it shares the same master, bsTan ‘dzin dbang rgyal, the temple has no ties with any other temple or monastery, since it is relatively isolated from the rest of the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area.

8/9. Rituals
   Since the members of the temple, like those of To shes are lay practitioners and work as farmers, they practise individually on an irregular basis and gather only for the rituals which are exactly identical with those of To shes Temple.
   There are two annual rituals based on the Yi dam kun ’dus and Dug inga rang grol held by To shes and Shar steng in turn and a ritual of the gDugs dkar cycle from
the 15th to the 20th day of the 11th month. Only ten practitioners gather for the minor rituals and these take place exactly the same way as those of To shes Temple.

12. Local community

The local community consists of fifty families (three hundred people in total) in Shar steng village.

13. Local festivals

Same as those of To shes Temple

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Source

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1996 with: bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, on him, see To shes Temple.

(120) sTong chung Monastery

1. Name

The site is locally known as Dung khyung. In certain written sources, such as the biography of Khri ka Kun bzang rgyal mtshan, it is referred to as sTong chung and is associated with sTong che in Khri ka. Not sure whether my interpretation is correct: this association however seems to have been made by later scholars, because for the local population in both areas the distance between sTong che in Khri ka and sTong chung in Ba yan is considerable. The two monasteries probably found out about each other after most of the Bonpo religious sites in Amdo were converted to the dGe lugs pa tradition and Bonpo masters began travelling back and forth between the few Bonpo sanctuaries that remained. With the exception of the biography mentioned above, the site is not referred to as sTong chung, neither locally, nor by the people of sTong che. According to another source, there were two masters in sTong che known as sTon pa che ba and sTon pa chung ba, “elder master” and “younger master” and the terms evolved into sTon che and sTon chung. Thus sTon chung in Ba yan is supposed to have been named after the younger master who went there. This version seems to be rather farfetched, and since Khri ka Kun bzang rgyal mtshan is renowned as a scholar, his version of the name’s origin is widely accepted, especially by the local Bonpo scholars.
2. Location
It is located in Dung khyung village in rTsa ba Township in Ba yan (Hua long) County, Qinghai province, about 100 km west of the county town of Ba yan.

3. History
According to oral tradition, the monastery was originally built on the present site of Bya khyung Monastery, one of the largest and most important dGe lugs pa monasteries in Amdo, where Tsong kha pa was ordained. Indeed, before Bya khyung Monastery was built, there was a Bonpo monastery surrounded by several villages whose the inhabitants were fervent Bonpo. When Bya khyung Monastery was built the Bonpo were expelled from the surrounding villages. They resettled at sTong chung village where they or their descendents built a large Bonpo monastery which was later destroyed by Hui Muslims. In the mid-20th century, the lama bDod nams gYung drung dbang rgyal of rTse zhig began to rebuild the monastery; twelve monks’ cells and the residence of the head lama were completed, but then, owing to the Chinese invasion, the main hall was never finished. The monastery was eventually rebuilt in 1998 through the efforts of bZod pa bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan.

5. Current number of monks
There were six monks in the monastery in 1996.

7. Educational exchange
Since the monks were very busy for rebuilding the monastery under the leadership of bZod pa bstan pa’i rgyal tshan. The latter is considered as reincarnation, but was not yet formally recognised. There was not any kind of monastic education when I visited the monastery, but, for historical reasons, the monastery has close ties with bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal of To shes Temple (No. 118).

Source
(1) Interview: bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal, the master of To shes Temple and Shar steng villages, is one of the most learned Bonpo scholars in the Ba yan area. He was born in 1932 and was recognized as the incarnation of Kun bzang rin chen of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180).
(121) sTong chung Temple

1. Name
sTong chung gSas khang

2. Location
The temple is located in sTong chung village, 100 km west of Ba yan (Hualong), the seat of Ba yan county.

3. History
According to an old text concerning the lineage of gZungs 'bum, a local Bonpo family, religious gatherings of the village began eighteen generations ago. The original site of these gatherings is not specified in the text. Later rTse dbus bSod nams g-yung dung dbang rgyal, the founder of To shes Temple (No. 118) and Shar steng Temple (No. 119), built a temple there. According to bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, the son of the builder, the temple was built in the early nineteen-forties.

4. Hierarchical system
- principal master
- bla ma, deputy principal master
- two dge bskos
- one dbu mdzad
- one deputy dbu mdzad

Each member of the temple occupies the position of deputy dbu mdzad for two years and then that of dbu mdzad for another two years on a rotational basis and in order of seniority. Thebla ma is responsible for preparing the gtor ma and disposing it during rituals.

8/9. Rituals
The dBal gsas cycle from the 15th to the 20th day in the 5th month and a 'cham performance on the 20th day of the same month.

Source
(1) Interviews in autumn of 1996 with: bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal, on him, see To shes Temple.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.
(118) To shes Temple

(119) Shar steng Temple
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(122) Ser kywa Temple

1. Name

Locally, Ser kywa Temple is referred to as a spyi khang, "Common House" and not as a gsas khang. Its full name is Ser kywa (also written as Se ky’a (TsGLNy, p.96) and Ser ky’a (KhKRL, p.128) Bon sngags bdud 'dul me ri 'khyil gling.

2. Location

The temple is located in Ser kywa village in Shar lung district (xiang), Khri ka county, 15km southeast of the county town (latitude: 35°57'01''N, longitude: 101°31'06''E).

3. History

As with the other gsas khang in the Kononor region, there are no reliable historical accounts of the monastery, whether oral or written.

5. Number of tantric practitioners

The gsas khang has one hundred and thirty-six tantric practitioners.

6. Education

According to some of the older members of the gsas khang, such as Kun bzang, the gsas khang was under the guidance of mKhar nag Tulku and sBra ser Tulku of sTong che (in Khri ka) until the nineteen-fifties. The present master is Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho. Young practitioners study ritual with their own private tutors, and also go to Bon brgya Monastery or other places where Bon brgya Rinpoche helps them receive further training. Bon brgya Rinpoche also occasionally visits the gsas khang to give teachings.

7. Exchanges with other gsas khang establishments

With the of exception of the above-mentioned relations with Bon brgya Rinpoche and his monastery, the gsas khang has no traditional ties with any other monastery or gsas khang.

8. Monthly Rituals

Kun bzang, sPyi ’dul and sTag la rituals are performed on the 19th day of each month. known as zla cho.

9. Annual Rituals

- 1st month: 10th-15th: rGya lo’i smon lam. The rituals performed during this period are prescribed by Bon brgya Rinpoche on the 1st day of the 1st month
when representatives of the gsas khang go to Bon brgya Monastery to pay their respects on New Year’s day. Generally the smon lam rituals include the propitiation of Khro bo gtso mchog and A bse.

- 3rd month: 25th-30th, the rite of A bse and performance of the sNang srid zhi chen ritual.
- 4th month: 4th - 5th, the offering of 1000 times according to the sKye sgo gcod pa; 8th -13th, the ritual of fasting (smyung gnas) and of Kun bzang rgyal ba rgya mtsho; 20th - 24th, the Zhi khro. ritual
- 5th month: 1st - 8th, Kun bzang. Since 28 families of Ser kywa village live as nomades in the Srin po mountain area, quite far from the village, the Kun bzang ritual is held only once a year.
- 9th month: 25th-30th, the propitiation of Drag btsan.
- 10th month: 8th-15th, the liturgy of Khro bo with the ‘cham dance on the 14th.

In addition to the above rituals, there is a custom known as tsho mthun, “agreement between villages”, according to which certain rituals are held collectively by two villages.

These rituals include:
(1) Khro bo from the 25th to the 30th day of the 4th month, and the sTong gsum 'khrugs pa'i yo bcos, dGra bla'i dpung stod, Drug cu'i gdon sel and Rlung rta'i gar 'dzugs from the 1st to the 4th day of the 5th month held jointly by the Bon dkar and Yag nyes villages.
(2) sPyi 'dul, together with the sTong gsum 'khrugs pa'i yo bcos, Drug cu'i gdon sel, dGra bla'i dpung stod and Rlung rta'i gar 'dzugs, from the 5th to the 13th day of the 5th month.

12. The local community

The lay community consists of four main villages which may be subdivided into fifteen branch villages:
1. Bon dkar comprising five branch villages: Srog tsha with ten families, Phar rka with eight families, Mar rka with eight families, La kha with eleven families, and So tshang with fifteen families.
2. Slog brgya comprising three branch villages: Slog brgya with sixteen families, Shi glo'u tshang with six families and A yag tshang with five families.
3. Se skong tshang comprising five branch villages: Hor tshang with 4 families, gDung tshang with six families, Bya brgya tshang with nine families, sNgo rgya tshang with three families and Nag rgya tshang with 2 families.
4. Yag nyes tshang comprising two branch villages: Yag nyes tshang with eighteen families and Bon nag tshang with sixteen families.
There are altogether one hundred and thirty-seven families and eight hundred and thirty people. Ser kywa village is mainly a Bon po village with the exception of nine families which are rNyin ma pa. There is also a dGe lugs pa monastery named Ser kywa nearby although there are no dGe lugs pa families living in the village.

13. Local festivals

The la btsas of the local deity Bla ri btsan gyi phye ma rnga rdung was built with the instructions given by Bon brgya Trulku, 2 km from the gsas khang, and propitiated on the day 9th day of the 5th month by the Bonpo, rNyin ma pa and dGe lugs pa communities together. The la btsas of Bon dkar is located 15 km from the gsas khang, on top of Mount Srin po’i pad ma dbang rgyal. It was built by Rig ’dzin So lha khyab ril, and is propitiated on 15th day of the 6th month by the Bon dkar village.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with: Kun bzang and other practitioners.
(2) Texts:
- TsGLNy
- KhKRL

(123) Khyung mo Monastery

1. Name

The monastery was named after Khyung mo Trulku, the main reincarnate lama of the monastery. It is also known as gYung drung phun tshogs gling.

2. Location

The monstery is located in Ba rgya village in sTong che valley of Chu nub (Hexi) district (xiang) in Khri ka county, 18 km south of the county seat of Khri ka county.

3. History

Literary sources: in addition to sBra ser Pandita Kun bzang rgyal mtshan’s unfinished autobiograghy, there are two more recent texts by sNyin sangs rgyal and sBra ser Thangs dbyangs. sBra ser Pandita, also known as Khri ka Kun bzang rgyal mtshan (or by his secret name Nam mkha’ dbang phyug) was a learned monk
from sBra ser Monastery overlooking the village of the same name. There are no written sources concerning the origin of Bon in sTong che. However, according to oral tradition, in the 14th century Ye shes rgyal mtshan, a Bonpo monk from gYas ru dben sa kha Monastery and originally from Sog sde in Nag chu kha, asked his main master, mTha’ bral bSod nams rgyal mtshan, about his future. His master told him that he was to spread the doctrine in a land called gYang lung ra gsum in northern Amdo. Following his master’s instructions, he left for Amdo in search of the place. The master gave Ye shes rgyal mtshan a reliquary for keeping sacred items exhorting him repeatedly not to open it before reaching his destination, but Ye shes rgyal mtshan’s treasurer, overcome by curiosity, opened the reliquary on the way and a pigeon escaped from it. The bird was in fact dMag dpon, a guardian of the Bon religion, which is why, it is believed, dMag dpon is propitiated by the Bonpos living in Kokonor to this day. When they reached the shores of Kokonor lake they learnt that gYang lung ra gsum corresponded to the three valleys of Khri ka, and thus proceeded in that direction. When they reached sTong che valley, the mule carrying their belongings dropped to the ground. Ye shes rgyal mtshan took this as an auspicious sign. He decided that they would settle there and drove his phur pa dagger into the ground. The gsas khang he built on the spot became Khyung mo lha khang which survived until the middle of the 20th century. (The temple was built in the old architectural style with the three Buddhas of the Three Ages at the entrance flanked by eight sms dpa’ on either side). The temple is the earliest of its kind in Amdo; indeed, since Ye shes rgyal mtshan arrived there from central Tibet, the temple was built in the original, central Tibetan style. Ye shes rgyal mtshan became renowned as sTong che ston pa, also called Sog btsun ston pa, the “monk from Sog sde” (in Amdo). He also built a monastery at the site of the present dPon tshang lha khang, but since its location in the center of the village was inconvenient, it was moved to the present site of Khyung mo Monastery a few generations after its foundation. It was during this period that the first temples in sTong che valley were founded: sBra ser lha khang, dPon tshang lha khang and sKa rgya stong skor spyi khang.

A lags Khyung mo is the most important reincarnation of the monastery. According to legend, A lags Khyung mo was a lama who practised the 'pho ba grong 'jug, “transferring the soul from one body to another”. There are two lineages of the practice of 'pho ba grong 'jug, one from India and the other from China. The Indian lineage was discontinued when sKar ma mdo sde, the son of Mar pa lo tsa ba, was killed by Rwa lo tsa ba. A lags Khyung-mo is said to belong to the Chinese lineage. The third A lags Khyung mo Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan received the teaching of 'pho ba grong 'jug from Rong sgom rTog med zhig po, a master of the lHo yang ston lineage and initiated the practice of 'pho ba grong 'jug within the Khyung mo lineage. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan was born to the Khyung po village in Nag chu kha
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

and was the son of the King of Hor (Hor spyi khyab rgyal po).

The elder people in the village remember that the eighteenth A lags Khyung mo was a Chinese man from Ziling (Xining), who came to Khyung mo Monastery and claimed to be the embodiment of the previous A lags Khyung mo who practised the ‘pho ba grong ’jug. The monastery, after having investigated the matter, confirmed his claim and he was enthroned at the monastery. This took place sometime in the early 20th century. The present A lags Khyung mo, sTobs ldan dbang phyug, was recognized by rGyal ’obs Rinpoche of sNang zhig Monastery of rNga khog. There are no biographies of the A lags Khyung mo incarnations, only a list of their names:

1. Sog btsun sTon pa Ye shes rgyal mtsan
2. Sog btsun Grags pa rgyal mtsan
3. Kun bzang rgyal mtsan
4. Yon tan rgyal mtshan
5. unknown
6. Tshul khrims ye shes
7. Kun bzang ye shes
8. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
9. Grub dbang Nyi ma
10. bsTan pa blo gros
11. Tshul khrims ye shes
12. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal
13. mTshan ldan rgyal mtshan
14. bsTan ’dzin ye shes
15. Phun tshogs dbang rgyal
16. gYung drung rnam rgyal
17. bsTan pa blo gros
18. sGrub pa mthar phyin
19. rGyal ’obs bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal
20. sTobs ldan dBang phyug, the present A lags Khyung mo

There was a mKhar nag Trulku popularly known as mKhar nag grub chen, who belonged to one of the three lineages of Khyung mo Monastery.

The monastery’s most remarkable scholar was sBra ser Pandita Kun bzang rgyal mtshan. He travelled throughout both Amdo and Khams. He finally arrived in gYing drung gling where he studied under the famous mKhan po Nyi ma bstan ’dzin. He is the author of a great number of works. Following is a list of those known to us: Nub phyogs stag gzig bde ba can gyi zhi zhe smon; Sang rgyas sman lha’i cho ga ’bring po; Shes rab byams ma’i bstod pa; mKhar nag btsan gzhung gi phyag bzhes; gDugs dkar bzlog bsgyur; Legs bshad rin chen gter khyim and brDa sprod nyi shu bdun pa’i ’grel bshad. He was also a painter. A large zhi zhe bshod type of thangka depicting ’Ol mo lung ring, the Bonpo sacred land in sTag gzig, is
attributed to him. The image is regarded as the emblem of the Bonpo community throughout Amdo. As a result, it has been copied in many temples and monasteries in Amdo.

In the lineage of rTse zhig Lama of rTse zhig Monastery, there was a master called Shes rab, more commonly known as A lags Shes rab, who became the master of many temples and monasteries in Amdo including those in sTong che. He had several temples and a residence built in sTong che Monastery. He named the monastery gYung drung phun tshogs gling. Shes rab rnam rgyal, his nephew, travelled to Central Tibet where he lived and studied as a monk at sMan ri Monastery in gTsang. His aging uncle grew very sad for he was afraid he might never see his nephew again, so rGyal ba, a monk at Khyung mo Monastery, went to sMan ri to ask Shes rab rnam rgyal to return. The latter accepted and thus uncle and nephew were reunited. Shes rab rnam rgyal also developed close ties with the sixth Panchen Lama, dPal ldan ye shes (1738-1780), who offered him a title and seal investing him with authority over all the Bonpo communities throughout Amdo (KTGN fol.9), and he became known as rTse zhig Drung rams pa.

He frequently returned to Khyung mo Monastery. From that time onwards, the masters of the rTse zhig lineage have been in charge of Khyung mo Monastery, and some among them as khri ba of the monastery even had a permanent residence there. Later, gYung drung bstan rgyas and rTse dbus rGyal ba tshul khrims from rTse zhig Monastery also put a lot of effort into the monastery.

Until the mid-20th century, monastery had three temples, one known as the dPon tshang gsas khang was built by dBang rgyal, a chief of sTong che valley, as an act of repentance for the killing of the seven brothers of Sha kya village by the Tsha kho army. According to legend, when gYung drung lha steng Monastery was destroyed by Chinese forces during the Manchu dynasty an orphan child from rGyal rong was adopted by a Chinese officer. When the boy grew up and became an officer like his adopted father, he asked permission to destroy one hundred and eight dGe lugs pa monasteries to take revenge on the dGe lugs pa for destroying gYung drung lha steng Monastery. Permission was granted and he was given the troops stationed at rGyal rong — known by the people of Khri ka as the Tsha kho army — to assist him in his task. When the troops finally arrived in sTong che valley to destroy Ba rgya Monastery, the last of the one hundred and eight dGe lugs pa monasteries located near Khyung mo Monastery, they met stiff resistance from the Sha kya village, the patron family of Ba rgya Monastery and their people. In the end only the Sha kya’s stag bdun (“seven tigers of Sha kya village”), in other words, the seven brothers of the village, were left to defend the monastery. The brothers took refuge in a castle to make their last defense. At this juncture the chief of sTong che proposed to act as mediator between the seven brothers and the Tsha kho troops and obtained from the latter the promise that the brothers would not be killed if they
surrendered to the army. No sooner had the brothers surrendered than they were killed. Since the chief had urged the brothers to surrender he felt responsible for their deaths and built the temple as an act of repentance. We do not know the exact dates of these events, but the story is still well-known today.

In the eighteen-nineties permission was granted for the monastery’s reconstruction.

4. Hierarchical system

The head of the monastery is a sprul sku.
- one dge skos
- one dbu mdzad

6 / 7. Education and Exchanges with other monasteries

The elder men of this monastery have not taken vows of celibacy and have families in the village. However, since the monastery’s reconstruction in the early nineteen-eighties, Khyung mo Trulku is trying to impose religious vows on the younger monks. As a result both young monks who have taken the vows and elder men who have not coexist inside the monastery. Generally the elder men only go to the monastery for rituals and other religious activities and then return to their homes in the village, while the young monks live inside the monastery on a permanent basis. In the past, the establishment had close ties with rTse zhig Monastery of rGan rgya pasture, but is now closer to Bon brgya Monastery, especially with A lags Bon brgya, also called Bon brgya Trulku. rTse zhig Monastery was formerly the most important Bonpo monastery in the Kokonor area but now, even though their master, Trulku Zla ba, is a disciple of A lags Bon brgya, its influence has diminished. Thus the monks of Khyung mo go to Bon brgya Monastery to receive teachings from A lags Bon brgya.

12. Local community

There are seventeen large local lay communities around Khyung mo Monastery in sTong che, both farmers and nomads:
1. Khyung mo lha sde with fifty families
2. sBra ser with twenty families
3. 'Bum kho with fifteen families
4. sNying nge lha sde with sixty families
5. Sha rgya with ten families
6. mKhar nag with twenty families
7. sKa rgya with twenty families
8. sTong skor with twenty families
9. Lhasa with ten families
10. Nog wer sgang with five families
11. Zhwa dmar with six families. All the above mentioned communities are farmers.
12. 'Brog ru'i dpon tshang with sixty families
13. 'Brog ru'i stong skor with fifty families
14. Kro'u tshang with ten families
15. Mar nang with twenty families
16. Sha rgya bon tshang ma with fifteen families
17. Bya mdo bon pô tshang with about five hundred families, but most families converted to Buddhism, leaving only thirty Bonpo families.

All the above-mentioned communities are nomads. Altogether There are four hundred and twenty-one families (around two thousand five hundred people). All these families also support the four gsas khang of sTong che valley, as well as the gsas khang of 'Brog ru'i stong skor and the tent gsas khang (tshogs ras) of 'Brog ru'i dpon tshang.

13. (mentioned at the beginning of the document)

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with: Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyung, the present Khyung mo bla ma of the monastery; Tshangs dbyangs, a monk and the teacher of the present Khyung mo bla ma at the monastery.

(2) Texts:
- KTGN
- KhKRL
- TsGLNy

Bonpo temples in sTong che

(124) sGar ba Temple
(125) sBra ser Temple
(126) gZe ma Temple
(127) sKa rgya Temple

1. Name

Among the four temples (Nos.124-127), the local people call the first three as
lha khang (temple) and the No.127 as spyi khang, ‘commune house’. While only the tantrics and monks in sTong che use the term gsas khang, ‘temple’ since it is the Bonpo’s own term for a temple, the common people use the word lha khang, e.g. sGar ba lha khang.

2. Location

The four temples are located in sTong che valley which is under the administration of Chu nub (Hexi) Township of Khri ka county, Tsolho (Hainan) Prefecture in Qinghai Province. sGar ba and sBra ser are located in Ba rgya village 16 km from the county town and gZe ma and sKa rgya are located in 'Bum kho village south of Khri ka mkhar, the county town of Khri ka.

3. History

About history of Bon religion in Khri ka, specifically in sTong che, the only text that briefly mentions about it, is the gShen gyi dge sbyong khri ka ba kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, the autobiography of Khri ka Kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan who was born in sTong che valley, but unfortunately it has only eighteen leafs and is incomplete. So there is very little information regarding the history of Bon religion and its monasteries and temples in the area. According to oral tradition, the four temples were founded by Sog btsun Ye shes rgyal mtshan who also founded Khyung mo Monastery (No.123) located in the same area. It is said that Sog btsun Ye shes rgyal mtshan came from Sog sde of the Nag chu kha region and according to gYung drung lhun grub, the master came from Tsan tan Monastery situated in that region.

The four temples were damaged at the end of the 1950s and were rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

The four temples have no special headship system. Masters from the three lineages of Khyung mo Monastery, i.e. Khyung mo, mKhar nag and sBra ser, had looked after the temples until the middle of the twentieth century. Presently it is Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyug who takes care of the four temples. Since all of tantrics of the four temples practise their rituals together either in one temple or another, they are called sTong che Bon mang as a collective name, and also for this reason, they have only one suit of administrative system. However, among the tantrics of the present day, dBang ba is regarded as the leader of all tantrics. When they gather together in the temples for the rituals there are positions as follows:

- none dbu mdzad appointed from one to four years, depending on his ability
- one dge skos appointed for one year
- one gnyer pa for one year
- one mchod g-yog for one year

The positions must be reelected by lay tantrics during the ritual of Khro brgya and replaced on the 13th of the 1st month each year before the ritual finishing.

5. Current number of tantrics

There are about seventy-five tantrics in the four temples together in sTong che valley and an additional thirty-five who come from the nomadic part of sTong che region.

7. Educational exchange

The tantrics of the four temples have a close relationship with Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho, the head of Bon brgya Monastery (No.100) in Reb gong. Either they invite him to give them teachings or they often go to Bon brgya Monastery in Reb gong to receive teachings from him.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: the ritual of Khro brgya from the 11th to 17th, the temples take turn to hold the ritual every year.
- 4th month: ritual of gTer sgrub for a few days, dates are not fixed.
- 8th month: ritual of Dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs 'khor from the 14th to 16th; this ritual must be performed in sKa rgya Temple.
- 10th month: rituals of gZe ma, Kun bzang, and Khro bo are performed from the 22nd to 29th in the gZe ma Temple.

10. Books held in the temples

A copy of Bonpo Kanjur and Katen of the bsTan pa'i nyi ma edition. In addition to these there are many ritual texts which are kept in the gZe ma Temple.

12. Local community

The devotees of the four temples are those who follow Khyung mo Monastery in sTong che.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with: Tshangs dbyangs, the teacher of Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyug and Khyung mo sTobs ldan dbang phyug himself who is the head of Khyung mo Monastery

(2) Texts:
- KTGN
- KhKRL
- TsGLNy
- sTeng chen dgon grong gi lo rgyus lha mi dgyes pa'i 'bel gtam by gYung drung lhun grub, MS.

Notes

1  At the beginning, this temple was known as dPon tshang lha khang since it was built by the chieftain of sTong che people. Later, the ritual of gZe ma, which is a chapter of the Khro bo text, is performed in the temple, it became known as gZe ma gsas khang.

2  Sog Tsan tan Monastery was originally a Bonpo monastery in Sog sde of Nag chu kha. The fifth Dalai Lama had it converted with other six Bonpo monasteries and bKa' brgyud pa together into dGe lugs pa and renamed it as Sog shod dGa' ldan 'phel rgyas gling. See Bod ljong nag chu khul gyi lo rgyus rig gnas, Seventh volume, pp.350-358 (published by Nag chu sa gnas srid gros lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha rtsom sgrig khang).

3  sTeng chen dgon grong zung gi lo rgyus lha mi dgyes pa'i 'bel gtam by gYung drung lhun 'grub, pp.5-8. MS.
(122) Ser kywa Temple
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

125) sBra ser Temple

126) gZe ma Temple
(127) sKa rgya stong skor Temple
(128) 'Brog ru stong skor Temple

A rig stong skor gsas khang is located in 118 km northewest of Chabcha, the county town of Gonghe. The local people call it simply Ma ni khang.

It is said that sTong skor, which was a large tribe, spread from the sTong skor tribe of sTong che valley to Khri ka. In the past, these people were adherents of Bon. Almost all of them were converted to Buddhism. Only seven families remained Bonpo to this day.

In 1989 for the first time a temple was founded for the people. There are five lay tantrics in the temple where two annual rituals are performed: rNam rgyal stong mchod and sPyi 'dul. The performance of the first takes place from the 1st to 5th of the 5th month. This is performed by some monks from Dung dkar Monastery (No.132) which is situated in the same county, and the second is performed for a few days in the 10th month.

The people in sTong skor practise both agriculture and pastoralism.

Source
(1) Interview in autumn of 1996: sTag thar rgyal, a Bonpo lay trantric in the tribe

(129) 'Brog ru'i dPon tshang Tent Temple

sTong che is a long valley of Khri ka County. There are a lot of tribes in the valley and they were originally nomads. In the past, these tribes were grouped into two parts. Some of them who remain in the valley became farmers, other who still have kept animals are of course nomads. The latter moved to Mugethang pasture, about two hundred km west of sTong che valley, and it is administratively belongs to Guinan County instead of Khri ka today. In local dialect, the two communities are referred to as ru yul 'brog, 'nomads and farmers'.

dPon tshang is the family of the chieftain of the community in the valley. The family also has a nomadic part with the same name on Mugethang pasture. Its Tent Temple, called 'Brog ru'i dPon tshang Tshogs ras, is usually kept in Mugethang.

The Tent Temple of 'Brog ru'i dpon tshang and that of Bon brgya are the two largest ones in Amdo. Unfortunately I have not been able get any information regarding the history of the Tent Temple of Brog ru'i dPon tshang and the dates of its annual rituals, because the people were scattered all over the place in their pasture land when I undertook fieldwork and celebration of their rituals did not coincide with my visit to this place.
(130) Bon brgya Tshogs ras (Tent Temple)

Tshogs ras signifies ‘cloth tent for gathering’. In Amdo dialect, the sbra, ‘tent’ is pronounced as ‘ra’, so that tshogs sbra has become tshogs ras since the tent is now made of cotton.

Bon brgya Tshogs ras is one of the very few tent temples that is still used in Amdo. The Tent Temple has no fixed location. It is moved from one place to another just as the nomadic tents. Every year a new location for the tent is chosen to perform the annual rituals. These rituals are usually performed only in autumn on pasture so that the weather is still warm and convenient for the people to attend the ceremony.

(131) Bon brgya Khyung smon Monastery

1. Name

The full name of the monastery is Bon brgya Khyung smon dgon smin grol mdo sngags bshad sgrub bdud las mam rgyal don gnyis lhun grub gling.

2. Location

It is located on Bon brgya pasture which is about 45 km east of Mang stod, the county seat of Guinan.

3. History

According to Bon brgya gYung drung lhun grub, the origin of the monastery was a small temple called Bon brgya gsang sngags bdud ’dul gling founded in 1409 by Sha rgya gYung drung rin chen at ’Ba’ tshe chu kha in Reb gong (for reference see his work given below), but this consideration needs to be proved. The present Bon brgya Khyung smon Monastery was founded by him during 1983 to 1990. He is the head of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

- one dgon bdag bla ma
- one khri ba bla ma (for one year)
- one byang 'dren or dbu mdzad (for one to three years)
- one dge skos (for one to three years)
- one gzhung gnyer chen mo (for one to three years)
- one mchod gnyer for each temple (for one to three years)
- one dung 'bud for each temple (for one to three years)
- one rtsi 'bud for each temple (for one to three years)
- one dbu g-yog for each temple (for one to three years)
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

- one *ja gnyer* for each temple (for one to three years)

All the incumbents are appointed every year by Bon brgya gYung drung lhun grub based on reelection of monks except the *mchod gnyer, rtsi 'bud, dung 'bud, dbu g-yog* and *ja gnyer* which are appointed by the *dge bskos. mchod gnyer, rtsi 'bud, dung 'bud, dbu g-yog and ja gnyer* could be punished to carry out the services for a longer period in case they did not do them well.

5. Current number of monks

There are eighty-eight monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

The monk students receive a traditional education, both through private tutoring and collective lessons organized by the monastery.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery has a close relationship with rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) in rNga khog. They send monks to rTogs ldan for some further studies and receive monastic vows.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: ritual of *sMon lam chen mo* from the 1st to 13th of the first month; in conjunction with this ritual, the following rituals are also performed based on the texts such as the *rMa gnyan yul lha 'i bsang khrus, sTong rgyung brngan chen mo, sDe brgyad brngan bsang* and *rMa rgyal spom ra 'i g-yang 'bod*.
- 2nd month: ritual of *Kun bzang rgyal ba 'dus pa* from 8th to 15th
- 3th month: ritual of *bsKang chen* from 25th to 29th
- 4th month: ritual of *commemoration of Byang ston Rinpoche*
- 5th month: ritual of *sTag la'i sgrub chen* from 8th to 16th
- 8th month: ritual of *gSang bdag mkhar rtse* from 20th to 23rd
- 12th month: ritual of *dBal gsas sgrub chen* from 13th to 21st

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has nine printed copies of Bonpo Kanjur and one printed copy of Bonpo Katen. Two printed copies of the Collected Works (twenty-five volumes) of Kun grol grags pa. Five printed copies of the Collected Works (thirteen volumes) of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. Four printed copies of the W (sixteen volumes) of gTer chen Tshe dbang 'gyur med. Five printed copies of gter ma collection (twenty volumes) of gSang sngags gling pa. Four printed copies of the Collected Works of Tshul chen bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan. Four printed copies of the Collected...
Works (two volumes) of dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan. Three printed copies of the biography of Bon brgya Rang shar rig grol, Bon brgya gYung drung phun tshogs and Byang ston Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan. More than two hundred other Bonpo texts. In addition to these, there also several Buddhist texts.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has neither land nor animals. The monks are provided for by their families and the monastery depends financially on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of eight villages in Bon brgya shog kha (communal division) in Bon brgya pasture and Reb gong, because almost every village of Bon brgya shog kha has both agricultural and nomadic parts, the former is in Chu khog Township of Reb gong County, the latter is divided into two parts administratively which are Sumdo Township of Guinan County in mTsho lho Prefecture and Bon brgya Township of rTse khog County in rMa lho Prefecture.

13. Local festivals
There is a sacred mountain called A myes Ba yan located west of the monastery. The date of its veneration is 4th of the 6th month every year. It is circumambulated by both Bonpo and Buddhists until today.

14. Occupation of the local people
Agriculture and pastorilism

Just now, when I have finished writing about Bon brgya Khyung smon Monastery, sad news has reached me to say that Bon brgya gYung drung lhun grub has passed away in his monastery. I hope that his reincarnation will come soon and his plan to build a Tibetan medicine hospital in Bon brgya pasture for the people will be materialized according to his wishes.

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn of 1996: gYung drung lhun grub, the head of Bon brgya khyung smon Monastery; sByin pa, monk of the monastery.
(2) Texts:  
- Bon brgya yah myes kyi sgrub sde rjes skyong ba khyung sman dgon gyi bon 'byung lo rgyus grub pa'i gdung rabs dang mkhas pa'i gdan rabs rnas brjod pa sdong rnying me tog gsar bzhad dpyid kyi dpal yon by Bon brgya gYung drung lhun grub. MS.
(128) 'Brog ru stong skor Temple

(129) 'Brog ru'i dPon tshang Tent Temple
(131) Bon brgya khyung smon Monastery, Plate 1

(131) Bon brgya khyung smon Monastery, Plate 2 gYung drung lhun grub, head of the monastery
(132) Dung dkar Monastery

1. Name

The monastery's full name is Dung dkar smin grol gling and derives from its location at the foot of Mount Dung dkar lha gnyan dkar po which is believed to be the abode of the deity A myes Dung dkar.

2. Location

The monastery is located 20 km north of Chab cha town in Ur rti Township in Gong he county, mTsho lho prefecture in Qinghai province.

3. History

In the early 20th century there were two Bonpo hermits of unknown origin, living in two caves on Mount Dung dkar lha gnyan dkar po. There were also four monks from Tsha kho, rGyal rong living in the same place as those of the hermits. gYung drung rgyal mtshan and gYung drung, two of the four monks were known as the dGe slong nam gnyis. These monks from Tsha kho and and another two monks Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin (from Che rje sTong skor) and dPal mchog from Khyung mo Monastery (No.123) decided to set up a monastery together. Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin, who had stayed at sTeng chen Monastery (No.139) asked his master bZod pa rgyal mtshe which of the three following sites: Hi la wor in sTong che (in Khri ka), Mo we (in Che rje) or Dung dkar (in Chab cha), would be the best location for a new monastery. The master immediately and without hesitating selected Dung dkar. The monks then requested bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal, a famous Bonpo master from Ba yan to assist and guide them in their task. As a result, bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal and the four monks are regarded as the founders of Dung dkar Monastery. I had the opportunity to visit dPal mchog, one of the four monks, in the late nineteen-seventies shortly before his death. According to bsTan 'dzin (b.1930), the head of the monastery whom I interviewed, the monastery was founded around 1940. A new small assembly hall was rebuilt in 1982. The present hall was built in 1992 by Tulku Tshul khrims of Ba yan.

4. Hierarchical system

- one sprul sku
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one spyi gnyer
- one mchod dpon

Their terms of office are not fixed. The present head of the monastery is Tulku bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal.
5. Current number of monks

At present there are twenty-eight monks living in the monastery.

6. Current education

The younger monks are taught by the elder monks and also go to Bon brgya Monastery in Reb gong to receive further teachings from Bon brgya Tulku.

7. Educational exchange

Since several of the founders came from Khyung mo Monastery (No.123), many of the monastery’s practices were borrowed from Khyung mo Monastery’s tradition. At present, however, the monastery has closer ties with Bon brgya Monastery (No.180) in Reb gong.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: the Klong rgyas ritual from the 4th to the 6th days
- 3rd month: performance of the ritual based on the Yi dam kun 'dus from the 13th to 17th days
- 4th month: performance of the rNam rgyal stong mchod ritual from the 3rd to 8th days
- 5th month: performance of the ritual base on the rTsas gsum from the 13th to the 15th days
- 6th month: the dbyar gnas retreat from the 13th to the 19th days
- 9th month: performance of the gNas brtan stong mchod ritual from the 22nd to the 27th days
- 10th month: performance of the Nyag bla ritual from the 13th to the 17th days

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one copy of the Bon po bKa' 'gyur; the complete works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, and various tantric texts.

12. Local community

As the lha sde of the monastery, there are three villages: Ur rti with 30 families which belong to Ur rti Township in Gong he County, rKa gsar with 50 families which belong to Chab cha Township of Gong he County, and thirteen families of the Khu sgyu'u tribe in The ge Township in Gong he county.

13. Local festivals

The Dung dkar la btsas, situated on top of Mount Dung dkar, behind the monastery, is renewed on the 1st day of the 6th month.
(133) rKgsar Temple

1. Name

rKgsar gSas khang gSang sngags bdud 'dul gling, but it is a type of spyi khang, "common house".

2. Location

The temple is located in rKgsar village of Chab cha Township, Gong he county, Tsho lho Prefecture.

3. History

According to oral tradition, a group of people from sPyi tshang village in Reb gong moved to Ka mdo in Ba yan and the new settlement came to be known as Ka mdo sPyi tshang. Their descendents split into three tribes: sPyi tshang, Kha yangs gdong and Ba yan in Ba yan. After some time, three men from these three tribes, together with their families arrived in Chab cha and settled at what is now known as rKgsar village. The man from sPyi tshang tribe was 'Phrin rgya, his direct descendents are mKhar rtse, Khro rgyal, Tshe ring mkhar (who passed away in 1996), gYung d dang dar rgyas (b.1996); the man from Kha yangs gdong tribe was dBang rgyal, his direct descendents are bSod nams, Shes rab, gYung drung rgyal, Kun bzang, bsTan 'dzin (b.1976); the man from Ba yang tribe was 'Bum pa, his direct descendents are Byams pa, rDo rje, sTag la, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (b.1965). 'Phrin rgya of sPyi tshang tribe, was the leader of the three families and built the first three assembly halls of the temple, which was to become rKgsar Temple. For this reason 'Phrin rgya is considered to be the founder of rKgsar Temple.

In the first half of the 20th century, rTse zhig bSod nams g-yung drung dbang rgyal, the founder of Dung dkar (No.132), visited rKgsar, and the Bonpo community of rKgsar village offered him some pieces of temple's land. As a result he moved the three assembly halls to the foot of Mount Dung dkar lha gnyan dkar po to be Dung dkar Monastery, a few kilometres from the temple as well as the present assembly hall of rKgsar gSas khang.

5. Current number of practitioners

There are forty tantrics in the gSas khang.
6. Current education

The young practitioners are taught by two teachers belonging to the gSas khang, who mainly follow the teachings of Bon brgya Rinpoche.

12. Local community

There are seven villages: rKa gsar village with thirty families, Kha sgang zhol ma village of Sa gru bzhi Township of Gong he County with four families, Rargan village of The ge Township of Gong he County with twelve families, Zhang bu ras village of The ge Township with eight families, rGya ra village of Chab cha Township of Gong he County with two families, sKyi gdong village of Chab cha Township with six families, Ur rti village of Ur rti Township of Gong he County with forty families.

Source
(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with: lCags thar rgyal (b.1942), a practitioner in the temple

(134) A rig stong skor Temple

1. Name

A rig stong skor gsas khang, but local people refer to it as Ma ni khang.

2. Location

The temple is located in a place 118 km northwest of Chab cha, the county town of Gonghe.

3. History

sTong skor is known, according to oral tradition, as a large tribe which was originally came from the sTong skor tribe of sTong che valley in Khri ka. They were formerly followers of the Bon religion. However, latér almost all of them were converted to Buddhism except seven families who still continue to practise the Bon religion to this day. The temple was founded in 1989 and it was the first one.

5. Current number of practitioners

There are five lay tantrics in the temple.

8 / 9. Rituals

From the 1st to 5th of the 5th month, the ritual of rNam rgyal stong mchod is performed. In the 10th month the ritual cycle of sPyi ’dul is performed. It has no
fixed dates.

13. Local festivals
   The mountain behind the temple is called gCas bcu and is believed to be a dwelling of the sixteen gNas brtan.

14. Occupation of the local people
   Agriculture

Source
(1) Interview in autumn of 1996 with sTag thar rgyal, a Bonpo lay tantric who lives in the village
(132) Dung dkar Monastery

(133) sKa gsar Temple
A fig stong skor Temple
Derge County

Derge (sDe dge) is a county of Kardze (Tibetan dKar mdzes, Chinese Gan zi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. It is located on the east bank of the 'Bri chu river (the Yangtze, Chinese Jing sha jiang) in the northwestern part of the prefecture. The county is divided into seven Qu comprising twenty-six Xiang, and one hundred and seventeen administrative villages. Gonchen (dGon chen), the capital of the county is located at latitude 31°48′N, and longitude 98°34′E, at an altitude of 3,240m. The county is particularly famous for its printing house known as Par khang chos mdzod chen mo bkra shis sgo mang. It is the largest traditional printing place in the Tibetan cultural area in Sichuan. The Par khang is renowned for its editions of the Buddhist 'Ka' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur and certain texts of the Sa skya, dGe lugs, bKa’ brgyud, rNying ma and Bon traditions, as well as its printing blocks of images for reproducing thangkas. The printing house was founded by bsTan pa tshe ring, the fortieth King of Derge, in 1729 within the complex of Derge Gonchen Monastery, located in the county town. Another famous site in the county is the temple Ge sar lha khang. Tibetans believe that Ge sar was born to the Gling tshang family in Derge, and most of the epic's episodes take place in the Derge region. Thus a temple dedicated to King Ge sar was built in the county in A phyug pasture which is believed to be the hero's birth place. The temple contains statues of Ge.sar and the Thirty Generals. Many of the place names in the epic correspond to existing places in the area. The temple is located 208 km northeast of the county town. There are ten Bonpo, fourteen rNying ma pa, nine bKa’ brgyud pa, one mixed rNying ma pa and bKa’ brgyud pa, nineteen Sa skya pa, and five dGe lugs pa monasteries in Derge county at present.

(135) Khro tshang Monastery

1. Name

The full name of the monastery is Khro tshang Dar rgyas dgon.

2. Location

It is located 206 kilometers northeast of Derge, the county seat, in Dung mda’ village, Lam mdo Township, dBon thog (Wointog in the local Tibetan dialect) District in Derge county.

3. History

According to oral tradition, during the persecution of Bon by King Khri srong lde btsan in the 8th century, two Bonpo masters, 'Bang ri ba Nam mkha’ thog rdugs and Grub chen bKra shis rgyal mtshan, took refuge on the mountain rDza stod Rin
Chen spungs pa in Derge. They attracted a number of disciples, including the Nine Saints of Khrom rdzong (Khrom rdzong rtogs dgu), the most famous of whom was Shes rab phun tshogs; their monastic establishment thus became known by the name of Khrom rdzong Phun tshogs gling.

In the middle of the 1st Rab byung (1027-1097), rMe’u ston bSod nams came to the monastery and began to teach Bonpo tantric practice and the monastery’s name was changed to bKra shis phun tshogs gling. Thereafter, the Khro tshang lineage became the principal lineage of the monastery and the monastery was renamed Khro tshang Dar rgyas gling. It is not clear who the first master was and when precisely the lineage originated, but according to one account, the first master was Khro tshang Mar legs. According to the same account, there were three brothers in the Khro tshang lineage, Mar legs, Byang pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Mu la snying po. Khro tshang Mar legs went to Zal mo sgang and became the master of the monasteries situated in Shar rdza’i lding khrom. They are: Khro tshang, sMon rgyal, ’Bum rmad, Shar rdza Ri khorod, sTeng chen, Zer ’phro and ’Phen zhol. His two brothers went to The bong and Rong kham. rTogs ldan Ye shes bstang ’dzin (1772-?) of Khro tshang Monastery became the monastery’s first abbot (mkhan po) and established the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas). His successors were mChog sprul Khro bo rgyal mtshan, mKhan chen lHun grub ye shes, rTogs ldan bSam gtan ye shes, Dam ldan Shes rab seng ge (rTogs ldan chung ba, the “Younger Saint”), Nyams rtogs Tshad ’phel dga’ bde, Grub brnyes Tshe dbang ’od zer, ’Gro ’dren A dkar, rGyud ’dzin rNam mkhyen rang grol, Yongs ’dzin ’Brug gsas chems pa (1791).

All the Kun grol Trulku from Kun grol ’Ja’ tshon snying po (b. 1700) to Kun grol Hum chen were in charge of the monastery. gSang sngags gling pa from Nyag rong and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan also taught and practised at the monastery for a number of years.

4. Hierarchical system

A son from every generation in the patrilineal descent of the Khro tshang family was chosen as the “throne-holder” of the monastery. The head of the monastery is therefore hereditary.

- one sgrub bla
- two dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- two ’cham dpon
- six gnyer pa (divided into three groups of two)

All the incumbents are reappointed every five years with the exception of the abbot.
5. Current number of monks

There are hundred and twenty monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education

Each year the monastery's administration appoints a teacher to teach Tibetan literature and Bon practice and theory to the young monks for five months, from January to the end of May. Every year, a group of monks perform a ritual called zhag brgya, "one hundred nights", which includes the practices of sngon 'gro, rtsa rlung, ritual cycles of dBal gsas, Phur pa, gSang ba drag chen, Khro bo, Byams ma, gDugs dkar, Ma rgyud, lHa rgod, Khyung dmar, sTag la and formerly Me ri.

7. Educational exchanges

Khro tshang is a branch of sMon rgyal Monastery which is located in the same area. This connection seems to have originated with Kun grol Hum chen, but at present Khro tshang is closer to Shar rdza Ri khrod (which even has a number of cells reserved for the monks of Khro tshang) and sends around two to fifteen of its monks to Shar rdza Ri khrod for tantric practice and further training.

8. Daily rituals

They usually consist of the following practices.

Early morning
- A li ka li
- rtsa lung
- sdus phyag
- mchod pa
- bsang 'don
- čGab gtor

During the day
- yi dam bsnyen sgrub

In the evening
- gsol kha
- bsur
- lus sbyin
- rtsa lung

9. Annual rituals

- 1st month, Rituals based on the following texts: the 'Dzam gling spyi bsang, Rig 'dus tshogs 'khor and Yi dam phyi nang gsang gsum gyi skang ba on the 1st day; the Kun rig sgrol ma for four days, mDo gYung drung klong rgyas for two days, Zhi khro sgrub chen for ten days, Ma rgyud thugs rje nyi ma and
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Kun gsal byams ma'i sngags sgrub for four days, starting on the 8th day
- 4th month, Rituals based on the sNang srid zhi chen gyi sbyin sreg and mChod gtor bdud rtsi chu rgyun on the 10th day
- 5th month, Rituals based on the Bla ma rig 'dzin 'dus pa'i sgrub chen with 'cham for ten days, sPyi bsang yid bzhin nor bu and mChod gtor for two days, the dbyar gnas summer-fasting (the number of participants for this ritual is limited to twenty-five monks) for fifty days starting on the 3rd day
- 6th month, Rituals of the Byams ma'i mdo chog, Srid rgyal drel dmar gyi tshogs 'khor, and the smyung gnas fasting practice from the 17th to the 22nd day
- 10th month, Rituals based on the gYung drung yongs rdzogs and Khro bo ngo mtshar rgyas pa'i sgrub chen, mKha' klong gsang ba'i mdo chen, Zhi khro rtsa gsum rgya mtsho'i gar 'cham with 'cham dance, for fifteen days, beginning on the 17th. These rituals lead to the performance of the dgu gtor rite.
- 11th month, Rituals based on the Bum sgrub chen mo sgrib shyong dril sgrub for eight days, 'Od dpag med and Zhi khro rigs brgya for seven days, beginning on the 8th day, and the ritual cycle of sTag la performed by the seven officials of the monastery for five days starting on the 25th.
- 12th month, the practice of the rab gnas consecration starting on the 10th day for five days
Rituals of g-yang sgrub and the ritual cycle of gDugs dkar, Ge khod, and Phur pa performed by seven monks for seven days at an auspicious time in the year.
Chanting of the bsang ceremony and the chanting of the main ritual text of the dBal gsas cycle, and the atonement of Srid rgyal by one monk in the sgrub khang every day.

10. Books held in the monastery

The assembly hall is the only surviving building of the original monastery which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. It contains an entire wall covered by paintings depicting the life of gShen rab Mi bo. The monastery once possessed a complete set of the Bonpo Kanjur collected by Khro tshang Yid bzhin dbang rgyal. When sPen pa dbang rgyal (b.1926), one of the present monks of the monastery, was seven or eight years old, Yid bzhin dbang rgyal was already eighty years old, which means that the latter was active in late 19th-early 20th century. Since the monastery already possessed several sections of the Kanjur, Yid bzhin dbang rgyal had the monks copy the missing texts, and copied a number of the texts himself, following the order in the catalogue of the Bonpo Kanjur by Nyi ma bstan 'dzin. These Bonpo canonical texts with Yid bzhin dbang rgyal’s own annotations was still in the monastery’s possession in 1997.
11. Income and expenses

In the early nineteen-eighties, the monastery received nineteen thousand Chinese Yuan from the tenth Panchen Lama for its restoration. The monastery owns 12 mu (a Chinese measuring unit = 0.0667 hectares) of farmland, fifty female yaks looked after by several local families who in exchange give the monastery 5 kg of butter per yak per year (in 1997, 1 kg of butter sold for 28 Yuan). The harvest of each mu yields 250 kg of barley (in 1997, 1 kg of barley sold for 2.60 Yuan).

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of three yul pa (communal division): Yar thang with twenty-five families, Dung mda’ with fifty families, and mKha’ re with thirteen families, (a total of ninety-three families and a population of about five hundred).

13. Local festivals

The three mountain peaks of rDza stod rin chen spungs pa are called Dung rgyal, Seng chen and Drag sngon. Since the three peaks are the abode of lha btsan, klu btsan and gnyan btsan they are also collectively known as bTsan rgod rnam gsum, “the Three btsan rgod”. The mountain was “opened” (gnas sgo phyed pa) as a holy site (gnas ri) by gSang sngags gling pa. The mountain is venerated by the local community on two different dates and in two different ways: 1. the gnas skor circumambulation on the 15th day of the 4th month, during which both the local lay community and the monks circumambulate and perform the bsang ceremony at the mountain’s three la btsas (la btsas bstod pa). 2. Since Brag sngon, the summit immediately behind the monastery constitutes the lowest foremost peak of the mountain, it is the monks alone who propitiate it on the 21st day of the 7th month. This ceremony is called rlung rta bstod pa, the scattering of the wind horse. The former ritual (involving both lay men and monks) is quite simple, but for the latter, the monks perform a complete ritual of bsang, accompanied by the dar lcog flags and the wind horse.

14. Occupation of the local people

Mostly nomads and some farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews (August, 1997): sPen pa dbang rgyal, a former monk at the monastery (b.1926) and gYung drung dar rgyas, the dge bkos of the monastery
(2) Texts:
- KGLG, Vol.1, pp. 616-620
(136) sMon rgyal Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is sMon rgyal dga’ ldan dar rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the north bank of the rDza chu river in A khod valley, rDza khog in Derge, 233 km north east of Gonchen Township, the county seat of Derge.

There is a hermitage called mThong chen Hermitage or sMon rgyal Hermitage on the mountain behind the monastery.

3. History

There was a couple called ‘Brog Bla ma lHa yi dbang po and dBra za mGon skyid ma whose son was born near the sacred mountain rMa rgyal spom ra. The son, named rMa rgyal Bla ma, established a hermitage at a site called sMon mKhan bu gdong. He had two sons, Dam pa rang grol and lHa yi blo gros. The former, Dam pa rang grol, became an accomplished master, specialized in the meditation system according to the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud, the oral transmission from Zhang zhung. He travelled extensively throughout Amdo and Khams to spread the teaching, and became renowned in these regions as sMon rgyal Bla ma. His brother, lHa yi blo gros, was a lay master, and his descendants include a great number of famous and important masters (sMon rgyal dgon pa ’i lo rgyus by Tshe brtan rdo rje, MS).

Dam pa rang grol took up residence in the hermitage on the site of the monastery, but the period after his death until the time of Kun grol grags pa ’ja’ tshon snying po (b. 1700) remains obscure. Kun grol grags pa, born in Khyung po rGyas reg khog, undertook the monastery’s construction. He was therefore considered as the dgon bdag, the master of the monastery.

Here is a list of the Kun grol reincarnations:

1. Kun grol grags pa ’ja’ tshon snying po, born Khyung po rGyas reg khog
2. Klu dbang rgyal po, born in mDo kham lha mo brag dkar
3. bsTan ’dzin rin chen gtsug phud, born in Central Tibet
4. bsTan ’dzin tshul khrims grags pa, born in ’Dan sgrol ma lha khang
5. ’Chi med bdud ’dul gling ba, born in Chos rgyal sde dge’i mdun skor
6. Hum chen ’gro ’dul gling pa, born in rGyal rong

The abbots of the monastery are known only from the time of ’Chi med bdud ’dul gling pa, the fifth Kun grol, onwards:

1. Shes rab dbang rgyal
2. Zla ba grags pa
3. Nam mkha' dbang rgyal
4. Tshul khrims mchog ldan
5. bsTan pa 'brug grags (b.1946), the present abbot

sMon rgyal Monastery is composed of two parts: the upper monastery (yar dgon), and the lower monastery (mar dgon). According to oral tradition, the yar dgon was built by the first Kun grol, but there is no mention of this in his biography. The latter's son Bla rgan rGyal sras built the lHa gsar khang temple. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag
   - mkhan po
     - one dbu mdzad
     - two dge skos,
     - two mchod dpon
     - one 'cham dpon
     - three rgyu gnyer (one is rgyu dpon and the other two rgyu gnyer)
     - two 'bud pa (musicians)

   The incumbents of the above-listed positions are reappointed every four years; the mkhan po's position is permanent. In this case, the mkhan po replaces the master of the monastery in his absence and is selected among the most academically and spiritually accomplished monks of the monastery.

5. Number of monks

   There are ninety novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

   One of the two dge bskos teaches Tibetan and religious practice to the novices throughout the year except for one month holiday in winter and one month holiday in summer. For more advanced training, the students generally go to Shar rdza ri khrod for further training.

7. Educational exchange

   A saint from sMon rgyal Monastery called Grub thob A stag kha ba rjes med founded A stag khang tshan, a monastic hostel, in sMan ri in gTsang, reserved for the monk students from rDza khog, Me nyag, sDe dge, Nyag rong, 'Dan ma and sGe bshes khog (in Rong brag of rGyal rong). As a result, sMon rgyal Monastery developed close ties with sMan ri. For the past few decades however, because of the influence of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan's teachings, monasteries in the region, including sMon rgyal, have been sending their monk students to Shar rdza ri
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

khrod for further training. rMon rgyal Monastery has four branches (dgon lag): Khro tshang (No.135), 'Bum rma (No.137), Zer 'phro (No.140) and Gong lung (No.149).

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: the performance of the ritual based on the Zhi khro dam pa rig brgya dkyil 'khor from the 8th to the 22nd day
- 5th month: the observance of the smyung gnas fast from the 8th to the 20th day;
- 6th month: the dbyar gnas summer-fast from the 1st to the 30th day
- 9th month: the recitation of the mantra snying po rnam gsum and the sidhi for 7 days
- 11th month: the dgu gtor rite based on the performance of the Zhi khro cycle from the 21st to the 30th

Daily life of the individual monks:

In the morning: the monks begin the day with the meditation on the root Guru (rtsa ba'i bla ma), and then chant the prayers: Bla ma rgyang 'bod, rTsa ba'i bla ma'i gsol 'debs, rTsa rlung gsol 'debs, Rlung thun gcig bcad, Sems sbyong, Yi dam zhi drag; this is followed by the purificatory ritual of bsang, the practice of the phyag salutation and and the chu gtor ceremony of water offering.

The afternoon is devoted to reading and recitation.

In the late afternoon: chanted invocation of the religious protectors (srung ma'i gsol kha), followed by the practices of minor rituals such as the lus sbyong, the sens sbyong the bsur and the gcod.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has an old incomplete manuscript copy of the Bonpo Kanjur; three copies of the printed edition of the Kanjur published by sMon rgyal lha sras; one copy of the printed edition of Buddhist Kanjur and a collection of various texts for liturgical purposes. The monastery formerly possessed three copies of the Bonpo Kanjur: one Khro skyabs edition and two manuscripts. Both manuscript copies came from the Hor region. The 6th Kun grol was the spiritual master of the king of Hor (Hor spyi khyab rgyal po), who ruled over what was known as the “Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor”. One day he had a dream in which a mkha' 'gro ma told him to build a stupa to be dedicated to sTag la at Hor lan stod and another to be dedicated to Phur pa at Lan sog sum mdo. He did as instructed in the dream and the king of Hor offered him a manuscript copy of the Bonpo Kanjur in gratitude for having built the two stupas on his estates. However, the 6th Kun grol did not want to accept the Kanjur and had two copies made instead. A great number of people were hired for the purpose and the work was supervised by lCang 'jug dBal gsas thar, the minister
of the king of Hor.

The 6th Kun grol finally brought his two copies of the Kanjur to sMon rgyal Monastery in 1954.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has 'bri (female yak) which are tended by several local families in accordance with the shi med contract.

12. Local community

The lha sde (local lay community) of the monastery consists of eight villages: gSer mda’ with ten families, Khang gsar with fourteen families, dGon nang with twenty-seven families, Rabs mang with thirteen families, 'Gul ba with four families, A khod with twenty families, dGe nang with seventeen families and sDe chung with a few families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called Khyung mo dpal ri. The la btsas on top of the mountain is dedicated to the local deity known as Shwa mdzo gnyan po dkar phyogs. The mountain is a combination of the cult of the local deity and a sacred site of the gnas ri type.

The propitiation and circumambulation of the mountain, by both monks and laymen, takes place on the 18th day of the 5th month.

There are four additional mountains, gNas rgor rta rna mdung rtse in the east, sTag sham gnyan po in the south, gSe dal gnam lcags thog rgod in the west and De’u dpon gNam lha dkar g-yag in the north, each has a deity bearing the same name and a la btsas on its summit. They are propitiated by the Bonpo lay community once a year.

The monastery also has a cemetery known as gSer mdo bo che, located in gSer lung valley, a two hours’ walk northwest of the monastery.

On the 12th of the 8th month, the lay people perform the sa zhib, ‘land inspection’, a special custom during which the local population first receive a blessing in the morning from the guardian deity of the monastery in front of the sgrub khang sanctuary, and then a group of horsemen inspect the monastery’s estates, to check whether the pastures, forests, paths, etc, belonging to the monastery are in good condition, whether anything has been stolen and whether any strangers are occupying the land. Once they have completed their round, they disperse without returning to the monastery.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming, animal husbandry and trade
Sources
(1) Interviews (autumn 1997): Tshe brtan rdo rje, a monk at the monastery and teacher at the Sichuan School of Tibetan Language in Dartsedo (b.1948); gYung drung 'phrin las, a monk at the monastery (b.1957); Pad ma skal bzang, a monk at the monastery (b.1928); Nam mkha’ bstan 'dzin (b.1931), a monk at the monastery; Pad ma dbang rgyal (b.1928), a monk from the monastery

(137) 'Bum rmad Monastery

1. Name

Since 'Bum mda’ village, the lha sde (the local lay community of the monastery) considers the monastery’s site to be the best in the region, the monastery was named 'Bum rmad, ('bum after the name of the village, and rmad meaning 'best').

2. Location

The monastery is on the north bank of the rDza chu river, about three and half hours on horseback from sMon rgyal Monastery which is located southeast of 'Bum rmad Monastery on the east bank of the rDza chu river.

3. History

There is a short text written by the administrative committee of the monastery which states that the monastery was founded by the fourteenth rMe’u bSod nams dbang grags in the Wood-Dog Year of the 2nd Rab byung (1094). According to mThu stobs rnma rgyal, who is the present rgyal tshab of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and master of 'Bum rmad Monastery, first there was a monastery on the south bank of rDza chu river. As it was located close to a rock called rGya rdzong brag, the monastery was named rGya rdzong Monastery. bSod nams dbang grags appointed dBra bla Nam mkha’ blo gros as his successor. Under Kun grol ‘Ja’ tshon snying po (b.1700), after the succession of the monastery’s eleventh abbot (after the accession of Kun grol ‘Ja’ tshon snying po (b.1700), the eleventh abbot), the monastery was moved to the north bank of the river, where its local lay community lived, and the name of the monastery was changed to 'Bum rmad. As far as we know he was succeeded by gYung drung nam rgyal, born in rDza yul, and was then recognized as the reincarnation of his predecessor? gYung drung nam rgyal’s incarnation seems to have been dBon sprul bsTan pa rgyal mtshan who was recognized by dGe bshes gSang sngags grags pa. The following reincarnation was Ye shes bstan 'dzin, recognized by gTer chen bDe gling pa. Ye shes bstan 'dzin was succeeded by Mi pham rnam rgyal. His successor was dGe sprul Yid bzhin legs
grub (d.1952), recognized by Kun grol bDud 'dul gling pa. The reincarnation of dGe sprul Yid bzhiin legs grub was 'Chi med zla ba yid bzhiin rgya mtsho (b.1978, also known as 'Chi med zla ba ye shes), recognized by Tshul chen Trulku of rTogs ldan Monastery in rNga khog. The last abbot of the monastery, mThu stobs rnam rgyal was born in 1926. He became a monk in 'Bum rmad Monastery at the age of eight. The following year, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, sensing that his life and hence his contribution to the Bon religion were coming to an end, decided to perform the Phyi rgyud cho ga bcu gnyis empowerment ceremony, which was to be his last. mThu stobs rnam rgyal participated in the empowerment ceremony. Shortly after Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan 'passed away into his rainbow body'. mThu stobs rnam rgyal studied under Blo gros rgya mtsho, the apostle (rgyal tshab) of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, Gling zhig Tshe dbang g-yung drung and various other masters. At the age of thirteen, he became a disciple of Kun grol hum chen and studied with him for nine years. At the age of twenty-two, he went to central Tibet on a pilgrimage to Bon ri, Yar lung, rGyal rtse, bKra shis lhun po, Zhu tshang, Sa skya, gShen Dar sding, mKhar sna, sMan ri, gYung drung gling, Se ra, 'Bras spungs, dGa' ldan and a number of other sacred sites. When he returned to rDza khog, he became the teacher of sMon rgyal lha sras, a son of Kun grol hum chen. Kun grol hum chen died when mThu stobs rnam rgyal was thirty-one years old. In 1984 mThu stobs rnam rgyal was chosen as the rgyal tshab of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. He has greatly contributed to the development of Bon religion, particularly the teachings of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, at Shar rdza Hermitage. In 1993, A g-yung, who was on a visit to the hermitage, officially confirmed his appointment as the rgyal tshab, with the approval of the government of dKar mdzes prefecture. In 1986, the main building of 'Bum rmad Monastery which served as a granary during the Cultural Revolution was restored by mThu stobs rnam rgyal.

4. Hierarchical system

- one mkhan po
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one 'cham dpon
- one mchod dpon
- one mchod g-yog
- one 'bud pa (who blows the conch shell)
- one dbyar bdag (leader of the dbyar gnas ritual)

Their term of duty is three years.

5. Current number of monks

There are about sixty monks and novices in the monastery.
6. Current education

The young monks are taught basic Tibetan and religious doctrine. They have daily lessons, one lesson in the morning and another in the afternoon and get five days off in autumn to help their families with the harvest. The religious teachings are based on the following texts: *Ma tri sgrub sbyong*, *mDo g-yung drung klong rgyas*, *rNam par rgyal ba*, *Byams ma*, *Sa bdag ’khrugs bcos*, *sPyi spungs skor gsum*, *gSas mkhar mchog lnga*, *gSang sngags ma rgyud*, *Rigs lnga bde gshegs ’dus pa*, *Zhi khro* and *gDugs dkar*.

7. Educational exchange

In the past, ’Bum rmad was a branch monastery of sMon rgyal located in the same area. Monks are sent to Shar rdza Hermitage for religious study and practice.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: rituals based on the texts such as *mDo g-yung drung klong rgyas* and *gSang sngags ma rgyud* as well as *Rig ’dzin bde gshegs ’dus pa* by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and *Zhi khro dgongs ’dus* by Kun grol ’Ja’ tshon snying po followed by a ’cham dance. The dates for these rituals are not fixed and may be performed any time in the 1st month; the length depends on the amount of funding received.

- 5th month: rituals based on the cycles of Khro bo and Phur pa. The *dbyar gnas* ceremony is performed by the monks in the dge tshul grade and there are usually about only twenty-five of them.

- 8th month: observation of the *smyung gnas* fast

- 11th month: the bum sgrub ritual based on the tradition of *Mi shig rdo rje*

- Starting on the 21st day of the 12th month: ritual based on the cycle of Khro bo, ending with a ’cham performance for three days from the 27th to the 29th. Apart from the last ritual in the 12th month, none of the rituals have fixed dates and may be performed anytime in the prescribed month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one copy of the Kanjur published by A g-yung and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu 1985-1987; one copy of the Collected Works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan; about twenty volumes of Bonpo tantras, bDe chen gling pa’s collected works (in twelve volumes), Kun grol ‘ja’ tshon snying po’s collected works (in twelve volumes), Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works (in twelve volumes), the *Tshe dbang bka’ thang* (in four volumes), and gSang sngags gling pa’s collected works (in thirteen volumes).
11. Income and expenses
The monastery has neither fields nor animals; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of three villages: 'Bum mda' with thirty-three families (one hundred and ninety people), Ra 'og with forty-six families (two hundred and sixty-four people), and Re mda' with fifteen families (ninety-two people).

13. Local festivals
The sacred mountain (gnas ri) called Shar rdza gYung drung lhun po is less than 1 km southeast of the monastery. It is said that the place was 'opened' (gnas sgo phyed pa) by gSang sngags gling pa in a Tiger Year and is venerated every Tiger Year. In accordance with tradition, the hermits of Shar rdza Hermitage together with the monks from 'Bum rmad and sTeng chen monasteries begin the mountain's veneration on a suitable day in summer. They must camp one night at each of the cardinal points around the mountain. The lay community of the Bonpo monasteries in the Shar rdza area also participate.

An empowerment ceremony is performed at each of the four points. Each ceremony is based on one of the twelve divinities drawn from the Dri med gzi brjid by Blo ldan snying po. The divinities are: bDer gshegs kun rig, Kun bzang rgyal ba rgya mtsho, bDer gshegs sMon lam mtha’ yas and dBang ldan dus ’khor.

