

20. *Tibet under her Last Kings (1434—1642 A.D.)*—By
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About eighty years after Tahi Situ Chyañ Chub Gyal-tshan's annexation of Tsang to the Government of Central Tibet, one of the Governors under the Phagmodu Rulers named Rinpûng-Norzang, a native of Tsang, caused a rising of the people against the Phagmo-du authorities, and from the year *tree-hare* of the 7th Cycle, the *Shikha* (towns) of Rinpûng and Samdub-tse (modern Shiga-tse) passed under the authority of Kun-zang Don-dûb-dorje, the two sons of Rinpûng Norzang. They established their power over the whole of Tsang in the year 1434, but nominally acknowledged the supremacy of the Phagmodu Chief. From the year *Earth-tiger* of the 8th Cycle, the Government of Central Tibet had to contend with internal dissensions both in the north and south of Û for which Mi-wang Nehu-dong-pa, the Ruler of Phagmodu, removed his residence to Dansa-thil, the seat of the Phagdu hierarchy. In the year *Iron-ox*, the son of Kunzang named Don-yo-dorje, who was also called Rinpûng Deba Gar-wa, inviting the *Karma* heirarch Choi-tog Gya-tsho of the *Shwa-mar* (Red-Cap sect) invaded Û with ten thousand troops. He drove away Miwang Nehu-dong-pa from his capital, and took possession of it. In this connexion, it is stated, that though the hierarch of Gahdan had twice tried to turn the tide of victory towards the Ruler of Nehu-dong-tse by propitiating some spirits yet the *Karma-pa* hierarch, his adversary, by superior exorcism made Rinpûng-pa victorious at the end. This heralded the triumph of the *Shwa-mar* (Red-Cap Church) over the Yellow-Church. Thereafter, for suppressing the growing power of Sera and Dapûng monasteries, two monasteries of the Red and Black Cap sects of the *Karma-pa* school were erected under Rinpûng-pa's auspices. This was done with a view to make Sera and Dapûng, the two great Yellow-Church monasteries, to die a natural death for want of support either from the State or from the pious. The *Karma-pa* and *Dûg-pa* sects sent troops to overpower some of the smaller Yellow-Church institutions which, thereby, became converted to the Red-Cap Church. Some of the land endowments of Sera and Dapûng were taken away from them, for which reason the breach between the rival schools became wide. From the year *Earth-ox* to that of *Earth-tiger* in the 9th Cycle, the Lamas of Sera and Dapûng were prevented from taking part in the Monlam Chenpo of Lhasa. But since the year *Fire-dog*, Miwang Nehu-dong-pa, the Chief of Nehu-dong-tse recovered his authority to some extent over the province of Û. Again in the year *Fire-bird* (about 1508) during Gedûn Gyatsho's residence at Methog Thang of Gyal, the Digong-pa Lamas brought troops from Kong-po for crushing down the power of the Yellow Church. When they were about to demolish the outer Dsong (fort) of Holkha, the Chief Nangso-Don-yod of Dohdah came with his troops for rescuing it. The Digong-pa

Lamas failing to destroy the Dsong, diverted their attention towards Lüng Shoi, Hod-na, and other places where they succeeded in converting eighteen Gelug-pa (Yellow-Church) institutions into Red-Cap school. In the year *Water-ox* the Yellow-Cap Lamas also sent troops to Kyor-lúng and other places under the *Kahgyud-pa* authorities. In this manner the Lamas of the different sects and schools became involved in civil dissensions. During this period the state of affairs in Tibet resembled the dark days which had followed the succession of the apostate Langdarma to the throne of Tibet.

The Chiefs of Tsang, who held office under the Phagmodu Rulers of Central Tibet, frequently led their troops to Ú to harass the people. They sometimes retired to their own strongholds after defeat, but often quietly annexed parts of their master's territories to their possessions. The Lamas of the Yellow Church struggled for power and to establish their supremacy over Tibet, in which act they met with reverses on account of the powerful help which the Chief of Tsang had given to the Lamas of *Shwa-mar* sects.

