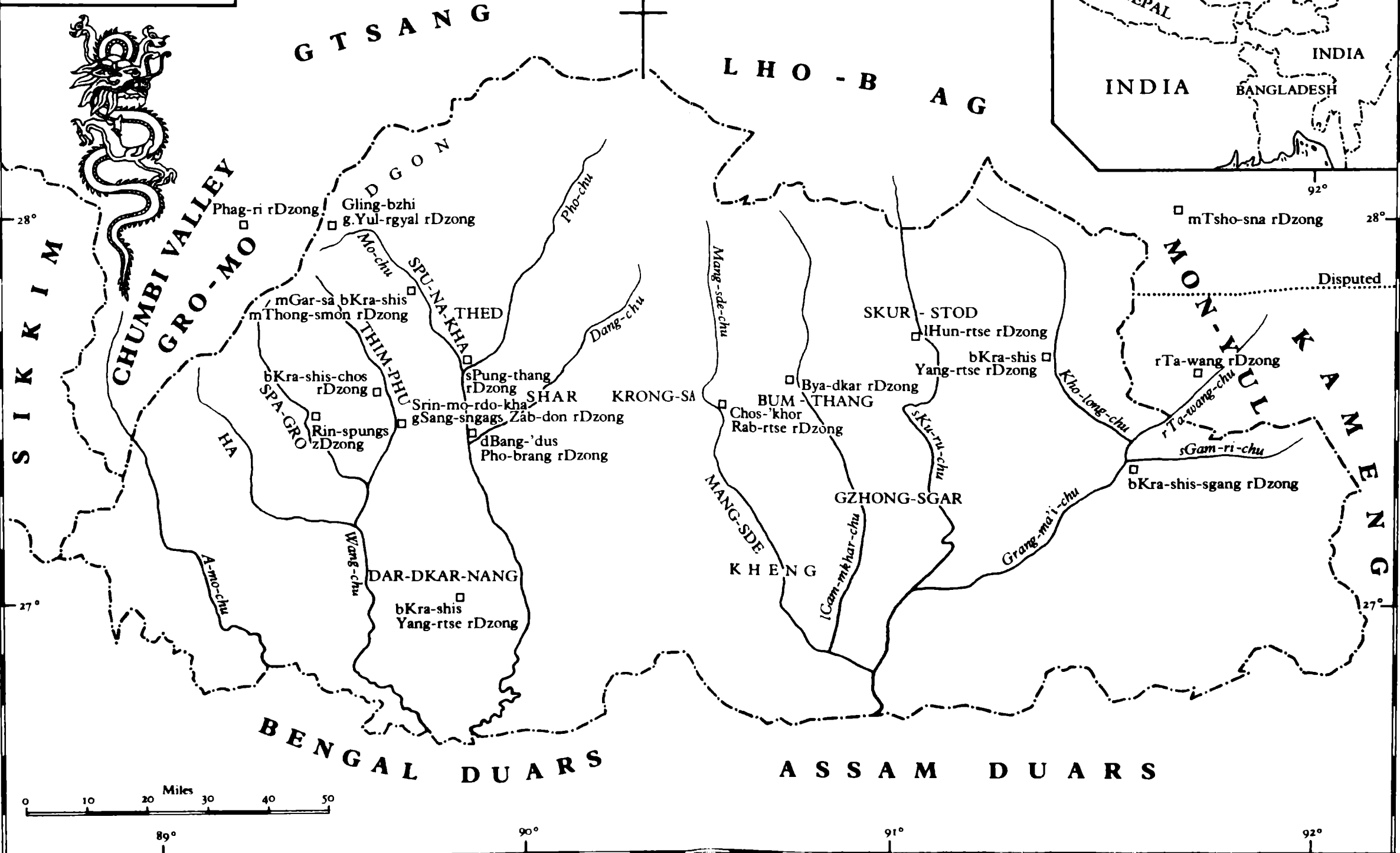
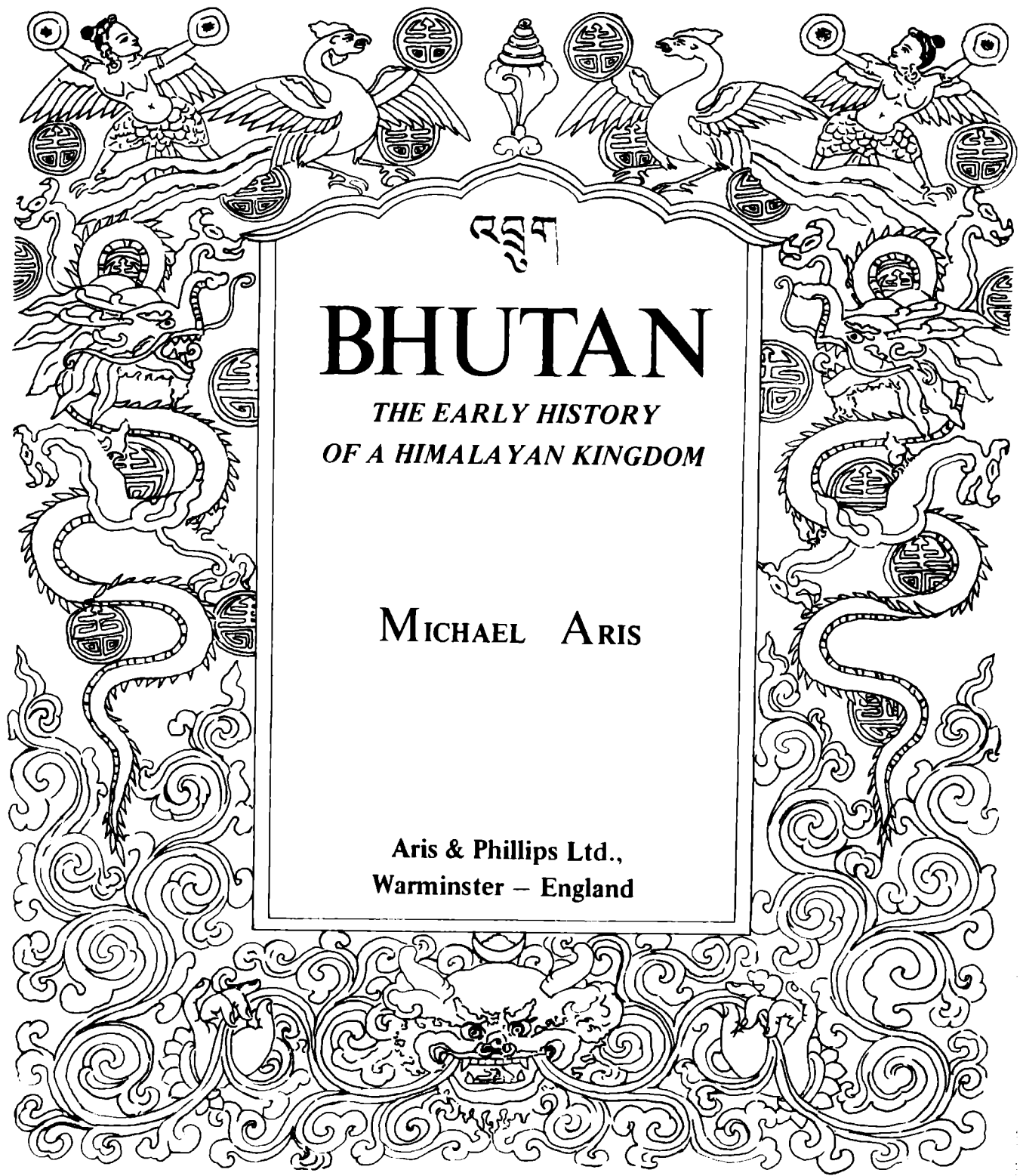


□ rdzong (only the major fortresses built in the period 1629-c.1655 are included)





འབྲུག་གི་

# BHUTAN

*THE EARLY HISTORY  
OF A HIMALAYAN KINGDOM*

MICHAEL ARIS

Aris & Phillips Ltd.,  
Warminster – England

མཉམ་འབྲེལ་གྱི་འཕེལ་རྒྱས་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་ཕྱོགས་སུ་བསྐྱོད་པའི་འབྲུག་གི་  
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*All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.*

## PREFACE

In the autumn of 1967, having recently graduated in Modern History from Durham University, I succeeded in gaining entry to the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan and thus fulfilled an ambition which had first arisen at an impressionable age when my father placed certain travel books in my hands. It was through the kind offices of my friend Mr Marco Pallis that I was offered the post of private tutor to the Royal Family of Bhutan and this led me to spend five years teaching, exploring, translating and studying in that country. Many people have asked me to write about my experiences at the Bhutanese court. However, not only did I give an assurance to the Queen at that time that I would not do so but from the beginning I was inclined towards a more objective approach to the country by examining its past, one in which subjective impressions could be kept under control and used to profit in interpreting the written word. I do not believe that in the last resort history can, or should even try to be, truly dispassionate, and I have not tried to hide my own natural bias. Indeed, it would have been difficult to write without some sympathy for my subject, or without having witnessed many of Bhutan's present institutions which have their origin in the distant past. It would have been still more difficult to complete this work had I remained in Bhutan. While I was employed as head of the Translation Department the late King did in fact instruct me through his cabinet to prepare an official account of Bhutanese history, but his untimely death eventually caused the abandonment of that project and my own departure from Bhutan. Time, distance and access to materials outside Bhutan has resulted in a work very different to the one then envisaged. Nevertheless, its substance has depended on a collection of primary Bhutanese sources copied by me or for me while I was resident in the country. I should like to think that if this book has any value it is due mainly to the merits of the surviving Bhutanese records themselves. Together they represent a whole new field of Buddhist historiography.

Every year sees the appearance of vital new sources for the period following the unification of Bhutan in the middle years of the 17th century. I therefore chose to forego the temptation of concentrating on the history of the Bhutanese theocracy and decided instead to go back to the earliest foundations as revealed in the texts I had copied or in those which had appeared in new editions. Moreover, while the institutions and aspirations of the present monarchy established in the early years of this century can be fully under-

stood only with reference to the church-state of the previous three centuries, I believe by the same token that the key to an understanding of the society which became a unified nation under *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal lies in the forgotten centuries of its semi-mythological past.

The book as it now appears is a slightly revised version of my thesis, 'A study on the historical foundations of Bhutan with a critical edition and translation of certain Bhutanese texts in Tibetan', approved for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies). It was written under the kind and thoughtful supervision of Dr David Snellgrove, Professor of Tibetan in the University of London, who was a constant source of help and encouragement. Throughout my stay in Bhutan and after, I was most fortunate in the guidance of two special friends and mentors, Mr Gene Smith of the US Library of Congress and the scholar-diplomat Mr Hugh Richardson, the last British and first Indian government representative to Tibet. Quite apart from his unrivalled grasp of the full dimensions of Tibetan literature, Mr Smith has probably read more sources for Bhutanese history than any other scholar, local or western. The visits which my family and I paid to his Delhi home provided many happy opportunities for fruitful exchange and the whole of this study was written while visualising his critical eye on the page. The best and most simple advice I received came from Mr Richardson who before I left for Bhutan suggested I keep a careful record of the titles and colophons of all the books I found. In reality I owe Mr Richardson far more than is suggested by the few acknowledgements given in my text. He commented on every section in draft, drew my attention to countless points of relevance, answered interminable queries with speed and patience – and the only note of mild protest came near the end when he complained that he needed to build an annexe to contain all the paper I had sent him. It is utterly impossible to thank him sufficiently for so much kindness and good counsel.

I cannot forget the sympathy and encouragement I received from so many people in Bhutan, ranging from members of the Royal Family to chance acquaintances in remote temples and monasteries, not to speak of friends in the villages. Of all these, I would particularly like to mention the following *kalyanamitra*: Dingo Khyentse Rinpoche, Topga Rinpoche, Lobpon Nado, Lobpon Pemala and Lobpon Sonam Zangpo.

I should also like to record my gratitude to Mr Philip Denwood, Lecturer in Tibetan at the School of Oriental and African Studies, with whom I first read the legal code presented in Part Five (on microfiche), also Dr Thomas Earle, Lecturer in Portuguese at the University of Oxford, without whose help I could not have included the *Relação* of Cacella (also on microfiche). Mrs L. Belcher typed the bulk of the thesis with admirable fortitude and Mr J.

Kislingbury prepared the maps on the basis of material supplied by me, and Nalini Soni helped with the labourious task of collating and numbering pages. Thanks are also due to many other friends and colleagues.

Among the institutional bodies which provided financial assistance for my work, the Spalding Trust gave me a grant to cover the cost of the outward journey to Bhutan, and the School of Oriental and African Studies awarded me a Governing Body Exhibition as well as a travel grant which enabled me to collect more texts in India. In 1976 I was elected to a Research Fellowship at St John's College, Oxford, and so came to enjoy ideal conditions under which to bring this work to fruition. I am deeply indebted to the President and Fellows of my college for their courageous decision to admit into their kindly fold so untried an entity as a Tibetologist.

On completing this work a year ago, I took my family back to the Himalayas, determined this time to gain entry to the region east of Bhutan where I believed vital material could be found to supplement the picture of the old clan society of eastern Bhutan. (See the penultimate sentence of the section on 'Common descent and diffusion' in Part One, Ch.4.) The Royal Geographical Society, the Spalding Trust and certain Oxford bodies all provided assistance, and after some initial delay the former Prime Minister of India, Mr Morarji Desai, graciously permitted our entry to the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Some of the conclusions arrived at in this study will eventually have to be modified as a result of discoveries in that area. To avoid delaying the present publication, I decided that a separate historical study on the 'Mon-yul Corridor' would have to be made. A preliminary report will appear in the *Proceedings* of the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies which I convened in my college in July of this year. The volume is due to be published in 1980 under the appropriate title of *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Edward Richardson*.

I have been blessed with the good *karma* that took me into the closed territory of my childhood dreams and with a family that constantly encouraged my interests. More immediately, I want to thank the family publishers Aris and Phillips Ltd, which has already brought out several works by friends who work in the same field, for enabling this book to see the light of day.

I could never have begun, let alone finished, without the moral and practical encouragement of my beloved wife Aung San Suu Kyi. This book is dedicated to her in love and gratitude.

St John's College, Oxford  
September, 1979.

## ABBREVIATIONS

DS	Dousamdub (Zla-ba bSam-grub): Translation of <i>LCB</i> I in the British Library
<i>Dukūla</i>	The autobiography of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-82), Vol. <i>Ka</i>
<i>rGyal-rigs</i>	<i>rGyal-rigs 'byung-khung</i> s <i>gsal-ba'i me-long</i> by Ngag-dbang (1728)
JD	'Jam-dpal rDo-rdo
<i>LCB</i> I	<i>lHo'i chos-'byung</i> by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal (1759)
<i>LCB</i> II	<i>lHo-phyogs nags-mo'i ljongs-kyi chos-'byung</i> by dGe-dun Rin-chen (1972)
LN	<i>Slob-dpon</i> Nag-mdog
<i>Lo-rgyus</i>	<i>Lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long</i> by Ngag-dbang
LP	<i>Slob-dpon</i> Padma-lags
<i>MBTJ</i>	The life of Pho-lha-nas (1689-1763) by <i>mDo-mkhar Zhabs-drung</i> Tshe-ring dBang-rgyal
<i>PBP</i>	The life of <i>Zhabs-drung</i> Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (1594-?1651) by <i>gTsang mKhan-chen</i> in Vols. <i>Ka</i> to <i>Ca</i> . Unless otherwise stated references are to Vol. <i>Nga</i> ( <i>lHo'i skor</i> ).
<i>Relação</i>	Cacella's account of his stay in Bhutan (1627)
<i>bShad-mdzod</i>	<i>bShad-mdzod yid-bzhin nor-bu</i> by Don-dam sMra-ba'i Seng-ge
<i>gTam-tshogs</i>	The 'miscellany' of 'Jigs-med Gling-pa (1730-98)
TD	bsTan-'dzin rDo-rje
<i>gTer-rnam</i>	Kong-sprul's lives of the 'text-discoverers'
Tōhoku	<i>A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons</i>
TR	sTobs-dga' Rin-po-che

## GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION AND KEY TERMS

The non-specialist reader will probably suffer indigestion when trying to stomach Bhutanese and Tibetan names. These are rendered throughout in transliterated form and I have given the Bhutanese pronunciation only in cases where it has little relation to the orthography. All proper nouns can be found in the indexes at the end where they are listed according to their radical letter (*ming-gzhi*), Tibetan alphabetical order: *k kh g ng c ch j ny t th d n p ph b m ts tsh dz w zh z ' y r l sh s h a*. Titles and epithets have been italicized throughout (e.g. *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal). The so-called 'consonant clusters' will present the main difficulty for the general reader. The following brief guide is adapted from the one given in Richardson and Snellgrove 1968: 278-9. No account is given here of tonal quality or vowel harmony.

1) The radical letters listed above are pronounced much as in English, with the following exceptions:

*ng* is often an initial in Tibetan (e.g. Ngag-dbang), whereas it occurs only in a medial or final position in English. Omit the first two letters in English 'hang-up' to produce the right initial sound in Tibetan.

*c* is pronounced as a light English 'j' (e.g. 'June')

*kh*, *th*, *ph* and *tsh* represent aspirated 'k', 't', 'p' and 'ts'

*z* is pronounced closer to English 's' than 'z'

*zh* is like the French 'j' in 'jamais'.

2) There are eight letters (*g*, *d*, *b*, *m*, *r*, *s*, *l* and *'*) which can appear as prefixed letters in a consonant cluster (e.g. the *r* in rNam-rgyal). These can all be left silent for the purpose of an approximate pronunciation.

3) Some clusters are pronounced as single sounds:

*gy* is sometimes pronounced as in English 'j',

*py* is equivalent to Tibetan *c* (i.e. a light English 'j'),

*phy* is pronounced 'ch',

*by* is pronounced 'j',

*my* is pronounced 'ny',

*r* in *tr* and *dr* is hardly heard,

*r* in *mr* and *sr* is silent,

*w* is silent when it appears in a cluster.

4) The pronunciation of some clusters have no obvious relation to their spellings:

*db* is pronounced 'w',

*dby* is pronounced 'y',

*kr* is pronounced like *tr*, in which the *r* is scarcely heard,  
*khr* and *phr* are pronounced like an aspirated *tr*,  
*gr* and *br* are pronounced like *dr*.

*kl*, *gl*, *bl*, *rl* and *sl* are all pronounced 'l', but

*zl* is pronounced 'd' (e.g. *zla-ba* = 'dawa'). Proper nouns having these 2-slot initial clusters are listed in the indexes under the consonant paired with *l* (e.g. See *Zla-ba* under *z*, *Gling* under *g*, etc.).

5) There are ten possible final letters, namely: *g*, *ng*, *d*, *n*, *b*, *m*, *r*, *s*, *l* and ' '. Of these *d* and *s* are not pronounced, while *g*, *r*, and *l* are sometimes scarcely heard at all. The letter ' ' which is treated as the sound of the pure vowel 'a', often produces an intruding nasal sound where it occurs in the middle of compound words (e.g. *bKa'*-*'gyur* = 'Kanjur').

6) When the letters *d*, *n*, *s* and *l* occur in the final position they have an 'umlauting' effect on the vowels 'a', 'u' and 'o' in the same syllable. Thus:

*rgyal* is pronounced 'gyel',

*bdud* is pronounced 'dü',

*dpon* is pronounced 'pön'.

7) A few standard Tibetan terms are used in this study with little or no explanation. The following list may help the general reader. (A glossary to terms drawn from the texts presented in Part Five is given in the microfiche supplement).

*dkar-chags* ('karchak'), list of a book's contents.

*rgyal-rabs* ('gyerab'), royal history.

*chos-rje* ('chojé'), literally 'Lord of Religion' (*dharmasvamin*), a title accorded to the hereditary religious nobility in Bhutan.

*gter-ston* ('tertön'), one who claims to have discovered texts or objects hidden mainly by the Indian sage Padmasambhava.

*gter-ma* ('terma'), the hidden 'treasure' discovered by the *gter-ston*.

*sde-srid* ('desi'), the office of civil ruler in Bhutan after the unification, the theoretical nominee of the *Zhabs-drung* (see below).