The mountain is also regarded as the residence of the local deities (yul lha). There is a white rock on the mountain which is believed to be the abode of a local deity called bKa’ gnyan Dung dkar mar rgyan. Its date of propitiation is not fixed and is determined by divination each year. Another local deity called Zhe chen stag mgo is believed to reside in the mountain. This deity is propitiated twice a year, in the 1st and 5th months, the exact dates are determined each year by divination. Both deities are propitiated mainly by the local lay people.

14. Economic occupation of the local population
Farmers and nomads.

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn 1997: mThu stobs rnam rgyal, the rgyal tshab of Shar rdza Hermitage, also a monk and the master of 'Bum rmad Monastery, born in 1926.
(2) Texts:
- rDza 'bum rmad dgon gyi lo rgyus compiled by the committee called 'Bum rmad dgon pa’i bdag gnyer tshogs chung in 1994, MS
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(138) Shar rdza Hermitage

1. Name

As its name indicates, it is a hermitage founded by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858-1934). Since the mountain on which the hermitage is located is called Gyer bza’, the hermitage is also referred to as Gyer bza’ Ri khrod.

2. Location

The hermitage is located on the northeast bank of the rDza chu river, about two hours on horseback from 'Bum rmad Monastery (No.137) following the track along the river. There is no motorable road leading to the hermitage.

3. History

Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan is the most famous and important Bonpo master and scholar in the 20th century. He is believed to have obtained the ‘rainbow body’ (ja’lus). His popularity and influence over the Bonpo community and culture continue to grow, especially in Khams and Amdo where more and more statues of him are appearing in Bonpo and even Buddhist monasteries. Both an accomplished spiritual master and scholar, his teachings, contained within the eighteen volumes of his collected works, have become a fundamental reference in Bon. His history of the Bon religion was translated into English and analyzed by Samten G. Karmay, and published under the title of *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon* (London Oriental Series, Vol.26, Oxford University Press, 1972).

At the age of thirty-three, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1890, the biography, pp.112-119) established the hermitage; during his life time, it was occupied only by his disciples who gathered there to receive his teachings and practise meditation under his guidance. After his extraordinary death at the hermitage, the place became a holy site not only for Bonpos, but also for Buddhists, and large gatherings of Bonpo tantric practitioners from Khams and Amdo take place there. As a result the hermitage has been enlarged and has become one of Tibet’s major religious sites. Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s original hermitage (where he lived and practised), the bDe chen ri khrod, is located on the upper part of the mountain and commonly referred to as Ri khrod gong ma, ‘upper hermitage’.

The hermitage’s small printing house (par khang) and meditation cells are located on the lower part of the mountain and are known as Ri khrod zhol ma, ‘lower hermitage’.

4. Hierarchical system

Before his death, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan appointed his nephew Blo gros rgya mtsho (1915-1954) as his apostle (rgyal tshab) at the hermitage, but
the latter died at the age of forty. Before Blo gros rgya mtsho left for Lhasa, he appointed Zer 'phro Tshul khrims dbang phyug as his rgyal tshab, the latter died in 1960. In 1984, mThu stobs rnam rgyal of 'Bum rmad Monastery was elected as the rgyal tshab but after twelve years, relations between sTeng chen Monastery (No.139) and the rgyal tshab became strained and so the latter returned to 'Bum rmad, his original monastery, A 'jigs, a monk from Ye shes Monastery (No.150) in Nyag rong, is now in charge of the hermitage. When I visited Shar rdza ri khor in August 1997, fourteen monks from Khams and Amdo were practising at the hermitage under his guidance. He must be in his thirties and is called mKhan chung, ‘younger abbot’ by the monks at the hermitage, although his appointment is temporary and unofficial.

5. Current number of monks

There are fourteen monks residing at the hermitage.

6. Current education

Shar rdza ri khor is a place reserved for individual religious practice, particularly the three-year retreat. Practitioners at the hermitage may also receive special teachings and tantric empowerments from the mkhan po and other masters.

7. Educationa exchange

Before Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s time, Bonpo monasteries sent their monks to sMan ri to study philosophy and practice meditation. Indeed, sMan ri and gYung drung gling were the only place for Bonpo monks to pursue their studies and obtain the dge bshes degree (for an account of the two monasteries see Nos.1 and 2). Monks who had been to these two monasteries were generally highly respected back in their own monasteries. Although this is still true to some extent, the situation has changed considerably since the Cultural Revolution. Thus sMan ri and gYung drung gling no longer receive the support it used to and are gradually losing their influence throughout the whole Tibetan cultural area; they no longer run the complete programme of Bonpo studies leading to the dge bshes degree which formerly attracted monks from as far as Amdo and Khams. In the meantime Shar rdza bKra shis rgyalmtshan’s influence, owing to his scholarly and spiritual accomplishments and miraculous death, has been steadily growing, and, moreover, Shar rdza Hermitage is much closer than sMan ri or gYung drung gling for the Bonpo monks of Amdo and Khams. Thus, at present most Bonpo monasteries in Amdo and Khams send their monks to Shar rdza Hermitage instead of sMan ri or gYung drung gling. The number of monks at the hermitage varies and there is a constant turn over. In the last fifteen years, Derge county government founded several religious schools for monks of all different religious traditions and Shar rdza Hermitage was included
among the schools for Bonpo teachings and thus may officially accept monks, but
the educational system remains traditional and it is still mainly a retreat center.

8 / 9. Rituals

Since Shar rdza Hermitage is not a monastery, apart from the occasional
empowerment ceremonies, there are no collective rituals or ceremonies.

10. Books held in the monastery

The hermitage has a small traditional printing house, and owns some printing
woodblocks (par shing).

11. Income and expenses

The practitioners residing at the hermitage must provide their own food; the
hermitage receives offerings from the faithful in the form of rtsam pa, yak meat, etc,
which it keeps for visitors.

13. Local community

The entire population of the Shar rdza area is Bonpo. There are four Bonpo
monasteries around the hermitage: 'Bum rmad, sTeng chen (No.139), Zer 'phro
(No.140) and 'Phen zhok (No.141), with their respective local lay communities. The
hermitage however does not have a specific community.

14. Occupation of the local population

Mainly farmers and some nomads

Sources

(1) Interviews (August 1997): mThu stobs rnam rgyal (b.1926), the rgyal tshab of
Shar rdza Hermitage, and the head of 'Bum rmad Monastery

(2) Texts:
- rJe btshun bla ma dam pa nges pa don g-yung drung 'chang dbang dpal
  shar rdza ba chen po bkra shis rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po 'i rnam par thar
  pa ngo mtshar nor bu 'i phreng ba thar 'dod mkhas pa 'i mgul rgyan by dBra
  ston bsKal bzang bstan pa 'i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959), Beijing: Krung go bod
  kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990
rDza sTeng chen Monastery

1. Name

rDza sTeng chen Monastery has several names, the original name was bsTan pa 'gyur med sTeng chen rnam rgyal gling. Following its destruction in 1902 by the monks of dGon gsar Monastery located in the vicinity, the monastery was rebuilt and renamed dPal gShen bstan mdo sngags g-yung drung dar rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is three hours on horseback from Nya 'gug Township which is located 248 km northeast from Derge county town. The monastery stands on the north bank of the rDza chu river (Ya long jiang in Chinese) which runs through Derge to dKar mdzes (Gan zi) county along a northwest - southeast axis.

3. History

There are two versions: according to the rDza sTeng chen dgon gyi lo rgyus by Tshe dbang 'gyur med, the monastery was founded by rMe'u A yu dang ra, according another one it was founded by rMe'u Grub chen Nam mkha' g-yung drung.

The monastery’s original name was bsTan pa 'gyur med sTeng chen rnam rgyal gling. At first, the family of rMe'u, who was based in gTsang, was in charge of the monastery, but unfortunately the history of this lineage remains obscure. However, later dBra ston lHa yi blo gros (his dates are not known, but he is believed to have been a contemporary of 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa, 1235-1280) from dBra dgon Monastery in dKar mdzes came to sTeng chen where he later settled and hence started a rMe'u lineage. It is said that dBra ston founded twenty monasteries in dBus gtsang, Khams and Amdo. He extended sTeng chen Monastery by building the gTsug lag khang and also enlarged the temple. His successor was dBra pa 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan who received his ordination from mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, founder of sMan ri Monastery. dBra pa 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan first went to gYas ru dBen sa kha Monastery in gTsang. He is referred to as 'Gro mgon dBra ston chen mo and is said to be one of the Eighteen Masters (ston pa bco brgyad) of gYas ru dben sa Monastery. He was succeeded in turn by dBra pa Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan who studied the A khrid, rDzogs chen and sNyan rgyud traditions under rMe'u mKhas pa dPal chen. The period from Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan’s time to that of dBra ba sKal bzang nyi ma remains obscure. dBra ba sKal bzang nyi ma was born in the Iron-Hare Year in the 15th Rab byung (1891). During his time, in 1902, sTeng chen Monastery was burned down by the monks of the nearby dGe lugs pa monastery of dGon gsar, because the dGon gsar monks believed that the assembly hall of sTeng chen prevented the sunlight from reaching their monastery (i.e. the
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monks of dGon gsar Monastery were jealous of the height and grandeur of sTeng chen Monastery). I am sure there are two sides to this story but unfortunately I could not find any source containing dGon gsar Monastery’s version of the events. In any case the monastery was burned down by the dGon gsar monks and more than twenty buildings and all the statues and texts within were completely destroyed. sKal bzang nyi ma fled to Hor in the Nag chu kha region, and the elder monks to gSer thar pasture.

In 1905, sTeng chen Monastery sent a group of representatives from sTeng chen and other monasteries, accompanied by two lDing dpon officers from Nyag rong to Lhasa to request permission to rebuild the monastery. gNas brtan gYung drung bstan pa, the representative of sTeng chen Monastery, related the events to the sPyi khyab mkhan po of the bKa’ shag in Lhasa (the highest monk official in the Dalai Lama’s government), who reported the story to the 13th Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama granted the monastery permission to rebuild and the sPyi khyab mkhan po sent a government representative together with A rta, one of the lDing dpon officers of Nyag rong, to rDza khog to act as mediators between the two monasteries. 1908 marked the beginning of the monastery’s reconstruction. The work was supervised by dBra spyul sKal bzang nyi ma and dBra dpon rNam rgyal grags pa, the local chief. Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and dBra sras Zla ba grags pa also largely contributed to the reconstruction and revival of the monastery. In 1916, the work was completed and the monastery was renamed dPal gShen bstan mdø sngags g-yung drung bstan rgyas gling. Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan was responsible for the iconographic programme of its interior decoration. Many famous Bonpo masters visited the monastery, including Khro tshang ’Brug Iha, gSer chen Sangs rgyas gling pa, Kun grol ’ja’ tshon snying po, mkHan chen Nyi ma bstan ’dzin, and the “three lineages of dBra, lCang and sMon”, (dBra lCang sMon gsum):

1. the masters of the dBra lineage from sTeng chen Monastery
2. the masters of the lCang lung lineage from lCang lung Monastery (No.158)
3. the masters of the sMon rgyal lineage from sMon rgyal Monastery (No.136)

sTeng chen Monastery was famous for a number of its practitioners who obtained the ‘rainbow-body’ (’ja’ lus) at the time of their deaths. The monastery was again destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s. It has preserved some 229 sq m of its original wall paintings.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one mkhan po
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - two mchod dpon
   - three khang gnyer
- two 'cham gnyer
- eighteen spyi ba: two for the ritual of Thang chen tshogs pa, two for the ritual of Nya tshogs, two for the ritual of sMan lha, two for bDe 'dus, four for the observance of the summer-fast (dbyar gnas), two for the dgu gtor rite and two for the ritual of bon gzhi

5. Current number of monks

There are sixty-three novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Educational exchange

One of the educated monks is appointed to teach the young students Tibetan literacy and ritual texts for three or four years, after which they are expected to practice on their own.

7. Exchanges with other monasteries

Monk students have to go to sMan ri or gYung drung gling in gTsang to take their ordination, but for other religious practice they generally go to Shar rdza ri khrod (No.138). Both Zer 'phro (No.140) and 'Phen zhol (No.141) are branches of sTeng chen Monastery, and the monks of both monasteries go to sTeng chen for major rituals.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st Tibetan month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan based on the mDo g-yung drung klong rgyas for twenty-seven days beginning on the 12th day. The ceremony is also known as nya 'tshogs.
- 4th month: rituals of sMan lha and the observance of a fast (smyung gnas) for fifteen days
- 5th month: the ritual based on the bDe 'dus (bde gshegs 'dus pa'i bum sgrub chen mo) by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan for fifteen days
- 6th month: the summer-fast (dbyar gnas) for fourteen days
- 11th month: ritual cycle of Khro bo for nine days ending with the 'cham dance for the lay community
- 12th month: ritual cycles of Khro bo and Phur pa for nine days ending with 'cham dance for the lay community. This last ritual performance is also known as bon gzhi or sometimes chos gzhi in this monastery.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one complete copy of the printed edition of the Bonpo Kanjur; copies of the Collected Works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and the Collected Works of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan as well as a collection of
various texts for liturgical use

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has neither land nor animals, and depends on donations from the faithful; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of five villages: Wa thung with forty nine families, Shog mthor with sixty-four families, Zam kha with thirty-one families, Ra la with twenty-nine families and Ting nang with forty families.

13. Local festivals
The mountain behind the monastery is known as Se mo g-yu rtse and is associated with the local deity of the same name.

14. Occupation of the local population
The members of the first four villages mentioned above are both farmers and nomads while those of the fifth are nomads.

Sources
(1) Interviews: bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med (b.1935), a monk at the monastery; Lung rig rnam dag (b.1937), a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
- rDza steng chen dgon gyi lo rgyus by rDza pa Tshe ring 'gyur med
- Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar by dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, Beijing: Krung go bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990

(140) Zer 'phro Monastery

1. Name
The full name is Zer 'phro bSam gtan g-yung drung gling.

2. Location
The monastery is located on the west bank of the rDza chu river in rDza khog. When I visited it in August 1997, I left from sTeng chen Monastery and had to cross the river on a wooden raft consisting of four tree trunks. From the opposite bank it took me about half an hour on horseback via a village to reach the monastery which is located at the foot of a mountain.
3. History

According to oral tradition, the monastery was founded by gYung drung rnam rgyal with the financial support of Gling tshang, one of the leading families in Derge, around eight hundreds years ago. Later the monastery was destroyed by a flood, which according to popular belief, was caused by the local deities who were offended by the monastery’s gold roof. Following this episode it was rebuilt by Nyag rong bKra shis dge legs, a disciple of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. It became a branch of sMon rgyal Monastery (No.136). In the 15th Rab byung (1867-1926), it became a branch of rDza sTeng chen Monastery and has remained as such until now.

The monastery is headed by abbots. Since Shar rdza is a very isolated and poor area, it took several generations to complete the monastery’s reconstruction. Nyag rong bKra shis dge legs, who undertook the monastery’s reconstruction, built an assembly hall (’du khang), and two sanctuaries for the atonement (sgrub khang). The second abbot, Phun tshogs blo gros, made a large statue called lHa chen, and painted the murals within the sgrub khang. The third abbot, Tshul khrims dar rgyas, built a kitchen and rebuilt another sgrub khang, and also introduced a system allowing the monastery to finance four monks at a time to do two-year tantric practice in the sgrub khang. The fourth abbot, Shes rab bstan ’dzin, travelled throughout Nyag rong and Khyung po to give teachings and collect funds for the monastery with which he built thirty small buildings for sheltering prayer-wheels (’khor chung), a small ma ti mantra wheel, and four large cauldrons (mtshogs zangs) and other cooking utensils for the monastery. The fifth abbot, rTogs ldan bsTan ’dzin blo gros, commissioned copper statues of the gNas brtan bcu drug (the “sixteen direct disciples of the Buddha”), Gu ru mtshan brgyad (the “eight aspects of Padmasambhava”), and gilled statues of the Buddhas of the Three Ages. The sixth abbot, Shes rab bstn ’dzin, travelled to central Tibet whence he returned with the collected works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415), two conches and three statues. The seventh abbot, dBang li, a disciple of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, repaired the assembly hall and built a wheel containing more than one hundred million ma ti mantras (stong ’khor). He is said to have passed away in his “rainbow body” (’ja ’lus). The eighth abbot, bsKal bzang bstn ’dzin, built a gold stupa (gsar gdung mchod rten) and acquired more than forty volumes of tantric texts for the monastery. rTogs ldan Mi pham rnam rgyal and gYung drung nyi ma, commissioned statues of the thirty-five Buddhas (ltung gshags so lnga) and furnished the monastery with other religious relics. The tenth abbot, Nam mkha’ grags pa, acquired the complete works of Kun grol ’ja’ tshon snying po and gTer ston gSang sngags gling pa, and more than forty thangkhas for the monastery. Shes rab phun tshogs and Nam mkha’ ye shes, established a philosophical college (bshad gwra). The twelfth abbot, Tshul khrims dbang rgyal, founded a printing house
containing more than a thousand printing blocks. As a very rare exception, there were dKon mchog, dBang ldan, mThar phyin and rGyal mchog. dKon mchog was a very learned master and introduced a ritual of *bDe 'dus sgrub mchod* which the monastery performs on the 15th day of the 5th month; dBang ldan was also *mgon khang bla ma*. mThar phyin was the head of the *bshad grwa* at the same time; rGyal mchog was a *gCod pa*, one who practices mainly *gCod*. There were three fourteenth abbots bsTan pa dkon mchog, Tshe ring dpal bzang and Nyi ma grags pa, until the mid-20th century.

The monastery suffered from destruction in the 1980s, it was rebuilt by bSod nams blo gros, dBra sras bSod nams lha rgyal and dBra sras Yid bzhin dbang rgyal, the last three abbots of the monastery.

The above information was provided by the *Zer 'phro dgon pa 'i lo rgyus* by rDza pa Tshe ring 'gyur med which unfortunately does not give dates or details of the abbots’ life stories.

4. Hierarchical system

- one *mkhan po*
- one *slob dpon*
- one *dbu mdzad*
- one *dge skos*
- one *mchod dpon*
- one *bdag gnyer*
- one *rtsis pa*

All the incumbents are reappointed every three years.

5. Number of monks

There are twenty novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Education

This monastery is a practising place (*sgrub grwa*) rather than a place for study. It specializes mainly in meditation practice in accordance with the tantric tradition. A teacher (*slob dpon*) is appointed to train the young novices. For major calendrical rituals they go and join their brethren at sTeng chen Monastery.

7. Exchanges with other monasteries

The monks used to go to sMan ri to take their full ordination and Shar rdza ri khrod for the three-year retreat and other practices.

8/9. Rituals

The performance of rituals in this monastery is much the same as those of
sTeng chen Monastery (No. 139).

10. Books held in the monastery

The printed editions: one copy of the Bonpo Kanjur, one copy of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan’s and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works, bDe chen gling pa’s collected works in thirteen volumes.

There are about thirty-five volumes of Bonpo tantras and other texts mostly manuscripts.

11. Income and expenses

The tenth Panchen Lama gave the monastery twelve thousand Chinese Yuan for the reconstruction of the monastery. The monks provide their own food. The monastery does not pursue any economic activities.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of seven villages: Kham be village with six families, Wa pa with nine families, Ser skya dgon with eighteen families, rNa bzhi with seven families, 'Khor lo with six families, Ma rtsa with five families and 'Od dwangs with ten families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called A myes rGyal po. There is a la btsas halfway up the mountain. Its renewal ceremony and the propitiation of the local deity take place on the 15th day of the 4th month and attended by both lay and monastic communities.

14. Occupation of the local population

Mostly farmers and some nomads

Sources

(1) Interviews in August 1997: gSal gong (b. 1965), a monk and head of the administrative committee of the monastery; Bu sngon (b. 1965), a monk and vice-head of the administrative committee of the monastery

(2) Texts:

- Zer 'phro dgon pa'i lo rgyus by rDza pa Tshe ring 'gyur med, MS. 3 folios; KGLG, Vol. 1, pp. 636-639
(141) 'Phen zhol Monastery

1. Name

'Phen zhol Bon gling g-yung drung dgon. It is also known known as 'Phen zhol Bon po dgon or dGon chung dgon.

2. Location

It is located on the same side of the river as Zer 'phro Monastery. From Zer 'phro Monastery it takes around one and a half hours on horseback following the river soutnwards. There are only two very narrow trails along either bank of the river.

3. History

According to oral tradition, the monastery was founded by Shes rab bstan 'dzin in the Wood-Bird Year of the 9th Rab byung (1525). Its subsequent history remains unknown. During the Cultural Revolution it was destroyed and was rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties. There are 158 sq m of ancient wall-paintings inside the surviving building of the original monastery. The monastery was run by a succession of abbots. Unfortunately, their names and chronology remain unknown. Those still remembered by the monks and local community are: bSod nams rgyal mtshan, a disciple of Kun grol 'ja' tshon snying po, Khro bo tshe brtan, Nam mkha' tshe brtan, gCod pa smon lam, Pad ma, Nyi li, dPal 'byung, Ri g-yang, Byang chub, Tshul khrims mchog rgyal, and Rin chen tshe dbang.

4. Hierarchical system

- one bla ma
- one mkhan po
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one mchod dpon
- two bdag gnyer
- one mgon bla

The incumbents are replaced every two years, with the exception of the mkhan po whose position is permanent.

5. Current number of monks

There are eighteen monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education

For several years the young monks are taught by a teacher appointed by the
monastery, after which they begin to practise on their own.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery traditionally sent its monks to sMan ri in gTsang to take their ordination, but at present they go to Shar rdza hermitage to take their vows and receive further training. The monastery was formerly a branch of sMon rgyal, but is presently a branch of sTeng chen.

8 / 9. Rituals

In summer the monastery performs the rituals based on the bDe mchog kun rig gnas chog and bDe gshegs 'dus pa'i sgrub mchod; in autumn, the propitiation of the religious protectors of Bon (bon skyong mchod gsol); in winter, the dgu gtor rite based on the cycle of a tutelary deity (yi dam).

In summer the monks of 'Phen zhol and sTeng chen perform the tshes bcu ceremony together in 'Phen zhol and the dgu gtor rite at sTeng chen at the end of the year.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has two complete copies of the Kham chen (in sixteen volumes each), a copy of the Dri med gzi brjid (in twelve volumes) and around twelve volumes of liturgical texts.

11. Economic circumstances of the monastery

The tenth Panchen Lama donated twelve thousand Yuan to the monastery. It has around ten sgro ba3 of barley and wheat; the profit of which is used for the monastery’s general expenses. The monks must provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of six villages: Re pa with twenty-nine families, bShes pa with two families, Re mo with two families, Bon gnas with two families, Lo mgo with one family and Chu sgang with one family.

13. Local festivals

The are the same as at 'Bum rmad Monastery. However, the mountain behind the monastery is called Brag ngon brag, the abode of a local deity sPe bo khyung bdag. There is a la btsas dedicated to the deity and is situated half-way up the mountain. The celebration of its annual renewal takes place on the 15th day of the 5th month.
14. Occupation of the local population
   Farmers and nomads

Sources
(1) Interviews in August 1997: Shes rab sbyin pa, a monk at the monastery, born in 1966; Yid dga’, a monk at the monastery, born in 1975; bSam 'grub, a monk at the monastery, born in 1974  
(2) Texts:
   - 'Phen zhol bon dgon gyi lo rgyus by rDza pa Tshe ring 'gyur med, MS

Notes
1 The bla ma in this case is the main spiritual guide of the monastery.  
2 bdag gnyer, the store keeper and accountant of the monastery.  
3 sgro ba is the yak-skin sack used to store and transport barley and wheat; each sgro ba can hold about 30 kg of barley or wheat. About 20 kg of grain are required to sow a mu (a Chinese term measuring unit corresponding to 6.667 hectares, or 0.165 acres, of farmland) which means that ten sgro ba of grain (= 300 kg) are needed to sow 15 mu of farmland.

(142) Ri spun Monastery

1. Name
   Ri spun

2. Location
   It is located on a hill behind Hyo pa district administrative seat, 97 km from Derge, the county seat. Hyo pa means “below” in the local Tibetan dialect.

3. History
   There is little information concerning the history of the monastery. The monks in Ri spun Monastery indicated that their monastery was associated with rDzong gsar, a Sa skya pa monastery in the same county, and that I would probably find some information concerning Ri spun in the historical records of rDzong gsar Monastery. I found only one account of rDzong gsar’s history, entitled rDzong gsar dgon gyi lo rgyus (MS, anonymous), but the name of Ri spun is not even mentioned there. Yet several people, including Buddhists and government officials, also confirmed the connection between Ri spun and rDzong gsar. Indeed the monasteries maintain very close ties and rDzong gsar, being the wealthier of the two, even supports Ri spun Monastery. However, rDzong gsar does not acknowledge its Bon related origin, not even in its historical records. The local inhabitants say that there
is a stone tablet with an inscription concerning the history of Ri spun and rDzong gsar in the place from lHa tshe dbang of dPal spungs thang on the shore of gSer ngu g.yu mtsho lake with an inscription concerning the history of Ri spun and rDzong gsar, but Blo gros phun tshogs, the author of Ri spun dgon gyi lo rgyus, says that he could not find it. There are ruins of an ancient castle at the top of a hill near the monastery called Khyung po rdzong, and there are several rather vague legends concerning its history, but no one seems to know anything precise about it. According to oral tradition, the monastery was founded in a Fire-Hare Year, but in which Rab byung remains unknown. It is said that several famous masters, such as Shar pa rNal 'byor, Khyung po Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Bu 'bor Tog gi rgyal mtshan, Du tshe rTogs ldan and Ri bla Ye shes stayed at the monastery. In the latter half of Ri bla Ye shes's life, the monastery was destroyed in a local conflict and that it was rebuilt by Ri bla Dar rgyas. Unfortunately, the dates of the masters mentioned above remain unknown. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and in 1983 permission was granted for its reconstruction.

4. Hierarchical system

There is only one head of the monastery elected by monks and confirmed by the Religion Department of the Derge county government.

5. Current number of monks

There are fifteen monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no regular, organized classes; the younger monks are trained by the elder monks in the practice of their ritual tradition.

7. Exchanges with other monasteries

Ri spun and rDzong gsar Monasteries have close ties because rDzong gsar was originally a Bonpo establishment, but the two have no religious or educational exchanges since they now belong to different religious traditions.

8 / 9. Rituals

The monastery performs only two annual rituals: the observance of the smyung gnas fasting from the 10th to the 13th day of the 5th month, and the dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of Khro bo from the 26th to the 30th day of the 11th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery possesses texts for its rituals but no other books.
11. Income and expenses
The government gave the monastery twelve thousand Yuan for its re-
construction. The livelihood of the monks is provided by their families.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of four villages: Ri gyong with forty-three
families, rKed thog with twenty-nine families, Rlung sgang with twenty-six families,
and Rlung khog with sixteen families (six hundred and twelve people altogether).

13. Local festivals
The mountain behind the monastery is called lHa rgod, but nothing is known
about its deity. There is a white rock on the mountain east of the monastery which is
associated with a deity called Tis 'dra, but there is no fixed date for its propitiation.

There is a sacred mountain called Phur pa lha khang 5 km east of the
monastery, which was a sacred site venerated annually by both monastic and lay
communities until about the middle of the 20th century. Other local sacred sites
include the ruins of three castles: mKhar nag, 7 km southeast of the monastery,
lHa rgod, 50 m north of the monastery, and gNas nang, 10 km northeast of the
monastery; the local inhabitants claim that a person who has contracted the bad kan
disease may be cured if he circumambulates all three sites within one day. gNas nang
was the residence of Bu 'bor Tog gi rgyal mtshan, and there are still one hundred
and twenty-two Bon po families living in the area. Ten monks from mainly Ri spun
occasionally gather there to perform rituals.

14. Occupation of the local population
Farmers

Sources
(1) Interviews (autumn 1997): bKra shis bzang po (b.1933), a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
- Ri spun dgon gyi lo rgyus by Blo gros phun tshogs, MS.

(143) Thar bde Monastery

1. Name of the monastery
Thar bde mi g-yo bsam gtan bon gling

2. Location
Thar bde Monastery is located on the bank of Yangtze, the borderline between
TAR and Sichuan Province. It takes two days on horseback to reach there from the county town of Derge.

3. History

The founder of the monastery, Kun dga’ rnam rgyal, had two sons: lhA rgyal 'phags and Nyi ma. The former married to ensure the family’s descent, while the later became a monk and succeeded his father, but their dates remain uncertain. It is said that there were thirteen generations in the Thar bde succession, but, according to a history of the monastery, the lineage counted in fact seventeen generations. The monastery was wrecked during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in the 1980s.

5. Current number of monks

There are forty novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

8 / 9. Rituals

The bDe chen zhing sgrub from the 1st day of the 1st month. the bDe gling sa gnyis 'khrug gces from the 16th to the 22nd day of the 1st month; sTag la sgrub mchod from the 20th to the 29th day of the 9th month; Drel dmar for a few days every month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has a printed copy of Kanjur and various ritual texts.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called gTsang chen gzhI gnyan and is the abode of a local deity of the same name. The deity is propitiated by the monks on the 15th day of the 1st month.

14. Economic occupation of the local people

Farmers
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Sources
(2) Texts:
- Thar bde dgon gyi lo rgyus, anonymous, MS. 7 folios
- KGLG, Vol.1, pp.634-635

(144) Rab rgyal Monastery

1. Name of the monastery
   Rab rgyal

2. Location
   The monastery is located on the bank of Yangtze which is the borderline between TAR and Sichuan Province.
   It takes two days on horseback to reach there from the county town of Derge.

3. History
   The founder of the monastery was bsTan pa lhun grub from Ri rtse drug in Khyung po, but the exact date of its foundation remains unknown. Mention is made of thirteen successive heads of the monastery, but their names remain unclear. The monastery was wrecked during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt by old monks of the monastery in the 1980s.

5. Current number of monks
   There are twenty novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   They have no organized classes, but the young monks are trained by the elder monks.

8 / 9. Rituals
   There are two important annual rituals: the summer offerings (dbyar mchod) for fifteen days and the winter offerings (dgun mchod) for seven days. The former is concerned with rNam par rgyal ba, an aspect of gShen rab Mi bo and the latter, with the tutelary deity Khro bo.

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.
14. Occupation of the local people
   Farmers and nomads

   I was told that there was no one in the monastery when I was just about to go
to Rab rgyal and Thar bde Monasteries from Derge in autumn in 1997. I therefore
could not visit them. This is why I have so little information concerning these
monasteries.

Source
(2) Texts:
   - *KGLG*, Vol.1, pp. 629-630
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.
(135) Khro tshang Monastery

(136) sMon rgyal Monastery Plate 1
sMon rgyal Monastery. Plate 2  sMon rgyal lha sras (b. 1938), the hereditary lama of Kun grol lineage of the monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(138) Shar rdza Hermitage. Plate 2. mThub stobs rnams rgyal (the elder), the present rgyal tshab of the hermitage.

(139) sTeng chen Monastery
(140) Zer 'phro Monastery

(141) 'Phen zhol Monastery
Ri spun Monastery
dPal yul county

dPal yul county is located in western Kardze Prefecture. The county comprises four Qu divided into seventeen xiang and sixty-six villages. Marthang (Mar thang) town (latitude: 31°12'N, longitude: 98°49'E, altitude: 3,030 m), the capital of the county is located 622 km west of Dartsemdo (Dar rtse mdo), the capital of the Kardze Prefecture.

There are four Bonpo, twenty seven rNying ma pa, one bKa’ brgyud pa and three Sa skya pa monasteries in dPal yul county.

(145) Kha rag Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is dPal gShen bstan kha rag g-yung drung bde chengleng.

2. Location

'Dzin chu river' is the longest in dPal yul county. It is a tributary of the 'Bri chu (Yangtze) river, and its total length is 180.8 km. It flows along a south to north axis, from the common border of 'Ba' thang, Li thang and dPal yul, through six districts (xiang), 'Dam thar, A tshab, mNyam skyid, 'Dzin khog, Rag khyab and Hor spo till it joins the 'Bri chu river. The river is named after 'Dzin khog, a valley through which it flows. Kha rag Monastery is located on the north bank of the river, about 90 km northeast of Marthang, the county seat.

3. History

Kha rag is a very ancient place-name in the history of Bon. Bonpo people believed that it was one of the forty-five gathering places ('du gnas) founded by Mu khri bTsan po, the second king of the Yar lung kings in Tibet, and gShen Nam mkha’ snang ba mdog can when they invited hundreds of Bonpo masters from Zhang zhung. Dran pa ‘i rnam thar g-yung drung gsang mdzod and bKa’ brgyad brgyud also mentioned Kha rag as one of the 'du gnas of Bon founded in the period of King Mu khri btsan po.

The history of Kha rag can be divided into two parts: its history as a 'du gnas and later as a dgon pa. As a 'du gnas, it has a long history, and has been regarded as a sacred site from the outset. There are several legendary versions dealing with Kha rag, but they all seem too fantastical to relate here.

There was a written history of the 'du gnas entitled Kha rag gnas kyi lo rgyus by Gling gshen Mu la blo gros, which might have contained valuable information, and I spent much time looking for it when I visited Khams in the autumn of 1997,
but unfortunately I was unable to find it.

In accordance with the oral tradition recorded by Bya Tshe ring in a history of Kha rag, the founder of Kha rag monastery was Ngo Zhu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. His family was originally from Bru sha (Gilgit) and was known as Bru sha rNam sras spyi ring. During King Khri srong lde btsan’s persecution of Bon in the 8th century, Bla klu dbang, a Bonpo master belonging to the Bru sha family fled to the 'Dzin valley in Khams and founded a monastery at Nor bu'i dbu rtse in Khrom stod khams lung east of dDe dge. After five generations, Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan was born in the Fire-Dog year (986A.D.). His father was Ye shes rgyal mtshan and his mother, Zhu bza' gYung drung mtsho. Since his mother was from Zhu, an ancient and famous family in the history Bon, he was called Ngo Zhu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. From that time, the family of Bru in Kha rag was known as Ngo Zhu Bru tshang. In accordance with the wishes of his father Ye shes rgyal mtshan, Ngo Zhu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan founded a monastery at the holy site of Kha rag, and his family took the name of Kha rag tshang. The lineage ran for forty-eight generations. The first twenty-eight descendants were:

1. Ngo Zhu Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
2. Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin
3. bKra shis g-yung drung
4. Phun tshogs dbang rgyal
5. Shes rab rgyal mtshan
6. Kun bzang g-yung drung
7. Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan
8. 'Chi med g-yung drung
9. 'Chi med blo gsal
10. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
11. bsTan 'dzin gtsug phud
12. Kun dga' ye shes
13. gYung drung blo gros
14. Shes rab g-yung drung
15. bKra shis rin chen
16. bsKal bzang nor bu
17. gYung drung bstan rgyal
18. Nam mkha' blo gros
19. 'Chi med tshe dbang
20. gYung drung blo gsal
21. Kun bzang bstan 'dzin
22. gYung drung bstan 'dzin
23. bSod nams bkra shis
24. A rtan
25. A tshan
26. gSang sngags
27. 'Jam dpal blo gros
28. Kun dga’ blo gros

In addition to the twenty-eight masters mentioned above, there was a very learned master called gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan who belonged to the eighteenth generation of the Kha rag tshang family. He was born in the Fire-Rat year of the 9th Rab byung (1516). His father’s name was sKal bzang nor bu, and his mother’s Ye shes lha ‘dzoms. gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan founded a monastery called rJes ri at the foot of Mount Bon ri in Kong po where he introduced the practice of the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) and the dgu gtor rite. He also founded a meditation centre (sgrub grwa) in Kha rag rgyal rtse mo where he initiated the ritual tradition of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan. He wrote more than ten volumes of works, but unfortunately very few of them survived. Nam mkha’ blo gros, the 18th master in the line, was born in the Wood-Dragon year of the 9th Rab byung (1556). He received teachings from gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan and built a three-storey assembly hall (’du khang). From his time onwards, the hereditary succession of the Kha rag tshang has continued unbroken to this day.

Kha rag ’Jam dbyangs blo gsal rgyal mtshan (b.1939), the last descendant, took me to monasteries Zla ’od and gTsug ’od near Kha rag Monastery when I was visiting the area in autumn 1997. The system of succession through reincarnation was never adopted in this monastery and the hereditary line of Kha rag tshang is still the head of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system
- dgon bdag, a hereditary line, the present one is Kha rag bla ma.
- dbu mdzad
- dgos skos
- phyag mdzod
- spyi gnyer

All the incumbents are elected by monks and changed every seven years with the exception of the dgon bdag.

5. Current number of monks
There are fifty novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The young novices are taught by masters of their choice.
7. Educational exchange

The monastery was formerly closely connected with gYas ru dben sa kha. This connection is mentioned in the history of the A khrid system of meditation. Later the monastery developed close ties with sMan ri, gShen Dar sdings and rMe’u tshang in Central Tibet, and rJes ri Monastery in Kong po. At present the monks go to Shar rdza Hermitage for further training but there are no regular educational exchanges between Khar rag and other monasteries.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of gShen rab Mi bo and mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 1st day
- 5th month: the ritual cycle of Khro bo rol pa
- 6-7th month: the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 1st day of the 6th month to the 19th day of the 7th month
- 8th month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud
- 9th month: the dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of Phur pa
- 10th month: the ceremony based on the Kun rig gnas tong dbang chen from the 1st to the 28th day
- 11th month: the dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 3rd to the 29th day including two days of ’cham
- 12th month: another dgu gtor rite of sTag la and the offering of the tshogs 1000 times to the protectors of Bon (bon skyong)

10. Manuscripts and printed books

The monastery has two printed copies of Kanjur and various other texts.

11. Economic circumstances of the monastery

The monastery depends on donations from its followers.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of one community: rGur (or rGu ru) spun gsum, “the three brothers of rGur”, divided into three branches with a total of thirty-four families (around two hundred people). According to oral tradition, these people are the descendants of the rGur spun gsum tribe mentioned in the Gesar epic.

14. Local festivals

There is a la btsas at the top of the mountain behind the monastery called Khar rag sdong brag which is believed to be the residence of the local deity of the same name. It was reconstructed in 1988 in accordance with the instructions given by Kun gsal blo gros, the present chief teacher at gYung drung gling Monastery in gTsang.
The deity's propitiation takes place on the 15th day of the 4th month.

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn of 1997: Kha rag 'Jam dpal blo gsal rgyal mtshan (b.1939), the present Kha rag bla ma
(2) Texts:
   - 'Dzing kha rag dgon gyi lo rgyus by Bya Tshe ring, MS

Notes
1 dPal yul rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus by dPal yul rdzong gi sa ming las don 'go khrid tsho chung, 1986, p. 84.
2 'Dzing Kha rag dgon gyi lo rgyud by Bya Tshe ring, MS, p.2: dran pa'i rnam thar g-yung drung gsang mzdod/ bod rgyal Mu khri btsan po la sogs pa/ Bon gshen rnams kyis bstan pa spel ba'i yul/ 'dzing gi kha rag shar phyogs rgyal mo rong/ bka' brgyad brgyud/ rgyal bo mu-khri btsan-po sogs bon gshen rnams kyis bka' brgyad bsgrubs pa'i gnas ni/ la stod drung gi 'tsal phug/ 'dzing gi kha rag gsang phug/ In both passages the name of the area where Kha rag is located is spelt 'Dzing instead of 'Dzin, but in fact both spellings are still in use.
3 A monastery in rNam gling in gTsang, Central Tibet, that was destroyed by flood in the 14th century.

(146) Zla 'od Monastery

1. Name of the monastery
   In the ancient inscription on the wall inside the assembly hall ( 'du khang), which I will discuss below, the name of the monastery appears as rDa dbus dgon pa.

2. Location
   The monastery is located about two hours on horseback southeast of Kha rag Monastery, at the top of a hill and surrounded by a forest. It is about 70 km northeast of the county town of dPal yul.

3. History
   According to oral tradition, Pad ma bdud 'dud, the youngest son of Khod po sNang Idan, married Chos mthsho and had three sons. The eldest, Nam mkha'i rgyal po, founded Zla 'od Monastery (No.146), and became known as Zla 'od Nam mkha'i rgyal po, the second son, Nyi ma'i rgyal po, founded gTsug 'od Monastery (No.147) near by, and was subsequently known as gTsug 'od Nyi ma'i rgyal po. The youngest son founded a monastery at sTag mgo gdong, on a hill resembling the head of a tiger, in a valley called gYang zla gzhi in the same locality as the other two
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Ganau and Sichuan

monasteries. The year of the monastery’s foundation is believed to be 1124 A.D., but there is no evidence to substantiate this.

Zla 'od Nam mkha' i rgyal po was the prelate of the kings of Khro skyabs and Brag steng, two of the eighteen kingdoms of rGyal rong. The history of the monastery after his time, as well as the chronology of its successive masters remain unclear:

1. Zla 'od Nam mkha' i rgyal po
2. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
3. bSod nams rgyal mtshan
4. gTshug phud
5. Shes rab bkra shis
6. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
7. Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
8. sByin pa 'od zer
9. Nam mkha’ lhun grub
10. bSlab gsum phun tshogs
11. bSam gtan
12. rGyal ba g-yung drung
13. A don
14. bsTan 'dzin rnam rgyal
15. Pad ma rgyal mtshan
16. 'Chi med

Since dPal yul district belonged to sDe dge in the past, many of the masters mentioned above were close to the kings of sDe dge, and several among them served as their prelates.

Unfortunately none of their dates seem credible enough to mention here although I attempted to determine the dates of some of them.

I was excited to find a long script on the ancient wall in the assembly hall (‘du khang) which I hoped would yield some important historical information about the monastery. A monk at the monastery spent much time and energy making a copy of it for me, but unfortunately its content is disappointing. However, it says that the assembly hall was built by a bSod nams rgyal po, and not Nam mkha'i rgyal po as mentioned above, although no dates are provided. Otherwise the entire inscription is devoted to the praise of the assembly hall and to the description of the statues within.

During the time of gTsug 'od, Zla 'od and gTsug 'od monasteries performed all of their annual rituals together. Despite the damage suffered during the Cultural Revolution, around 11,534 meters of the original wall-paintings within the assembly hall have been preserved.
4. Hierarchical system
   Same as Kha rag Monastery (No.145)

5. Current number of monks
   There are nine novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are taught by masters of their choice.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery follows the Bru, Zhu or gShen traditions of ritual practice, (mainly the Bru tradition). At present the monastery also follows the New Bon tradition and the monks go to Shar rdza hermitage for teachings and retreats.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 1st month: Bla ma mchod chog from the 15th to the 20th day
   - 4th month: the *Klong rgyas cho ga* from the 10th to the 15th day
   - 5th month: Ma rgyud stong tshogs for seven days
   - 8th month: the *smyung gnas* fasting for eight days
   - 10th month: offerings of the sacrificial cake (*tshogs*) 1000 times from the 10th to the 15th day
   - 11th month: the performance of the *Zhi khro* ritual from the 10th to the 20th day and the *dgu gtor* rite from the 24th to the 29th day

10. Books held in the monastery
    The monastery possesses one printed copy of the Kanjur, one printed copy of the collected works of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, one printed copy of the collected works of gTer ston Tshang drag, the printed edition of the *Dran pa bka' thang* in eight volumes, that of the *Tshe dbang bka' thang* in four volumes and that of the *mKha' gro bka' thang* in one volume.
    There are manuscript copies of the following ritual texts: *Zhi khro*, *Ma rgyud*, *Khro bo mgo mtshar rgyas pa*, *gDugs dkar*, *bDe 'dus*, *sTag la*, *Byams ma*, *gShed dmar*, *Gu drag*, *Khro bo rol pa*, *Seng gdong ma* and *Kun rig*.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery depends on donations from the local lay community.

12. Local community
    The local lay community consists of three villages: Ri tshal phu pa with
twenty-five families, Phyug po phu ba with fifteen families and gYang stod phu pa with eighteen families (273 people altogether).

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called gSer phu and is believed to be the abode of the local deity Bya chen. There is a la btsas dedicated to him on the summit of the mountain. The deity is propitiated on the 10th day of the 1st month by the monks.

Another mountain called gZung mgon 1 km east of the monastery is regarded as the abode of the eponymous local deity. There is a la btsas on its summit. The date of its renewal ceremony is not fixed. The ceremony is attended by the lay members of the Bonpo community.

There is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called mDa' IHa ri 20 km south of the monastery with a la btsas halfway up. It was first “opened” (gnas sgo phyed pa) as a holy place by bSod nams dbang rgyal alias Zla 'od Nam mkha' thog 'dzin and later further sanctified by gTer chen Tshe dbang grags pa and also by Glang zhig. Its veneration ceremony takes place on the 15th day of the 4th month and the ceremony is attended by the members of both Bonpo and Buddhist communities. It is circumambulated following the Bon tradition, (g-yas skor, i.e. counter-clockwise).

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers and nomads

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1997 with 'Jigs med, a monk at the monastery (b.1965)
(2) Texts:
- Zla 'od dgon gyi lo rgyus by Bya Tshe ring, MS
- The inscription on the assembly hall of the monastery
- gTsug 'od dgon pa, MS., anonymous

Notes
1 Bon is referred to as Bon dkar (“White Bon”) and Bon nag (“Black Bon”) by the Buddhists, and as bKa’ gsar (“new teachings”) and bKa’ rnying (“old teachings”) by the Bon pos themselves. Because of the negative connotation of “Bon nag”, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan does not agree with either appellations; he considers that the distinction between new and old teachings is also incorrect and refers to them as new and old gTer ma (“treasures”) instead. As a result, the two traditions are now increasingly referred to as gTer gsar and gTer rnying, “new treasures” and “old treasures”.
(147) gTsug 'od Monastery

1. Name
   gTsug 'od

2. Location
   The monastery is located about one and a half hours on horseback southeast of Kha rag Monastery (No.145) in a village whose inhabitants form the local lay community of the monastery.

3. History
   According to oral history, Pad ma bdud 'dul, a descendant of the Khyung tribe and the youngest son of Khod po sNang ldan, married Chos mtsho, and had three sons. The eldest, Nam mkha’i rgyal po, founded Zla ’od monastery (No.146) and became known as Zla ’od Nam mkha’i rgyal po, the second son, Nyi ma’i rgyal po, founded gTsug ’od temple in the Wood-Dragon year of the 2nd Rab byung (1124) near Zla ’od Monastery, and became known as gTsug ’od Nyi ma’i rgyal po.

   Nyi ma’i rgyal po married sKal bzang lha mo and had three sons. bsTan pa lhun grub, the eldest son and bDe skyid lha mo had two sons. bsTan pa ’od zer, the elder one and rTa mgrin mtsho, had a son called lHun grub dbang ldan, who became a renowned master. He and gYung drung dbang mo had four sons. The youngest son married rNa ba tshaw Shes rab sgrol ma and had five sons, the middle son became a gter ston. He discovered many gter ma texts and was initiated into the practice of rtsa rlung by Nyag gter gSang sngags gling pa. The youngest son, Pad ma g-yung drung, had three sons, the youngest of whom, gYung drung rgyal mtshan, married Nyi li Bo legs and had two sons. One of the two sons bsTan pa married gZha’ tsha Rig ’dzin lha mo and had two sons. The eldest son dBang phyug married Khra tshang Gu ru sgrol ma and had only one son called Phun tshogs who, with Zla ’od sgrol ma, had three sons; the second son, Rig ’dzin, was a disciple of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858-1934). He married sTag mgo A mnang sgrol ma and had a son called ’Chi med rgyal mtshan who was recognized by ’Jam dbyang mkhyen brtse and Thar bde Dri med as the reincarnation of Rab brtan shes rab of lCang lung Monastery (No.148) in the same county.

   In the lifetime of ’Chi med rgyal mtshan, the monastery was looted by Nyi grags tshang, a Buddhist family in the same area and the Bon religion was banned until the middle of 20th century. In the 1980s, the monastery was rebuilt at a place called Rab mgo.

   I obtained an eighteen-page manuscript devoted to the history of the monastery simply entitled gTsug ’od dgon. It is anonymous. Its author claims that he saw a chronology of the monastery entitled bsTan rtsis nor phreng rab gsal me long.
beginning in the Earth-Serpent year of the 5th Rab byung (1269) and ending in 1489. Then new additions were made to bring it up to 1991. The date of the monastery’s foundation mentioned above was taken from the anonymous work gTsug ’od dgon. However, unfortunately, I was unable to find the chronology and I don’t even know whether it is still available.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag
   - dbu mdzad
   - dgos skos
   - phyag mdzod
   - spyi gnyer
   All the incumbents are elected by the monks and changed every seven years.

5. Current number of monks
   There are only ten monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by elder monks of their choice.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery follows the Bru, Zhu or gShen traditions of ritual practice, (mainly the Bru tradition). At present the monastery also follows the New Bon tradition (see note 1 of Zla ’od Monastery, No.146) and the monks go to Shar rdza Hermitage for teachings and retreats.

8 / 9. Rituals
   From gTsug ’od Shes rab’s time-onwards, Zla ’od and gTsug ’od monasteries performed all their annual rituals together.

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery depends on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community
   Same as those of Zla ’od Monastery

13. Local festivals
   Same as those of Zla ’od monastery
14. Occupation of the local population
   Farmers and nomads

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1997: Kha rag bla ma, the head of the monastery; 'Jigs med (b.1965), a monk of the monastery
(2) Texts:
   - Zla 'od dgon gyi lo rgyus by Bya Tshe ring, MS
   - The inscription on the wall in the assembly hall of the monastery

(148) lCang lung Monastery

1. Name
   The monastery’s full name is gTer lhung lcang lung or lCang lung gYung drung mthong grol gling.

2. Location
   The monastery is located at the foot of Mount Ka ye rgyal mo facing Dis mgo village in gTer lhung (gTer lung) valley in gTer lhung district, which is located 75 km northeast of Palyul, the county seat. It takes around one hour on horseback from the county town to the monastery.

3. History
   According to oral tradition, following a prophecy, Nam mkha’ lhun grub, a master of the Wa zha tribe, left Central Tibet and travelled to the east of mDo khams, and founded a monastery at mGo ti sgang. His youngest son, gYung drung dbang ldan, founded the original lCang lung Monastery at a place in gTer lhung valley where he discovered a chest containing a bse ru’i ra, “rhinoceros horn”, and that, as a result, became known as bSe ru’i mgo.
   Following is a list of the monastery’s masters:
   1. gYung drung dbang ldan
   2. gYung drung lhun grub
   3. gYung drung bstan rgyal
   4. Nam mkha’ lhun grub,
   5. Blo gros g-yung drung
   6. bsTan pa dbang rgyal
   7. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan
   8. mKhas grub rgyal mtshan
   9. Rin chen dbang ldan
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

10. gYung drung dbang rgyal
11. Nam mkha’ bzang po
12. bSod nams dbang rgyal
13. bSod nams bzang po
14. lHun grub tshul khrims
15. mChog dga’
16. Yon tan rin chen
17. Rin chen
18. bSod nams g-yung drung
19. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan
20. gYung drung nram rgyal
21. rNam ’joms
22. gYung drung lha mo
23. Ya ma rgyal
24. bsTan ’dzin
25. mKhas btsun Bon dbyings rdo rje
26. Tshe dbang g-yung drung
27. Rab brtan shes rab
28. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal
29. Rang lta rin chen
30. Kun bzang rdo rje

This list is taken from a history of the monastery entitled lCang lung dgon, MS, unfortunately no dates are given. The oral accounts of many of these masters that I heard from the local population are also difficult to date. The succession of the masters before gYung drung nram rgyal, the 20th in the lineage, was hereditary. The masters from the 21st to the 24th is unknown. From the time of mKhas btsun Bon dbyings rdo rje, the 25th master in the lineage, succession by reincarnation was adopted.

mKhas btsun Bon dbyings rdo rje defeated a master called dBra sras in a debate and thus won the estime of the royal family of sDe dge who bestowed lands on him, and appointed him as a prelate at the court.

The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt by the following monks of the monastery:

mKhan Sangs rgyas tshe brtan, ’Chi med rgyal mtshan, the reincarnation of Rab brtan shes rab, Bla ma ’od zer, bKra shis mgon, Rig ’dzin rdo rje, and Rang rig.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
- three spyi ba (gnyer ba)
- two mchod dpon
All the incumbents are replaced every three years.

5. Current number of monks
There are thirty novices and monks altogether.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
Traditionally, the monastery had very close ties with sMan ri in gTsang, but is now closer to Shar rdza Hermitage in sDe dge.

8/9. Rituals
Kun rig (ten days), dbyar mchod (twenty-one days), Phur pa (ten days), Me tog mchod pa (seven days), sgrib sbyang (five days), smyung gnas (eighteen days), dbyar gnas (fifty-three days), dgu gtor (seven days), Ma rgyud (five days).

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has copies of both the Bonpo and Buddhist Kanjur and Tenjur as well as the collected works of the following masters: Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, Kun grol 'Ja' tshon snying po, Klong chen rab 'byams, and 'Jigs med gling pa.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery depends on offerings. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community of the monastery consists of three villages: gYu mgo with twenty families, Chu phyar with twenty families, and Til mgo with thirty families. In other villages there is sDong thog with thirty-four families and sBas gong with seventeen families who were converted to the rNying ma pa tradition. In these villages, the Bonpo practitioners perform the ritual called gsal kha for the families, but for funerary rites the people call upon the monks of the rNying ma pa monastery.

13. Local festivals
Mount Ka ye rgyal mo, situated behind the monastery is believed to be a holy
mountain blessed by the goddess Byams ma. It was "opened" (gnas sgo phyed pa) by 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po and Kong sprul Yon tan rgya mtsho. Its circumambulation (in the Bonpo way) by the local people takes place on the 15th day of the 4th month.

14. Occupation of the local population
   Farming supplemented by animal husbandry

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn of 1997 with the following monks at the monastery:
   Ye shes Tshe ring (b.1949), bSod nams chos 'phel (b.1923) and dKon mchog (b.1933)
Kha rag Monastery. Plate 1
Kha rag Monastery, Plate 2 Kha rag 'Jam dbyangs blo gros rgyal mtshan (b.1939), the present Kha rag bla ma
Cang lung Monastery
dKar mdzes County

dKar mdzes County is located in northwestern dKar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, around the upper reaches of the rDza chu river. dKar mdzes is the capital of dKar mdzes county (latitude: 31°37'N, longitude: 99°59'E). The county covers an area of 6,364 sq km and comprises 26 townships. The total population is 51,781 (49,042 of whom are Tibetans).

(149) Gong lung Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Gong lung gYung drung mi ’gyur gling. Since it is the only Bonpo monastery in this county, it is known as Bonpo monastery or Bonpo gYung drung.

2. Location

The monastery is located 22 km west of dKar mdzes, the county seat.

3. History

According to oral tradition, the original site of the monastery was near a place called Rab gsal zhabs facing the monastery. No one knows the exact date of its foundation, but it is said to have been founded during the royal period (7th-8th centuries). The monastery was later moved to a place called Dar lung. The farmers who cultivate the land on both former sites have come across the ruins of the monastery.

In the 18th century, Kun grol 'Ja’ tshon snying po (b. 1700) moved the monastery to its present site with the financial support of the sMon rgyal family and spent the first half of his life at the monastery. His knowledge and fame attracted many disciples, followed by their families who settled around the monastery, forming what later became known as Chos 'khor village. The last master of the monastery still remembered by the local people was A khu sPrul sku (1876-1943). He was a member of the sMon rgyal family and a disciple of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. The monastery was partially wrecked during the Cultural Revolution. However, the original assembly hall (’du khang) has survived except for the statues and books inside. The monastery was reopened in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

The head of the monastery’s administrative committee is ’Phrin las lhun grub. None of the traditional positions exist.
5. Current number of monks

There are all together eighteen novices and monks, only six of whom live in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

A khu spul sku developed close ties with Shar rdza Hermitage and thus the monks go there for teachings and the three-year retreat.

8/9. Rituals

Following is the ritual tradition established by Kun grol 'Ja' tshon snying po:
- 1st month: gNas bBrtan bcu drug on the 2nd day, the Zhi khro cycle on the 3rd and 4th days, commemoration (dgong rdzogs) of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 5th day, the Adkar bum sgrub from the 6th to the 8th day and the rTsag sum cho ga from the 9th to the 15th day
- 4th month: the Zhi khro cycle from the 5th to the 7th day and the Si tu'i bum sgrub from the 8th to the 15th day
- 12th month: the ritual cycle of sTag la and Srid rgyal from the 15th to the 29th day with the dgu gtor rite on the 29th day

10. Books held at the monastery

The monastery possesses only the usual texts for liturgical purposes.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and relies on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of only three Bonpo families and seven partly Bonpo and partly Buddhist families (i.e. who call upon the Bonpo monks to perform rituals relating to worldly matters and upon the Buddhist monks to perform those dealing with the here-after) in Chos 'khor village.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery, dGe bsnyen Mi ra, is the abode of the deity of the same name. The la btsas is on the mountainside and its renewal ceremony takes place on the 15th day of the 5th month, although the custom is now
hardly followed.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1997 with dBang dga’ bSod nams dbang rgyal (b.1929)
(2) Texts:
- Bon po dgon gyi lo rgyus, in Khams phyogs dkar mdzes khul gyi dgon sde so so’i lo rgyus gsal bar bshad pa nang bstan gsal ba’i me long, compiled by Krung go’i bod kyi shes rig zhib ’jug lte gnas kyi chos lugs lo rgyus zhib ’jug so’o et al, China Tibetology Publishing House, Beijing, 1999. Vol. 1, pp. 206-210
- dKar mdzes rdzong gi sa cha’i ming btus published by dKar mdzes rdzong gi sa ming las don ’go khrid tsho tshung, dKar mdzes, 1986
Gong lung Monastery
Nyag rong rdzong

Nyag rong (Chinese Xinlong Xian) is a county of dKar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province. The seat of Nyag rong county is Ri nang, located at Ri nang pasture in Nyag rong valley. There are ninety-two villages divided between twenty-four townships. The total area of the county is 8,672 sq km. The population is 38,371 (31,388 of whom were Tibetans in 1986). The highest mountain in the county is Kha ba lung ri in Zur pa at an altitude of 5,995 m (its peaks remain snow-capped throughout the year). Nyag chu river flows southward through a deep gorge across the county for 175 km. 10.1% of the county area is covered by forest. There are eight Bonpo monasteries in the county.

(150) Ye shes Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is bShad sgrub bstan rgyas bkra shis g-yung drung gling; it was also known as Ye shes spos mdud dgon or Ye shes bshad sgrub gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the south bank of a stream in Gong shod valley, 5 km east of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county. Gong shod valley is one of the “eighteen large valleys” (Shod chen bco brgyad) of Nyag rong county. The site of the monastery is called Brag dmar mdo rtsa (literally “foot of the red rock”), because it is located at the foot of a red rock (Brag dmar).

3. History

According to oral tradition, during the persecution of Bon under the reign of King Khri srng ltd btsan, many Bonpo masters fled from central Tibet, and thus a master called sTag gsas came to Me nyag, and became known as Me nyag sTag gsas. The Bonpo scholar and historian Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858-1934) also mentions this personage in his historical work. It is also said that Me nyag sTag gsas and rMa lHa rgod of Nyag rong are in fact one and the same. There is a prayer text entitled Lo rgyus gsal 'debs (MS) in Ye shes Monastery mentioning that “the great and powerful hero Me nyag sTag gsas came to Me nyag under the name of rMa gsas lHa rgod”. The son of rMa lHa rgod was called Nam mkha’ ye shes. He received teachings from his father and then travelled extensively to propagate the Bon religion. He won the esteem and support of Klu rgyal, the chief of Nyag rong who helped him build a monastery at Brag dmar mdo rtsa in his honour. The monastery was named Ye shes Monastery after him. Since the monastery consisted of temples (lha khang), the
place became known as IHa khang thang, the “plain of temples”.

Three generations of Nyag rong chiefs acted as patrons of Nam mkha’ ye shes: Klu rgyal, his son Klu mgon and his grandson Klu skyabs. Nam mkha’ ye shes was succeeded by Cang mkhar spo sByin pa rgyal mtshan who spent the first half of his life in Ye shes Monastery, and then left the monastery to live in a hermitage which he founded on a hill called Dar ri, which is why he is also locally known as Dar ri sByin pa rgyal mtshan. Although Rig ’dzin nyi ma does give precise dates in his historical work with regard to the masters mentioned above, I am not sure they are accurate and prefer not to use them here. 

Because Klu thar had no male heirs, the lineage of local chiefs was discontinued.

There was also a master called rTogs ldan bKra shis rgyal mtshan who became a famous ascetic in the area; he is also known as Nub rTogs ldan bKra shis rgyal mtshan. His brother, Mo the Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, was a lay tantric practitioner and founded sKya thu li temple at La rked stod and gShel lo temple at La rked smad in Nyag rong; because he was very active in La sked, he was also known as Nyag sked tshang, and it is said that his lineage continued to be active in the area for seventeen generations.

During the time of mGon po rnam rgyal, a chief of Nyag rong, gSang mchog, a descendent of Khod spungs sGrub gshen snang ldan, Zla ba grags pa, a descendent of Mo the lineage, gYung drung rgyal mtshan, a son of ’Od zer gling pa, and Nyag stod sTong ldan mgon po, agreed to rebuild Ye shes Monastery in which three small monasteries were merged as one monastery.

Later Nyag stod sTong ldan mgon po acted as a patron of the monastery and renamed it Ye shes bshad sgrub gling. According to Rig ’dzin nyi ma this took place in 1848. In 1908, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan visited the monastery. In 1909, Khyung po Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Tshul khrims mchog rgyal added an assembly hall (’du khang) with twelve columns. Both were disciples of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan had two sons, gYung drung bdud ’dul and Ri kho alias Thugs rje gling pa. The former succeeded him after his death. The latter discovered numerous gter ma texts in several places in Khams and taught them throughout the area.

During the Cultural Revolution the monastery was destroyed, but its reconstruction was undertaken in 1983 with the help of A yung, alias gYung drung bston pa’i rgyal mtshan (1922-1996). In his youth, he was recognized as the reincarnation of a master called Dri med ’od zer, and the abbot of the monastery, Tshul khrims mchog rgyal, kept him in the monastery. In fact the abbot was a brother of his grandfather. He studied under the abbot, gTer ston Tshe dbang ’gyur med, dBra ston bsKal bzang bston pa’i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959) and rGyal tshab Blo gros rgyal mtsho.
Later A yung became vice-president of the Political Consultative Conference of dKar mdzes Prefecture, and it was in this capacity he was able to help to rebuild Ye shes Monastery and other local Bonpo monasteries. He worked hard to promote education in Bonpo monasteries in dKar mdzes Prefecture. When I visited dKar mdzes Prefecture in 1997, I saw his photograph in almost every monastery. I then realized how popular he was among the Bonpo community.

In the 1980s, a manuscript copy the Bonpo Kanjur was brought out at dBal khyung Monastery. It was hidden away during the turbulent history. As it turned out, it was the only complete extant copy of the Bonpo Canon. Its publication, owing to the strenuous efforts of A yung and his friend Shug sdong sKal bzang phun tshogs, represents a major contribution to Tibetan cultural heritage, although the published version is not an exact replica of the dBal khyung manuscript. Alongside A yung, another important figure of the monastery was the master gYung drung bdud 'dul (?-1995).

In 1983, the authorities granted the monastery permission to reopen. Thanks to A yung and gYung drung bdud 'dul, and the financial support and labour provided by the local lay community, the monastery was rebuilt and is now one of the most important centres in the region. A rgyal or sKal bzang rgya mtsho, a brother of A yung and 'Khrin las kun khyab, the son of gYung drung bdud 'dul, are the present leaders of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

- two gser khri, “gold throne”
- one mkhan po
- one g-yung drung slob dpon
- two dbu mdzad
- four dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- four shog dpon

All the incumbents are reappointed every three years with the exception of the gser khri whose position is permanent.

5. Current number of monks

There are one hundred and sixty monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Education

The monk students receive a traditional education, both through private tutoring and collective lessons organized by the monastery.
7. Educational exchange

The novices go to gYung drung gling in gTsang and Shar rdza ri khor to take their ordination and for further religious training, and also to sNang zhig for further studies.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415) for seven days;
- 3rd month: ritual of gCod pa during the entire month
- 5th month: commemoration of Bonpo masters taking the Klong rgyas text as the basis of the celebration from the 15th to the 20th day; the performance of the ritual cycle of Kun bzang rgyal ba ’dus pa from the 21st to the 30th day
- 6th month: ritual based on the Rig 'dzin 'dus pa from the 1st to the 11th day. On the 12th day fifteen kinds of ’cham dance take place for the public audience. The ’cham includes such as the sa 'dul, sixteen ’dod yon lha mo, keng rus, shwa ba; the observance of the summer-fast (dbyar gnas) for fifty days starting on the 15th day
- 9th month: rituals based on the cycles of sTag a and Phur pa from the 18th to the 24th day
- 11th month: rituals based on the cycles of Khro bo, Phur pa and Zhang zhung Me ri from the 23rd to the 29th day ending with ’cham dance on the 29th

10. Books held in the monastery

There are copies of the printed editions of the following books: two copies of Bonpo Kanjur published by A yung in 197 volumes, one copy of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works, one copy of mNyam med Shes rab rGyal mtshan’s collected works, one copy of bDe chen gling pa Tshe dbang grags pa’s collected works, one copy of dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan’s collected works and one copy of gSang sngags gling pa’s gter ma texts.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has neither land nor animals. The monks are provided for by their families and the monastery depends financially on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of five shog kha (communal division): Ri nub, La rked, mChog dge, Gong shod and sKe bzhi. 1. Ri nub comprises three villages: Gyang ra with thirty families, Bar shod with twenty-five families and lHa khang mdo with thirty-five families. 2. La rked comprises nine villages: dBus ru with ten families, Bar shod with twenty families, Mi rgud with thirteen families,
La ri with eleven families, Lu gu with six families, Tis bru with seven families, Pa bzi with five families, Phur pa with twelve families and Ye shes with six families. 3. mChog dge comprises three villages: Yar grong with twenty families, Mar grong with twenty families and Ka re with three families. 4. Gong shod comprises five villages: Dung ri with six familieis, Yang grong with twelve familes, Mar grong with seventeen families, sBying ge with nine families and Dar ni with six families. 5. sKe bzhi comprises five villages: sBus thang with twelve families, Dar ri with thirteen families, Ja lung with eight families, Ra gni with eleven families and Klu khang with fifteen families.

13. Local festivals

There is a mountain called sKyobs 'byin seng nag surrounded by twelve peaks about 25 km south of the county town of Nyag rong rdzong. The local deity (yul lha), believed to be residing on it, is propitiated by the local people of the villages mentioned above, but the date of the propitiation is not fixed. It may fall any time between the beginning of the 5th month to the beginning of the 8th month.