In the year 1564, Tshe-wang Dorje, the chief representative of the house of Rinpúng,¹ with his son Padma-Karpo held the fort of Samdub-tse, and having brought the whole of Upper Tsang under his power, declared himself Tsang-toi Gyalpo, the King of Upper Tsang. In the year 1569 (*Iron-horse* of the 10th Cycle) the authorities of Digong fought with those of the monastery of Tag-lúng. In the year *Water-serpent*, there was a rebellion at Kyid-Shoi against the Phagmodu authorities. The Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatsho, interceding in the affairs brought upon an agreement between the ruler and the ruled. Again afterwards, in the year *Tree-hog* (1574) Rinpúng-pa brought his troops to Kyid-Shoi for creating disturbances, but they were compelled to withdraw from there after they had caused some injury to the people. In the year *Iron-serpent* (1580) internal dissensions again raged in Digong. On Dalai Yontan Gyatsho's return from Mongolia, the *Shwa-mar* hierarch, Nag-wang Choitag, complimented him with a letter written in verse; but some misapprehension having arisen as to its concealed meaning, Rab Byampa Geleg Lhündüb and others sent a discourteous reply to it couched in terms which were interpreted as conveying insult to the hierarch. This incident, unfortunately, raked up greater bitterness in the strained relations between the two rival Buddhist Churches of Tibet.

The King of Upper Tsang, with the help of a few petty chiefs of the south and north, incited the Na-wa Rong people to rebellion, in quelling which, the resources of the Government of Central Tibet were greatly exhausted. Taking advantage of this disturbance he asserted his independence.

In the year *Tree-serpent* heading the troops of the Red and Black-cap Lamas of the *Karma-pa* School, he attacked the military

¹ Rinpúng or Rinchenpuñg, a small town in the Tsang Rong district. It contained a huge image of Maitreya famous under the name of Rong-Cham-Chen.

encampment of Deba Kyid-Shoi and killed a large number of Dûngkhors (civil officers) of the Government. On this occasion the *Karma-pa* Lamas became exultant and made a metrical rejoinder to the Dalai Lama's reply by placing their letter before the image of Buddha in the Cathedral of Lhasa. This step, which was meant to be an appeal to show that the *Shwa-mar* hierarch's welcome to the Dalai Lama was sincere, produced disastrous effects. It induced the Yellow-Cap Lamas to invite the help of the Mongolian hordes. About the time that Sonam Namgyal was Deba of Kyi-Shoi, several thousands of Tartar horsemen had already come to Tibet and encamped in the neighbourhood of Lhasa. In the year *Iron-dragon* (1609) the *Karma* hierarch named Phuntshog Namgyal, with his son *Karma* Tan Kyong Wang-po, led the Tsang army to Û, but finding that the Mongol horsemen, that had come to protect the Yellow Church, were waiting for an action, out of fear they quietly withdrew. In the year *Water-mouse* (1611) he brought the whole of Tsang including Gyal-Khar-tse (modern Gyang-tse) and Byang (northernmost province of Tsang) under his power, and became known as Tsang Gyal, i.e., King of Tsang. This was the first instance in which a *Karma* hierarch had marched at the head of a victorious army, having betaken himself to worldly life, and become lord temporal and spiritual.

Later on, again invading Û with the Tsang army, he took possession of *Nêhu* Dong and all the lands, and some of the smaller monasteries of Û. In the seventh month of the year *Earth-hare* (1617), resolving to entirely demolish the Yellow-Cap Church he besieged Sera and Dapûng and killed many thousand monks. He expelled the Yellow-Cap Lamas from Lhasa. In their discomfiture the Lamas took shelter at Tag-lûng. In the year 1619, that is, shortly after the humiliation of the Yellow-Cap Church and its patron *Miwang Nêhu* Dong-pa, the Mongolian army arrived and met the Tsang army first at *Kyang-thang-gang* near Lhasa, and ultimately at *Tsang-Gyadthang-gang* and completely routed them. In the seige of Lhasa, which followed this success of the friends of the Yellow-Church, about 100,000 Tsang men were captured. They all would have been killed had not the Panchen Rinpoche (Tashi Lama of Tsang) timely interceded and procured their release. The monasteries of *Sang-ñag* Khar and others, besides many Lamas of the Yellow Church that had been taken over to the Red-Cap Church, were restored in 1620 to the Yellow-Church, which got back its lost territorial endowments as well. The king of Tsang and his friend the valiant *Karma* hierarch failing in their military enterprize in Tibet, sought for help from the Mongolian Chiefs who were devoted to the Red-Cap Church. It took them nearly twenty years to consolidate their power in Tibet after the retirement of the Mongolian hordes from Tibet. When they had again grown powerful they began persecuting the Yellow-Church with greater animosity than before.