*rnam-thar* ('namthar'), biography, hagiography.

*rdzong* ('dzong'), fort.

*rab-byung* ('rabjung'), the sixty year cycle of the Tibetan calendar, the first of which is reckoned to have started in 1027 A.D.

*Zhabs-drung* ('Shabdrung'), literally 'Before the Feet', a title accorded to certain religious hierarchs in Tibet. It is by this title that the founder of Bhutan and his incarnations are known.

*lha-khang* ('hlakhang'), temple.

## INTRODUCTION

Thus of the whole enormous area which was once the spirited domain of Tibetan culture and religion, stretching from Ladakh in the west to the borders of Szechuan and Yunnan in the east, from the Himalayas in the south to the Mongolian steppes and the vast wastes of northern Tibet, now only Bhutan seems to survive as the one resolute and self-contained representative of a fast disappearing civilization (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 271).

The words above form the conclusion to a standard work on Tibet. While evoking something of Bhutan's present significance, the sad epilogue serves to introduce this study by placing the kingdom in its broadest historical and geographical context. The country is indeed the only independent lamaist state to have escaped absorption into China, India or Nepal, not forgetting the many peoples of the Soviet Union and Mongolia who once belonged to the world of Tibetan Buddhism. Even in its Himalayan setting, however, Bhutan is undoubtedly the least known of the absorbed or independent states situated in that great range. No serious study of this unique survival can begin until its history has come to light for there can be very few countries left in the world today whose present institutions are so faithfully derived from an unbroken continuity with the past. One of the aims of this book is to dig beneath the romantic façade which the country presents to visitors in search of Shangri-la by exploring the complex but dimly perceived process of cultural and political evolution which led to its emergence as a unified country in the 17th century. It makes no claim to be definitive or authoritative but insofar as this corner of oriental history has remained unexplored it may perhaps be said to represent the first stumbling effort.<sup>1</sup>

All the Bhutanese sources presently available (not counting oral traditions) are written in classical Tibetan and so the whole scope and framework of this study is 'Tibetological'. But here we run into a basic difficulty, for the Bhutanese have never considered themselves 'Tibetan' in the sense we give the term. They undoubtedly write in Tibetan; they speak in a medley of different tongues which can be considered local or archaic forms of Tibetan;



they have in the past been proud to regard themselves as part of the general area over which Tibetan Buddhism held sway; and even today the Bhutanese look upon Tibet as their lost spiritual homeland; but they possess such a strong notion of their own identity as a separate people that they could never consider themselves Tibetans. In my view the whole history of the country has to be understood to explain satisfactorily the reasons behind this combination of a strong pride in a common cultural heritage and a fierce assertion of racial distinctions. However in immediate terms the geographical and ethnic factors are cogent enough.

Bhutan has to be seen in the broad context of that whole area which has the 'Tibetans' (Bod-pa) in the central region of the high plateau, surrounded by a number of peripheral peoples to the west, south and east, all of whom fall within the sphere of 'cultural' Tibet, either inside or outside 'political' Tibet. Though none of the people on the fringe consider themselves 'Tibetans' and many have in the past developed their own polities and institutions, they do still form part of the Tibetan cultural hegemony. Thus they all share in common the experience of Tibetan Buddhism in its many aspects as introduced and adapted from India and, to a lesser extent, from Central Asia and China. After the collapse of the Tibetan Empire in the 9th century and the restoration of Buddhism in the 10th century and later, the Buddhist religion came to replace the earlier political empire as the one unifying force in the whole region. Over much of the area, furthermore, there is a certain uniformity of lifestyle which contributes to the sense of a cultural empire. The basic pattern of settled agriculture interspersed with nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralism which is found in the central heartland of Tibet of the gTsang-po valley is repeated with infinite variety all over the plateau and even beyond.

If sufficient records had survived from the period of the Tibetan royal dynasty and after, the early history of the area would largely be written in terms of the shifting relationship between indigenous clans, the central monarchy and foreign intruders. Much effort has been expended in trying to reconstruct this picture from the relevant scraps found by Stein and Pelliot at Tun-huang, from pillar inscriptions and from the very few documents of the early period which have come down to us in the writings of later Tibetan historians. The difficulties are compounded mainly by the fact that to a great extent society in central Tibet ceased to be clan-based and later historians were more interested in singing the eulogies of their own monastic or semi-monastic principalities than in tracing the vestiges of the old clans which were still surviving in their day. Much of the outline of Tibetan history as depicted by these monastic historians can be proved to stem from valid traditions but with rare exceptions the whole tone is

legendary. The growth of historical legend is a fascinating field of study in its own right but it often tells us more about the day and age of the chronicler than of the period about which he writes. The historical value of his text will depend on how he uses or adapts early traditions, oral or written, into his own work. These are the most basic considerations which the student of early Tibetan history has to bear in mind in approaching his subject, and this is no less true for anyone attempting to write the early history of Bhutan. The latter endeavour has its own peculiar problems and pitfalls which will soon become clear, but there is an important one it shares with the broader field; the texts alone do not give us a clear enough picture of the ethnic, linguistic and geographical backcloth to the historical drama.<sup>2</sup>

### The Land

The kingdom of Bhutan occupies 18,000 square miles of the eastern Himalayas and is bounded on the north by the Tibetan provinces of gTsang and lHo-brag, and on the south by the Indian states of West Bengal and Assam. (For map, see end papers.) To the west lies Sikkim (now fully annexed to India) and to the east the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (formerly the North-East Frontier Agency). The population of Bhutan today is said to be just under one million.<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps the only independent country in South Asia free of the problem of over-population. Broadly speaking the country divides naturally into three lateral zones, each one having a quite different ecology. In this respect it conforms to the general pattern of the Himalayan ranges to the east and west.

(1) Forming the long northern border with Tibet there lies the main watershed of high peaks reaching heights of up to 24,000 ft. crossed by about six major passes leading to the very thinly populated areas of northern Bhutan. These are inhabited by groups of pastoralists known to the western Bhutanese as 'bzhop' and to other groups in the east as 'brokpa', both forms clearly deriving from Tibetan 'drokpa' (*'brog-pa*). In addition to the herding of yaks these people also cultivate a few grain crops and potatoes. Like all the high altitude populations of the Himalayas they are heavily dependent on a regular barter trade with the south to supplement their own produce. Particularly interesting are the communities of the Gling-bzhi La-yag area who live north-east of the great peak of Jo-mo lHa-ri and preserve a very distinctive language and dress of their own. Elsewhere in this high altitude zone (known as dGon) the peoples are very similar to those living in the next lateral zone to the south, an alpine area of vertical valleys running north-south at altitudes ranging from about five to nine thousand feet.

(2) While the northern border, not yet formally demarcated, is determined by the natural boundary of the Himalayan watershed, the southern

border has been properly fixed and begins where the foothills rise from the Indian plains. These foothills are covered by dense tropical forests constituting another lateral zone, this one inhabited by Nepalese settlers, by various offshoots of the main northern groups and by pockets of quasi-aboriginal groups (see below).

(3) It is in the central zone that the main population of the country is concentrated and nearly all the cultivated land is given over to the production of wet rice and other grains such as barley, buck wheat and maize, depending on the altitude. Rising from the floors of these valleys, forests of pine, rhododendron and other species give way to pastures where small herds of cattle are led in the summer. This region is the economic and cultural heartland of the country and is bounded on the east and west by two corridors of what used to be Tibetan territory which cut across the ethnic divisions: the valley of Chumbi (Gro-mo to the Tibetans) in the west and the 'Mon-yul Corridor' to the east, now part of Arunachal Pradesh. Chumbi and Mon-yul together represent the southernmost extension of Tibetan power, traversing the main Himalayan range. Between these corridors lie the principal Bhutanese valleys, inhabited by a medley of peoples whom we can broadly classify according to the language they speak (see Figure 4 for a preliminary language map).

### Peoples and Languages

#### NGALONG

The six western valleys of 'Ha' (Had), 'Paro' (sPa-gro), 'Thimphu' (Thim-phu), 'Punakha' (sPu-na-kha) and 'Wangdü Phodrang' (dBang-'dus Pho-brang), the last in fact a complex of valleys forming the Shar district are peopled by the 'Ngalong'. The term is thought to mean 'The Earliest Risen' and is often spelt sNga-slong, that is to say the first converted to Buddhism and thus civilised. Whatever the truth of its etymology, it is a term as much used by themselves as applied to them by their neighbours. It certainly reflects the dominant political role won by the western Bhutanese when the country was united in the 17th century. The Ngalong of all the Bhutanese peoples, it is generally agreed, are most like the central Tibetans even though their language is incomprehensible to an ordinary Tibetan. It is particularly marked by the contraction of two Tibetan syllables into one (viz. *bla-ma* > 'lam', *rkang-pa* > 'kanp', *shog-shig* > 'shosh' etc.) and by a variant set of verbal complements. The consonant clusters containing a subjoined *ra* are treated very differently from standard spoken Tibetan. Within this Ngalong group further variations are discernible not only from valley to valley but even from village to village. This pattern is in turn repeated throughout the country and could no doubt be said to derive ultimately from its geographical fragmentation.

## TSANGLA

This is spoken in a variety of forms by the people known to the western Bhutanese as the 'Shar chop' (=Shar-phyogs-pa, 'The Easterners'), by far the most populous group in the country. Although unquestionably one of the Bodic languages, Tsangla resists all attempts at classification. Some of its vocabulary and syntax can be found in the little known publications of Stack (1897) and Hoffrenning (1959). The somewhat anomalous position it occupies in its relation to the other two main languages of Ngalong and Bum-thang has led to the feeling in Bhutan that this is the oldest or 'original' language of the country, but this may derive from nothing more than the common tendency to equate distinctness with autochthony.

## BUMTHANG

Between the Ngalong of the west and the Tsangla of the east lie a number of districts whose dialects represent diversified forms of the ancient and interesting language spoken in the Bum-thang province (the Bum-thang sDe-bzhi, consisting of Chos-'khor, Chum-smad, sTang und U-ra). The neighbouring districts which preserve modified forms of the language are Kheng, sKur-stod and Mang-sde-lung, but it can easily be shown how the same language re-appears beyond the Tsangla area and the eastern border of the country in what is now Arunachal Pradesh (see Figure 4). There the so-called 'Northern Mon-pa' of the rTa-wang region maintain a speech so close to that of Bum-thang that an immediate genetic relationship can be inferred. The wider affiliation of this primary nucleus has unwittingly been determined by Robert Shafer in his important paper on 'The linguistic position of Dwags' (1954), in which he used the material on the 'Takpa' language presented by B. H. Hodgson (1853) to show that it has certain phonetic features more archaic than 'Old Bodish' which are shared by the rGyal-rong language of the Sino-Tibetan borderland. This in turn led Shafer to the conclusion that 'Dwags' is descended from 'proto-East Bodish'. The argument is surely correct but its geographical and ethnic orientation is demonstrably wrong; as we shall see, the discovery of the affiliation of rGyal-rong and 'Dwags' has vital implications for Bhutanese pre-history.

The term Dag-pa (or 'Dap' in abbreviated form) is applied by the Bhutanese to a small group of pastoralists on the eastern border who are related to the Mon-pa people of the rTa-wang region where a group of villages are classified in the Tibetan administrative system as the Dag-pa Tsho-Ing (The Five Hosts of the Dag-pa). Hodgson's informant in the mid-19th century was undoubtedly a native of the area: 'Takpa, the Towang Raj of the English, is a dependency of Lhasa. Its civil administrator is the Chonajung peun [*mTsho-sna rDzong-dpon*]; its ecclesiastical head, the Tamba

[?] Lama, whence our Towang [rTa-wang]'. (Hodgson 1853: 124). The confusion arose when Shafer accepted Hodgson's mistaken identification of Dag-pa with the well-known Tibetan district of Dwags-po which lies south of the gTsang-po river, west of Kong-po. We can instead be positive now that the language studied by Hodgson and Shafer belongs to the Bhutanese heartland in Bum-thang and to one segment of the 'Mon-yul Corridor'.

## MON

The linguistic affiliation of these two groups with rGyal-rong carries important historical implications for an understanding of the difficult key term Mon. In its ancient and original form *Man*, it is applied by the Chinese to several 'barbarian' groups related to the Ch'iang, including the people of rGyal-rong. The term is found in Tibetan texts of the eighth and ninth centuries in the forms *Mon* and *Mong*, and thereafter it is applied to all kinds of groups throughout the Himalayas with whom the Tibetans came into contact. The term lost any specificity it might once have had and came to mean little more than 'southern or western mountain-dwelling non-Indian non-Tibetan barbarian'. The present range of the term must have had its first impetus in a movement from the east to the south-east, and the affinities noted above incline one to look for the main point of secondary diffusion in the centre and east of 'proto-Bhutan'; not only the language but also some of the social institutions peculiar to the area may have served to link it in Tibetan eyes to the 'true' Mon of rGyal-rong. The old towers and fortresses in the Sino-Tibetan marches, the *Mong-rdzong* of a Nam text, are paralleled by many such buildings which have disappeared or lie in ruins in central and eastern Bhutan and in Kameng. In Bum-thang there still survive families in which inheritance is passed down through the female line, a particular feature of several societies in the vicinity of the Eastern Mon. F.W. Thomas, to whom we owe the most thorough study (1954 : 150-155) of the term to date, was the first to look for a direct connection between the Mon of rGyal-rong and the eastern Himalayas, focussing particularly on the Mishmi and other tribes north of Assam. However he was incorrect in believing those groups to be Mon-pa. (They are known as *Klo-pa* to the Tibetans which is quite different.) A Bhutanese candidacy for the 'true southern Mon' now seems more credible.

## DZONGKHA

It must be realized that the three main languages of Bhutan are mutually incomprehensible and that it takes a long time for, say, a Ngalong-speaking person to gain familiarity with the other two languages. Since the 17th century unification of Bhutan there has, however, developed an official

idiom known as 'Dzonghka' (rDzong-kha, 'the language of the fortress'), a polished form of the village patois of the Ngalong people. This is spoken among government officials and monks from all regions of the country, and the idiom is so developed that often one can find people from the central and eastern parts of the country who speak it better than someone from the western region where the idiom first arose. The policy of the present government is to advance the diffusion and status of Dzongkha further by making it obligatory study in all schools throughout the country. To that end the local scholars employed by the Education Department have had to take brave and difficult steps towards adapting the ancient literary language to accommodate the spoken forms of Ngalong, the first time that any of the Bhutanese languages have been written down in Tibetan script.<sup>4</sup> (The script mainly used in Bhutan is in fact their own cursive hand known as *rgyug-yig*.) The only material on Dzongkha available in a western language is the almost unobtainable study by Byrne (1909). The Gro-mo dialect spoken in Chumbi is quite close to some of the western Bhutanese forms and some of it is recorded in Walsh (1905). Serious study of the Bhutanese languages, however, has yet to begin despite these pioneering efforts which depended on their authors' chance encounters with Bhutanese in India.

## RESIDUAL GROUPS

The tripartite division of Bhutanese speech suggested above is unjust to the host of minor dialects which fall outside the major groupings. While travelling in Bhutan one constantly meets with small pockets of people whose speech baffles their neighbours. Some of these might be very ancient survivals bearing little or no connexion with the larger groups. If one were to apply the label 'indigenous' to any peoples in Bhutan in the same way as it is applied to the Lepchas of Sikkim, one would be tempted to focus on the very small communities of jungle-dwellers who practise shifting cultivation on the fringe of the major groups. Like the Lepchas themselves, who are reckoned to have long preceded the Tibetan migrations, some of them are known to the Bhutanese predictably as Mon-pa. These forest Mon-pa live in Mang-sde-lung, Kheng and gZhong-sgar. Small groups of similar people are also found in the west. They are known as the 'Toktop' and live in two permanent villages south of sPa-gro called Upper and Lower 'Toktokha'. They are probably related to the people living in 'Taba-Dramten' and 'Loto-Kuchu' in the area of southern Bhutan west of the border town of Phun-tshogs-gling. All these minute western groups (numbering a few hundred at the very most) come under the authority of an official appointed from sPa-gro formerly called the *gDung gNyer-pa* ('The Steward of the gDung'), now the *gDung Rab-'byams*. The name gDung is pregnant with

meaning for the lost history of the country but, anticipating the argument (see Part One, Chapter 5) it is suggested that the gDung were once a people who appear to have been spread over the whole country and who have now all but disappeared under the impact of fresh migration or military defeat from the north. The only people still calling themselves gDung appear to be those living in the villages over which the *gDung Rab-'byams* has direct authority, but the other groups at 'Toktokha', 'Taba-Dramten' and 'Loto-Kuchu' over whom his jurisdiction is said by some to extend may perhaps be branches of the gDung. The 'Toktop' males wear a peculiar garment woven from nettles called a 'pakhi', crossed over the chest and knotted at the shoulders very much like the dress of the Lepchas. The other connection one might suggest is provided by the 'Toto' people living in the Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal, often thought by anthropologists to be an ancient immigrant group from Bhutan.<sup>5</sup> Whether it would be possible to demonstrate that all these groups are the vestigial fractions of a single broken tribe resident in the country before the later migrations began, it is too early now to say. It would be satisfying to find a positive connection eventually between the gDung of Bhutan and the ancient gDong clan of eastern Tibet.

From this rather crude outline emerges a complex picture which contrasts with that of the adjacent Himalayan territories to the west and east. In Nepal and Sikkim the complexities of the ethnic map are occasioned primarily by the interactions of the various Indian and Tibetan peoples not only with each other but also with more or less 'indigenous' groups. To the east of Bhutan, in Arunachal Pradesh, the complexities are more the product of 'tribal' contiguities. With the absence of any Indian groups in Bhutan apart from the descendants of Indian slaves, we can see that the Kingdom represents a transitional area between its western and eastern neighbours, one in which 'Tibetan' groups predominate over greatly fragmented 'tribal' groups.

### Prospects for Archaeology

The only discipline besides those of anthropology, ethnology and linguistics which may one day help to clarify the historical picture is archaeology. The potential in this field is very rich but can only be touched upon here. In Plate 1 is illustrated a group of prehistoric stone implements forming part of the private collection of HRH Namgyal Wangchuk. They were all discovered as random surface finds in the central valleys of the country and until they passed into present ownership they were kept as talismans. In many households such objects are placed in a receptacle called a *g.yang-khang* ('house of prosperity') in connection with the ritual per-



Plate 1. Prehistoric stone implements from the private collection of H. R. H. Prince Namgyal Wangchuk. (photo. Anthony Aris)





Plate 2. Megalith in a mortar (?) outside the temple of dKon-mchog-gsum in Bum-thang.



Plate 3. Stepped plinth and fragment of megalith in the courtyard of temple of dKon-mchog-gsum.





Plate 4. *top* Boundary megalith on the pass of 'Shaitang La' between the valleys of sTang and U-ra.  
*bottom* Megaliths outside the temple of gSum-'phrang.

-formed to bring wealth to the family (*g.yang-khug*). The local term for a stone axe or quadrangular adze is *gnam-lcags sta-re* ('sky-iron axe', 'meteoritic axe') and the legend holds that these were the weapons of the gods and demi-gods (*deva* and *asura*; *lha, lha-ma-yin*) which fell to the ground in the course of their battles. (Much the same story used to be told about such artifacts in rural England, and indeed all over the world.) Tucci (1973:34) has supplied the words *thog-rde'u* ('little lightning-stone', my translation) and *mtho-lding* ('high-flying', his translation), but unfortunately he was never able to see any examples in Tibet or elsewhere. The examples presented here are sufficient to show that Bhutan once possessed a sophisticated lithic culture. The highly polished tools were clearly manufactured for a wide variety of purposes and from various types of stone.