There is also a “sacred mountain” (gnas ri) called Brag dkar lhang lhang nor bu yang rtse located about 40 km west of Nyag rong rdzong county town. It was a “site of hidden treasures” (gter gnas) where Sangs rgyas gling pa discovered many concealed texts (gter ma) and consequently he converted the site what is known as “to open doors of the site” (gnas sgo phyed pa) i.e. revealed the site as a sacred place. The date of its veneration is not fixed and may fall any time between the beginning of the 5th month to the beginning of the 8th month of every Dragon Year. In the past, both Bonpo and Buddhist people circumambulated the mountain in the Bonpo way, that is, keeping the mountain on the left as one follows the path of the circuit, but after Nyag bla Pad ma bdud ’dul, a rNying ma pa master, said that both ways were appropriate and had the same religious efficacy, Buddhists began to circumambulate the mountain in the clockwise direction.

14. Occupation of the local population

Both nomads and farmers.

Sources

(1) Interviews: A rgyal or sKal bzang rgya mtsho, a monk and one of the two masters of the monastery, born in 1939. Rig ’dzin nyi ma, born in 1967; he was recognized as a reincarnation of a Sa skya monastery, but he did not want to be converted to the Sa skya pa tradition and has kept his Bonpo faith while living as a Sa skya pa reincarnation in Ye shes Monastery. gYung drung bstan ’phel (b.1931) is the abbot of the monastery.
Notes
1 Nyag rong rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus by Nyag rong rdzong gi sa ming las dong 'go khrid tsho chung, 1986.
2 KGLG, volume 1. This text mentions nine Bonpo monasteries, the ninth being dBra khyung sgrub sde gling, pp.385-387.
3 dBal IHa khri, Me nyag sTag gsas, Khyung po Ne khrom, and several others who went to the North and lived there (176a), cf. Samten G. Karmay, The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon, London, Oxford University Press, 1972, p.93.
4 mthu che dpa'bo, me nyag stag gsas mchog/ rma gsas lha rgod mtsan gsol me nyag byon.
5 Ye shes dgon pa'i lo rgyus by A g-yung, based on a history of the monastery by gYung drung bdud 'dul, MS.
6 Historically, Nyag rong is considered a part of Me nyag; the different dialects of Me nyag are referred to as Me nyag log skad. According to A g-yung, Cang mkhar spo is the Me nyag log skad term for “Bonpo”.
Ye shes dgon pa'i lo rgyus, p.4, MS.
7 Ye shes dgon pa'i lo rgyus kun gsal me long by Rig 'dzin nyi ma, MS.
8 Mo means “rain” and the means “to bring down” in the Me nyag log skad, referring to his ability to provoke rain when needed for the crops, Ye shes dgon pa'i lo rgyus, p.8, MS.
9 Ye shes dgon pa'i lo rgyus kun gsal me long by Rig 'dzin nyi ma, p.10, MS.
10 dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtsan was Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtsan's disciple and the author of his master's biography: the Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtsan gyi rnam thar.
11 shog kha means “tribe”, and dpon means “chief”; shog dpon is the title given to the monk in charge of monks belonging to a same tribe within a monastery. Because four of the local tribes are still Bonpo and belong to Ye shes Monastery, all four have monks in the monastery, and there is a Shog dpon for each of these groups. Ri nub is also Bonpo and belongs to the monastery, but since it has no monks in the monastery there is no need for a Ri nub Shog dpon. The Shog dpon has to be from the same tribe as the group of monks in his charge and he must also be a former dge bskos.

(151) rGyal zhung Monastery

1. Name
rGyal zhung Monastery was also formerly known as rGyal ba bkra shis or rGyal zhung 'brug grags.

2. Location
rGyal zhung Monastery is about 12 km north of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county.
3. History

According to oral tradition, the master rGyal ba rtsa mkhyen pa founded a hermitage called rGyal zhing in the valley behind the present monastery. Then it was moved to another site but the reason and precise time of this change remain unknown. According to one short account of the monastery’s history (rGyal zhing dgon gyi lo rgyus, 8 folios, MS and anonymous), it was founded by the master Bya btang Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan in the 10th Rab byung (1567-1626), and later, because there was no source of drinking water in the vicinity, Khyung ’khor sMon lam tshul khrims, the master at that time, moved the monastery to a new place. The new monastery had nine columns and was named rGyal ba bkra shis. The same account mentions three other masters of this lineage, bSod nams rnam rgyal, Kun bzang rnam rgyal and ‘Chi med, but their dates and life stories are not mentioned. In the 19th century, Bya btang Dri med ’od zer offered the monastery a piece of land known as Zhing stong thang on which the present monastery was built. While the monastery was being built, the people heard a dragon in the sky and thus the monastery was named rGyal zhing ’brug grags. It was consecrated by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan in the early 20th century. It was partially destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties. The old assembly hall still stands and contains some 177 sq m of original murals.

4. Hierarchical system

- one gdung ’dzin
- two dbu mdzad or dbu skyor
- three dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- two spyi ba

The dge bskos are replaced each year, while the dbu mdzad, mchod dpon and spyi ba are reappointed every two years.

5. Current number of monks

There are twenty-five monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no regular classes and the young novices are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery was a branch of Gong rgyal Monastery. The monks are generally sent to Shar rdza Hermitage to take their ordinations, and occasionally to sNang zhig Monastery (No.180) in rNga khog.
8 / 9. Rituals
- 5th month, the observance of the smyung gnas fasting
- 6th month, the performance of ritual based on the Zhi khro sgrub chen from the 3rd to the 10th day ending with the 'cham dance for the public. The observance of the dbyar gnas summer-fasting starting from the 15th of the 6th month for forty-nine days.

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has one copy of the printed edition of Bonpo Kanjur gyur, published by A yung and sKal bzang phun tshogs; one copy of the printed edition of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works; of the ‘Bum nying ma dgu shar in ten volumes; The yum texts (Buddhist) in twelve volumes.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has fifteen 'bri (female yak) that were offered by the lha sde (the monastery’s local lay community). The yaks are tended as shi med by several local families who give 2.5 kg of butter to the monastery per yak each year.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of three shog kha (communal divisions): 1. Zi re shog-kha with one village (also known as Zi re) comprising twelve families; 2. Sa nag shod shog kha with five villages: Ba re with four families, Sa nag shod village with three families, Gong thog village with four families, rGyal zhing with three families and Ba re sgo village with two families. 3. Sa nag stod shog kha comprising one village (also called Sa nag stod) with twenty-one families.

13. Local festivals
On top of the mountain behind the monastery a la btsas is built according to the instructions given by gSang sngags gling pa and it is dedicated to the local deity called bKra shis dpal bzang. Its annual renewal ceremony takes place on the 15th day of the 1st month. There is another la btsas on top of the mountain facing the monastery. It is dedicated to the local deity gYung drung dar rtse. The la btsas was constructed according to the instructions given by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and the deity is propitiated by the local people on the 15th day of the 1st month and on the 13th day of the 12th month.

There is also a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called sBas gnas g-yung drung sprungs rdzong located 1 km east of the monastery. The master who “opened the door” (gnas sgo phyed pa) of the mountain was rGyal ba rTsa mkhyen pa. It is circumambulated in the Hare-Year during the summer by the people both Bonpo and Buddhist in the Bonpo way, that is, keeping the mountain on the left as one walks.
14. Occupation of the local people
   Farmers

Sources
(1) Interviews: Ye bzang (Ye shes bzang po, b.1964), a monk at the monastery; rDo li (rDo rje rgyal mtshan, b.1947), a monk at the monastery

(152) Gong rgyal Monastery

1. Name
   The original spelling of the monastery’s name was Gu rgyal. It was later spelt Gong rgyal by Sangs rgyas gling pa (1705-1735).

2. Location
   It is located about 6 km northeast of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county.

3. History
   Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, the first master of the Bya btang lineage, is said to have built a small monastery at a site called Dar lo, but it is now in ruins. No one knows when it was built or why it was abandoned. In the 13th Rab byung (1747-1806), another small monastery was built by gSang sngags gling pa. He also “opened the door” (gnas sgo phyed pa) of the hidden local mountain (i.e. transformed the place into sacred site) and called it sBas yul g-yung drung spungs tshal. He is believed to have discovered a number of holy objects on the sacred site including a statue of White Tara and a gold gshang bell. He donated these objects to Gong rgyal Monastery. Around that time the monastery had about one hundred monks. In the Wood-Bird Year of the 15th Rab byung (1885), Bya btang bsTan pa’i nyi ma undertook to build a new temple for the monastery following a plan made by gSang sngags gling pa. When it was completed two years later, gSang sngags gling pa was invited to consecrate it and to give the lung initiation of the Bonpo Kanjur. Later, other masters such as Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, Khro sprul gYung drung mthong grol and the fifth Kun grol bDud ’dul gling pa also gave teachings at the monastery.

   The Gong rgyal dgon gyi lo rgyus (anonymous, MS) lists twenty-two successive masters of the Bya btang lineage until the middle of the 20th century:
   1) Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan
   2) Nam mkha’ dbang ldan
   3) Ye shes rgyal mtshan
   4) gYung drung gsas pa
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

With Bya btang bsTan 'dzin dbang grags’s two sons, the lineage divided into two branches. There are two versions of the history about when reincarnation was adopted for the succession of the Bya btang masters. According to one, the position continued to be hereditary (gdung brgyud) until Tshe dbang 'gyur med’s time in the middle of the 20th century, after which it was transmitted by reincarnation. However, when I visited the monastery in 1997, I was told that the reincarnation system was adopted after Bya btang gYung drung rgyal mtshan’s time. So far, because of the lack of reliable sources it has been impossible to verify either versions of the story. Bya btang Tshe dbang 'gyur med also founded a tantric college specializing in the practice of the Phurpa cycle.

In the nineteen-eighties, Blo li Trulku built a new assembly hall, as well as restoring the old assembly hall which was destroyed during the Cultural revolution.

5. Current number of monks
There are fifty-one monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education
There are no organized or regular classes. The young monks are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
In the past, rGyal zhing and gZhi ring monasteries were branches of Gong rgyal
Monastery, but there does not seem to be any interaction between them at present. The monks are sent to sMan ri in gTsang, Shar rdza Hermitage (No. 138) and sTeng chen Monastery (No. 139) to take their ordination and receive further training.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 4th month: observation of fasting (smyung gnas) for 8 days
- 6th month: ritual based on the bSam lhun sgrub chen by Tshe dbang 'gyur med starting on the 4th day for 7 days; observation of the dbyar gnas ceremony from the 15th day for 45 days
- 9th month: ritual based on the sKu gsum phur sgrub for 7 days
- 11th month: ritual of the cycle of dBal gsas from the 23rd to the 30th day

10. Books held in the monastery

There a copy of the Kanjur published by A yung and sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu 1985-1987. A copy of the Khri skyabs edition of Khams chen in sixteen volumes, and a MS copy of 'Bum nyi ma dgu shar. There are also some old printing blocks for the following texts: Dran pa bka thang, Tshe dbang bka thang, Zhang zhung snyan brgyud, rNam rgyal gzungs chen, Gu drag, sKu gsum phur sgrub, Rig 'dus, gSang 'dus zhi khro, sKu gsum thugs thig, bSam lhun sgrub skor and gZungs 'jug.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has neither land nor animals and depends entirely on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of ten villages: Chu nang with fourteen families, Dar lo with fifteen families, dGung ru with fourteen families, Gu dar thog with fourteen families, rTa sa with nine families, rGyal ba with eleven families, Ying mad with eighteen families, Kha lung with nine families, Nya zi with fourteen families and Rlung pa with seven families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called dGa' bde dpal ri, and is the abode of a local deity known by the same name. There is a la btsas on top of the mountain dedicated to the deity. Its renewal ceremony is performed by both the local people and the monks of the monastery on the 1st day of the 12th month.

At Nyag shod, which is 1.5 km southeast of the monastery, there is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called gYung drung rin chen 'bar ba. It is venerated on the 1st day of the 5th month, each Dragon-Year by both Bonpo and Buddhists. They
circumambulate the mountain in the traditional Bonpo way (i.e. keeping the mountain on the left).

Since the mountain has three peaks, it is also known as Tshogs brgya spun gsum and was considered as the abode of three local deities related as brothers before the mountain was transformed into a sacred site.

14. Occupation of the local population

Mainly farmers but one third of the population are nomads

Sources

(1) Interview: gYung drung rnam dag, a monk at the monastery, born in 1937
(2) Texts:
   - Note: (1) Gong rgyal dgon gyi lo rgyus, anonymous, MS

(153) Klu 'bum Monastery

1. Name of the monastery

In the past the monastery was known as Su tshang or Klu 'bum mtha' rtengling.

2. Location

The monastery is located at a roadside of the main road leading to sGre bo this smad village, 28 km south of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county.

3. History

According to oral tradition, Su tshang Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (the Klu 'bum dgon gyi lo rgyus, a MS has Nam mkha' rgya mtsho), the first master of the Su la lineage, founded a small monastery at Ka smad mgo called Su tshang about 10 km east of the present monastery. He is said to have been the spiritual master of 'Bru dGa' bde chos skyong ber nag, one of the Thirty Heroes in the Ge sar epic. In Khams, the hero is considered as a historical figure. Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan was succeeded by his son Nam mkha’ 'od zer, who in turn was succeeded by his son Nam mkha’ bstan 'dzin, who in turn was succeeded by his son Nam mkha’ tshul khrims. Since there was no water source in the vicinity, Nam mkha’ tshul khrims undertook to channel water to the monastery, but the inhabitants of sGre bo village were unwilling to help. As a result the village split into two villages: sGre bo stod and sGre bo smad. Moreover, eight monks from sGre bo stod left the monastery and founded a small monastery called Su tshang stod pa.

Later lCags mdud Shes rab rgyal mtshan, a master of the rNying ma pa
monastery and located on the opposite bank of the rDza chu river, converted Su tshang stod pa to the rNying ma pa tradition and renamed it rNga rnga Monastery.

According to KGLG (volume 1, p.302), lCags mdud Shes rab rgyal mtshan only restored the monastery in 1491.

Su tshang Nam mkha’ tshul khrims and the people of sGre bo smad pa village founded Klu 'bum Monastery. As they were preparing the site for construction, they discovered a Bonpo text entitled Klu 'bum, and thus the monastery was named Klu 'bum. Later Khod spungs Kun bzang 'od gsal, the twenty-third master in the Su la lineage, enlarged the assembly hall.

The monastery mainly practised rituals according to the old gter ma (gter rnying) tradition, especially the ritual cycles of dBal gsas, Ge khod and sTag la, but after receiving the teachings based on the Rang gter sku gsum phur sgrub by gSang sngags gling pa the monastery also began to practise the new gter ma tradition (gter gsar).

Khod spung mDo rgyud grags pa also lived and taught at the monastery for about five years. In 1923, gYung drung bstan 'dzin, the 24th master in the Khod spung lineage, enlarged the monastery by building a new assembly hall with eight tall columns. The masters of the Khod spungs lineage, also known as Su la tshang, have been in charge of the monastery. It is not clear how many masters the lineage comprises but there are several names that frequently recur in both written and oral traditions. Su la sKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959), who belonged to this lineage, wrote an extensive biography of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. The present master of Su la is bsKal bzang grags pa. Unfortunately I did not meet him when I visited the monastery in autumn 1997, because he was ill and was hospitalized in Chengdu at the time. I went with sMon rgyal lha sras to visit him in Chengdu, hoping to obtain more information about the monastery, but he was too ill to receive me.

4. Hierarchical system
   - head of the monastery
   - two dbu mdzad
   - four dge skos
   - two mchod dpon
   - two spyi ba

   All the incumbents are reappointed every three years on a rotational basis.

5. Current number of monks

   There are thirty novices and two monks.
6. Current education
   The younger novices are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   La kha Monastery (No.154) is a branch of Klu 'bum. So there are exchanges between the two monasteries (see below). The monks go to Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) to take their ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The monks go to dBra khyung hermitage for a one-month summer retreat every year during which they receive teachings and learn to play ritual instruments. In winter, since Klu 'bum and La kha are connected as “mother and son monasteries” (ma dgon bu dgon) they have a common winter retreat (in the 9th month). The monasteries host the retreat in turn. From the 20th to the 30th day of the same month, they perform a ritual with 'cham dance based on the sKu gsum phur sgrub, a gter ma text of gSang sngags gling pa as well as rituals of the cycle of gDugs dkar and the ceremony of the smyong gnas fasting. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. When I visited the site in 1997 I saw only the assembly hall which had survived, but it was completely empty.

11. Income and expenses
   The monks mainly live with their families since there are no monks’ quarters in the monastery. They must also provide their own food when they go to the monastery for rituals.

12. Local community
   The local lay community consists of four communal divisions (shog khag): Sa stod, Sa smad, Bar shod and Klu 'bum. Sa stod comprises Lo dbu with five families and Rong ru with eleven families; Sa smad comprises Yang med with seven families, mKhar sbe with five families and mKhar brag with three families; Bar shod comprises only one village, Ri stod with ten families; Klu 'bum with four families. In addition there is Su la village with five families.

13. Local festivals
   The mountain behind the monastery is called She long glang chen, but there is no la btsas on it. In the vicinity there are two mountains called sKyobs 'byin and Brag dkar, abodes of the yul lha deities bearing the same names. The dates of their propitiation remain unknown.
14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews: A dga, a monk at Klu 'bum monaster (b.1939), bSod nams tshe ring (b.1930), another monk at Klu 'bum Monastery

(154) La kha Monastery

1. Name

La kha Monastery is also called La kha 'Brug grags or gYung drung rab brtan gling or bShad sgrub rab brtan gling.

2. Location

It is located at a place called La kha which is about 20 km south of the county town. There is only one narrow winding path leading to the monastery, and it takes about 5 hours on horseback from Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county to the monastery.

3. History

According to oral tradition, a monastery was first founded at La kha by seven monks. Since the inhabitants of the area believed they heard a dragon roar in the sky when the monastery was being built, it was named La kha 'brug grags. The date of its foundation remains unknown. In the Earth-Dragon Year of the 16th Rab byung (1928), gYung drung bstn 'dzin, the twenty-fourth master in the Su la lineage, moved the monastery to its present site, which is known as dBra khyung, and renamed it bShad sgrub rab brtan gling.

gYung drung bstn 'dzin, who studied for nine years in sMan ri in gTsang, founded another monastery called A sta khang tshan che ba. Both these monasteries have always been headed by the masters of the Su la lineage.

The cycles of the gSas mkhar mchog Inga and other old gter ma (gter rnying) ritual texts were the only ritual traditions practised in this monastery, but later gSang sngags gling pa's text sKu gsum phur sgrub and its 'cham tradition, as well as other new gter ma (gter gsar) ritual practices were introduced. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was "officially reopened" in the nineteen eighties, but it had not yet been rebuilt when I visited it in 1997, because of lack of funds (the local population is very poor).
4. Hierarchical system

- khri pa
- two dbu mdzad
- four dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- two spyi ba

The incumbents are appointed every three years on a rotating basis.

5. Current number of monks

There are fifteen novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

The younger novices are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational Exchange

La kha Monastery is a branch of Klu 'bum (No.153). There are some ritual exchanges between the two monasteries (see below). The monks go to Shar rdza Hermitage to take their full ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals

Since Klu 'bum and La kha are connected as "mother and son monasteries" (ma dgon bu dgon), they have a common winter retreat (in the 9th month). They host the retreat in turn. The monastery’s main ritual is based on the sKu gsum phur sgrub, a gter ma text discovered by gSang sngags gling pa with its 'cham tradition.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery possesses a copy of the printed edition of Bonpo Kanjur, in addition to its own collection of texts.

11. Income and expenses

The monks provide their own food; the monastery receives very few donations from the faithful as the local population is very poor.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four villages: La kha with sixteen families, rBa ru with ten families, La shod with four families and Dud rdtag with two families.

13. Local festivals

Both monks of the monastery and lay population propitiate two sacred mountains, sKyobs 'byin and Brag dkar. The mountain behind the monastery is She
long glang chen (with no la btsas) associated to a local deity called She long who has an elephant as mount.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers and nomads

Source

(1) Interview: A dga (b.1939), a monk at Klu 'bum Monastery, bSod nams tshe ring (b.1930), another monk at Klu 'bum Monastery

(155) dBal khyung Monastery

1. Name of the monastery

The full name of the monastery is dBal khyung gYung drung mthong smon gling. It is also known as dBal khyung gShen bstsn mdo sngags gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located in rNga yab, southwest of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county. There is a 28 km motorable road between the county town and Shang lang shod township, and another 15 km of road between the township and philosophical college (bshad grwa) of sKal bzang Monastery. dBal khyung Monastery is around an hour’s walk from the college.

3. History

In the 8th Rab byung (1447-1506), there were eight men considered as saints in Nyag rong area, four of whom were Bonpo: Brag dben bKra shis rgyal mtshan, dBal khyung sMon lam rgyal mtshan, rTsis 'das Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Dar ri sByin pa rgyal mtshan.

According to gYung drung don grub (dBal khyung dgon pa ’i lo rgyus, MS, p.4) it was dBal khyung sMon lam rgyal mtshan who founded the monastery at rDzong mgo in the 8th Rab byung (1447-1506). His son, Blo gros rgyal mtshan, succeeded him as head of the monastery, but the monastery was destroyed by fire in the second half of Nam mkha’ grags pa’s life, (another famous head of the monastery). It was rebuilt during the life-time of Tshul khrims bstsn rgyal. The monastery is believed to have been moved during bSod nams dbang rgyal’s time and was renamed dBal khyuung gYung drung mthong smon gling.

Here is a list of the subsequent masters of the dBal khyung lineage: dBon po A kru, lHun grub tshul khrims, bstsn ’dzin rgya mtsho, Bla ma tshul khrims, O rgyan rnam grol, Bla ma blo bzang, Karma ye shes, bsTan pa rgyal mtshan and gSang
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

sngags gling pa (1864-?). The latter played an important role in the development of the monastery and Bon in the region. He enlarged the monastery, adding two assembly halls (‘du khang) and thirteen monks' cells (grwa shag). 'Chi med rig 'dzin and mKha’ spyod dbang mo are also believed to have greatly contributed to the monastery’s development. and gYung drung don grub is the the present head of the monastery who is assisted by sMon rgyal lha sras. The latter is a tantric practitioner. He was a son of Kun grol Hum chen, the sixth Kun grol grags pa and brother of mKha’ spyod dbang mo, a famous mkha’ 'gro and discoverer of gter ma texts in the 20th century. The monastery is famous for its unique and beautiful manuscript set of the Bonpo Kanjur which miraculously survived the turbulences of recent history. It was reproduced and published by A yung and Shug sdong sKal bzang phun tshogs in Chengdu 1985-1987 and again later by sMon rgyal lha sras, in Lhasa in collaboration with the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences. The monastery itself was totally destroyed, but was rebuilt by gYung drung don grub in the nineteen-eighties.

4. Hierarchical system

- one bla ma
- two dbu mdzad
- three dge skos
- one dkor gnyer
- two mchod dpon

With the exception of the head of the monastery, the incumbents of the above-listed positions are reappointed every three years on a rotating basis.

5. Current number of monks

There were twenty-four monks and novices in the monastery in 1997.

6. Current education

There are no regular, organized classes, and the young monks are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monks go to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) in gTsang and Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) for their ordination, further training and retreats.

8 / 9. Rituals

dBal khyung and Brag dben (No.156) Monasteries conduct four rituals together at dBal khyung Monastery: the commemoration of gSang sngags gling pa from the 25th to the 30th day of the 2nd month; the commemoration of mKha’ spyod
10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one copy of the Bonpo Kanjur, MS, one copy of the printed edition of Dran pa 'bka thang, one copy of the printed edition of Pad ma bka thang, a copy of the printed edition of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works in twenty-six volumes, and one copy the printed edition of gTer chen Tshe dbang grags pa’s collected works.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has five female yaks tended by several local families who give the monastery 10 kg of butter per yak each year. The monks provide their own food and the monastery otherwise depends on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of two shog khag (communal divisions), bZhag ri and Kha lung. The former comprises five villages: bZhag ri with seventeen families, Sa so with two families, Glang rong with one family, rGo dung with one family and ‘Ga’ yeng with twelve families. The latter, Kha lung comprises eight villages: Wa lung with one family, Bo mi with ten families, dBal khyung with four families, Tso shis with two families, Chu shod with six families, Yang gzhung with two families, Bung leng with three families and Kha 'khor with one family. All these villages constitute the lha sde (local lay community) of both dBal khyung and Brag dben monasteries.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry

Source

(1) Interviews: Kun bzang nyi ma (b.1964), A rdo (b.1934)
(156) Brag dben Monastery

1. Name

Brag dben Monastery has several names: Brag dben gsang mdzod pad ma gling, Brag dben gsang mdzod pad ma mdo sngags gling and Brag dben gYung drung gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located in rNga yab, southwest of Ri snang, the seat of Nyag rong county. There is distance of 28 km between the county town and Shang lang shod township, and another 15 km between the township to the philosophical college (bshad grwa) of sKal bzang Monastery which may be reached by car. From there it is an hour’s walk to dBal khyung Monastery (No.155) and another five to Brag dben.

3. History

The earliest account concerning the monastery is a legend about the connection between Brag dben and gShen Dar sding. (This connection is not mentioned in any other source). According to this legend, Brag dben was a branch monastery of gShen Dar sding in gTsang. gShen rGyal ba 'od zer, a disciple of Kun mkhyen Ye shes blo gros, travelled to sBas gnas in Nyag rong in the 3rd Rab byung (1192-1251), where he gave teachings based on the cycles of Ma rgyud, Khro bo, Phur pa and the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud in accordance with the gShen tshang tradition and it seems that sBas gnas became a hermitage from that time onwards. According to the Brag dben dgon pa 'i lo rgyus by gYung drung don grub (p.4. MS), Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med and Khyung po Nang chen grags pa stayed at the hermitage for a long period of time in the 5th Rab byung (1267-1326). In the 8th Rab byung (1447-1506), Brag dben bKra shis rgyal mtshan, one of the four Bonpo saints of the Eight Saints of Nyag rong, (the other three were dBal khyung sMon lam rgyal mtshan, rTsis 'das Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, and Dar ri sByin pa rgyal mtshan) built two temples and fourteen meditation cells there, and thereafter the site was referred to as Brag dben Monastery. Brag dben bKra shis rgyal mtshan spent the rest of his life there. In the 12th Rab byung (1687-1746), Sang rgyas gling pa visited the monastery and gave teachings there. He also renamed the monastery Brag dben gYung drung gling. Then 'Od zer gling pa built four stupas around the monastery at the four points of the compass. Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and gSang sngags gling pa also visited the monastery and gave teachings there. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties by gYung drung don grub, the present master.
4. Hierarchical system
- one bla ma
- two dbu mdzad
- three dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- one dkor gnyer

The incumbents of the above-listed positions are reappointed every three years.

The head of the monastery is gYung drung don grub.

5. Current number of monks
There are forty-five monks in the monastery in 1997.

6. Current education
There are no regular, organized classes. The young monks are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
Since Brag dben Monastery is a branch monastery of dBal khyung, the two monasteries perform almost all their rituals together. The monks go to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) and Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) for their ordination, further studies or retreats.

8 / 9. Rituals
dBal khyung and Brag dben Monasteries conduct four rituals together at dBal khyung Monastery: the memorial of gSang sngags gling pa from the 25th to the 30th day of the 2nd month, that of mKha’ spyod dbang mo from the 23rd to the 28th day of the 3rd month.

The tshes bcu ritual from the 1st to the 10th day of the 6th month, and the dgu gtor ritual from the 21st to the 29th day of the 11th month. Two rituals are performed collectively by the two monasteries at Brag dben Monastery: the tshes bcu from the 3rd to the 10th day of the 7th month, and dgu gtor from the 23rd to the 30th day of the 12th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has a collection of Tshe dbang grags pa’s gter ma works, one copy of the biography of gSang sngags gling pa, one copy of the biography of mKha’ ‘gro dbang mo, one copy of the Pad ma bka’ thang and various texts for liturgical purposes.
11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations from the faithful and the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community of the monastery consists of two shog khag (communal divisions), bZhag ri and Kha lung. The former comprises five villages: bZhag ri with seventeen families, Sa so with two families, Glang rong with one family, rGo dung with one family and dGa yeng with twelve families. Kha lung, the second shog khag comprises eight villages: Wa lung with one family, Bo mi with ten families, dBal khyung with four families, Tso shis with two families, Chu shod with six families, Yang gzhung with two families, Bung leng with three families and Kha 'khor with one family. All these villages constitute the lha sde (local lay community) of both dBal khyung and Brag dben monasteries.

14. Occupation of local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry

Source
(1) Interviews: Kun bzang nyi ma, born in 1964. A rdo (b.1934)

(157) Mi nub Monastery

1. Name

The full name of the monetary is dPal ldan mi nub g-yung drung gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located in Mi nub village, at the foot of Mount sBas gnas gnams gcabs yang rdzong in A 'dzul valley of Nyag rong. The village belongs to Shod ring Township which is 6 km south of the county town of Nyag rong. It takes two hours from the Township to climb through a hill to the village.

The monastery is considered to be the residence of Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med (1280-1337)¹ who was a famous figure as a rediscoverer of gter ma texts in the history of Bon religion. His biography contains a list of gter ma texts that he rediscovered. After his life-story, there is also another chapter entitled gDung rabs so so 'i lo rgyus cung zad smos pa (p.28a) which records the names of the masters who were close to Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med. It is just a list of names without dates:

1) Blo gros rgyal mtshan, a lay master who lived at Gong shel brag dmar phug.
He founded a college for lay tantrics of Bonpo at mChog dge and had many disciples. Towards the end of his life, he went to 'Du ra mdo in Me nyag where executed the ritual of sa 'dul for the site of 'Du ra Monastery (No. 165). He died when he was 63.

2) rNam dag gtsug phud, a son of Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med. He went to gYas ru dben sa Monastery in gTsang to study, and was the first monk in the lineage. He gave teachings in sBa zhab brag dkar hermitage, 'Dra yul chu mig ljongs, dGe bshes khog, Khro skyabs and Cog tse. He died at rGyal mo dmu rdo in rGyal rong.

3) sGrub gshen sNang ldan was born at sBa zhab gnas and lived at Sha ra thang in Nyag rong as a lay master. mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415) became a pupil of him and gave all important teachings to him such as Tshe dbang bya ri ma and Khyung dmar. He died when he was 71.

4) Grub chen Khyung rgod, a lay master and a son of Blo gros rgyal mtshan. His real name was Khyung gsas bdud 'joms. He learnt religion from his father. He was believed to have obtained the "rainbow body". He died at 55.

Then there were the thirteen masters in the same lineage:
1) Nam mkha’ g-yung drung, a son of Grub chen Khyung rgod. He traveled extensively and gave teachings in the rG yal rong area. He died at 60 in 'Dra yul.

2) Seng ge blo gros, a son of Nam mkha’ g-yung drung. He learnt religion from his father and gave teachings in 'Dra yul and died when he was 63.

3) 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, a son of Seng ge blo gros. He studied Bon under his father and then went to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) to study under the feet of Rin chen rgyal mtshan, the fifth abbot of the monastery. Since he became the religious teacher of the king of Khro chen, he spent years at mTsho mtho Monastery (No.188). He had many disciples there although his residence was in Nyag rong. He died when he was 60 at bZhag ra lha rtse hermitage in Me nyag.

4) gSang ba mchog ldan was a lay master. He learnt religion from his uncle 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, and went into retreat for twelve years on Mount Blon po skos yag in Nyag rong. He died when he was 55.

5) A shar blo gros, a son of gSang ba mchog ldan. He entered sMan ri Monastery and studied under bSod nams ye shes. He died when he was 70.

6) bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, a son of Khod spungs Gu ru. The latter was a descendant of Grub chen khyung rgod. He followed A shar blo gros and upheld both teachings and lineage. He became also a disciple of a Sa skyab bdag chen and lCags mdud 'brug mo rdzong in Nyag rong. He traveled in rGyal rong and Me nyag to practise meditation and became very famous. He produced many sons. They were divided into three groups: Khod spungs
sKos yag pa, Yo kyun pa, and Mi nub tshang. He died when he was 60.

7) rJe bthun mgon po was a lay master. He studied under his father and Tshul khrims 'od zer who was a descendant of Byang ba khro tshang. He had a close relationship with dBra tshang, the chief family in rDza khog of sDe dge and also with the Buddhists in his area. He had a lot of disciples in rDza khog and Tre hor.3 He died in Brag dmar hermitage in Nyag rong.

8) rGyal ba rin chen, a son of rJe btsun mgon po. He was a lay master, but attended many monasteries for studying and practising. He died when he was 53.

9) rNam rgyal grags pa, a son of sNgags chung and a brother of rJe btsun mgon po. He was a lay master and lived in Brag dmar mgo in Nyag rong. He spent many years in rGyal rong and died when he was 40.

10) Rin chen lhun grub, a son of rNam rgyal grags pa. He was a lay master and studied under his father and 'Dra bla gYung drung rgyal mtshan. He lived at sBa zhabs brag dkar hermitage and traveled and taught in rDza khog, rNga khog and rGyal rong. He died when he was 83.

11) gYung drung rnam rgyal, a son of Rin chen lhun grub. He was a lay master who traveled extensively in rGyal rong and died when he was 45.

12) gYung drung bstan 'dzin, a son of gYung drung rnam rgyal. He was a monk and took up residence in Zhu tshang Monastery for many years where he gave teachings. He initiated founding several monasteries in rGyal rong. He moved to Klu 'bum Monastery (No.153), but the present biography does not mention it. He died when he was 70.

13) Nyi ma dbang Idan, a son of Jo sras. The latter was a member of the Khod spungs family. Apart from Bonpo teachings, he also practised rNying ma pa teachings and had very close relationship with the rNying ma pa. He became the representative of Su la lineage which had a long line of teachers that ended with Nam mkha' skyabs and brTson 'grus bzang mo. The lineage of Khod spungs then became known as Su la tshang. After these thirteen masters of the Khod spungs lineage, we know only the names of their successors and it would be too cumbersome to give them all here.

A shar Blo gros, the 5th master, came from mChog dge Monastery to Mi nub bco brgyad thang and founded a small monastery there. The date of foundation is unknown. However, now nothing remains there apart from a stupa, a tsha tsha khang and a piece of land which now belongs to the monastery called A shar zhing. According to a brief history of the monastery provided by the monastery4 there was a master of the Khod spungs lineage called Mi nub Shes rab rin chen, but in the biography of Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med he is not mentioned. He is said to have moved the monastery to the present site and built an assembly hall with four pillars. The same source also states that his brother bsTan 'dzin was a master in the
monastery.

gSang sngags gling pa, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan and dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan visited the monastery and gave teachings there. In the 1980s, the monastery got permission to be rebuilt.

4. Hierarchical system:
- two dbu mdzad (dbu mdzad and dbu skyor)
- four dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- one bdag gnyer

For the dbu mdzad, one has to be first dbu skyor for three years first, then the dhu mdzad for another three years. The bdag gnyer stays for nine years. The rest changes every three years.

6. Current number of monks
There are fifty-nine monks in the monastery.

7. Current education
Young monks follow old monks to learn teachings and practices. They go to Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) to follow further courses and receive ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
Four types of rituals are performed: the smon lam from the 3rd to 12th of the first month; the observance of the smyung gnas fast from the 15th for few days; the ritual of three cycles: Khro bo, Phur pa and Me ri from the 20th to 30th of the 12th month; the observance of dbyar gnas fast from the 14th of the 6th month for fifty days.

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has a complete set of Bonpo Kanjur and Katen, and a number of ritual texts such as that of sTag la, Khro bo, Phur pa and Me ri.

11. Income and expenses
The monks have to find their food by themselves; the expenses of the monastery depend on offerings of disciples.

12. Local community
The local villages are grouped into four communities (shog khag) who are described as the lha sde of the monastery: 1. Ri 'go village with twelve families, rTa dbye with one family. 2. Ri mda’ village with twelve families. 3. Yul lung
village with twelve families; Zang mda’ village with four families; Mi nub village with eight families; Yul lung phug village with one family. 4. Shod ru village with thirteen families; Bu bzhi with one family and Thog bi with two families.

13. Local festivals

A sacred mountain called sKyobs ’byin is situated in the south-west of the monastery. Both monks and lay people perform the circumambulation of the mountain on the occasion of the Dog Year called gnas ‘dus. The master who “opened the door of holy mountain” (gnas sgo phyé mkhan) was Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med.

14. Occupation of the local population

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1997 with the following monks of the monastery: Tshe thar (b.1963), the present dge bskos of the monastery, gYung drung dbang rgyal (b.1969), Tshe dbang (b.1937), gDung dkar (b.1934) and lHa skyabs (b.1954)

(2) Texts:
- KGLG, Vol.1, pp. 393-395

Notes

1 'Chi med ’gro ’dul khod spungs blo gros thogs med kyi skyes rabs dang ’brel ba’i don gyi rnam thar gdung rabs dang bcas pa rdzogs ldan sprin gyi rol mo by dBra ston sKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959), block print. In this work, the author described the life of Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med to the time when he met bSod nams sgrol ma who became his wife at the age of twenty-five. Then the biography strangely ends without any reference to the second half of his life.

2 'Dra yul chu mig ljongs is a place in rTa’u County of dKar mdzes Prefecture in Sichuan Province. dGe bshes khog, Khro skyabs, Cog tse, and rGyal mo dmu rdo traditionally belong to the rGyal rong region. dGe bshes khog and rGyal mo dmu rdo are in Rong brag County of dKar mdzes Prefecture. Khro skyabs and Cog tse are in rNga pa Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

3 Tre hor is an area in dKar mdzes County in dKar mdzes Prefecture.

4 Mi nub dgon pa’i lo rgyus, the author is unknown, MS.
Ye shes Monastery, Plate 1
Ye shes Monastery, Plate 2  A g-yung Rinpoche gYung drung bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1922-1996), head of the monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan
(153) Klu 'bum Monastery

(155) dBal khyung Monastery
(157) Mi nub Monastery
(158) rBa mda’ Monastery

1. Name
The full name of the monastery is rBa mda’ bDe chen bsam gtan gling. There is a valley called rBa lung pa, and according to legend, three Indian saints lived in the valley and worshipped a self-manifested stone statue of Vajrapani (Phyag rdor) within a cave in the upper reaches of the valley. One day they forgot their rattan (rba dbyug, “walking staffs”) there, so the valley was named rBa dbyug bor ba’i lung pa, “the valley of the lost rattan”; mda’ means the lower reaches of the valley, thus rBa mda’ meaning “Lower rBa valley”.

2. Location
The monastery is 23 km north of the county town of Brag mgo.

3. History
There are no reliable records concerning the history of the monastery. I found only a brief history containing legendary accounts according to which a Bonpo master called rGya mda’ ri nang came to the sNyi khog valley and built the monastery in the middle of the 6th Rab byung (1327-1386), after having built Chu ring Monastery in Chu ring valley. Four generations later, bDud ’dul grags pa, the valley’s chief, forced the monastery to move to sPang dmar. The new monastery was considerably enlarged to include a twenty-room assembly hall (’du khang) and fifty monks’ cells housing more than a hundred monks. Then lHa lug tshul khrims moved the monastery to a site called Lug ge where it remained active for seven generations. The monastery was later moved again by Byang chub to gNas khog where it remained for only fifty years, then dBra sras Zla ba grags pa, a son of dBra sprul bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal of rDza sTeng chen Monastery (No. 139) and a master of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (who wrote his biography) rebuilt it at bDe cha and named it bDe chen bsam gtan gling. At that time, it had an eighteen-room assembly hall and fifteen monks’ cells. He spent thirteen years at the monastery before “passing away into his rainbow body” (’ja’lus pa), at the beginning of the 20th century. Then Tshul khrims ’od zer (1910-1971) and rDo rje tshe dbang (1890-1962) who were disciples of dBra sras Zla ba grags pa were in charge of the monastery for more than forty years. Both were monks and had received teachings from Phun tshogs blo gros, the abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No. 1) at the time.

During the Cultural Revolution the monastery was knocked down and in the 1980s it was rebuilt with its twenty-five-room assembly hall and twenty-two monks’ cells by sPul sku Nam mkha’ ’od zer gzhan phan mtha’ yas (b.1937) and ’Jam dbyangs.

sPul sku Nam mkha’ is the rebirth of Zla ba grags pa and at present in charge
of the monastery. In addition to Bonpo teachings and practice, he learned Tibetan medicine and worked at Brag 'go Hospital of Tibetan Medicine for twelve years.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag
   - one dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - two mchod g-yog
   - one bdag gnyer
   - one dngul gnyer
   All of whom are reappointed every two years on a rotational basis.

5. Current number of monks
   There are twenty-nine novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes and the novices are taught by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery has close ties with rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) and sends its novices there to take their ordination and for the practice of the lo gsum ("three-year retreat").

8 / 9. Rituals
   The observance of the bsnyen gnas abstinence and the smyung gnas fasting from the 28th day of the 7th month to the 5th day of the 8th month; the ritual based on the sKu gsum sgrub pa for five days starting on the 25th day of the 12th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
    The monastery has one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur two printed copies of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works, one manuscript copy of the Khams chen and ten manuscript volumes of ritual texts.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery does not own any land or animals. The monks provide their own food and the monastery relies on offerings from the faithful.

12. Local community
    The local lay community consists of five villages: rBa mtha’ with six families, rBa-mdā’ with twenty-three families, rTsi ri with five families, Kug rje with six
families and Tshi na with ten families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is known as Khyung rdzong rin chen 'bar ba and is considered as a sacred site. The local deity who resides on it called rBa phye. Bya btang Tshe dbang 'gyur med is said to have sanctified the place.

It is believed that if barren women circumambulate the mountain, they will be cured. There is another sacred mountain near the monastery known as Ra dmar brag.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry

Sources
(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery: sPrul sku Nam mkha’ (b.1937), Tshe dbang mgon po (b.1939), dNgos grub bstan 'dzin (b.1969) and sKal bzang dar rgyas (b.1942)

Notes
1 rBa mda 'dgon by Tre hor 'Phrin las don grub, MS.
2 In Me nyag dialect, tshi means earth, na means black, thus Tshi na means “black earth”.
3 Hor yul snyi lung khyung rdzong 'bar ba 'i gnas kyi dkar chag gsal ba 'i me long by Tshe dbang 'gyur med (alias Byang chub rig 'dzin gling pa), MS.

(159) rGyal rong Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is gTo lung Yang dben dpal dgon. It is also called gTo sgang gYung drung gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located in a valley called gTo khog, 20 km southwest of Brag 'go, the county seat in dKar mdzes Prefecture.

3. History

Because rGyal rong gYung drung ye shes, the founder of the monastery, came from rGyal rong, the monastery was called rGyal rong Monastery. There are no reliable written sources concerning the site’s history before that time. According to legend, following King Khri srong lde btsan’s persecution of Bon in the 8th century A.D., many Bonpo masters in Central Tibet fled to Amdo and Khams. One among
them, rMe’u bSod nams g-yung drung, established a hermitage in Tre hor¹, Kham. Because the hermitage attracted ten thousand disciples, he extended the hermitage into a monastery which then became known as Khri tsho, meaning “Ten Thousand”. After its destruction by fire, rTsa ra sTobs Idan ’od zer rgyal mtshan founded another monastery called Shug sgang (“Hill of Cypress Trees”, after the cypress forest on the mountain on which it was located). It had an assembly hall (’du khang) with eight rooms and more than twenty monks’ cells below the assembly hall. It was again destroyed by fire.

Following is a list of the successive masters:

1. rMe’u bSod nams g-yung drung
2. rTsa ra sTobs Idan ’od zer rgyal mtshan
3. bKra shis bsam ’grub
4. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
5. gYund drung phun tshogs
6. Pad bsod
7. bsTan ’dzin dbang Idan
8. dGu na Tshe bstan
9. Lo god
10. Lung phug
11. sKal bzang skyabs
12. Chos bstan
13. Blo ldan
14. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
15. rGyal rong gYung drung ye shes
16. gYung drung rgyal mtshan alias gYung drung bstan ’dzin
17. gSang sngags grags pa
18. Grags pa
19. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
20. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
21. Tshe dbang bstan ’dzin
22. bKra shis don ’grub
23. Zla ba grags pa

rGyal rong gYung drung ye shes, the 15th master, was a son of the king ’Gran rdzong in rGyal rong. He was a disciple of bSod nams g-yung drung, an abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No.1). While he was at sMan ri, he also received teachings from Tre ston bSod nams ’gyur med, Bru bla dBang rgyal, Zhu sgom Khri btsun and sTag dbra Nam mkha’ ’od zer. After completing his studies he began to practise meditation in many hermitages throughout Amdo and Kham and finally founded gTo lung Yang dben dpal dgon in gTo khog². In his time, there were about a hundred monks in the monastery. It is said that there were two traditions of ’cham dances,
one belonging to the monastery and the other to the residence of the head of the monastery (bla brang).

rGyal rong gYung drung ye shes was succeeded by bla ma gYung drung bstn 'dzin who received teachings from many masters at sMan ri. The latter became the abbot of rGyal rong Monastery and founded a new monastery called gZhung ring (No. 160). During his time, lHa brtan Padma mnam rgyal, a dGe lugs pa master, came to gTo khog and succeeded in converting rGyal rong Monastery to the dGe lugs pa tradition. He renamed it dGa’ ldan phun tshogs gling. The new name was inscribed over the entrance of the assembly hall in which statues of the Jo rje 'brom gsum (Jo bo rje, rJe Tsong kha pa, 'Brom ston rGyal ba’i 'byung gnas) were installed. However, when the king of Rab brtan was later defeated by the Manchu emperor Qianlong, the monastery reverted to the Bonpo tradition.

Zla ba grags pa, the 23rd master, is said to have dissolved into a rainbow body (’ja’ lus pa) when he died. The monastery was knocked down during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt by Rig 'dzin nor bu and Nam mkha’ ’od zer.

4. Hierarchical system
- one khri pa
- one dbu mdzad
- one dgc skos
- one mchod dpon
- one bdag gnyer

The incumbents are reappointed on rotational basis every two years. The khri pa must be a monk who has taken his vows at sMan ri Monastery.

5. Current number of monks

There are forty novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monks go to sMan ri Monastery to take their ordination.

8/9. Rituals

The ceremony based on the Ngan song dong sprugs for five days, the smon lam ceremony for five days, and the tshogs brgya offering and the ritual of Kun rig for four days during the Tibetan New Year period; the general religious service (sku rim) for one month starting in the 5th month; the dgu gtor rite with ' cham dance in the 12th month.
10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one old manuscript copy of *Khams chen* in sixteen volumes, one old manuscript copy of *Dri med gzi brjid* in twelve volumes, (the copyist of both manuscripts remains unknown), one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur, one printed copy of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works (Chamdo edition).

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from its followers and the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of one village with twenty-two families.

13. Local festivals

Mount Khri tsho sgang located southwest of the monastery is believed to be the abode of the local deity Khri tsho ’brug lha who has a dragon as mount. It was sanctified by Zla ba grags pa as a sacred mountain and is venerated in the Monkey-Year. There is also a hill near the monastery called Gor gor mig associated with the local deity Lung ye. Both Khri tsho ’brug lha and Lung ye are regarded as attendants of another local deity called sKu bla Yong mgon³.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry.

Source
(1) Interview with ’Chi med grags pa (b.1936), a monk at the monastery

Notes
1 Tre hor corresponds to the former/original division of the territory comprising dKar mdzes County — with the exception of Zla thang ma township — and Tre hor township of Brag ’go County, in dKar mdzes Prefecture, Sichuan Province).
2 gYong drung bon gvi bstan ’byung phyogs bs dus by dPal tshul, Bod ljongs mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa, 1988.
3 gNas bdag sku bla yongs mgon gyi bsang mchod, p.3, MS
1. Name of monastery

The full name is gZhung ring (also spelt gZhu ring) bKra shis smin grol gling.

2. Location

It is located 41 km southeast of the county town of Brag 'go.

3. History

According to gZhung ring dgon by Sang dga', gYung drung bstan 'dzin, the founder of the monastery, was born into a leading family of dGe bshes tsa (also written rdza, rtsa) valley in rGyal rong in the Earth-Dog Year of the 11th Rab byung (1658). He founded the monastery in 1691. Around thirty generations later, a family in dGe bshes tsa valley produced another important master, known as 'Chi med grub dbang. His reincarnation was sTon bla bsTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan. The present master is called Tshe dbang g-yung drung.

4. Hierarchical system

- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- two mchod g-yog
- four gnyer pa (two bdag gnyer ba, one dngul bdag)
- one rtsis pa

The dge skos and the gnyer pa are replaced every two years on a rotating basis, the mchod g-yog every year, and the dbu mdzad every three years.

5. Current number of monks

There are thirty-five monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes; the younger monks are trained by the elder ones. They go to Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) for ordination and further training.

8/9. Rituals

The smon lam prayer from the 5th to the 11th day of the 1st month; the ritual Bla ma'i mchod pa and the mDo g-yung drung klong rgyas from the 11th to the 15th day of the same month with the 'cham dance on the last day. The 'cham include the mChod pa'i lha mo brygyad, dPal Idan lha mo, gShin rje lha dgu, Dam can shel khrab and dMar lam bcu. The smyung gnas fast from the 5th day of 6th month to the 4th day of the 7th month; the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud for seven days in the 7th month;
the ritual sTag la'i dgu sgrub from the 1st to the 10th day of the 10th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one copy of the Bonpo Kanjur published by A yung and sKal bzang phun tshogs; one copy of the collected works of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan; one copy of the collected works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, the Chamdo edition; two copies of the wood block prints of the Dran pa'i bka'thang and those of the Tshe dbang bka'thang from Gong rgyal Monastery (No.152).

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from its followers; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of twelve villages: Kha 'brog village with twenty families, Ri nya with six families, sTag lung with five families, sMi nub with seven families, Khri cha with three families, 'Ug gling with six families, rDzas nub with ten families, Brag 'go with nine families, Ba nang with four families, Sa dmar with fourteen families, sPang yul with eleven families and Glas rkong with one family.

13. Local festivals

The mountain facing the monastery is known as dGa' ldan dpal ri. It is propitiated in the 6th month by both monks and lay communities and is circumambulated by both Bon po and Buddhists. The mountain was “opened” by Sangs rgyas gling pa. The mountain behind the monastery is called Khro bcu brag or Khro chu brag and is associated with three local deities known collectively as Gong gsum and individually as rDo rje btsan rgod, gYung drung 'od 'bar and Do sho btsan rje (each is represented by one peak of the three peaks and each has its own la btsas). The dates of their propitiation are the 1st day of the 1st month, the 13th day of the 4th month and the 15th day of the 6th month. Only the Buddhists propitiate rDo rje btsan rgod, even though this local deity is mentioned in several Bon po ritual texts; gYung drung 'od 'bar is propitiated by both Bonpo and Buddhists; Do sho is no longer propitiated.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry
Sources

(1) Interview with the following monks of the monastery in autumn of 1997: sKal bzang nyi ma (b.1945), mGon lo (mGon po rdo rje, b.1922) and A g-yung (b.1947)

(2) Text:
- gZhung ring dgon by Sang dga’, MS
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.
(158) rBa mda' Monastery

(159) rGyal rong Monastery
(160) gZhung ring Monastery
**rTa’u County**

rTa’u county is located around the lower reaches of Phyag ru river (a tributary of rDza chu) in northeastern dKar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The county covers an area of 7,546 sq km. The county has 144 villages divided between 23 townships. The county seat is rTa’u (latitude: 30°59', longitude: 101°07', altitude: 3,007m).

(161) bSam ’grub Monastery

1. **Name**

The full name of the monastery is 'Dra gYung drung bsam 'grub gling.

2. **Location**

The monastery is located in a valley of Phyag ru river, 55 km south of rTa’u, the county seat.

3. **History**

bSam ’grub combines three monasteries: Brag ra, 'Ong gong and sMong skyid.  
1) Brag ra Monastery was founded by Khod po Blo gros thogs med, in the Iron-Ox year of the 5th Rab byung (1301). Blo gros thogs med built a small temple and another for practitioners (sgrub khang) in Brag ra when he sanctified Mount sBa zhabs brag dkar, and named them Khod po Monastery. The place was successively named sNgags sde byang chub gling by Khyung rgod, bDud 'dul yang rtse gling by Nyi ma dbang ldan, and gNas sgo pad ma gling by gSang sngags gling pa (1864-?) when each of these masters visited the monastery. Following is a list of the successive masters of the monastery:

1. Blo gros rgyal mtshan  
2. rNam dag gtsug phud  
3. sGrub gshen sNang ldan  
4. Nyi ma dbang ldan (who rebuilt a larger assembly hall ('du khang) with twelve columns)  
5. rMe nag rTogs ldan  
6. rTul 'dre rTogs ldan  
7. Go tog rTogs ldan  
8. dBra ston Rin chen  
9. Khyung gter 'Od zer gling pa  
10. Khod spungs dBang ldan (for twenty years)  
11. gYung drung dpal bzang (for eighteen years)  
12. Thugs rje gling pa (for a few years)
13. GYung drung bstan 'dzin (for three years)
14. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan (for a few years until the Cultural Revolution)

The monastery originally comprised of an assembly hall, a kitchen (ja khang), a mchod rten, and a residence for the monks (grwa khang). It had two establishments, one for the ritual cycle of dBal gsas (dbal gsas sgrub grwa) and another for the atonement ritual of the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo (srid rgyal sgrub grwa). It had a giant thangka and a large collection of books including a complete manuscript copy of the Bonpo Kanjur made by Khod po Blo gros thogs med. The monks were required to take their ordination vows at sMan ri Monastery (No.1).

2) 'Ong gong Monastery was founded by Khod po Blo gros thogs med at lCang log sna. It started out as a hermitage and gradually expanded into a monastery, but fell into decline owing to an ongoing dispute with Nya mtsho. As a result it was moved to sMug rong dgu rdza brag dkar, but fell into decline again soon after its reconstruction, as two thirds of the monks were converted to Buddhism.

The remaining monks followed Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, who at that time had returned to 'Dra valley from sMan ri. The site where they settled was called dGe gsar in the local dialect, which probably means dgon gsar, "new monastery"; the ruins of a stupa are still visible. A master of the monastery called A khu Ye shes, rebuilt a 'du khang with four columns and the monastery became known as 'Ong gong. Following is a list of the successive abbots of the monastery until the Cultural Revolution:

1. dBal 'gugs sKal bzang rgyal mtshan
2. rTogs ldanTshul khrims mam dag
3. dBal 'dzin bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal
4. rTogs ldan Sangs rgyas
5. rDzong lu Ye shes
6. A 'be Tshul khrims
7. Ra tsho lcags thar

There were about eighty novices and monks at the monastery in the mid-20th century. They were required to go to sMan ri Monastery for three years training and ordination vows.

3) According oral tradition, sMong skyid Monastery was founded in the 6th Rab byung (1327-1386) by the three brothers of Khro tshang who travelled from gShen Dar sding Monastery to 'Dra valley in Khams. It was called Glang 'ong. The eldest brother was called gYung drung rgyal mtshan. After a few generations, the monastery was moved to sMong skyid and became known as sMong skyid dgon nying, the "old sMong skyid Monastery". Later when it was moved again it was known as both sMong skyid dgon gsar, the "New sMong skyid Monastery", and Phun tshogs gling. There were
forty novices and monks at the monastery.

In the 1980s, the masters of the three monasteries, sPrul sku Zla ba grags pa, mKhan po bsTan 'dzin nyi ma, mKhan po gYung drung dbang rgyal, mKhan zur 'Chi med, mKhan po Lo thar, Wa lo mGon po and 'Gyur med agreed to rebuild the three monasteries together as one monastery. The reconstruction was completed in 1989. Khyung sras bsTan 'dzin nyi ma is the present mkhan po and Zla ba grags pa (b.1936) is the present khri pa.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one khri pa
   - one mkhan po
   - two dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - nine spyi ba
   - two mchod g-yog
   All the incumbents are reelected every three years.

5. Current number of monks
   There are sixty-seven novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educationa exchange
   There are no regular exchanges with other monasteries. The novices take their ordination vows in the monastery during the summer fast (dbyar gnas).

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 6th month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud from the 1st to the 6th day with the following 'cham dances on the 7th day: rNam brgyad, dMag dpon, sTag, Seng ge and Dam can brgyad according to the Nang so tradition.
   - 8th day of the 6th month: religious services (zhabs brtan) and the tea offering (gs'er skyems) followed by the 'cham dances: sTag la'i rnga 'cham, dBal gsas tshogs 'cham according to the tradition of the Central Tibetan monasteries (grwa sa); dBal gsas tshogs 'cham, dMu bdud, Dam can brgyad and rGyal po according to the Nang so tradition.
   - 9th day of the 6th month: tea offering ceremony(gser skyems), the ritual cycle of Me ri, and the following 'cham dances: rNam brgyad, sTag la'i rnga 'cham, dBal gsas tshogs 'cham, Ma rgyud tshogs 'cham, Dam can brgyad, and dMag
dpon according to the tradition of the Central Tibetan monasteries (grwa sa).

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has a printed copies of the collected works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan’s and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

11. Income and expenses

The main expenses of the monastery are the three major rituals: Ma rgyud sgrub mchod, the summer fast (dbyar gnas) and the dgu gtor rite. The three spyi ba are responsible for organizing the rituals: for the Ma rgyud sgrub mchod, the three spyi ba collect 10 kg of barley from each monk in the monastery; for the dbyar gnas, each family offers as much barley as it can, and the dgu gtor rite is organized and sponsored by the monastery itself.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four communities (shog khag): Brag ra, rMang dkyil, Wur go and Shar phyogs. Brag ra community comprises two villages: Kha lo with fifteen families and rGya bye with fifteen families; rMang dkyil community comprises three villages: Wa de with eight families, sKal tsho with eighteen families, bSu 'go with four families; Wur go community comprises only one village: Wur go with nineteen families; Shar phyogs community comprises only one village: Shar phyogs with twenty-three families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called sKu bla Ri mchog and is the residence of a local deity of the same name. There is a la btsas on its summit. Khod po Blo gros thogs med unveiled the mountain as a sacred mountain (gnas ri), and as the celestial abode of the tutelary deity Ma rgyud in the 13th century. The revelation was confirmed by gSang sngags gling pa (1864-?) in the 19th century. The mountain's circumambulation takes place on the 1st day of the 1st month and the 13th day of the 5th month. The mountain facing the monastery is called Seng ge rgyab bsnol and its three peaks are believed to represent the three local deities Seng ge rgyab bsnol, 'Brong nus and Brag li. There is a la btsas on each peak which are renewed by both religious and lay communities on the same day as the festival of the mountain behind the monastery. Seng ge rgyab bsnol and Brag li were sanctified by Thugs rje gling pa, a master from Nyag rong in the early 20th century, and 'Brong nus by gSang sngags gling pa. There is another sacred mountain called sPos ri ngad ldan which is located northeast of the monastery, and which was sanctified by gSang sngags gling pa. There is also la btsas on its summit.
14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1997 with Zla ba grags pa (b. 1936).

(2) Texts:
- bSam 'grub dgon pa by 'Phrin dga', MS
- 'Dra g-yung drung bsam 'grub dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus by bsTan 'dzin nyi ma and Zla ba grags pa, MS

Notes

1 sMong skyid bSam 'grub dgon by 'Phrin dga', MS; it is also referred to as sMongs dkyid in 'Dra g-yung drung bsam 'grub dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus by bsTan 'dzin nyi ma and Zla ba grags pa, MS.

2 'Chi med 'gro 'dul Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med kyi skyes rabs dang 'brel ba'i don gyi rnam thar gdüng rabs dang bcas pa rdzogs ldan sprin gyi rol mo by dبرا ston sKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959), block print. For further information, see notes under Mi nub Monastery (No. 157).

3 I'cang log sna belongs to Khub chags township of rTa'u county

4 KGLG p.513: Nyag smad rgya mthams su 'dra ba li chu khar bon dgon che ba gcig refers to bSam 'grub Monastery.

5 According to oral tradition, two brothers of Nang so king in dGe bshes tsa valley in rGyal rong, gYung drung bstan 'dzin and gYung drung ye shes, were sent to sMan ri Monastery to study. Because of the king who was gravely ill, gYung drung bstan 'dzin was recalled to rGyal rong, but before leaving sMan ri he asked Shes rab dbang rgyal, the abbot of sMan ri Monastery at the time, if he could establish a new 'cham tradition in rGyal rong since he was not able to learn the entire grwa sa 'cham tradition of sMan ri. The abbot accepted, and thus, upon his return, he established the Nang so 'cham tradition which eventually spread to the Nyag rong, rTa'u, Brag 'go and rGyal rong areas. In this monastery, both traditions of 'cham are performed. The term grwa sa in Bonpo tradition refers to sMan ri and gYung drung gling monasteries.

(162) Chu mig Monastery

1. Name

The monastery's full name is 'Dra Chu mig gYung drung bstan rgyas gling. Because the first site of the monastery was located near a spring, the monastery was called Chu mig monastery.
2. Location

The monastery is located 81 km southwest and a further three hours’ walk from rTa'u, the county seat.

3. History

According to legend, during Gri gum btsan po’s time, because of the persecution of Bon in Central Tibet, Me nyag lCe tsha mkhar bu, a famous Bonpo master, escaped to Kham and established a hermitage in 'Dra valley which became the first Bonpo establishment in the area. Later, during Khri srong lde btsan’s persecution of Bon, sNya chen Bla ma, a Bonpo master and a descendant of sNya chen Li shu stag ring, another great Bonpo master, also escaped to Kham and took refuge in 'Dra where he rebuilt the hermitage which later became the first Bonpo monastic establishment in the area. According to the same legend, he brought a cypress branch from Mount Kong po Bon ri and planted it in 'Dra valley where it grew into a tree which exists to this day. There is a village called sNya gad in the valley which is said to have preserved numerous ancient texts inherited from their ancestors, but unfortunately they were all destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Shortly after, Byang Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, a descendant of Khro tshang in rDza khog brought to the monastery a statue representing gShen rab Mi bo as a three-year old boy from Central Tibet. He also enlarged the monastery. His residence (of which only the ruins remain today) was called Pho nyi bla brang. Later, a master called gTsug phud moved the monastery to its present site and renamed it Chu mig. According to the same legend, he was a descendant of the sPa tshang family based in Yu ring village, Central Tibet.

Later, Khod po Blo gros thogs med (1280-1337) arrived in 'Dra valley and unveiled the sacred mountain (gnas ri) of 'Dra gnas the'u bo. Among his foremost disciples there were the Seven Great Lamas. One of the seven was a master from sNya gad village situated near Chu mig Monastery.

dGe bshes gYung drung bstan 'dzin, the founder of Brag ra Monastery, took Chu mig Monastery under his wing, and thus the two monasteries developed close ties during his lifetime. Hor ra bDud 'dul also came to 'Dra valley and founded Seng ge Monastery. This was the first Buddhist monastery in the area. From the time of Khyung gter 'Od zer gling pa onwards, most masters of his lineage looked after the monastery. Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, Bya btang Tshe dbang 'gyur med, dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan visited the monastery to give teachings. In the first half of 19th century, A bdud lHun 'grub rdo rje, A lung Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Khyung po Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, O rgyan Thug rje gling pa were the successive masters of the monastery.

The monastery was razed during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in the 1980s under the leadership of Bla ma Nor bu. Khyung dbon Rig 'dzin Yon tan mam
rgyal gave teachings there in 1990 which marked the resumption of the monastery’s religious activities. Khyung sras bsTan 'dzin nyi ma is the present mkhan po.

4. Hierarchical system
- one khri pa
- one bla ma
- two dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- nine spyi ba
- two mchod g-yog

5. Current number of monks
There are fifty novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery has no special ties with any other monastery. Occasionally the monks go to sMan ri (No.1) or Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) for further teachings, practice and ordination vows.

8 / 9. Rituals
- 4th month: ritual based on the bDe chen zhi sgrub for eight days from the 8th, followed by the prayer to sMon lam mtha’ yas, the smyung gnas fast for ten days with ritual based on the Klong rgyas
- 6th month: the summer rituals (dbyar cho) for three days from the 3rd day together with the ritual cycle of dBal gsas and gTso mchog ending with the 'cham dances for two days (the same as those performed at bSam 'grub Monastery (No.161); the ritual cycle of Phur pa according to the “New revelation” (gter gsar) tradition for five days in the same month; the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 14th day of the 6th month for fifty days
- 12th month: the dgu gtor rite from the 25th day for five days

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has one printed copy of Kanjur and one printed copy of Dran pa bka’ thang and Tshe dbang bka’ thang - printed from the woodblocks kept at Gong rgyal Monastery (No.152).
11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four villages: Yar grong with twenty-six families, Mar grong with twenty-seven families, dGong thog with ten families and Yi te with eight families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is sKu bla mThe bo and is the residence of the local deity of the same name. There is no fixed date for its propitiation.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1997 with: Zla ba grags pa (b.1936), the head of bSam 'grub Monastery

(2) Texts:
- "Dra chu mig g-yung drung bstan rgyas gling gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus" by Rig 'dzin nyi ma, MS
- "Chu mig dgon" by 'Phrin dga', MS
- a letter dated 23rd day of the 8th month 1999 from Zla ba grags pa concerning the history of Chu mig Monastery

Notes

1 snya is the name of a clan descending from sNya chen Li shu stag ring and sNya chen bla ma; gad means 'spread' in the Me nyag dialect, thus sNya gad means "the tribe that spread from sNya".

2 The only two references concerning the history of the monastery have different views on this point: 'Dra chu mig dgon gYung drung bstan rgyas gling gi lo rgyus' by Rig 'dzin nyi ma says that Nyi ma rgyal mtshar and gTsug phud were one and the same person, whereas the 'Chu mig dgon' by 'Phrin dga' considers that they were two different personages. The former was from rGyal rong and the latter from sPa lineage in Central Tibet, and gTsug phud was the founder of the monastery and the monastery became known as Chu mig during his time.
1. Name

The monastery’s full name is dGu rdza (or rdzab) dgon dPal ldan g-yung drung gling. It was also known as gSang phug or rDza lung.

2. Location

The monastery is 28 km south of rTa’u, the county seat.

3. History

Oral tradition relates two legendary accounts of the monastery. According to one of the legends, after the decline of a Bonpo monastery founded by Khod po Blo gros thogs med (1280-1337) at lCang lo sna in rTa’u, several of its elder monks went to the sacred mountain rBa zhabs brag dkar and founded a hermitage there which later developed into a monastery. According to the other legend, a Bonpo saint called Nam mkha’ snang mdog from rGyal rong founded gSang phug, a hermitage on the same sacred mountain that gradually expanded into a monastery known by the same name.

The monastery was looked after by the descendants of Khod po Blo gros thogs med. Later 'Gro mgon Tshe dbang 'gyur med, 'Go mgon Shes rab dgongs rgyal, 'Gro mgon gYung drung tshul khrims, Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan and Nam mkha’ bsam ’grub gave teachings at the monastery. It seemed to have enjoyed a long period of prosperity that ended when a group of local Buddhist chiefs who envious of the monastery’s wealth hired a gang of thieves to ransack and burn down the monastery.

Many years later, during the dGe lugs pa persecution when many Bonpo monasteries in the area were force to disband, rDza dGe sprul Yid bzhin legs ’grub, undaunted by the dGe lugs pa sectarian policy, went to Dartsedo to obtain permission to rebuild at least one Bonpo monastery. He combined nine Bonpo monasteries together into one and called it dGu rdza dgon, the “Nine Monasteries in the Clay Mountain”. After that, it was maintained by gYung drung rgyal mtshan and Byams pa 'phrin las for many years. It was wrecked during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt and resumed its religious activities in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

- one khri pa
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- two mchod dpon
- two spyi ba

All of whom are replaced every three years with the exception of the spyi ba
who is replaced every year.

5. Current number of monks

There are twenty-one novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monks go to Shar rdza hermitage for ordination vows and teachings, and occasionally for the three-year retreat.

8 / 9. Rituals

The smon lam prayer ceremony from the 10th to 19th day of the 1st month; the smyung gnas fast for ten days in the 4th month (the dates are determined by the monastery); the dbyar gnas summer fast from the 9th to 23rd day of the 6th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has only one printed copy of dBra ston sKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan’s collected works.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of two communities (shog khag): lCags rkang and sMig ri. lCags rkang community comprises seven villages: Bar sha with nine families, Sa ya with six families, Sa re with four families, Yo sho with fourteen families, mKhar chag with six families, ’Brog pa with four families and sNgun ’dus with four families; sMig ri community comprises six villages: dGu smad with three families, sNye ri with ten families, Ci ti with seven families, Nya rgyu with ten families, Kha lang with seven families and ’Brog pa with twelve families.

13. Local festivals

There is a la btsas on top of the mountain behind the monastery. No date is fixed for its renewal ceremony which is performed by Bonpos only.

The mountain facing the monastery, sBa zhabs brag dkar, is the most important sacred mountain in the area. Khod po Blo gros thogs med sanctified it
and discovered a number of important Bonpo gter ma texts there. The mountain is venerated every Monkey-Year by both Bonpo and Buddhists who circumambulate the mountain in the direction prescribed by their respective traditions. There is a short anonymous text about the mountain entitled sBa zhabs brag dkar dkar chag dad pa' i glu dbyangs, which mentions another longer text entitled sBa zhabs brag dkar byin rlabs shugs 'byung.

14. Occupation of the local population
Farming supplemented by animal husbandry

Sources
(1) Interviews with following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: 'Chi med dbang phyung (b.1929), Blo kho (Blo bzang dpal Idan) (b.1942), sMon lam nor bu (b.1969)
(2) Texts:
- dGu rdzab dgon by 'Phrin dga', MS
- sBa zhabs brag dkar dkar chag dad pa' i glu dbyangs, anonymous, MS
- a short, untitled and anonymous text about the history of the monastery, MS

(164) Dam pa rang grol Monastery

1. Name
The monastery is also known as sTon pa rang grub.

2. Location
The monastery is located 87 km south of the town Ba smad of rTa'u county.

3. History
There are two legends about the origin of the monastery and its name. According to one legend recorded by 'Phrin dga', which I also heard when I visited the monastery in 1997, Dam pa rang grol, a Bonpo master from dGe bshes tsa in Rong brag (rGyal rong), came to Ba smad and established a hermitage there in the 3rd Rab byung (1147-1206). The hermitage gradually expanded into a monastery which was named after its founder.

According to the other legend, a Bonpo master called Rig 'dzin Shar ba rnal 'byor attempted to make a statue of gShen rab Mi bo, but despite his efforts he did not succeed, so in the end he threw out the unfinished statue into the monastery's courtyard and returned to his room. The next morning, the statue had become a perfect representation of gShen rab Mi bo. It was named sTon pa Rang grub, the
"self-manifesting master" and the monastery was named after it. The statue is believed to have survived until the mid-20th century.

Although there is a list of masters which 'Phrin dga' claims represents the lineage of the monastery's masters, it is obvious that there are several names in the list that have nothing to do with the monastery's history so I did not find it necessary to include it here. The monastery was rebuilt and resumed its religious activities in the 1980s. The last three descendants of Khod po Blo gros thogs med who looked after the monastery are Blo gros, his nephew (khu dpon gdung brgyud), rDo rje, and the latter’s nephew, Nor bu dbang chen (b.1967), who is the present khri pa of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one khri pa
   - one dbu mdzad (with no predetermined term of office)
   - one dge skos (replaced every three years)
   - two spyi gnyer (with no predetermined terms of office)
   - one mchod dpon (with no predetermined term of office)

5. Current number of monks
   There are fifteen novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educationa exchange
   The monks go to Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) to take their ordination vows.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 2nd month: a ritual known as khang tshe, based on the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 7th to the 13th day
   - 4th month: the summer offerings (dbyar mchod) from the 3rd to the 15th day followed by a 'cham dance on the last day (the dances include A ra ka co, Keng rus, sTag la, dBal gsas, the four dMag dpon, the four sNgags pa, the four Dur khrod, the four 'Bum pa, tigre, lion, Srid pa rgyal mo and Dam can)
   - 12th month: the smyung gnas fast for eight days beginning on the 16th and the winter offerings (dgun mchod) on the 24th and 25th days

10. Manuscripts and printed books
   The monastery has one manuscript copy of Khams chen in sixteen volumes.
11. Economic circumstances of the monastery

The monastery has eight acres (mu) of land which are used to cultivate barley. It also receives offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local lay community

The local lay community consists of two communities (shog khag): Ba smad community comprises four villages: Ngo nya with ten families, Ba smad with fifteen families, Sa skya with four families and Ma dži with two families; mGar thar community comprises only one village: Mar chö with three families. In addition there are several villages in the neighboring county of Dartsedo: Ngo nya village with seven families, Ba smad with eight families, mKhar ma with ten families and sKu nub with three families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is known as Wa zur and is the residence of the local eponymous deity. Its la btsas is at the top of the mountain. The deity is propitiated twice a year, on the 3rd day of the 1st month and the 11th day of the 4th month.

The mountain on which the monastery is located is regarded as sacred and is called Dam pa rang grol. Its distinctive features are four rocks resembling self-manifested sculptures: the sun and moon to the east, a stupa to the south, a vajra to the west, and a white conch shell to the north. The mountain is propitiated in the Sheep Year.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

Farming supplemented by animal husbandry.

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: Rig 'dzin don 'grub (b.1934), rDo rje (b.1933), Ya ma tshe ring (b.1949)
(2) Texts:
   - Dam pa rang grol dgon by 'Phrin dga', MS

Notes

1 Dam pa rang grol dgon by 'Phrin dga', MS.
2 The term cho means village in the local Me nyag dialect.
3 This tribe is geographically the same village as Ngo nya of Ba smad shog khag mentioned above, but belongs to another administrative division. The same applies to the following eight families of Ba smad.
4 Shar mi 'gyur gyi nī zla rang byon, lho mi 'gyur gyi mchod rten rang byon, nub mi 'gyur
gyi rdo rje pha bong. byang mi 'gyur gyi dung dkar rang byon.
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(161) bSam 'grub Monastery

(163) dGu rdza Monastery
(164) Dam pa rang grol Monastery
Nyag chu county

Nyag chu is the name of a river which takes its source in Khri 'du county, Yul shul Prefecture, Qinghai Province. It flows through gSershul county before entering dKar mdzes Prefecture where it joins the 'Bri chu (Yangtze). The total length of Nyag chu river is over 1500 km. In Tibetan, the river in its upper reaches is known as rDza chu, and in its lower reaches as Nyag chu. Nyag chu county (Chinese Yajiang) is located in dKar mdzes Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The county is located around the middle reaches of Nyag chu river. The county covers an area of 7,681.5 sq km. There are 79 villages divided between 17 townships. The seat of Nyag chu county is sPun zla grong (latitude: 30°02'N, and longitude: 101°00'E; altitude: 2,632 m) 147 km from Dartsemdo, the capital of dKar mdzes Prefecture.

(165) 'Du ra Monastery

1. Name
   'Du ra Monastery was formerly known as gYung drung gsang phug or dPal gshen 'du ra.1 It belongs to rBa smyug rong township.

2. Location
   The monastery is located 109 km south of sPun zla grong, the seat of Nyag chu county.

3. History
   The monastery seems to have been founded by 'Gro mgon rGyal ba tshul khrims in the Water-Rat year before the first Rab byung (1012).2 According to legend,3 it was one of the thirty-seven 'Du gnas, "gathering places", during the period of sTag ri gnyan gzigs, the thirty-first king of the IDe dynasty in Yarlung. Then a master known as dGe'legs rnam rgyal alias mKha' gying ram nag from rGyal rong renamed the sacred site gYung drung gsang phug. It is also known dPal gShen bstan ldum ra. His successors were Khro rgyal rtse, IDe nag khyung gsas dbal bon (the latter founded a nunnery called 'Og min dga' ldan that produced several reputed female practitioners), rMa lHa rgod, Yab zin bon ston, and finally Khod po Blo gros thogs med (1280-1337) who rebuilt the monastery at the age of sixty-seven.4 He was succeeded by Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 'Gro mgon Klong rol dbang rgyal, but it is not certain whether the latter was a direct descendant of the former. Then, according to the Mi nyag ldum ra dgon byung tshul, the following masters in the succession were:
   1. dBang bsgyur bstan pa rgyal mtshan
   2. lhun grub dbang rgyal
3. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
4. Blo gsal g-yung drung dbang ldan
5. sKyabs mgon sByin pa rgyal mtshan
6. mTshungs med sMon lam lhun grub
7. rTogs ldan rGyal ba gtsug phud
8. Grub chen bsTan pa 'brug grags
9. gDeng thog bSod nams dbang rgyal
10. sGom chen Tshe dbang g-yung drung
11. rTsal rdzogs rNam rgyal gtsug phud
12. rNam mkhyen Kun dga’ lhun grub
13. mKhyen brtse lhun grub dpal bzang
14. rNam dag rGyal ba gtsug phud
15. Shes rab seng ge
16. Shes rab dbang ldan
17. rGyal ba tshul khrims
18. bsTan pa 'brug grags
19. gYung drung phun tshogs
20. gYung drung smon lam
21. Blo gros dpal ldan
22. gYung drung nyi ma
23. gYung drung rgyal mtshan

At some point the monastery was destroyed in a skirmish and was rebuilt by rGyal ba gtsug phud, the 14th. The monastery was again destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one mkhan po
   - two dbu mdzad (one dbu mdzad che ba and one chung ba)
   - one dge skos
   - two phyag mdzod
   - two mchod dpon (one mchod dpon and one mchod g-yog)
   - one mgon khang bla ma

   All the incumbents are replaced every three years with the exception of the mkhan po.

5. Current number of monks

   There are twenty-seven novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

   There are language and religious teachings for the young novices, and the mgon
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

khang bla ma is the teacher.

7. Educational exchange

In the past the monks went to sMan ri Monastery (No.1). They now also go to Shar rdza Hermitage (No.138) for their ordination vows.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan for ten days from the 5th day
- 4th month: a ritual to provoke rainfall and prevent hail storms for five days from the 15th day
- 5th month: dbyar mchod for thirteen days from the 13th day
- 9th month: dgyur mchod from the 18th day for fifteen days, ending with the dgu gtor rite and the 'cham dances: sdbal gsas tshogs 'cham, sdmu bdud zhal 'cham, sdpal ldan lha mo, s'dod yon lha mo, s'tag la'i rnga 'cham, gShen rab dgu 'cham, gSer skyems, rNam brgyad, Mon pa, dMag dpon, Sha ba, Dur khrod and dGe slong

10. Books held in the monasery

The monastery has a copy of the new edition of Kanjur in 165 volumes and a printed copy of the collected works of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, and various ritual texts.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of five communities (shog khag): Tsher ma rong, 'Brog pa, Rong pad 'dzin, Rag gong and Ma ti shod. Tsher ma rong community comprises four villages: Tsho cha with forty-three families, Bar rdza with fifteen families, gNas zhal with seventeen families and rTa ba with twenty families. 'Brog pa community comprises three villages: Pad 'dzin with nine families, rHa g-yag with three families and Gu ru with seventeen families.

Rong pad 'dzin community comprises four villages: Pad 'dzin with three families, Rong pa with four families, mTsho thog with thirty-two families and Mi nyi shod with twenty-one families. Rag gong communities comprises two villages: Rag gong with twenty-six families and Li 'gu with thirty-six families. Ma ti shod communities comprises three villages: sTod pa with nine families, Bar ma with seven families and sMad pa with sixteen families.
13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called Seng ge dkar mo and is regarded as the abode of the local eponymous deity. There is a la btsas at the top of the mountain which is renewed on the 15th and 25th days of the 5th month by the monks and on the 3rd day of the 1st month by the lay people.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers with the exception of 'Brog pa shog khag who are nomads

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (b.1968), a monk and the present mkhan po of the monastery, gYung drung nor bu (b.1970), gYung drung rnam dag (b.1930), bSod nams blo gros (b.1972), Shes rab 'od zer (b.1974)

(2) Texts:
- Mi nyag ldum ra dgon byung tshul, anonymous, MS
- Mi nyag 'du ra dgon pa'i lo rgyus by Rig 'dzin bstan srung, MS
- 'Chi med gro 'dul Khod spungs Blo gros thogs med kyi skyes rabs dang 'brel ba'i don gyi rnam thar gdung rabs dang bcas pa rdzogs ldan sprin gyi rol mo by dBra ston sKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959) (xylographic edition)

Notes

1 There is a short history of the monastery entitled Mi nyag ldum ra dgon byung tshul (MS) by an unknown author who writes first lDum ra dgon and then 'Du ra dgon, but the monks in the monastery have affirmed that 'Du ra is the correct name of the monastery.
2 Mi nyag 'du ra dgon pa'i lo rgyus by Rig 'dzin bstan srung, MS., p.1
3 Mi nyag ldum ra dgon byung tshul, MS., p.1.
4 According to Mi nyag ldum ra dgon byung tshul (pp.6-7) he built lDum ra Monastery at the age of sixty-seven and that he died at the age of seventy-seven in 'Du ra Monastery, but according to Khod po Blo gros thogs med he died in 1337 at the age of fifty-eight.
(166) Thang sgang Monastery

1. Name
The full name of Thang sgang Monastery is Thang sgang g-yung drung nags tshal gling.

2. Location
The monastery is located 49 km south of the county town of the Nyag chu County, of which 40 km for car and the rest 9 km there is no road for car, one has to go on foot for about 5 hours.

3. History
There is a text entitled Thang sgang dgon pa'i lo rgyus by Rig 'dzin bstan srung. It is about history of the monastery and written very recently. The author states that the monastery was founded by gYung drung rgyal mtshan in the Wood-pig Year of the tenth Rab byung (1575). The following names of the masters are still remembered by the old monks in the monastery:
1. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
2. gYung drung lhun grub
3. gYung drung smon lam
4. gYung drung bstan 'dzin
5. A 'bi bla ma
6. Shes rab tshul khrims
7. Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin. It was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system:
- one bla ma
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one phyag mdzod
- one mchod dpon
They appointment is changed every three years. The present bla ma of the monastery is Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin.

5. Current number of monks
There are fourteen monks in the monastery.

6/7. Current education and exchange
There are courses for language and teachings for the young monks in the monastery. The monastery has very close relationship with Ye shes Monastery
8/9. Rituals

This monastery has re-established the performance of the ritual *dbyar mchod* and *dgun mchod*. The *dbyar mchod* takes place from the 1st to 30th of the 1st month, and the *dgun mchod* from the 20th to 30th of the 12th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has a set of the Bonpo Kanjur of the 1985-1988 edition as well as copies of the collected works of the following masters: mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. There is also a copy of the *Khams chen*.

11. Income and expenses

Monks in the monastery have to provide their food and the expenses of the monastery depend on offerings of followers.

12. Local community

There is only one village called Thang sgang with 40 families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called sPang ser. There is a lake called Pang ser g-yu mtsho sngon mo situated up in the mountains and is regarded as the abode of the local deity by the same name. The *la btsas* for the deity is on bank of the lake and the deity is propitiated on the first of the 1st month and the 6th of the 4th month of the Tibetan calendar.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1997 with: Blo bzang ye shes (b.1967), a monk in the monastery

(2) Text:

- *Thang sgang dgon pa'i lo rgyus* by Rig 'dzin bstan srung, MS
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Nyag- Chu County

Dar-rtse-mdo County

Li-thang County

1/510,000
(165)  'Du ra Monastery
Li thang County

Li thang county is located east of Sa blu li mountain, around the upper and middle reaches of Li chu river, a tributary of Nyag chu river, in southwest dKar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The county covers an area of 15337 sq km; there are 114 villages divided between 26 townships. The county seat is located at mKhar mthon po (Gao cheng) (latitude: 29°59’N, longitude: 100°16’E, altitude: 4,187m), 284 km from Dartsemdo, the capital of dKar mdzes Prefecture.

(167) 'Gro mgon Monastery

1. Name
The full name of the monastery is 'Gro mgon g-yung drung bdud 'dul gling.

2. Location
The monastery is located 86 km north of Li thang, the county seat.

3. History
The founder of the monastery is believed to be 'Gro mgon bDud rtsi rgyal mtshan who was born into the 'Gro mgon family of dBra village in Bu 'bor sgang in the bZhag area in Khams. He founded the monastery at the age of twenty-two. He took his monastic vows from 'Gro mgon gYor med at the age of twenty-five and received the name bDud rtsi rgyal mtshan. He passed away at the age of fifty-eight. His successor was his nephew 'A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1198-1263), who was ordained at the age of twenty-eight by bDud rtsi rgyal mtshan, his uncle. He died at the age of sixty-three.

Mu po provides a list of the following masters in his 'Gro mgon g-yung drung bdud 'dul gling:
1. mKhas grub 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan
2. dBang gi rgyal po
3. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan
4. lHun grub dbang rgyal
5. Rin chen 'od zer
6. gYung drung dbang ldan
7. sByin pa rgyal mtshan
8. sMon lam lhun grub
9. rGyal ba gtsug phud
10. Grub chen 'Brug grags
11. bSod nams dbang rgyal
12. Tshe dbang g-yung drung
13. rNam rgyal gtsug phud
14. Kun dga' lhun grub
15. bSod nams rgyal mtshan
16. lHun grub dpal bzang
17. rGyal ba gtsug phud
18. Shes rab seng ge
19. rGyal ba tshul khrims
20. bsTan pa 'brug grags
21. gYung drung phun tshogs
22. Gar dbang rdo rje
23. gYung drung smon lam
24. Blo gros dbang ldan
25. gYung drung nyi ma
26. Shes rab blo gros
27. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
28. bsKal bzang bstan rgyas²

gSang sngags gling pa (1864-?) and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858-1934) and dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959) visited the monastery to give teachings. The monastery was razed during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in 1991. The present master of the monastery is 'Chi med rnam rgyal (b. 1989).

4. Hierarchical system
   - one dgon bdag
   - one mkhan po
   - one dbu mdzad (replaced every year)
   - one dge skos (replaced every year)
   - one mchod g-yog (replaced every year)
   - one spyi ba (replaced every year)

5. Current number of monks
   There are fifty-three novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monks go to sMan ri Monastery (No. 1) and Shar rdza Hermitage (No. 138)
to take their ordination vows and for further teachings.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: the ritual known as sKyil 'khor zhi sgrub based on the Bla ma sku gsum gyi drag phur dkyil 'khor by gSang sngags gling pa from the 1st day for seven days
- 4th month Sidhi recitation for seven days
  recitation of Kanjur from the 15th day of the 5th month to the 15th day of the 6th month the dbyar gnas fasting from the 15th day of the 6th month to 30th day of the 7th month
- 9th month: sTag la with the dgu gtor rite from the 22nd day to the end of the month
- 11th month: the ritual cycles of Khro bo and Phur pa from the 22nd day for seven days

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has a copy of the printed copy of Kanjur; printed copies of the collected works of the following masters: mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan and bDe chen gling pa.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offering from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local tay community of the monastery consists of four communities (shog khag) in the area: rJo bo, Mar shod, Yar shod and 'Bo ba. rJo bo community comprises eight villages: Ba kha with eight families, Bo rig with one family, Bu lo with seven families, 'Bar la with four families, Khyer ba with seven families, gZi lung with three families, gNam gsas with six families and Ya dar with five families; Mar shod community comprises one village A rje which has only one Bonpo family; Yar shod community comprises one village A rje which has only one Bonpo family; 'Bo ba community comprises one village Shing las which has only one Bonpo family.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called gYung drung lha rtsa and is regarded as the abode of the local deity of the same name and has a la btsas at its summit which is renewed on the 13th day of the 4th month.

There is a sacred site called Dran pa zhi khro gnas. It is located 1 km northwest
of the monastery and was sanctified by gSang sngags gling pa. It is worshipped every Dog Year by both monastic and lay communities together. There is another sacred mountain called sNa brag dkar, located four hours on horseback north of the monastery, worshipped by both Bonpos and Buddhists following the Buddhist tradition, every Horse Year on the 15th day of the 1st month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: gYung drung rgyal mtshan (b.1958), Pad ma (b.1958), Blo gros (b.1978)

(2) Texts:

- lHo 'gro mgon gyi lo rgyud (rgyus) udpal'i 'phreng mdzes rjes 'brang blo gsal gyi mgul rgyan, anonymous, MS
- 'Gro mgon g-yung drung bdud 'dul gling by Mu po, MS

Notes

1 According to 'Gro mgon gYung drung bdud 'dul gling by Mu po, MS. p.4., he was born in a Iron-Dragon Year called rNam gnon (620 A.D.), but then goes on to say that 'A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 'Gro mgon bDud rtsi rgyal mtshan's nephew, was born in 624 A.D. This is obviously incorrect since we know that 'A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan was an abbot of gYas ru dben sa Monastery in gTsang. Therefore bDud rtsi rgyal mtshan cannot have lived in the 11th century.

2 It is obvious that Mu po copied this list from lHo 'gro mgon gyi lo rgyud (rgyus) utpla'i 'phreng mdzes rjes 'brang blo gsal gyi mgul rgyan; he claims that there were one hundred and thirteen masters in the succession of 'Gro mgon. Furthermore, the text was undoubtedly written in the 20th century since it mentions several personages such as dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959).
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Nyag-rong County

Nyag-chu County

'Bo-phant County

'Ba'-thang County

'Phag-phant County

Nyag-rong County

mChod-ten

'Phag-chu County

Dab-phant County

(Dao cheng)

Legend:
- County Seat
- District Seat
- Township Seat
- Administrative Village
- Monastery
- Mountain
- County Border
- Township Border
- River
- Road
- Footpath

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(168) Bye 'bur Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Bye 'bur gYung drung gling or Bye 'bur gYung drung bde ldan gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the bank of the Yangtze river, 5 km southeast of Rong brag, the county seat.

3. History

The original site of the monastery is in Sha ba mtsho near Sog po ri rtse in the same county and the ruins of the former monastery are still visible. The monastery was moved to its present site by a master called gDan khri for an unknown reason. According to a legend recorded by gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje (gYung drung bde ldan gling, MS., p.1), in the thirteenth Rab byung (1747-1806), dGongs rtse gYung drung tshul khrims, who had studied at sMan ri, occupied the monastery’s throne. One night, one of his boots disappeared and was found on a dune on the bank of the Yangtze river. dGongs rtse gYung drung tshul khrims took this as a prophecy and thus moved the monastery to the place where the boot was rediscovered, which is the present site of the monastery. The monastery was therefore called Bye 'bur dgon pa, “the dune monastery”. The monastery was demolished during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

- one khri pa
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one dkor gnyer

All the incumbents are appointed on a permanent basis as there are very few monks in the monastery.

5. Current number of monks

There are seven monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery has no special ties with any other monastery and the monks may
go to the monastery of their choice for their ordination vows.

8 / 9. Rituals

Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan for a few days at the beginning of the 1st month; sgrub mchod in the 3rd month; g-yang sgrub in the 5th month, smyung gnas in the 8th month.

The dates and length of the rituals mentioned above vary according to the amount of donations received.

10. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local community of the monastery consists of fifty families in Burgod village, seventy-two families in sGang 'bur village and forty-five families in Rlob grong village.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called gSum zer and is the residence of the local deity of the same name. There is a la btsas is at the top of the mountain which is renewed on the 10th day of the 7th month.

Sources
(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: bsTan 'dzin g-yung drung (b.1929), gYung drung 'chi med (b.1938), Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin (b.1976)
(2) Texts:
- gYung drung bde ldan gling by gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje, MS

(169) sPang gi lung Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full is sPang gi lung bDe ldan nor bu gling. The name is also written as Phu gu lung (gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje, Nor bu bde ldan gling) and 'Bur gu rlung.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the ridge of a small mountain range, 2 km east of
Rong b brag, the county seat.

3. History

According to a legend recorded by gNyag Chos nyid rdo rje, there existed a monastery with about seventy monks at sPang nang in Sog po stag btsan in which both Bonpo and Buddhists practised together for decades, but owing to its remote location, the monastery was moved in the 15th Rab byung (1867-1926) to a site called 'Gu ya and its master was a Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. Grub thob gYung drung nyi ma, one of its masters, again moved the monastery to Bur gu rlung in the Wood-Bird year of the 16th Rab byung (1945) and renamed it sPro snang Grub thob Bla brang. From then onwards the monastery became known as bDe ldan nor bu gling. The monastery was knocked down during the Cultural Revolution and rebuilt in 1983 at the same site.

4. Hierarchical system

- one khri pa
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one dkor gnyer

The terms of office are not fixed.

5. Current number of monks

There are seventeen novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery has no special ties with any other establishment, and the monks are free to go to the monastery of their choice (generally Shar rdza Hermitage, No.138) for ordination and further teachings.

8/9. Rituals

Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan for a few days at the beginning of the 1st month; sgrub mchod in the 3rd month; g-yang sgrub in the 5th month, smyung gnas fast in the 8th month.

The dates and length of the rituals mentioned above vary according to the amount of donations received from the monastery’s followers.
10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has no library. The monks have their own books for ritual purposes.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of three villages: Tsog bu with forty-six families, Bar so with forty-one families and La ba with sixty-one families.

14. Economic occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1997 with gYung drung rab rgyas, a monk at the monastery who is around twenty-five years old.

(2) Texts:

- Nor bu bde ldan gling by gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje. MS

(170) gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery

1. Name

The monastery is usually known as Brag steng gYung drung dar rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the bank of Yongtze river 27 km south of the county town of Rong brag.

3. History

A precise date of foundation of the monastery is not known, but it is said to have been founded by Sangs rgyas gling pa according to gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje (gYung drung dar rgyas gling, MS p.1). Sangs rgyas gling pa is one of the four masters of the New Bon Tradition and a famous gter ston. The same source also suggests that the monastery was founded prior to the destruction of gYung drung lta steng Monastery (No. 187). The monastery had the Brag steng king as its benefactor and the king was an ardent supporter of gYung drung lta steng which was destroyed by Qianlong in 1776.1 Because of this reason, monks of the monastery were forced
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

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to leave the monastery and live in the villages. They had later several monasteries
built, for example, Shan co, Zhi ba sa le and Mu chu la rgod.

The monastery produced several famous masters, such as Tu phyag Phyogs las
ram mam rgyal who was born in rJe lung valley which is five kilometers northeast of the
monastery and mTshams pa dge bshes (his real name is unknown) was born in She
co valley, but there is very little information about theses masters.

In 1940 the monastery was moved and rebuilt by rGyal sprul, a master from
Brag 'go and Nyi ma dbang Idan, the king of Brag steng at the present site. It was
active until the middle of the twentieth century. It again suffered from destruction
and was rebuilt by Nya ngo Tshul khrims and Ye shes with the financial help given
by bsTan pa dbang rgyal who was a former monk of the monastery and now a
business man living in Lhasa.

4. Hierarchical system:
- one khri pa
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one dkor gnyer
These are appointed on a permanent basis as there are very few monks in the
monastery.

5. Current number of monks
There are seven monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes; the younger monks are trained by the elder
monks.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery has no special ties with any other monastery. The monks may go
to the monastery of their choice for their ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the
4th to 5th; commemoration of gShenrab Mi bo from the 14th to 15th
- 3rd month: performance of the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 1st to 15th
with the 'cham dances: gShen rab dgu 'cham, Phur 'cham, Me ri'i 'cham,
Gyad bzhi and Bla ma bon skor
- 4th month: observance of the smyungs gnas fast, from the 14th to 15th
- 7th month: the performance of the bsang ceremony on Mount rGyal mo dmu
rdo on the 10th

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations from the faithful; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of ten villages: Mi log village with forty families, She co with thirty-three families, Se ri with twenty-three families in She co valley; Pher with fifty-eight families, A la pe with forty-two families, Bram with thirty families, Ma ni ra kho with thirty-five families, 'Gi ru with twenty-one families in Yag re village, Shan sde with eighty-five families, Le dom with ten families in Lang 'ge village.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called bDud kyi zer ba and is regarded as the abode of the local deity called Khyung zhig. There is a la btsas situated at the top of the mountain and renewed only by the monks of the monastery. There is no fixed date for this ceremony.

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1997 with the following monks of the monastery: Tshul khrims rnam dag (b. 1928), Tshul khrims ye shes (b. 1939), Tshul khrims blo gros (b. 1935) and bsTan 'dzin rin chen (b. 1915).

(2) Texts:
- gYung drung dar rgyas gling by gNyag Chos nyid rdo rje. MS

Notes

1 gYung drung lha steng Monastery was one of the most important Bonpo monasteries in rGyal rong. It was destroyed by the Manchu army of Qianlong emperor in 1776 in the second war of rGyal rong. gYung drung lha steng Monastery was forcefully converted to the dGe lungs pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism and was given a Chinese name: Guangfasi. Some times it is also called Yongzhong lama si (gYung drung bla ma Monastery). See Jiarong Zangzu Shizhi (History of Tibetans in rGyal rong) by Qiaodan (mChod rten), p.361-364. Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995. Beijing.

2 Shan co gtsug lag khang, Shan co is a valley which is located fifteen kilometers northeast of the the monastery.

3 Zhi ba sa le Monastery was located in Ma le kha kha co.valley of today's Chu chen County of rNga pa Prefecture.

4 Mu chu la rgod Monastery was located in 'O lung valley of today's Wen chuan County of rNga pa Prefecture.
(171) Khyung lung Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Khyung lung rnam rgyal lha rtse ri khrod or Khyung lung gShen bstan rnam rgyal lha rtse gling. It is also known as Khyung dgon.

2. Location

The monastery is located on a mountain 30 km north of Rong brag, the county seat, about one and a half hours’ walk from the main road.

3. History

Bla ma A lco from Khyung po came to Brag steng where he lived in a cave as a hermit and gave teachings. Later he was made the chief of Brag steng area. From that time onwards, the eldest son in the Khyung po family inherited the position of king, while the younger son that of master of the monastery. According to dKa’ thub, the monastery was founded in the Fire-Ox year of the 5th Rab byung (1277). The cave, where the original hermitage was established, was known as Khyung lung rnam rgyal lha rtse and later when it was expanded into a monastery, as gShen bstan rnam rgyal lha rtse gling.

The monastery survived until the Cultural Revolution. dKa’ thub provides a list of the monastery’s succession of its masters, but since the author himself doubts its authenticity, I have not reproduced it here.

4. Hierarchical system

With the exception of bsTan ’dzin ren chen, the head of the monastery, there are no other positions.

5. Current number of monks

There are only six monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

The monastery no longer has a proper educational system. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery used to send its monks to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) for teachings and ordination.
8 / 9. Rituals

The monastery has not yet resumed its annual ritual activities.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of two villages: 'Gu nge and Lung khug, with a total of about one hundred families.

13. Local festivals

There is a mountain called Bri we located one day’s walk west of the county seat, which is believed to be a goddess called Bri we Pad ma-bu khrid. There is an image of her in gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery (No. 170). She is regarded as a daughter of A myes rMa chen. The mountain was designated as a gnas ri by gSâng sngags gling pa.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1997 with bsTan 'dzin ren chen (b.1927), a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
   - Khyung lung dgon by dKa’ thub, MS

(172) rJi ngo Monastery

1. Name

The monastery is also known as 'Jam dbyangs khang.

3. History

rJi ngo Monastery is said to be very ancient, and to have been founded more than a thousand years ago, but so far no evidence in support of this claim has been found. According to legend, it started out as a hermitage and was transformed into a monastery in the 14th century. The religious masters of Khro skyabs, Brag steng and rTa’u visited the monastery at different times. A master from Khro skyabs is said to have enlarged the monastery. It was razed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt by a group of thirty people from the local village in 1985.
5. Current number of monks

There are no monks in the monastery.

8/9. Rituals

The villagers gather at the monastery two days a month to observe the smyung gnas fast.

12. Local community

There are one hundred families in the brGya 'dres village.

13. Local festivals

There is a la btsas on Bo ri, the mountain behind the monastery, which is propitiated on the 15th day of the 4th month. Kha ba ston stan, another sacred mountain, (gnas ri) located behind Bo ri, is propitiated on the same date.

14. Economic occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1997 with: 'Bum thar (b.1934), a lay tantric practitioner of the village, sKal bzang nor bu (b.1930), a farmer of the village, rGya mtsho (b.1934), a lay tantric practitioner of the village, Nam mkha’ A rdo (b.1933), a farmer in the village, gYung drung (b.1948), a villager who works in the local government at the county seat.

(173) dPag bsam lhun ’grub Monastery

1. Name

The monastery is also known as sBal lung dgon, after the name of the site.

2. Location

The monastery is located 78 km northwest of Rong brag, the county seat.

3. History

The name of the founder is given as sKu zhabs Dam pa by gNyag chos nyid rdo rje, but it is obviously not a real name.

He also states that the monastery was founded in the Earth-Ox year of the 12th Rab byung (1709). sKu zhabs Dam pa was succeeded by Nyi ma, who had three reincarnations, mGal bu sku zhabs, Kong yul sku zhabs and A mgal sku zhabs. mGal
bu succeeded him as the abbot of the monastery but left shortly after for mDo bzhi mo Monastery. The monastery was burned down in the Fire-Dragon year of the 15th Rab byung (1916) during a skirmish. It was later restored by a lama called Tshe dbang. The latter’s reincarnation was Tshe dbang sku chung alias mDo lo sprul sku who died in the middle of the 20th century. The present head of the monastery is dGa’ ba bkra shis (b.1943) and the khri pa is bsTan pa’i rgyal mtshan.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one khri pa
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one mchod g-yog
   - one ’cham dpon

   All the incumbents are replaced every three years with the exception of the khri pa.

5. Current number of monks

   There are ten novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

   The monastery is a branch of gZhun ring Monastery (No.160) and its chanting and ’cham tradition follow that of gZhung ring.

8 / 9. Rituals

   The smon lam prayer from the 7th to the 19th day of the 1st month; the smyung gnas fasting from the 10th to the 18th day of the 4th month; rNam rgyal stong mchod for seven days in the 7th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

   The monastery has a printed copy of Kanjur, Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin’s edition.

11. Income and expenses

   The monastery depends on donations from its followers.

12. Local community

   The local lay community of the monastery consists of eight villages: 'O
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

mkhyen with twenty-five families, 'Bri no with ten families, Ra sde with fifteen families, Ra zur with twelve families, mDa' mdo with twenty-four families, sBal lung with six families, Gon cha with six families and Tsha nyal with eighteen families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery, sBal lung gdong, is the abode of the local deity sKu bla dBal drel and is propitiated on the 13th day of the 5th month. There is a la btsas at the top known by the same name.

There is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called Rin chen spungs pa about 2 km from the monastery that was designated as such by A khu Tshe dbang, a master of gZhung ring Monastery. The Seng chen hermitage is an hour's walk west of the monastery.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn in 1997 with dGa' ba bkra shis (b.1943), head of the monastery

(2) Texts:

- dPag bsam lhun 'grub gling by gNyags Chos nyid rdo rje, MS

(174) rDo zur mo Monastery

1. Name

The monastery's full name is rDo zur mo (or bzhi mo) 'Dod rgu phun tshogs gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 42 km from Rong brag, the county seat.

3. History

The monastery was founded by Nang so gYung drung bstan 'dzin in the Wood-Monkey year of the 12th Rab byung (1714) for the five villages of rGyal shod. The following masters of the monastery, Bla ma Tshe dbang grags pa, sKu zhab Dam pa, Bla ma rGyal ba, gZhi ring A khu Tshe dbang, Ye shes tshe dbang, Bla ma gZhan phan and gYung drung blo gsal became famous throughout the region, but since the monastery was a branch of sBal lung Monastery, they are
generally associated with the latter. The monastery was destroyed in a dispute in the
early 20th century. It was burned down again in 1935. The monastery was restored
owing to mGal bu’s efforts. It was again demolished during the Cultural Revolution
and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one mchod dpon
   In theory, all the incumbents, with the exception of the dgon bdag, are replaced
every three years, but in practice they remain in office for longer periods owing to
the small number of monks.

5. Current number of monks
   There are twenty-five novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young monks are trained by the elder
monks.

7. Educational Exchange
   The monastery is a branch of sBal lung Monastery and in the past there were
educational exchanges between the two.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The monastery no longer holds regular annual rituals.

10. Books held in the monastery
    The monastery has a printed copy of the Kanjur, Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin’s
edition.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery depends on offerings from its followers.

12. Local community
    The local lay community consists of seven villages: Bya grong ba with
fifty-eight families, sKor dgu with forty-five families, Ri ma with forty-eight
families, Zla khog with thirty-two families, gZi cha with thirteen families, Mo tsi
with forty families and Ri ba with twenty families.
13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called dBang 'dul sdud and is the abode of the local deity dBal drel. The deity is propitiated by the monastery together with dPag bsam lhun 'grub gling Monastery, on the 15th day of the 1st month and the 15th day of the 12th month.

There is also a sacred mountain (gans ri) called Brag dben gnas 2 km northwest of the monastery and worshipped on the same dates as the above-mentioned mountain. It is believed to have been a residence of Vairocana, the famous Tibetan Buddhist monk of the 8th century.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1997: gYung du rn gstan 'dzin (b.1937), A 'dzin (b.1927), Shes rab Ye shes (b.1926)

(2) Texts:
- 'Dod dgu phun tshogs gling by gNyag Chos nyid rdo rje, MS

(175) Bya ti lo Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Bya ti lo gYung drung bde chen gling. It is also called lNga stag bDe chen gling. Bya ti lo is a place name where the monastery is located.

It is also written as bCa’ rdo lo in the gYung drung bde chen gling by gNyag Chos nyid rdo rje, MS.

2. Location

The monastery is located 15 km from the county town.

3. History

Before the present monastery was founded, there were two Bonpo monasteries called lHo nub and Nas rdzong, the former belonged to lNga shog community, and the latter sTag gsum village. Then, A ‘ga’ sKu zhabs, the reincarnation of sKu zhabs Nyi ma, a native of the Ba jo village, founded Bya ti lo Monastery in 1859 which then became common for both lNga shog and sTag gsum villages.

gYung drung thogs med nyi ma, the reincarnation of A ‘ga’ sKu zhabs, was born in Tsha family of the sTag gsum village. He was recognized as a reincarnation...
by gZhi ris Nam mkha’ bsam `grub. Soon after the death of A ‘ga’ sKu zhabs, the monastery was burnt down. The next reincarnation rebuilt it in a new place and it existed until it was finally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The present monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s. gYung drung blo gsal, the third successor of sKu zhabs Nyi ma, is the present master of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system:
   - one khri pa
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one gnyer pa
   Only the dge bskos is replaced each year, but the rest stays permanent.

5. Current number of monks
   There are thirteen monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   The young monks follow older monks for teachings. No courses are given to the young monks.

7. Educational exchange
   Since the monastery’s masters came from sBal lung Monastery at the beginning, it often sends the young monks there as well as sending them to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) in order to receive their ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 1st month: performance of the ritual cycles of Phur nga and Zhi khro for five days
   - 6th month: ritual of Zhi khro for four days
   - 7th month: ritual of rNam rgyal for three days
   - 10th month: ritual of Phur nag for four days

10. Books held in the monastery
    The monastery has a copies of the ‘Bum nyi ma dgu shar and the Dri med gzi brjid from the A yung edition.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery depends on offerings of its followers in the villages.
12. Local community

There are nine villages: rDo ba village with forty families, Thog ba with fifty families, Zhabs tsho ba with fifty families, Ba zog with fifty families, Tho byi with twenty-three families, Ci ru with forty families, Wa ba with sixty families, sTag gsum with sixty families and Le lu with forty families.

13. Local festivals

The back mountain behind the monastery is called Ra ma Bla ri, regarded as the abode of the local deity called gYung drung dgra 'dul.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn of 1997 with the following monks of the monastery:
   Sri skyabs (b.1815), bsTan pa (b.1927), Go skyabs (b.1930) and Phun pa zer (b.1929)

(2) Texts:
   - gYung drung bde chen gling by gNyag Chos nyid rdo rje, MS
(168) Bye 'bur Monastery

(169) sPang gi lung Monastery
(170) gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery

(172) rJi ngo Monastery
(173) dPag bsam lhun 'grub Monastery

(174) rDo zur mo Monastery
Bya ti lo Monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(176) Mi rgod Temple

1. Name
   Ri bo lha khang

2. Location
   The temple is located 8 km from the county town.

3. History
   According to oral tradition, the temple was built in the Fire-Rat year of the 9th Rab byung (1516) by La dkar bsTan pa’i rgyal mtshan¹ who was a monk of sMan ri Monastery (No.1). He first took residence in a village known as sDe le gong and later established a hermitage on the sacred mountain of gNas chen Ri bo brag dkar.
   The hermitage was transformed into a temple belonging to the local community. According to legend, the cave where the hermitage was located was so small that a yeti enlarged it, which is why the hermitage is also known as Mi rgod ri khrod, the “Yeti hermitage”.
   Mount Ri bo brag dkar is believed to be an abode of the goddess Srid pa rgyal mo. The present temple was rebuilt in the 1980s. The present master of the temple is Rig ’dzin rgya mtsho.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one khri pa (replaced every five years)
   - one dbu mdzad (replaced every five years)
   - one dge skos (replaced every five years)

5. Current number of religious practitioners
   There are fifty religious practitioners in the temple most of whom are laymen.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes.

7. Educational exchange
   The temple has no particular ties with any other establishments.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The temple does not hold any regular annual rituals.

10. Books held in the temple
   The temple has no books but the practitioners have their own ritual texts.
11. Income and expenses

The temple depends on donations from its followers.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of five villages: sDe tshal with twenty families, sDe slas with fifty three families, Ra kho with thirty-seven families, Khri mo with one family, Lha khang with twenty-five families.

The local population is very mixed. It includes, in addition to Tibetans, many Han and Yi followers of Bon. The temple claims that in addition to the families mentioned above there are around two hundred families of mixed nationality in Nas chu township, around one hundred families in Shar kha township, one hundred and sixty families in Sa snga rong village and more than a hundred families in Kho tsha in Mu li county.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the temple is Ri bo brag dkar. It has a la btsas at the top. The local deity of the mountain is generally propitiated on the 1st, 13th and 15th days of each month although there is no prescribed date. There are four mountains surrounding it at the cardinal points: Dung ri dkar po, gSer ri dkar po, Zang brag dmar po and Brag mar yu ring.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Source

(1) Interview with Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (b.1928) in autumn 1997, a teacher at the temple

Notes

1 Ri bo lha khang (mi rgod sgrub phug yang zer) by rDo rje rig 'dzin, MS., p.1
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Dar-rtse-mdo County

brGyad-zil County

dKar-pa

Thang-mgo

County Seat
District Seat
Township Seat
Administrative Village
Monastery
County Border
Township Border
River
Road
Footpath

1/460,000
(176) Mi rgod Temple
(177) Grib srib Monastery

Grib srib Monastery is also called sPang ri Monastery. According to oral tradition, it was founded around in 1646. Its first bla ma was Nyi ma grags pa, born in rGyal rong; the second was Me thar, born in 'Ben da village of Khong yul in Dar rtse mdo; the third was born also in rGyal rong, but nobody seems to know his name. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

In Dar rtse mdo there are some other Bonpo temples, such as Tshe ring, 'Phong mda' and sTag rtse, but nothing is known about them. It is the lay people who look after them. They usually work with their families as farmers and go to the temples only for some annual rituals. Since my visit in Dar rtse mdo was coincidence with their harvest everybody had gone back to home for it. The only monks I met became monks very recently. They have never been in any kind of school and have just started to learn read and write Tibetan in that year.
rNga khog

The traditional name of the region is rNga khog and its inhabitants are referred to as rNga ba. The term rNga ba is pronounced Ngawa by the people in Amdo and transcribed by the Chinese as Aba and they wrongly use it as if it were the name of the region. rNga ba county is located in rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. There are 19 townships subdivided into 82 villages in the county which covers an area of 10370 sq km. The population is 42,223 (of whom 37,767 were Tibetans in 1980). The county town is located at rNga ba township, 246 km from 'Bar khams, the capital of rNga ba Prefecture, and 509 km from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province.

(178) rTogs ldan Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is rTogs ldan dBen gnas lhun grub 'od gsal g-yung drung gling or rTogs ldan dPal gShen bstan smin grol bkra shis g-yas su 'khyil ba'i gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 5 km northeast of rNga ba Township, the seat of rNga ba county.

3. History

rTogs ldan Monastery is believed to have been an extension of a hermitage founded by Bon blon bla ma. He was a descendent of Bya chen Nyi ma 'dzin, the founder of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180).

The hermitage was mainly for lay practitioners and remained as such for many generations after Bon blon bla ma. In 1666 rTogs ldan gYung drung tshul khrims, the first of the Tshul chen series, transformed it into a monastery.

Tshul khrims bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, the second Tshul chen, received teachings from Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1858-1934) whom he invited to the monastery, and changed the name of the monastery to rTogs ldan sMin grol bkra shis g-yas su 'khyil ba'i gling. Since the monastery was destroyed in the middle of the twentieth century it had to be rebuilt in the 1980s.

There are three main reincarnate masters as the heads of the monastery: Tshul chen Theg mchog bstan pa'i nyi ma (b.1937), Khri pa 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho and Bon blon Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin (b.1932). These three take turns as khri pa of the monastery every three years.
4. Hierarchical system
   - three sprul sku
     - one khri pa, replaced every three years
     - one mkhan po, replaced every three years
     - one dbu mdzad, replaced every three years
     - one dbu mkhyen, (assistant dbu mdzad) replaced every three years
     - one dge skos, replaced every year
     - two dge g-yog (assistant dge skos) replaced every year
     - one mchod dpon, replaced every two years
     - one mchod g-yog (assistant mchod dpon), replaced every two years
     - two gnyer pa replaced every two years (the two gnyer pa have equal status)

   The incumbents are replaced on the 11th day of the 4th month following the renewal ceremony of the la btsas dedicated to the local deity called Cho mchog when each of the new incumbents receive a silk-knot protection (srung mdud).

5. Current number of monks
   There are five hundred and eighty-eight novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are three colleges: sDe snod thos bsam nyin byed gling for the study of philosophy (mtshan nyid), lHun grub ’od gsal zla gzhon gling for the study and practice of tantras, and lNga rig shes bya’i dga’ tshal gling for the study of the “five sciences” (rig gnus Inga).

   There are four hostels (khang tshan): Kun rig khang tshan, Dus ’khor khang tshan, sMan Iha khang tshan and Byams ldan khang tshan.

7. Educational exchange
   rTogs ldan is the largest monastery upholding the New Bon Tradition. Many monk students from monasteries throughout Amdo and Khams go there to study. It also sends teachers to smaller monasteries which have the same tradition.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 2nd month: ritual of the Siddhi bon sgrub that invokes Padmasambhava, from the 23rd to the 30th day
   - 3rd month: the religious service in general (zhabs rten chen mo) for the monastery from the 1st to the 13th day
   - 4th month: ritual based on the bDe chen zhing sgrub chen mo from the 11th to the 15th day
   - 6th-7th months: the observance of the summer-fast (dbyar gnas chen mo) from the 15th day of the 6th month to the 30th day of the 7th month
- 10th month: ritual based on the cycle of Phur pa called Phur sgrub chen mo from the 5th to the 15th day
- 12th month: commemoration of a bla ma on the 20th day and the dgu gtor rite from the 23rd to the 29th day

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one manuscript copy of the Khams chen (in sixteen volumes) and five printed copies of the Bonpo Kanjur and Katen. It also holds printed copies of the collected works of the following masters: rTogs ldan bSod nams phun tshogs, rTogs ldan dKon mchog (in two volumes), rTogs ldan Tshul khrims bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (in three volumes), rTogs ldan Yon tan rgya mtsho, rTogs ldan ’Jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho (in three volumes), rTogs ldan Tseg mchog bstan pa’i nyi ma (in three volumes), rTogs ldan Nges don mthong ba rang grol (in three volumes) and rTogs ldan bZod pa rgyal mtshan. Most of the books are enclosed in their traditional wooden covers (leb shing).

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from the faithful and also owns a hotel in the county town.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of twenty-nine villages: sTag tsha with thirty-families, Shod pa with thirteen families, Tsu ra with ten families, mGon shul with eight families, Khug mgo rtsa with six families, The grong with five families, Grong mang with four families, Ka shul with twenty-eight families, ’Tsham rang lcag with eight families, Zhe phan with four families, A ka with ten families, Ber rtsa with six families, sNas tsa with eight families, Tha ra with eleven families, ’Gyur skor with eight families, Ho tsha with eight families, Hor ’phan with fifteen families, Khug mgo sgang with eighteen families, Kha shu with five families, Cha ’go with one families, mTha’ ba with eighteen families, Cho mchog with ten families, Rag tsa with eight families, Phyug tshang with thirty families, dGe li with forty families, Ko tsa with eight families, dGon pa with twenty families, So ri with ten families, Byar skor ma with eight families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called Cho mchog, and has a la btsas at its summit dedicated to the deity Cho mchog Drang srong gnyan po. As it was constructed by rTogs ldan bSod nams phun tshogs on the 11th day of the 4th month, the ceremony of its renewal is performed on that day by both religious and lay communities of sNang zhig and rTogs ldan. The ceremony is followed by the
appointment of the new administrators of rTogs ldan Monastery.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farmers and traders

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with: Tshul chen Theg mchog bstan pa’i nyi ma, one of the present masters of the monastery (b.1937). Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin (b.1932), one of the three trulkus of the monastery
(2) Texts:
- rNga ba rdzong gi rtogs ldan dgon pa’i lo rgyus by Tshul chen Theg mchog bstan pa’i nyi ma, MS
- A history of rTogs ldan monastery (untitled and anonymous), MS
- sNgang zhig bkra shis g-yung drung gling gi gdn rabs rdzogs ldan ngag gi rgyal rnga by Bya ’phur Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, p.38, Mutri Tsedpo Zhang bod Research Institute, Dolanji, H.P. India, 1994
- gTer bdag rbang gi bka’ blon mon nam mched brgyad kyi nang tshan khyung dkar lha gnyan gyi bsang mchod by rTogs ldan rGyal ba dbang ldan, MS

Notes
1 There are several variants of the name: Bo leb, sPo leb, Bon slebs and Bon blon. Regarding the first variant, “bo” derives from the term bo ti in Amdo dialect, meaning clod, leb means “flat”. It is said that when Bon blon bla ma established the hermitage in the place where there were many “flat clods”; the meaning of the second variant remains unknown; the third variant means the “arrival of Bon”, the explanation for this name was that the master was the first Bonpo to arrive in the region; the fourth variant means “the Bon minister” which appears in the official documents given to the master by the local authorities of Zung ’phan during the reign of Qianlong.

(179) gDong li Monastery

1. Name
The monastery’s full name is gDong li sMin grol bsam gtan dar rgyas gling.

2. Location
The monastery is located 20 km east of the county seat. The monastery lies on a mountain ridge (which is why it is known as gDong li, gDong meaning “ridge”) between Drel lung and So mang valleys on the north bank of rNga chu river in rNga khog.
3. History

The monastery was founded by bsTan pa lhun grub (1646-1779) in the Fire-Rat year of the 12th Rab byung (1696). Following is a list of the successive masters of the monastery:

1. bsTan pa lhun grub (1646-1779)
2. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (1712-1783)
3. Rin chen lhun grub (1766-1841)
4. bsTan pa rab rgyas (1843-1927)
5. Ngag dbang blo gros phyogs las mam rgyal (1930-1990)
6. sKal bzang shes rab rgya mtsho alias bsTan pa rab rgyas, the present master

4. Hierarchical system

- one mkhan po
- one bla ma
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- one rgan pa (=gnyer ba)
- one mchod dpon
- one gsol ka ba
- one lha gnyer

The incumbents are appointed (including the mkhan po) by Tshul chen and the khri pa of rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) on the 20th of 12th month every two years with the exception of the dbu mdzad whose term is not fixed. As it is a branch of rTogs ldan, there is one bla ma representing rTogs ldan Monastery.

5. Current number of monks

There are altogether fifty-seven novices and ordained monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The novices go to rTogs ldan to receive the preliminary (sngon 'gro) teachings in the 4th month, as well as for other teachings and their ordination.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: sMon lam from the 7th to the 17th day, including ritual cycle of Ma rgyud, the ritual of Rig 'dzin bon skor, Klong rgyas cho ga and atonement rite of dPal ldan lha mo;
- 3rd month: Guru sidhi from the 10th to the 16th day;
- 4th month: the festival of the pig month (*phag zla'i dus mchod*) for thirteen days starting on the 22nd day of the 4th month with the *Ma rgyud tshogs'khor* for three days and *Klong rgyas sgrub pa* for ten days;
- 6th month: the observance of the summer fast (*dbyar gnas*) from the 15th day of the 6th month to the 30th day of the 7th month;
- 12th month: *Klong rgyas* from the 13th to the 16th day and the *dgu gtor* rite from the 27th to 29th day.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of five villages: dGe li with twenty-three families, gDong mgo ra with twenty-one families, rTsang tsa with one family, dGon pa ra with twenty-one families and gDong li with one family.

13. Local festivals

The *la btsas* at the top of the mountain behind the monastery is called Nag 'jar sgang. It is dedicated to the local deity bDud mgon dgra lha'i rgyal bo. The *la btsas* was constructed in accordance with instructions given by gDong li bsTan pa dar rgyas, the third master of the gDong li lineage. The renewal ceremony of the *la btsas* by the monks takes place on the day following the end of the *dbyar gnas* fast (30th day of the 7th month). There is another *la btsas* called Brag dmar nor bu lha rtse located 3 km east of the monastery on a mountain at a site called Tsher khog. It was built following the advice given by gDong li bsTan pa lhun grub. The spirit of the mountain is propitiated by both monks and lay people although the date of its propitiation is not fixed.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and trade

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with Ri kho bSod nam rig 'dzin (b.1942), the head of the monastery's administrative committee

(2) Texts:

- *rNga khul rnga ba rdzong gi gdong li dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* in *rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus*, published by the Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture and Religion Bureau of the rNga ba Prefecture, MS, pp.78-79
(180) sNang zhig Monastery

1. Name

The monastery's full name is sNang zhig rGyal bstan phun tshogs gling, and is also known as sNang zhig bKra shis g-yung drung gling, or sNang zhig Phyogs las rnam rgyal bkra shis g-yung drung gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 5 km north of rNga ba Township, the seat of rNga ba county. There is a motorable road leading to the monastery.

3. History

The first in the succession of the sNang zhig masters is said to be Do 'phags chen po, also known as Yon tan rgyal mtshan (b. 1168). Although the latter was responsible for spreading Bon in the area and opened several hermitages in rNga khog, the real founder of the monastery was Nyi ma 'dzin, the eldest son of Do 'phags chen po. The first building of the establishment was Nyi ma 'dzin's own residence (bla brang) built in 1108 and known as rGyal bstan phun tshogs gling.

Do 'phags chen po and sKyang za g-yu sgron had three sons: Nyi ma 'dzin, 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, and gYung drung rgyal mtshan. Nyi ma 'dzin studied under the feet of Zhu sgom 'phrul zhig, but his two brothers 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan and gYung drung rgyal mtshan migrated to Shar khog where the former founded the monastery ICags mdud bKra shis g-yung drung gling (No. 199), and the latter a monastery known as sNang zhig dngul sku (No. 201).

The descendants of the three brothers were collectively known as the “three lineages of sNang zhig” (sNang zhig khag gsum). The twenty-fourth descendant of the eldest brother, sNang zhig Tshul khrims dbang mchog, took monastic vows. He then divided the establishment of sNang zhig rGyal bstan phun tshogs gling into two settlements: one for lay tantric practitioners and the other for monks.

Following is a list of the sNang zhig lineage masters:
1) Do 'phags chen po (sNang zhig Yon tan rgyal mtshan
2) Nyi ma 'dzin
3) lHun grub rgyal mtshan
4) Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan
5) Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan
6) Zla ba rgyal mtshan
7) Yon tan rgyal mtshan
8) Kun dga’ lhun grub
9) Shes rab rgyal mtshan
10) lHun grub rgyal mtshan
11) Shes rab 'od zer
12) Chags med bya bral
13) bstan pa rgyal mtshan
14) Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
15) Ye shes rgyal mtshan
16) bSod nams rgyal mtshan
17) lHun grub dbang ldan
18) bsTan pa tshul khrims
19) Rin chen lhun grub
20) Shes rab rgyal ba
21) Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
22) Shes rab dbang rgyal
23) Tshe dbang rgyal mtshan
24) Tshul khrims dbang mchog
25) bsTan pa tshul khrims
26) bsTan pa lhun grub
27) Shes rab blo gros
28) Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin
29) Rin chen rgyal mtshan,
30) gYung drung bstan pa dar rgyas, he founded gDong li Monastery (No.179)
31) bSod nams rgyal mtshan
32) bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal
33) Phun tshogs rnam rgyal
34) Blo gros thogs med
35) gYung drung bstan pa'i nyi ma
36) Grub dbang g-yung drung bstan 'dzin
37) Nam mkha' blo gros
38) bsTan pa rab rgyas (1929-1961)
39) bsKal bzang blo gros rgya mtsho (b.1983)

The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and its reconstruction was undertaken in 1980 by rGya 'obs bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal and Slob zur Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin.

4. Hierarchical system

The sNang zhig family is the “owner of the monastery” (dgon bdag) and the present head of the monastery is sNang zhig bsKal bzang blo gros rgya mtsho (b.1983). The monastery is therefore headed by an hereditary line.
- rgyal tshab
  - one khri pa, replaced every year
  - one dpon sbob, replaced every three year
- two *dpe khrid*, (teachers), replaced every two years
- three *dge skos*, replaced every year
- two *dbu mdzad*, replaced every six years (after three years the younger *dbu mdzad* (*dbu mdzad chung ba*) replaces the *dbu mdzad che ba*, the elder *dbu mdzad*)
- two *mchod g-yog*, replaced every two years (after one year the *mchod g-yog chung ba*, the younger *mchod g-yog*, replaces the *mchod g-yog che ba*, the elder *mchod g-yog*)
- seven *lha gnyer*, replaced each year; one *gnyer chen*, replaced each year
- two *yig mkhan* (accountant) replaced every two years
- two *drung yig*, replaced every three years

5. Current number of monks

There are seven hundred novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education


For the above subjects the students use the *bsDus grwa* by mKhan chen Nyima bstan 'dzin; the works on the *Khams chen* by dPal chen; the five *'Phrul sgron* by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and commentaries on the *Gab pa*, *mDzod* and *Sa lam* written by scholars from gYas ru dBen sa kha Monastery.

The monk students have classes and debate every day except during retreats; the texts they study during retreats include texts that deal with meditation systems of A khrid, sNyan brgyud and rDzogs chen.

Monks of the college of ritual practice (*sgrub gwra*) must complete the three year retreat (*lo gsum*) following the A khrid tradition of meditation.

7. Educationa exchange

sNang zhig is the largest monastic university of Bon religion in Tibet. Many monks from various monasteries throughout Amdo and Khams visit the monastery. sNang zhig Monastery sends its monks to teach at Tsha lung Monastery (No.193) in rMe ba, 'Bol la (No.182) and Kun 'brog (No.183) monasteries of 'Bar kham in rGyal rong, lCags mdud (No.199) and sNang zhig dNgul sku (No.201) in Shar khog, rTse dbus Monastery (No.99) in rGan rgya, Dung dkar Monastery (No.132) in Chabcha, Khyung mo Monastery (No.123) in Khri ka and Bon brgya Monastery (No.100) in Reb gong.
8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of sNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 4th to the 6th day
- 2nd month: commemoration of Nang chen Kun bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan from the 1st to the 5th day and that of rGya 'obs bsTan pa rab rgyas from the 7th to the 13th day
- 3rd month: the ritual based on the Yi dam kun 'dus from the 8th day for three days and the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud from the 11th for four days
- 4th month: the recitation of the mantra Ma tri on the 14th day
- 5th month: the ceremony of the lighting of 10,000 butter lamps as offering to rNam rgyal, an aspect of gShen rab Mi bo, for ten days from the 6th day
- 6th month: the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 3rd day for seven days; the observance of summer-fast (dbyar gnas) for seven days from the 15th day; the ceremony of Dus khrims for seven days from the 24th day
- 11th month: commemoration of sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan on the 7th and 8th days
- 12th month: the ritual of the gShen rab sgrub mchod for three days from the 14th day and the dgu gtor rite for four days from the 26th day

10. Books held in the monastery

Printed editions: five copies of the Bonpo Kanjur and six copies of the Bonpo Katen, and more than 2000 printing blocks.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from the faithful and also owns a hotel in the county town.

12. Local community

The local community consists of twenty-eight villages: mChog skyid with thirteen families, 'Ju skor with thirty families, Aka with sixty-four families, Cha bo with forty-one families, Ber rtsa with thirty-seven families, Thar ba with sixty families, Ho tsa with fifteen families, Hor 'phen with thirteen families, Khos 'go with seventeen families, Kha shu with twenty-seven families, Bon sde with seventy-five families, sPrel mgo with fifteen families, gTsang ra with ten families, Zhag 'dug with five families, Zhes 'phen with twenty-eight families, Grong mang with ten families, Thes grong with twenty families, Khos mgo rtsa with eighteen families, mGon shul with thirteen families, sTag rtsa with eighteen families, 'Tshams ring lcag with twenty-eight families, mTha' ba with fifteen families, mGo che lcag with thirty-eight families, Ka shul 'gab ma with forty-five families, Ka shul gong ma with twenty-five families, Chu kha ra with five families, dGe lu with seventeen
families, Mag gsar with fifteen families. (717 families altogether)

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery, rBang brtsan bse khrab can, is located about 10 km north of the monastery. There is a la btsas at the top whose renewal celebration, which is attended by both religious and lay communities, takes place on the 11th day of the 4th month. In addition, the members of the sNang zhig family traditionally propitiated the local deity (yul lha) of Mount gNyan po g-yu rtse, located in southeast of Golok, 5368 meters high, but the custom was interrupted in the 1960s. Recently it was revived by the present head of the sNang zhig family. There is also a "sacred mountain" (gnas ri) called dGon lung, situated about 4 km northwest of the monastery. It was sanctified by sNang zhig Nam mkha’ blo gros. Its veneration by the local people takes place every Horse Year.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers and traders

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with: rGya ’obs bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal (b.1928). the present representative (rgyal tshab) of the sNang zhig master in the monastery, and the following monks at the monastery: Nam mkha’ tshul khrims (b.1930), bsTan ’dzin ye shes (b.1931) and Phun tshogs (b.1950)

(2) Texts:

- Bon gyi 'dus sde chen po snang zhig rgyal bstan phun tshogs gling ngam bkra shis g-yung drung gling gi chags rim lo rgyus mdor bs dus shel dkar phreng ba by dGe bshes bsTan ’dzin phun tshogs and ’Jam dbyangs brtson ’grus, MS
- gZhi bdag gnyan po rBang btsan bse khrab can gyi bsang mchod bstod bskul (anonymous), MS
- gZhi bdag gnyan po g-yu rtse ’i bsang mchod bdud rt si ’khyil ba (anonymous), MS
- sNang dgon dkar chag gsal ba ’i me long by Nam mkha’ tshul khrims, MS
- sNang zhig bkra shis g-yung drung gling gi gdan rabs rdzogs ldan ngag gi rgyal rnga by Bya ’phur Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, Mutri Tsedpo Zhang Bod Research Institute, Dolanji, H.P. India, 1994

Notes

1 Per Kvaerne dated the year of his birth 1028, in “The Monastery of sNang zhig of the Bon Religion in the rNga pa District of Amdo” (Rivista degli Studi Orientali 63, 1990)
and this is supported by the works of Nam mkha’ tshul khrims (p.9.n. MS.) and Bya phur Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan (p.32) mentioned above. However, dGe bshes bsTan ‘dzin phun tshogs and ‘Jam dbyangs brtson ‘grus give 1088, one Rab byung (60 years) later in their above-mentioned works. However, dGe bshes bsTan ‘dzin phun tshogs and Dru ming ‘Jam dbyangs brtson ‘grus give 1088, one rab byung (60 years later) in their above-mentioned works. They also provide a different list of the masters from that given by Per Kvaerne (1990) whose work is based on sNang zhig do ’phags chen po’i sku phreng gso l’debs byin rlabs myur gzigs ma by Shes rab blo ldan (d.1999).

(181) Cog lo Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Cog lo rNam rgyal bsam gtan nor bu gling. Cog lo is the name of a village in which the monastery is located.

2. Location

The monastery is located 34 km southeast of rNga ba Township.

3. History

The monastery was founded by sNang zhig ’Dul ba rgyal mtshan in the Earth-Rat year of the 2nd Rab byung (1108). Originally it was located at the confluence of lDing chu and rNga chu rivers, but following the rNga ba county authority’s decision to build a power station there, the monastery was moved to the present site and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

’Dul ba rgyal mtshan belonged to the sNang zhig family whose lineage I have already discussed in connection with sNang zhig Monastery (No.180).