The single specimen in my own possession is a quadrangular polished stone adze, 80 mm in length, made from Sillimanite. It was kindly inspected by Mr. Sieveking of the British Museum who commented in a private communication (18/7/77):

'It is immediately recognisable as a member of a common class of artifact first recognised as characteristic of the "Late Stone Age" by R. Heine-Geldern in the 1920's and normally found distributed between Yunnan, and the Hanoi Basin of Vietnam and Indonesia. It has since been recognised that similar artifacts are found without cultural associations in Burma and India (Assam, Bihar and Orissa). The context of the distribution of this type in the Himalayan foothills and similar highland regions is unknown. Though one or two specimens come from northernmost Burma, in general the western distribution has been recorded near to present population centres and is therefore lowland in character. This may well be an artefact of the extent of present day archaeological research. In Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia such adzes are common, and have been found in cultural association with decorated pottery and other forms, mostly in burial places. They are probably characteristic of an agricultural people whose culture at least in the central region appears to be fairly distinct. Few reliable radiocarbon dates are acceptable for this phase. On general grounds I would suggest a date of 2000-1500 BC for the major period of use of such adzes.'

Apart from these stone tools, there are a number of standing megaliths in the central region of the country in positions which suggest that they may have been used for purposes of border demarcation and ritual. (See Plates 2-4 and Part One Chapters 1 and 2.) Furthermore, there are a number of independent rumours of old graves unearthed in the Mang-sde-lung valley. (Except in the most exceptional circumstances the Bhutanese today cremate their dead.) Could it perhaps be that the scattered 'tribal' groups referred to above are the successors to the prehistoric people who left these

traces? If this eventually turns out to be the case it might then be concluded that they were displaced from the central agricultural regions by the later migrants and so came to the outer jungle fringes where some turned to shifting agriculture while others became more permanently settled. Much research will have to be completed before this suggested model can be fully accepted. Until then all we have at our disposal in unravelling the Bhutanese past is the written material.

### Names for Bhutan

This introduction to the land and its people would not be complete without some notice of the names given to the country at different times for its past is mirrored in the history of its names. The modern 'Bhutan' derives from *Bhoṭanta* which is an old Indian term for the whole of Tibet. The earliest European traveller to enter the country in 1627 described the country as "the first of those of Potente" (*Relaçãõ*, f. 8), that is to say the first 'Tibetan' state one enters on the journey north from India. After various anglicizations (Bootan, Bhotan, Boutan etc.) the name became fixed towards the end of the last century as Bhutan and it is now accepted by the Bhutanese as the official name for their country. Among themselves the term is never used except in government correspondence when this is conducted in English. Following the unification of the country in the 17th century by one branch of the 'Brug-pa school of Northern Buddhism, the term '*Brug-yul* ('Land of the 'Brug-pa') has been in use within the country but it is not easy to date the adoption of the term with precision. Particularly in writing, the Bhutanese also use an older expression, *IHo*, 'The South', in various combinations (*IHo-yul*, *IHo-ljongs*, *IHo-rong*, *IHo'i sMan-ljongs* etc.). It is primarily a Tibetan expression denoting the area's position in relation to their own country but the Bhutanese rarely take exception to using it themselves. In Tibetan texts there can sometimes be ambiguity in the use of the term because the area of the central plateau south of the gTsang-po river is also broadly termed *IHo* (or *IHo-kha*). When they want to be precise, Tibetan writers of the past usually combined *IHo* with *Mon* (viz. *IHo-mon*) in speaking of the area now occupied by Bhutan. As already noted, the expression *Mon* has an extremely broad application in referring to old 'non-Tibetan' peoples on the fringe of the plateau and indeed the form *IHo-mon* is also given to groups in the western Himalayas. Although the term can carry strong pejorative overtones in Tibetan usage, some of the people to whom it is applied seem quite content to use it in referring to themselves. This is true, for example, of the great Bhutanese saint Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521). Today, however, the Bhutanese never refer to themselves as

Mon-pa, but local scholars will often call their country by the old and crucial term *lHo-mon Kha-bzhi* (The Southern Mon Country of Four Approaches). This is uniquely and specifically applied to the area of Bhutan in the sense of a corporate entity, because the 'approaches' (*kha*, lit. 'mouths') are situated at its four extremities of 1) Kha-gling in the east, 2) Gha-ta-kha or dPag-bsam-kha, that is Cooch Bihar or Buxa Duar in the south, 3) brDa-gling-kha near Kalimpong in the west, and 4) sTag-rtse-kha on the northern border.<sup>6</sup> As might be expected, the term finds most frequent mention in the texts of the 17th century and later, that is to say after the unification, but it also appears much earlier as *lHo-kha-bzhi* in a Tibetan source which may perhaps be dated to 1431.<sup>7</sup> There appears to be a mystery here because the evidence, if it is correct, would suggest a sense of unity developing in the area long before the actual creation of the unified state. This contrasts with the complex picture of fragmentation in the early period which it is the intention of this book to reveal.

### The historical sources

#### EARLIER BRITISH WRITINGS

One of the commonest conceptions of Bhutanese history is the one which underlines the vicissitudes of the theocratic state established in the 17th century. For a long time there was a good deal of confusion surrounding the origins of this state. Although Waddell (1894:242) compiled a list of its theoretical rulers (the *Dharmarājas*), it was almost totally wrong. Claude White (1909:101-2) tried to establish a rough chronology but confused the sexagenary cycle and so placed the origins of the state in the 16th century. All that these writers had to draw on were the earlier British records concerning relations with Bhutan which had begun in the 18th century, one or two texts rather doubtfully rendered into English by their Tibetan clerks and assistants, and also a certain amount of misunderstood or misleading local information. The picture thus formed, especially by White, suggested that Bhutan had once had a strong Indian connection in the person of a king of 'Sindhu' (said to be a contemporary of the 8th century Indian saint Padma-sambhava) who founded a kingdom in Bhutan; that after him Tibetan hordes invaded the country and settled; and that all the subsequent history of the country is bound up with the origin and spread of the 'Brug-pa school, culminating in the founding of an independent state under the great lama *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (See Part Three). To his credit, White realised the tremendous importance of this latter figure and even if the dates he provided were all wrong, his brief synopsis of the *Zhabs-drung's* life can still hold in most respects. A generation later Sir Charles Bell made occasional

use of the important history known as the *lHo'i chos-'byung* (abbreviation: *LCB I*) but not in any way that greatly altered the picture formed by White.<sup>8</sup>

The semi-official tone of these early British writings was more the product of political endeavour than of independent scholarship. Anglo-Bhutanese relations had begun under Warren Hastings in the last half of the 18th century and had formed part of his cautious and conciliatory policy towards the Himalayas, a policy which was occasioned more than anything else by a desire for trade. The intervention of the East India Company in a quarrel between Bhutan and Cooch Bihar in 1772 heralded a number of British missions led by Bogle in 1774, Hamilton in 1776 and 1777, and Turner in 1783. Their accounts<sup>1</sup> yielded a good deal of accurate information on Bhutanese life and customs, most sympathetically recorded in the fine prose of the 18th century. Not only were strange social customs explained in an objective manner but the main features of the Bhutanese theocratic government were clearly discerned. The brevity of their visits and the lack of a common language unfortunately militated against a deeper understanding of Bhutanese religion and history. These potential obstacles to happy intercourse became greatly exacerbated in the next century by a steady deterioration in political relations. The chief bone of contention was the strip of plain along the southern border with India over which Bhutan had gained territorial rights of some complexity in preceding centuries. Continuous internal strife within the country throughout the 19th century and an overbearing and high-handed attitude on the part of most British officials at this time combined to create a situation of total misunderstanding and disaccord. The Anglo-Bhutan War of 1865-6 ensued and led to the appropriation of the entire strip of lowland plain by the British. The strong man in Bhutan at this time and the most resolute opponent of the British was the Governor of eastern Bhutan called 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal. His family were descendants of the great 'text discoverer' (*gter-ston*) Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521), (see Part Two Chapter 2 section iii for his life). This branch of his lineal descendants seems to have been little affected by the defeat of 1866 for it was the governor's son, O-rgyan dBang-phyug (Plate 30), who was installed in 1907 as the first King of Bhutan, thus replacing the traditional theocracy founded in the 17th century by an hereditary monarchy. In 1910 a treaty was signed between Bhutan and Britain according to whose provisions the Government of Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of the British in its foreign affairs but retained complete control over its internal affairs. The treaty was renewed by India on its gaining independence in 1947 and is still in force in 1978 during the reign of the fourth hereditary monarch who came to the throne a year after the country was admitted to the United Nations in 1971.

## MODERN WORKS

The history of the relations between India and Bhutan from the time of the East India Company to the present have recently been summarised most competently by Kapileshwar Labh (1974) who used the material available in the British records. Unfortunately the Bhutanese records were not available to him. The only scholar to have made any use at all of the latter (apart from Dr. Ardussi whose work is not yet published) is Professor Luciano Petech who has written a short preliminary paper seeking to establish “. . . the succession and chronology of the heads of the Bhutanese state during the first hundred years or so of its existence.”<sup>10</sup> This most valuable study was based on three Bhutanese sources,<sup>11</sup> supplemented and clarified with the evidence contained in certain Central Tibetan and Chinese works, and has been of the greatest help to the present effort.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

It must be emphasised at this point that whereas in the case of early Tibetan history there exists a solid core of evidence in the form of contemporary manuscripts and inscriptions, no such material is ever likely to come to light for the same period in Bhutan. There exists a solitary exception in the form of a fragmentary inscription on a broken bell preserved in Bumthang which may safely be dated to the 8th century AD (see Plate 6 and Part One, Chapter 1). It is amazing that the only known written material of unquestionable Bhutanese origin which can with certainty be dated to the period before the unification of the 17th century is the long and fascinating autobiography of Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521). Between the belt inscription and this autobiograph there are no contemporary records from Bhutan at all. Fortunately a study of this period is made possible by the survival of many contemporary Tibetan texts which deal with events in Bhutan. Moreover there is a good deal of material to be found in local works composed after the unification relating to events in the early period (c. 800 to c. 1600). Still more important, a few of these latter texts incorporate material from earlier Bhutanese texts now lost. One of the best examples of this type is provided by the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs*, the family records of the *Hūm-ral* family of sPa-gro compiled in 1766. The work I used most extensively which also falls into this category is the *rGyal-rigs* of 1728, whose evidence is partly corroborated in the *Lo-rgyus*. A critical edition and translation of these two works is included in Part Five, and a brief discussion on their background is given in the following section to this introduction. In using these late texts I have in every case had to try and assess their reliability and separate pious or imaginative reworkings from the valid evidence brought in from earlier sources.



The material on the period after the unification exists in such profusion as to overshadow all that went before. At an approximate guess, there survive at least fifty separate biographies and autobiographies for the period of the theocracy (1651-1907). The later records strongly reflect the triumph of an official ideology over all the disparate races, sects and lineages which were absorbed into the new state created by the 'Brug-pa rulers. The political unification itself was accomplished very quickly in the middle years of the 17th century and the centralising and unifying functions of the state naturally ran counter to local history and local sentiments. The measure of the new state's success can partly be gauged from the fact that the historical consciousness of the Bhutanese as a people today does not seem to extend back much further than the arrival in 1616 of the *Zhabs-drung*, founder of the theocracy. Although it is conceded in the literature that the Buddhist religion was introduced to Bhutan long before his arrival, the early history is mythologised in such a way as to fit the official doctrine. In *LCB I*<sup>12</sup> therefore, a bare six folios out of a total of one hundred and fifty one are devoted to the pre-theocratic period in Bhutan and of these six folios, five are taken up with the history of the 'Brug-pa school prior to the arrival of the *Zhabs-drung*. In a far more balanced account (*LCB II*) completed in 1972, dGe-'dun Rin-chen has written a new religious history (*chos-'byung*) not so much as an apologetic for 'Brug-pa rule, but rather as an ordered eulogy for the whole course of Buddhism in the country. At least five official histories concentrating on more secular matters have been written in the last thirty years. None has met with the seal of government approval and consequently they only survive in manuscript. I had the opportunity of reading four of them but have not used them here. At present the Director of the National Library, *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags (LP), is preparing the definitive official account and it is very much hoped this will soon be published.

### Background to the Texts on Microfiche in Part Five

The works selected for inclusion in Part 5 have been chosen for their value as crucial source material on the formative era of Bhutanese history as they cover the entire period leading to the full emergence of the Bhutanese theocracy. Their relative brevity as compared with the other major works consulted in this study further suggested the convenience of presenting them here as a group of interrelated 'minor' texts. Moreover, none of them belong to the same genre of historical writing and so together they represent something of the available corpus on Bhutanese history. Several other short texts separate from the *mam-thar* and *chos-'byung* genres could have been included but for reasons of space and time. Nevertheless, the ones chosen here seem to

me among the most important of those now available. Two texts of the *gter-ma* class (not represented here) are studied separately in Chapters 2 and 3 to Part One.

While the first two works in this collection have never before been available to modern scholarship, and are indeed hardly known even in Bhutan, the next two (which include a text translated from Portuguese) have been partially known from the work of White (1909) and Wessels (1924) Although these earlier writers fully realised their importance, neither of them were able to fit these works into the historical context with any degree of success, and the translations they provided were incomplete.

To form something of a chronological sequence the works have to be read in the order: I, IV, II, III. The present order was determined by the close relationship of I and II and by the nature of IV as 'odd man out'.

I. *Sa-skyong rgyal-po'i gdung-rabs 'byung-khung dang 'bangs-kyi mi-rabs chad-tshul nges-par gsal-ba'i 'sgron-me* (short title: *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khung gsal-ba'i sgron-me*), *dbu-can* ms. in 54 folios measuring approx. 35 x 8½cms. Author: the monk Ngag-dbang (Wa-gindra) of the Byar clan. Date: 1728.

I first heard of this work and No. II below in 1971 from *Drag-shos* bsTan'dzin rDo-rje, former magistrate of bKra-shis-sgang rDzong, who was at that time employed at the Audit Office in the capital. He very kindly offered to secure copies for me from eastern Bhutan and after some months he succeeded in obtaining the manuscripts from which these copies were made. The copyist made no attempt to correct the many orthographic errors which had crept into the two works since the time of their composition and some effort has now gone into amending the more obvious mistakes. A few lacunae remain unfilled but not so as to cause serious disruption. bsTan'dzin rDo-rje himself wrote down a few comments on the copy of this first work and these are given here in the notes under the abbreviation TD. *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags (LP) very kindly answered some specific queries in a letter dated 10/5/77. The work is uniquely important for its treatment of the ancient ruling clans and families of eastern Bhutan. These are discussed at some length in Chapters 4 and 5 to Part One where it is shown that several unexpected references can be found in Tibetan literature that shed light on its evidence. However, it should perhaps be pointed out that the form of the work, particularly its division into apparently unrelated sections, seems to come from the fragmented nature of Bhutanese society itself. Although there are themes linking them together unconsciously, each of the sections 2 to 5 really stands on its own for its handling of a particular unit of rule or rather of a collection of related units sharing a common myth. The Addendum provides a glimpse into how some of that 'sharing' seems to derive from the author's own search for unity

in the face of multiformity. Apart from its supremely local character the style and conception of the work owes much to the Tibetan *rgyal-rabs*.

II. *dPal 'brug-par lung lha'i gdung-brgyud-kyis bstan-pa'i ring-lugs / lho-mon-kha-bzhi-las nyi-ma shar-phyogs-su byung-zhing rgyas-pa'i lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long; dbu-can* ms. in 24 folios, same measurements as I above. Author: Ngag-dbang. No date.

This is the second of the two works found for me by bsTan-'dzin rDo-rje, and its condition exactly matched that of I above. While the rGyal-rigs is a glorification of the ancient order in eastern Bhutan, this work is an enthusiastic narrative account of its destruction by a military campaign organised for the new 'Brug-pa government in the 1650's by *Krong-sar dPon-slob* Mi-'gyur brTan-pa. How the two works could have issued from the same pen remains something of an enigma. No doubt one reason can be found in the universal tendency to recognise and accept the powers that be once they are firmly established. Another is that the author was both a member of an ancient clan (the Byar) and a 'Brug-pa monk of the state monastery in bKra-shis-sgang rDzong. Furthermore, the rGyal-rigs seems to be a 'secret' work directed to wards the sympathisers of the *ancien régime*, while the *Lo-rgyus* is clearly of a formal nature intended to win favour in the eyes of 'Brug-pa officialdom. They were probably written at different periods in the life of the author. The way in which several figures mentioned at the bottom of the pedigrees in Section 2 of the *rGyal-rigs* turn up here as protagonists in the struggle with the 'Brug-pa is particularly satisfying (see Table V and the notes to both works). Unfortunately the geographical setting remains somewhat obscure and only the larger districts can presently be identified on the map. Nevertheless, the work is of great value, based as it is on a number of eye-witness reports and written in a most refreshing style, simple and direct. I know of no other work in Tibetan or Bhutanese literature which quite compares with it. The lack of a similar account of the 'Brug-pa expansion towards the west is much felt. The name of Mi-'gyur brTan-pa also figures prominently in that movement.

III. *dPal 'brug-pa rin-po-che mthu-chen ngag-gi-dbang-po'i bka'-khrims phyogs thams-cad-las nam-par rgyal-ba'i gtam*; blockprint in 16 folios, occupying ff. 100b-115a in *LCB* I. Author: bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, 1701-67 (*regn.* as 10th Head Abbot 1755-62). Date: 1729.

This is the Bhutan Legal Code of 1729 composed by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal for and on behalf of the 10th 'Brug *sDe-srid*, Mi-pham dBang-po at the start of the latter's eight-year reign. Although this seems to be the first such code in Bhutan, it was by no means the only one. *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags informs

me that he has personal knowledge of at least two others, both of which similarly took the form of decrees proclaimed by new incumbents to the position of *Brug sDe-rid*. One may indeed wonder if these codes continued to hold force for very long after the reigns of their promulgators. Both Petech (1972: 211 Note 75) and White (see below) appear to have thought that this particular code was the only example of its kind and that it enjoyed a constant validity through later Bhutanese history, the former referring to it as 'the Bhutanese code of law (actually conduct rules for the ruling class).' The term *bka'-khrims* ('legal code', 'decree' or 'edict') as found in the above title has had an unbroken continuity from the time of the Tun-huang literature where it appears as *bka'grims* (cf. also *bka'grims-gyi yi-ge*, *bka'i khrims-yig*, Uray 1972:32). The only published text, however, which affords a parallel to this one seems to be 'The Edict of the C'os rGyal of Gyantse' (Tucci 1949: 745-6). In fact work on Tibetan law began only recently with Uray's most detailed study (1972) of the tradition of Srong-btsan as lawgiver. His researches will form the starting-point of any future approach to the important question of the genuine codes of the 14th century and later. That sufficient material does survive to warrant an exhaustive study is quite clear from the notices given of certain legal texts by Kitamura (1965: No.408), Yamaguchi (1970: Nos. 443-4) and especially by Meisezahl (1973: 222-65). Meanwhile, even if the code presented here cannot yet be properly set either in the context of the Bhutanese legal tradition or in the wider Tibetan tradition from which it stems, it does stand as a mine of information on the theory and practice of theocratic government in Bhutan. Two of the British colonial officers who had dealings with Bhutan realised its importance and commissioned their Tibetan assistants to translate it into English. A partial translation (or rather summary) can be found in Appendix I, 'The laws of Bhutan', to White's book of 1909 (301-10). Sir Charles Bell employed the teacher 'Dousamdub Kazi' (Zla-ba bSam-grub) to translate the whole of the *lHo'i chos-'byung* wherein the code is preserved, and his type-script survives in the British Library (A2 19999.b.17). Both versions are marred by inaccuracies and omissions but were on occasion found useful for resolving certain problems of interpretation. The draft by 'Dousamdub' is generally better, though less fluent, and I give a few of his readings in the accompanying notes under the abbreviation DS, followed by the page number of his typescript. Of far greater value have been the glosses provided for me by *Slob-dpon* Nag-mdog, which he most graciously sent in a letter dated 11/12/75. Some of these I have reproduced in their original form in the footnotes and Glossary under the abbreviation LN. No attempt has been made to trace the undocumented quotations which sprinkle the text, besides those that turned up in the *Subhasitaratnanidhi* of Sa-skya Paṇḍita (the *Sa-skya legs-bshad*, Bosson's edition of 1969). The annotation of the translation has presumed a fair amount of

'Tibetological' knowledge on the part of the reader, and so my notes are generally confined to matters concerning Bhutanese institutions. Much of the text is written in a clipped 'civil service' idiom to the point of ambiguity or obscurity, and some license has therefore been used to bring out the meaning in certain passages. I have not checked the text against those excerpts of it which are said to be reproduced on slabs of slate set into a *stūpa* outside the *rdzong* of sPu-na-kha. (The *stūpa* is known as the *rdo-ring* ('pillar'), presumably by analogy with the *Zhol rdo-ring* of lHa-sa.) A 'definitive' translation will only be possible when the later codes become available to supply sufficient parallels and contrasts.