A khams Rin chen dar rgyas and Nam mkha’ shes rab bsam gtan have been looking after the monastery until now. There is a representative of the master of sNang zhig (rgyal tshab bla ma) who is appointed by the sNang zhig family.

The present rgyal tshab bla ma, Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (b.1919) was appointed by sNang zhig bsTan pa rab rgyas in the first half of the 20th century. He was still occupying the position in autumn 1998 when I visited the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

- dgong bdag (hereditary)
- rgyal tshab bla ma
- one dbu mdzad (replaced every three years)
- two gnyer ba (replaced every year)
- one mchod g-yog (replaced every year)

The rgyal tshab bla ma nominates the candidates for the different positions and
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

submits his choice to the sNang zhig family when he visits the monastery on the 12th day of the 1st month during the annual gathering of the sMon lam. The sNang zhig family then decide them and send knots to let them know who were selected to be for the positions in the next morning.

5. Current number of monks

There are one hundred and nine novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

There is no organized system; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

Since it is a branch of sNang zhig Monastery, the monks are required to go to sNang zhig for the three year retreat, ordination and further training.

8. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 4th to the 6th day; the recitation ceremony of the Ma tri for seven days with ‘cham dance on the 13th day; the new incumbents of the positions mentioned above are appointed on the 14th day; the new dge bskos enthroned on the 15th day; this is followed by the ritual based on the ‘Khor ba stong ‘dren for three days and the gYung drung klong gyas on the 12th day
- 4th month: the ritual based on the rNam rgyal stong mchod from the 13th to the 15th day, followed by the Zhi khro ritual for two days and the mNyam med bla sgrub ceremony for one day
- 5th month: the ritual based on the ‘Khor ba stong ‘dren again from the 14th to the 17th day
- 6th month: the mNyam med bla sgrub ceremony again and that of sKyabs mgon (Zla ba rgyal mtshan) on the 15th and 16th days
- 7th month: the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) for nine days from the 21st day
- 9th month: the ritual cycle of sTag la for ten days from the 21st
- 10th month: commemoration of sNang zhig bsTan pa rab rgyas on the 28th day
- 12th month: the ritual based on the gYung drung klong rgyas from the 14th to the 16th day, immediately followed by the ritual of sMan lha from the 17th to the 19th day
- 13th month: the ritual cycle of dBal gsas on the 27th and 28th days followed by the gtor bzlog rite and a ‘cham dance on the 29th day, and another ‘cham dance on the 30th day of the same month
11. Income expenses

The monastery has lent 100,000 Yuan to the local people and in return receives 1,400 Yuan interest per year. In addition, the monastery owns nine female yaks that are kept by the villagers who in return give the monastery 4 kg of butter per yak every year (1 kg of butter cost 7 Yuan in 1998). The monastery also receives offerings from its followers. The monks must provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four villages: A 'dus with twenty-five families, sNa skor with forty-two families, Khyung dga' with twenty-eight families and sGom pa with twelve families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is known as Dung khyung. Its la btsas called Khyung sras dGe legs bstan sras was constructed with the instructions given by sNang zhig bsTan pa rab rgyas. The mountain spirit is propitiated by the monks of the monastery.

There is also a sacred mountain (gnas ri) known as rGya mkhar 'go. It is located 2 km south of the monastery. The mountain was sanctified by rTogs ldan rGyal ba dbang ldan and is venerated by both the monks and local lay people in the 10th month of the Horse Year.

The village A 'dus has five la btsas: Wer sgo, gYa' khang, gSas mkhar, Brag skar and gNam Iha dkar chen, whose annual renewal ceremony takes place on the 11th day of the 1st and 4th months. The village sNa skor has six la btsas: Dung khyung, lHa ri dar 'dzin, gNyan, gYung drung lha rtse, sTag rtse and A myes brag dkar. The local-deities, to whom the la btsas are dedicated, are propitiated on the same days as those of the A 'dus village. The village Khyung dga' has two la btsas: Nag rgas and Zhig gung and sGom pa has only one la btsas, Di 'gu. The dates of their renewal ceremony are not fixed.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1998: dGra 'dul (b.1937), Shes rab (b.1938) and Tshul khrims (b.1958)
(2) Texts:
- rNga khul rNga ba rdzong gi cog lo dgon gyi lo rgyus mdo bsdus in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture and Religion Bureau of rNga ba Prefecture, pp.71-72
(178) rTogs ldan Monastery, Plate 1

(178) rTogs ldan Monastery, Plate 2. O rgyan lha khang mthong ba don ldan at the monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

Plate 3  Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin (b.1932), one of the three masters at the monastery
(178) rTogs Idan Monastery. Plate 4 Tshul chen Theg mchog bstan pa'i nyi ma (b. 1937), one of the three masters at the monastery.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(178) rTogs Idan Monastery. Plate 5 Khri pa 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya misho, one of the three masters at the monastery.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(180) sNang zhig Monastery. Plate 2 The assembly hall of the monastery

(180) sNang zhig Monastery. Plate 3 The rGyal khang temple in the monastery
sNang zhig Monastery. Plate 4  bsKal bzang blo gros rgya mtsho (b.1983), the thirty-ninth master of the sNang zhig Lineage
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(180) sNang zhig Monastery. Plate 5 rGya 'og bstan 'dzin dbang rgyal (b.1928), the present rGyal tshab of sNang zhig bsKal bzang blo gros rgya mtsho at the monastery.
Cog lo Monastery
'Bar khaps

'Bar khaps county belongs to rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The county town is 'Bar khaps which is also the capital of rNga ba Prefecture. There are 104 villages divided between 15 townships. The county covers an area of 6,346 sq km. The population is 59,180. 30,379 of whom were Tibetans in 1980.

The Religion Bureau of 'Bar khaps county has divided the monasteries of rGyal rong, including those of 'Bar khaps into three categories: those whose monks are "away from work", or full-time monks (las bra1 grwa pa), those whose monks are "half-away from work", or part-time monks (las phyed grwa pa), and those whose monks are "seasonal monks" (dus tshigs kyi grwa pa). The first category refers to monks who live in the monastery on a permanent basis; the second to those who live outside the monastery and who go to the monastery only to perform the annual rituals; the third to those who live in the monastery but who go back to their homes to help during the ploughing and harvest seasons. The monks belonging to the second and third categories are generally laymen.

(182) 'Bo la Monastery

1. Name
The monastery’s full name is 'Bo la sTobs ldan glang chen dgon.

2. Location
The monastery is located 2 km north of 'Bar khaps.

3. History
According to oral tradition, the monastery’s history goes back more than a thousand years, but no one knows its details. It seems that it was connected to a master called 'Bro re bla ma who was born in 'Bo la village. It was wrecked during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the late 1980s.

'Bo la was formerly a branch of 'Bar khaps gYung drung lha steng. After the conversion of 'Bar khaps Monastery to the dGe lugs pa tradition in the 18th century 'Bo la Monastery was left without a proprietor.

Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin (b.1928) was chosen among the monks to be the head of the present monastery.

4. Hierarchical system
- dgon bdag
- one dbu mdzad
- one dge skos
- three gnyer pa (one gnyer pa rgan pa, senior and gnyer pa gzhon pa, junior)
The incumbents of these positions are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks
The monastery counted thirty-three novices and monks in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
There is no particular system, the novices are trained by the elder monks.

8/9. Rituals
Annual ritual of offering the sacrificial cake (tshogs) one thousand times to the protective goddess Srid rgyal drel dmar from the 3rd to the 9th day of the 5th month and the performance of the ritual cycle of sTag la for three days in winter time with no fixed dates.

10. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income. It depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community of the monastery consists of three villages: Dur ma with twenty families, Zhig bro with twenty families and Hor pa with eighty families.

13. Local festivals
The mountain behind the monastery has a la btsas dedicated to the local deity called 'Bo la dPal chen skyong ri and the propitiation festival takes place on the 13th day of the 6th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farmers

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with: Tshe dbang (b.1937), a monk at the monastery, dBang ldan (b.1923), a lay sponsor of the monastery
(2) Texts:
- rNga khul 'bar khams rdzong gi 'bo la dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdo rbsdus in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of the rNga ba Prefecture, MS., pp.197-198
(183) Kun 'brog Monastery

1. Name
   The monastery's full name is Kun 'brog (pronounced as Kub ro) g-yung drung dgon.

2. Location
   The monastery is located 35 km southeast of 'Bar khams Township, the seat of county.

3. History
   According to oral tradition, the monastery was founded two thousand years ago, but there are no written records and the details of its history remain unknown.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one bla ma
   - two dge skos
   - two gnyer pa
   The dge bskos and gnyer pa are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks
   There were twenty-one novices and monks in the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
   The novice monks are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchanges
   The monastery is regarded as a branch of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180) in rNga khog and sends its novices there to study. There were five monks from sNang zhig Monastery when I visited the monastery in autumn 1998.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The observance of the smyung gnas fasting from the 10th to the 15th day of the 4th month; the ritual based on the mNyam med bla sgrub from the 1st to the 6th of the 5th month; the ritual cycle of Khro bo from the the 15th to the 20th day of the 12th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
   The monastery does not possess any collection of books. Only a few of the monks possess their own texts for liturgical purposes.
11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations and has no regular source of income. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of two villages: Kur bu with twenty families and Kor tag with thirty-six families.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews during autumn 1998 with bZang po (b.1934)
(2) Texts:
- rNga khul 'bar khams rdzong gi kun 'brog g-yung drung dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdo rbsdus, in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, the Religion Bureau and Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture, p.202

(184) Ka ca Monastery

The monastery is located 80 km northwest of the 'Bar kham Township, seat of the county. It is a very small establishment. Its only monk, Pad ma, was studying at rTogs Idan Monastery (No.178) in rNga khog as Ka ca is regarded as a branch of rTogs Idan, even though no one knows how and when the connection was established. When I visited the monastery 1998 there was only one elderly caretaker in the monastery. So far, no written records are available.

(185) Ka co Monastery

1. Name

Ka co monastery is also known as Ta rdo ko, after the hill on which it is located.

2. Location

It is located 78 km from 'Bar kham Township, seat of the county.

3. History

There are ruins of a monastery which are said to be very old and probably
those of the original monastery, but no one seems to know who the founder was and when it was destroyed. The present monastery was founded by Dza rong Nyi ma bstan 'dzin, a master of Tsha lung Monastery (No.193) located in the same area but belonging to rMe ba county. The monastery was knocked down during the Cultural Revolution. It was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
The monastery has a *dgon bdag* and the *gnyer pa* acts temporarily as head of the monastery in the absence of the *dgon bdag* who is Dza rong Nam mkha' rin chen as mentioned above.
There are no other official positions.

5. Current number of monks
There were nine lay practitioners living with their families.

6. Current education
The younger practitioners are trained by the elder ones.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery is a branch of Tsha lung Monastery and Dza rong Nam mkha' rin chen regularly visits the monastery to give teachings.

8 / 9. Rituals
The only annual ritual is that of the rNam par rgyal ba' i stong mchod which is performed for three days in the 5th month.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings.

12. Local lay community
The local community is the Ka co village with sixty-three families.

13. Local festivals
The mountain behind the monastery is known as Ta rdo ko and it has two la btsa: gYung drung lha rtse and Tshe 'dzin. The annual propitiation of the mountain spirit takes place in the 6th month.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farmers
Source

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with Dar lo (b.1938), a lay practitioner at the monastery

(186) dGon gsar Monastery

1. Name
   The full name of the monastery is sPa tshang dgon gsar nor bu gling. It is also known as sPa tshang Monastery.

2. Location
   The monastery is located about 80 km north of 'Bar mkhams (70 km of motorable road and a further four hours’ walk uphill).

3. History
   The history of the monastery remains unknown. It was demolished during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s. The present head of the monastery is sPa tshang Tshul khrims bstan pa rab rgyas (b.1970). He studied at sNang zhig Monastery (No.180) for four years and at the Tibetan Buddhist College in Beijing for two years.

4. Hierarchichal system
   - dgon bdag
     - one dbu mdzad (replaced every five years)
     - one dge skos (replaced every five years)
     - one mchod dpon (replaced every three years)
     - one do dam pa (replaced every three years)

5. Current number of monks
   There were twenty-six novices and monks at the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the younger novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery has been closely connected with sNang zhig Monastery since the time of the twenty-third master of the sPa tshang lineage. sNang zhig sends a teacher who is replaced every three or four years, and every three years dGon sar
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

sends three novices to sNang zhig for training and ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
- 4th month: ceremony of the mChod pa stong mtshan from the 8th to the 15th day
- 6th month: the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 8th to the 15th day
- 12th month: the sgrub mchod dgu gtor rite from the 11th to the 14th day with a 'cham dance on the last day

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur, one printed copy of the Khams chen, one printed copy of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan's collected works and various manuscript copies of ritual texts.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of two villages: Myo kyo with twenty-five families and sMad yul with seventy families.

13. Local festivals
The bsang ceremony on a mountain called 'Byo ko g-yung drung lha rtse is performed by the monastic community on the 16th day of the 6th month.

There are three la btsas: rMa bya, Wer rtse ko, and Shu ku. The dates of the renewal ceremony of these la btsas are not fixed.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farmers

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with sPa tshang Tshul khrims bstan pa rab rgyas (b.1970)
(2) Texts:
- An untitled text about the monastery by sPa tshang Tshul khrims bstan pa rab rgyas, MS
(182) 'Bo la Monastery

(183) Kun 'brog Monastery
dGon gsar Monastery
Chu chen County

Chu chen county is situated in rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The county seat is Chu chen, 92 km from 'Bar khams, the capital of the rNga ba Prefecture government. There are 127 villages divided among thirteen townships townships. The county covers an area of 5,550 sq km. The population is 68,215, of whom 20,496 were Tibetans in 1980.

(187) gYung drung lha steng Monastery

1. Name

gYung drung lha steng (or lha sding)

2. Location

The monastery is located around 33 km south of Chu chen Township, seat of the Chu chen county.

3. History

According to written sources, the monastery was founded in the Fire-Dog year of the 1st Rab byung (1046). The monastery was at one time one of the two major Bonpo centres of the eighteen kingdoms of rGyal rong. Among their kings, those of Lcags la, bTsan lha, Wo gzhi, Se mo rdzing 'gag, Cog tse, Dam pa, Khro skyabs, gZim g-yag, dGe bshes tsa and Yar rgan became important sponsors of the monastery. mKhan chen bSod nams rgyal mtshan and sTag dngos Shes rab g-yung drung conducted the monastery’s consecration ceremony (rab gnas) after its completion.

According to an inscription, one of the kings took his dge bsnyen vows from Kun grol grags pa (b.1700) and received the name of Nam mkha’ g-yung drung ye shes. Later he was ordained a monk by mKhan chen bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

After rGyal rong’s conquest by the Manchu emperor Qianlong in 1778, the monastery was converted to the dGe lugs pa tradition by force and was given the Chinese name of Guang fa si (bsTan 'phel gling). The practice of Bon religion was forbidden by an edict. As a result, the monastery fell under the authority of 'Bras spungs Monastery near Lhasa which immediately appointed an abbot for the monastery. It continued to do so until the 1950s. Only some of the names of the abbots sent from Lhasa are known to us:

1. Sangs rgyas 'od zer
2. Grags pa phun tshogs
3. Blo bzang 'jam dbyangs
4. Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin
During the Cultural Revolution the monastery was razed. In the 1980s the central government generously gave 300,000 Chinese Yuan for the monastery’s reconstruction.

Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin (b.1932) of rTogs ldan Monastery (No.88) in rNga khog, oversaw the work with the assistance of Rin chen rgyal, sTag lha skyabs, Legs bshad rgya mtsho, Ya ma bKra shis and Tshe ring phun tshogs. At the beginning, because of the monastery’s conversion, there was some discussion between Bonpo and dGe lugs pa as to which tradition the monastery should belong, but since the majority of the local population wanted it to be Bonpo, the local authorities handed it over to the Bonpo community. The reconstruction was completed in 1989 and Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin became the khri pa and Rin chen rgyal became the mkhan po of the monastery.

The monastery is supported by rTogs ldan Monastery which sends teachers and holds regular annual rituals there to revive Bonpo religious activities in the region after two centuries of dGe lugs pa dominance. Since 1990, the local people select
the *khri pa* and *mkhan po* every year from various Bonpo monasteries in rGyal rong, such as Bla med and Brag dben Monasteries in Chu chen county, Khyung lung Monastery (No.171) in Rong brag county. In 1990 Legs bshad rgya mtsho of Bla med Monastery (No.190) was selected as the *khri pa* and Rin chen rgyal as the *mkhan po*. In 1991 sKaz bzang and Ya ma bKra shis were respectively *khri pa* and *mkhan po*, in 1992 Tshe dbang rgyal mtshan and sTag lha, in 1993 Rab brtan and Legs bshad, in 1994 O rgyan and bSod nams, in 1995 Tshul khrims mthar phyin and bSod nams, in 1996 Tshul khrims dar rgyas and bSod nams, in 1997 Pad ma and gYung drung.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one *khri pa*
   - one *mkhan po*
   - one *gnyer pa*
   All the incumbents of the above-listed positions are replaced every year.

5. Current number of monks
   The number of monks is extremely variable since they come from various monasteries in rGyal rong and stay there for a few months or a few years. Generally, there are between five and fifteen novices and monks at a time.

6. Educationa Exchange
   The monastery has close ties with rTogs ldan Monastery as well as with several monasteries in rGyal rong, especially with those that send monks and sponsor the monastery.

7. Current education
   There is no particular system of education.

8/9. Rituals
   Since there is no fixed number of monks at the monastery, there are no fixed annual rituals

10. Books held in the monastery
   The monastery only has the usual ritual texts.

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.
12. Local community

The local lay community consists mainly of the population in the A nyin area among other Bonpo communities in rGyal rong.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with Bon blon Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin (b.1932), a trulku of rTogs Idan Monastery

(2) Texts:
- *rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi g-yung drung lha lding dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* in *rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus*, MS, pp.244-248. Compiled by the Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture
- Samten G. Karmay, “The Decree of the Khro-chen King”, *Acta Orientalia* 51, (Copenhagen) 1990: 141-159
- Per Kvaerne, Elliot Sperling, *Preliminary Study of an Inscription from Rgyal-rong*, *Acta Orientalia* (Copenhagen) 1993, 54, 113-125

Notes

1 A short anonymous history of gYung drung lha steng, pp. 244-248 in *rNga khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus* published by the Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture, MS. According to another point of view, the monastery was founded in the 13th century, see Si khron zhing chen ngag ba bod rigs rang skyong khul chu chen rdzong gi sa cha'i ming 'go by Chu chen rdzong sa ming 'go khrid tsho chung, p.155. 1984, 'Bar kham.

2 The other was mTsho mtho Monastery (No.188).

(188) mTsho mtho Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is mTsho mtho gShen bstan nor bu'i gling. It is also known as Tsho steng Monastery.

2. Location

The monastery is located 40 km northwest of Chu chen, the seat of the Chu chen county (there is a distance of 36 km from the county town to Sa ba kyo township, and another 4 km from there to the monastery).
3. History

The monastery was founded two years before the introduction of the Rab byung system of datation (1027). It is not certain who the founder was. A list of the names of its abbots is available:

1. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan
2. bSam gtan phun tshogs
3. Legs pa rgyal mtshan
4. gYung drung khri zer
5. dBang rgyal bstan 'dzin
6. Nor bu dpal dbang
7. Tshe dbang
8. Sha trog pa
9. Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin
10. bKra shis rgyal mtshan
11. bSod nams g-yung drung
12. bsTan ’dzin nor bu
13. Nam mkha’ dbang rgyal
14. gYung drung bstan ’dzin
15. ’Dul rgyal phun tshogs
16. lHa dbang bstan ’dzin’
17. Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin
18. Nam mkha’ dbang ldan
19. bSod nam bstan ’dzin
20. Nyi ma dbang rgyal
21. Nam mkha’ lha sgron
22. Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin
23. bsTan pa’i blo gros
24. Nyi ma grags pa
25. gShen rgyal bstan ’dzin, the present abbot

4. Hierarchical system

- mkhan po
- dge bskos (elected by the monks for three years)
- dbu mdzad
- mchod dpon

In this monastery, it is the dge bskos who appoints the dbu mdzad, lha gnyer and mchod dpon, and who determines their terms of office.

5. Current number of monks

There were thirty novices and monks in the monastery in autumn 1998.
6. Current education

There are six different classes devoted to the following subjects:

1) Sum rtags snyan gsum (*sum cu pa, rtags ’jug and snyan ngag*)
2) Tshad ma
3) 'Dul ba
4) dBu ma
5) Phar phyin
6) mDzod

8/9. Rituals

Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 4th and the 5th days of the 1st month, ritual based on the *gYung drung klong rgyas* from the 10th to the 15th of the same month; the observance of the *smyung gnas* fast on the 14th and the 15th days of the 6th month; the recitation ritual known as Ti tri su'i sgrub chen on the 14th and the 15th days of the 11th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur, one printed copy of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four communities: A lag sho, Mu khre, Le dam and Kyab kya bho.

A lag sho community comprises four villages: We bu with nine families, Tho bo with four families, De thul with sixteen families and mTsho mtho with twenty families.

Mu khre community comprises five villages: Sa me with seven families, Dan ceb with twenty-two families, Mu khre with twenty-one families, Mur ye with six families and Yu ska with four families.

Le dam community comprises three villages: Le dam with twelve families, rGyal gu with three families and gZhi bzhor with thirty families.

Kyab kya bo community comprises three villages: lDe bzo with twenty-four families, Kyab kyo bo with fifty families and Le bu with twelve families. In addition there are ten nomad families connected with the four communities.
13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery has a la bstas called Mo khrom dedicated to the spirit of the mountain. Its renewal festival takes place on the 5th of the 5th month.

There is also a sacred mountain known as Shel ri stag gsum located four hours' walk west of the monastery. It is venerated only by the Bonpo communities on the 5th of the 5th month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farmers, nomads

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks in autumn 1998: gYung drung bstan 'dzin (b.1923) and Blo gros kun gsal (b.1933)

(2) Texts:
- rNga khul chu chen rdzong mtsho steng dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bs dus in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus. Compiled by the Religion Bureau and Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture, MS, pp. 241-243
- rNga khul chu chen rdzong mtsho steng dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bs dus provides dates for the most of the abbots, but does not seem reliable enough to quote here.

(189) dGra lha khyung dgon Monastery

1. Name

The monastery has several names: 'Brug ri bkra shis khyung dgon, Khyung khu, Khyung dgon and Brag bon dgon.

2. Location

The monastery is located in 41 km northwest of Chu chen, seat of the Chu chen county.

3. History

The monastery was founded by gShen rab rgyal in the Earth-Sheep year of the 3rd Rab byung (1199). Following is a list of the monastery’s successive abbots:

1. gShen rab rgyal
2. A thang rtswa zan
3. Bla ma Ka chen
4. Nam mkha’ dbang ldan
The monastery was demolished during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s. The present master of the monastery is Rab brtan. He was chosen among the monks of the monastery.

4. Hierarchical system
- one bla ma
- one dbu mdzad (replaced every three years)
- one dge skos (replaced every three years)
- two gnyer ba (replaced every two years)
- two lha gnyer (replaced every month)

5. Current number of monks
There were twenty-eight novices and monks at the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The novices are taught by one of the learned monks.

8 / 9. Rituals
Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 4th to the 6th day of the 1st month; the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud from the 8th to the 10th day of the 4th month; the observance of the smyung gnas fasting from the 11th to the 14th day of the 10th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has one printed copy of the Kanjur and various ritual texts in manuscript.
11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of three communities: Mal nib community has 8 villages: bZhi mdo with thirteen families, rGye le with eight families, Ka yam kro with eight families, Yi ban kyo with six families, A go with four families, Li phru with fourteen families, Tang khu with six families, Ru rdo with six families.

Le ltam pe community has five villages: Ka lo with seven families, rMa mdo with twenty families, Nga kyab with twelve families, Pa le with twenty families and sPo to with five families.

rGya yag community has five villages: Yi rdib with eighteen families, Pi kye with eleven families, Sa yo with fifteen families, Mo lo kyo with thirteen families and Mi len teb with fifteen families.

13. Local festivals

Dze mu At the top of the mountain behind the monastery there is la btsas dedicated to the local deity called Dze mu who is propitiated by the monks on the 5th of the 5th month, and another la btsas for the local deity rDza nag located near the monastery to the east, also propitiated on the 5th of the 5th month.

There is also a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called dGra lha khyung rtse 5 km north of the monastery. This was sanctified by Grub thob gShen rab rgyal and is venerated by the whole local population on the 4th day of the 5th month.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews with following monks at the monastery in autumn 1998: Rab brtan (b.1933), Zhi tho pur (b.1931), Drung drung (b.1931)

(2) Texts:
- rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi khyung dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus. Compiled by the Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga ba Prefecture, MS, pp.239-240
(190) Bla med Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Bla med yid bzhin nor bu’i gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 110 km west of Chu chen, seat of the Chu chen county.

3. History

According to Yon tan rgya mtsho (dGon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, MS) the monastery was founded Rig pa rang shar at the age of thirty-seven and died at the age of ninety-five.¹

Following is a list of the monastery’s masters:

1. rDza bo Rig pa rang shar
2. gSal ba 'od chen
3. gSal ba 'od chung
4. Dran pa bdud 'dul
5. bShes yes dbon po
6. rNam dag rgyal mtshan
7. gTsug phud 'od zer
8. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
9. Khro bo rgyal
10. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan
11. Tshul khrims
12. Thub pa
13. rNam-dag 'od zer
14. Ngag dbang rgya mtsho
15. bSod nams nyi ma
16. Theg pa rgyal mtshan
17. Phun tshogs nams rgyal
18. Blo gros thub bstan
19. Shes pa
20. Rin chen lhun grub
21. bsTan 'dzin grags pa
22. Shes rab nyi ma
23. Shes rab dbang ldan
24. Zla ba rgyal mtshan
25. Phun tshogs dbang rgyal
26. bSod nams blo gros
27. bsTan 'dzin tshul khrims
28. gYung drung phun tshogs
29. Kun bzang lhun grub
30. Shes rab kun gsal
31. sKal bzang nor bu
32. sByin pa
33. gYung drung rnam dag
34. gYung drung mthu rtsal
35. Tshul khrism 'od zer
36. Tshe dbang rgyal mtshan²

4. Hierarchical system
   - one dbu mdzad (replaced every three years)
   - one dge skos (replaced every three years)
   - one gnyer ba (replaced every year)
   - one mchod dpon (replaced every year)

5. Current number of monks
   There were forty-five novices and monks at the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The novices are sent to the monasteries of sNang zhig (No.180) and rTogs ldan (No.178) for their ordination and further training.

8/9. Rituals
   Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 5th day and the ritual based on the gYung drung klong rgyas from the 15th to the 18th day of the 1st month; the rituals performed in summer known as dbyar sgrub from the 1st day of the 6th month and those performed in winter dgun sgrub starting in the 14th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
    One printed copy of Kanjur published by Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin and one printed copy of Katen published by bsTan pa’i nyi ma.

11. Income and expenses
    The monastery owns thirty 'bri (female yak) which are kept by the local people for the monastery with the shi med contract. Otherwise the monastery depends on
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

offerings from the faithful and has no regular source of income.

13. Local festivals

There is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called Ma rgyud gsang mchog, west of the monastery. It is surrounded by four mountains at the four directions: gYung drung gtams rdzong to the east, 'Khor lo brtsegs rdzong to the north, Pad ma spungs rdzong to the west and Rin chen 'bar rdzong to the south. There is a la btsas on top of each mountain which are dedicated to the spirits of the mountains.

The main sacred mountain was sanctified by gTer ston Tshe dbang 'gyur med who is said to have retrieved many gter ma scriptures from it. There is a hermitage facing the principal mountain. The propitiation ceremony of the mountain by the local people takes place on the 22nd day of the 5th month.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1998 with Yon tan rgya mtsho and Ya ma bKra shis (b. 1934)

(2) Texts:
- dGon pa 'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus by Yon tan rgya mtsho, MS
- rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi bla med dgon pa 'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa 'i lo rgyus, the Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga pa Prefecture, MS, pp. 236-238

Notes

1 According to another source, the monastery was founded by Rig pa rang shar 114 years before the introduction of the Rab byung system of datation, in 913 A.D, (see rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi bla med dgon pa 'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, p. 236).

2 The rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi bla med dgon pa 'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus provides a list of masters of the same lineage differently: 1) rDza bo Rig pa rang shar, 2) gSal ba 'od chung, 3) gSal ba 'od chung, 4) Dran pa bdud 'dul, 5) bShes yas dpon po, 6) rNam dag bshes yas, 7) rGyal mtshan bshes yas, 8) Shes rab 'od zer, 9) gYung drung rgyal ba, 10) Kho bo rgyal, 11) Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 12) Tshul khrims, 13) Thub pa, 14) gYung drung rnam dag, 15) bsTan 'dzin tshul khrims, 16) gYung drung phun tshogs, 17) Kun dga' 'od zer, 18) Legs bshad rgya mtsho (b. 1931), 19) Ya ma bkra shis (b. 1934), 20) gYung drung rab rgyal (b. 1962), 21) Yon tan rab rgyal (b. 1962), 22) dPal ldan rab rgyal (b. 1971), 23) mThar phyin rab rgyal (b. 1971).
(191) bZod sgom Monastery

1. Name
   The monastery’s full name is bZod sgom bKra shis mam rgyal gling.

2. Location
   The monastery is located 74 km northwest of Chu chen, the seat of the county.

3. History
   The monastery was founded by Pa go Shes rab rgyal mtshan (992-1043) in the Earth-Dragon year of the 1st Rab byung (1028). Following is a list of his successors:
   1. Pa go Shes rab rgyal mtshan
   2. Pa go bSod nams blo gros (1030-1095)
   3. Pa go Phun tshogs dbang rgyal (1092-1141)
   4. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan (1136-1199)
   5. bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1202-1275)
   6. Rin chen rgyal mtshan (1266-1339)
   7. gYung drung bstan ’dzin (1336-1408)
   8. gYung drung gtsug phud (1398-1448)
   9. sKal bzang g-yung drung (1444-1498)
  10. Nyi ma bstan ’dzin (1466-1552)
  11. Phun tshogs mam rgyal (1550-1612)
  12. sKal bzang blo gros (1609-1689)
  13. gYung drung dbang Idan (1687-1771)
  14. bsTan pa dar rgyas (1768-1836)
  15. Shes rab bstan ’dzin (1916-1963)
   After the time of Kun bzang rgyal mtshan, the fourth master in the line, the monastery was looked after by the masters of dGra lha Khyung dgon Monastery (No.189). Thus from that time onwards the monastery became a branch of dGra lha khyung dgon. The monastery was rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties.

4. Hierarchical system
   - two dbu mdzad (with indefinite terms of office)
   - one dge skos (replaced every two years)
   - three gnyer ba (replaced every two years)
   - one mchod dpon (replaced each year)

5. Current number of monks
   There were thirty-six and novices monks at the monastery in autumn 1998.
6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
Since it is a branch of dGra lha khyung dgon, the two monasteries maintain close ties. They send their novices to the monasteries of sNang zhig (No.180) and rTogs ldan (No.178) in rNga khog for ordination and further training.

8 / 9. Rituals
The ritual cycle of dBal gsas from the 12th to the 19th day with a 'cham dance from the 18th to the 20th day of the 1st month; the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 15th to 19th day of the 4th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery possesses one printed copy of Bonpo Kanjur and one printed copy of Katen, one printed copy of Dri med gzi brjid and a few other texts.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on donations from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of four villages: sByer chu with thirty-eight families, rDi mi with twelve families, mGar rdo with sixteen families and 'Gram with three families.

13. Local festivals
There is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) which was originally a Bonpo site and which was believed to be an abode of gShen lha 'od dkar. However, since most of the region's population were converted to Buddhism, the Buddhists began to regard it as the abode of Thugs rje chen po or sPyan ras gzigs. The Bonpo, however, still circumambulate the mountain.

14. Occupation of the local people
Farmers

Sources
(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with sTag la skyabs (b.1935), Shes rab tshul khrims (b.1930), Bla ma skyabs (b.1943), all three monks at the monastery, and with
Nor bu thar (b.1942) and rGyal ba (b.1947), both laymen

(2) Texts:
- an anonymous untitled history of the monastery, MS
- rNga khul chu chen rdzong gi bzod sgom dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdu in rNga khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, The Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga pa Prefecture, MS, pp.220-224
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.
gYung drung lha steng Monastery

mTsho mtho Monastery
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(189) dGra lha khyung Monastery

(190) Bla med Monastery
bZod sgom Monastery
rMe ba county

rMe ba (Hong Yuan in Chinese) county is located in rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. There are 39 villages divided between 12 Townships and 6 state farms in the county. The area is 8,478 sq km. The population is 26,060 (17,701 of whom were Tibetans in 1980). The county seat is Khyung mchu, 190 km from 'Bar khams, the capital of rNga ba Prefecture.

(192) Mag gsar Temple

1. Name

The temple (gsas khang) has three names: Mag gsar khyung po g-yung drung gling, Mag gsar khyung po dar rgyas gling and gSang sngags smin grol theg chen gling.

2. Location

The temple is located in 3 km northwest of sKyang mchu, the seat of rMe ba county.

3. History

The nomads of Mag gsar, a village in Chu khog town of Reb gong county, rMa Iho Prefecture, migrated to the present site of rMe ba only decades ago. The nomadic community was an important sponsor of the temple in Mag gsar village in Reb gong until the last decade of the 20th century.

In 1993 'Jam dpal rdo rje (b. 1950) founded Mag gsar Khyung po g-yung drung gling as a branch of the temple in Reb gong mentioned above. Since Mar gsar village in Reb gong traditionally paid homage to Gong thang, a lama of Bla brang Monastery, the temple’s official proprietor (dgon bdag) is still Gong thang, although 'Jam dpal rdo rje is the founder of the temple.

4. Hierarchical system

- dgon bdag, head of the temple
- dbu mdzad (replaced every three years)
- one dge skos (replaced each year)
- two gnyer pa (with no predetermined term of office)

5. Current number of residents

There are one hundred and forty-five tantric practitioners (sngags pa) at the temple fifty of whom form the main group for the temple’s annual rituals.
6. Current education
The system is similar to that of the gsas khang in Reb gong (cf. Nos. 101-115). All the practitioners are laymen and only go to the temple to perform the annual rituals. The younger practitioners are trained by the elder ones.

7. Educational exchange
The temple is closely connected with four Bonpo reincarnations: Tshul chen and Bon blon Nam mkha’ bstan 'dzin of rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) in rNga khog, Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho of Bon brgya Monastery (No.100) in Reb gong and sMon rgyal lha sras of dBal khyung Monastery (No.155) in Nyag rong.

8. Rituals
- 1st month: prayer for the deads based on the sKye sgo gcod pa from the 7th to the 13th day
- 5th month: the ritual cycle of sNang srid zhu chen from the 10th to the 14th day
- 9th month: the Zhi khro cycle from the 1st to the 5th day
- 7th month: the ritual cycle based on the Tshe dbang bod yul ma on the 10th day
- 10th month: the ritual cycle of dBal gsas from the 22nd to the 25th day (the local name for the ritual INga mchod suggests Buddhist influence)
- 12th month: the dgu gtor rite from the 22nd to the 29th day
There is a special ritual for the village which is performed by both Bonpo and rNying ma pa tantrics together in the gsas khang during the 5th month for several days, which includes the ritual cycle of sPyi ’dul performed by the Bonpos and rituals of Ma mo and mGon po performed by the rNying ma pa.

10. Books held in the temple
The gsas khang has three printed copies of the Bonpo Kanjur and one printed copy of Katen, the edition of bsTan pa’i nyi ma.

12. Income and expenses
The temple has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.

13. Local festivals
There are four la btsas dedicated to the local deities: A skya, Seskong, gYu skod and dMag dpon. The deities’ propitiation takes place on the 15th day of the 7th month and is attended by the local lay communities.
14. Occupation of the local people

They are nomads.

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with 'Jam dpal rdo rje (b.1950)
(2) Texts:
    - _Mag gsar khyung po g-yung drung gling ngam theg chen gling gi rnam thar_
      by 'Jam dpal rdo rje, MS, composed in 1999
    - _rNga ba khul gyi hung yon rdzong gi dmag gsar bon dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor
      bsdus, NKhGL, pp.12-13_

(193) Tsha lung Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Tsha lung rNam rgyal bsam gtan ling, or sTag lung rnam rgyal bsam gtan ling. It is also known as Tsha lung sTag tshang.

2. Location

The monastery is located 90 km southwest of Khyung mchu, seat of the rMe ba county.

3. History

The monastery was founded by Bya chen Nyi ma ’dzin in the Fire-Horse year of the 3rd Rab byung (1186). He was a son of Do ’phags chen po, the founder of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180) in rNga khog.

Following is a list of Bya chen Nyi ma ’dzin’s descendants and successors:

1. Bya chen Nyi ma ’dzin
2. dBang phyug rin chen
3. sMin grol rgyal mtshan
4. bSlab gsum tshul khrims
5. mKhas btsun kun bzang
6. rNam grol rin chen
7. Drung mu bstan ’dzin
8. mKhas mchog lhun grub
9. baTan ’dzin ’od zer
10. rGyal ba bsam gtan
11. mKhyen brtse bstan pa
12. rNam grol rin chen
13. gYung drung bstan dbang
14. bsTan 'dzin dar rgyas
15. Dza rong Nyi ma bstan 'dzin
16. gYung drung tshul khrims
17. Grags pa bzung po
18. rGyal ba
19. Rin chen lhun grub
20. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
21. Nam mkha' tshul khrims
22. Dza rong Nam mkha' rin chen

The 22nd in the line is the present master of the monastery. He was seriously ill when I visited the monastery in autumn 1998, and I was told that he was training sKal bzang shes rab (b.1982), his son, to be his successor. The monastery was razed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag, hereditary
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one rgan pa
   - one dge skos
   - one mchod g-yog

   The incumbents, with the exception of the dgon bdag, are replaced every three years.

5. Current number of monks

   There were thirty-five novices and monks at the monastery in 1998.

6. Current education

   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

   For the above-mentioned historical reasons, the monastery is connected with sNang zhig (No.180) and is still responsible for Tsha lung, and the monks go there for further training and ordination.

8/9. Rituals

   Ma rgyud from the 4th to the 7th day, followed by smon lam from the 8th to the 15th day of the 1st month (with Byams pa gling skor festival on the 15th day); rNam rgyal stong mchod from the 4th to 9th day of the 4th month; the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 14th to the 21st day of the 6th month; Atonement ritual for the
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

religious protectors (srung ma'i tshogs 'don) is from the 1st to the 6th day of the 9th month.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four villages: Ba kha so ma of Chu kha ru community with twelve families, Ba kha rnying ba of Chu kha ru community with eleven families, Brag ris ma village with fourteen families and Shing bzo ba kha village with sixteen families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called bTsan mkhar and is associated with a local deity called bTsan A bse. He is propitiated by both monks and lay followers on the 2nd day of the 1st month.

There is a sacred mountain known as Tsha ri gYung drung dgra 'dul 8 km west of the monastery that was sanctified by rTogs ldan bSod nams phun tshogs, a master of rTogs ldan Monastery (No.178) in rNga khog. It is propitiated by both monks and lay followers on the 15th day of the 6th month.

14. Occupation of the local population

Farmers

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks at the monastery in autumn 1998: Dza rong Nam mkha' rin chen (b.1938), Tshul khrims ye shes (b.1930), Dza rong sKal bzang shes rab (b.1982)

(2) Texts:

- sTag lung rnam rgyal bsam gtan gling gi bstan 'byung bkra shis bde legs kun 'byung by Nam mkha' tshul khrims, MS
- rNga ba khul hung yon rdzong gi tsha lung dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdo rbsdus in NKhGL pp.7-8
mDzod dge county

mDzod dge county belongs to rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. The county seat is located at sTag tsha dgon. The county comprises 16 districts xiang with 86 villages. The county covers an area of 10,203 sq km. The population is 50,459,41,444 of whom were Tibetans in 1980. There are six Bonpo monasteries in the county.

(194) A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is A skyid skyang tshang gYung drung bstan rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 41 km northeast of the county town, the seat of mDzod dge county. There is a motorable road leading to the monastery.

3. History

Dri med 'od zer believes (DzNGL pp.112-114) that the first master of the monastery was sKyang 'phags, one of the Three Saints of Amdo (’phags pa rnam gsum), who lived in the 2nd Rab byung (1087-1146). He first founded a hermitage known as Bon po'i bde khug.

sKyang 'phags had two sons, Thog rgod and Thogs med. Practitioners began to gather together at the hermitage. Following is a list of the masters who preached at the hermitage:

1. sKyang 'phags
2. Thog rgod and Thogs med
3. rGyal mtshan dpal bzang. This master reorganized the hermitage.
4. bSod nams bstan 'dzin. This master built a temple below the hermitage and living quarters around it.
5. Khri gtsug bstan 'dzin
6. Mi ’gyur gtsug phud
7. bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal
8. Rin chen 'od zer
9. rGyal ba bstan 'dzin
10. Khri rgyal grags bzang. During the time of this master, tantric practitioners lived in the hermitage, also a few monks.
11. sKyang bla bsTan 'dzin phun tshogs. This master with the help of Gling zhig rGyal ba blo gros extended the hermitage into a small monastery by
building an assembly hall (ʼdu khang) in the 7th Rab byung (1387-1446).
12. gYung drung bstan ʼdzin
13. bSod nams rgyal mtshan
14. sKyang bla dBang ldan grags pa. This master enlarged the monastery after it merged with the monasteries of Dar rgyal lha rtse and Phag rgod (DzNGL p.113). He renamed the monastery A skyid gYung drung bstan rgyas gling. He insisted on the strict observance of monastic discipline.
15. bsTan pa ʼod zer
16. Rin chen lhun grub
17. gYung drung ye shes ʼod gsal alias Byang chub rin chen, a renowned physician, popularly known as A byang tshang
18. Nam mkhaʼ lhun grub. During the time of this master the monastery was burned down.
19. Nam mkhaʼ bstan ʼdzin and sKyang dbon Rin chen rgyal mtshan. The second rebuilt the monastery and also elaborated the rules of the monastery. He established the ritual of offering known as Klong rgyas mchod pa with the 'cham dance according to the tradition of Sangs rgyas gling pa during the 1st month.
20. bsTan pa grags dbang and Nam mkhaʼ mi ʼgyur gtsug rgyan
21. gTsug gshen rgyal ba. According to Dri med ʼod zer, he recognized the famous writer sKyang sprul Nam mkhaʼ rgyal mtshan as the reincarnation of Nam mkhaʼ bstan ʼdzin. gTsug gshen rgyal ba was contemporary with rGyal ba g-yung drung phun tshogs alias A tshogs tshang who was a famous master. He was born in sTag ra village in The bo and was regarded as the emanation of sKyang ʼphags and took up residence in sKyang tshang Monastery. Before he came to the monastery he is said to have studied at ʼBras spungs where he obtained the rab ʼbyams pa degree. He was also invited by the kings of Lung dgu, Khro skyabs in rGyal rong, and the monastery has preserved some of the valuable gifts he received from them.
22. sKyang tshang rGya nag sprul sku sKal bzang mkhas grub alias A mkhas tshang who greatly supported the monasteries rTswa ring (No.98) and bSam ʼgrub (No.197).
23. Nyi ma bstan ʼdzin. Because he died very young, he is called sPrul chung.
24. gYung drung rgyal mtshan alias Nam mkhaʼ dbang phyug, also known as rGya nag sprul sku rNal ʼbyor ba
25. Nam mkhaʼ rin chen alias bsTan ʼdzin rin chen rnam rgyal (b.1880) was born in Khang sar village of A skyid in mDzod dge. He was a very learned master and wrote a number of works.
26. sKal bzang sangs rgyas bstan ʼdzin (1905-1961) was born in ʼJam pa village of Thang smad community in the A skyid area of mDzod dge.
27. Dri med 'od zer (b.1935) is the present head of the monastery. He was born in Pe chung village in sTeng ka, The bo. He is a great Bonpo scholar and is also renowned in the area as a physician in Tibetan medicine. In addition to running the monastery, he works at mDzod dge Tibetan Medicine Hospital and has received several official titles for his social service.

The monastery was reconstructed in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one bla ma
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one dngul bdag
   - one rtsis pa

5. Current number of monks
   There are twenty-six novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks. The monastery often organizes public teachings.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery maintains close ties with Chags ri (No.94), rTswa ring and bSam 'grub monasteries in The bo county, and with Nyos zhing (No.195) and dGu skyang (No.196) monasteries in mDzod dge county, but their educational exchanges are not regular.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 5th day; the ritual based on the Klong rgyas from the 6th to the 15th day with a 'cham dance on the 15th day
   - 2nd month: the cycle of the Yi dam kun 'dus from the 13th to the 22nd day
   - 3rd-4th months: the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 21st day of the to the 1st day of the 4th month; the recitation of Ma tri and Du tri su alternately, starting on the 18th day of the 4th month
   - 5th month: commemoration of sKyang 'phags from the 21st to the 22nd day
   - 6th month: the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 9th to the 15th and the renewal ceremony of the la btsas on the following day
   - 7th month: general religious service (zhabs brtan) from the 13th to the 15th day
- 8th month: the observance of the bsnyen gnas abstinence and the smyung gnas fasting from the 14th to the 15th day
- 9th month: whitewashing ceremony (dkar rtsi) of the assembly hall’s inner walls on the 21st and 22nd day
- 10th month: the ritual based on the Klong rgyas on the 14th and 15th days

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has three printed copies of Kanjur, two printed copies of Katen, printed copies of the collected works of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, and more than two hundred texts in print and manuscript, including a few Buddhist texts, dealing with rDzogs chen, ritual and literature.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of nine villages:
sTag gi gad mgo with ten families, A skyid stod with twenty-nine families, A skyid grog with nine families, mDzo mgo thong rab with fifty-eight families in two areas, sKyang ston with six families in mDzo mgo, sKyang skor with thirteen families, sDe ba with thirty-four families, Thong rab sa la with twelve families and Pan yon with four families.

13. Local festivals

There are four la btsas located at the top, middle and foot of the mountain behind the monastery: the la btsas called Nor bu, below the banner at the summit, sKyang tshang la btsas half-way up the mountain, and finally the new la btsas (la btsas gsar pa) and Grwa tshang la btsas at the foot of the mountain. The renewal ceremony of the four la btsas traditionally took place on the 15th day of the 6th month, but now the ceremony of sKyang tshang la btsas is carried out on the 1st day of the 1st month.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and trade

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with Dri med 'od zer (b.1935), the most learned Bonpo scholar in the area
(2) Texts:

- sTod skyang zhes su grags pa a skyid skyang tshang dgon bkra shis g-yung drung dar rgyas gling gi byung ba cung zad brjod pa shel dkar me long by Dri med 'od zer in mDzod dge’i bod brgyud bang bstan dgon sde so so ‘i lo rgyus mdo rbsdus, published by Srid gros mDzod dge rdzong u yon lhan khang rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig khang, September, 1999, pp.111-217

(195) Nyos zhing Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is The brag Nyos zhing or The chu’i brag dkar bya rgod dgon smin grol nor bu’i gling. It is also known as Nyi shar, because it is located near a rock called Nyi shar brag. The most sacred mountain in the area, Brag dkar bya sgod, is located immediately behind the monastery and thus the monastery is also known as Brag dkar bya sgod.

2. Location

The monastery is located at the foot of Mount Brag dkar bya rgod, about 131 km north of sTag tsha, the seat of mDzod dge county.

3. History

The bo township of mDzod dge county is geographically and traditionally part of The bo county in present day Kan lho Prefecture, Kansu Province. In the 13th Rab yung (1747-1806), at the time of gZa’ ru Khro rgyal, the chief of the gZa’ ru tribe, there was a village called Bon sde stod ma near gTso tshang Monastery (No.91), whose religious gathering place was a temple of A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery (No.194) in Ma ru village of gZa’ ru tribe where a few monks lived, known as Bon sde stod ma. But as the religious practitioners did not live according to monastic vows, it was decided that the monastery should be moved to a more isolated spot. Thus A tshogs tshang of A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery bought the present site of the monastery in exchange for a white cow and other goods. The new monastery was named Nyos zhing, literally “field that was bought”. After the monastery was completed, the monasteries of sKyang tshang, gTso tshang and the local lay community decided that since it was A tshogs tshang who built the monastery, it would remain a branch of sKyang tshang Monastery, but that since it was located nearer gTso tshang, the latter would take charge of the monastery and the chief of the local gZa’ ru tribe would be the monastery’s patron. The agreement was committed to writing and signed by all parties. Thus rGyal ba g-yung drung phun tshogs of sKyang tshang and gYung drung bstan ’dzin of gTso tshang are
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Bonpo monks and temples in Tibet were counted as the first of its patriarchs.

1. rGyal ba g-yung drung phun tshogs and gYung drung bstan 'dzin
2. gTso bla bSod nams phun tshogs alias A bsod tshang
3. gTso bla bDe chen dbang 'dus
4. gTso bla bSod nams dbang grags
5. gTso dbon bsTan 'dzin dbang rgyal alias A khu bsTan rgyal tshang, also known as gTso dbon rgan
6. gTso dbon Zla ba rgyal mtshan, a nephew of the 5th
7. gTso dGra 'dul mgon po (1932-1971) was recognized as the rebirth of A khu bsTan rgyal tshang by gTso dbon Zla ba rgyal mtshan. He was the first reincarnation of the monastery. The monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s. The master appoints a bla ma to take care of the monastery in his absence. The present head of Nyos zhing Monastery is Shes rab dbang rgyal. He is still also the head of gTso tshang Monastery.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one mkhan po
   - one dbu mdzad (who also acts as dge skos, replaced every three years)
   - three spyi ba (reappointed every three years)

5. Current number of monks
   There are twenty-nine novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education
   There no organized classes. The novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   Since Nyos zhing was a branch of A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery, both monasteries maintain close ties. The monk students go to sKyang tshang for further training and to take their ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
   Commemoration mNyam med chen po on the 4th and 5th days and the recitation of the prayer (smon lam) from the 13th to the 15th day of the 1st month; the ritual based on the Klong rgyas sgrub pa and the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 11th to the 22nd day of the 4th month; ritual based on the rTsa gsum on the 21st and 22nd days of the 5th month.

10. Books held in the monastery
   The monastery has one printed copy of Kanjur, one printed copy of Katen and
various other texts, including several works of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of seventeen villages in the vicinity of the monastery: Bum pa with seven families, Tshal ru with nine families, Sog po with five families, Shel gnag with fourteen families, rGu rab with eleven families, Gral ring with thirteen families, Ther re with twelve families, E ’dzin with six families, 'Khor tshang with fifteen families, A 'grub with seven families, gSer with seven families, Ra tshang with three families, gNas yag with five families, gZa’ tshang with four families, Gral mngon with six families, rDang du’u with three families and Nub ru with three families.

13. Local festivals

The la btsas on the mountain behind the monastery is dedicated to the local deity and its renewal ceremony is carried out by the monks on the 11th of the 4th month.

The la btsas of De’u skyes is renewed by the lay people on the 4th day of the 5th month and the la btsas of sTag chen on the 15th of the 5th month. The date for the renewal ceremony of Nor bu rdzong la btsas is not fixed.

The most popular sacred mountain in the area is Mount Brag dkar bya sgod. In Bonpo tradition, it is associated with the Zhi khro cycle. The mountain, which is located immediately behind the monastery, was sanctified by sKyang ’phags Nyi ma ’od zer at the beginning of the 2nd Rab byung (1087-1146). Buddhists also regard the mountain as sacred and associate it with bDe mchog. The mountain is venerated by both Bonpo and Buddhist communities.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with sKal bzang bstan pa (b.1971), a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
   - The chu’i brag dkar bya rgod dgon smin grol nor bu’i gling gi byung ba mdor bs dus (The brag nyos zhing dgon in the catalogue) by Dri med ’od zer in mDzod dge’i bod brgyud ang bstan dgon sde so so’i lo rgyus mdor bs dus, published by Srid gros mDzod dge rdzong u yon lhan khang rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig khang, September, 1999, pp.251-291
   - an untitled account of the monastery’s lha sde (local lay community) by the administrative committee of Nyos zhing Monastery, MS
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- mDzod dge rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus by mDzod dge rdzong sa ming 'go khrid tshan chung, 1986, p.1
- A liturgical text concerned with bla ma, yi dam and mkha' 'gro, composed by sKyang sprul Nam mkha'rgyal mtshan

(196) sGur.skyang Monastery

1. Name

sGur skyang is the abbreviation of sGur ba sKyang tshang; the monastery’s full name is sGur ba sKyang tshang dgon rnam rgyal kun grags gling. sGur ba is the name of the valley where the monastery is located. It is also spelt dGu ba, because the monastery faces a range of nine mountains collectively known as Go tshang spun dgu, the “nine brothers of Go tshang mountain” (which is also the name of nine local tribes).

2. Location

The monastery is located 61 km east of county town of mDzod dge.

3. History

A few years before the introduction of the Rab byung chronology that begins with the year 1027, a Bonpo called sKyang rtse Nyi ma grags pa opened a hermitage near Sa ral village, west of rTsub ma'i la dmar on the flank of Mount Go tshang in mDzod-dge. Later, in the 1st Rab byung (1027-1086), his son ’Bum skyabs, who was also called sKyang rtse tshang, built a temple at the hermitage which attracted an increasing number of practitioners.

A brother of ’Bum skyabs known as sKyang rtse ’Phags pa skyabs was regarded as a great saint. He is often called simply sKyang ’phags (DzNGL p.52). He was one of the Three Bonpo Saints of Amdo and founded Thang zhing gYung drung gling Monastery above Thang zhing village in the 2nd Rab byung (1087-1146). This monastery was also known as Nyin ka Monastery.

bSod nams ’bum, the chief of sGur ba valley, built a residence for sKyang ’phags and his family, to ensure his family’s descent and gave him seven families to serve him. For this reason, sKyang ’phags is regarded as the first master of all the monasteries belonging to the sKyang tshang lineage. In order to establish a real monastery, sKyang ’phags chose a site known as Gling ’og, but it was not built in his lifetime.

Following is a list of the masters in the sKyang ’phags lineage:
1. sKyang ’phags
2. Thog rgod nam mkha’rgyal mtshan, one of three sons of sKyang ’phags,
moved the temple of Saral to Gling 'og and renamed it rNam rgyal lha khang. The new complex became known as rNam rgyal kun grags gling or more commonly as dGu ba sKyang tshang Monastery. He remained there as head of the monastery, while Thogs med, his brother, married to continue the hereditary succession.

3. Grags pa dbang rgyal (b.1148), founder of bSam 'grub Monastery (No.197)
4. gYung drung thos grol, moved rNam rgyal lha khang of Nyin ka and the temple of Ra sngon 'bri sde from sTag ra to Gling 'og
5. bSod nams bzang po alias rGyal ba rgya mtsho, founder a monastery in Shar khog (Zung chu) in the Iron-Tiger year of the 15th Rab byung (1290)
6. Rin chen blo gros, built a temple dedicated to the Eighty Saints in the monastery and also supervised sKyang tshang Monastery (No.202) in Shar khog
7. bDud 'dul dbang grags
8. gYung drung bstan rgyal
9. dKon mchog yon tan
10. rNam rgyal thogs med
   The last four (7-10) masters also looked after sKyang tshang monastery in Shar khog.
11. rNam rgyal bstan 'dzin, also active in Chu nag valley (which now belongs to the Nine Villages of gZi tsha)
12. gTsug phud tshul khrims, founder a small monastery called mGon po near Tshal rang village in the rTa ra dri ri area in the lower reaches of The chu river
13. Nyi ma 'bum. He wanted the practitioners in the monastery to observe strict monastic discipline but was unable to impose it in his lifetime.
14. Shes rab rgyal mtshan, went to sMan ri Monastery (No.1) in gTsang with several companions to order to receive ordination and when he returned to the monastery, he imposed strict monastic discipline following his predecessor's wishes. He also built a temple called Dri med khang bzang in Thang zhing for those practitioners who did not wish to take monastic vows immediately.
15. Seng ge gling grags, built a residence for the sKyang 'phags lineage at dGa' Idan hermitage in Bab bzo, founded by sKyang 'phags and initiated the tradition of sending a master from sGur skyang to the hermitage.
16. gYung drung bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, travelled to Central Tibet for several years and reinforced monastic discipline in the monastery. He helped dBang Idan grags pa of A skyid sKyang tshang monastery (No.194) to move Dar rgyas lha rtse, Phag rgod establishments to gYung drung bstan rgyas gling and developed close ties between A skyid and sGur skyang monasteries.
17. Nam mkha' ye shes built a temple in each of the following places: 'A zha, sTag ra and Nyag ra, with the intention of founding monasteries there.
18. Kun bzang lhun grub, built a temple at the monastery dedicated to Kun bzang rgyal ba 'dus pa
19. gYung drung lhun grub, built a temple in lDong ti and also founded sTag skyong Monastery (No.211) in rTsub ma which now belongs to the Nine Villages of gZi tsha county
20. Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin
21. Rin chen rgyal mtshan, born in the 17th century. He enlarged the assembly hall ('du khang) and renamed the monastery dPal gshen bstan g-yung drung rgyal mtshan kun grags gling. He also completed the construction of rTag skyong Monastery.
22. Nam mkha’ khri rgyal, built a temple in the monastery for the purposes of tantric rituals
23. gYung drung gtsug rgyan
24. Khri gtsug rgyal ba
25. gYung drung bdud 'dul
26. Khri rgyal grags pa
27. gYung drung bstan pa
28. Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin
29. Nam mkha’ rin chen
30. gYung drung shes rab bstan 'dzin (b.1916)
The monastery was accidently destroyed by fire in 1950 and was rebuilt shortly after at its present site;
31. Rin chen rgyal mtshan (b.1976)
In 1982, the monastery was allowed to reopen. Although during the Cultural revolution the assembly hall served as a granary, the sKyang 'phags’s residence as a school and the temple devoted to the tantric rituals as the school’s kitchen, the local government returned all the buildings to the monks and the monastery was restored.

4. Hierarchical system
- dgon bdag, hereditary
  - one grwa tshang bla ma (replaced every three years)
  - one dbu mdzad (replaced every three years)
  - two dge skos (replaced every three years)
  - sixteen spyi ba

The spyi ba sponsor the monastery’s annual rituals: four spyi ba for the ritual of Ma tri'i sgrub mchod, two spyi ba for the ritual cycle of dByar gnas, two spyi ba for the ritual based on the Klong rgyas, two spyi ba for the recitation ritual of Du tri su, three spyi ba for the Yi dam kun 'dus, three spyi ba for the ritual cycle of Phur ba, all
of whom are replaced each year.

5. Current number of monks

There are twenty-three novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

The young novices are trained by the elder monks. The monastery organizes public teachings and the monks also go to other monasteries for further teachings.

7. Educational exchange

There are seven monasteries historically related to the sKyang 'phags lineage and in many ways they remain closely connected to each other.

8 / 9. Rituals

The monks of the monastery go to rTag skyong Monastery to perform the smon lam ceremony together with the monks there from the 6th to the 9th day of the 1st month; they go to bSam 'grub Monastery (No.197) of 'Phan chu in Bab bzo for the smon lam ceremony from the 12th to the 14th day of the 1st month; the gTo srung ritual from the 11th to the 15th day of the 2nd month together with bSam 'grub Monastery in Bab bzo, rTag skyong Monastery and Ko dgon Monastery in 'A zha; the ritual cycle of the Yi dam kun 'dus from the 2nd to the 11th day of the 3rd month; the ritual based on the Du tri su for Nyag ra village in sTag ra gong ma from the 10th to the 19th day of the 4th month (the monks go to the village on the 7th day and spend the following two days preparing for the ritual and return to the monastery on the 29th day); the ritual based on Klong rgyas in the 5th month; the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 10th to the 16th day of the 6th month; the gTo srung ritual from the 12th to the 15th day of 7th month; the Klong rgyas ritual from the 8th to the 12th day of the 8th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one printed copy of Kanjur and one printed copy of Katen.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community (lha sde) consists of fifteen families in Yul gsum community: Shing bzo with six families; De'u khag with seven families; gYi tshang with two families; four villages in Sa ral community: sKyang skor, Tsho
bzhi, dPal rtse and Ar ma (twenty-seven families altogether); two villages in Phu ba community: sTag 'ban with nine families and sGa phrug with six families; four villages in mDo ba community: 'Brug dge with five families, Kha rgan with two families, Ko tshang with two families and Wa thang with one family; three villages in Bar mtshams community: 'Bre sde with four families, sGa phrug with four families and sKya yon with four families; three villages in Thang zhing community: Myi rtsa with six families, Mye r ngu with two families and Yag tsa with nine families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called Nor bu spungs brjid and is associated with the eponymous deity; it was sanctified by sKyang 'phags gYung drung thos gr Ol, the 4th in the sKyang 'phags lineage. The festival of its veneration takes place on the 13th day of the 3rd month. The la btsas was burned down in 1950, but was reconstructed in the following year by gYung drung shes rab bstan 'dzin, the 30th master of the sGur skyang lineage.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with: Dri med 'od zer (b.1935), bsTan 'dzin phun tshogs (b.1933), dBang ldan (b.1934) and A rdo (b.1949)
(2) Texts:
- sGur ba'i skyang tshang dgon rnam rgyal kun grags gling gi byung ba brjod pa dbyar rnga'i sgra dbyangs by Dri med 'od zer in DzNGL pp.51-110

(197) gYung drung bsam 'grub Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is gYung drung bsam 'grub dgon nor bu'i gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 53 km southeast of county town of mDzod dge.

3. History

bSam 'grub Monastery has preserved records of its masters as follows:

1. Grags pa dbang rgyal (b.1148), the 3rd sKyang 'phags. He came to a small monastery called Rol 'ong in 'Brug lung where resided until his death. The
establishment later developed into proper monastery which became known as bSam ’grub.

2. Ye shes rgyal mtshan
3. Ye shes rgyal ba
4. bsTan ’dzin blo gros
5. Shes rab bstan ’dzin
6. bsTan ’dzin dbang ldan
7. ’Dul ba bstan ’dzin rgyal mtsho alias Tshul khrims
8. bsTan pa ’brug grags

The reincarnation of the 6th in the line, was born towards the end of the 10th Rab byung (1567-1626). He built five temples in the monastery dedicated to each of the following practices: rituals of Klong rgyas tshogs chen, Ma rgyud and Khro bo. He also founded other monasteries in three different places: gSer khang in dPal skyid, Thang nag in lDong spe and brDa rnga in sKyang tsha. At that time, however, Rol ’ong Monastery and Bya khyung Monastery fell into decline, and he therefore founded bSam ’grub Monastery combining both monasteries in the middle of the 11th Rab byung (1627-1686).

9. bsTan ’dzin rgyal mtshan
10. Shes rab bstan pa dar rgyas
11. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (1823-1888)
12. Shes rab bstan rgyas (1889-1931) alias rNam rgyal ye shes, or locally known as A shes; he was regarded as the reincarnation of the 11th in the line.
13. Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1889-1959) alias gYung drung bkra shis
14. mChog grub dpal bzang (b. 1948), the present head of the monastery

The monastery did not survive during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt by mChog grub dpal bzang in 1984-1997.

4. Hierarchical system
   - two trulku
   - one grwa tshang bla ma (with no predetermined term of office)
   - one dbu mdzad (replaced every two years)
   - one dge skos (replaced every two years)
   - one spyi ba (replaced every two years)

5. Current number of monks

   There are forty-two novices and monks at the monastery.

6. Current education

   There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder
monks.

7. Educational exchange

It has close ties with all the monasteries founded by the masters of the sKyang 'phags lineage.

8 / 9. Rituals

Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 3rd to the 5th day of the 1st month, the offering of Me tog mchod pa and the ritual cycle of Khro bo from the 6th to the 16th day of the same month; the ritual cycle of Phur ba and the ritual based on the rTsa gsum bon skyong bzhi sbrag from the 10th to the 22nd day of the 4th month; ritual based on the rTsa gsum kun 'dus mchog sgrub for the commemoration of sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan from the 21st to the 23rd day of the 5th month; the summer fast (dbyar gnas) in the 6th month.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has more than two hundred volumes of works including the Kanjur and Katen.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of three communities: dMa’ nyin community has three villages: rDo rdza with three families, mChod rdza with seven families and dPal skyid with four families. Lug lung community has three villages: The bo with two families, Grags bu with two families, Kha ska with seventeen families, plus two single families: lCags phyung and rDo skyabs. sTag le community has nine villages: rDo gla, dPal skyid and sKya skor with thirty-three families altogether; bSam yas village with seven families, Gro thang with sixteen families, dBen yul with ten families, rMo’u ngo with six families, Cong ro with eleven families and sGrub lung with seven families.

13. Local festivals

The renewal ceremony of the la btsas called Grwa chung and located on the mountain behind the monastery is performed by the monks on the 11th day of the 4th month.

dPa’ bo la btsas is dedicated to the local deity and is renewed by the lay community on the 11th day of the 4th month.
14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with Dri med 'od zer (b.1935) and Shes rab gong 'phel (b.1967), a monk at the monastery

(2) Texts:
- mDzod dge rdzong bab bzo yul tsho 'i g-yung drung bsam 'grub dgon nor bu'i gling gi lo rgyus mdo tsam by bSam 'grub do dam tshan khag, DzNGL pp. 236-243

(198) mDa’ chen Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is mDa’ chen Dar rgyas gling or mDa’ chen dgon gYung drung bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling. It is also called Shel phug sKyang tshang.

2. Location

The monastery is located 76 km southeast of the county town of mDzod dge.

3. History

According to lHun grub bstan 'dzin (DzNGL p. 226), sKyang 'phags Nam mkha’-g-yung drung, born in the Iron-Bird year of the 1st Rab byung (1081), established two hermitages, sGon sTag nang and dGa’ ston that gradually became sKyang Shel phug, a residence of the masters of the sKyang ’phags lineage, hence the monastery’s second name Shel phug sKyang tshang. Although the sKyang ’phags lineage in mDa’ chen Monastery has survived to this day, the sources concerning its history are no longer available, and the dates of many of the masters remain unknown. Following is a list of the masters of mDa’ chen 'og ma, “the Lower mDa’ chen” lineage who looked after the monastery:

1. sKyang ’phags Nam mkha’-g-yung drung
2. Rang grol Bla ma rgyal mtshan
3. Gling zhig Shes rab g-yung drung
4. Gling zhig rGyal ba bstan ’dzin
5. Gling zhig rNam rgyal grags pa
6. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
7. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
8. Nam mkha’ ye shes
9. bSod nams ye shes
10. gYung drung phun tshogs
11. Shes rab 'od zer
12. Nam mkha’ rin chen
13. rNam rgyal grags pa
14. Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin
15. sKyang tshang Bla ma gtsug gshen
16. sKyang tshang gYung drung gtsug rgyan
17. sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan
18. bSod nams rgyal mtshan
19. bSod nams bstan ’dzin and Phun tshogs rnam rgyal
20. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
21. gYung drung kun khyab
22. Khro bo rgyal mtshan
23. Shes rab dbang rgyal

In addition to the above-mentioned lineage, there is another lineage known as mDa’ chen kha ma, “the Upper mDa’ chen” that originated in the dKar mo Hermitage of the monastery founded by Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin, the fourteenth master. The succession of this lineage is as follows:

1. Nam mkha’bstan ’dzin, the fourteenth
2. sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, the seventeenth
3. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
4. Nam mkha’ rgyal po
5. A drung
6. Tshul khrims bstan ’dzin
7. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal and Lung rtogs skal bzang rgya mtsho (DzNGL pp.227-229)

The mDa’ chen ’og ma is regarded as more important than mDa’ chen kha ma, because its lineage is the original lineage of the monastery, whereas mDa’ chen kha ma is an offshoot of the latter. However, all the masters of both successions had equal roles in the monastery. The assembly hall (’du khang) survived the Cultural Revolution, although not the statues and thangkas within were destroyed. The monastery was officially reopened and its reconstruction undertaken in 1982.

4. Hierarchical system
   - two incarnated lamas
   - one grwa tshang bla ma
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one spyi ba

All the incumbents are replaced every two or three years with the exception of
5. Current number of monks

There are one hundred novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

8/9. Rituals

Commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Phur pa for eleven days, the *gYung drung klong rgyas* for ten days, ritual based on the Zlas chog rin chen sgron ma occasionally, the *Rigs drug rang sbyong* for seven days, Ma rgyud for two days, commemoration of sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan for three days, the *smyung gnas* fasting for two days, the *dbyar gnas* fasting for two days.

There are five *ja shog*, “tea communities”, each *ja shog* in turn offers tea during retreats in the monastery for fifteen days, the anniversary of sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan for three days and the *dgu gtor* rite for nine days.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has two printed copies of Kanjur and one printed copy of Katen (bsTan pa’i nyi ma’s edition), one copy of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s collected works and one printed copy of sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan’s collected works.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.

12. Local community

The local lay community of the monastery consists of Bab bzo, Thang skor and Cog tshang communities, collectively known as Zhing yul pa, and divided into five villages: rTswa sa gzhung with twenty-one families, Zam kha with ten families, Khang ri sgang with seven families, Lung zhing nang with nine families and Ne’u gsing lam ’og with thirteen families.

'Bras sde, rTsi nag bu gcig and dPal rtse communities, collectively known as Sha mo khag and also divided into five villages: Bab bzo tshang with forty-three families, Ra dge with fourteen families, Nyag nyi with thirty-four families, mKhar smad with thirty families and Zhing ’khyil with ten families. 'Bras sde and Ngang rab communities, collectively known as Chu tshal shog: Ka tsi with forty-one
families and Ngang rab thirty-one families; 'Khrungs sa with thirty-two families.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998: Dri med 'od zer (b.1935), the present head of A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery (No.194) and the most learned Bonpo scholar in the area

(2) Texts:

- Bab bzo mda 'chen g-don g-yung drung bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling gi lo rgyus nyung bsdus dwangs gsal me long by Shel phug lHun grub bstan 'dzin, DzNGL pp. 218-235
A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery. Plate 1
(194) A skyid skyang tshang Monastery. Plate 2 Dri med 'od zer (b. 1935), the twenty-seventh master of the skyang tshang lineage at the monastery
rGur skyang Monastery

gYung drung bsam 'grub Monastery
Zung chu County

Zung chu (Zing/Zong) county, also known as Shar khog, is located in rNga ba (= rNga khog) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. There are 142 villages divided between 26 townships in the county. The total area is 8,400 sq km. The population is 59,544 (19,960 of whom were Tibetans in 1986). The county seat is Cin An, 431 km from 'Bar khams, the capital of rNga ba Prefecture.

Zung chu county is named after a river which takes its source near Kun dga’, a mountain located in gSal chu township. The river is a tributary of the Yangtze river and is around 711 km in length.

(199) sNa steng Monastery

1. Name
   The monastery’s full name is sNa steng bKra shis g-yung drung gling also known as lCags mdud dgon.

2. Location
   The monastery is located by the road, 8 km north of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History
   The first master of the sNang zhig lineage of sNang zhig Monastery (No.180) in rNga khog, Do ’phags chen po (b.1028), had three sons: Nyi ma 'dzin, 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan and gYung drung rgyal mtshan (alias Shes rab 'od zer), the younger brothers, migrated to Shar khog. There 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan established a family considered sacred (gdung brgyud) with the name of lCags mdud situated to the east of the river and below the village of A gling. The family temple which he built became his main residence and was called sNang zhig lCags mdud dgon (NKhGL p.99). Later the temple was extended into a small monastery. The family was famous for its possession of an old silver image of the Bonpo sage Dran pa nam mkha’ known as lCags mdud dngul sku, “the Silver image of the lCags mdud family”. gYung drung rgyal mtshan, the brother of 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, died at the age of twenty-four leaving two sons: gYung drung bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan and bSam ’grub. While the elder brother looked after the monastery and the younger brother ensured the lineage’s continuity.

Shar khog is an area where Bon religion has always been the dominant tradition and where the gdung brgyud system has been the most prevalent. However, in the recent times there were interruptions in the line of the family and the monastery has made great efforts to reestablish the hereditary succession.
In 1938, with the help of the local people, lCags mdud Nyi ma bstan 'dzin (1898-1953) moved the monastery to sNa steng and so it became known as sNa steng Monastery. Later lCags mdud sKal bzang rgyal mtshan (1922-1978) took charge of the monastery. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and the present head of the monastery is lCags mdud Zla ba rgyal mtshan (b.1951). He took the initiative to rebuild it in the 1980s. gYung drung nyi ma (b.1973) acts as teacher in the new monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

- *dgong bdag*, hereditary
- *bon slob*
- one *dbu mdzad*
- two *dge skos*
- two *gnyer ba*

All the incumbents are replaced every three years with the exception of the master of the monastery.

5. Current number of monks

There are fifty-nine novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Education education

There are no regular classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monks go to sNang zhig Monastery in rNga khog and to dGa' mal Monastery (No.208) in Shar khog for further study; Zla ba rgyal mtshan received teachings from bsKal bzang dar rgyas at dGa' mal Monastery and from Dri med 'od zer, at A skyid sKyang tshang Monastery (No.194) in mDzo dge.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 4th to the 5th day; ritual cycle of dBal gsas for five or seven days from the 21st day
- 4th month: the festival of sNa steng sgrub pa is based on the *Tī tri su* and lasts seven days from the 23rd day ending with a 'cham dance for the public
- 6th month: the ritual cycle of the rNam rgyal for three days from the 27th day
- 8th month: the ritual cycle of sTag la for three days from the 26th day
- 9th month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud for four days from the 9th day
- 10th month: the cycle of the *Yi dam kun 'dus* for three days from the 11th day
- 11th month: commemoration of sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan from the
7th to the 8th day

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on donations from the faithful.

12. Local community

There are five villages: A gling with sixty families, Ki tshal with twenty families, Tshe yag with eighteen families, rGyal btsan with twenty families and Ta khug ta pa with about forty families. In the local oral tradition the village rGyal btsan and Ta khug ta pa are counted as one, Yag gi tsho ba bzhi, the “Four Excellent Communities”.

13. Local festivals

There is a la btsas on the mountain behind the monastery dedicated to the local deity called dGe bsnyen gYung drung rtsal. Its renewal ceremony is performed on the 1st day of the 6th month by the monks of the monastery.

Mount A gling brag dkar, situated at the west of the monastery (accessible only on foot), is considered as the residence of the local deity by the same name. The renewal ceremony of its la btsas and the propitiation of the deity take place on the 4th day of the 4th month and are performed exclusively by the lay community.

In Shar khog there are also two sacred mountains (gnas ri). One is called Byang Bya dur and is located 1 km north of dGa’ mal Monastery and the other Shar Dung ri located 56 km east of the county town of Zung chu (cf. BBD). In the vicinity of Mount Shar Dung ri, there is also a sacred lake called Dung ri gser mtsho. These places are considered as holy places and venerated by both the monks and local Sharwa lay people, as well as by devotees from other regions. The lake called Huanglong in Chinese attracts numerous tourists every year.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and trade

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn in 1998 with: Tshe kho, a monk at the monastery (b.1932)
(2) Texts:
   - lCags mdud bkra shis g-yung drung gling gi dkar chag me tog tshom ‘phreng
     by lCags mdud Zla ba rgyal mtshan, bsTan blo and sGra dpal, in Zing (Zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sogs (so ’i) dkar chag, pp.123-145. 1993, Mimeograph
(200) Rin spungs Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Rin spungs bKra shis smin grol gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 22 km north of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

sKyang btsun gYung drung bstan rgyal (b. 1768), a descendant of sKyang ’phags in mDzo dge, went to sMan ri Monastery (No. 1) in gTsang and received teachings from a great master called gYung drung dbang rgyal. After thirteen years of study, the latter sent him back to Amdo. When he arrived in Shar khog, gTsos tshang dbon po and his fifteen disciples came to meet him and became his disciples. Later he was offered land by the local people and founded a hermitage at the site called Rin spungs. Later he extended it into monastery. Towards the end of his life, a thirteen-year old boy called dGe ’dun shes rab (b. 1811) from dMu dge came to Rin spungs following a vision he had received in dream. gYung drung bstan rgyal was very enthusiastic about the new visitor and exhorted his disciples to accept dGe ’dun shes rab as his reincarnation after his death. He asked dGe ’dun shes rab to return to the monastery in seven years. He is said to have even made an inventory of all his personal belongings in the presence of dGe ’dun shes rab, and ordered the monks to give them to dGe ’dun shes rab upon his return. However, dGe ’dun shes rab did not return seven years later as agreed so gYung drung bstan rgyas, before his death, left a testament for him in a small wooden box which he hid in the wall of his meditation cell. Finally, the monastery sent some monks to dMu dge to talk with dGe ’dun shes rab’s family who warmly welcomed them and accepted the recognition of their son as the reincarnation of gYung drung bstan rgyal, but the boy was not at home.

In the mean time, dGe ’dun shes rab had travelled to rGyal rong, Khyung po, Kong po, lHa sa, rMe’u tshang, Dar sding, Zhu tshang; he studied at rMan ri for seven years, practiced meditation at Byang gNam mtsho for one year and Khyung po’i sgom grwa for another six years, and had visited many sacred places and monasteries of different traditions (including Buddhism) where he studied and practiced meditation with various great masters and acquired the new name of Shes rab ye shes. Shortly after his return to dMu dge, remembering his promise to gYung drung bstan rgyal, he returned to the monastery. Although the master had died a few years before he was given all gYung drung bstan rgyal’s personal belongings and valuables including the box with the testament.

gYung drung bstan rgyal introduced the monastic tradition of sMan ri Monastery and named the monastery Rin spungs bKra shis smin grol gling. He
became the second master of sKyang tshang lineage and abbot of Rin spungs Monastery. The third master was bsTan 'dzin phun tshogs dbang rgyal. The fourth was Shes rab rnam rgyal.

The reincarnation of Shes rab ye shes was born soon after his death in Chu mdo village near the monastery, but he died very young. The following reincarnation, Shes rab rnam rgyal, was born in Shel bod village of dMu dge in 1895.

The fifth was gYung drung bstan 'dzin, born in 1955.

The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - mkhan po who is a trulku
   - grwa shang bla ma
   - one dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - one a mchod
   - two mchod dpon

   All the incumbents are replaced every two years, with the exception of the grwa tshang bla ma who has no predetermined term of office.

5. Current number of monks

   There are ninety-six monks and novices in the monastery.

6 / 7. Current education

   Since sKyang btsun gYung drung bstan rgyal was a disciple of gYung drung dbang rgyal, a master of sMan ri Monastery, Rin spungs still sends its monks to sMan ri and gYung drung gling monasteries in gTsang for teachings and ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals

   - 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 3rd to the 6th day, and the ritual cycle of dBal gsas from the 8th to the 15th day
   - 4th month: the festival of the dGe spyod for three days and the Mun sel sgrub pa for seven days with 'cham dance on the last day for the public. The festival is known as Rin spung dbyar gnas
   - 7th month: the ritual based on the rNam rgyal stong mchod for three days
   - 9th month: the observance of the smyung gnas fasting for nine days from the 13th day
11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on offerings from its followers; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists seven villages in gTso tshang township: Rin spungs with thirty-two families, Bar shod with eighteen families, Grang 'dzi with fourteen families, lCang smad with twenty families, Bar rong with eighty families, 'Phel 'dzin with eleven families and Khri rgyal with twelve families; six villages in A stong township: Tsha chu sgur with forty-six families, dBal smon with nine families, Hor mthong with two families and the three villages of A stong: A stong with forty-two families, Chu 'khyil sgur with thirty-eight families and gYang rten with twenty-two families.

13. Local festival

The la btsas called bKra shis bde chen is on a hill in front of the monastery. Its renewal ceremony, performed by the monks, takes place on the 10th day of the 7th month, which is the last day of the rNam rgyal stong mchod ritual at the monastery.

The propitiation of the local deities of some of the following villages takes place on the 1st of the 1st month: Rin spungs village’s local deity is called Khyung rgod and the la btsas dedicated to him is located at the top of Mount Khyung rgod.

Bar shod village’s local deity is called Brag rgan and the la btsas is located on Mount Brag rgan. Bar rong village’s local deity is called Kod po and the la btsas is located on Mount Kod po.

The local deity of 'Phen 'dzin and Khri rgyal villages is called Bum pa and the la btsas is located on Mount Bum pa. Tsha chu sgur village’s local deity is called Brag ri and the la btsas is located on Mount Brag ri. A stong village’s local deity is called Nyi 'ong and the la btsas is located on Mount Nyi 'ong.

Chu 'khyil sgur village’s local deity is called gCal phrug gYung drung dgra 'dul and the la btsas is located on Mount gCal phrug. gYang rten village’s local deity is called bKra shis bde chen and the la btsas is located on Mount bKra shis bde chen.

dBal smon village’s local deity is called rDo tshang and the la btsas is located on Mount rDo tshang.

The monks and lay people also join other communities to venerate the two sacred mountains Bya dur and Dung ri, situated in the area (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture and trade
Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with gYung drung tshul khrims alias gYung drung thar, a monk at the monastery (b.1963)

(2) Texts:
   - Rin spungs bkra shis smin grol gling gi gdan rabs nyung bsdu brjod pa tshangs pa'i dbyangs snyan by sKal bzang dar rgyas, composed in 1984, ZGSK pp.107-121

This text by sKal bzang dar rgyas is the only available work dealing with the history of Rin spungs Monastery; the first part of the text states that sKyang btsun gYung drung bstan rgyal recognized dGe 'dun shes rab as his reincarnation when he was still alive, and then later goes on to say that bsTan 'dzin phun tshogs dbang rgyal, the third sKyang btsun, was recognized as the reincarnation of sKyang btsun Rinpoche (when he is obviously the second reincarnation), so there seems to be a some confusion between the two masters.

(201) sNang zhig dngul sku Monastery

1. Name

   The monastery’s full name is sNang zhig gser khang rnam rgyal kun grags gling.

2. Location

   The monastery is located 21 km north of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

   There are two sNang zhig monasteries in Amdo: one in rNga khog and the other in Shar khog, the latter belongs to the lineage of the former, since it was founded by a descendant of Do 'phags chen po (b.1168). He is regarded as the first master of the sNang zhig lineage.

   Do 'phags chen po and sKyang za g-yu sgron had three sons: Nyi ma 'dzin, 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, and gYung drung rgyal mtshan (alias Shes rab 'od zer). The eldest son was sent to Zhu sgom 'phrul zhig for religious training and later became known as Bya chen Nyi ma 'dzin. 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan, and gYung drung rgyal mtshan migrated to Shar khog. The family of 'Dul ba rgyal mtshan became known as lCags mdud and the monastery he founded was called sNang zhig lCags mdud and later became known as sNa steng bKra shis g-yung drung gling (No.199).

   However, it was gYung drung rgyal mtshan, the youngest brother, who took away the famous silver image (dngul sku) of Dran pa nam mkha' of the family in rNga khog with him when he came to Shar khog where he later founded a monastery
called sNang zhig dngul sku dgon. He had a son called bsTan pa rgyal mtshan who succeeded him and looked after the monastery. However, at a later date, the sacred silver image fell into the possession of the lCags mdud family.

Their lineages of the three brothers became known as the “three lineages of sNang zhig” (sNang zhig khag gsum).

The following is a list of the masters in the lineage of the sNang zhig dngul sku:

1. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan
2. bsTan ’dzin ye shes rgyal mtshan
3. gYung drung tshe ring
4. Yon tan rgyal mtshan
5. Nyi ma bstan ’dzin
6. Tshe dbang rgyal po
7. Zla ba rgyal mtshan
8. Klu ’bum yag
9. Bya ’phur
10. Rin chen lhun grub
11. bsTan pa tshul khrims
12. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
13. ’Dul ba rgyal mtshan
14. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
15. Shes rab blo gros
16. Zla ba rgyal mtshan
17. Rin chen lhun grub
18. Nam mkha’ lhun grub
19. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
20. Kun dga’ phun tshogs
21. gYung drung bstan ’dzin
22. Blo gros thogs med
23. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
24. Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan
25. gTsug phud rnam rgyal

After the last master’s death, Nam mkha’ blo gros of sNang zhig in rNga khog became the master of the monastery, he was succeeded successively by Tshul khrims bsTan pa’i rgyal mtshan, Shes rab bstan ’dzin, and A tog rtogs ldan. The monastery was knocked down during the Cultural Revolution. It was rebuilt in the 1980s. Shes rab ’od zer (b.1971), the present head of the monastery was recognized as the reincarnation of Tshul khrims bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, a famous hermit who, however, did not belong to the sNang zhig lineage.
4. Hierarchical system
- *dgon bdag*, hereditary (*gdung brgyud*)
- two *dbu mzdad*
- two *dge skos*
- two *gnyer pa*
All of whom are replaced every three years except the head of the monastery.

5. Current number of monks
There are ninety-one novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
In the past the monks took their ordination from *sKal bzang dar rgyas* of *dGa’ mal Monastery* (No.208), but now they go to *sNang zhig Monastery* (No.180) in *rNga khog*.

8/9. Rituals
- 1st month: commemoration of *mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan* from the 4th to the 5th day
- 2nd month: the *smon lam* ceremony from the 1st to the 7th day
- 3rd month: the ritual cycle of *Ma rgyud* from the 7th to the 9th day
- 5th month-6th month: the recitation ritual based on the *Ti tri su* from the 23th day of the 5th month to the 1st day of the 6th month
- 10th month: the ritual cycles of *Khro bo* and *Phur pa* from the 16th to the 19th day
- 11th month: commemoration of *sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan* from the 7th to the 8th day

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur and several other manuscript copies of texts for ritual purposes.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery depends on offerings from its followers; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
The local lay community consists of twelve villages: Khri smin with ninety-five
families, A bstan with fifty families, A ho with fifteen families, Ha mes with forty-five families, 'Brug skyid with fifteen families, sDong spel with sixty families, sPang bzang with fifty families, Na gtsang with fifteen families, sPo 'bru with fifteen families, rGyal 'phen with twenty-seven families, 'Khor rgye with twenty families and Che g-yag with thirteen families.

13. Local festivals

In addition to Dung ri and Bya dur, the two most sacred Bonpo mountains in the area, there is Mount Brag mkhar and its la btsas, located behind the monastery and propitiated by the monks on the 1st day of the 6th month. Khri smin village’s la btsas called dKar ye is propitiated by the village people likewise on the 1st day of the 6th month. The la btsas of A btsan village is renewed on the 1st of the 3rd month. The villages Brag nag, Ya ho, Ha mes and 'Brug skyid have a common la btsas. Its renewal ceremony takes place on the 4th day of the 5th month. sDong spel has two la btsas, La chen and rGyal mkhar, the former is propitiated on the 1st day of the 6th month, while the latter is propitiated on the 1st day of the 3rd month. The la btsas of sPang bzang, called dGra 'dul, is propitiated (date was unclear). Na gtsang, sPo 'brug, rGyal 'phen, 'Khor rgye and Che g-yag have the same la btsas called Brag rgan.

The monks and local lay communities join other communities in the region to venerate the two sacred mountains Bya dur and Dung ri situated in the Sharwa region (cf. sNa steng Monastery No. 190).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with gYung dga’ (b.1930) a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
- sNang zhig dgon pa’i dkar chag chu skyes dbang bo’i tshom phreng by Ha smin(mes) gYong dga’, in Zing (Zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sog (so’i) dkar chag, mimeograph, 1993, pp. 92-106

(202) sKyang tshang Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is sKyang tshang Phun tshogs dar rgyas gling.
2. Location

The monastery is located 23 km north of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

bSod nams bzang po (alias rGyal ba rgya mtsho), a master of the sGur skyang lineage in mDzo dge was invited by a village chief called mGon po skyabs to Shar khog. This is said to have taken place in the Earth-Dragon Year of the 4th Rab byung (1268). He eventually founded sKyang tshang Monastery. His successors in the family were Rin chen blo gros, bDud 'dul dbang grags, gYung drung bstan rgyal, dKon mchog yon tan, rNam rgyal thogs med. After the latter's death the line of the sKyang tshang family was interrupted.

dBra tsha A lha ye shes was selected to be the head of the monastery, but during his time, in the Fire-Dog Year of the 10th Rab byung (1586), the monastery was destroyed by an earthquake. Several decades later, rTogs ldan gYung drung bstan 'dzin (b.1654), a brother of Tshe rgyal, the sKyang tshang chief, returned from sMan ri Monastery (No.1) and asked Tshe rgyal to give him a site called sKyang klu gdong where he founded a small monastery. Later A mkhar, another sKyang tshang chief, asked Bya tshang rTogs ldan bsTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan to be the head of the monastery, and both chief and the master agreed to move the monastery to a new site. The new monastery was called gSer khang rin chen, but it was burned down in a fight.

rTogs ldan Phun tshogs 'od zer founded a new monastery called Khri skyong la kha'i dgon Kun khyab bde chen gling for sKyang tshang village. Then sKyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan was invited to be the head of the monastery in the Earth-Rat Year of the 14th Rab byung (1828). The next head in the succession was Rin chen Tshul khrims. Since there was no source of water in the vicinity of the monastery, lHun grub rgyal mtshan moved it to rNyi 'bur valley where it became known as rNyi 'bur Monastery. A sngags rGyal mtshan, also known as rTogs ldan bsTan pa tshul khrims (1907-1932), was appointed as the head of the monastery after having served as the dbu mdzad in rNyi 'bur Monastery. He moved the monastery to the present site in 1916. He was succeeded by sKyang dbon bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1911-1955).

In 1950, the monastery appointed Hor btsun bsTan 'dzin blo gros rgya mtsho (1889-1975) as the chief teacher (bon slob) and under his guidance, metaphysic studies (mtshan nyid) were introduced. However, the monastey was razed to the ground during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt again in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

- dgon bdag, mainly by appointment
- grwa tshang bla ma (three years)
- two dbu mdzad (dbu mdzad chung ba for two years, then as dbu mdzad che ba again two years)
- two dge skos (two years)
- two spyi ba (two years)
- bla ma'i gnyer ba (three years)
The present head of the administrative committee is Khro bo.

5. Current number of monks
   There are eighty-two novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery is a branch of A skyid sKyang tshang.

8/9. Rituals
   - 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 4th to the 5th day
   - 2nd month: the monks are divided into two groups to perform the ritual cycles of dBal gsas and Phur pa from the 1st to the 7th day, followed by the festival of sKyang tshang Ma tri organized by all the monks together from the 8th to 15th day of with a 'cham dance on the last day for the public audience
   - 4th month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud on the 27th and 28th days, followed by the smyung gnas fasting on the 29th and 30th days
   - 8th month: commemoration of Hor btsun bsTan 'dzin blo gros rgya mtsho on the 6th day
   - 11th month: commemoration of sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan on the 7th and 8th days
   - 12th month: commemoration of bsTan pa tshul khrims on the 7th and 8th days, and the dgu gtor rite on the 28th and 29th days

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.

12. Local lay community
   The local lay community consists of two communities with 6 villages. the Shamo community: Ro wer village with twenty-seven families, Shog tog with fourteen families, La ga with sixteen families and mKhar sgang with twenty-three families.
The sKyang tshang community has two villages: sKyang tshang with one hundred and eight families and Chu 'khyil with sixty five families.

13. Local festivals

There is a la bstsas on top of the hill behind the monastery called Seng ge thod pa. It is propitiated by the monks alone on the 6th day of the 1st month.

Bon ri is the common la btsas dedicated to the local deity called gYul las rnam rgyal who is believed to be residing on Mount bDud gzhom. The deity is propitiated by the lay communities both Sha mo and sKyang tshang on the 1st day of the 1st month. The la btsas called dGra 'dul is propitiated on the 1st day of the 1st month.

Shog tog village has two la btsas: Yar ta and Mar ta and mKhar sgang village's sKya log la btsas are propitiated on the 16th day of the 11th month. The la btsas of sKyang tshang village is propitiated on the 16th day of the 12th month and that of Chu 'khyil village on the 4th day of the 5th month.

The monks and local lay community join other communities to venerate the sacred Mount Bya dur (BBD), Mount Dung ri and the lake gSer mtsho located in the Sharwa region (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.190). Nowadays the lake called Huang long in Chinese attracts many Chinese tourists.

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and trade

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with sKal bzang rgyal bzang alias Klu thar rgyal, a monk at the monastery (b.1940)

(2) Texts:
- dPal gshen bstan phun tshogs dar rgyas gling gi dkar chag mu tig tshom phreng by sKyang bla Blo bzang rgya mtsho, Lung rig snyan grags and Khro bo rgyal mtshan in Zing (Zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sogs (so 'i) dkar chag, mimeograph, 1993, pp. 68-91

mKhar yag Monastery

1. Name

The monastery's full name is gShen bstan g-yung drung nor bu dar rgyas gling. Since it is located in mKhar yag village, it is also called mKhar yag dgon.

2. Location

The monastery is located 109 km from Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.
3. History

The monastery, which was first simply a temple, was founded by rGyal ba rin chen, who was originally from 'Bar khams Monastery. He also established a small hermitage called Ra skor zhing gi ri khrod. Later bsTan 'dzin kun khyabs transformed the hermitage into a monastery in 1887. As he was from dGa’ mal Monastery (No.208), the new monastery became a branch of dGa’ mal. The next master was sNang zhig sPrul sku (d.1937) who was regarded as a reincarnation of Nyi ma rig 'dzin of sNang zhig dNgul sku Monastery (No.201). He moved the monastery to a place called gNyan yul in 1920. After that lCags mdud Nyi ma bst an 'dzin looked after the monastery for a few years. Then sNang zhig Rin chen rnam rgyal (b.1895) became the master of the monastery. The latter was succeeded by his nephew bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1939-1959). Tshul khrims bst an 'dzin (1918-1985) became the master of the monastery in 1982. The monastery was demolished during the Cultural Revolution and was rebuilt again in the 1980s. The present master of the monastery is gYung drung tshul khrims (b.1932).

4. Hierarchical system

- dgon bdag
- one dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- mchod g-yog

Both dbu mdzad and dge bskos are replaced every three years. The dge bskos also act as gnyer ba and the mchod g-yog has no predetermined term of office.

5. Current number of monks

There are thirty novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

Until sNang zhig dNgul sku Monastery sent rGyal ba bst an 'dzin to the monastery to teach, the monks went to dGa’ mal monastery for religious training.

8 / 9. Rituals

The ritual cycle of the Ti tri su from the 11th to the 19th day of the 1st month with 'cham dance on the 18th day; the observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) from the 13th to the 16th day of the 6th month; the ritual cycle of sTag la with dgu gtor rite from the 22nd to the 30th day of the 12th month.
11. Income and expenses

The monastery depends on donations from the faithful; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consisted of all the gNyan yul tsho bdun, the “seven villages of gNyan yul”, but mKhar lung village is now half Bonpo and half Buddhist. mKhar yag village with twenty-eight families, Ngo de with twenty-five families, rDa nga with seventeen families, dGon nang with fifteen families, gSer rko with twenty-six families, gDong yas with seven families and three families in mKhar lung.

13. Local festivals

The monastery has three la btsas: one at the top of the mountain behind the monastery called mKha' spyod g-yung dgra 'dul. The second dKar sgong is located 8 km north of the monastery and the third gYag mgo rdo 'bum is located 25 km east of the monastery. Their renewal ceremony takes place on the 15th day of the 5th month and is attended only by the monks.

mKhar yag village has its own la btsas called dBus lung nor bu phyug mo and is propitiated on the 1st day of the 1st month.

Ngo ke village’s la btsas is called Nor bu dbang rgyal and is located 3 km southwest of the monastery.

The la btsas of rDa nga village is called Rag stag nor bu and is located 6 km southwest of the monastery. The la btsas of dGon nang village called bZo gnyan mgar ba yon tan is located 8 km east of the monastery. The las btsas of gSer rko village is called sTobs,po che and located 10 km east of the monastery. The la btsas of gDong yas village is located 10 km southeast of the monastery.

The communities, both monastic and lay, join people from other villages to venerate the sacred Mount Bya dur and Mount Dung ri situated in the region (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.190).

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn 1998 with: rGyal ba (b.1934), a monk of sNang zhig dNgul sku Monastery who was sent to teach at mKhar yag. The following monks are from mKhar yag Monastery: Shes rab bstan ’phel (b.1976); bsTan pa rab rgyas (b.1970); bSod nam rgya mtsho (b.1963) and sKal bzang (b.1973)

(2) Texts:
Notes

1. The gNyan yul dgon pa gshen bstan g-yung drung nor bu dar rgyas gling gi dkar chag records him as sNang zhig sPral sku without giving his real name, but as such it is not found in other documents.

(204) Gla ro Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is dMu dge Gla ro gYung drung dgon.

2. Location

The monastery is located 180 km of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

According to the dMu dge gLa ro g-yung drung dgon gyi dkar chag (hereafter Gla ro dgon gyi dkar chag, ZGSK pp. 247-255) the entire population of dMu dge was Bonpo, and there were four large Bonpo monasteries and a number of smaller ones in the region. The four monasteries were A sngags khyung tshang, A skyid nor bu gling, mDo bstan ’ol mo gling and Gla ro g-yung drung gling. In the 10th Rab byung (1567-1626), Yon tan rgya mtsho, a lama from the dGe lugs pa monastery of sTong skor in Hor sTong skor (Gla ro dgon gyi dkar chag ZGSK pp.247-249) in Kokonor invaded dMu dge in Shar khog with his army and according to the same source A sngags khyung tshang Monastery was burned down with the monks inside (ZGSK pp.254-255) and all the other monasteries were also destroyed with the exception of Gla ro Monastery.

Fortunately later sNang zhig Nyi ma rig ’dzin was able to save the monastery and rebuilt it in the Wood-sheep Year of the 14th Rab byung (1825).

The successive heads of the monastery were:
1. bsTan pa rgyal mtshan
2. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal
3. bKra shis phun tshogs
4. gYung drung rgyal mtshan
5. sKal bzang rgyal mtshan
6. Kun bzang rgyal mtshan
7. gTsugs phud mam rgyal
8. bKra shis zla ba rgyal mtshan
9. Dung ri dBang ldan
10. Bla ma mKhar yag tshang
11. Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin
12. gYung drung bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan

The monastery was knocked down during the Cultural Revolution and gYung drung bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan rebuilt it in 1987. According to oral tradition, the original population of dMu dge came from Zhang zhung during King Khri srong lde btsan's persecution of Bon in the 8th century. The group, led by two personages known as sTag la rje and dBal gsas skyabs, sought refuge in the area where they settled (ZGSK pp.254-255). Many families have preserved a number of ritual objects and customs from Zhang zhung.

4. Hierarchical system
   - mkhan po
   - one dbu mdzad
   - one dge skos
   - one gnyer ba
   - one mchod dpon, with no predetermined terms of office

5. Current number of monks
   There are thirteen monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   There are occasional educational exchanges with mKhar yag Monastery.

8/9. Rituals
   The observance of the summer fast (dbyar gnas) for three days in the 6th or 7th month with no fixed dates; the dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 25th to the 30th day of the 12th month.

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery depends on offerings from the faithful; the monks provide their own food.

12. Local community
   The local lay community (lha sde) consists of villages: Te'u jo with seven
families, bKa’ srung with six families, Chu lung with six families, Ba zhun with six families and Do ’phags with four families.

13. Local festivals

The monks and local lay community join other communities in the region to venerate Mounts Bya dur and Dung ri, the two most important sacred mountains of Bon in the region (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and nomads

Sources

(1) Interviews with following monks of the monastery in autumn 1998: Shes rab bstan ’dzin (b.1978), Shes rab ’od zer (b.1977), sKal bzang dar rgyas (b.1973) and Phun tshogs (b.1980)

(2) Texts:
- dMu dge gya ro g-yung drung dgon gyi dkar chag by bsTan ’dzin mchog legs rab rgyas in Zing (zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sogs (so ’i) dkar chag, Mimeograph 1993, pp. 247-256

(205) gSer gling Monastery

1. Name

The monastery is also known as gShen bstan nyi ma ’bum gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located in Zhang ngu khog, 77 km from Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

The monastery was founded by mKhar yag gYung drung kun khyabs in the Fire-Pig Year of 15th Rab byung (1887) in order to settle a conflict between two lay communities: sTod tsho dgu and sMad tsho dgu. mKhar yag gYung drung kun khyabs was succeeded by a series of masters as the head of the monastery:

1. mKhar yag gYung drung kun khyabs
2. bsTan ’dzin ngag dbang rnam rgyal
3. mKhar yag Shes rab
4. Ra thang rTogs ldan dkar po
5. Dung ri Nam mkha’ dbang drag
6. Dung ri bsTan ’dzin dbang ldan (b.1887)
7. Dung ri Nam mkha’ bstan ’dzin (b.1918)

The monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s. bsTan ’dzin nor bu and bSod nams tshul khrims were the monks who worked on the reconstruction. The present head of the monastery is Shes rab kun gsal.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag, hereditary
   - two dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - one gnyer pa
   - two mchod dpon

All the incumbents, besides dgon bdag, are replaced every three years.

5. Current number of monks
   There are forty-eight novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monks go to dGa’ mal Monastery (No.208) to take their ordination.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The recitation ritual based on the Ti tri su from the 7th to the 11th day of the 1st month with ’cham dances on the 15th day; the ceremony of the mChod pa stong mtshan from the 8th to the 13th day of the 2nd month; the ritual based on the rNam rgyal stong mchod from the 11th to the 15th day of the 4th month; the The dgu gtor rite based on the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 21st to the 29th day of the 12th month.

11. Income and expenses
   The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on donations from its followers.

12. Local community
   The local lay community (lha sde) consists of eighteen villages grouped into two communities, sTod tsho dgu and sMad tsho dgu. The Upper Nine Villages (sTod tsho dgu): 1. ’Bar ra steng with fifty-five families, 2. La yas with fifty-three families, 3. Khu khag with thirty-four families, 4. ’Bu se with thirty-two families, 5.
Bo ras with twenty-five families, 6. Re wo with thirty-eight families, 7. Ngo we with twenty-five families, 8. Tsi sri with forty-five families, 9. Sra nge with twenty-three families.

The Lower Nine Villages (sMad tsho dgu): 1. rDi gu with twenty-four families, 2. Dzi be with thirty-four families, 3. Ho tse with thirty families, 4. Sra ti with forty-five families, 5. rTse tshang with twenty-five families, 6. Zhi ke po with forty families, 7. 'Dzu pa with ten families, 8. Tsha kho with ten families, 9. Ra 'gu with ten families.

13. Local festivals

The monastery has its own la btsas called Bhe te, located at the top of Kho ri te, the mountain behind the monastery and propitiated on the 15th day of the 1st month by the monks.

The la btsas of sTod tsho dgu is known as Mo ba rin chen. The la btsas of sMad tsho dgu is called Ku ne 'bru tse.

The local lay community, together with other Sharwa communities, also venerates Mounts Bya dur and Dung ri, the two most important sacred mountains in the region (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming

Sources

(1) Interviews with the following monks in the monastery in autumn 1998: Shes rab kun gsal (b.1954) and Shes rab gtsug rgyan (b.1978)

(2) Texts:
- Zhang ngu dpal gshen bstan nyi ma 'bum gling gi dkar chags (chag) gsal ba'i me long by Lung rig snyan grags (ZGSK pp.271-275)
- gShen chen klu bdud brag dkar gyi bsang yig ha ri'i ljon bzang by sNang zhig gYung drung bstan pa'i nyi ma, MS
- gNyan gyi rgyal bo ge ne 'brug rtse'i dgos 'dod kun 'byung by Dar rgyas rgyal mtshan, MS
- rNga khul zung chu rdzong gi gser len dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, NKhGL pp.108-109

(206) Sa 'brug Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Sa 'brug gShen bstan kun gsal smin grol gling.
2. Location
The monastery is 63 km from Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History
The monastery was founded in 1855 by Rin spungs Shes rab seng ge, a master from Rin spungs monastery. He successfully settled a conflict between the local villages which earned him great reputation in the area and as a result he had the monastery built in memory of his mediation.

His successors until the mid-20th century were: gYung drung phun tshogs, Cho 'd zi dbon po, Wer to bsTan 'dzin dbang grags, Wer to rGyal ba bkra shis and Bon nang gYung drung dbang ldan. The monastery suffered damages during the Cultural Revolution and Bon nang gYung drung dbang ldan undertook the monastery’s reconstruction in 1986. The present master of the monastery is gYung drung blo gros nyi ma (b.1969).

4. Hierarchical system
- gdon bdag, elected
One monk serves as both dbu mdzad and dge skos with no predetermined term of office.

5. Current number of monks
There are ten novices and monks.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes; the younger monks are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery has no special ties with any other monastery.

8/9. Rituals
Commemoration of of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 15th day of the 1st month; the observance of the smyung gnas fast from the 13th to the 15th day of the 6th month; the smon lam ceremony from the 7th to the 15th day of the 11th month.

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful.
12. Local community

The local lay population consists of three communities: Nye tsi, Bod sde and Bhan. The Nye tsi community has five villages: Kye khri with twenty families, La chen with fifteen families, Pe khri with sixteen families, Pe wa with twenty families and 'Ju ba with two families; The Bod sde community has three villages: Klu bu gsum with twenty-three families, Khran kha with twenty families and dGon pa nang with fifteen families;

The Bhan community has three villages; Wer to with fifteen families, Bhan gong ma with twenty families and Bhan 'og ma with thirty families.

In addition to the three communities, there are eighteen families in Si re village, thirty-three families in Li dbyin, and twenty-three families in Li dgu.

13. Local festivals

The la btsas called bKra shis, which is situated at the top of Mount rGyu bu gdong, behind the monastery, is propitiated by both monks and lay people on the 3rd day of the 1st month.

The la btsas of the Nye tsi community known as 'Brug rtse. Its renewal ceremony takes place on the 15th day of the 6th month and attended only by the lay members of the community. The la btsas called Wod pa of the Bod sde community is propitiated on the 15th day of the 5th month by the lay members of its community. The date of the renewal ceremony of la btsas called Bhe bho rtse dgu of the Bhan community is unknown.

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with gYung drung blo gros nyi ma, the present master of the monastery (b.1969)

(2) Texts:
- Sa 'brug dgon pa dpal gshen bstan kun gsal smin grol gling gi tho yig dkar chags (chag) by sGra tog gYung drung 'gyur med in Zing (zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sogs (so 'i) dkar chag, Mimeograph, 1993, pp. 241-246

(207) Brag g-yung drung Hermitage

1. Name

The full name of the hermitage, which is actually a nunnery, is Brag dkar g-yung drung 'khyud rtse gsang chen smin grol gling.
2. Location

The hermitage is located 2 km on foot from dGa’ mal Monastery (No.208), at the top of the mountain behind the monastery, 34 km from Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History

Brag g-yung drung is a hermitage of dGa’ mal Monastery. Its history is practically unknown. There are hermits who live in separate quarters.

In the 1980s Tshul khrims rnam dag, the forest guardian, who has lived as a tantric practitioner at the site for many years, obtained permission to build a nunnery. This is the only Bonpo nunnery in the area.

4. Hierarchical system

None

5. Number of hermits

There are twenty-six nuns in the nunnery and fifteen monk hermits.

6. Current Education

The nuns are trained by the master of the nunnery either collectively or individually.

7. Educational exchange

The nunnery maintains close ties with dGa’ mal Monastery, which sends teachers there.

8/9. Rituals

The main ritual practice of the nunnery is based on the cycle of Ma rgyud, but there is also performance of rituals as follows:

- 2nd month: practice of meditation in conjunction with a ceremony based on the rDzogs chen sku gsum rang shar by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan
- 4th month: the ritual practice based on the Tshe dbang bod yul ma by gYung drung gling pa, from the 4th to the 15th day
- 6th month: the ritual practice based on the mKha’ ’gro gsang gcod by sPrul sku Khro gnyan rgyal mtsahn on the 14th and 15th days
- 8th month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud on the 24th and 25th days finishing with a ‘cham dance

11. Income and expenses

The nunnery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from
the faithful; the nuns and hermits provide their own food.

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with Tshul khrims rnam dag (b.1945)
(2) Texts:
- Brag dkar g-yung drung 'khyud rtse gsang chen smin grol gling gi lo rgyus nyung bsdus dwangs 'dren me long by Tshul khrims yar 'phel, MS
- gSang mchog gnas chen bya dur gyi bsang mchod lha lnga'i sgra dbyangs by sGra bsun Ye blo, MS
- Brag dkar g-yung drung nor bu spungs pa'i gnas bdag bskul ba, anonymous. MS

(208) dGa’ mal Monastery

1. Name
The full name is dGa’ mal gYung drung dar rgyas gling.

2. Location
The monastery is located on the roadside 34 km north of the county seat of Zung chu.

3. History
The monastery was founded by Rin chen rgyal mtshan of the Tshab tsha family in 1378. The family is considered as sacred (gdung brgyud). The monastery was therefore looked after by a series of masters from the family as the heads of the establishment. The following is a list of the heads of monastery starting form its founder:
1. Tshab tsha Rin chen rgyal mtshan
2. Tshab tsha Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1387-1408), a nephew of the first
3. Tshab tsha Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (1411-1446)
4. Tshab tsha Shes dbang g-yung drung (1432-1492)
5. Tshab tsha gTsug phud rgyal mtshan (1477-1526)
6. Tshab tsha gYung drung bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1517-1568)
7. Tshab tsha bsTan 'dzin tshul khrims (1562-1626)
8. Tshab tsha Shes rab bsTan 'dzin (1629-1649)
9. Tshab tsha gYung drung rgyal mtshan (1653-1699)
10. Tshab tsha bsTan 'dzin nyi ma (1683-1734)
11. Tshab tsha bSod nams nyi ma (1726-1775)
12. Tshab tsha gYung drung bstan 'dzin (1779-1798)
13. Tshab tsha bsTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (1792-1862)
14. Tshab tsha gYung drung bstan rgyal (1899-1960)
15. 1Ha rig pa Blo gros rnam rgyal (b.1947)
16. Tshab tsha bsTan pa gong 'phel (b.1947)
17. dPal grags
18. mKhar yag Nor bu dbang rgyal (b.1933)
19. gYung drung kun khyab (d.1971)
20. Khyung po rab rgyas (b.1940)
21. bsTan 'dzin tshul khrims
22. Bar ma Ye shes rgyal mtshan (b.1958)
23. Tshab tsha mKhyen rab brtse chen (b.1945), the present head of the monastery

4. As hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag, head of the monastery, hereditary
   - two dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - two gnyer pa
   - two mchod dpon

   All the incumbents are replaced every three years with the exception of the mchod dpon who is replaced every year.

5. Current number of monks
   There are one hundred and eight monks and novices in the monastery.

6. Current education
   There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
   The monastery has close ties with sNang zhig Monastery (No. 180) in rNga khog that sends a teacher whenever needed.

8 / 9. Rituals
   - 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 4th and 5th days, and the dGa’ mal smon lam festival from the 7th to the 18th day
     In the past, the sa glang prediction ceremony was held in the early morning of the last day of the dGa’ mal smon lam festival and during the day the 'cham dance was performed for the public audience.
   - 1st month-2nd month: the dgu gtor rite based on the Khro phur from the 26th day of the to the 1st day of the 2nd month
- 3rd month: the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud from the 13th to the 15th day
- 4th month: the observance of the summer-fast (dbyar gnas) from the 8th to the 15th day
- 11th month: commemoration of sKyiab mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan on the 7th and 8th days
- 12th month: the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 10th to the 15th day

10. Books held in the monastery
There are manuscript copies of several works by the first and thirteenth Tshab tsha masters.

11. Income expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful.

12. Local community
There are five local communities which form the local lay community (lha sde) of the monastery. They are A 'ben, Ha phan, mTsho phan, mTha' ba and rMa yul. The A 'ben community comprises four villages: rGya khag with nine families, A pa with fourteen families, sMan tshang with nineteen families and Tsho ngan with ten families. The Ha phan community comprises two villages: Kha stod with twenty-seven families and Chu 'khyil brag dgon with thirty-three families. The mTsho phan community comprises three villages: rGya khag with seven families, Grwa khag with ten families and Chu 'khyil brag dgon with ten families. The mTha' ba community comprises four villages: 'Bro sde with thirteen families, rTa nga with three families, rGya khag with eight families and mKhas grub with five families. The rMa yul community has three villages: sGra to with six families, Brag 'gag with eight families and bDud bcom with five families.

On the mountain behind the monastery called Shes rab lha rtse there are two la btsas. One is called mTshan nyid la btsas which is built at the top, the other la btsas, on the mountainside known as Srid rgyal la btsas, is dedicated to the goddess Srid rgyal. The renewal ceremony of these la btsas, performed by the monks, takes place on the 1st day of the 5th month.

Mount Ri Dzam bha lha, believed to be the abode of the local deity with the same name, is located 15 km east of the monastery. The deity is propitiated by the five communities together on the 5th day of the 5th month.

There is also the sacred mountain (gnas ri) known as Bya dur located 1 km north of monastery (cf. sNa steng Monastery No. 199). It is venerated by all the people from Shar khog and other regions.
14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture and trading

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1998 with the following monks at the monastery: Sra bstan mi 'gyur (b.1936), Tshul khrims rgya mtsho (b.1964) and Shes rab mthar phyin (b.1972)

(2) Texts:
- rNga khul zung chu rdzong gi bya dur dga’ smin (mal) dgon pa ’i lo rgyus m dor bsdus, NKhGL pp.94-97
- dPal gshen bstan dga’ mal g-yung drung dar rgyas gling gi dkar chag dpyid kyi glu dbyangs thos pa tshig gi rab phreng, ZGSK pp.146-171

(209) New dGa’ mal Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is dGa’ mal gShen bstan kun khyab bde chen gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located on the roadside 34 km north of the county seat of Zung chu.

3. History

After the events of Cultural Revolution, there were several unsuccessful attempts to found a new monastery for all the Bonpo population in Shar khog. Finally, in the nineteen-eighties the local authorities gave permission to rebuild one Bonpo monastery on the site of the old dGa’ mal Monastery. It regrouped the five former main monasteries: dGa’ mal, sNa steng (No.199), Rin sprungs (No.200), sNang zhig dngul sku (No.201), and sKyang tshang (No.202).

When the assembly hall of the new dGa’ mal was completed, Shes rab mthar phyin (b.1933) was chosen to be the abbot and sKal bzang dar rgyas the chief teacher (bon slob) of the new monastery. The monks of the old dGal’ mal were content to cooperate in establishing the new dGa’ mal. Later, however, the monks of sKyang tshang, sNang zhig, Rin sprungs, sNa steng and other monasteries in the area began to rebuild their own monasteries at their original sites and resumed independent religious activities. This event led the monks of the old dGa’ mal to
rebuild their own monastery too, although the two are now located within the same compound. The new dGa' ma1 nevertheless continues to function as a representative body of the five monasteries.

4. Hierarchical system
- one mkhan po, appointed
- two dge skos who are replaced every two years.

Every year since 1996, the five monasteries in turn send an abbot, a dbu mdzad, a mchod dpon and a 'cham dpon; there is one bon slob and one lo gsum mkhan po, chosen among the monks in the monastery or invited from one of the other monasteries.

5. Current number of monks
There are few monks living in the monastery on a permanent basis and their number fluctuates. However, when the five monasteries mentioned above gather at the monastery to perform the two major annual rituals, their number exceeds four hundred.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes; the novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery maintains close ties with the five monasteries mentioned above.

8 / 9. Rituals
- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the 4th and 5th days; the smon lam festival from the 18th to the 23rd day of the 1st month with the 'cham dance on the last day all five monasteries together. This gathering is known as dgun 'tshogs, the ritual in winter
- 4th month: the observance of the summer-fast (dbyar gnas) from the 13th to the 15th day
- 5th month of the: the recitation ceremony of the Ti tri su (dbyar 'tshogs) from the 8th to the 16th day of the with the 'cham dance on the last day all five monasteries together. This congregation is called dbyar 'tshogs.
- 9th month: the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 23rd to the 30th day
- 10th month: commemoration of Zla ba rgyal mtshan on the 8th and 9th days

11. Income and expenses
The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.
12. Local community
Since the monastery represents the five monasteries mentioned above, it has no local lay community of its own.

13. Local festivals
For the local festivals, see the accounts of the five monasteries.

14. Occupation of the local people
See No.12.

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: rNam rnam Tshe ring dbang rgyal, a monk at the monastery (b.1937)
(2) Texts:
- Zing (zung) chu bya dur dga’ mal dgon chen nam dpal gshen bstan kun khyab bde chen gling gi dkar chag lung rig chu shel dbang po’i bdud rtsi’i rgyun by sGra dpal, ZGSK pp.35-67
- rNga khul zung chu rdzong gi dung ri bya ’phur dgon pa’i lo rgyus mdor bsdud, NKhGL pp.101-102

(210) Shar khog gTso tshang Monastery

1. Name
The monastery’s full name is gTso tshang sMin grol bstan rgya gling and was named after its founder, gTso ’phags Zla ba rgyal mtshan.

2. Location
The monastery is located 17 km north of Songpan, the seat of Zung chu county.

3. History
According to Hor btsun bsTan ‘dzin blo gros, gTso ’phags Zla ba rgyal mtshan, was born in the Earth-Rat Year of the 2nd rab byung (1168). His successor was gTso ’phags Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. After several generations the gTso tshang lineage was interrupted, but was reestablished with gYung drung bstan ’dzin who rebuilt the assembly hall (’du khang) in 1862. The monastery was then looked after by a
series of religious practitioners: bSod nams bstan rgyal, Shes rab bstan ’dzin, A khu 'Brug yag, gYung drung phun tshogs and Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan. The monastery was closed down during the Cultural Revolution and was reopened in 1995, later than most monasteries which, for the most part, were rebuilt in the 1980s. Prior to its reopening, its monks lived in Rin spungs Monastery (No.200), since, according to oral tradition, Rin spungs was originally a branch of gTso tshang.

The reconstruction of gTso tshang was part of the Development Project of the One Hundred Townships of Sichuan Province launched in 1991 which included gTso tshang township. The monks of gTso tshang Monastery living in Rin spungs moved to the new gTso tshang Monastery after 1995, but, since it is new and small, Rin spungs Monastery still supports it and sends teachers whenever needed and the monastery has in fact become a branch of Rin spungs. The two monasteries perform their annual rituals together.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag, first hereditary
   Rin spungs and gTso tshang have two common dge skos: the senior dge skos from Rin spungs and the junior one from gTso tshang. They are both replaced every two years. There are two dbu mdzad both from Rin spungs since the two monasteries perform all their rituals together. The monasteries have two common spyi ba (or gnyer pa) and two mchod dpon who are replaced every two years.

6 / 7. Current education and educational exchange
   For the reasons mentioned above the monastery maintains close ties with Rin spungs and the monks go there to study.

8 / 9. Rituals
   The monks go to Rin spungs Monastery (No.200) for major rituals.
   The monks of Rin spungs also come to gTso tshang Monastery for certain rituals such as the recitation ceremony of the Ma tri from the 23rd day of the 4th month to the 1st day of the 5th month with a ‘cham dance on the last day. The monastery also performs a number of rituals alone: The rNam rgyal stong mchod from the 2nd to the 5th day of the 5th month, the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud from the 6th to the 9th day of the 5th month and the ritual cycle of sTag la for five days in the 11th month (no fixed dates).

10. Books held in the monastery
   The monastery has no books for common use; the monks have their own books.
11. Economic circumstances of the monastery

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community consists of four villages: Bar rong with about twenty families; 'Phen 'dzin with twelve families, Chu lung tshur ta with seventeen families, Lung tshang with twenty-four families and gTso tshang with eleven families.

13. Local festivals

The *la btsas* on the mountain behind the monastery is called bKra shis. Its renewal ceremony is performed by the monks on the 1st day of the 1st month and the 4th day of the 5th month.

There are two *la btsas* of the four villages. One is called gSas mkhar and the other Nor bu. They are situated on a mountain of the local deity. The deity is propitiated by the village people on the 1st day of the 1st month and the 4th day of the 5th month.

The monks and local lay community also join other villages in the region to venerate the two sacred mountains, Bya dur and Dung ri. (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Farming and trading

Sources

(1) Interview with sKal bzang (b.1930) in autumn 1998
(2) Texts:
   - gTso tshang dgon pa smin grol bstan rgyas gling gi dkar chag snang gsal me long by Shes rab mthar phyin in Zing (zung) chu rdzongs dgon pa so sogs (so 'i) dkar chag, Mimeograph, 1993, n.258
(201) sNang zhig Monastery

(202) sKyang tshang Monastery
(203) mKhar yag Monastery

(204) Gia ro Monastery
(205) gSer gling Monastery

(206) Sa 'brug Monastery
Brag g-yung drung Hermitage

dGo’ mal Monastery
(209) New dGa’ mal Monastery

(210) gTso tshang Monastery
gZi tsha sde dgu County

This is a place originally called Khod po valley (Khod po khog). It was called Nan ping in Chinese in the periods of 1953 to 1959 and 1962 to 1999 as a administrative county, and received its present name in 1999. The “Nine Villages of the descendants of the gZi clan” (gZi tsha sde dgu) are ancient tribes of rGyal rong in Amdo.

gZi tsha sde dgu County is located in rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. There are 123 villages in the county divided between 19 townships. The county covers an area of 5,289.83 sq km. The population is 47,779 (10,854 of whom were Tibetans in 1980). The county seat is gZi tsha sde dgu and is 576 km from 'Bar khams, the capital of rNga ba Prefecture.

(211) rTsub ma Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is rTsub ma gYung drung dar rgyas gling or rTsub ma sTag skyong gYung drung dar rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 120 km northwest of gZi tsha sde dgu, the county seat.

3. History

The monastery was founded by bsTan pa tshul khrims (1897-1968) in 1939. He was succeeded by gYung drung phun tshogs (b.1933), the present head of the monastery. It was reconstructed in 1984. It was destroyed again by fire and was rebuilt in 1991.

4. Hierarchical system

- one grwa tshang bla ma, elected
- two dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- two spyi ba

All the incumbents besides the grwa tshang bla ma are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks

There were thirty-two novices and monks in the monastery in 1998.
6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

Since the monastery was closely connected with A skyid sKyang tshang (No.194) and sGur skyang (No.196) Monasteries in the past, Dri med ’od zer, the head of these monasteries, looks after rTsub ma Monastery, and the monks go to his monasteries for their ordination and the three-year retreat (lo gsum).

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: the smon lam prayer from the 5th to the 10th day based on the gYung drung klong rgyas
- 2nd month: the ritual based on the Yi dam kun ’dus from the 9th to the 22nd day
- 3rd month: the observance of the smyung gnas abstinence from the 14th to the 16th day
- 4th month: the ritual based on the gYung drung klong rgyas from the 14th and 15th day
- 5th month: commemoration of sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan from the 21st to 22nd day
- 6th month: the ritual based on the gYung drung klong rgyas from the 14th to 15th day
- 9th month: the srung bzlog rite based on the ritual cycles of sTag la and Phur pa from the 1st to the 3rd day

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community of the monastery (lha sde) consists of rTsub ma gong ma and rTsub ma ’og ma communities. rTsub ma gong ma comprises four villages: lTong phrug with ten families, rTa ro with five families, ’Dre bu with fourteen families and Tang be with three families.

rTsub ma ’og ma comprises five villages: lTong phrug with twelve families, rTa ro with seven families, ’Dre bu with nine families, Bla ’og with five families and Tang be with five families.
13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is called sByin 'bum regarded as the abode of Bya dur mgo, the local deity. There is a la btsas named gYung drung nor bu. Its renewal ceremony takes place on the 3rd of the 9th month. Another mountain called rTsub ma brag dkar with its la btsas is located at 5 km west of the monastery. Its renewal ceremony takes place on the 1st of the 3rd month.

The people from this region also participate in the veneration of Mount Shar Dung ri and the lake Dung ri gSer mtsho. These are sacred sites of Bon and renowned for their beauty. They are located in Shar khog, 247 km east of the monastery. Mount Byang Bya dur, another sacred site in Shar khog is 187 km east of the monastery (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with gYung drung phun tshogs (b.1933), the present head of the monastery

(2) Texts:
- Nan phing rdzong rtsub ma dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, NKhGL p.258
- Si khrong zhing chen rnga ba bod rigs rang skyong khul nan phing rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus, published by Nan phing rdzong gi sa ming 'go khrid tshan chung, 1983

(212) Dar rgyas Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Khod po gYung drung dar rgyas gling.

2. Location

The monastery is located 54 km east of gZi tsha sde dgu, the county seat and is accessible by car.

3. History

After several unsuccessful attempts, Dar rgyas Monastery was the first Bonpo monastery to have been founded in the Khod po area. It was founded by Khod po sKal bzang nyi ma in the 10th Rab byung (1567-1626). The monastery was maintained by his descendants as the successive heads of the monastery:

1. Khod po sKal bzang nyi ma
2. bsTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan
3. Nain mkha’rgyal po
4. Shes rab blo gros
5. Yu bo

The fifth is the present head of the monastery. He was studying at Brag g-yung drung Hermitage (No.207) in Shar khog under the master Khyung g-yang when I visited Dar rgyas Monastery in autumn 1998. Since he is too young to take on his responsibilities, Phun tshogs ‘od zer, a master from the Bon 'khor lineage of Rab dben Monastery (No.215) in the same county, was invited to look after the monastery. The monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
   - one dgon bdag
   - two dbu mdzad
   - two dge skos
   - two spyi ba
   - two mchod dpon

All the incumbents besides the dgon bdag are replaced every three years.

5. Current number of monks

There were eighty-five novices and monks in the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery has no particular ties with any other monastery.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 2nd to the 6th day
- 2nd month: the ritual cycle of Phur pa from the 5th to the 9th day
- 3rd month: recitation of Ma tri from the 7th to the 16th day with the 'cham dance on the 15th day
- 5th month: rNam rgyal stong mchod from the 11th to the 13th day
- 9th month: the ritual cycle of sTag la from the 25th to the 29th day with the dgu gtor rite on the 29th day
10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one printed copy of the Bonpo Kanjur.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The local lay community of the monastery consists of eight communities scattered over a large area: Ba stod community comprising three villages known collectively as Ba stod khag gsum: Ba yo village with fourteen families, Bu 'bo with forty-two families and rTsa zhol with thirty-two families. Khyung chag community comprising three villages: Bo skong with twenty-five families, Tshe skong with eighteen families and Pur ngo with twenty-two families. Lang chen community comprising Lang chen village with forty-two families. Nyang tan community comprising Nyang tan village with twenty-five families. Gro rtsi community comprising two villages: Gro rtsi with twenty-seven families and Cho ba with thirty families. gTsang tsha community comprising three villages: Yang yan with twenty-eight families, Gu sras with forty families and sBrul tshang with twenty-eight families. 'Phan po community comprising two villages: 'Phan po with fifteen families and mKhar mdo with thirty families. mDzo lo community comprising mDzo lo village with twenty families.

13. Local festivals

Mount Khod rtse behind the monastery is believed to be a sacred mountain associated with Ma rgyud. There is a la btsas called gSas mkhar located on the mountain's summit. Its renewal ceremony takes place on the 1st day of the 5th month. There is also a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called lCam sras dom mgo 2 km west of the monastery that was sanctified by sKyang 'phags and venerated on the 1st, 8th and 15th days of any month, because the propitiating date is already unknown.

gNyan chen bla ma snang rtse, a mountain located 1 km north of the monastery is regarded as the abode of a local deity of the same name. A la btsas called Sa stag is dedicated to him and is propitiated by the monastery on the 29th of the 9th month.

Ba stod and Nyang tan communities share the same la btsas on the 15th day of the 5th month. The la btsas of Khyung chags community is renewed on the 13th day of the 5th month. The la btsas dedicated to gNyan chen Pe tis stag mgo, the local deity is renewed by the Lang chen community on the 11th day of the 4th month. The la btsas called Mo skyong of Gro rtsi community is renewed on the 10th day of the 4th month. The la btsas called Brag mkhar of gTsang tsha community is renewed on
the 15th day of the 3rd month. The *la btsas* called Bya dkar of 'Phan po community is renewed on the 11th day of the 3rd month. The *la btsas* named lHa khang gdong of mDzo lo community has no fixed date for its renewal ceremony.

The people of this area also venerate Mount Bya dur and Dung ri, the two most important sacred mountains in Shar khog, the neighboring county (*cf.* sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interviews in autumn of 1998 with the following monks at the monastery: bsTan pa ’od zer (b.1944), sKal bzang rnam rgyal (b.1953) and sKal bzang tshul khrims (b.1940)

(2) Texts:

- *Nan phing rdzong dar rgyas dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bs dus* in rNga khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, NKhGL p.260

Notes

The *Nan phing rdzong dar rgyas dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bs dus* provides a different list of the monastery’s lineage masters: 1) sKal bzang nyi ma, 2) Nyi ma ’od zer, 3) sMon lam, 4) bsTan ’dzin rgyal mtshan, 3) Phun tshogs ’od zer (NKhGL p.260). The dates of these masters are also given, but they do not seem to be reliable enough to mention here. I found no historical record of the monastery and the monks do not have any clear knowledge on the subject.

(213) Sa dbus Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Sa dbus bKra shis phun tshogs gling also called Sa dbus gYung drung ’phel rgyas dgon. Sa dbus is the name of the community where the monastery is located. It is also spelt Sa 'ug, Sa 'u or Sa yul.

2. Location

The monastery is located 116 km northwest of the county seat of gZhi tsha sde dgu.

3. History

According to oral tradition, the monastery was founded by sKyang ’phags, a Bonpo saint of Amdo who was very active in the 2nd Rab byung (1087-1146). It is a
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

branch of bSam 'grub Monastery (No.197) in mDzod dge, but no historical records have been found. Since the assembly hall (’du khang) served as the village’s granary during the Cultural Revolution, it has survived and was restored in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system
- one dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- two spyi ba
- one bsang gtong, apart from performing the bsang ceremony, he also executes other religious services such as the bskang 'don at the monastery. All the incumbents are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks
There were twenty-five novices and monks in the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education
There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery maintains ties with the monasteries that are historically related to sKyang 'phags, i.e. A skyid sKyang tshang (No.194), sGur skyang (No.196) and bSam 'grub (No.197).

8 / 9. Rituals
- 1st month: mChod pa stong mtshan on the 15th and 16th days
- 2nd month: mChod pa stong mtshan on the 15th and 16th days
- 3rd month: Ti tri su and Ma tri alternately from the 1st to the 8th day; mChod pa stong mtshan on the 15th and 16th days
- 4th month: the smyung gnas fast from the 15th to the 17th day
- 5th month: mChod pa stong mtshan from the 1st to the 16th day
- 6th month: commemoration of sKyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan on the 21st and 22nd days
- 10th month: Birth anniversary of sKyang sprul Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan on the 15th day
- 12th month: the ritual cycles of sTag la, Phur pa and Khro bo in alternance from the 21st to 30th day with the 'cham dances on the 28th and 29th days

10. Books held in the monastery
The monastery has no texts; some of the monks have their own books for ritual
purposes.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income. It depends on offerings from its followers. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

The Local lay community of the monastery is called Sa dbus consisting of four villages: sMe ba with fifteen families, Rong le with fourteen families, Bla sgrub with thirteen families and Tho sgrub with ten families.

13. Local festivals

There are two la btsas on the hill Gad pa stag mgo located 3 km north of the monastery: the renewal ceremony of the one situated on the upper part of the hill is performed by both monks and lay people and the one located on the lower part is renewed by the lay people alone on the 11th day of the 4th month.

The la btsas named brTse bzer east of the monastery is renewed by both lay and religious communities on the 3rd of the 9th month.

There are also four la btsas. Each one has its own name: the one south of the monastery is called dByar dus nor bu or dByar dus cog shing and the three to the north, 'Dod 'jo nor bu, dPal rtsal seng ge and Shi mda'. Their renewal ceremony is performed by the lay people of the four villages on the 11th day of the 4th month.

Both laymen and monks venerate Mount Bya dur and Mount Dung ri in Shar khog (cf: sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: gYung drung tshul khrims (alias Klu 'bum 'brug, b.1952), a monk at the monastery
(2) Texts:
- Nan phing rdzong gi sa yul dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdo rbsdus in rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus, NKhGL p.259

(214) lDong dpal Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is lDong dpal gYung drung me tog gling. lDong
dpal is the name of the community where the monastery is located. A variant spelling is gDong dpe.

2. Location

The monastery is located 145 km northwest of the county seat of gZi tsha sde dgu.