IV. *Relação que mandou o p.<sup>e</sup> Estevão Cacella Da comp.<sup>a</sup> de Jesu ao p.<sup>e</sup> Alberto Laercio Provincial da Provincia do Malavar da India Oriental, da sua Viagem pera o Catayo, até chegar ao Reino do Potente.* 15 folios, ms. in Portuguese (29 x 20 cms.) Preserved in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu where it has the catalogue no. 627 $\frac{4}{x}$ . An account by Cacella of his stay in Bhutan, written at the court of *Zhabs-drung* ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal at the temple of lCags-ri on 4th October 1627. It is not in the author's handwriting and must be a copy sent to Rome from India.

The translation of Cacella's *Relação* (or rather the bulk of it which recounts his stay in Bhutan) has been made from a photocopy kindly provided by the Society of Jesus in Rome. It would have been impossible to include this interesting document here but for the help of Dr. Thomas Earle, University Lecturer in Portuguese, Oxford, who also supplied the following comment: 'The Jesuits sometimes wrote highly literary reports of their activities, especially their 'cartas anuas', but this is clearly not one of them. It is only a report of work in progress, as Cacella explains in para.1. The report is not especially well put together, as after a rather sententious summing-up on ff. 13-14 (omitted in our translation) he remembers that he has failed to tell the Provincial about the geography of Cambirasi [=Bhutan, see Note 14]. I think the omitted para. is intended as a summing-up, because it begins 'This is the state of things in which we are at present' and he goes on to ask for the blessing of the Provincial, which he does again at the very end of the report. Where Cacella does attempt higher flights, as in the para. we have omitted, he is rather unclear and difficult to follow. The vocabulary seems straightforward, apart from the few oriental words he uses. On the whole I would guess that this report was somewhat hastily written.' (letter dated 29/3/77).

The value of this document lies chiefly in the fact that by a stroke of pure good fortune it contains a detailed account of Cacella's meeting with *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (1594-?1651), the founder of Bhutan. Cacella

and his fellow Jesuit, Cabral, spent several months in the *Zhabs-drung's* company in 1627 and the account corroborates several passages in the biographies of the *Zhabs-drung* (*PBP* and *LCB* I, ff. 12a-54a) which I point out in the notes. The only person who has given serious notice of the *Relação* to date is Wessels (1924: Ch. 5 and Appendix II). Although he made a brave attempt to relate to evidence to Bhutanese institutions, unfortunately Wessels only had the secondary material deriving from British authors to hand, and so the significance of the work from the point of view of the Bhutanese material was of course lost on him. However, his book is still basic reading for those who wish to see Cacella's account in the wider context of Jesuit missions to Tibet and Central Asia. It also has to be read for its narrative of our Jesuits' approach Journey to Bhutan and for their doings in Tibet, both of which lie outside the present interest.<sup>13</sup>

### Scope and organisation of this study.

The beginnings of Bhutanese history as frequently described in popular works today<sup>14</sup> clearly stem, with a few modifications, from the earlier British accounts discussed above. The quest for the sources on which the latter were based led me to the world of 'rediscovered texts' (*gter-ma*), particularly to those credited to Padma Gling-pa, and to the fortunate discovery of two works written in the 18th century (the *rGyal-rigs* and the *Lo-rgyus*) which form the only material dealing with ancient units of non-monastic rule. It then became necessary to probe the traditions around which the legends had developed. All these legends served to link the Bhutanese past with the early dynasty of Tibet and, in one case, with India.

It soon became clear that there were two approaches a historian could develop in examining what are undoubtedly a set of origin myths. He could by dint of hard labour search for historical fact embedded in the legends which constitute the myths or he could study the myths themselves to appreciate the psychological attitudes of the society for which the myth acts as a statement of truth. To obtain the most out of the material I have tried working these two lines in counterpoint to each other.

In Part One each myth is presented in chronological order of the historical events to which it relates; it also happens, probably fortuitously, that this is the same sequence in which the myths were first written down. When useful, the present day versions of the myths as recited in Bhutan are given. Each chapter represents an extended essay which can stand on its own. Chapter 6 indicates some of the underlying themes. It is hoped that after criticism has done its utmost with these stories there will still be left

a modest residuum from which important historical deductions can be made. The other advantage to be gained from this dual approach to the study of myth is that it helps to explain the ambivalent attitude of the Bhutanese to their place in the Tibetan cultural empire that has now disintegrated, a theme touched upon earlier in this introduction. The position which the Bhutanese assign to themselves in the Northern Buddhist world goes far towards explaining their character and ideals as a people.

Although some of the analysis given in Part One takes the reader to certain concrete realities, for example the lay nobility and clan society of central and eastern Bhutan, it is in Part Two that the development of social institutions is directly considered. Where, however, the historian might expect or hope to find sources dealing with land rights, the agricultural economy, trade patterns, units of lay rule and such like, he is instead confronted in the literature with a single theme, namely the rise of monastic principalities and an ecclesiastical aristocracy, mostly in western Bhutan. The material on this subject is so diffuse and varied that separate treatment has to be given to each unit to obtain a clear picture of the complex network of affiliations which linked all the lineages of Bhutan to the Buddhist schools of Tibet.

Part Three contains a preliminary study of the founding of the Bhutanese state in the 17th century. The historical attitudes of the Bhutanese for this period are just as structured as those which determine their view of the distant past but the body of closely related biographies surviving from this period permits a detailed and dated chronological sequence. The creation of Bhutan is studied in terms of the life of its founder, the *Zhabs-drung* who is undoubtedly the key figure in Bhutanese history. The biographies of his successors, in my view, yield the best results when studied in close relation to each other to obtain a clear picture of the greatest difficulty of all: the problem of legitimate rule. This takes one to an old skeleton in the Bhutanese cupboard, namely the secret of the founder's final 'retreat'. In searching for the solution to this problem I have tried to probe beneath the structure imposed on Bhutanese history in the arrangement of *LCB I*. The terminal date of this study is c. 1705 when the secret of the *Zhabs-drung's* 'retreat' was finally divulged but in Part Four I conclude with a brief glimpse of the issues raised by a study of later developments in the theocracy, particularly those which led to the rise of the present monarchy and the country's full independence.





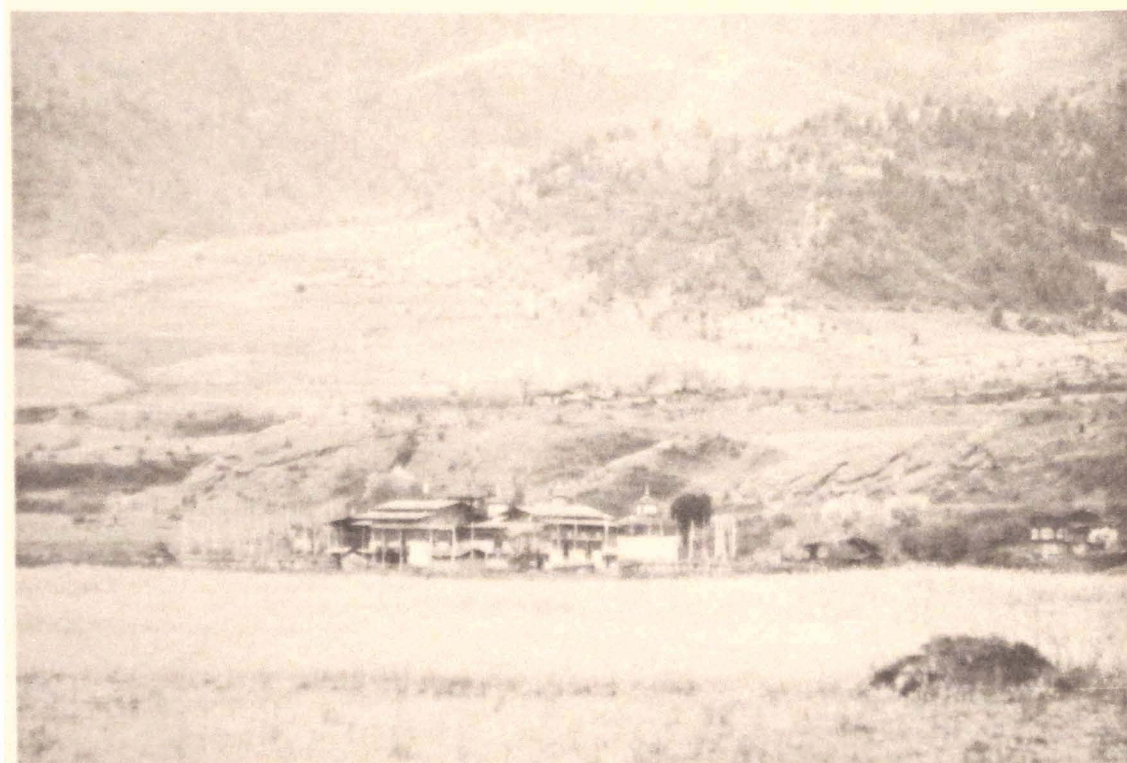
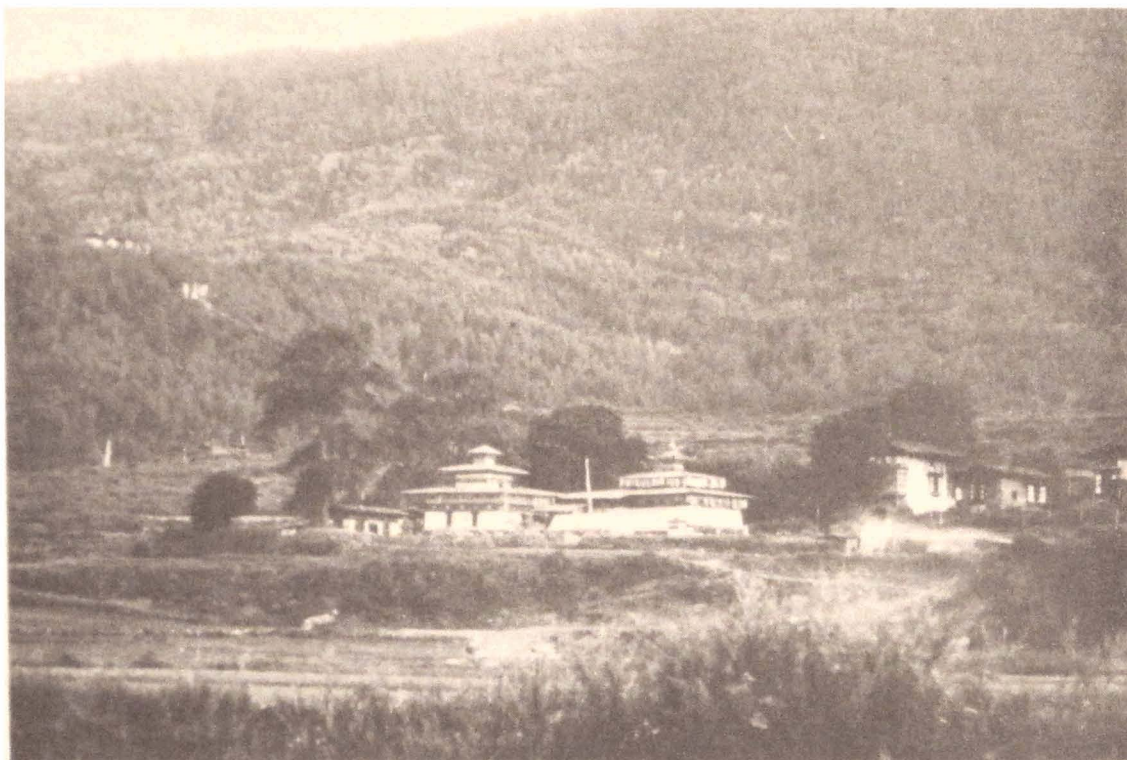
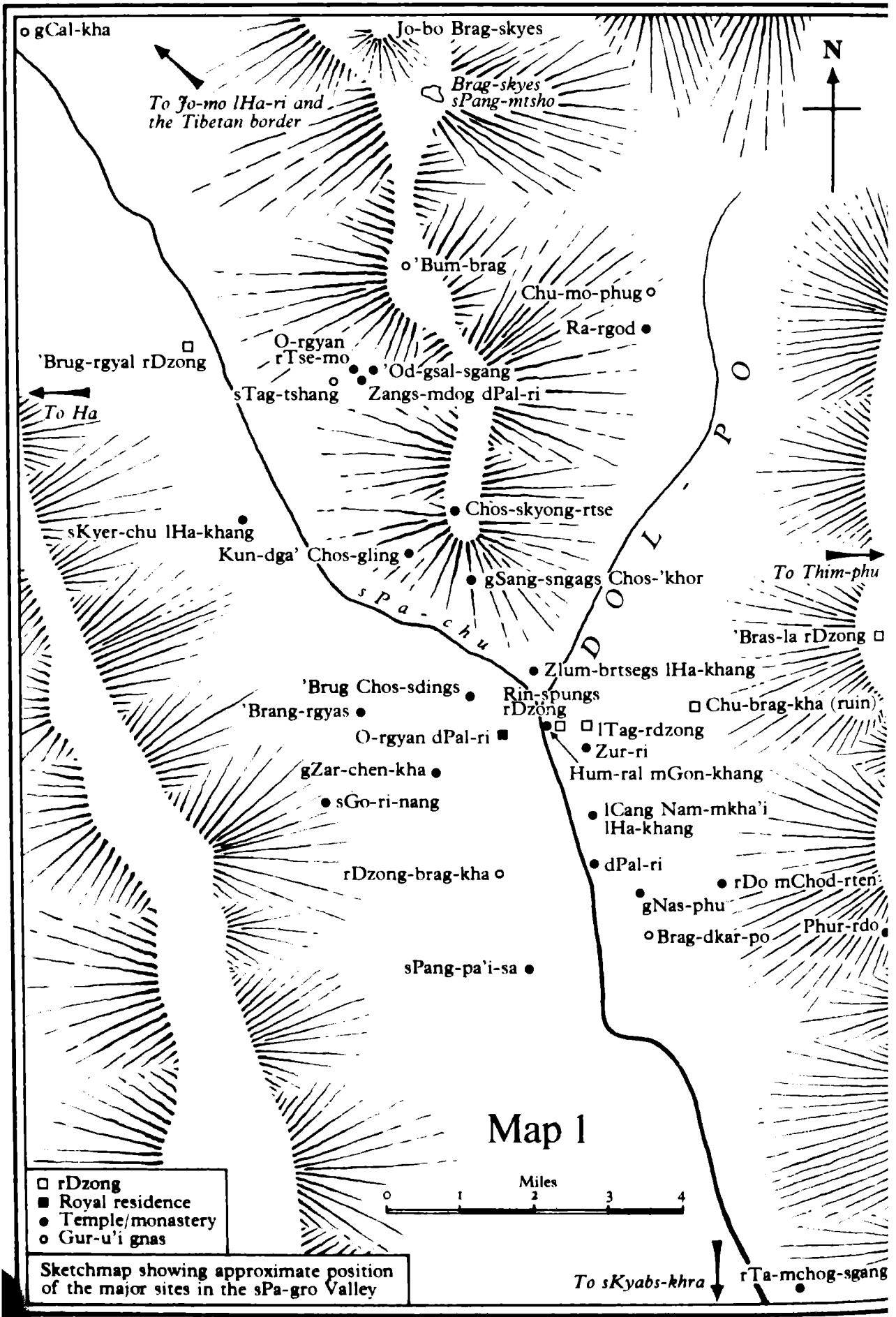


Plate 5. *top* The *Yang'dul* temple of *sKyer-chu* in the *sPa-gro* Valley.  
*bottom* The *mTha'-dul* temple of *Byams-pa* in *Bum-thang*.

**PART ONE**  
**Origin Myths and their Historical Associations**  
**(Seventh to Ninth Centuries)**



o gCal-kha

To Jo-mo lHa-ri and the Tibetan border



Jo-bo Brag-skyes

Brag-skyes sPang-mtsho

o 'Bum-brag

Chu-mo-phug o

Ra-rgod ●

'Brug-rgyal rDzong □

O-rgyan rTse-mo ●

'Od-gsal-sgang ●

sTag-tshang o

Zangs-mdog dPal-ri ●

To Ha

Chos-skyong-rtse ●

sKyer-chu lHa-khang ●

Kun-dga' Chos-gling ●

gSang-sngags ●

Chos-'khor ●

To Thim-phu

'Bras-la rDzong □

Zlum-brtsegs lHa-khang ●

'Brug Chos-sdings ●

Rin-spungs rDzong □

Chu-brag-kha (ruin) □

'Brang-rgyas ●

O-rgyan dPal-ri ■

lTag-rdzong □

Zur-ri ●

gZar-chen-kha ●

Hum-ral mGon-khang ●

sGo-ri-nang ●

lCang Nam-mkha'i lHa-khang ●

rDzong-brag-kha o

dPal-ri ●

rDo mChod-rten ●

gNas-phu ●

o Brag-dkar-po o

Phur-rdo ●

sPang-pa'i-sa ●

# Map 1

- rDzong
- Royal residence
- Temple/monastery
- o Gur-u'i gnas



Sketchmap showing approximate position of the major sites in the sPa-gro Valley

To sKyabs-khra

rTa-mchog-sgang ●

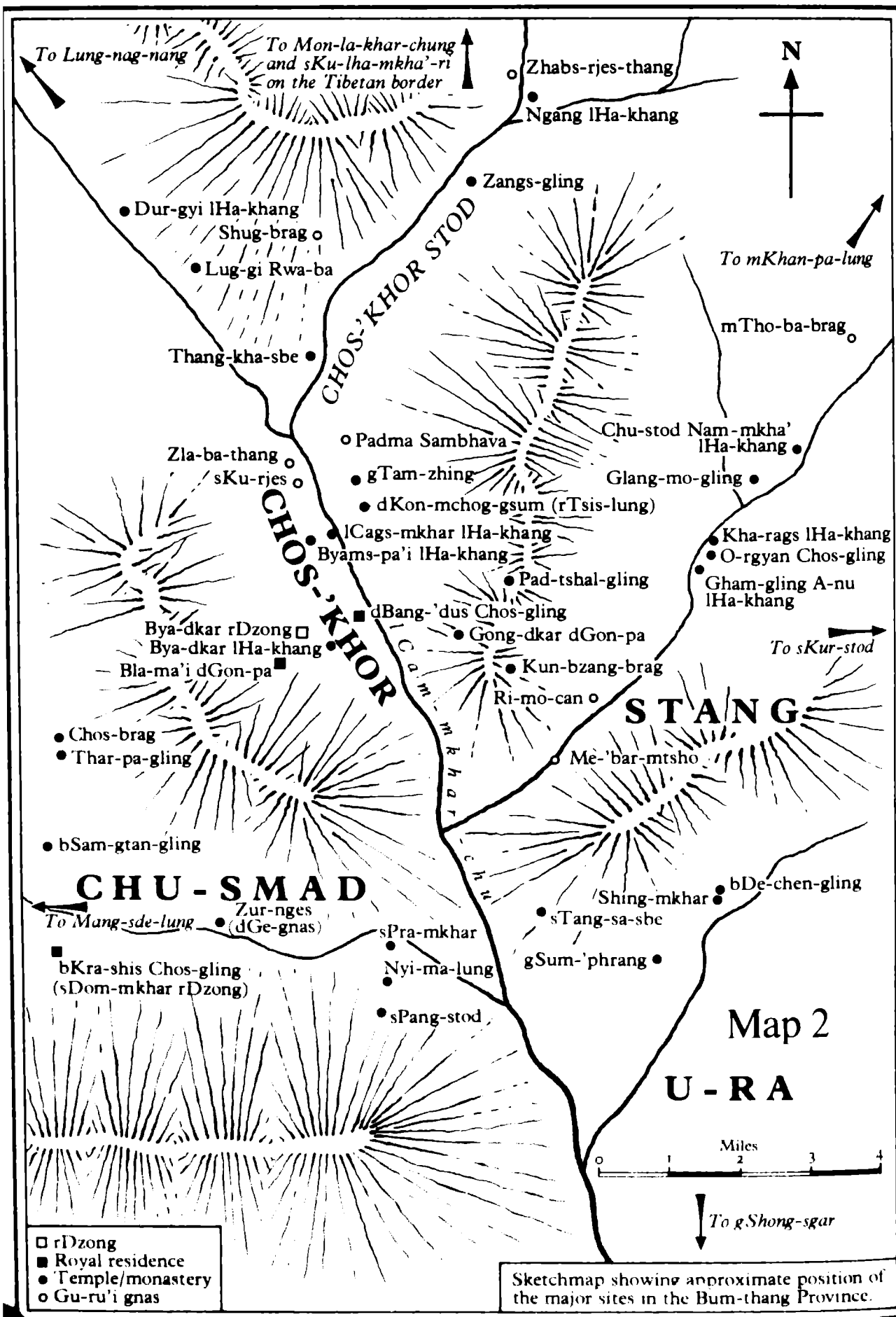
## CHAPTER 1: THE FIRST BUDDHIST TEMPLES

Almost the only testimony to the earliest period of history in Bhutan is supplied by two ancient Buddhist temples, sKyer-chu lHa-khang in the sPa-gro valley and Byams-pa'i lHa-khang in the Bum-thang province (Plate 5). Not only do they conform to the known character of the most ancient Tibetan temples but many of the literary sources place them within an elaborate system of temple construction devised by King Srong-btsan sGam-po who ruled Tibet from c. 627 to 649. This system is associated with a scheme (Figure 1) based on geomantic principles said to have been introduced by his Chinese queen to assist in the conversion of Tibet to the new religion of Buddhism. Although the scheme came to symbolize for all later historians the physical extent and territorial boundaries of Buddhist Tibet, neither the scheme itself nor the accompanying story have previously been analysed. Any attempt to determine the possible historicity of this potent myth requires a survey of all the available references to it in the surviving literature. It must be said that, while for the Tibetans the story goes to prove their political and religious hegemony, for the Bhutanese it is a source of national pride that they should have two of the twelve ancient temples from the scheme within their territory.<sup>1</sup>

### The two Temples

#### SKYER-CHU (Map 1, Plate 5a)

The temple of sKyer-chu (pronounced 'Kichu') is near the top end of the sPa-gro valley in the hamlet of the same name. It lies at some distance from the west bank of the sPa-chu river which cuts the valley down the centre, roughly halfway between the two fortresses (*rdzong*) of Rin-spungs and 'Brug-rgyal. The compact group of one-storied temples lies among paddy fields which rise behind the temple until they merge into the mountainside forming the watershed with the adjoining valley of Ha to the west. The principal temple, to which the others must have been joined at later dates, contains a fine south-facing image of the Crowned Buddha known as the sKyer-chu Jo-bo which is surrounded by standing images of *bodhisattvas*



To Lung-nag-nang

To Mon-la-khar-chung and sKu-lha-mkha'-ri on the Tibetan border

Zhabs-rjes-thang  
Ngang lHa-khang



Dur-gyi lHa-khang  
Shug-brag  
Lug-gi Rwa-ba

Zangs-gling

To mKhan-pa-lung

Thang-kha-sbe

CHOS-KHOR STOD

mTho-ba-brag

Zla-ba-thang  
sKu-rjes

Padma Sambhava

Chu-stod Nam-mkha' lHa-khang

gTam-zhing

Glang-mo-gling

dKon-mchog-gsum (rTsis-lung)

lCags-mkhar lHa-khang

Byams-pa'i lHa-khang

Pad-tshal-gling

Kha-rags lHa-khang  
O-rgyan Chos-gling  
Gham-gling A-nu lHa-khang

Bya-dkar rDzong  
Bya-dkar lHa-khang  
Bla-ma'i dGon-pa

dBang-'dus Chos-gling

Gong-dkar dGon-pa

Kun-bzang-brag

To sKur-stod

Chos-brag  
Thar-pa-gling

Ri-mo-can

STANG

Me-'bar-mtsho

bSam-gtan-gling

CHU-SMAD

Zur-nges  
(dGe-gnas)

sPra-mkhar

Shing-mkhar

bDe-chen-gling

To Mang-sde-lung

bKra-shis Chos-gling  
(sDom-mkhar rDzong)

Nyi-ma-lung

sTang-sa-sbe

gSum-'phrang

sPang-stod

Map 2

U-R A

Miles



To gShong-sgar

- rDzong
- Royal residence
- Temple/monastery
- Gu-ru'i gnas

Sketchmap showing approximate position of the major sites in the Bum-thang Province.

and which is locally considered to be the equal of the famous lHa-sa Jo-bo. It is difficult to attribute this figure to any particular period but its style precedes the highly ornamented one which developed under the later 'Brug-pa period (17th to 19th centuries) and which is now found in almost every temple throughout the country. Local traditions hold that the present building and its contents are not the original structure attributed to Srong-btsan sGam-po but later refurbishments. As the principal shrine is still very small and subsidiary temples have been added to it, it can safely be assumed, that the dimensions of the original building were preserved throughout later works of restoration. If we are to accept the unlikely statement made in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (f.60a) which is taken up by dPa'-bo gTsug-lag (Vol. Ja, ff. 39b-40a) these dimensions were laid down by an unnamed architect from Tho-gar or Tho-dkar (Tokharistan?). That the temple is one of Srong-btsan sGam-po's appears to have been accepted without question by a whole line of 'text-discoverers' of the *Bon* and Buddhist faiths and indeed by countless generations of saints and pilgrims who went there. The restoration of the temple is alluded to in the *rGyal-po bka'-thang* (f.75a) where we read that some of the 'material treasures' (*nor-gter*) hidden there were intended to be used for its repair.

#### BYAMS-PA (Map 2, Plate 5 )

The site and structure of the temple of Byams-pa (Maitreya) in Bum-thang are strikingly similar to those of sKyer-chu lHa-khang in sPa-gro. It is found in a similar position on the floor of the upper part of the Chos'-khor valley quite close to the west bank of the south-flowing Bum-thang river (also known as the lCam-mkhar Chu), about two miles north of Bya-dkar rDzong, close to the mountainside. Again, a number of other shrines have been added to the principal one during later periods. Their outward similarity is not, however, so closely matched by their interiors. The principal image of Byams-pa lHa-khang, from which its name clearly derives, is a large east-facing image of the Future Buddha, Maitreya. The Tibetan sources for the legend never mention the temple by name but simply refer to 'the temple of Bum-thang'. There are in fact several candidates for antiquity among the temples of that province and apart from the unanimous assertions of the local traditions today and its 'classical' location there do not seem to be any independent and positive means of confirming the ascription of Byams-pa lHa-khang to Srong-btsan sGam-po. The first historical reference to the temple by name can be dated to 1355, the year in which the great Klong-chen-pa wrote his eulogy of the Bum-thang province. The relevant passage, cryptic to the point of ambiguity, reads in translation: "On the eastern side of the river, on the broad plain in the central [part of the valley is] Chos'-khor Temple; to the west, the two temples of Byams-pa [and] sGrol-ma, [and there also exists] the 'U-shang-

## 6 FIRST BUDDHIST TEMPLES

rdo Temple in lHa-sa — [all these were] built [as] the foci (*me-btsa*) of bSam-yas.<sup>2</sup> This places the temple of Byams-pa in a simplified version of the geomantic system having the lHa-sa Jo-bo at its centre, here replaced by the first Tibetan monastery of bSam-yas founded by *Khri* Srong lDe-brtsan in c. 779. The sense of the passage depends on the interpretation of *me-btsa*. I follow Das (1902:971) in taking it as *sa-yi lte-ba* or *sa-gnad che-ba*, ‘any important place excellent in position and free from the depredations of malignant spirits, and on such places Buddhist viharas are enjoined to be erected’. The quotation he gives in support of this definition (from f.153 of an unidentified biography of Atiśa) although unclear, would confirm the opinion that *me-btsa* (or *me-tsa*) is a geomantic term referring to places which act in a strange way on other places, just as in acupuncture one or several points in the body relate to the operation of its vital organs.<sup>3</sup> Here it is the bSam-yas monastery which was in some way ‘activated’ by the construction of these other temples. The temple of Chos’khor (which is also the name of this particular valley in Bum-thang) is placed on the east bank of the river but the name has not survived elsewhere. The only temple of undoubted antiquity on that bank is rTse-lung (or rTsis-lung, now called dKon-mchog-gsum, discussed later in this chapter) and this may be another old name for that foundation. On the west bank, we are told, are the twin temples of Maitreya and Tara, of which now only the Maitreya still exists. However, the passage could be interpreted as referring to a single building containing both these temples. ’U-shang-rdo near lHa-sa is known to be a famous foundation of *Khri* gTsub-lde-brtsan (Ral-pa-can) 815-c.836; its mention alongside these distant temples of a ‘barbarian’ region does not engender much confidence in the story. It seems likely that Klong-chen-pa simply repeated a local tradition he heard during his exile in Bum-thang, probably an expression of that widespread movement by which Padmasambhava (whose name is so closely linked with the founding of bSam-yas) came to surpass even Srong-brtsan sGam-po as the true progenitor of Buddhism in the area.

A single generation after Klong-chen-pa his Bhutanese incarnation Padma Gling-pa gives us a ‘prophecy’ by Padmasambhava on all the old temples of Bum-thang.<sup>4</sup> In reply to King *Khri* Srong-lde-brtsan’s request that he should foretell the ‘ups and downs’ of Bum-thang, Padmasambhava explains that ‘in previous times when there were no *lha-pa*’ (this, unless the text is corrupt, seems to mean simply ‘religious persons’) the King Sendha Ra-tsa (see Chapter 2 below) acted as patron for the construction of Byams-pa lHa-khang. The Guru then tells the King: ‘Now you too must build a temple with three kinds of roof-tiers at a place where the demons and spirits are forgathered on top of the left foot of a mountain shaped like a demoness (*srin-mo*) reclining on her back in the centre of Bum-thang. If you do that it will in general benefit the teachings of Himavat and in particular [the temple] will become the life-

force (*srog*) of the teachings of bSam-yas and Bum-thang.' The King therefore sends Ba-mar Khri-zheng (also spelt Ba-mi Khri-zhir)<sup>5</sup> of Yar-lung to Bum-thang. He builds the temple of rTse-lung with 'the Indian King dByug-ston' acting as patron. At that time the Guru also comes to give directions and so the temple of A-nu is built in the sTang valley 'to subdue the border' (*tha-'dul*, i.e. *mtha-'dul*) and the temple of Rin-chen dGe-gnas is built in the village of Zung-nge (in what is now called the Chu-smad valley) 'to subdue the area beyond the border' (*yang-'dul*). There follows a long list of *stūpas* and images which were built at different places in the province on the Guru's advice. Now the principal interest of this story lies in the way Byams-pa lHa-khang is reckoned to have been built before the main sequence of events; this ties in with a local belief that it is indeed the oldest temple in the province. The notion of a demoness (*srin-mo*) lying on her back and the idea of temples built to subdue the outlying areas are directly borrowed from the principal myth concerning Srong-btsan sGam-po's construction of his twelve temples with the Jo-khang of lHa-sa in the centre. As in the case of Klong-chen-pa's account, we are faced here with a transposition of the chief protagonist's role from the King to the Guru and of the location of the chief temple from lHa-sa to bSam-yas.<sup>6</sup>

In Padma Gling-pa's biography<sup>7</sup> of the 'Sindhu Rāja' it is implied that the temple already existed before him, the Guru leaving butter for its lamps and a guardian to look after it. This took place after he had cured the King and before he left for India to mediate a settlement with King sNa'u-che. Both texts foretell how the fate of the temple constitutes one of the thirty 'evil times' (*dus-ngan*) that will befall the province. The 'prophecy' says the temple-keeper's family will die out<sup>8</sup> and the King's biography says that its fabric will be restored,<sup>9</sup> events which we can probably safely assume took place within the memory of Padma Gling-pa's contemporaries. The attribution to the 'Sindhu Rāja' can probably be explained by the temple's close proximity to the supposed site of his nine-storied palace of lCags-mkhar and to the 'tomb' of his son, sTag-lha Me-'bar, in a *stūpa* less than a mile to the east on the west bank of the river.

While, therefore, we have the inconsistencies of Padma Gling-pa's visionary treatment of the oral legends as tending to discount their veracity, there is on the other hand no solid evidence in support of later claims that Byams-pa lHa-khang is indeed the one founded in Bum-thang in the 7th century by Srong-btsan sGam-po. But Padma Gling-pa's own references to it do suggest an historical precedence over all other candidates,<sup>10</sup> we have the absence of any convincing explanation other than the one afforded by the story of the Srong-btsan temples, and as noted above, its site in the Choṣ-'khor valley approximates very closely indeed to the site of sKyer-chu in the sPa-gro



valley, a fact which at the most could be taken to imply its being part of the same scheme of temple construction and at the least suggests a contemporaneity of style and origin. Both temples, it should be remembered, lie in districts immediately contiguous to central Tibet, separated from it in each case by a single pass – districts which certainly had the most abiding contacts with the main currents of Tibetan history in all ages. Finally, there is the ancient *sgrub* of Byams-pa lHa-khang, a festival which, it has been argued elsewhere (Aris 1976 : 609-610) appears to bear vestiges of the old Agricultural New Year which falls at the time of the winter solstice and which has now almost disappeared in this part of the country. The celebration of this ancient festival within the precincts of the most ancient temple in the district would be in the fitness of things. The transfer of these rites, which cannot have had a Buddhist origin, into a Buddhist setting does not cause surprise. The same process took place over many centuries in the celebration of the official New Year in lHa-sa.

### Tibetan Sources for the Myth

If there were temples built by Srong-btsan sGam-po in the area of proto-Bhutan these could, according to present tradition, only be Byams-pa lHa-khang and sKyer-chu lHa-khang. But did that king in fact implement this famous scheme of temple-building? How is it structured? Do the Bhutanese temples figure consistently in the lists? Where, and on what evidence, does the story first appear?

There are ten sources which deal with the matter in detail.<sup>11</sup> Their chronological sequence shows that the story of Srong-btsan's temples seems to originate in the early *gter-ma* literature, that there are no contemporary accounts dating from the dynastic period and, most interestingly, that the story was accepted uncritically by the late dGe-lugs-pa historians who were usually sceptical of these 'revealed' texts. As shall be seen, the story forms a vital subplot in the narrative of Srong-btsan's relationship with his Nepalese and Chinese queens and their conversion of Tibet to Buddhism. Although this most 'orthodox' account derives from the concern of early historians to link their Buddhist heritage to the period of Tibet's greatest power the very materials they drew on can in many instances be shown to be of ancient provenance, albeit thoroughly doctored to their aims. To what extent this reworking of old material was a *conscious* process is most difficult to determine.

### Locus Classicus

The origins of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* are obscure but, fortunately, the pre-ambular index to the splendid Punakha edition (Vol. E, ff. 5a-12a) supplies

enough information to suggest a few tentative conclusions. The work divides into three parts, namely:

- 1) *mdo-skor* ('The Section on *Sūtras*');
- 2) *sgrub-skor* ('The Section on *Sādhanas*'); and
- 3) *shal-gdams-kyi skor* ('The Section on Testaments').

A certain *mahāsiddha* dNgos-grub is said to have first discovered the *sgrub-skor* from the Jo-khang in lHa-sa and passed this on to *mNga'-bdag* Myang who in turn recovered the 150 'testaments' similarly hidden by the king. Myang bestowed both of these onto Mi-skyod rDo-rje of La-stod who passed them to *rJe-btsun* Shākya bZang-po. The latter then discovered the *Gab-pa mngon-phyung-gi skor* and the 'Section on *Sūtras*', thus completing the whole cycle of texts in this collection which was passed in its entirety to *lHa-rje* dGe-'bum from whom they were transmitted in a long line of eighteen masters down to the first '*Dharmarāja*' of Bhutan, *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal. This account of the compilation and transmission of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* conforms in most of its particulars to the information given in the *Blue Annals* and the lives of the 'rediscoverers' by Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas. *Grub-thob* dNgos-grub and *mNga'-bdag* Myang (or Nyang; his full name is Nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'Od-zer) are said to have been contemporaries of the great Karma-pa Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa (1110-1193) and Phag-mo Gru-pa (1110-1170).<sup>12</sup> Although dNgos-grub's dates are not given by Kong-sprul he does give us those of Nyang: 1124-1204. But these do not seem right since he is said to have died at the age of 69 and these would make him 80. Stein, on what evidence it is not clear, gives the dates 1136-1203/4 which would fit better.<sup>13</sup> Although Nyang seems to have been a far more important figure than dNgos-grub,<sup>14</sup> it is the latter whom Kong-sprul specifically says must be remembered as the one responsible for the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*, even though it represents the *gter-chos* of three quite different persons. dNgos-grub is also known to the Bon-po as *gZhod-ston* dNgos-grub ('The Teacher from gZhod') for his recovery of certain texts behind the image of Vairocana in the mKho-mthing temple of lHo-brag. That the *sādhanas* devoted to Avalokitésvara which he is said to have discovered were his own and not later incorporations in the cycle is clear from the *Blue Annals* where he is found bestowing them on Rog Shes-rab-'od (1166-1244) when the latter was about nineteen in 1184.<sup>15</sup> There seems less certainty about the remaining sections which Kong-sprul describes as 'tributary rivers' (*chu-lag*) to the *sādhanas*. The 'testaments' of the king are said to be the recovery of Nyang and no doubt more can be learnt about this in the Nyang family chronicles, the *mNga'-bdag yab-sras-kyi skye-rabs nam-thar* which Kong-sprul (*gTer-snam*, f.50a) says are located in the *sNga-'gyur [= rNying-ma] rgyud-'bum*.

It is the 'Section on *Sūtras*' which most concerns us here because it is in this that we find a strange collection of narrative works devoted to the life of

the great Srong-btsan sGam-po himself. Most authorities attribute their discovery to *rJe-btsun* Shākya bZang-po who received a prophecy about them after he had constructed many water dikes and completed works of restoration in lHa-sa.<sup>16</sup> He is reputed to have got them from the *gNod-sbyin Khang-pa* ('The House of the *Yakśas*') inside the Jo-khang, which can probably be identified with the little temple marked No 16 in Richardson's plan of the ground floor, on the north side of the main entrance passage.<sup>17</sup> The actual content of this 'historical' section is a considerable muddle. The first item is the so-called *Lo-rgyus chen-mo* ('The Great Chronicle') which relates the lives of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the Buddha Śākyamuni. The editor of our Bhutanese edition says in an interlinear note to the *dkar-chags* that while most sources maintain this should be in 41 chapters, the examples known to him actually contain only 36. The remaining two works listed as forming this section (but which are in fact omitted from this edition as in most others<sup>18</sup>), are famous canonical texts relating to the cult of Avalokiteśvara which Shākya bZang-po or one of his successors decided should be included. We are then left with a further four works constituting a quite separate sub-section finding no mention at all in the original *dkar-chags*. It is here that the principal biographical works on the king are all situated and which it must be surmised are all later additions. This in itself need not be taken to discount their antiquity. It only affirms their later inclusion in the whole corpus. The problem, however, does not end there. To justify their inclusion the editor explains in another interlinear comment that it was most certainly the king's command that the following works should obtain to the 'Section on *Sūtras*':

- 1) *Me-tog rgyan-pa'i zhing-bkod*
- 2) *bKa'-chems mthon-mthing-ma*
- 3) *rGyal-bu 'jig-rten dbang-phyug-gi skyes-rabs*
- 4) *rGyal-po'i mdzad-pa nyi-shu-rtsa-gcig-pa*
- 5) *bKa'-chems ka-bkol-ma*

Alas, the list corresponds only partially to what we actually find in this or in any other surviving edition of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* known to us. It is particularly disappointing in respect of item 5 to which there exist several enticing references in other historical works and which may yet prove to be of great antiquity. Instead what we are presented with in this 'biographical sub-section' is:

- 1) *Sangs-rgyas shākya thub-pa'i bstan-pa-la mdzad-pa'i lo-rgyus*, ff.97b-140a. ('The Account of [Srong-btsan sGam-po's] Deeds in Regard to the Teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni').
- 2) *Sangs-rgyas gzhan-gyi bstan-pa-la mdzad-pa'i lo-rgyus*, ff.140a-167b. ('The Account [of Srong-btsan sGam-po's] Deeds in Regard to the Teachings of Other Buddhas').