3. History

The monastery was founded by bsTan pa 'brug grags, a master of bSam 'grub Monastery (No.197) in mDzod dge. No written records on the monastery’s history have been found. The monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s. mChog grub dpal bzang, the head of bSam grub Monastery in mDzod dge is also the dgon bdag of lDong dpal Monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

- one dgon bdag
- one dbu mdzad
- two dge skos
- two spyi ba

All the incumbents besides the dgon bdag are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks

There were twenty-two novices and monks in the monastery in autumn 1998.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

7. Educational exchange

The monastery has close ties with bSam 'grub Monastery in mDzod dge.

8 / 9. Rituals

- 1st month: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 5th to the 14th days
- 3rd month: mChod pa stong mtshan on the 1st and 2nd days
- 4th month: the smyung gnas fast on the 15th and 16th days
- 5th month: mChod pa stong mtshan from the 14th to the 16th days
- 8th month: traditionally the ritual based on the rTsa gsum is performed from the 21st to the 25th day, but because none of the present monks know how to perform it, they recite the mChod pa stong mtshan instead
- 10th month: propitiation of the religious protectors (bka' skyong) on the 17th day and the renewal ceremony of the la btsas 18th day
- 12th month: the ritual cycles of stTag la, Phur pa and Khro bo alternately from the 21st to the 30th day with the 'cham dances on the 28th and 29th days

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

There are six villages in lDong dpal community: Thang dga' with twelve families, Bya tshang with eleven families, sDong bar with thirteen families, Thang sna with eleven families, mDo skong with twelve families and Yar lung with eighteen families.

13. Local festivals

The mountain behind the monastery is regarded as sacred and is called gYung drung gsas mkhar. Its la btsas is renewed by the monks on the 10th day of the 12th month.

The renewal ceremony of the following la btsas: The la btsas called lDong nags tsho sman of Thang dga' village is renewed by the village people three times a year: on the 11th day of the 4th month, the 4th day of the 5th month and the 21st day of the 11th month. The la btsas of Bya tshang village is called gSas mkhar, the la btsas of sDong bar village Nang skya bstan 'dzin (there is a motorable road leading to it); the la btsas of Thang sna village rDung rtse and the la btsas of mDo skong village ICang gsas dus log. Yar lung village has four la btsas: gSas mkhar, 'Brug mgo, gNyan chen zhwa smug and gSas mkhar nor bu. The renewal ceremony of all the above-mentioned la btsas is performed by the people of their respective villages twice a year, on the 11th of the 5th month and the 17th day of the 10th month.

The la btsas gNyan chen sGrung lha rgad po of lDong dpal village is renewed once a year on the following days in alternance: the 11th day of the 4th month, the 4th day of 5th month, the 15th day of the 6th month and the 17th of the 10th month.

The people of the lay community also travel and participate in the veneration of Mounts Bya dur and Dung ri in Shar khog (cf: sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: gYung drung blo gros (alias Ya go, b.1942), a
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

monk at the monastery

(2) Texts:

- *Nan phing rdzong gi gdong dpe dgon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, NKhGL*
  pp.259-260

(215) Rab dben Monastery

1. Name

The monastery’s full name is Rab dben bKra shis phun tshogs gling. Since the monastery is located in rDza gzhi community it is also known as rDza gzhi dgon.

2. Location

The monastery is located 41 km west of the county seat of gZi tsha sde dgu which is renowned for its scenic beauty.

3. History

The date of the monastery’s foundation remains uncertain. According to oral tradition, it has a history of 1100 years.¹ Bon mkhar sKal bzang rin chen, the present head of the monastery, has recorded an oral account according to which the original temple was founded by Drang srong Nyi ma thag ’dogs. This sage is regarded as a descendant of Kong tsha dbang Idan, one of the offspring of gShen rab Mi bo. The Bon mkhar lineage therefore claims to be descended from gShen rab Mi bo.

bsTan ’dzin rgyal mtshan, the twenty-first of the Bon mkhar lineage, moved the temple to the present site in 1573, and extended the establishment into a monastery which he named Rab dben bKra shis phun tshogs gling,² but the history of the establishment before his time remains obscure. However, the account of Bon mkhar sKal bzang rin chen gives a list of the heads of the monastery, but it is incomplete:

1. Drang srong Nyi ma thag ’dogs
2-20. The names are missing.
22. rNam dag tshul khrims
23. bsTan ’dzin lhun grub
24. Tshe dbang lhun grub
25. bsTan pa dar rgyas
26. lHun grub dbang rgyal
27. bsTan ’dzin dbang rgyal
28. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
29. gYung drung tshul khrims
30. Sang rgyas tshul khrims (1936-1959)
31. sKal bzang rin chen (b.1964), the present head of the monastery. The
monastery was rebuilt in the 1980s.

4. Hierarchical system

- *dgon bdag*, hereditary
- two *dbu mdzad*
- two *dge skos*
- three *mchod dpon*
- two *spyi ba*, no predetermined term of office

All the incumbents besides the *dgon bdag* are replaced every two years.

5. Current number of monks

There are sixty-one novices and monks in the monastery.

6. Current education

There are no organized classes. The young novices are trained by the elder monks.

8/9. Rituals

The monastery performs only two rituals: commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan from the 3rd to the 6th day of the 1st month; Ma tri sgrub chen from the 7th to the 16th day of the 4th month with the 'cham dances on the 15th day.

10. Books held in the monastery

The monastery has one printed copy of Bonpo Kanjur.

11. Income and expenses

The monastery has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from the faithful. The monks provide their own food.

12. Local community

There are several communities scattered among eight villages: 'Brong khams community comprises four villages: 'Bar yul mkhar with forty-three families, mDa' 'bur with six families, mDa' 'joms with eleven families and Bod nang with thirteen families.

Khyung yag community comprises two villages: Khyung yag with thirty-five families and Nye kho with twelve families.

gNyan rtsa community comprises gNyan rtsa with forty families; Ngo stod has one village: rDzong nang with thirty-seven families; Kyong te community comprises four villages: Phar phyin with twelve families, bDe chen with forty families, Sa cha
with twenty families and Ha li with eighteen families;
gZi tsha sde dgu community comprises nine villages: rDze tsha ba with sixty families, Zhu ce with forty families, He dga’ with seven families, Bo bzo with forty families, 'Phel ya with thirty families, rGyal 'phel with twelve families, rGu ba with nine families, 'Phan po with twenty-six families and 'Phong bze ge with thirty-seven families. In addition, there are several families scattered in various townships: Chu dkar, A lo, Ma ca, Lo dbyi, Wu’u c’o and rTsa thang.

13. Local festivals

There is a sacred mountain (gnas ri) called rDza gzhi brag dkar located 3 km east of the monastery, with a motorable road leading to it. It was revealed by sKyang sprul Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan and is venerated by the people of the villages on the 15th and 30th day of the 6th month.

In addition they also go and participate in the veneration of Mounts Bya dur and Dung ri, the two most important sacred mountains of Bon in Shar khog (cf. sNa steng Monastery No.199).

14. Occupation of the local people

Agriculture

Sources

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: Bon mkhar sKal bzang rin chen (b.1963), the present head of the monastery
(2) Texts:
   - Nan phing rdzong gi rab dben dgon pa’i lo rgyus mdor bsdus, NKhGL pp.260-266

Notes

1 Zha ru si (rou wen gong ba) gai kuang (A General Introduction to rDza gzhi Monastery [rab dben dgon pa]) by Bon mkhar sKal bzang rin chen, written in Chinese, MS., p.1.
2 Concerning the succession of the Bon mkhar bla ma and their dates, Nan phin rdzong gi rab dben dgon pa’i lo rgyus mdor bsdus provides a different list of the masters and their dates after the transference of the temple to the present site, but it is too confused to quote here.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan
Rab ña Monastery
Wen chuan County

Wen chuan county is located in rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. There are 18 townships subdivided into 126 villages. The county covers an area of 3,958.27 sq km. The population was 82,830 in 1980: 5,516 Tibetans and 17,322 Qiang. The county town is located at Wei zhou Township 246 km from 'Bar kham, the capital of rNga ba Prefecture.

(216) Bla ma Temple

Bla ma Temple is located 110 km south of the county seat of Wen chuan, two-kilometer walk up the mountain to reach the monastery. Wen chuan is a county of rNga ba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

Since the Tibetans in the area are completely sinicized and no longer speak Tibetan, they use even Chinese names, although they acknowledge that they are Tibetans. The founder of the temple remains unknown. When I visited the site in 1998, the caretaker of the temple, an old Tibetan man called Ma Qingyun, who had been a soldier in the Long March, was the only person there who knew how to read some Tibetan. The temple was rebuilt in the 1980s.

Only a small number of lay practitioners occasionally come to the temple to worship and make offerings. Ma Qingyun occasionally performs simple rituals for local families when requested. The temple has two copies of the gSer 'od nor bu 'od 'bar (xylographic edition), and one manuscript volume of various ritual texts.

Economic circumstances of the temple depends on offerings from the faithful. Many people come to the temple to worship and make offerings although there is no local community as such.

Occupation of the local population is farming.

Source

(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: Ma Qingyun (b.1918)
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(217) mChog gsum Temple

Since the Tibetans in the Wen chuan area have been completely sinicized, most of them call the temple by its Chinese name, Sansheng Miao, (a literal translation of mChog gsum lha khang). The temple is located on the road 110 km south of the county town of Wen chuan.

According to oral tradition, originally there was a Guan di Miao, a temple dedicated to the Chinese deity Guan di. Sang rgyas dpal ldan, a Bonpo master from Central Tibet enshrined a statue of gShen rab Mi bo as the main statue of the temple together with two other statues — relegating the Guan di statue among the secondary deities — and transformed the establishment into a Bonpo temple named mChog gsum lha khang.

There were no lay devotees when I visited the temple in 1998, only an old lady looking after it. I was told that she was a Tibetan, from Chu chen in rGyal rong, and now she was the caretaker of the temple. The temple was rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties. It has close ties with gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery (No.170) in Rong brag county. The local people invite five monks from gYung drung dar rgyas Monastery to perform an annual ritual on the 15th day of the 2nd month every year.

Since there are no other religious activities apart from the ritual mentioned above, very few people come to the temple. Indeed many of the villagers have not been to the temple for years and don’t even know to which religious tradition it belongs.

Sources
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: Xiao Shufang, the caretaker of the temple who was around seventy years old when I visited the place (she did not know the year of her birth)
(2) Texts:
   - Wen chuan rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus compiled and printed by Wen chuan rdzong gi sa cha'i ming btus las don 'go khrid tsho chung, p.1, Wei zhou, 1982
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

(216) Bla ma Temple

(217) mChog gsum Temple
(218) La tha Temple

1. Name

The temple is also called A lo Temple. This name of the temple is said to be Mongolian, since the temple’s devotees are mainly of Mongolian origin and are said to be descendants of a Mongolian army.

2. Location

The temple is located 120 km from the county town of Yanyuan, which is part of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

3. History

When I went to visit the region I was unable to reach the temple owing to floods that had destroyed the road to Yan yuan county. I was unable to find any written source concerning the temple’s history (and I doubt that any exist). In Xichang, the capital of Liangshan Prefecture, I met one aged woman from the village where the temple is located. She told me that according to a legend the temple was founded in the 13th century. The devotees of this temple are mainly Mongolians but also include some Tibetans and Naki, and even some Yi, another ethnic group living in the area. The Mongolian army, of which the present Mongolians are said to be the descendants, arrived in the region in the 17th century with Gushri Khan. In the past, the temple was looked after by the leading Mongolian family, whose eldest son inherited his father’s position as chief, while the second and third sons became the gnyer ba and head of the temple respectively. When there were not enough sons, the incumbents were chosen from among the family’s relatives. The temple was rebuilt in the nineteen-eighties.

4. Hierarchical System

There is one dge skos and one dbu mdzad, both replaced every three years.

5. Current number of devotees

There are one hundred and twenty-nine tantric practitioners who work as farmers and live with their families and only go to the temple to perform the annual rituals.

6. Current education

The younger practitioners are trained by the elder practitioners.

7. Educational exchange

Since it is the only Bonpo temple in the area, it has no direct ties with any other
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan

8 / 9. Rituals
- 1st month: the smon lam prayer from the 10th to the 20th day
- 4th month: the smyang gnas fast from the 1st to the 16th day
- 8th month: the minatsho ritual from the 6th to the 11th day
- 9th month: the dutsetshok ritual from the 26th day to the 29th day; this is followed by the gelacha ritual.

The terms minatsho, dutsetshok and gelacha are said to be the Mongolian names for the rituals, but none of the people whom I interviewed in Xichang knew what they meant.

11. Income and expenses
The temple has no regular source of income and depends on offerings from its followers.

12. Local community
About 5,000 Mongolian, Tibetan and Naki in the area

14. Occupation of the local people
Farming

Source
(1) Interview in autumn 1998 with: Wang Wenzhi, a Mongolian woman who comes from the village where the temple is located and who works at the Department of Minorities and Religion of Liangshan Prefecture government.
Abbreviations

**BHMT** Brief History of Monasteries in Dibu (Tewo), in Chinese, by Yanglen Dorje in The bo rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i yig cha (Deb gnyis pa). Edited by the Editing Commitee for Historical Accounts of Past Events of the CPPCC of Tewo County of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, 1994.

**BLKM** Bod kyi lo rgyus kun dga'i me long by dMu dge bSam gtan in Rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig bdams bsgrigs of rnga ba Chang and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (Deb Inga ba). Edited and published by the CPPCC of rNga ba Chang and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province. 'Bar khams, 1987.

**BGLD** Bon brgya dgon sman ri bshad sgrub smin grol gling gi lo rgyus mdor bs dus by Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mt sho, MS.

**BBD** Byang bya dur by sGra dpal, Mineograph. Zung chu, 87 pages.

**CNTK** bDe bar gshegs pa'i bka'i dgongs 'grel bstan bcos 'gyur ro cog par du sgrub pa'i tshul las nye bar brtsams pa'i gtam yang dag par brjod pa dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu'i phreng ba (or Co ne'i bstan 'gyur dkar chag) by Kun mkhyen 'Jigs med dbang po. Kansu mi rigs dpe skrun khang. Lanzhou, 1986.


**DMCB** mDo smadchos 'byung or Deb ther rgya mtsho by Brag dgon pa dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas. Kansu mi rigs dpe skrun khang. Lanzhou, 1982.


**DzNGL** mDzod dge'i bod brgyud nang bstan dgon sde so so'i lo rgyus mdor bs dus, compiled by Srid gros mdzod dge rdzong u yon lhun khang rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad yig khang, Nang khul yig cha, rNga ba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, 1999.


**KBTL** Kan lho bod kyi tsho shog lo rgyus mdor bs dus by Ma Denkun and Padma Dorje, No.11, in Kan lho lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i yig rigs. Published by the Editing Commitee for Historical Accounts of Past Events of the CPPCC of
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Tibetan regions in Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan


KGLG  
*Khams phyogs dkar mdzes khul gyi dgon sde so so'i lo rgyus gsal bar bshad pa nang bstan gsal ba'i me long.* Compiled by Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig zhib 'jug lite gnas kyi chos lugs lo rgyus zhib 'jug so dang/ Krung go bod brgyud nang bstan slob gling bod brgyud nang bstan zhib 'jug khang/ Zi khrong zhing chen dkar mdzes khul chos lugs cud/ dKar mdzes khul yig bsgyur cud las khungs/ Beijing, in 1995.

KNGL  
*Kan lho'i bod brgyud nang bstan dgon sde so so'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* (Bar cha), Restricted use. Compiled by Wanggyal. The Editing Committee for Historical Accounts of Past Events of the CPPCC of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Hezuo (Gtsos), 1993.

KhKRL  
*Khri ka'i rig gnas lo rgyus.* Compiled by Srid gros khri ka rdzong khong mi lhan tshogs rig gnas lo rgyus khang, unofficial publication. Xining, 1996.

KTGN  
*gShen gyi dge sbyong khri ka ba kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar* by sBra ser Pantita Kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (autobiography incomplete), MS.

KTSD  
*Kan su zhing chen the bo rdzong sa ming byung tshul gyi deb ther* (Nang khul rgyu cha) by the Group of General Survey of Place's Names in Tewo County. Tewo, 1987.

NKhGL  
*rNga ba khul gyi dgon pa'i lo rgyus* (temporary title) by the Religion Bureau and the Buddhist Association of rNga ba Tibetan and Qiang Nationalities Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province, MS.

NBBK  
*gNas mchog brag dkar bya rgod kyi dkar chag man shel gong bu'i 'khor lo by Hor btsun bsTan 'dzin blo gros rgya mtsho in rNga ba khul gyi gnas yig* (Vol.1), pp.121-140. The Office of Edition and Translation of Apa (Rnga ba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

NMK D  
*gNas chen dmu ri seng ge yongs rdzogs bkra shis lha yi mdun sa zhes pa'i dkar chag gnas kyi ide mig* by Tshul khrims rnam dag in *rNga ba khul gyi gnas yig* (Vol.2), pp.151-235, The Office of Edition and Translation of Apa (Rnga ba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

SZNT  
*rJe btshun bla ma dam pa nges pa don gyi g-yung drung 'chang dbang dpal shar rdza ba chen po bkra shis rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba thar 'dod mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan* by dBra ston bsKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1897-1959). Beijing: Krung go bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990.
TGLG  
gTso tshang dgon pa'i lo rgyus by lDong rigs pa A skal, MS. This text is written down from just memory in 1983.

TGLR  
rTse zhig gam rtse dbus dgon pa'i lo rgyus rags tsam zhu ba by Shes rab bstan pa'i zla ba. MS.

TLPY  

TsGLNy  
mTsho lho khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bs dus. Compiled by mTsho sngon zhung chen mtsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs dang krung go'i bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob gling nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Zi ling (Xining), 1999.

TzGLNy  
mTsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bs dus. Compiled by mTsho sngon zhung chen mtsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs dang krung go'i bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob gling nang bstan zhib 'jug khang. mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999, Ziling (Xining).

TZLD  
rTse zhig lo rgyus mdo r bs dus by Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho. MS.

YBTP  
gYong drung bon gyi bstan 'byung phyogs bs dus by dPal tshul, Bod ljong mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa, 1988.

ZGSK  
Zing (zung) chu rdzong dgon pa so sogs (so'i) dkar chag. Compiled by A gling bsTan 'phel. Mimeograph, 1993.

ZNYZ  
Zhuo ni yang tu si zhuan lue (Brief Bibliography of Co ne rgyal bo) by Yang Shihong. Published by Si chuan minority publishing house, 1989, Chengdu.
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region
Mustang District

(219) Klu Brag Monastery

The only Bonpo community of any size in Mustang is Klu brag, a village of ten-and-a-half estates (grong pa) subdivided into fourteen households (khang pa) and sixteen hearths (me khral). There are also three private temples, in Jomsom, Nardzong and Dzar, but because they concern only individual families they are not considered here.

1. Name

The settlement, called Klu brag, is itself sometimes referred to in historical works as a monastery (dgon pa), rather than just a village. This is probably because the community is populated by people who are ranked as Priests (bla mchod) in the social hierarchy of the area, between Nobles (dpon po) and Commoners (phal pa).

There are, however, a number of temples (variously called lha khang and dgon pa) that are either still functional or derelict and abandoned. The main temple (lha khang) is called Phun tshogs gling. It is a public institution, and it is here that almost all the community ceremonies are held.

In addition to Phun tshogs gling, there is another communal temple called sGom phug dgon pa, "the temple of the meditation cave", situated uphill some twenty minutes' walk to the south of the main settlement area. And finally, there are three active private temples:

- two adjoining temples a short distance to the east of the main settlement area, belonging to the Glo bo Chos tsong and Ja ra sgang clans
- the bla brang, belonging to the estate of Klu brag's founder, Yang ston bKras shis rgyal mtshan

There are also a number of caves that are used for meditative retreats.

The village temple, Phun tshogs gling, was founded in the nineteenth century by Ka ru sGrub dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen, who was born in western Tibet in 1801 and later developed close links with Klu brag. sGom phug dgon pa is said to have been built much earlier by the founders of the village in the thirteenth century, or shortly afterwards. It appears to have been restored a number of times, but most recently, after its complete collapse, it was rebuilt with a grant from the Danish Embassy in Kathmandu.

2. Location

Klu brag is one of the nineteen settlements that form the old political enclave known as Baragaon (Tib. Yul kha bcu gnyis). It is about two hours' walk north of Jomsom, the headquarters of Mustang District, in Dhaulagiri Zone, on the southern bank of the Panda Khola, an eastern tributary of the Kali Gandaki.
3. History

The early history of Klu brag can be derived from three main sources in the Tibetan language. The texts are as follows.

1. The first is entitled: “The voice of Brahma, the lineage history of the clan of the Ya ngal priests which is like sight, the foremost of all the senses”. A manuscript of this book, consisting of fifty-four pages written in Tibetan script, is kept in the village of Klu brag. It has also been published in India. The lineage history occupies approximately one half of the text, while the first part deals with the Bonpo account of the creation of the world. This work will be referred to below as the Ya ngal gdung rabs (YDR).

2. The second source is entitled Dong mang gur gsum gyi rnam thar. This is a short piece containing brief biographies of several bla mas from the Ya ngal clan, principally Shes rab rgyal mtshan and his two sons, Dam pa 'bum rje and bKra shis rgyal mtshan. It has been published in India in a collection entitled Sources for a History of Bon.

3. The third work is entitled “The biographies of the bla mas of the rDzogs chen zhang zhung snyan rgyud lineage”. It contains the life stories of over a hundred Bonpo bla mas. It has been published in India under the title of Bonpo Nispanna Yoga.

The following account will not be a detailed discussion of these texts, but will summarise the main historical events, and simply outline the lives of the principal figures. Reference will also be made to certain important historical documents from Thini and other villages of Panchgaon.

3. 1. The Bon religion enters Mustang

The Ya ngal gdung rabs begins with the divine origin of the Ya ngal lineage at the time of gNya' khri btsan po. Ya ngal is said to have been one of his three court priests. The list of descendants, which is too long to discuss here, runs for seventeen generations from the heads of three main branches, called the Three Gu rib, who lived in the early eleventh century.

The main history begins in the life of Shes rab rgyal mtshan, who was born in 1077 in the village of sTag rtse byi ri in Upper Tsang, in Tibet, where the Ya ngal clan had lived for many generations. His father was gSung rab skyabs, who was the son of mKhas pa sman pa, one of the three lineage heads. According to the Bonpo Nispanna Yoga:

He had four different names: since he was born thirteen days after the death of his father he was known as Tshabs ma grags (meaning “the One Called the Replacement”); his clan was Ya ngal, and so he was known as Yang ston chen po (meaning “the Great Teacher of the Ya ngal clan”); according to a prophesy he was an incarnation of sPang la rnam gshen, and his given name was Shes
During his youth he devoted himself to scholarly pursuits, and Buddhist monks were unable to defeat him in debate. Later he lived as a yogi in the mountains. During this period everyone said he had gone mad because he would sit for long periods staring into space. Once, while he was meditating, a beautiful young woman came to him and asked him if he was going to visit his teacher. On his inquiring where his teacher was to be found, the woman replied that he was in the upper part of the same valley. Here he found a cave containing a woven nest of silken thread. In this nest was a tiny creature like a monkey which offered him a bronze bowl and told him to drink from it. He did so, and immediately achieved illumination.

After returning to scholarly life, he held a discussion with a certain Se bon ’khrö rgyal on certain matters of philosophy. So impressed was he by the bla ma’s knowledge that he decided to study under his teacher, ’Or sgom kun ’dul. After ’Or sgom kun ’dul had initiated Shes rab rgyal mtshan into a part of the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud, he instructed him to go to Upper mNga’ ris, where he would have two sons and would receive many disciples. About this time there lived in the village of Bon ’khor in Glo bo a bla ma named Rong rTog med zhig po, who had many patrons in the area. The story of their meeting is related in Bonpo Nispanna Yoga:

As he sat there, one of the dice-mantras went: “Rong rTog med zhig po who sees neither the sun nor the moon”. He asked where such a person was. “The adept of the rDzogs chen zhung zhung snyan rgyud, the great saint in the monastery high up there in the mountains is the one called Rong rTog med zhig po, who sees neither the sun nor the moon”. On hearing this, boundless reverence and faith arose in him and he determined to meet the bla ma.

... The same evening, in the early part of the night, a woman came to Rong rTog med zhig po in a dream. “The incarnation of sPang la nam gshen is coming as your student. Give him an audience and instruct him thoroughly in the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud”, she commanded. In the second half of the night, a man came for an audience carrying the equipment of a Bonpo tantrist...

The next morning, a servant said, “a Bonpo who has come from the village of gDong skya, over there, is asking for an audience”. Rong rTog med zhig po asked what he looked like and was told that his dress and tantric equipment were such and such, and he said, “The one who appeared in my dream last night is here.”

Shes rab rgyal mtshan received from Rong rTog med zhig po the upper transmission of the Zhang zhung snyan brgyud.

At this point we may mention another version of these events. This account was written by the nineteenth-century master Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan. It is probably based on the historical sources cited earlier, but the author seems to
have added certain details and omitted others in order to create a good story. After discussing the perseverance shown by many notable scholars in trying to find their *bla mas*, he praises them for adhering to their quest “without giving a thought to hardship or suffering”:

> For example, we should follow the manner of the Great Yangston’s search for Rong rTog med zhig po. That *bla ma*, the Great Yangston, was thoroughly learned in the Bon doctrines of the *Shegyu*, and on one occasion a woman appeared to him saying, “How learned are you?”

> “I am completely learned,” he replied, whereupon the woman began weeping and departed unhappily. The *bla ma* thought to himself, “When I told her I was learned she became unhappy. If she appears tomorrow I must tell her I know nothing,” and he waited.

The following day the woman came and spoke to him as before. “I know nothing at all,” he replied, “have you any sort of knowledge you might teach me?” The woman laughed with happiness.

> “If you want to acquire some knowledge, there is one Rong sgom rTog med zhig po who appears to be living among crags infested by nagas and demons, seeing neither the sun nor the moon. Go to him, and you will have some great knowledge to study,” she said, and departed. Just to hear this the Great Yangston’s heart was so filled with joy that he forgot to ask where the *bla ma* was. Thinking that the woman would come again on the following day too he waited, but she did not appear. After a week had elapsed, he thought to himself that it would be best to go off now in search of the *bla ma*. He travelled down to Amdo and Khams, and sought him for three years without finding him. Then he went up and searched for three years in the middle of Tibet, in dBus and gTsang, but he did not find him. He then looked in sTod mNga’ ris for three years, but did not find him there either.

By now the Great Yangston was utterly dispirited, and proceeded to return. When he reached the capital of Glo bo sMon thang he met two men who were playing dice. One of the dice-mantras ran: “The one who sees neither the sun nor the moon, Rong sgom rTog med zhig po, knows.” On hearing this the Great Yangston began to tremble. “Now I can meet my *bla ma*,” he thought, and laughed with joy, but then thought, “Although I have looked for three years without finding him I may not find him now,” and he wept. He asked where that *bla ma* known as Rong sgom rTog med zhig po lived, and the two men replied, “Below here, towards Glo bo sMon thang, among the crags infested by nagas and demons in the upper part of the valley of Klu brag - there he lives seeing neither the sun nor the moon. Then he went there and met the *bla ma*, and after telling him this story he requested spiritual instructions.

It is interesting that the author of this account names Klu brag as the place
where Rong rTog med zhig po lived. In fact the village was not founded until the next generation, but the mistake may be due to the author's knowledge of the connection between Klu brag and the Ya ngal lineage.

Ya ngal Shes rab rgyal mtshan died at the age of sixty-five. He had two sons and a daughter by his third marriage. The elder son, Dam pa 'bum rje 'od, was a remarkable individual, but there is insufficient space here to discuss his life. It is with his younger brother, bKra shis rgyal mtshan, that we are mainly concerned.

3.2. bKra shis rgyal mtshan and the founding of Klu brag

bKra shis rgyal mtshan is generally known by the title of 'Gro mgon Klu bragpa, meaning 'the Protector of Living Beings, the Man of Klu brag", because he was the founder of Klu brag village. The Ya ngal gdung rabs gives an entertaining description of the event.

bKra shis rgyal mtshan went riding on a mare which had a foal. His patrons in Kagbeni said goodbye to him on the plateau (Pe Thangka, situated between Kagbeni and Klu brag). "But you cannot go any further," they said, because it was an area inhabited by demons.

"My service to living beings is in this place," he replied. The demon of the place hid the foal inside a rock, and then its mother galloped and kicked the rock; the foal kicked from inside, and the rock split open into three pieces, and the foal emerged. The hoof-prints of the mare and the foal are still there, and the bla ma left the imprint of his penis.

bKra shis rgyal mtshan had a further encounter with the same goblin, Kye rang skrag med, who appeared with his wife a few days later in the form of a pair of poisonous snakes. He defeated them and made them swear oaths that they would become protectors of the doctrine. Then, according to the Ya ngal gdung rabs:

He put two small needles into the earth to decide whether or not he should found a village. He put an inverted basket over them, and when he looked after seven days the basket was full and had been raised so that it did not touch the ground.

What had filled the basket was, in fact, a young walnut tree which had sprouted from the needles. This gigantic tree still stands above the entrance to the village of Klu brag, and small pieces of wood are occasionally taken from it to make receptacles for sacred relics. bKra shis rgyal mtshan, who is also sometimes known as Yang ston Bla ma, died at the age of eighty-five. The descendants of bKra shis rgyal mtshan later went to Dolpo, where they founded bSam gling Monastery (No.223) and other religious centres. The Ya ngal clan still lives in several places in Dolpo, and the association between the clan and this district has often led to the mistaken assumption that Yang ston Bla ma originally came from here.

The land on which the village of Klu brag was built belonged to Thini,
also known as gSum dGa’ rab rdzong, which at that time was the most powerful settlement in the region. Historical documents, known as bemcha, from Panchgaon, confirm that surrounding villages were obliged to pay relatively heavy taxes to Thini. Thus Pha lag and Dang dga’ rdzong had to pay Thini nine large baskets of meat annually, while nearby Sangdak provided eight male goats in their second year. dGe lung had to make an annual payment of one adult bull yak and one yak calf. Marpha had to pay its taxes in the form of unpaid labour. Every year, ten young men would come from Marpha to Thini, bringing their own farming implements and animals, to plough Thini’s fields, and ten young women would come to do the weeding. Even Manang had to pay annual tribute to its powerful neighbour. One document from Thini gives the following account of events:

Yang ston Bla ma of Dolpo asked the headmen and constables of gSum dGa’ rab rdzong to give him the land of Klu brag. Because they considered him to be the greatest bla ma, without any equals, they presented it to him. They said: "even if you keep livestock, you may still have the land; even if a conflict arises, you may still have the land. Take good care of Ya po ri and Ti mi ri thang ka... Every year you should pay us 3 zowa of bumbali berries from Thini’s hillside, three bundles of birch-bark, and a small basket of dzimbu".

The reason why Klu brag had to pay these commodities in particular may have been simply that they were most abundant in the vicinity of the village — as indeed they seem to be today. Klu brag is the only village in Baragaon which has extensive forests, a legacy of the gift of land which was made to Yang ston Bla ma in the thirteenth century. What is clear is that this tribute, compared with the burdensome taxes paid by other settlements, was nothing more than a gesture of respect in acknowledgement of dGa’ rab rdzong’s political authority.

3.3. The legend of dGon phug dgon pa

One of bKra shis rgyal mtshan’s first acts after establishing a Bonpo community in Klu brag was to undertake a lengthy retreat of nine years, nine months and nine days in a small cave situated some twenty minutes’ walk above the valley floor. It is said that, as a miraculous sign of his spiritual achievements, a ridge appeared in the rock wall above the cave to mark each year that he spent in retreat. At some period after the end of his retreat a small temple was built over the site, and this construction was duly named dGon phug dgon pa, the Temple of the Meditation Cave. There were a number of cells adjoining the main temple where hermits once used to reside, but these fell into disrepair long before the recent collapse of the main hall.

4. Hierarchical system

Although the village of Klu brag as a whole is regarded in Baragaon as a
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region

religious settlement, only a small number of its inhabitants actively practise as bla mas. Every male head of a household must be a priest, whether he attains to this position by birth, adoption or marriage, and must undergo an initiation ceremony. Younger sons who are not the heads of households may also undergo initiation and receive an education if they choose, although priesthood is not obligatory in their case. A small number of women are celibate nuns (jo mo); their religious role is not a hereditary one.

4. 1. The bla ma

The most important position in the hierarchy is that of bla ma. The bla ma may be either a member of the community itself or a prominent religious figure from the outside. The present incumbent is gYung drung rgyal mtshan, a member of the Zhu clan. Born in 1957 of Tibetan parents just on the Indian side of the western Tibetan border, gYung drung rgyal mtshan was subsequently recognised as the incarnation of bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, who had been the founder of the little private Bonpo temple in nearby Jomsom (Mustang dialect Dzongsam < Tib rDzong gsar). gYung drung rgyal mtshan, the “Dzongsam sprul sku”, was educated to the level of dge bshes in sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji, and after completing his studies came to settle in Klu brag in the early 1990s. He recently married a Klu brag woman and is living in sGom phug dgon pa (see below).

4. 2. The dbu mdzad

Far from being considered a prestigious office, the position of dbu mdzad (precentor) is the most unpopular in the village. The incumbent is not decided on a rotational basis but is appointed at a village meeting held specifically for this purpose. The length of the term of office is on of the most variable, and although it is likely to be fixed at its present time of two years, terms of one and three years have been known in the past. The main reason for the unpopularity of the office is that the dbu mdzad may not go to India for trading during the winter, since his duties require him to be present in the village at least once a month.

The dbu mdzad’s work consists in leading the chanting during ceremonies and, whatever his age (the criterion which determines the order of seating in non-religious gatherings) he sits at the head of the row of bla mas. He must make the gtor ma for all ceremonies in the temple with the aid of other village bla mas who are skilled at this, and during ceremonies lasting more than one day, he and the chos khrims pa (see below) must sleep inside the temple to guard the butter and flour sculptures from cats and rodents.

4. 3. The chos khrims pa

The chos khrims pa (proctor), who need not be literate, is chosen by ap...
pointment at the same time as the dbu mdzad. While the term of office is the same, the chos khrims pa is not obliged to forego the winter trading. Like many other aspects of monasticism, the duty of the proctor in Klu brag has been adapted to a lay environment, and its scope has been extended to include non-monastic functions. In spite of appearances the office is not merely a ceremonial vestige of earlier times, but it is apparently regarded as a valuable peacekeeping force. Evidence for this lies in the fact that at two of the annual secular festivals, an assistant chos khrims pa is appointed for the duration of the festivities.

4.4. The jo mo bla ma

In theory, the duty of the jo mo bla ma (the “nuns’ priest”) is to lead and supervise the nuns’ ceremonies, whereas in actual fact it is only they who perform the chanting while the few nuns that there are now look on or administer and beer. There are two jo mo bla ma, of whom at least one must be literate. Whereas the term of office used to be three years, it has recently been reduced to two, and the incumbents are selected by casting dice amongst the adult male bla mas. In addition to the main annual ceremony of the nuns (see below), there is one that is conducted on the night of the tenth day in every month, and it is accordingly referred to as Tshes bcu mchod pa (tenth-day ceremony).

In all the nuns’ ceremonies, including the tshes bcu, making the gtor ma and the tshogs (consecrated food for subsequent distribution to all the villagers) is the duty of the younger jo mo bla ma, but he is usually helped by his senior. They are not obliged to forego the winter trading as is the dbu mdzad, but may be absent on the condition that they arrange for another bla ma to take their places.

Outgoing jo mo bla ma end their term of office after the annual ceremony, but their successors are decided before the ceremony.

4.5. The mchod dpon

There are two mchod dpon, selected by appointment at a village meeting, and the only occasion for which they are required is the mdos rgyab, the five-day-long ritual which marks the end of the old year. Their term of office runs for only one year. They lead and perform most of the dancing (‘cham, for which reason they are also sometimes referred to as ‘cham dpon), and on the organisational side they are responsible for receiving and measuring the required contributions of oil from each household, apportioning some of it to the women charged with making tshogs, and for making and lighting the oil lamps.

4.6. The spyi pa

There are two spyi pa for each of the twenty-odd ceremonies held annually in the temple, and the officiants are selected on a rotating basis. However, the rota does
not operate from one ceremony to another, but only from one year to the next in
such a way that each ceremony has its own roster of spyi pa.

The position in each case rotates by estate (grong pa), and it is to a household
rather than to an individual that the actual work is allocated, since the wives of
the two spyi pa are responsible for collecting the grain contributions from each
household and using it to brew the beer necessary for the ceremony.

4. 7. The sku tshab

Like the spyi pa, the sku tshab is an office that has its origin in the great
monasteries of Tibet. It, too, has become a humble one in Klu brag to the extent
that a common synonym for it is chang ma, the “beer-dispenser”. Only the more
important annual ceremonies have a sku tshab. He is also selected by household
rotation, and his duties are to assist the two spyi pa in the kitchen and in serving beer
and food to the bla mas.

5. Number of monks / priests

There are at present no celibate monks in Klu brag, although a few boys from
Klu brag, having taken monastic vows and received training in sMan ri Monastery
(No.231) in Dolanji, are living in India. An exception may be made for gTsug phud
rgyal mtshan, the senior bla ma of Bar sle in Dolpo, who lived in Klu brag for the
last few years of his life, departing a short while before his death in 2001. However
although he was a monk, he was living in sGom phug dgon pa, rarely descended to
the village itself, and played little part in the life of the community.

The other “outsider” is the Dzongsam sprul sku, gYung drung rgyal mtshan (see
above). However, he is more integrated into the community to the extent that he has
married into it and presides at rituals.

There are ten-and-a-half estates (grong pa) in Klu brag, and these are
subdivided into fourteen households (khang pa). The head of each of the fourteen
households is considered to be a bla ma (grwa pa, though none is celibate). All
must participate in the calendrical ceremonies of the community, but only those
who are literate (about half the number) actually take part in reading the liturgy and
performing ritual procedures. In addition to the heads of household, some younger
men in the community have received some level of education either within the
village or in Dolanji and may therefore participate actively as bla mas.

6. The present educational system

The religious education of the Klu brag bla mas is carried on along much the
same lines as in the past: training may be received either from a local or visiting bla
ma residing in the village itself, or at a distant religious institution (Tibet in the past,
but now Nepal or India). About ten boys are currently undergoing monastic training
or pre-monastic schooling at sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji. Certain rituals are taught by fathers to their sons within the village, and this training is accompanied by periods of retreat either in a cave or in the family chapel.

The Dzongsam sprul sku, gYung drung rgyal mtshan, is also providing an education to villagers. His main focus of attention has been the village women, who are illiterate but at whose request he has taught them certain devotional songs and recitations.

Secular education, following the Nepalese state curriculum, is provided in the village school, but the community has built a hostel that will provide parallel education in Bon religious matters and Tibetan literacy.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries

Apart from the late Bar sle Rinpoche and the Dzongsam sprul sku, the first a native of Dolpo and the second of India, all the bla mas of Klu brag are native either to Klu brag or to the neighbouring villages. Since there are no Bonpo establishments of any size in Mustang district apart from Klu brag, the only education or devotional visits that Klu brag pas usually make are to Dolanji or to Triten Norbutse Monastery (No.230) in Kathmandu.

8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery

Other than the daily morning fumigation (bsang) ceremony and the lighting of the votive lamp (mchod me) in the evening, there are no daily rituals. Every household performs these same ceremonies in its private chapel.

9. Description of annual rituals of the monastery

The following ceremonies are listed in the register of temple ceremonies (ma yig), which details the financial obligations of each household in subsiding each performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan month</th>
<th>date (tshes)</th>
<th>Name of ceremony</th>
<th>Short title of main text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dran pa yab sras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>gSo sbyong/ sMyung gnas</td>
<td>Klong rgyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bla ma mchod pa</td>
<td>Dran pa yab sras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>SKye sgo gcod pa</td>
<td>'Khor ba ngan song sanye sgo gcod pa...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>dGe rtsa mchod pa</td>
<td>sTag la me ‘bar spu gri dmar po...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are certain ceremonies that are not listed in the register. These include the following two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan month</th>
<th>date (tshes)</th>
<th>Name of ceremony</th>
<th>Short title of main text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(Jo mo mchod pa)</td>
<td>dMar khrid dug Inga rang grol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>mNym med 'das mchod (commemoration of the death of mNym med Shes rab rgyal mtshan)</td>
<td>Klong rgyas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jo mo mchod pa is held simultaneously with the first village ceremony of the year. The latter is conducted in a private house while the nuns and their two bla mas (who hold this position by rotation) assemble in the village temple. Since the Jo mo mchod pa lasts only one day, the temple is vacated in time for the preparations for the gso sbyong, which begins on the 13th.

The last ceremony was established comparatively recently. It is not listed in the who lives in the small village of Drumbag, near Jomsom. The venue for the ceremony alternates annually between the patron's home and the Klu brag temple.

10. Daily life of an individual monk

   Except on the occasion of village ceremonies, the daily round of the village priests consists mainly in pursuing economic activities.
11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery

Klu brag was one of the main sources of Bonpo religious manuscripts that were reprinted in India during the 1960s and 1970s. There are many liturgical and a few biographical works kept either in the temple library or in private houses. Various other Bonpo works, published in India from other sources, have also been brought to the village.

12. Economic circumstances of temple

The annual ceremonies performed in the village temple are financed by the priestly estates (grong pa) on the basis of capital that was invested in these rituals by patrons from Klu brag itself and from surrounding settlements. These investments and the interest that must be paid by each of the estates are recorded in a register of temple contributions referred to as the ma yig, the "record of capital". The documents in question are in the form of sheets of coarse paper measuring 9.5 inches by 8.5 inches sewn together along the centre and folded horizontally to make a booklet. The two booklets are not, however, the original documents, but were copied from an earlier scroll by an educated bla ma from Mustang who lived in Klu brag for a short time at the request of the villagers. Households listed in the text are identified by the heads of each, and the names in the register refer to men who occupied this position in the last generation. The copies are therefore comparatively recent, and the fact that they have been updated unfortunately makes it impossible to draw many inferences about the village as it would have been during the time of the document's original composition. The type of patronage revealed by the register is not based on a private relationship between a bla ma and a lay householder, but embraces any number of people who wish to confer their patronage on the Klu brag temple and its community of bla mas. This system itself has two slightly varying forms. The first of these is apparently an earlier method and operates as follows.

If someone from a neighbouring village loses a close relative, he or she may wish to bestow a certain amount of money on a religious institution in order that prayers be said and lamps lit to generate merit for the deceased. Such donations are known as sbyar mchog and are collected until the total is sufficient for the establishment of a ritual. Originally the money used to be divided up into eight equal portions and each portion given to one of the grong pa. This sum was used by that grong pa as capital (a ma) with which to trade, and interest to the value of ten per cent of the capital was contributed towards purchasing the foodstuffs necessary for the ceremony. Sometimes the sum given to each householder was not the same, and the form in which the interest was to be paid frequently differed, but these variations are all recorded in the register and must still be paid as they are entered. The names and perhaps the motives (usually the death of the named relative) were probably recorded in the original register, but the more recent booklets contain only details
of the original contributions required of each household, and make provision for the new ninth grong pa. Rituals that are financed by this method are referred to as the 'old ceremonies' (mchod pa rnying pa), and these are contained in the first of the two ma yig booklets.

Whereas the recipients of the patronage used to be the grong pa, the money is now distributed among the 'monks' (grwa pa) and nuns (jo mo). 'Monks' in this case still refers to village bla mas and the money continues to be invested in household trade—but a household with two bla mas (for example, an extended household occupied by a father and his eldest son) or with a resident nun will be given a proportionately larger share of the capital. The system may be represented by a simple diagram. Let us suppose that at a certain point in time there are five priests or nuns in Klu brag’s religious community (in fact there are now fifteen), each represented in order of age by a letter. To simplify matters, it may be assumed that the sum of money collected as sbyar mchog is fifty rupees, and each person is consequently required to pay commodities to the value of one rupee per year as interest. The amount payable is represented by a number following each letter:

\[
\begin{align*}
A1 & \quad B1 & \quad C1 & \quad D1 & \quad E1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

When a monk or a nun dies his or her payment of the interest ceases. But the terms of receiving sbyar mchog from patrons are that the ritual be perpetuated on as grand a scale as the capital permits, and the onus of the deceased’s temple contributions is transferred to the two youngest members of the community. The capital that has been allotted to the deceased is given in equal portions to the two youngest, but in view of the depreciation of money the sum comes to a good deal less even than the interest which they are required to pay in the form of foodstuffs. The bracketed letter represents the deceased.

\[
\begin{align*}
(A1) & \quad B1 & \quad C1 & \quad D1^{1/2} & \quad E1^{1/2} \\
\end{align*}
\]

If a new bla ma or nun, F, joins the community he or she then receives the obligations of the deceased priest which had been allotted to the two who until now had been the youngest. Everyone is again paying the same amount of interest:

\[
\begin{align*}
B1 & \quad C1 & \quad D1 & \quad E1 & \quad F1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

If another young bla ma then joins he receives half the interest-obligations of each of the two oldest:

\[
\begin{align*}
B^{1/2} & \quad C^{1/2} & \quad D^{1/2} & \quad E^{1/2} & \quad F1 & \quad G1 & \quad H1 \\
\end{align*}
\]
If the oldest then died, not the youngest member but the youngest member paying half a share would receive the obligations:

(B) C\(\frac{1}{2}\) D\(\frac{1}{2}\) E1 F1 G1 H1

Finally, to conclude the possibilities, the premature death of a young bla ma or nun would affect the two who are paying half a share each:

C1 D1 E1 F1 (G) H1

In this way no one pays less than half a share or more than one and a half.

It is not clear why this system was introduced in preference to the older one which was based on estates (grong pa). It may be that grong pa were fragmenting into separate households at that time, and since each house must have a resident bla ma, this was regarded as a fairer system. The theory would be that the combined wealth of the two households forming a split grong pa would be greater than that if the grong pa was still a unit. However, this is not necessarily the case, and it does not explain why nuns and junior bla mas in a house should have to pay, since they do not necessarily strengthen the economic situation of that house. The rituals that are financed by this method are known as the ‘new ceremonies’ (mchod pa gsar pa).

13. Number of local villages or nomads

Klu brag belongs to an enclave popularly known as Baragaon, a Nepali name derived from a Tibetan original (Yul kha bcu gnyis) meaning “the twelve villages”. The original range of this enclave is not known, but in recent centuries it comprised nineteen villages. The enclave was ruled by a duke (dpon po) who belonged to one of the noble lineages from Lo, several days’ walk to the north. Klu brag is the southernmost village in Baragaon.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

The people are basically sedentary farmers who grow barley, wheat and buckwheat, and rear livestock. This economy is supplemented by winter trading in India and summer trading in Tibet, but long distance trade (mainly in contraband) to Hong Kong and Thailand was also practised in the past two decades.

Notes

1 The historical texts from which it has been possible to confirm the dates of these early historical events are discussed in two works: David Jackson’s “Notes on the history of Serib and nearby places in the Upper Kali Gandaki”, *Kailash*, vol. 6, 1978, pp. 195-224; and David Snellgrove’s *The Nine Ways of Bon*, 1967, pp. 4-5.
MUSTANG DISTRICT AND THE MUKTINATH VALLEY

Based on Kostka 1993: 84
Klu brag Monastery, Plate 1 dGon phug dgon pa, immediately after its restoration in 1997 (Photo C. Ramble 1997)

(219) Klu brag Monastery, Plate 2 dGon phug dgon pa, immediately after its restoration in 1997 (Photo C. Ramble 1997)
(219) Klu brag. **Plate 3** The interior of Klu brag's Phun tshogs gling Temple during the annual mDogs rgyab festival, showing the gtor ma of Zhi ba and Khro bo on the altar
(Photo C. Ramble 1997)

(219) Klu brag. **Plate 4** The senior *bla ma* and two sa 'dül dancers during the annual mDogs rgyab festival of Klu brag
(Photo C. Ramble 1997)
Plate 5 Villagers performing a g-yang rdzas ceremony at the annual mDos rgyab festival of Klu brag.
(Photograph C. Ramble 1997)

Plate 6 Dancers at the mDos rgyab festival of Klu brag representing the four Bon skyong and the village yul sa, Kye rang skrag med.
(Photograph C. Ramble 1997)
(219) Klu brag. **Plate 7** A pair of tsakli from Dolpo (17th century?) showing Yangston Shesrab gyalshtang (right) and his teacher, Rong rTog med zhig po (Photo C. Ramble 1997)

(219) Klu brag. **Plate 8** A sbyin sreg ceremony being performed in the village of Klu brag (Photo C. Ramble 1997)
Plate 9 Completing the construction of the zlog bcas during the mDos rgyab ceremony of Klu brag

(Photo C. Ramble 1997)
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region

Dolpo (Nep. Dolpa) District

(220) gYung drung shug tshal gling Monastery

1. Name

The village dgon pa is called gYung drung shug tshal gling.

Twenty minutes’ walk to the east is a hermitage called Brag dgon. The latter is said originally to have been called Brag gung dgon pa. It is officially registered under the Nepalicised name Takun.

2. Location

The village of Bar sle (Nep. Bajibara) is situated high above Tarakot on the northern side of the Bheri river and on the western side of the Tarap river. gYung drung shug tshal gling, the main village temple, is some twenty minutes’ walk above the village. Brag dgon hermitage is a further half-hour walk to the east in a steep exposed corner above the valley.

3. History

3.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling

There used previously to be two other temples: one further up and one to the west, but these are now both in ruins.

The main temple; above the village and next to the house of Bla chung lhag pa is called gSer thang. It is said to be around 500 years old, but no documentary evidence could be produced. It was renovated by a householder priest, the father of gTsug phud rgyal mtshan, and repainted recently by a local thangka-painter called Zla ba.

Bla chung lhag pa is the main bla ma of the dgon pa. The late gTsug phud rgyal mtshan was his paternal uncle. He is a married bla ma, and his eldest son will be his successor. There are eleven family members in the household, and their livestock includes yaks, cows and horses. Due to the early death of his father, Bla chung lhag pa’s education was not completed.

3.2. Brag dgon hermitage

This hermitage was built by gTsug phud rgyal mtshan. He helped his father with the rebuilding of gYung drung shug tshal gling, but did not want to follow in his footsteps as a householder priest. He went to bSam gling (No.223) and remained there for three years. After that he stayed for two years in the area of Ri bo dpal ’bar mountain, meditating in a hermitage. After returning to the village he wanted to build a dgon pa and began to search for a place. He found a steep, rocky place, where there was a stone with a painting of sTon pa gShen rab, and some rocks that
resembled a stupa. He believed that this was a sacred place, connected with Me lha or Phyag gi dbang po, whose handprint is to be seen on one of the first rocks encountered on the circuit around Mt. Ri bo dPal dbar.

Encouraged by all these auspicious signs, he started to build the first part of Brag dgon temple while living in a cave on the mountain. About this time he was joined by a nun, who was then 21 years old. The first chapel was completed in 1962, and other sections were added subsequently.

4. Hierarchical system of gYung drung shug tshal gling and Brag dgon

At first there were two ordained monks, but this lineage ended and has been followed by householder priests (sngags pa). gTsug phud rgyal mtshan was an exception, since he had taken monastic vows. Bla chung lhag pa, his brother’s son, is a householder priest who maintains gYung drung shug tshal gling.

The lineage of gTsug phud rgyal mtshan and Bla chung lhag pa is called dMu tsha.

5. Number of monks/priests

5.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling

Bla chung lhag pa is the main householder bla ma. An old man is taking care of the prayer-wheel house. His son is currently undergoing training in sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji. There are no children receiving religious education here at the moment.

In Bar sle there are altogether eleven householder priests.

5.2. Brag dgon hermitage

Only gTsug phud rgyal mtshan and the nun were in residence when the present fieldwork was carried out in 1998. There were no children being educated.

6. The present educational system

From time to time gTsug phud rgyal mtshan used to teach Tibetan language to boys.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries

7.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling

The son is presently being educated in Dolanji.

7.2. Brag dgon hermitage

gTsug phud rgyal mtshan himself travelled a great deal in his youth. He lived in bSam gling for three years and later received initiations from Slob dpon bsTan ’dzin rnam dag in Kathmandu and from Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin in Dolanji. He moved to
Klu brag in the latter years of his life to take up residence in the restored dGon phug dgon pa.

8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery
   See no.10 below

9. Description of annual rituals of the monastery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ceremony</th>
<th>Tibetan calendar (tshes/zla)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo gsar</td>
<td>1-3/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mNyam med dus chen (birthday of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan)</td>
<td>4-5/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bla ma mchod pa (established here by gTsug phud rgyal mtshan)</td>
<td>2nd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sTag la’i zlog pa</td>
<td>3rd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sByin sreg (herbs and grains placed in a bowl and set on the mountain for the protection of the village)</td>
<td>4th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rNam rgyal stong mchod, this ceremony, which was performed until recently in Bar sle, has been discontinued</td>
<td>7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumambulation of nearby Ri bo dpal ’bar</td>
<td>7th month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Daily life of an individual monk

10.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling
   Bla chung lhag pa alone reads scriptures and makes offerings in the morning. During the daytime he works in the fields and with the animals. In the evening he again performs a ritual in the temple.

10.2. Brag dgon
   The daily practice of gTsug phud rgyal mtshan was as follows:
   - Rise at 5 a.m., perform various acts of worship, especially propitiation of Srid pa rgyal mo
   - Perform fumigation ceremony (bsang)
   - Make gtor mas, light butterlamps
   - Two to three hours of meditation in the afternoon
   - Reading scriptures, chanting mantras
   - Dinner is made by his sister, the nun
   - One hour of practice (more on special days) before bed
   The nun-sister used to cook, help out, and follow her own ritual practice (she is learning to read).
11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery

11.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling
   Complete set of *mDo mang*
   *Dri med gzi brjid*
   *bKa’ ’gyur* and *brTen ’gyur*

12. Economic circumstances of temples

12.1. gYung drung shug tshal gling
   They receive only occasional support from the village, mainly at the time of the
ceremonies performed in the course of the ritual calendar.

12.2. Brag dgon
   They are supported by their own families and by occasional donations.

13. Number of local villages or nomads

   Bar sle (Bajibara) village is divided into seven parts. The villagers are of mixed
religion, some being Buddhist and some Bonpo. There are said to be no conflicts
between people on religious grounds, and they visit each other’s temples and
pilgrimage sites.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

   Mainly agriculture and animal husbandry.
(221) Dar rgyas phun tshogs gling Monastery

1. Name of monastery
   1.1. Dar rgyas phun tshogs gling

   1.2. sMer phu dgon

2. Location
   2.1. Fifteen minutes walk north of mDo, in the area of mDo rta srab called Srib phyogs. It is situated on the right bank of the Doro river about half an hour walk eastwards from mDo towards Tshar ka.

   2.2. sMer phu dgon pa, now only ruins, is situated southwest of mDo in a side valley.

3. History
   The Bon community first settled around sMer phu, which was established by Tre ston Tshe dbang tshul khrims. Later the community moved to Srib phyogs in a valley to the east from mDo rta srab where gYung drung rgyal mtshan and bSod rams rgyal mtshan established another temple.

   Until about two years ago there were two householder bla mas at Srib phyogs, but by 2000 both had died and the Bonpo community of Dolpo is now worried about the future.

4. Hierarchical system
   There is a bla ma, of the Ya ngal clan, called gTsug phud dbang grags. He is a sngags pa. There is also a precentor (dbu mdzad), a permanent position that is held by a brother of the main bla ma.

5. Number of monks/priests
   Seventeen or eighteen sngags pa, all from the mDo rta srab area. No celibate monks.

6. The present educational system
   The main teacher is the Bla ma gTsug phud dbang grags, who taught his son, his grandson and several other boys from the community. Some of the sngags pa teach their own sons.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries
   The grandson is now a monk in Triten Norbutse (No. 230). He has been in
Kathmandu for two years, after doing a three-year preliminary retreat in the village. There are no other monks from this dgon pa either in Dolanji or in Kathmandu.

8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery

The house of the senior bla ma is adjacent to the dgon pa. He, or other members of his family, perform the daily ceremonies. In the morning there is the offering of water (yon chab) and the fumigation (bsang), and in the evening the lighting of the butterlamp (mchod me) and the invocation of the protectors (bka’ skyong).

9. Description of annual rituals of the monastery

End of 1st, beginning of 2nd month: Ma tri ceremony.
6th month: annual repainting of the dgon pa.
8th month: collection of grain donations and settling of annual accounts.
End of 10th and beginning of 11th month: Du tri su, a five-day ceremony.
End of 11th, beginning of 12th month: smyung gnas. Performed by the sngags pa of the temple.

10. Daily life of an individual monk

As householder-priests they are mainly occupied with secular economic activities.

11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery

Includes manuscripts of mDo gzer mig, Dri med gzi brjid, Yum etc.

12. Economic circumstances of temple

The dgon pa is private, belonging to the family of the bla ma, and is officially registered as such. Support is provided by the Bonpo inhabitants of the settlement (about half the households). They support the institution with annual offerings of grain to each of the priests. There is no government support, and if any additional works need to be done funds must be raised from the local community, with the priests' families being the major donors.

13. Number of local villages or nomads

mDo is a mixed area with Bon and Buddhist followers according to houses. There are 11 houses of Bonpo and 37 of Buddhists.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

Farming, animal husbandry and trade.
(222) Yang dgon Monastery

1. Name of monastery
   1 Kog lang (ruin)
   2 Dar rdzong [orthography?] phun tshogs gling (ruin)
   3 Yang dgon mthong grol gling (mThong grol phun tshogs gling)

2. Location
   Tshar ka, eastern Dolpo, towards Mustang.

3. History
   The oldest one is called Kog lang, the second one is Dar dzong phun tshogs gling and the third one is mThong sgrol phun tshogs gling. The first two are ruined. Bla ma bKra shis bstan 'dzin, who obtained his dge bshes degree in sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji, built the third monastery a few years ago. Kog lang is said to be about the same age as bSam gling. Dar dzong phun tshogs gling said to have been founded around the middle of the nineteenth century.

4. Hierarchical system
   The senior bla ma is bKra shis rgyal mtshan, a member of the Ya ngal lineage. In addition, there is a precentor (dbu mdzad) who occupies this position for life.

5. Number of monks/ priests
   There are twenty-two sngags pa apart from the bla ma. There are also sixteen nuns of whom only two are literate.

6. The present educational system
   Bla ma bKra shis rgyal mtshan is himself mainly occupied in teaching. At present he has five pupils, boys ranging in age from eight to ten years. He himself had eleven years of religious training from his father, Nyi ma tshe brtan and his uncle Tshul khrims. After this he received twelve years of education in Dolanji.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries
   There are currently six boys from Tshar ka studying in Dolanji and four in Triten Norbutse (No.230), Kathmandu. There are two monks of Tshar ka apart from bKra shis rgyal mtshan who have obtained the dge bshes degree and they are presently living in Dolanji. One is named bsTan 'dzin. and the other is the new dpon slob of Dolanji.
8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery
   Personal rituals of the dge bshes.

9. Description of annual rituals of the monastery
   Mainly in summer drumchö (?) (rNam rgyal stong mchod) and drumchod (?) in winter, showing mask dances. Ma tri.

12. Economic circumstances of temple
   The ceremonies are apparently funded by the families of the sngags pa themselves.

13. Number of local villages or nomads
   The lay population of Tshar ka is fairly evenly divided between Buddhists and Bonpos. There are twenty-six households of Bonpos and twenty-eight of Buddhists.

14. Economic occupation of the local population
   Sedentary farming, livestock rearing and trade between India and Tibet.

(223) bSam gling Monastery

1. Name of monastery
   There are two temples in bSam gling. The main one is called rGyal gshen ya ngal gdan sa bSam gtan gling dgon, more popularly known as Yang ston dgon pa. (Yang ston is a contraction of Ya ngal gyi ston pa, the “teachers of the Ya ngal clan”).

2. Location
   Close to Phijor village. (Phijor is the Nepalicised form of the local name that is pronounced “bicher”, and in Tibetan is spelt in a variety of ways, e.g. Bi cher, Bi cer, Byi tsher etc.)

3. History
   Part of the history of the temple is related in the Ya ngal gdung rabs (see below). Khyung po ’Chi med g-yung drung provided the following supplementary information. The temple was built more than 900 years ago by Yang ston rGyal mtshan rin chen. The latter had been staying near Mt. Kailash, where he had a dream in which he received a visit from Dran pa nam mkha’. He was told to go to Dolpo and to build a temple there. Shortly after this dream he left Tibet for Dolpo, travelling through Saldang, Namdo and Bi cher. At that time the village of Bi cher
already existed and contained a prayer-hall, a prayer-wheel and several statues. Yang ston rGyal mtshan rin chen searched in many places until he found bSam gling, and the various auspicious dreams he had while staying there persuaded him that this was the place in which he should build a monastery.

4. Hierarchical system

Male lineage inheritance system at the Khyung po temple.

5. Numbers of monks/priests

At present there are four monks staying permanently at bSam gling temple. One boy is currently undergoing his three-year preparatory training. The four monks are:
- gYung drung dar rgyas (Nyasel [sp?] clan)
- Shes rab bstan 'dzin (Yang ston)
- lHa rgyab
- Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (Khyung po)

In addition to these monks, there are seventeen householder-priests in the area. Six monks are currently being trained in sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji and Triten Norbutse (No.230) in Kathmandu.

11. Books and manuscripts

   *Bum (Prajñāparamitā)* in sixteen volumes
   - Parts of *bKa'gyur* and *bsTan'gyur*
   - Ten volumes of *Bum Nyi ma dgu shar*
   - Three volumes of *Klu'bum*
   - 1 volume of *mDo mang*
   - 3 volumes of *brGyad stong*
   - Various other ritual texts and documents

12. Economic circumstances of monastery

   bSam gling temple owns a substantial amount of land and even cattle in Bi cher. These are looked after by the villages, but profits from the yield go to the main temple.

13. Local villages or nomads

   Bi cher

14. Economic occupation of local population

   Agriculture, animal husbandry and trade with Tibet.
1. Name of monastery or temple

dPal gshen bstan mtha' srung mtsho gling dgon pa.

The Temple complex is a cluster of nine buildings and three ruins. The cluster as a whole is known by the abbreviated name of mTha' srung dgon pa. The big community temple is called simply gTsug lag khang. The address is:

Phoksumdo (Phug gsum mdo), Ringmo (Ring mo) village, Dolpa District, Karnali Zone, Nepal.

2. Location

The temple complex is about fifteen minutes' walk from the village on the east bank of the lake. The village, usually called Ringmo, is also called Tshowa (mTsho ba) and Phoksumdo (Phug gsum mdo).

3. History

The temple, called mTha' bzhi mtha' srung mtsho gling dgon, was built by Tshe dbang Tshul khrims of the Tre clan, but later looked after by a certain rGyal mtshan tshul khrims, a bla ma of the mTha' bzhi lineage (note that the name of this clan is also sometimes rendered mTha' zhu). The name is said to be derived from a temple with the same name that was located in Tibet, in similar environmental surroundings. The year in which the temple was built is not known, but may be obtained on the basis of an examination of the Tre ston lineage history (work on which is now proceeding). The area is said to have been popular among hunters, who would drive animals into this rocky corner, from which there is no escape. Tre ston Tshe dbang tshul khrims chose this site in order to suppress hunting and to promulgate the Bon religion.

Most recent bla mas in Ringmo, in chronological order, are:

mTha' bzhi gDul ba rig 'dzin
Tre ston bSod nams g-yung drung
mTha' bzhi rGyal ba gtsug phud

The biography of mTha' bzhi gDul ba rig 'dzin used to be kept in Ringmo, but it is now in Kathmandu.

Tre ston bSod nams g-yung drung used to have many disciples. He himself went to Tibet and studied in mKhar sna dgon pa. rGyal ba gtsug phud was one of his disciples. First the community dgon pa was built. This was followed by the mTha' bzhi chapel, and the students later built several smaller chapels.

mTha' bzhi rGyal ba gtsug phud, although he was from a priestly lineage, originally became a carpenter. After becoming ill, however, he meditated on Khyung dmar for three years, in the course of which he acquired a great deal of spiritual
power. His meditation cave, located above the nearby settlement of Palam, contains many hand-prints and wing-prints from the khyung. He lived at the temple about fifty years ago with a bla ma called rTogs Idan, who had come from Khams and married a local woman. After their death the temple effectively fell into neglect for about ten years.

After nearly a decade without a bla ma, the temple was headed by gYung drung rgyal mtshan of the Khyung dkar clan. He was invited from his home in sPung mo (see infra) by the villagers of Ringmo. He remained at the temple for about thirteen years until bSam grub nyi ma completed his studies in sMan ri at Dolanji (No.231) and returned, as a dge bshes, in about 1991. At first he concentrated on his own practice, but the boys needed an education, and he accordingly accepted five permanent students to undertake the three-year preliminary training. They were taught reading, writing, grammar, philosophy and dialectic debate. Four of them are now at Triten Norbutse (No.230) in Kathmandu for the continuation of their studies, while four new boys have begun the three-year preliminary training.

In 1996 a new community temple called (the second) gTsug lag khang was added. The construction was supported by the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), which supports certain projects in the Phoksumdo National Park, with a donation of Rs. 45,000.

4. Hierarchical system

The dgon pa used originally to operate a system of hereditary succession with incumbents from the mTha’ bzhi and Tre ston lineages. This succession was interrupted (see above) by a break of some ten years, but the villagers invited gYung drung rgyal mtshan and, later on, dGe bshes Shes rab nyi ma, both from sPung mo. Nowadays, therefore, the temple is run by an elected abbot, while hereditary householder-priests still live at their private chapels.

1. mkhan po (abbot). The position of the abbot is occupied by dGe bshes bSam grub nyi ma and has only existed since about 1991. Like dGe bshes Shes rab nyi ma in sPu mer, dGe bshes bSam grub nyi ma belongs to the family of sGrub thob Rinpoche (Khyung po dkar po).

2. spyi dbu bla ma: the ‘community head bla ma’. His task is to be part of all the rituals concerning the whole village and to pray for rain or stop hail and frost depending on the time of year. Performing this duty he is also referred to as ser srung or sad srung. The position is traditionally occupied by the mTha’ bzhi bla ma lineage. But since there was no one sufficiently experienced in mTsho, an invitation was issued to gYung drung rgyal mtshan from sPung mo (he is over 80 years old). Originally a hereditary position, it is nowadays increasingly replaced by experienced persons of different lineages. In the case of village and family rituals the abbot and the dge slong,
all educated in India are called to perform the ceremonies together with the local grwa pa.