3) *rGyal-bu 'jig-rten dbang-phyug-gi skye-rabs*, ff. 167b - 183b. ('The *Jātaka* of Prince Lokésvara').

4) *rGyal-po'i mdzad-pa nyi-shu-rtsa-gcig-pa*, ff. 183b - 211a. ('The Twenty-one Deeds of the King').

The first two items are referred to as *mDzad-pa lo-rgyus-kyi skor* ('The Section Containing the Chronicle of Deeds') and the last two as *gSung-gros man-ngag-gi skor* ('The Section Containing the Precepts on Counsels'), a somewhat arbitrary classification which bears little relevance, if any, to their actual content. It may be significant that items 3 and 4 correspond to the same numbers given in the *dkar-chags* list given above. If we put to one side the two middle items (2 and 3) which represent the ten *jātaka* stories of King Srong-btsan sGam-po's previous lives, we are left with item 1 in 12 chapters (hereafter referred to as A) and item 4 in 21 chapters (hereafter B). They are very close redactions of the same traditions which from here passed into the main stream of Tibetan historical writing. They deal firstly with the legendary arrival of Buddhist texts in the time of lHa-tho-tho-ri gNyan-btsan and a brief (but, in the case of A, well-founded) genealogy of the early kings; the conception and birth of Srong-btsan sGam-po; his youth and consecration; his introduction of religious laws; his collection of Buddhist images; his marriages to the Nepalese and Chinese princesses; the building of temples; the introduction of civil laws; the translation of scriptures and the concealment of *gter-ma*; and finally, the king's apotheosis. Why should such a duplication of material occur within a single collection such as this? Evidently several hands were responsible for this 'biographical sub-section' and apart from Shākya bZang-po one is tempted to look to lHa-rje dGe-'bum (or dGe-ba-'bum) as taking a prominent part. Kong-sprul (*gTer-mam*, f.41b) mentions him in place of Skākya bZang-po and it is more than possible that his activities extended beyond simply passing down the completed corpus as the *dkar-chags* would have us believe. It may be that in dGe-'bum we have the final redactor of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* and this might, if his dates can be established, entail a later date for the whole work than the one suggested by Haarh (1969 : 20): 1160 - 1240. But, unless it is entirely apocryphal, the biography of *Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po* (1184 - 1251) provides strong evidence that the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* already existed in that saint's youth; it is specifically mentioned among the teachings received by him in Tibet before he came to Bhutan where later he bestowed its 'authorisation'.<sup>19</sup> This must be the earliest independent reference to the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* and considerably antedates those noticed by Stein<sup>20</sup> in the biography of Tsong-kha-pa and in the well-known history, the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*.

These thoughts on the problem of dating the work, however, do not help us in the matter of deciding why A and B should exist almost side by side. Of the two, A is far more detailed than B although it contains much the

same material. Should we surmise that the author of A decided that B did not contain sufficient material and therefore used it as a basis upon which he could introduce the more extensive legends known to him ? Or did the author of B decide that A was too long and complicated and therefore required shortening ? Or else did he decide that much of the information contained in A was fanciful and should be excised in an attempt to produce a purer version ? Or finally do both accounts derive immediately from a common ancestor unknown to us ? The methodology of many Tibetan historians tends towards a contraction of original source material, a selective process which reduces complex subjects into simple ones according to the author's natural bias. Difficulties are glossed over or reshaped to fit the accepted structures. On the other hand we also find certain outline schemes being expanded to encompass the material known to the historian, a process in which imagination has full rein when dealing with events of the remote past. In our case detailed textual analysis might provide clues as to the relationship between A and B but since the central elements of our story are contained in both versions we can, having underlined the existence of these problems, leave them aside and turn at last to the story's substance. Since of the two A seems the sharper and would appear to have the greater internal logic it is used below to retell the story in a greatly condensed form.

### The Narrative

Among the parting gifts which the Princess Kong-jo requests from her father before leaving China to marry Srong-btsan sGam-po (in 640 AD) is mentioned a divination chart described as 'a striped scroll of trigrams in 34 sections'.<sup>21</sup> What she in fact receives is 'a divination chart in 300 sections executed according to the Chinese divinatory sciences'.<sup>22</sup> It is this object which she later uses in her geomantic reckonings to determine the most favourable sites for her temples and on f.127b there is some unconvincing speculation on the etymology of the word *gab-rtse*. The practice of divination during Srong-btsan's reign was a complex amalgam of Indian, Chinese and Tibetan forms, as can readily be seen in Ariane Macdonald's analysis of the important Tun-huang document, Pelliot No. 1047 (A. Macdonald 1971: 272-309). She claims this text was redacted during the reign of Srong-btsan himself, and it is interesting to note that some of the divination charts mentioned there contain the element *par* in their names (as in *skang-par*, *ryu-phar-thun*, etc) which I have assumed derives from *par-kha*, 'trigram'.

On arrival in lHa-sa the wheels of the chariot transporting the famous image of Śākyamuni which Kong-jo is also taking with her get stuck in the sand and despite the efforts of the two champions lHa-dga' and Klu-dga' who are accompanying the party as bodyguards (and from whom, incidentally,

the rGya clan of the 'Brug-pa school claim descent) the chariot cannot be moved. Kong-jo wants to know why this happened and having laid out her 'striped scroll of trigrams' and worked out 'the reckonings according to the divinatory sciences',<sup>23</sup> she perceives that the whole of Tibet 'is like a demoness (*srin-mo*) fallen on her back'. The Plain of Milk in lHa-sa is the palace of the king of the *klu* spirits and the lake in the Plain of Milk is the heart-blood of the demoness. Of the three peaks rising from the plain two of them are her breasts and the third is the vein of her life-force. It is the evil conjunctions of all these which explains 'the evil behaviour [of the Tibetans] including brigandage and so forth'. But besides these bad configurations the place has certain good qualities which are duly listed. She perceives that if a temple is built on the Plain of Milk<sup>24</sup> the natural good qualities<sup>25</sup> of Tibet would come forth and flourish. Further calculations establish that in order to activate these qualities the following sites have to be disposed:

- 1) 'a place where many people foregather, the king's site';
- 2) 'a place where many monks foregather, the site of a temple';
- 3) 'a place where many *rsi* foregather, the site of a monastery'; and
- 4) 'a place where happiness is pursued temporarily, a site for the common people'.

In order to establish the last of these first, five impediments have to be removed:

- 1) 'the palace of the *klu*';
- 2) 'the cairn of the *'dre*';
- 3) 'the bed of the *ma-mo*';
- 4) 'the habitual path of the *btsan*'; and
- 5) 'the *sa-dgra* of the elements'

— in fact all those places associated with the native deities of Tibet's centre. The *klu* palace is itself countered by the famous image of Śākyamuni which is set up in temporary fashion under a canopy supported by four pillars and guarded by the two champions.

Kong-jo is then admitted to the king's presence and a great public festival ensues. Meanwhile the Nepalese queen Khri-btsun who is in the palace of Sog-po-mkhar notices all this. Seeing all the commotion and noting that Kong-jo has brought this precious image with her she thinks: 'Kong-jo too will build a temple and since she is expert in Chinese geomancy<sup>26</sup> she will build other temples too. Since I am the senior consort my memorials should be greater. I must not let her build temples until I have built a temple.' Peremptorily summoning Kong-jo she explains this to her. Kong-jo does not dispute but suggests to Khri-btsun that she builds her temple on the lake. Khri-btsun is furious and refuses to let Kong-jo see the king for a whole year. Later they appear to settle their quarrel and a long verse dialogue ensues after which Kong-jo repeats her advice, saying it is not intended as a joke. (End of Ch. 9)

Khri-btsun then receives permission from the king to build Buddhist temples wherever she pleases, so she lays the foundations of 108 temples in Yar-lung and other places. What she builds by day, however, is destroyed at night by the malignant spirits. She resolves to consult Kong-jo because of her skill in Chinese geomancy and sends a maidservant to her with a measure of gold powder. Kong-jo lays out her 'striped scroll of trigrams'. Her calculations once again reveal all the favourable conditions and evil impediments in the lie of the land where she says the following must be established:

- 1) 'a place where many laymen foregather, the site of the *sa-bdag rgyal-po*;
- 2) 'a place where monks foregather, the site of a temple';
- 3) 'a place for those who pursue temporary happiness, the site for laymen'; and
- 4) 'a place for a monastery for those who reside for a short time'.

This list is a slight elaboration of the previous one and items 3 and 4 have been interchanged. As we shall see, Kong-jo is in fact referring to one single site which possesses all these attributes — the future site of IHa-sa's Jokhang 'Cathedral'. She gives further details concerning how the impediments to its construction are to be removed: firstly, the cairn of the *'dre* and the *the-brang* demons in the Garden of Musk Deer is to be destroyed and lastly the lake in the Milk Plain is to be filled in with earth. Besides these, many injunctions are given such as the pointing of Śiva's *liṅga* at the *srin-mo*'s pubic hair in order to suppress the 'earth-demon' (*sa-dgra*) of the east.<sup>27</sup> Kong-jo insists that she has already explained these instructions but they have been misunderstood. The maid, however, in conveying them to Khri-btsun gets the order muddled and says the first injunction is to fill in the lake (in fact the last). Earth is carried on the backs of goats which alone have the ability of getting through a forest which is in the way.<sup>28</sup> This activity only serves to muddy the lake and the king advises Khri-btsun to consult Kong-jo once more. A different maid is sent who in turn receives the same instructions only this time it is made very clear that the 'terrestrial modifications'<sup>29</sup> have to be performed before the lake is filled in, adding that these modifications involve an azure dragon to the south, a red bird to the west, a black tortoise to the north and a striped tiger to the east.

Khri-btsun is now positive that Kong-jo is deceiving her out of jealousy and goes to the king with her problem. The king consults a sandal-wood image which he had obtained in a previous episode. A ray of light issues from it and settles on the lake in the Milk Plain, filling it with light. The king rides down to the lake and the sound of his horse's hooves is magnified so many times that the local populace think there is a horse race in progress. Each person according to his *karma* sees the king in a different manner. (This is a theme which recurs throughout the text.) The next day Khri-

btsun is told to accompany him to the lake and on arrival the king commands her to build a temple wherever his ring falls. He throws it into the air, it strikes her saddle and bounces into the lake. She is convinced the whole affair has been stage-managed by the king under the jealous influence of Kong-jo and she bursts into tears. Drawing her attention to the rays of light, the king comforts her and promises to build her temple. She is overjoyed. There follows a most difficult passage describing first the erection of a palace for the king by the side of the lake and then the temple itself. Nepalese stone-masons are employed to copy the luminous outline of a magical *stūpa* which has appeared in the lake (see Note 24 above). Timber and 'imperishable mud from the realm of the *klu*' come up from the bed of the lake. Foundations are gradually laid down using all sorts of different materials on the plan of 'a tall Chinese mansion' of middling height.<sup>30</sup> The plan consists of:

- 1) 'a square foundation in accordance with the [common] people';
- 2) 'a chequer-board foundation for a temple in accordance with the monks'; and
- 3) 'a site shaped like a swastika in accordance with the Bon-po'.<sup>31</sup>

But even these efforts are wasted because the malignant spirits once again destroy by night what is built by day. At last the king gains a spontaneous understanding of all the geomantic configurations on which the fate of the temple depends so closely and on which Kong-jo has been insisting for so long. Before these are put in order and the temple finally completed, however, he conceives the plan which produced the two border temples in Bhutan. (Version B explains that it is part of Kong-jo's original scheme.)

### The Scheme

Srong-btsan sGam-po perceives that the demoness which encompasses the whole of Tibet is striking out with her arms and legs. In order to pin these down he builds four temples in the central regions of the country known as 'The Four Great Horn-Suppressors' (*Ru-gnon chen-po bzhi*). Then he constructs a further four temples to 'tame the border' (*mTha'-dul*) and finally a set of four to 'tame the area beyond the border' (*Yang-'dul*), each temple pinning down part of a limb. At that time the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas see the king as Avalokiteśvara building 'palaces of the *dharma*' for the sake of Tibet. The common people of the four 'horns' (*ru*) and the four borders of Tibet simultaneously see a figure of the king coming to give them orders for the building of temples. The 'inner and outer retinue' of the king see him as refusing to build Khri-btsun's temple until he has built temples elsewhere to suppress the malignant spirits.<sup>32</sup>

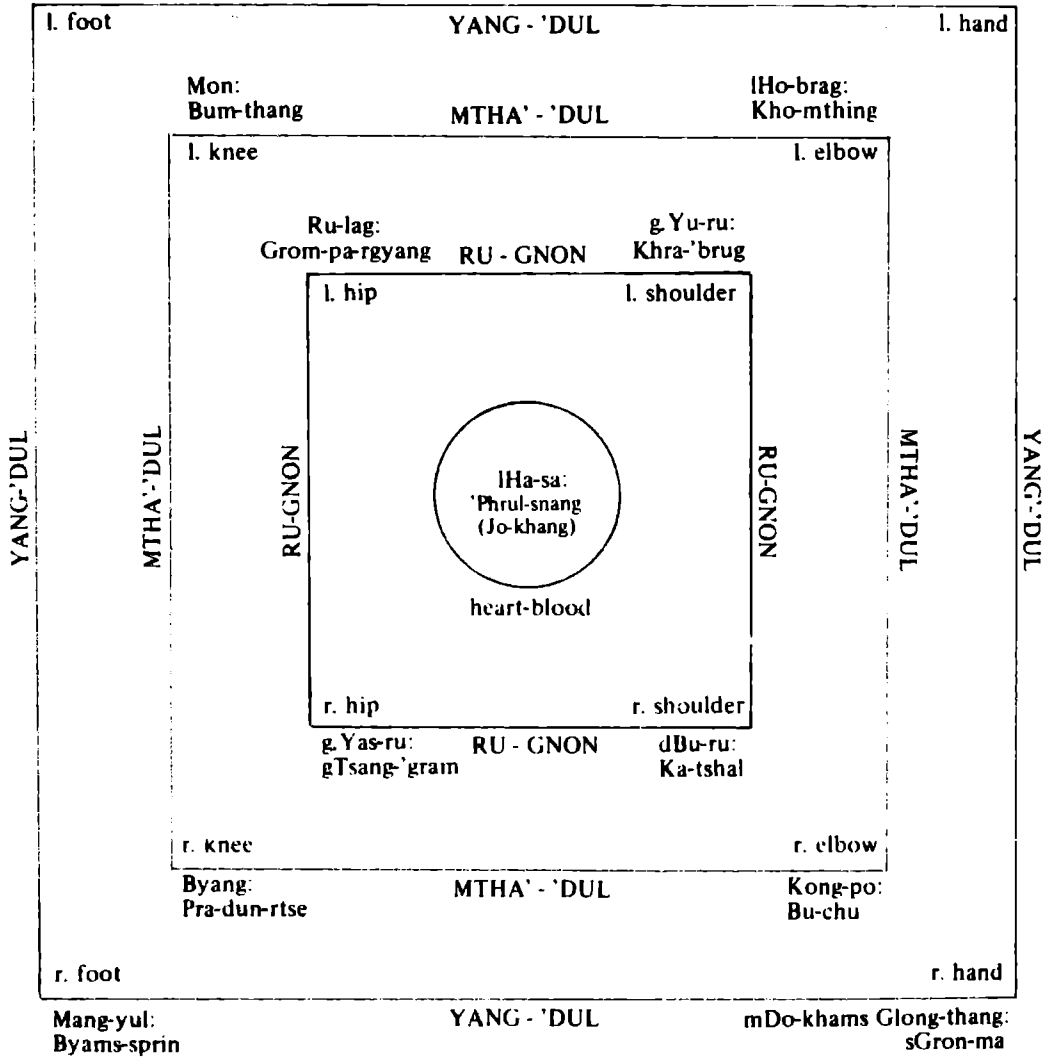
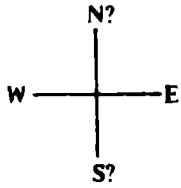
The entire plan of these temples is illustrated in Figure I and matches Stein's conception of the scheme which he seems to accept without reserva-



The *Ru-gnon*, *mTha-'dul* & *Yang-'dul* Temples  
(according to the *Ma-ñi bka-'bum*, ff. 137a & 199b)

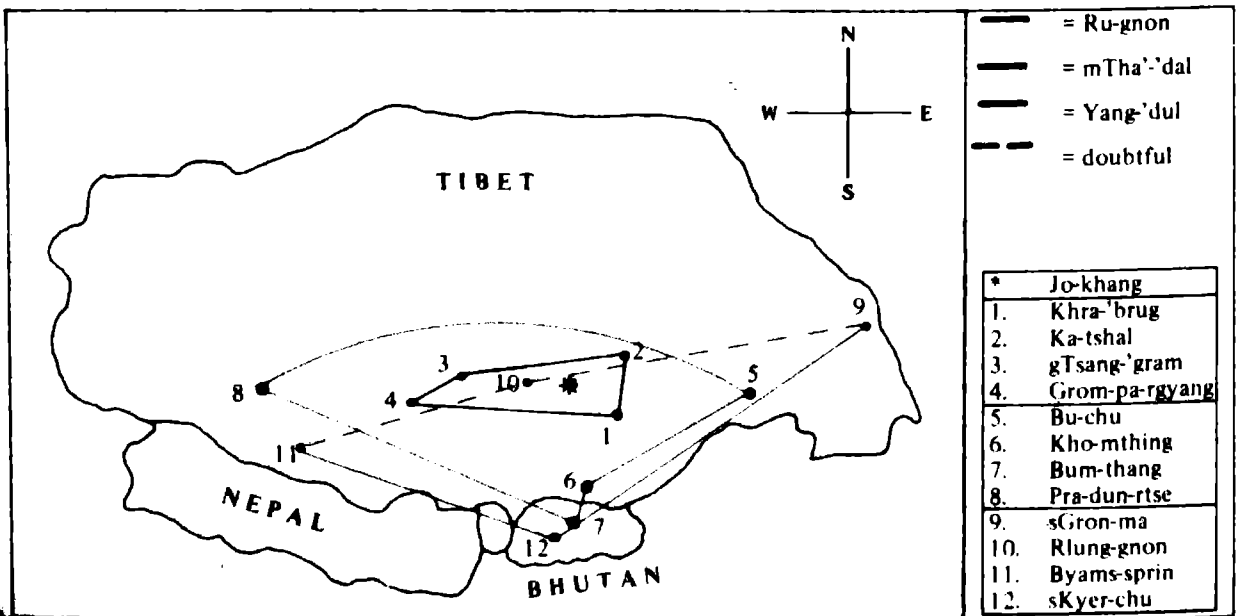
sPa-gro  
sKyer-chu

Byang Tshang-pa:  
Rlung-gnon



Mang-yul:  
Byams-sprin

mDo-khams Glong-thang:  
sGron-ma



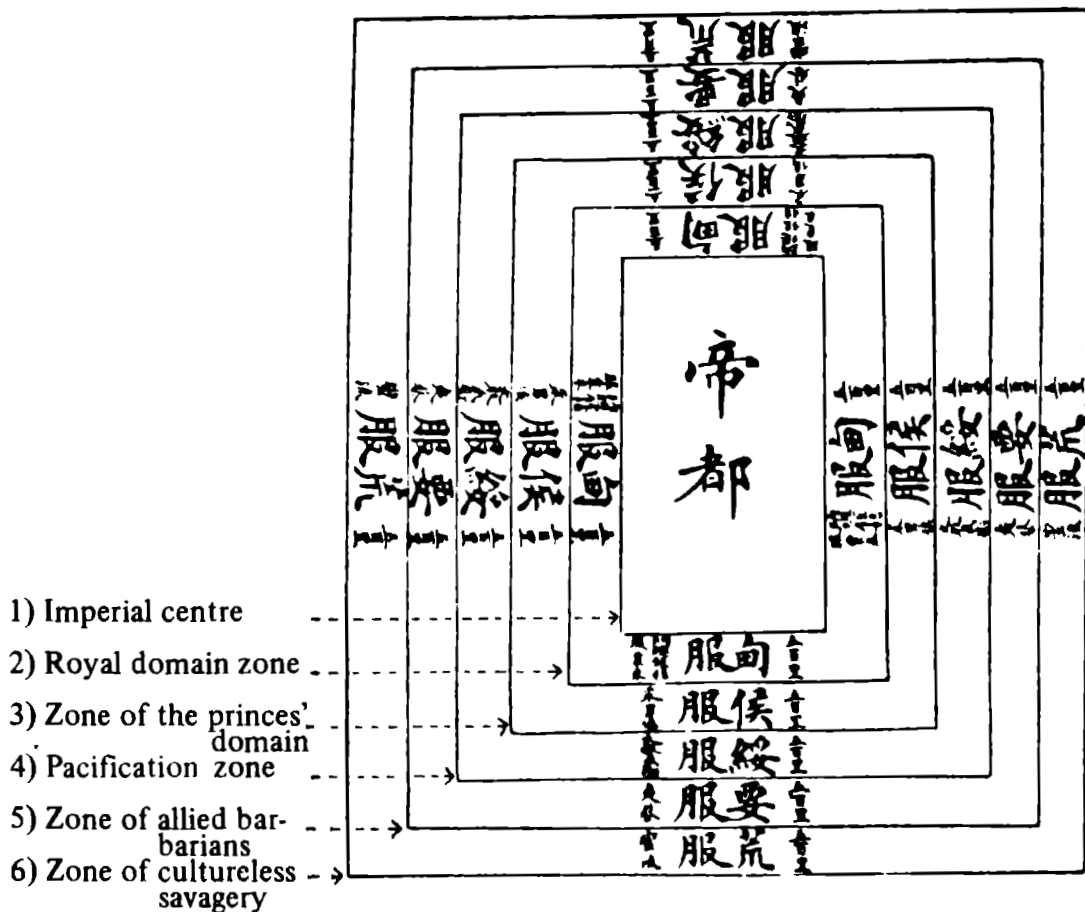


Fig 2. The concentric zones of China according to the Yü Kung (based on Needham 1970:502)

tion as reflecting historical reality: 'The conquering and civilizing function of the first king, once he was established at the centre, was performed in accordance with Chinese ideas; in square concentric zones, each boxed in by the next and extending farther and farther from the centre' (Stein 1972: 39). Although the details of the Chinese scheme and its relation to the Tibetan one have not been worked out by Stein, there seems every reason to accept it as the chief source of influence. The Five Zones of Control are described in the *Yu Kung* ('The Tribute of Yu', forming a chapter of the *Shu Ching*), a text now thought to belong to the 5th Century BC. These zones (*fu*, lit. 'subdue') are made up of concentric squares expanding from the metropolitan area of the imperial centre and are enumerated by Needham as follows:

- 1) the 'royal domains' (*tien fu*),
- 2) the 'princes' domains' (*hou fu*),
- 3) the 'pacification zone' (*sui fu*),
- 4) the zone of allied barbarians (*yao fu*), and lastly
- 5) the zone of cultureless savagery (*huang fu*).<sup>33</sup>

(See Figure II). The Tibetan scheme must surely have been a contraction of this or similar schemes in which zones 1, 4 and 5 may perhaps have been selected as most appropriate to the Tibetan world – a world which, let it not be forgotten, the rulers of the 7th and 8th centuries certainly held to be the equal, if not on occasion the actual superior, of China. Nothing meaningful can yet be said on the important question of when the basic Chinese plan was accepted by the Tibetans but the idea of Tibet being surrounded by 'degrees' of barbarism which we find strongly expressed in many early sources must have accorded well with this scheme. The term which is semantically most relevant to the conception of *mTha'-dul Yang-dul* is that of *mTha'-khob Yang-khob*, 'Barbarians of the Border and Barbarians of the Area Beyond'.<sup>34</sup> This is reminiscent of attitudes to the various kinds of Klo-pa south of the Tsā-ri region, tribal peoples with whom the central Tibetans, however, appear to have made contact rather later than the period under discussion.

The Chinese scheme has undergone a characteristically Tibetan process of adaptation: whereas the original Chinese version is structured on a north-south axis (with the emperor in the middle facing south) the Tibetan one lies on an east-west axis as indicated by the alignment of the demoness' limbs on the chart. Significantly, the temples shown on the chart as east or west of the Jo-khang do so in the sketch-map of locations; the same does not hold for the temples seen on the north-south axis. All this accords well with the common Tibetan notion of their country lying *up* in the west (*sTod mNga'-ris*) and *down* in the east (*mDo-smad* Khams). It may also betray a

Buddhist influence in that the demoness who represents Tibet on the point of conversion has her head pointing to the east. A further correlation with Buddhist ideas may lie in the fact that the basic structure of the scheme resembles that of a *maṇḍala*, whose cosmological significances were never lost on the Tibetans. If these overtones were present in the mind of the scheme's architect, however, he is more likely to have lived in the 8th century or afterwards, during a period when the new faith had its roots well established. The four *ru* which form the central zone (the shoulders and hips of the *demoness*) are themselves part of a south-orientated scheme. They constituted the basic units of military and economic administration but only reached their final form at the start of the 8th century, long after Srong-btsan sGam-po's death: the first three *ru* (left, right and centre, looking south) find their earliest mention in 684 while the fourth 'supplementary' horn (the *ru-lag* of gTsang or Sum-pa) first appears in 709 (Uray 1960: 54-55).<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the Chinese notion of concentric zones, another probable source for the Tibetan scheme appears to be the great cosmic tortoise, an important idea in Chinese cosmology. The *bShad-mdzod* (f. 210a) relates how the whole of China was subdued by a female tortoise lying on her back. Although she is still on a north-south axis as in the scheme of Chinese zones, her four limbs are stretched out to the four half-points of the compass, exactly as in the Tibetan scheme. If we accept her as the prototype for the Tibetan demoness then the latter's character becomes more apparent for she is not just a common demoness but, more pertinently, the female version of the male *srin-po*, the red-faced demons who so often represent the old Tibet (*gdong-dmar srin-po bod-kyi yul*); lying on her back she is the ancient yet virgin territory waiting to be subjugated and civilized. In the *bShad-mdzod* the female tortoise is, in this particular context, the special emanation of Mañjuśrī but no doubt possesses some of the qualities of her cosmological counterpart who is female 'because all beings are born of the female', is lying on her back 'to support beings by means of compassion', has her head to the south 'because the pure land of Jambudvīpa lies to the south', eats essences 'to teach patience to beings' and (normally) lives in the ocean 'so that beings will foregather there' (ff. 221b - 222a). These qualities represent a correlation with Buddhist tradition, just as the 'astrological' signs (the *par-kha*, *sme-ba* etc.) on her body are also harmonised with certain numerical categories of the Buddhists. In this source the female tortoise also represents the whole science of astrology: an earlier passage (f. 207a) explains how India is subdued by religion, China by astrology, Zhang-zhung by *Bon*, Khrom Ge-ser (sic) by war and sTag-zigs (sic) by wealth. Tibet, surrounded by these countries, is a notable omission from the list and it would be tempt-

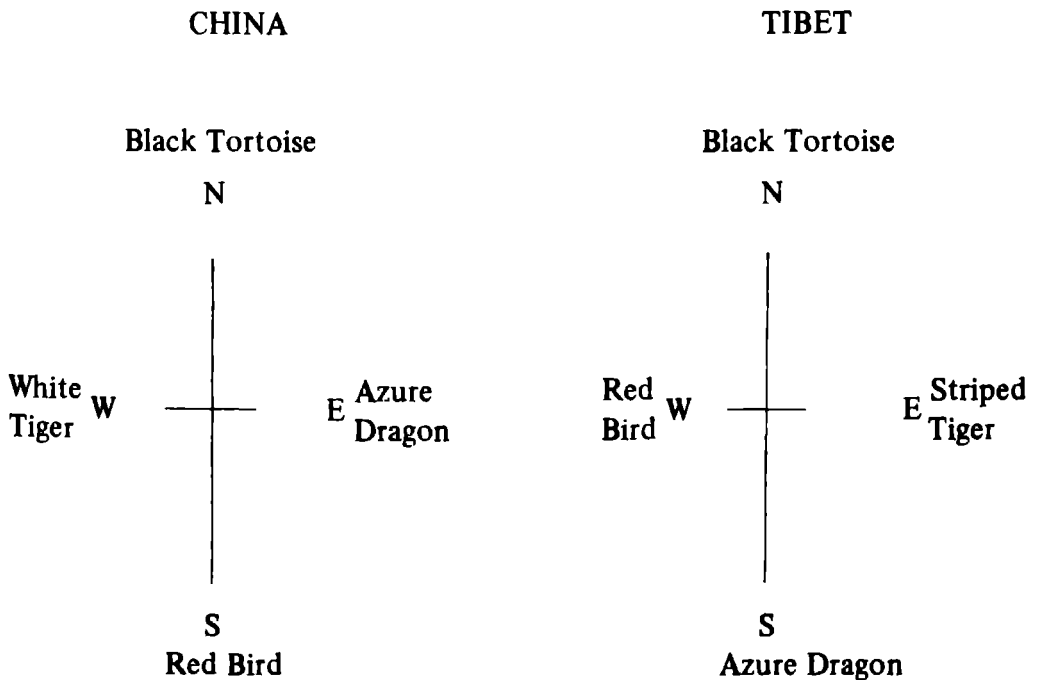
-ing to suggest that the story of the demoness lying on her back and being subdued by temples is an attempt to fill the gap.<sup>36</sup>

### Historical Background to the Scheme

Is there any truth at all in the colourful story narrated above, so revealing of the Tibetan capacity for historical hindsight? Of the two principal consorts mentioned here only the Chinese is attested to by the Tun-huang Chronicle, the Nepalese probably being a later invention to create a theological rapport with Padmasambhava's two wives (Tucci 1962: 124). Even the Chinese queen was probably superseded in importance by the *Jo-mo Mong-bza' Khri-lcam* (mNyen-ldong-steng), the mother of Srong-btsan's heir (see Note 32 above). She is specifically mentioned in the Chronicle. The recent and most thorough researches of Ariane Macdonald have shown beyond doubt that the king, far from being the great propagator of Buddhism as all later sources insist, was instead the codifier of all those indigenous beliefs known as *gtsug-lag*, a word misappropriated of its meaning by the first Buddhists in Tibet along with several other key terms in order to convey Buddhist concepts (A. Macdonald 1971: 387). *gtsug-lag* in the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*, as we have seen, is a term used to denote the divinatory sciences of the Chinese among which geomancy seems to have been considered extremely important. Later *gtsug-lag* took on a much broader sense and we find it often used in reference to 'sciences' in general. The temple became the *gtsug-lag-khang*, 'the house of the *gtsug-lag*'.

All traditions seem to affirm the Chinese origins of Tibetan geomancy. The interesting commentary, apparently by a disciple of the 5th Dalai Lama but unfortunately full of serious mistakes, which Vidyabhusana presented in 1917 as accompanying the *Srid-pa-ho* ('chart of auspicious combinations') indicates that the chart derives from a tradition known as the *gTsong-lag spong-thang lugs* first introduced by Srong-btsan's Chinese queen (Vidyabhusana 1917: 9). The *spong-thang* here must surely be the *par-thang* ('scroll of trigrams') of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* Version A of our story. Version B (followed by the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*<sup>37</sup>) has instead *spor-thang* which would provide the link to *spong-thang*, assuming the latter is not just a scribal error. It does at least discount Vidyabhusana's idea that this is the name of a monastery. It might also imply that the whole notion is mere wishfulness. One might even be able to trace the idea of Kong-jo's reckonings to those of the Indian pandit Śāntirakṣita's geomantic siting of the first monastery at bSam-yas: its destruction each night by the spirits of the soil is an exact echo of what occurs in the story of the Jo-khang above. On the other hand *sBa-bzhed* (Stein 1961: 2), which is thought by many scholars to preserve more than a modicum of credibility and which is far older than the

*Ma-ri bka'-'bum*, says that Kong-jo's father, the Chinese emperor, had in his possession 'a divination chart in 360 sections' which must surely be the one in 300 sections she receives from him in our story. Clearly a great deal more research will have to be done before any certainty is gained on the subject of China's contribution to the Tibetan 'black astrology' (*nag-rtsis*) of which geomancy is a part. Some would argue for a greater Indian contribution but at least one feature of Kong-jo's reckonings noted above is a direct adaptation of a central feature of Chinese geomancy: the role of the celestial animals of the four quarters, known as the 'Four Protectors' (*srung-bzhi*). These are correlated by the Chinese with the operation of the four seasons, the four elements and the four directions and, like the stars and the planets, are manifested in various ways on earth (Feuchtwang 1974: 151-158). Whether the shift which has taken place in their alignment (as illustrated in Figure III) reflects a genuine Tibetan re-interpretation of these symbols or whether it has arisen out of simple error cannot be decided without a great deal of further enquiry. What seems to be sure, however, is that the geomantic theory widely prevalent in Tibet that a building is best sited with the land



*Fig 3. The celestial animals of the four quarters in China and Tibet.*

'open' (*phye*) to the east, 'heaped' (*spungs*) to the south, 'straight' (*drang*) to the west and 'curtain-like' (*yol*) to the north originated from an interpretation of these and other allied symbols of Chinese origin. The *Ma-ri bka'-'bum* holds that 'all the [traditional] sciences of China without exception',<sup>38</sup> were

introduced by Kong-jo; but while it has been argued by Ariane Macdonald (1971: 386) that elements borrowed from Confucianist doctrines may have been superimposed on the indigenous beliefs concerning *gtsug* during Srong-btsan sGam-po's reign, it seems probable that the arrival of a second Chinese princess in 730 bringing books with her had a more lasting effect on the absorption of non-Buddhist ideas and techniques from China. Some of the Tibetan nobles had learnt Chinese in the meantime and this could also have assisted the process of absorption.<sup>39</sup>

A more positive approach to the whole myth could show how the Jo-khang – the building which Richardson (1977a : 159) describes as 'the Tibetan Holy of Holies' and which lies at the centre of the entire scheme – was undoubtedly the foundation of Srong-btsan sGam-po. This is affirmed in the sKar-cung pillar inscription of *Khri lDe-srong-btsan* (804 - 816) which indicates clearly that there were other temples built by him too.<sup>40</sup> Two edicts of *Khri Srong-lde-brtsan* place the foundation of lHa-sa's '*vihara*' in Srong-btsan's reign.<sup>41</sup> The evidence of the early records suggests that for three generations leading up to Glang-dar-ma the god-kings gave with the greatest impunity public testimonies to their attachment to principles irreconcilable with Buddhism, principles pertaining to the highly structured politico-religious system of *gtsug-lag*, while at the same time propagating the new religion with varying success. These tremendous tensions can no doubt help to explain the final collapse of the dynasty and very likely go back to the time of Srong-btsan if we accept his foundation of the Jo-khang. If we do, then there is no particular reason to reject the authenticity of his other foundations. Conclusive evidence either way is lacking but the *mTha'-dul Yang-'dul* theory itself must surely rest on the fanciful notion which the *Ma-ni bka'-bum* expresses by saying that during Srong-btsan's reign 'all the border peoples too were united under the *dharma* to Tibet'.<sup>42</sup> This in turn would suggest that the twelve temples associated with the demoness's limbs are nothing more than a reflection of the Tibetan love for numerical categories, which give order to several of their myths and distract attention from their composite nature. Thus the *mTha'-dul Yang-'dul* paradigm seems to fit several of the earliest temples built under successive kings into a dexterous scheme credited to their illustrious ancestor who used it to subjugate both Tibet proper (the four *ru*) and its frontier marches to the civilizing (literally 'taming') influence of Buddhism. It would be an easier matter to argue in favour of the scheme's historicity if it were credited to *Khri Srong-lde-brtsan*: the Tun-huang Chronicle says that 'he built temples in all the regions at the centre and on the border'<sup>43</sup> and, most revealingly, this is repeated in the sKar-cung inscription.<sup>44</sup> The *Blue Annals* (p. 44) records that: 'During the king's reign twelve great monastic colleges were established, as far as Khams.'

### Geographical Locations

Turning now from the muddled waters of quasi-historical myth, does the operation of the scheme accord with geographical reality? Apart from a few reservations, the answer must generally be yes. The four *Ru-gnon* temples, corresponding in our scheme to the 'Royal Domain Zone' of the Chinese, are all situated in central Tibet and form a rough square. Fortunately, *Klong-rdol Bla-ma's* notes on the location of all these temples enable us to be fairly sure about the site of those foundations not otherwise known to us. Khra-'brug (1) and Ka-tshal (2) in the *Ru-gnon* group are very famous. The former, which the *Ma-ni bka'-bum* Version B of the story says is the first Buddhist temple of Tibet, is situated in the Yar-lung district of the Left Horn (*g. Yu-ru* = *g. Yo-ru*) and is 'the largest and most important of the surviving royal foundations in that area' (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968 : 74). Ka-tshal is in the Central Horn (*dBu-ru*) close to lHa-sa and is 'the most convincing of the old religious foundations' (loc. cit.). For the remaining two in this group we are dependent on *Klong-rdol. gTsang-gram* (3) of the Right Horn (*g. Yas-ru*) is 'on the banks of the Pha-ri gTsang-chu River in the district of Thobrgyal in gTsang'.<sup>45</sup> Finally, the temple of Grom-pa-rgyang (4) in the Supplementary Horn (*Ru-lag*, which corresponds to the south-western part of the province of gTsang) is said by *Klong-rdol* to be near lHa-rtse.<sup>46</sup>

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Rlung-gnon ('Wind-Suppressor'). Until further evidence comes to light we shall have to accept Klong-rdol's location, the only one which seriously upsets the symmetry and logic of the scheme as a whole. The temple of Byams-sprin (11) lies in Mang-yul and is the 'Jamding' marked on the pundit's map just north of sKyid-rong, an important town near the Nepalese border (see note 49 above and *Thang-yig*, f. 282a). All ten sources are unanimous in placing this in the *Yang-'dul* group. To complete the list there is the second of our two Bhutanese temples in the scheme, that of sKyer-chu (12) in the sPa-gro valley.