3. dbu mdzad

4. dge rgan: the proctor, corresponding to the office more commonly known as dge skos.

5. dge bshes / dge slong/ drang srong: mTsho used to lack its own dge bshes, and abbot and other dge bshes who perform rituals here are all originally from sPung mo. However, two monks from mTha’ srung mtsho gling dgon pa who were educated in India, took drang srong vows and are now referred to as dge slong. They are usually invited together with the abbot for larger domestic ceremonies and are always involved in major rituals at the dgon pa. Furthermore several young men from mTsho are currently receiving an education in Kathmandu and India (Dolanji), and some are planning to become monks and take their dge bshes degree.

6. grwa pa: sometimes also called Lo gsum pa or ser khyim pa (a term only used in the larger monasteries): married householder priests, usually Lo gsum pa.

7. jomo, married nuns; these have taken a few vows.

A generation ago the Lo gsum pa and grwa pa were usually sent to sPu mer for education. Nowadays they receive education from dGe bshes bSam grub nyi ma. Some are still sent to sPu mer, to bSam gling or to Kathmandu or to India (Dolanji). With the new Tapriza School nearby several children are educated there for the first five years, so that they are literate before the undertake the three-retreat.

The hierarchy is no longer very clear. In the past it used to be based on lineage, but with the arrival of the new abbot from sPung mo and the spyi dbu bla ma from sPung mo the situation is apparently changing. During the period when there was no bla ma at mTha’ srung mtsho gling dgon pa, religious education waned and was mainly received by bla mas from sPung mo.

5. Number of monks

Living at the dgon pa:

Abbot: dGe bshes bSam grub nyi ma (originally from sPung mo), studied in Dolanji.

others:  - 2 monks who have partly studied in Dolanji, both dge slong (drang srong)
         - 2 old householder priests, grwa pa
         - boys in their Lo gsum education  (number differs from year to year, none in 2002)
6. The present educational system

Until 1999 there were four boys in their education for the Lo gsum retreat. During the Lo gsum they undertake sngon 'gro and dngos gzhi practices and winter retreats. They take further initiations from different bla mas and study prayer music, mask dancing and mask making.

In addition three young boys from the village used to visit the dgon pa periodically to learn basic Tibetan language, but they are now studying at Tapriza School. Two elderly householder priests living in their own houses at the dgon pa follow their daily practice and only join in when there are bigger rituals. The two monks (dge slong) who were educated in Dolanji follow their own daily practice and carry out the different domestic and monastic rituals together with the abbot.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries

Educational exchange takes place mainly between kngmo, sPung mo and sPu mer, and sometimes also bSam gling (which is much father away in the north-west of Dolpo). Nowadays Dolanji (Shimla) and Triten Norbutse (Kathmandu) are also on the circuit. Additionally the bla mas of mTsho are called to perform rituals or provide Tibetan medicine in Khaliban, a village further south with many Bonpo, but no monastery or bla ma (see below). Since 2001 they have been building their own small dgon pa and are trying to convince a bla ma from sPung mo to stay there and perform the necessary rituals.

8. Daily rituals of the monastery

The daily rituals of the monastery are the individual performances of the various monks. The monastery itself has monthly rituals, and these are complemented by community ceremonies.

9. Description of annual rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ritual</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date (Tibetan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo gsar. This is actually sometimes celebrated in the different settlement clusters to the south, where the villagers live during the winter. Many go to sPung mo for Lo gsar.</td>
<td>winter villages or sPung mo</td>
<td>12th/1st month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yul lha ceremony, in which the entire village participates</td>
<td>yul lha shrine above village</td>
<td>2nd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me mchod (fire ritual for the fertility of the crops)</td>
<td>rotating houses</td>
<td>5th month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Every month on the 10th day a Tshes bcu ritual is performed at the dgon pa and financed according to a rotational system.

10. Daily life of an individual monk

10.1. Daily practice of the boys undergoing the three-year preliminary retreat

- Wake up 3a.m.
- Pray to the yi dam
- prostrate in the main dgon pa 300 times before breakfast
- breakfast
- ritual practice of bsang, approximately half an hour
- again about 500-600 prostrations
- 10 a.m. dge bshes teaches the lo gsum pa
- lunch
- prostrate in main dgon pa ’tshogs khang
- tea
- ritual practice of gongtong (< dgong stong [?], a local term for bka’ skyong)
- grammar lesson, reading text
- dinner
- recite texts
- triple prostration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Main Rituals</th>
<th>Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man sgrub. Begun in 1996, and will henceforth be performed every few years in rotation with other Bonpo villages, at the dgon pa. In the intervening years they hold another dus chen on the 1st day of the 6th Tibetan month.</td>
<td>mTha’ srung mTsho gling</td>
<td>6th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rNam rgyal stong mchod</td>
<td>mTha’ srung mTsho gling</td>
<td>6/7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dus chen for rNam rgyal shes rab rgyal mtshan, the builder of sPu mer monastery.</td>
<td>mTha’ srung mTsho gling</td>
<td>7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrimage to Khyungpur, Bla ma chu mig, Jagdul or Shey</td>
<td>pilgrimage places</td>
<td>7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar tshogs mchod pa, a ceremony for the well-being of animals at the beginning of the frosts and for the expiation of sin incurred during the mass sacrifice of animals throughout the kingdom of Nepal during the national Dasain festival.</td>
<td>mTha’ srung mTsho gling</td>
<td>8/9th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yul sa gsol (pho lha and yul lha offerings)</td>
<td>Yul sa shrine &amp; diff. houses</td>
<td>9th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dBal mchod ritual for prosperity and health</td>
<td>rotating houses</td>
<td>10th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma tri ceremony, for six days, at the temple</td>
<td>mTha’ srung mTsho gling</td>
<td>10th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khyungpur pilgrimage</td>
<td>pilgrimage place</td>
<td>11/12th month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Daily practice in Shes rab bstan 'dzin dgon pa
- morning worship of yi dam (sTag la me 'bar)
- tea break
- fumigation; text used is bSang gi dag gtsang sngon 'gro'i rim pa
- bka'skyong in evening

11. Books and manuscripts in mTha' srung and mTsho gling monasteries

written down by dGe bshes 'grub Nyi ma
- sTon pa'i rnam thar 12 vol.
- 'Bring po gzer mig 3 vol.
- mDo 'dus 2 vol.
- rNam rgyal gzungs chen gser dngul bris ma 3 vol.
- Byams ma'i rgyud 2 vol.
- Zhang zhung snyan brgyud 1 vol.
- A khrid nyams rgyud 2 vol.
- gSer 'od 7 vol.
- Tshe dbang gzhung bzhi 9 vol.
- sTag lha bris ma 5 vol.
- sKang 'bum 5 vol.
- Me ri 3 vol.
- Ge khod 3 vol.
- sPyi 'dul 2 vol.
- Dran pa yang gsang 3 vol.
- Phur pa 3 vol.
- sKye sgo gcod pa'i mdo 100 vol.
- dBal gsas 2 vol.
- sKye sgo gcod pa yig nag can 12 vol.

12. Economic circumstances

The dgon pa no longer owns fields in Ringmo village. Monks are maintained by their individual families, while the main dgon pa is supported by the village, although donations are received from private benefactors as far away as Bi cher and Khanigaon. In 1996 Ringmo dgon pa received a donation of Rs. 45,000 from the WWF for the construction of a new community temple (see above).

13. Number of local villages or nomads

Ringmo, also called Tshowa (mTsho ba) or Phoksumdo (Phug gsum mdo) is the main village. The population of Ringmo is grouped into 33 houses. In addition to
the villagers of mTsho the people from Rike (about 40 people) and Renji (about 25 people) villages are supporting the dgon pa and call the bla mas to perform rituals.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

The people of Ringmo subsist on agriculture (barley, buckwheat, potatoes, mustard), animal husbandry (goats, yaks, dzos, a few chickens) and trade. In summer they go to Tibet to exchange grain for salt, tea, wool and modern Chinese manufactured products. In spring and autumn they travel southward to exchange tea, salt and wool for grain and other goods. In the southern trade, barter with products from the north is increasingly being replaced by cash transactions.

Since the opening of Shey Phoksumdo National Park a few men work as game scouts for the park or WWF and receive salaries. Two men have passed the SLC (School Leaving Certificate) and receive salaries as government teachers.

Notes

1. This list was compiled by dGe bshes bSam 'grub nyi ma.

(225) sPung mo and sPu mer Temples

1. Name of the monastery
1.1. sPung mo

rNam rgyal lha khang, of the Tre ston 'Bru lineage

Other monasteries are in sPu mer, an hour’s walk from sPung mo. Many ceremonies are combined.

1.2. sPu mer

a. Upper: gYung drung phyug mo
b. Middle: bDe chen gling
c. Lower: Padma gling, renamed Theg chen rab rgyas gling
d. Lowest: Bla brang
e. Shug ri nyi shar ri khrod (four hours’ walk from sPu mer)

2. Location

rNam rgyal lha khang is in the village of sPung mo, which is situated between the Kagemara Pass and the Sumduwa Army Checkpost.

The settlement cluster of sPu mer, with its four temples, is situated in a side valley leading from sPung mo to the grazing areas called Gunasa [dGun sa?] (one hour’s walk from sPung mo). Further up the valley towards Gunasa, after passing the small cluster of houses in Punika, the hermitage of Shug ri nyi shar can be
reached (about four hours' walk from sPu mer). The cluster of sPu mer dgon pa, measured at bDe chen gling, is located at 3,366 m., at N 29° 09' 04.1" / E 82° 51' 51.5".

3. History of the monasteries in sPung mo and sPu mer

3.1. sPung mo

The rNam rgyal lha khang belongs to the Tre ston Dru lineage. It was founded by Tre ston Tshe dbang tshul khrims, who also installed a large statue of gTso mchog mkha' 'gying there. There is an annual ceremony for the propitiation of the latter yi dam. This is the community temple, and no one lives here.

3.2. sPu mer

The temples listed above were built in the following order: c, d, a and b.

a. gYung drung phyug mo

Previously there had been a small chapel built by Tre ston gTsug phud rgyal mtshan. It was built by rNam rgyal Shes rab rgyal mtshan, who was the father of Ge khod Rin chen rgyal mtshan (also known as Grub thob Rinpoche). Grub thob's father came from Tibet and stayed some years in sPung mo, before coming here to build the upper temple (a). Grub thob, who belonged to the Khyung po dkar po (Khyung dkar) lineage, was the eldest of six children. He became a monk and a renowned practitioner. He died at the age of 73 and remained in thugs dam for five days. The three brothers now living in sPu mer, as well as the dGe bshes in Phoksumdo, are all children of one of Grub thob's brothers.

b. bDe chen gling

This family house and chapel was built by Grub thob Rinpoche and his father, but later than gYung drung phyug mo. Nowadays it accommodates two householder-priests and their families.

c. Padma gling or Theg chen rab rgyas gling

The second name was given by Slob dpon bsTan 'dzin rnam dag to offset the specifically Buddhist overtones of the first name. The dgon pa is a tantric temple.

d. Bla brang

Built by Tre ston Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. After the latter's death, Tre ston rTog rgyal stayed here and married. Because he had no sons, the Tre ston sgo lineage was interrupted, and the temple is now falling into dereliction.

e. Shug ri nyi shar ri khrod

This hermitage has been used for meditation by several bla mas, especially of the Tre ston lineage. Nowadays there are two boys staying here for their three-year period of initial training.
4. Hierarchical system

1. spyi dbu bla ma, the "Community head bla ma". His task is to be part of all the rituals concerning the whole village and to pray for rain or stop hail and frost depending on the time of year. Nor bu bla ma from sPu mer (a member of the Khyung po dkar po lineage, grandson of Grub thob Rinpoche = Namgyal Sherab Gyaltshen of the Khyung po dkar po lineage) currently holds this position. Incumbency is hereditary.

2. bla ma / rin po che (bla ma). In sPung mo this is the seat of former Grub thob Rinpoche (rNam rgyal Shes rab rgyal mtshan of Khyung po dkar po lineage), who was highly revered in Dolpo. Today it is dGe bshes Shes rab nyi ma, his brother's grandson, who occupies this position. It is a hereditary position, but it is additionally the position of the first dge bshes in sPung mo, who returned from Dolanji and took up residence in sPu mer.

3. dbu mdzad: Normally the same person, who leads the ceremony (1 or 2 above), occupies this position.

4. dge rgan: the proctor or disciplinarian, the position usually referred to elsewhere as dge bskos orchos khrims pa.

5. grwa pa: 13 grwa pa: married householder priests, usually lo gsum pa, or some vows

6. jo mo: 13 jomo, married, they have taken a few vows

7. dge bshes / dge slong

Five men from sPung mo/sPu mer have accomplished their dge bshes degree in Dolanji and have taken dge slong vows. Today only two stay in sPung mo, while the others are working in different areas.

The dge bshes do not yet have special, clearly defined tasks except for keeping up their own chapels. But they are often called simultaneously with the spyi dbu bla ma for rituals and ceremonies in the village and are expected to undertake their own retreats. The main bla ma, however, occupies a position somewhat close to that of abbot. At the moment he is also working at the new Tibetan medical clinic in Chunubar in rotation with other local grwa pa. Of the five dge bshes who returned from India after finishing their dge bshes degree only one lives in sPung mo (specifically, sPu mer).

It seems that the dge bshes obtain high positions only if they have inherited them, and a high level of education is still not a sufficient criterion of status. The status of the spyi dbu bla ma is therefore still higher than that of these dge bshes. However, the traditional hierarchy is apparently changing, and often all are invited for important ceremonies.

The monastery in sPung mo is maintained by a private household, and there are no priests in residence. There are, however, several householder priests who are educating their own sons. In sPu mer there are three brothers of the same lineage.
One of them, dGe bshes Shes rab nyi ma (living in gYung drung phyug mo) is the abbot, and is responsible for the education of his nephews. In addition, he also occasionally teaches other boys from sPung mo.

5. Number of monks

- dge bshes / dge slong 5

Five men from sPung mo/sPu mer have accomplished their dge bshes degree in Dolanji and have taken their dge slong vows. The eldest is dGe bshes Nyi ma ‘od zer (of the Khyung po ser rtsa clan), who founded the monastery in Kag Hurikot and is currently residing there. dGe bshes Sherab Nyima (Khyung po dkar po) is the abbot of sPu mer dgon pa, dGe bshes; Nyi ma seng ge (Tre ston) resides in gYung drung kun grags gling dgon pa in Sikkim; dGe bshes bSam 'grub nyi ma (Khyung po dkar po) is the abbot at mTha’ srung mtsho gling dgon pa and dGe bshes gYung drung dbang rgyal (lDong me nyag) teaches at Tapriza School in Sachog (between sPung mo and mTsho yul). Furthermore there are several young men from sPung mo in education in India (Dolanji), Benares and Kathmandu, some of them planning to become monks and to take their dge bshes degrees.

- grwa pa 13
- jo mo 13

6. The present educational system

The grwa pa are either taught by their fathers or uncles or sent to sPu mer, mTha’ srung mtsho gling dgon pa, Kathmandu or India for their religious education.

The education available in sPung mo/sPu mer mainly consists of the Lo gsum (3 years, 3 month, 3 days) retreat to sPu mer dgon pa, Shug ri nyi shar hermitage, mTsho dgon pa or Duli dgon pa (Khanigaon/Hurikot). It entails sngon ’gro and dngos gzhi practices and winter retreats.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries

Several boys from sPung mo were educated in sPu mer (especially during the time of rNam rgyal shes rab rgyal mtshan and Ge khod rin chen rgyal mtshan) or have gone to the monasteries in mTsho, bSam gling, Khanigaon/Hurikot, Kathmandu or India for religious education. There is very frequent exchange between mTsho village, sPung mo and sPu mer. Further exchanges take place with Kag Hurikot and bSam gling. Lately several boys left for studies to Triten Norbutse Bonpo monastery (No.230) in Kathmandu and sMan ri (No.231) in India. Close contact also exists with Bar sle, Tsha lung and Khaliban villages in southern Dolpo. Khaliban villagers in particular often invite the grwa pas or bla mas from sPung mo to perform rituals because they do not have their own bla ma or monastery, but are strongly connected to the Bonpo community. Since 2001 they have been building
their own small dgon pa and are trying to persuade a bla ma from sPung mo to stay there and perform the necessary rituals.

8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery

There are no daily rituals at rNam rgyal lha khang, but only village functions. The dge slong and grwa pa usually perform a bsang ceremony in the morning and a bka’ skyong in the evening.

9. Description of annual rituals in sPung mo/sPu mer

Description of annual rituals at rNam rgyal lha khang in sPung mo (NL) or Theg chen rab rgyas gling in sPu mer (TR), or elsewhere in sPung mo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ritual</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date (Tibetan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lo gsar, New Year</td>
<td>Koiru, sPung mo winter village</td>
<td>12th/1st month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sTon pa dus chen</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>1st month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yul sa gsol kha (pho lha and yul lha offerings)</td>
<td>Yulsa shrine</td>
<td>2nd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bla ma mchod pa: Nam mkha’rgyal mtshan dus chen</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>2nd month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sPyi ba la khro bo’i dkyil ‘khor zhal ’phye ba: ritual of g’tso mchod mkha’ gying commemorating Tsoton Tshe dhang tshul khrims</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>3rd/4th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me mchod (fire ritual)</td>
<td>rotating houses</td>
<td>5th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gYang sgrub</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>6th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rNam rgyal stong mchod</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>6/7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bla ma chu mig pilgrimage</td>
<td>Gunthang</td>
<td>7th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bla ma mchod pa: commemorating the death of Khyung po rNam rgyal shes rab rgyal mtshan</td>
<td>TR and diff. houses</td>
<td>8th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar ıshogs (to compensate for the sins incurred by the national festival of Dasain)</td>
<td>NL</td>
<td>8/9th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yul sa gsol kha (pho lha and yul lha offerings)</td>
<td>Yul sa shrine &amp; diff. houses</td>
<td>9th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dGu gtor</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>10th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma tri dus chen, several days</td>
<td>NL or TR ?</td>
<td>11th month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bla ma mchod pa: commemorating the death of Ge khod Rin chen rgyal mtshan, who died about 12 years ago. He was the son of rNam rgyal shes rab rgyal mtshan.</td>
<td>NL and TR</td>
<td>11th month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Daily life of an individual monk

The grwa pa and jo mo live at home with their family and only assemble for ceremonies. The dge bshes stay in different places (Medical Clinic, sMan rtsis khang, Tapriza School, etc.) They perform their daily practices in their personal temples or at their new places of work. Sometimes the grwa pa receive teachings or dbang from differing bla mas in the course of rituals.
11. Books and manuscripts

11.1. Texts at gYung drung phyug mo dgon pa in sPu mer¹

Books for ceremonies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>no. of vols.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dri med gzi brjid</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Khro bo sgrub skor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phur pa sgrub skor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ge khod sgrub skod dbal chu'i skor bcas pa</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Khro bo gsang 'dur gyi skor sgrub skor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Me ri bka'sgrub skor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. sTag la'i sgrub skor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Khung dmar sgrub skor</td>
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<td>9. gDugs dkar po</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Rig 'dzin 'dus pa sgrub skor</td>
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<td>11. dBal gsas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tshe sgrub bya ri ma</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Du tri su</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. sKye sgo</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Rab gnas skor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Klong rgyas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. sPyi 'dul</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Ma mo rbod gtong pod</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Me dpung dgu dril pod</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. bSang po ja (?)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rGyud kyi skor)</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Ma rgyud sangs rgyas rgyud gsum</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Ma tri'i rgyud</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. mKha' 'gro gsang gcod kyi dmigs skor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Byams ma'i rgyud</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. dMar 'khrid dug inga rang grol gyi drang don</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nges don</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(rNam thar gyi skor)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Grub dbang bstan 'dzin rin chen gyi rnam th</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. rNam rgyal shes rab rgyal mtshan gyi rgyud</td>
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<tr>
<td>rim shog dril</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. gZags kyi nyi ma'i rnam thar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Shar pa rnal 'byor gyi rnam thar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.2. Texts at bDe chen gling in sPu mer²

1. Shar pa rnal 'byor gyi rnam thar              | 1            |
2. mDo bskal bzang                               | 2            |
3. Khro bo rgyud drug                            | 1            |
4. mDo gzer mig
5. mDo mang
6. Tre ston nam mkha'rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar
7. Zhi khro sgrub skor
8. sTag la sgrub skor
9. Rig 'dzin bon skor sgrub skor
10. Khro bo sgrub skor
11. Du tri su
12. sKye sgo gcod pa pod
13. dBal gsas sgrub skor
14. dBal gsas drag po dgu skor
15. gSang drag sgrub skor
16. Me ri bka' ma
17. Ma rgyud sgrub skor
18. gTo nag
19. gSer 'od nor bu 'od 'bar
20. Klong rgyas sgrub skor
21. Tshe dbang drag po sgrub skor
22. dMar 'khrid dug lnga rang grol
23. Dam can las gsum

12. Economic circumstances of the monasteries

sPu mer dgon pa (a and b) are maintained by the family living there. In 2002 they received some money from the Phoksumdo National Park to pay for renovation work in Phyug mo temple.

The gnyer pa and gnyer ma, a duty that changes every year in a rotating system, collect the food and goods for communal ceremonies at rNam rgyal lha khang. They have to collect the food, prepare chang, make rtsam pa, etc. The quantity of food and other goods that each household has to provide depends on the size and number of fields of each family and on the number of grwa pa and jo mo in a household.

13. Number of local villages or nomads

sPung mo is the main village in this area. The clusters of sPu mer and Punika can be added. sPung mo has about 15 buildings housing some 120 to 130 people. About 16 people live in sPu mer and about 20 people in Punika.

14. Occupation of the local population

The people of sPung mo, sPu mer and Punika subsist on agriculture (barley, buckwheat, potatoes, mustard, beans), animal husbandry (goats, yaks, dzos, dzomos, a few horses) and trade. In summer they go to Tibet to exchange grain for salt,
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region

Tea, wool and modern Chinese products and in spring and fall they go southward to exchange tea, salt and wool for grain and other goods. In the trade to the south money is more and more replacing the goods from the north. Since the opening of Shey Phoksumdo National Park several men also found work as game-scouts working for the park or for WWF and receive salary and clothing. One man has passed the SLC (School Leaving Certificate) and receives a salary as a government teacher.

Notes

1 List compiled by dGe bshes Shes rab nyi ma under the title dGon pa g-yung drung phyug mo'i nang bzhugs dpe rnying.
2 List compiled by Lha bu and Nor bu bla ma under the title sPu mer bde chen gling du bzhugs pa'i dpe rnying.

(226) gYung drung ’gro ’dul gling Monastery

1. Name of monastery

gYung drung ’gro ’dul gling dgon pa. Popularly referred to as Duli dgon pa.

address: Yungdrung Gompa, Khaigaon Hurikot, Dolpa District, Karnali Zone, Nepal
Nyima Wozer Lama, Yungdrung Wangyal Lama

2. Location

The monastery is situated between the villages of Khanigaon and Hurikot, one hour’s walk from the first and half an hour’s walk from the latter.

3. History of the monastery

Hurikot used to be a Bonpo community, but the religion fell into decline after the death of the last bla ma. The villagers of Hurikot used to maintain close links with bSam gling (No.223), but since even in bSam gling there was no bla ma who could have supported the village they asked sPung mo. When Nyi ma ’od zer (Nyima Wozer) finally finished his studies in India and received his dge bshes degree, he came back and started to collect money to build a new monastery near Hurikot. The monastery was finally completed a few years ago. A community dgon pa is now being planned, and Nyi ma ’od zer is currently raising funds for this.

Nowadays sPung mo has very close relations with Hurikot, and they support each other whenever there is need. Because of the absence of a bla ma for a long time the situation became quite difficult, and the religion became something of a mix between Bon and local shamanic practices.
4. Hierarchical system
   Nyi ma 'od zer is the abbot of the monastery. He was invited here by the villagers of Hurikot.

5. Number of monks
   Three boys from sPung mo and Ringmo are being educated at the monastery.

(227) Srid rgyal Monastery

1. Name
   Srid rgyal dgon pa

2. Location
   Above the village of Tsha lung, five hours from Dunai on the northern side of the Bheri river, opposite Juphal, up a steep trail.

3. Founder of the dgon pa
   Bla ma Tre ston Srid rgyal bzang po, a disciple of Tre ston Tshe dbang tshul khrims.

3.1. Present bla ma
   Shes rab phun tshogs, a sngags pa who is a rare visitor to Kathmandu. No old texts are kept here.

4-7. Hierarchical System, Number of monks, education system, exchange
   Lineage householder bla mas, from father to son.

8-13. Villages
   The villages are Tsha lung and Kalikara

14. Occupation of the local population
   Agriculture, animal husbandry.
(228) Dorpatan Monastery

1. Name of monastery
   bKra shis dge rgyas mtha’ brtan gling

2. Location
   Dorpatan refugee camp, Rukum District, Dhaulagiri Zone

3. History
   Shes rab blo gros, the old abbot of sMan ri monastery in Tibet, was living for a while with other members of the Bonpo community in Kathmandu, including bsTan ’dzin mam dag, shortly after coming into exile. The Red Cross began to build a refugee camp in Dorpatan in the early sixties, and after the departure of bsTan ’dzin mam dag to England, Shes rab blo gros went to Dorpatan. The Dorpatan temple was created at this time. Shes rab blo gros later went to Manali in India, and the management of the temple was taken over by Tshul khrims nyi ma, a bla ma from Kre ba, north of Kyirong, in Tibet. Most of the members of the Dorpatan camp were from Kre ba. After the murder of Tshul khrims nyi ma in a celebrated incident in 1969/1970, the temple was run by mKhan po bSod nams rgyal mtshan, from Khyung po. He died in 1995, and has been succeeded by dGe bshes bsTan ’dzin dar rgyas, a monk from Dolanji who was appointed to this position by the mKhan chen Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin.

4. Hierarchical system
   The monastery is small, and the hierarchical system not elaborate. There is a mkhan po, an dbu mdzad and a gnyer pa, Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan.

5. Number of monks/priests
   Including the hierarchs listed above in no. 4, there are six monks, who live in the monastic quarters attached to the temple.

6. The present educational system
   Religious education is relatively unstructured; the dge bshes sporadically teaches Tibetan to the children from the refugee camp.

   In addition to the monastery there is a medical centre, where teaching is provided by dGe rgan Tshul khrims sangs rgyas, who came from Khyung po, in eastern Tibet, in the mid-1980s. He has about ten students, most of whom are from the local refugee community but one from Dzar, in the Muktinath Valley of Mustang District.
7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries

There is a certain amount of mobility between Dorpatan, sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji and Triten Norbutse (No.230) in Kathmandu.

8. Description of daily rituals of the monastery

Essentially, fumigation (bsang) and water-offering (yon chab) in the morning and bka' skyong (invocation of the protectors), with the lighting of a mchod me (votive lamp), in the evening.

9. Description of annual rituals of the monastery

The main annual rituals are: mNyam med dus chen (commemoration of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan) in the 1st month; smyung gnas in the 4th month; dgu gtor of sTag la in the 9th month.

10. Daily life of an individual monk

The monks do not farm or engage in much commerce, but they are much in demand for the performance of domestic rituals among the lay community.

11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery

The library consists almost entirely of Bonpo works reprinted in India.

12. Economic circumstances of temples

The monastery owns a number of fields, and receives an income from the lease of this land to lay farmers from the refugee community. Further support is provided by the lay population and also from Triten Norbutse (No.230) and the Bonpo community in Kathmandu.

13. Number of local villages or nomads

Approximately 200 people.

14. Economic occupation of the local population

The people migrate seasonally between Dorpatan and the south (mainly Pokhara), where they live for part of the time. In Dorpatan they grow mainly potatoes, as well as oats for livestock. Apples are now being grown in increasing quantities.

The potatoes are exchanged in the south for salt and rice, and this exchanged in turn in the middle hills for maize and wheat.
(229) Mon ri zur gsum Temple

1. Name of temple
   Mon ri zur gsum

2. Location
   The village Kha legs 'bum (Nep. Khaliban) is situated across the river from Tripurakot (Tibtu) in Pahada VDC below the mountain Monrisosum (Mon ri zur gsum).

3. History of the Monastery
   The Tibetan-speaking population of this area offer, as the etymology of the name Khaliban, kha legs 'bum, “a hundred thousand sweet words”, and argue that the present form (Nepali for “empty forest”) is a later transformation. The story goes that the Tibetan settlers chose this lonely place for its good pastureland. Matri stones in the area are pointed out as evidence of the antiquity of Bon practice in the area. As contact between the Tibetans and the southern population grew closer, the practice of Bon fell into abeyance. Rituals were customarily performed by Bonpo priests from sPung mo, mTsho or Hurikot, but for some years there has been a general wish to have a resident bla ma. In 2001 work began on the construction of a monastery.
   
   The name of the site, Mon ri zur gsum, is derived from that of a nearby mountain, a pilgrimage place that is said to have been opened by Ha ra ci par. A stupa standing amid some ruins near Khaliban is said to mark the site of the original temple founded by Ha ra ci par. Other sacred relics include a footprint in stone said to have been left by Ka ru Grub dbang bsTan 'dzin rin chen (nineteenth century) while he was performing prostrations in front of the holy mountain.

4-7. Hierarchical System, Number of monks, education system, exchange
   At the moment there are no local bla mas in Khaliban. When there is need for a ritual or ceremony, the bla mas from sPung mo, mTsho and Hurikot are called. The main reason why the local villagers wish to build a temple is precisely so that they might have their own resident bla ma.

8 / 9. Rituals
   They celebrate Lo gsar and some smaller rituals for personal purposes in the private houses.
   
   For example Tongchod, Takchod, Magyud.
10. Daily life of an individual monk
   Not applicable

11. Books and manuscripts which the monastery keeps
   No old books in the village.

12. Economic statistics in the monastery
   The people of Khaliban and several bla mas from Phoksumdo are currently trying to raise money for the construction of a small monastery. So far, they have received support from WWF, Tapriza Verein and the NGO called Friends of Dolpo.

13. Number of local villages or nomads
   Khaliban (about 21 houses).

14. Occupation of the local population
   Agriculture, provision of ponies for transport, animal husbandry (cow, ox, sheep, goats), trade.
Bonpo monasteries and temples in Nagchu, Chamdo and Ngari regions

Bon Monasteries in Dolpo
1. (220) gYung drung shug tshog la hling Monastery
2. (221) Dar rgyas phun lhogs gling Monastery
3. (—) Shri phyogs Monastery
4. (222) Dar rdzong phun lhogs gling Monastery
5. (222) Yang dgon Monastery
6. (223) bSem gling Monastery
7. (224) mThar sring mscho gling Monastery
8. (—) sPo mon Temple
9. (225) gYung dgon Temple
10. (226) gYung drung 'gro duh gling Monastery
11. (227) Srid rgyal Monastery

JUMLA

- Bon Monastery
- Bon Village
- Village/Bettlement
- Mountain
- Airport
- Lake, River
- Mountain Pass
- National Boundary
- District Boundary
- Trail
- Trade routes Teho/Pugmo
(220) gYung drung shug tshal gling Monastery, Plate 3 Bar sle Rinpoche
(Photo M. Kind 1992)
Ogyen Phuntsog Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Samdrup 2002)

Dergyen Phunphel Monastery, Plate 2
(Photo M. Kind 2002)
Dar rdzong phun tshogs gling, Plate 1
(Photo M. Kind 2002)

Yang dgon Monastery, Plate 2
(Photo M. Kind 2002)
(223) bSam gling Monastery, Plate 1
(Photograph M. Kind 2000)
(223) bSam gling Monastery, Plate 2 Ya ngal gdan sa
(Photo M. Kind 2000)
mTha' srung mtsho gling Monastery
(Photo M. Kind 2002)
(225) sPung mo Temple, Plate 1
(Photo M. Kind 2002)
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region

(225) sPu mer Temple, Plate 2
(Photo M. Kind 2002)

(225) Shug ri nyi shar Hermitage, Plate 3
(Photo M. Kind 1997)
Plate 2

Plate 1
(230) Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery

1. Name

Bon dgon dpal ldan khri brtan nor bu rtse

2. Location

The monastery is located on the western outskirts of Kathmandu city. It is built on the slope of a hill and has an extensive view overlooking the city. The place is called Ropa by the local people and is in the vicinity of Swayambhunath stupa.

3. History

In 1986, Yongs 'dzin bsTan 'dzin rnam dag initiated the building of a house built at this location with the financial help of an American friend. He thought that a Bon religious centre in Kathmandu would be desirable considering that there are fairly large areas in Nepal where the population adheres to the Bon religion and his idea was unanimously supported by the Bonpo community in Kathmandu. It was dPal 'byor nor bu, however, a resident of Kathmandu and a member of the Bonpo community, who played the leading role in dealing with the purchase of land and obtaining official permission for construction as well as fund-raising. When Yongs 'dzin bsTan 'dzin rnam dag went to visit Tibet from India he stayed in the new house while in Kathmandu. While he was there, monks from different places came to see him and he started giving them teachings. However, the actual temple was founded in 1992 and a little later the work on the interior decoration and surrounding areas were completed. In 1994, the consecration of the new assembly hall was carried out by the abbot of sMan ri in Dolanji and Yongs 'dzin bsTan 'dzin rnam dag.

The establishment gradually developed into a monastery and dGe bshes Nyi ma dbang rgyal was appointed as its first abbot by the abbot of sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji (No.231) and Yongs 'dzin bsTan 'dzin rnam dag in 1992.

The monastery has an assembly hall ( 'du khang), a residence of the abbot (bla brang) and a building that houses the library, guest rooms as well as rooms prepared specially for computer work. There are also several buildings for accommodating the monks.

The monastery has two distinct establishments: the bshad grwa (centre for studies of philosophy and logic) and the sgom grwa (centre for meditation practice). In 1996, dGe bshes bsTan pa g-yung drung, who obtained his dge bshes degree in sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji, became the dpon slob, the principal teacher. In 2001 he succeeded the abbot Nyi ma dbang rgyal as the second abbot of the monastery. Since then mKhan po bsTan pa g-yung drung has been in charge of the whole establishment. Amongst other heavy duties, he supervises students as well as doing his own research. In 2002, dGe bshes Tshul khrims bstan 'dzin was appointed as the
chief of the meditation centre.

4. Hierarchical system
- yongs dzin
- mkhan po
- sgom grwa'i mkhan po
- dpon slob
- dbu mdzad
- dge skos
- spyi gnyer
- mgon gnyer
- zla da gnyer pa

5. Number of monks
There are 117 monks from various parts of Nepal, mainly Dolpo and Mustang, as well as from Khyungpo in Khams and from Amdo. A number of researchers in Tibetology from various countries also either stay in the monastery for short periods or pay visits.

6. The present educational system
The monks of the bshad grwa follow courses on such subjects as the classic texts on philosophy and logic. They also read Tantras and rDzogs chen texts as well as taking up studies in poetry, astrology, traditional medicine, metrology connected with making stupas and mandalas as well as thangka painting. The courses last for 13 years, after which students are examined, mainly by debate, for the dge bshes degree.

As for the students of the sgom grwa, the courses last 4 years during which time they read and practise meditation based on A khrid, rDzogs chen bsgrags pa skor gsum and Zhang zhung snyan brgyud. After completing the courses, the successful candidates are issued a certificate for the title of gShen gyi 'byor ba.

7. Educational exchange
The monastery receives students from other monasteries in India such as sMan ri in Dolanji (No.231). It also sends its own students to sMan ri as well as to dGe lugs pa colleges in India.

8 / 9. Rituals
- 1st month: from 4 to 5, celebration of the birth of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan; on the 5th there is also the renewal celebration of the dar shing and the rlung rta with laymen from the Bonpo community in Kathmandu; on
the 8th, performance of 'cham, called gShen gyi gar 'cham; from 14 to 15, a ceremony based on the gShen gyi dge spyod rnam par dag pa'i mdo; from 23 to 30, the monks of the bshad grwa practise the ritual of sMra seng while those the sgom grwa perform the ritual devoted to Bla chen Dran pa nam mkha’;  
- 4th month: from 12 to 16, performance of the ritual based on the Sa bdag nye lam sde bzhi;  
- 8th month: from 1 to 7 observation of the monastic discipline while the laymen come to the monastery and practise the bsnyen gnas and smyung gnas observations;  
- 9th month: the 30th, commemoration of the death of gShen rab Mi bo;  
- 10th month: from 1 to 21, intensified study of logic following the former tradition of gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2);  
- 12th month: from 26 to 29, performance of the dgu gtor chen mo rite based on the ritual cycle of Khro bo and Phur pa.

10. Books and manuscripts kept in the monastery  
The monastery’s library has a large collection of MSS and modern Tibetan and Indian reprints of Bonpo works.

The monastery has established good working conditions for computerisation of classical texts and other Bonpo works. It was the monks of this monastery who input the whole catalogue of the Katen collection. This was published in 2001 by National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan under the title of A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts, Bon Studies 4 (Senri Ethnological Reports 24) and the texts contained in The Call of the Blue Cuckoo, published by the same institute in 2002, Bon Studies 6 (Senri Ethnological Reports 32). The monastery publishes a periodical entitled bGres po'i 'bel gtam once a year.

This account of Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery is based on the Bal yul gnas 'khod bon dgon dpal ldan khri brtan nor bu rtse'i lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa gtsang chab zegs ma by mKhan po bsTan pa g-yung drung composed in 2002, MS, 15 pages.
(230) Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery, Plate 1
(Photo Y. Nagano 2003)

(230) Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery, Plate 2 The assembly hall
(Photo S.G. Karmay 1994)
Khri brtan nor bu rtse Monastery, Plate 3 Slob dpon bsTan 'dzin rnam dag (right) and mKhan po bsTan pa g-yung drung

(Photo Y. Nagano 2003)
(231) sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji

1. Name
   dPal gshen bstan sMan ri’i gling

2. Location
   The monastery is located in Dolanji. It can be reached from the town called Solan in Himachal Pradesh. From Solan one can take either a bus or a taxi to go to the monastery. The route passes through a small village called Ochgat and Dolanji is a few kilometers away to the south of this village. In Dolanji the monastery is situated on a hill above a Tibetan refugee settlement called Thob rgyal gsar pa.

3. History
   In 1968, Shes rab bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1912-1962), the abbot of gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2) performed a ceremony in order to find a successor of Shes rab blo gros (1935-1962), the 32nd abbot of sMan ri Monastery (No.1). Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin (b.1929) was elected by secret lot as the 33rd abbot of sMan ri. He was elected without knowing while he was doing research in the University of Oslo. He therefore soon returned to India. His name was then changed to Lung rtogs bstan pa’i nyi ma when he was enthroned as the abbot as the tradition requires. In 1969, he began to have an assembly hall built. Since then he devoted all his time to the monastic establishment. Over the years, the monastery developed enormously. In this he was supported by dPon slob Sangs rgyas bstan ’dzin (1912-1978), the senior teacher of sMan ri Monastery in Tibet and dPon slob bsTan ’dzin mam dagger (b.1926), the junior teacher of the same monastery. The latter then became the senior teacher in the monastery at Dolanji while dGe bshes gYung drung mam rgyal was appointed as the junior teacher when the studies of philosophy and logic were established. Later dPon slob bsTan ’dzin mam dag was succeeded by dPon slob ’Phrin las ngyi ma as the senior teacher.

   The monastery consists of an assembly hall (’du khang), the abbot’s residence (bla brang), the library (dpe mdzod), residences of the monks, buildings with rooms for lectures and conferences. There is a dispensary, a house for the orphans that the monastery keeps as well as cells for meditation retreats, a guest house and a building for computer work. There is also an institute called Mu khri btsad po’i zhang bod rig gzhung zhib ’jug khang. The monastery publishes annually a periodical called Bon sgo.

4. Hierarchical system
   - khri ’dzin
   - yongs ’dzin
5. Number of monks

The monastery has about 250 monks mainly coming from Dolpo and other areas in Nepal; from Khams, Amdo, Nag chu kha regions, Central Tibet as well as mNga’ris, Western Tibet.

There are also European and American monks who follow the courses of meditation as well as study. Scholars from various countries come and stay in the monastery for doing research.

6. Current education

In 1978 courses in various traditional learning were established. They are concerned with such subjects as the classic texts on philosophy and logic particularly by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan and other masters. They also read Tantras and rDzogs chen texts as well as taking up studies in poetry, astrology, traditional medicine, metrology connected with making stupas and mandalas as well as the thangka painting. After 8 years of study students can sit for examination mainly by debate and finally obtain the dge bshes degree. From 1986 to 2002 about 57 students obtained the dge bshes degree.

7. Educational exchange

Students are often sent to other religious schools, especially Triten Norbutse (No.230) and the dGe lugs pa colleges in India on short periods. After obtaining the dge bshes degree, the majority is either encouraged or voluntarily leave the monastery. These monks go back to their own countries, such as Dolpo in Nepal and Tibet where they try to re-establish either the monastic tradition or just help revive cultural traditions that were lost or discouraged. Some of these monks also go to Western countries where they establish Bonpo centres of learning and meditation practice.

8/9. Rituals

- 1st month: from 4th to 5th, celebration of the birth of mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (in many monasteries in Tibet this was taken as the commemoration of the death of the master); around the middle of this month there is the performance of 'cham such as gShen gyi gar 'cham, rTsed sna’i rol 'cham and Zhang zhung gi shon gar; from 6 to 16, the examination of
the dge bshes degree (this takes place only every two years); from 14 to 16, celebration of the birth of gShen rab Mi bo; from 22 to 23, performance of the ritual cycle of Ma rgyud; from 23 to 30, the ritual cycle of the wisdom deity, sMra ba'i seng ge. It then ends with the bestow of the empowerment initiation of the deity by the abbot for the monk students.

- 3rd month: 1st day, commemoration of dPon slob Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin and performance of the ritual cycle of Tshe dbang rig 'dzin;
- 4th month: from 14 to 15, recitation of the bKa' 'gyur;
- 5th month: from 12 to 16, religious services, particularly based on the mKha' klong gsang mdos for the people of Thob rgyal gsar pa, the refugee settlement;
- 6th month: on the 10, during the day, performance of the bs kang gso ritual for the religious protectors and during the night the chanting of the bs kang 'bum;
- 7th month: from 14 to 15, commemoration of Shes rab bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, the 10th abbot of gYung drung gling;
- 8th month: the 8th, commemoration of Shes rab blo gros, the 32nd abbot of sMan ri;
- 9th month: the 9th, celebration of the arrival of Mu cho ldem drug to 'Ol mo lung ring; from 23 to 29, performance of the ritual cycle of sTag la;
- 10th month: the 4th, commemoration of Khyung sprul 'Jigs med nam mkha'i rdo rje; from 23 to 29, performance of the ritual cycle of Khro bo; the 30th, commemoration of the death of gShen rab Mi bo;
- 11th month: from 7 to 8, commemoration of sKyabs mgon Zla ba rgyal mtshan (1796-1862); from 23-29, performance of the ritual cycles of Khro bo and Phur pa;
- 12th month: from 27 to 29, performance of the ritual cycle of Khro bo and Phur pa ending with the dgu gtor chen mo rite.

11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery

The Library has a good collection of MSS and modern Indian and Tibetan reprints of Bonpo works

This account of sMan ri Monastery is based on the information given in the dPal gshen bstan sman ri'i gling gi lo rgyus rags bsdus by mKhan po bsTan pa g-yung drung written in 2002, MS, 10 pages.
Plate 1 The assembly hall
(Photograph S. G. Karmay 1996)

Plate 2 Residence of the abbot
(Photograph H. Blezer 1998)
Plate 3

Plate 3

sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji,

mKhan chen Lung rtags bstan pa'i nyi ma

(Photography courtesy of Tenpa Yungdrung 2001)
(232) Gling tshang Monastery

1. Name of the monastery
   rDza sMon rgyal g-yung drung gling

2. Location
   Settlement of Gling tshang from Kham, Manduwala, Dehradun, UP, India

3. History
   The monastery was founded by dGe slong ’Phrin las rgya mtsho in 1974 on a piece of land near the Gling tshang settlement. The land was allotted by rGyal sras ’Jigs med dbang ’dus of Gling tshang who was the head of the refugee camp. The monastery is a resettlement of the same name in Kham, Tibet which was a private religious establishment of the king of Gling in Derge, and the Bonpo lama Hum chen ’gro ’dul gling pa, the Sixth Kun grol, was the prelate of this king. Because of these relations in Tibet the head of the Gling tshang settlement in Dehradun wished that the monastery be built near the settlement. sMan ri Monastery in Dolanji appointed rTogs ldan brTson ’grus rgyal mtshan as the abbot of the monastery and in 1996 he was succeeded by dGe bshes Nyi ma grags pa. The owner of the monastery (dgon bdag) is Kun grol Nam mkha’ ’phrin las dbang rgyal, the 7th Kun grol.

4. Hierarchical system
   - dgon bdag, owner of the monastery
   - mkhan po, abbot

5. Number of monks
   At present there are five monks.

6. Current education
   The monks practise their meditation following the tradition of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan.

   This is compiled by Nyima Woser Choekhortsang.
Sikkim

(233) Zhu gYung drung kun grags gling Monastery

1. Name of monastery
   Zhu gYung drung kun grags gling

2. Location
   Southern Sikkim, in Kuisang/Kuising

3. History
   The temple was built in the late 1980s by a certain gYung drung tshul khrims who, although not himself of the Zhu lineage, had connections with that family - hence the name of the temple. He himself is said to be the proprietor of a photo-studio in Gangtok.

4. Hierarchical system
   There is one monk, named rNam rgyal, a product of sMan ri Monastery (No.231) in Dolanji, who is taking care of the teaching at the temple.

5. Number of monks/priests
   There are about a dozen young monks from local families.

6. The present educational system
   See above.

7. Personnel and educational exchange of monks between monasteries
   Very limited exchange for the present, although the temple does receive visits from colleagues of rNam rgyal from Dolanji.

11. Books and manuscripts kept by the monastery
    Mainly modern Indian reprints of Bonpo works.

12. Economic circumstances of temple
    The temple is supported by donations from the families of the young monks.

14. Economic occupation of the local population
    The villagers in the vicinity of the temple are mainly sedentary farmers.
Appendix: Excerpts from the history of the Ya ngal clan

The following is the genealogy of the Ya ngal clan according to the Ya ngal gdung rabs (YDR). It is not, however, a straightforward translation of the text, which rather confusingly shifts from one lineage to another and which includes a great deal of obscure information. The genealogy as it is presented here deals first with the line of gSung rab skyabs and then with the descendants of Phur pa skyabs since the clan is divisible into these two major lineages. Each individual is identified by a number referring to his generation and a letter which denotes his age with respect to the other siblings. If YDR includes any information about an individual, the salient points will be entered after his name - such as a new name following ordination (tshul ming), his wife (W) if she is mentioned, his accomplishments, and of course his descendants. In all but a few cases, daughters are not named. where they are, they will be indicated by the sign D and not a lower case letter since they are usually named after the sons irrespective of their age. The form of the following genealogy is based on that used by Jackson in his study of the Mustang royal family [1980], but with certain modifications. The text does not trace just one lineage but often lists the descendants of each of several brothers, and the same number and letter (e.g. 6a, 6b and 16a in the first lineage) may therefore refer to several individuals.

The lineage of gSung rab skyabs

1 mKhas pa sman pa
2a gSung rab skyabs W: Nyi la chos dbyangs
2b gSung rab 'bum

2a gSung rab skyabs
3 Shes rab rgyal mtshan W: gNya' mo bkra shis
4a Dam pa 'Bum rje 'od

...was himself an incarnation of a vidyadhara, and in a previous life, when he was a learned hermit, he reached 'Ol mo lung ring in the land of rTag gzigs through the power of his magical wisdom. From inside a crystal stupa which had originated by itself he carried the relics of the Teacher [gShen rab] to Tibet, and later said that he was [an incarnation of] Dran pa nam mkha’. Moreover, that bla ma, who had mastered the three studies and who had filled his life with achievements, set his footprint on the neck of Mt. Kailash. ...Later, after he had gone to the realm of phenomenal space, the bla ma said, “I, as one wo have attained sunyata, have cut off my speech and mind (?). Do not burn my body, but take it to the mountains”. His disciples requested a relic for the sake of future generations of living beings. A relic emerged from his nose and it may still be seen (YDR fols 37a-38a).
4b bKra shis rgyal mtshan, “‘Gro mgon Klu brag pa’.”
4c Jo lcam Byang chub sems ma (mother of rTogs ldan dbon po).

4b bKra shis rgyal mtshan
5a Bla ma sngags pa W: gNyag mo dngos grub
...went to Bi cher in Dolpo. [He and his wife] had many sons, who did not survive, but there were three [surviving] children whom they brought up (YDR 40b).
5b Ngos blang rgyal mtshan 'bum
His lineage increased in Klu brag (YDR 40b).
5D Drang srong ma

5a Bla ma sngags pa
6a Bha su
...died at the age of twenty-one
6b Sems dpa’ gsal
...was a bla ma who, according to the prophesy, taught the word of Bon in the land of the incarnation (?) of the Dakini Co za bon mo, and he is said to have become a protector of the doctrine. [It is not clear whether this passage refers to the following bla ma or to Bla ma sngags pa. If the latter this bla ma is nameless and Sems dpa’ gsal is the tshul ming of Bla ma sngags pa.] At the age of seventeen he took his vows in teh presence of the abbot Klu brag pa [i.e. bKra shis rgyal mtshan, his grandfather], who gave him the name of Sems dpa’ gsal. he meditated for many years on the wrathful deities at Gong 'gra monastery, but he was not arrogant about the results of his meditation and spiritual achievements.... His worthy [disciples] had a vision of his body appearing in self-originated light, and after a short time he shook his body three times and passed into heaven as a rainbow (YDR 40b-41b).
6d bKra shis tsho mo

5b Ngos blang [here Drung pa] rgyal mtshan
6a dBal dar 'bum
...took his vows from Bru ston Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. His tshul ming was mKhan po bSod nams rgyal mtshan, and he was, besides, an incarnation of Dran pa [nam mkha’]. Concerning the account of his enslavement of the goblin Kye rang and his retinue, he became dreadfully angry and merely displayed a face like the stripes of a tigress and, without the sightest fear in his heart, that bla ma performed the “production” [uppannakrama] meditation for his tutelary deity and caused the goblin to disappear (YDR 43a).
6b lHa rgod skyabs
6c Ge khod tse ring
6c  Ge khod tshe ring
7a  Nam mkha’ dbang rgyal
7b  Phur pa mkha’ ’gro

7a  Nam mkha’ dbang rgyal
8a  Drung pa nyi ma rgyal mtshan
...was born in a Tiger year. [There follows an obscure passage which attributes the origins of a particular proverb to an event in his life] (YDR 43b).

8a  Drung pa nyi ma rgyal mtshan
9a  bsTan pa bsam grub
...was the great Tshe dbang rig ’dzin who accepted birth among men. Forever saying “Sa le ’od” he saw the face of Kun tu bzang po. The imprints of his hands and feet [in rock] were a token of his constancey. He bound with an oath the retinue of the goblin Kye rang, the protector of the doctrine. He had a vision in which he went ot the assembly of vidyadhara, and he carried the deeds of Khro bo dbang chen from heaven, from the assembly of vidyadhara (YDR fols 43b-44a).

9b  Phun tshogs dbang rgyal

9b  Phun tshogs dbang rgyal
10  bsTan pa ’od zer skye pa
...was a bodhisattva and was the author of bsKang ’bum, and so on, and of many religious discourses.
11a  Rig ’dzin ’dus pa
11b  Khro bo bsam grub

11b  Khro bo bsam grub
12a  gYung drung rgyal mtshan
13a  Drung pa Rin chen dbang rgyal
...was the incarnation of the mind of sTong rgyung [mthu chen]. That bla ma repeated the Ngan song dong sprugs mantra ten million times. He spat on a wall and the letter A appeared; and above all, the guardians of Bon of the Secret Treasure, the three powerful demons who are the protectors of the doctrine, accompanied him as if they were his body and smell (YDR fol 44b).
13b  Nyi ma rgyal mtshan
13D The daughter went to rDzong [in the Muktinath valley] as a bride, and had one son. Then she renounced the world and entered the religious life, and became the accomplished bodhisattva Rig ’dzin dbang mo (YDR fol 44b).
The lineage of Phur pa skyabs

1  Khu tsho
2  Phur pa skyabs  W: sNya mo kun skyid
3a rGyal mtshan rin chen
3b Blo gros bstan rgyal
3c sTon rgod
3b Blo bon lha 'bum
[The four sons] were incarnations of *vidyadharā*, and, as it says in the prophesy, "in mNg' ris stod there will appear one called Yang ngal sTod rgod, who will also hold the lineage of the doctrine which Khod spungs Dran pa taught to men". That Yang ngal teacher came to Klu brag for the sake of living beings, and the yak on which he was riding left its footprint, and the *bla ma* left the imprint of his hand. That *bla ma* met his tutelary deity in manifestation, and his guardian assisted him. In particular, if he asked something of rGyal po Nyi pang sad, he would accomplish it (YDR 42a-42b).

3b Blo gros bstan rgyal
4a Khri gtsug g-yung drung
4b Slob dpon zil gnon

3c bsTan rgod
4 mKhan po Grags rgyal

3d Blo bon lha 'bum
4a lHa rgod 'bum
4b Khro rgyal skyabs

4a lHa rgod 'bum
5a dGe bsnyen
5b mKha' 'gro
5c Bon skyongs skyabs

These four wise ones were blessed, and whoever met them would certainly not fall into the lower realms. To their worth disciples they appeared in bodies of light (YDR 42b).

4b Slob dpon Zil gnon
5a Nam mkha' blo gros
5b gYung drung rgyal po

It is said that he repeated the *Ngan song dong spsugs* mantra ten million times, that there were many and various signs of his achievement relating to his general qualities, and that he actually received the prostrations and offerings of the *asuras*.

4 mKhan po Grags rgyal [here drag dbang]
5a Don grub dpal
5b dBang ldan bzang po
Through being [or according to?] an incarnation of gShen Bha da bhi sha his name was dBal la bzang po (?). By virtue of his sudden realisation he caused the transmitted doctrine to spread. That teacher wrote the gSung rab 'bum in 113 volumes, and clarified the doctrine in Lo and Dolpo. He appears in all religious treatises as Rab gnas mKhan po Drung pa dBang ldan bzang po. When he achieved sudden realisation he lived downstairs [i.e. inside his house] for three summers, and upstairs [i.e. outside] for three winters, and several inferior people called him “Mad dPal bzang”. Thn the bla ma became angry and magically caused a knot to appear in a piece of iron, and so forth, and many other miracles occurred (YDR fols. 46a-46b).

5a Nam mkha’ blo gros
6a Nam mkha’ rin chen
   ...thoroughly practised the service and worship of the wrathful deity Phur pa and was one who had achieved mastery over “production” and “completion” (YDR fol 47a).

5 dGe bsnyen mkha’ ’gro (on fol 42b dGe bsnyen and mKha’ ’gro are two separate sons of lHa rgod ’bum).
6a gYung drung mgon po
   ...remained in an attitude of worship for his entire life. At the age of 63 his spirit dissolved into the realm of phenomena in a rainbow. As a visible sign for the reverence of future generations, sacred relics and so forth as well as many self originated objects appeared (YDR fol 47a).

5a Don grub dpal
6a Nyi ma rgyal po
   ...thoroughly practised the service and worship of his tutelary, the Red and Blank Garudas. He was seen to direct hail with his fingers and was a superior individual who subdued fierce serpent-gods and local genii. That incarnation of the mind of Samantabhadra, Yang sīon gYung drung rgyal mtshan repeated the mantra “Sa le ’od” one hundred million times and was an excellent man who had thoroughly perfected the three studies (YDR fols 47a-47b).
6b gYung drung nam rgyal
   ...took monastic vows and was given the tshul ming gYung drung rgyal mtshan. [This would seem to imply that the qualities and achievements attributed to his elder brother Nyi ma rgyal po are actually his.]

6a Nam mkha’ rin chen
7a gYung drung bstan pa
7b Rig ’dzin bon skyabs
...received the name Yang ston gYung drung tshul khrims on taking the vows of a novice, and he was the excellent incarnation of a great bla ma. For the sake of future generations he erected many triple stupas, and was one thoroughly versed in the Three Studies (YDR fol 47b).

7c  Tshul khrims bsam grub  
7d  Rin chen rnam rgyal

7a  gYung drung bstan pa  
...was the incarnation of a vidyadhara and became a master of the doctrine (YDR fol 48b).

8b  'On chung  
...sat in a cave, a bodhisattva meditating as a layman. ...Once, when that bla ma was 39 years old, he bent [or fell] over in a cave and lost consciousness. It is said that Khyung ston [i.e. Khyung ston Tshul khrims legs pa, with whom he was apparently studying at the time] blew a conch from a hill-top, and the lma regained consciousness and sat up, clear in his thoughts (YDR fol 48a)

8D  not named  
8D  not named

7d  Rin chen rnam rgyal  
8a  bKra shis rgyal mtshan  
...became a monk and received initiations, instructions and mental teachings from Khyung ston Tshul khrims 'od zer. Throughout his life he [preserved] an attitude of worship and service and he met his tutelary deity. In particular, it is said that while meditating on the Yi dam Me ri he joined his hands and caused a fire to be lit, as well as doing other such things (YDR fol 48b).

8b  Rin chen rnam rgyal  
8c  gYung drung phun tshogs

8b  Rin chen rgyal mtshan  
9a  gYung drung rnam rgyal  
...was an incarnation of gShen Tshad med 'od Idan, and his tshul ming was Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan (YDR fol 49a).

9b  Bla ma bstan lha  
9c  Rin chen lhun grub

9b  Rin chen rgyal mtshan and wrote innumerable teachings and religious works. [While he was copying the] Dri med gzi brjed, which was about as long as an arrow, each time he dipped his pen into the inkpot a line of words was written, which was a sign of his general accomplishments (YDR fol 49a:
see also Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, 1980, p. 4 fn. 1).

9d. Shes rab rgyal mtshan
9b. bsTan lha (sTag lha here)
10a. Srid dar nam rgyal

...lost interest in the world, and on taking the vows of a novice he received the *tshul ming* 'Od zer rgyal mtshan, the mind manifestation of sTag lha whose name resounds high and low and everywhere like the roar of the dragon. The initiations, teachings and explanations which he gave were like a flowing stream, and he amassed about two hundred disciples from high and low who wore Bon like a hat. As one who was a holder of the doctrine he acquired many powers for the protection of living beings. He eventually died at the age of 63, on the 8th day of the 4th month in a Rat Year. In the vision of rTogs ldan bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, he manifested his light body as a rainbow-tent in the sky, and pssed into heaven (YDR fol 49b-50a).

10b. Bla ma rin chen

9d. Shes rab rgyal mtshan
10a. lHa rgod

His monastic name was gYung drung rgyal mtshan. He established a monastery in Tarap, and besides this he spread the doctrine (YDR fol 50a).

10b. Khro bo nram rgyal

...became a holder of the doctrine who was an expert in both the “religion of gods” [lha chos] and the “religion fo men” [mi chos]. He had three sons, but prior to that he had been sGo dwags khri ba, a bla ma who had taken the three vows, and flowing the death [of this bla ma] he became Yang ston gYung drung mam rgyal [possibly 6.b., above, the son of Yang ston Don grub dpal] (YDR fol 51a).

10a. lHa rgod
11a. Shes rab 'od zer

9c. Rin chen rgyal mtshan
10a. dGos 'byor

...was [also] called Ye shes rgyal mtshan, and as a hermit he took the name gTsug phud rgyal mtshan. gShen Mi 'gyur btsug phud said that he was an emanation of gShen rab 'Dod pa dgu 'gyur. As a representation of his body he erected so many stupas for the Three Protectors [Ku byi mang ke, A ti mu wer and dBal chen Ge khod gsang ba drag chen] and others; as a representation of his speech he copied out the *Khams brgyad* and so many other treatises, and as a representation of his mind he painted a thangka showing the ten deeds [of gShen rab]. These made up the triad of translator, sage and principal teacher. Moreover, by means of the many monasteries
Bonpo monasteries and temples of the Himalayan region

[which he built] he acted as a moderate leader and protector (?) and he became a great contemporary master of the doctrine.

As a sign of the manifested accomplishments of the superior powers he had gained, his horse left the imprint of its hoof [in rock], he acquired about three hundred disciples form high and low and everywhere, adn several of them became siddhas. He became a great master of the doctrine. Finally, at the age of 66, on the 10th day of the 4th month in a wood horse year, he passed upward into the realm of phenomena amidst a tent of rainbow light and a rain of flowers, and many other wonders besides. His body caught fire of its own accord and on his bones there appeared six syllables and innumerable images of deities and so on, and he became a great lamp of the doctrine (YDR fols 50b, 51b, 51 barma).

10b Unnamed: died in childhood
10c gYung drung rnam rgyal

10b Khro bo rnam rgyal [Apart from the three sons listed here] 'he had many sons who did not survive, and six daughters who lived' (YDR fol 51a)
11a bsTan pa rgyal mtshan
11b Mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan

...achieved independence in his own mind when he was young; having gone to tend the flocks, he went into a cave and sat there in meditation for about three days. At the age of eighteen he went to a mountain retreat in a remote place and abstained from speaking for about three years, in addition to which he did nothing but practise austerities. He sat for nine years behind closed doors, and received many prophecies from and frequently saw the face of Tshe dbang rig 'dzin. Due to some impediment his life did not run its natural course, but at the age of thirty one, on the seventeenth day of the third month in a Horse year, he passed while meditating into the realm of phenomena. Upon his body there appeared the six syllables, and there also appeared many images of gods and sacred relics, but due to some pollution some of these flew away and some dispersed. That excellent incarnation was in fact an emanation of the mind of Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, and he was also an emanation of the voice of Khri gtsug bstan 'dzin (YDR fol 1 'og ma a - 1 'og ma b).
11c Shes rab 'od zer

Notes
1 For a summary of the relevant events in his life, see the outline of the history of Khru brag given above.
2 See note 1 above
3 See note 1 above
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Charles Ramble and Marietta Kind
Terms of governing system and duties in monasteries
Terms of governing systems and duties in monasteries

dkon gnyer see dkor gnyer
dkor gnyer, caretaker, keeper, custodian, performing the bsang ceremony, and making general announcements

sku tshab, often assistant of spyi ba (q.v.)
bskang 'don see a mchod
khang gnyer see dkor gnyer
khang tshan dge rgan, hostel chief

khri pa, ‘one who holds the throne’, monks of special status within a monastery who act as the head of the monastery in rotation

khri pa bla ma, the monastic who holds the throne for a limited period
khri 'dzin, “throne holder”, abbot

mkhan po, abbot, rector

grwa dpon, a leader of a particular group of monks
grwa tshang spyi gnyer, treasurer of a monastery

grwa tshang bla ma, a monk who holds much the same position as that of khri pa bla ma

dge skos, disciplinarian
dge rgan, senior monk, teacher, chief of a hostel, cf. khang tshan dge rgan

dge g-yog, assistant disciplinarian
dgon bdag, head of a monastery, often hereditary

mgon khang bla ma, chaplain, cf. a mchod
mgon bla, contraction of mgon khang bla ma (q.v.)
mgron gnyer, steward

'go bdag bla ma, one who replaces the head of a monastery and performs the rituals in his absence

rgan pa, ‘senior’, a term sometimes used for gnyer pa, treasurer

rgyal tshab, apostle, successor of a previous head of an establishment

rgyal tshab bla ma see rgyal tshab

rgyu gnyer see gnyer pa
rgyun gnyer, store-keeper

sgrub bla, head of a particular establishment within a monastery

dnkul gnyer see gnyer pa
dnkul bdag see gnyer pa

chang ma, beer-dispenser

chu len, novices who fetch water in a monastery

chos khrims pa, proctor

mchod gnyer see machod dpon
mchod dpon, sacristan

mchod g-yog, assistant sacristan

'cham gnyer, the monastic in charge of the 'cham dance

'cham dpon see 'cham gnyer

ja gnyer, assistant cook
ja mar, secondary cook

ja g-yog, one who washes dishes, cleans kitchen and tends fire

jo mo bla ma, nuns’ priest
gyerpa, treasurer, often responsible for monastery’s upkeep, steward, manager

ma, often assistant of gyerpa (q.v.)

‘bud, novice in charge of the call of assembly by blowing the conch shell

do dam pa, superintendent

yig, secretary

‘dzin, successor in a hereditary line

gnyer, caretaker, cf. kcor gnyer

khyab, general controller, cf. do dam pa

gye, general treasurer

phyag, general treasurer

ba, treasurer, manager, one who oversees expenses for religious festivals, and collects offerings, their investment and the use of the resulting profit

ibi ma, community head bla ma (q.v.)

sku, reincarnated lama, either the head of a monastery or occupies a special position in a monastery

ishun che mo, supervisor of political and economic matters

mdzod, treasurer, often that of abbot’s residence

slob, chief teacher, cf. dpon slob

‘dren, chief chanter, cf. dbu mdzod

branch gnyer pa, treasurer of abbot’s residence

ma, head of either a monastery or an establishment within a monastery

ma i gnyerpa, treasurer of the head bla ma in a monastery

skyor, assistant of dbu mdzod (q.v.)

mkhyen, chanter, cf. dbu mdzod

bla, head of a monastery; chaplain of a local chief

mdzad, chief chanter, chief of chorus, choir-master, precentor

g-yog, assistant of the chief chanter

po, an administrator of a monastery and its estates often connected with a hereditary line

of the head of a monastery

byar dbag, leader of the byar gnas ritual

‘bud pa, musician

chen, chef

tsis pa, accountant

dpon, chef, one who tends fire

dag gnyer pa, assistant of a manager

mkhan, secretary, copyist

khyab, teacher, tutor, supervisor

yung drung slob dpon, supreme master

sne, monastic official, one who deals with the organization of religious services (zhabs brian)

pa, attendant

dpon, person dealing with the affairs of a subdivision within a monastery

giong, person dealing with the performance of the bsang ceremony
slob dpon, chief teacher

gser khri, literally "gold throne", term applied to a monk either elected often by secret lot or appointed by the general assembly to occupy the monastic throne

gsol kha ba see a mchod
lha gnyer see a mchod

a mchod, chaplain, a monk in charge of daily services in the sgrub khang
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