### Later Fortunes of the Scheme

Let us consider now as briefly as possible the fortunes of the scheme as revealed in the later material available to us. Besides the ten sources listed in order above which contain (or permit a reconstruction of) the list, there are several other texts (such as the *Blue* and *Red Annals*) which provide the almost obligatory reference to the scheme but which omit any list of temples. The *bShad-mdzod* (ff. 160a - 161a) has an extremely muddled version based, it would appear, on bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan's *rGyal-rabs*; so deviant is it (even introducing a temple called lCang-ra sMug-po in Khotan), that it can be mostly ignored. The tables (I to IV) illustrating the various ascriptions supplied by the ten principal sources show that in the course of time the demon-ess representing the old Tibet has become a contorted knot with all her limbs out of joint — an apt symbol indeed for the fate of the old traditions. It is, however, a knot that can in this instance be unravelled without much difficulty. Bu-ston's history is the first to pick up the story almost intact from the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*, simply introducing the unidentified temple of sKa-brag into the *mTha'-'dul* group and relegating the temple of Bum-thang in Mon-yul (i.e. Byams-pa'i lHa-khang) to a group of five specified temples where it is joined with sKyer-chu in sPa-gro on the left sole of the *srin-mo*. Because this upsets the basic scheme of 4 x 3, Bu-ston deliberately omits to call this last set 'the four *Yang-'dul*'. This pattern is later followed by Śrībhūtibhadra and Padma dKar-po who otherwise hold to the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*. However, the former contracts the two Bhutanese temples on the left sole into one (i.e. Mon Bum-thang sKyer-chung). The latter drops sKyer-chu from the list, but retains Mon Bum-thang. Thus order is restored to the *Yang-'dul* group, though it is still not given its name. Although Klong-rdol is the latest authority, he seems to have done his homework and gone right back to the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* as representing the oldest authority, to which he added his valuable notes on the location of these temples. Meanwhile the *rGyal-po bka'-thang* Ch. 14 has a section that clearly derives from the same stratum of tradition as the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* but omits mention of the scheme

itself. The list of twenty temples it attributes to Srong-btsan starts with the four *Ru-gnon* and follows with a further ten of which eight belong to the scheme as we know it; we can therefore gain a very tentative idea of how these eight might have been aligned. At least one of the two temples thus omitted to achieve this somewhat doubtful reconstruction, that of rTsis (better known as rTsis gNas-gsar) in Nyang-ro, is itself reckoned locally to be a *Ru-gnon* temple.<sup>51</sup> rTsis seems to be coupled with the temple of dPal-chang in brGyad-ro (or brGyang-ro). All the other sources (i.e. dPa'-bo gTsong-lag, the 5th Dalai Lama and Sum-pa mKhan-po) follow a variant tradition first introduced by bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan in his *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*, one which can be demonstrated to have arisen out of a faulty reading or memory of either the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* or Bu-ston's history and which makes nonsense of geography. Although the groups are broadly parallel to those in what we may call the 'authentic' tradition they are placed under wrong headings. All the later confusion stems from this. Further, in order to introduce the unidentified temple of Shes-rab sGron-ma (which is oddly placed in Kashmir) the two Bhutanese temples are again contracted into one: Bum-thang sKyer-chu (Aris 1976: 603 note 6). Whereas the whole story of these temples in the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* (at least in Version A) has something of the appearance of an after-thought, here it is brought very much into the foreground and greatly expanded with a whole medley of geomantic and cosmological alignments. Each of the three groups is thus endowed with special characteristics. The four *Ru-gnon* are built by architects (*lag-dpon*) from Mi-nyag (Xixia), Tho-dkar (Tokharistan ?), Bal-po (Nepal) and Hor (Central Asian Turks ?), only the last one being actually named: dPal-dbyangs of the dBas clan. Each of the four *mTha'-'dul* is linked to a branch temple and a hermitage. This may or may not correspond to reality. The four *Yang-'dul* are each associated with one of the four celestial animals of Chinese geomantic tradition, an idea perhaps picked up from the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* where, as we have seen, these animals have pride of place but not in this particular context. The *bShad-mdzod* (f. 160b) takes up the same notion and applies it to the *mTha'-'dul* temples, but gets the correlation of celestial animals with the directions wrong. For instance, the Bhutanese temple of sKyer-chu (called here dPal-gro [= sPa-gro] Thang-shing 'Dud-pa-can) is erected at 'a *stūpa* of the Striped Tiger to the South'; it should be 'Azure Dragon', but the author was perhaps recalling the association of Bhutan with tigers. In place of the *Yang-'dul* he has four temples built at the half-points of the compass. Finally, as if dissatisfied with the geomantic potential of the basic scheme, the *rGyal-rabs* introduces a further nine temples:

- 1) Kha-chu, Kom-chu and Gling-chu in the east 'to activate the sun, moon, planets and stars' (on which see Stein 1959a : 235);

Table 1: The Ru-gnon Temples: ascriptions.

NAME OF TEMPLE	LOCATION	LIMB
(1) I Khra'brug II Khra'brug III Khra'brug IV sGron-ma V Khra'brug VI sGron-ma VII Khra'brug VIII sGrol-ma IX sGrol-ma X Khra'brug	G.yu-ru -- G.yu-ru Khams Glong-thang -- Khams Klong-thang -- Khams Glong-thang Khams Klong-thang Yar-klung	left shoulder left shoulder -- right palm left shoulder right palm left shoulder -- -- right shoulder
(2) I Ka-tshal II sKa-tshal III bKa'stsal IV sKyer-chu V Ka-tshal VI sKyer-chu VII sKa-tshal VIII sKye-chu IX -- X Ka-tshal (Jo-bo'i lHa-Khang)	dBu-ru -- dBu-ru lho-phyogs-su Bum-thang (sic) Mon -- sPa-gro -- dPung-stod Mal-gro	right shoulder right shoulder -- left palm right shoulder left palm right shoulder -- -- left shoulder
(3) I gTsang'gram II gTsang'gram III gTsang'gram IV Shes-rab sGron-ma  V sTsang'gram VI sGron-ma VII gTsang'gram VIII Shes-rab sGrol-ma IX -- X gTsang'gram (Bye-ma'i lHa-khang)	g-Yas -- g.Yas-ru nub dPal Kha-che'i gnas-su 'Tshal-rigs -- mTshal-rigs -- Tshal-rigs -- gTsang Thob-rgyal-gyi thad-kyi Pha-ri gTsang-chu'i 'gram-du	right hip right foot -- right sole  right thigh right sole right foot -- -- right hip

NAME OF TEMPLE		LOCATION	LIMB
(4)	I Grom-pa-rgyang	Ru-lag	left hip
	II Grom-pa-rgyang	--	left foot
	III Grom-pa	Ru-lag	--
	IV Rlung-gnon	byang-phyogs-su Tshangs-pa	left sole
	V 'Brom-pa-rgyang	--	left thigh
	VI Rlung-gnon	Tshangs-pa	left sole
	VII Grom-pa-rgyang	--	left foot
	VIII Rlung-gnon	Tshangs-pa	--
	IX --	--	--
	X Grim-pa-rgyang	gTsang lHa-rtse'i nye-skor-gyi Ru-lag	left hip

- |                                  |                        |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| I = <i>Ma-ñi bka'-'bum</i>       | VI = dPa'-bo gTsug-lag |
| II = Bu-ston                     | VII = Padma dKar-po    |
| III = <i>rGyal-po bka'-thang</i> | VIII = 5th Dalai Lama  |
| IV = bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan      | IX = Sum-pa mKhan-po   |
| V = Śrībhūtibhadra               | X = Klong-rdol         |

Table 2: The *mTha'-'dul* Temples: ascriptions.

NAME OF TEMPLE		LOCATION	LIMB
(5)	I Bu-chu	Kong-po	right elbow
	II Bu-chu	Kong-po	right elbow
	III mKho-mthing ?	lHo-brag	--
	IV Khra-'brug (bKra-shis Byams-snyoms)	g.Yu-ru	left shoulder
	V Bu-chung	rKong	right elbow
	VI Khra-'brug	--	--
	VII Bu-chu	Kong-po	right elbow
	VIII Khra-'brug	g.Yon-ru	--
	IX Khra-'brug	g.Yon-du	--
	X Bu-chu	Kong-po	right elbow

Table 2 (cont.)

	NAME OF TEMPLE	LOCATION	LIMB
(6)	I Kho-mthing II Khom-mthing III Bum-thang ? IV Ka-rtsal V Khom-ting VI Ka-tshal VII mKho-mthing VIII bKa'-chal IX -- X Kho-mthing	lHo-brag lHo-brag Mon-yul sPu-ru [= dBu-ru] lHo-brag dBu-ru lHo-brag sBus-ru -- -- lHo-brag	left elbow left elbow -- right shoulder left elbow right shoulder left elbow -- -- left elbow
(7)	I Bum-thang II sKa-brag III sKyer-chu ? IV gTsang-'brang (Byang-chub dGe- gnas) V Ka-brag VI gTsang-'gram VII sKa-brag VIII gTsang-'gram IX -- X Bum-thang	Mon -- sPa-gro g.Yas-ru -- g.Yas-ru -- g.Yas-ru -- -- Mon	left knee right knee -- right hip-bone -- right knee right hip right knee -- -- right knee
(8)	I Pra-dum-rtse II Bra-dum-rtse III sGrol ?  IV Grum-pa-rGyang (Dri-med Nam-dag) V Srang-dun-rtse VI Grom-pa-rgyal VII Pra-dum-rtse VIII Grum-pa-rgyang IX -- X Pra-dun-rtse	Byang -- mDo-khams Klong- thang gTsang gTsang -- Ru-lag -- Ru-lag -- -- Byang	right knee right knee -- -- left hip-bone left knee -- left knee -- -- left knee

- I = *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* VI = dPa'-bo gTsug-lag  
 II = Bu-ston VII = Padma dKar-po  
 III = *rGyal-po bKa'-thang* VIII = 5th Dalai Lama  
 IV = bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan IX = Sum-pa mKhan-po  
 V = Śrībhūtibhadra X = Klong-rdol

Table 3: *The Yang-'dul Temples: ascriptions*

	NAME OF TEMPLE	LOCATION	LIMB
(9)	I sGron-ma	mDo-Khams Glong-thang	right palm
	II sGron-ma	'Dan Klong-thang	left palm
	III Chu-dar [=Bu-chu]?	Kong-po	--
	IV Bu-chu	shar Kong-po	right elbow
	V sGron-me	Khams-su Klong-thang	left palm
	VI Bu-chu	Shar Kong-po	right elbow
	VII sGron-ma	Khams-kyi Glong-thang	left palm
	VIII Bu-chu	Kong-po	--
	IX Bu-chu	Kong-po	--
	X sGrol-ma	mDo-Khams lDan Chos-'Khor-gyi 'gram-gyi Klong-thang	right palm
(10)	I Rlung-gnon/Klung-gnon	Byang Tshang-pa	left palm
	II Rlung-gnod	Byang Tshal	right palm
	III Byams-sprin ?	Mang-yul	--
	IV 'Khon-thing (gSer-gyi lHa-khang)	lHo lHo-brag	left elbow
	V Rlung-mnon	Byang 'Tshal	left palm
	VI Kho-thing	lHo lHo-brag	left elbow
	VII Rlung-gnon	Byang Tshal	right palm
	VIII mKho-mthing	lHo-brag	--
	IX --	--	--
	X Rlung-gnon	sNye-thang Chos-rdzong-gi 'gram-gyi Tshangs-pa	left palm



Table 3 (cont.)

NAME OF TEMPLE	LOCATION	LIMB
(11) I Byams-sprin	Mang-yul	right sole
II Byams-sprin	Mang-yul	right sole
III Rlung-gnon ?	Tshangs-pa	--
IV Byams-sprin dGe-rgyas	Nub	right knee
V Byams-sprin	--	right foot
VI dGe-rgyas	Nub	right knee
VII Byams-sprin	Mang-yul	right sole
VIII Byams-sprin dGe- rgyas	--	--
IX --	--	--
X Byams-sprin	Mang-yul	right foot
(12) I sKyer-chu	sPa-gro	left sole
II Bum-thang/sKyer- chu	Mon-yul/sPa-gro	left sole
III sPra-dun-rtse ?	--	--
IV sPra-dun-rtse	Byang	left knee
V sKyer-chung	Mon Bum-thang (sic)	left foot
VI sPra-dun-tse	Byang	left knee
VII Bum-thang	Mon	left sole
VIII Pra-dun-rtse	Byang	--
IX --	--	--
X sKyer-chu	Mon sPa-gro	left foot

I = *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*II = *Bu-ston*III = *rGyal-po bka'-thang*IV = *bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan*V = *Śrībhūtibhadra*VI = *dPa'-bo gTsug-lag*VII = *Padma dKar-po*VIII = *5th Dalai Lama*IX = *Sum-pa mKhan-po*X = *Klong-rdol*

Table 4: The Ru-gnon, mThas'-'dul and Yang-'dul Temples: summary of ascriptions

TEMPLE	RU-GNON	MTHA'-'DUL	YANG-'DUL
(1) Khra-'brug	I II III V VII X	IV VI VIII IX	
(2) Ka-tshal	I II III V VII X	IV VI VIII (IX)	
(3) gTsang-'gram	I II III V VII X	IV VI VIII (IX)	
(4) Grom-pa-rgyang	I II III V VII X	IV VI VIII (IX)	
(5) Bu-chu		I II V VII X	III IV VI VIII IX
(6) Kho-mthing		I II (III) V VII X	IV VI VIII (IX)
(7) Bum-thang	IV ?	I (III) X	V? VII
(8) Pra-dun-rtse		I II V VII X	III IV VI VIII (IX)
(9) sGron-ma	IV VI VIII X	(III)	I II V VII X
(10) Rlung-gnon	IV VI VIII (IX)		I II (III) V VII X
(11) Byams-sprin			I II (III) IV V VI VII VIII (IX) X
(12) sKyer-chu	IV? VI VIII (IX)	(III)	I II V? X
(13)? sKa-brag		II V VII	
(14)? Shes-rab sGron-ma	IV VI VIII (IX)		

I = *Ma-ni bka'-'bum*II = *Bu-ston*III = *rGyal-po bka'-thang*IV = *bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan*V = *Śrībhūtibhadra*VI = *dPa'-bo gTsug-lag*VII = *Padma dKar-po*VIII = *5th Dalai Lama*IX = *Sum-pa mKhan-po*X = *Klong-rdol*

? = ambiguous ascription

( ) = assumed ascription

2) sNyal sNang-gro and Gling-thang in the south 'to suppress [the element] fire, having meditated on the Fire God Drang-srong':

3) Gu-lang (Paśupatināth) and Shing-kun (Swayambunāth) in the west 'to suppress [the element] water and defend the Tibeto-Nepalese border'; and

4) dGe-ri and dPal-ri in the north 'to suppress [the element] air, having bound to an oath the [gods and demons] *lha, klu, 'dre* and *srin.*'

dPa'-bo gTsug-lag omits some of these details but his account is clearly dependent on the *rGyal-rabs*. Sum-pa mKhan-po merely provides the first temple in each group of the main scheme, thus permitting us to construe his list as that of the *rGyal-rabs*. For all its historical and geographical defects this variant tradition yet stands as additional proof of how the square-based outline of the original scheme carried a strong appeal for Tibetan historians, providing an obvious base upon which further quadrangular notions could be brought in to enhance it.

Haarh has attempted to show how the Tibetan image of the world evolved from a triangular shape as expressed in the concepts of:

1) the three 'refuge countries' of Nyang-ro, Kong-po and Dwags-po,

2) the four 'original tribes' among which the gTong of Sum-pa can be conveniently placed on the line between the sMra of Zhang-shung and the lDong of Mi-nyag, which two, together with the Se of 'A-zha, constitute his triangle,

3) a similar arrangement with the border tribes and

4) the common names for India (the 'White' rGya), China (the 'Black' rGya) and Central Asia (the 'Yellow' rGya) (Haarh 1969: 275 - 278).

This world view, it is claimed, takes account of only three cardinal directions (broadly speaking East, West and North) and ignores the south which is '... the direction towards the Himalayan ranges, which presented an almost unbroken ridge, in most places impassable. A similar concept of the image of the world and the cardinal points we find in the Old Norse area, excluding East, being unimportant because closed by the forests and ridges of Kjolen.' The later quadrangular image, he concludes, came in 'under the impact of Indian culture and the broader knowledge of the world acquired by the Tibetans.' With the proviso that Chinese ideas must also have played a rôle in the evolution of the quadrangular image, Haarh's thesis certainly seems credible despite his contraction of some four-fold classifications into three-fold ones to achieve it. A parallel development in Bhutan can be seen in the way the early notion of its core of just three valleys in the west (*Theḍ Thim sPa: gsum*) was expanded later into a square having four gates (*lHo-mon Kha-bzhi*) that encompassed the entire country once it had been established as a political reality. In both models the square is protective. At the same time it is outward-looking and vigorous, conscious of its ordered

strength. Such a symbol can only have taken root in these countries in times of confident consolidation and expansion under a powerful central authority.

### Implications for Bhutan

sKyer-chu lHa-khang and Byams-pa'i lHa-khang are the only two buildings directly attributed to the dynastic period which are situated south of the main Himalayan range (discounting for the present the shrines dedicated to Padmasambhava). It is most apt then that they should find a place in the outer zones of a square-based scheme that affirmed Tibetan expansion south through the Himalayas. The apparent anomaly (corrected by Bu-ston) whereby sKyer-chu is in a more barbarous zone than Byams-pa should not cause concern. We cannot be sure whether this reflects a genuine attitude or a simple slip, but it does not affect the overall conception. Very likely they are geographically too close to form a 'side' to the outermost square and so were disposed as 'corners' instead. The same would explain the anomalous positions of Byams-sprin and Pra-dun-rtse.

The degree to which their temples' location in the scheme must have influenced the Bhutanese in their more or less unconscious collective presuppositions about their own place in the world cannot be overestimated, for implicit in the story lies a strong paradox that speaks closely to their condition; while the temples stand as direct proof of their links to a golden age of spiritual vigour, at the same time the supposed purpose of these 'taming' constructions places them almost beyond the pale of that primal source of legitimacy, on the outer barbarian fringes. It is this which would explain the clipped allusions to the scheme found in the Bhutanese histories<sup>53</sup> and in conversations with local men of letters. It was the figure of Padmasambhava that provided the main chance to resolve this paradox but its ghost stayed on to haunt them down the centuries.

### The Votive Bell of dKon-mchog-gsum (Plate 6)

If the symbolic rôle of the myth has overshadowed the historical events that gave birth to it, we are still left with a single piece of epigraphic evidence that might yet provide conclusive proof of early contact between 'proto-Bhutan' and dynastic Tibet: the inscription on a large broken bronze bell in the tiny temple of dKon-mchog-gsum in Bum-thang. A bell however large is a transportable object and the oral legends told in the vicinity of the temple hold that the large fragment kept there is part of a complete Tibetan bell, stolen from Tibet and brought south over the Himalayas to Bum-thang where it was set up in this temple. Its chimes were so loud that they were heard in Tibet. An army came down later to recapture it but since it was too heavy for them to carry it was deliberately

smashed. The largest fragment was then recovered by the local inhabitants and put back in the temple.

The bell is in fact the fourth of the great *cong* to be found that were commissioned as votive offerings by members of the Tibetan royal family and installed in their earliest temples to proclaim to the world 'the sound of the *dharmā*'. They appear to have been cast by foreign craftsmen of the T'ang dynasty employed for this purpose by the Tibetan royalty. Surprisingly enough, no such bells of the T'ang seem to have survived in China itself, although all the later temple bells of China belonging to this type preserve the characteristic shape and features of these bells in Tibet: side panels divided by vertical ribbing and an 'undulating' lower edge (most pronounced in our example here). The word *cong* is itself borrowed from the Chinese word for a bell (*chung*) and is applied by Tibetans only to these massive temple bells,<sup>54</sup> not the smaller variety which go by the name of *chos-sgra* ('*dharmā* sound') in Bhutan. The latter usually have certain *mantra* cast in relief on their outer surface; this would explain why the custodian of dKon-mchog-gsum, on being asked what the fragmentary inscription on the *cong* was about, declared that it was part of a *mantra*, which it certainly is not. While the alignment of the text differs substantially from those on the bells at bSam-yas, Khra'brug and Yer-pa (where they are found in between the vertical ribbing, not partly below as here) it is definitely a dedicatory formula such as we find on these Tibetan examples. Richardson, to whom we owe the most complete study (1954) of the three Tibetan *cong*, has confirmed that the only part that can be said to convey any sense at all in the available photographs of this example reads, on the bottom two lines, as follows:<sup>55</sup>

ta bstsis nas // cong mkhan li'u sta(n)g cong xx  
 bya xx na dang xg su blugs //

Both the *ki-gu* (in bstsis and li'u) are of the archaic reversed type. A line underneath indicates an uncertain reading. A cross indicates an illegible letter. The gap between sta(n)g and cong is formed by the single vertical 'rib' visible in Plate 6. The parenthesis around the n in sta(n)g suggests this syllable could be read as stag or stang. There are also a few syllables which can be made out elsewhere among which the following are worth mentioning: pas bka' stsar te (at the top) and: byang chub (below the garlanded lotus motif in the centre, partly visible in Plate 6).

The only certain meaning to be derived is that the name of the person who made the bell or who acted as overseer during its casting (the *cong-mkhan*) was either *Li'u-stag* or *Li'u-stang*. Taking *su* as the locative particle we might assume that the missing passage on the bottom line would have indicated the place where it was cast (*blugs*). Assuming that *stsar* is an odd form for *stsal* we might conjecture that the name of the person who 'ordered' (*pas bka'*



Plate 6. The late 8th century (?) votive bell (*cong*) at the temple of dKon-mchog-gsum

*stsar te*) the bell was given in the part missing at the top. Finally *Byang-chub* could just possibly be the name of somebody concerned in the business of commissioning the bell.

This tantalising state of affairs leaves us with no more than *Li'u-stag/Li'u-stang*, names that resemble many of those clearly applied in the Tun-huang documents to foreigners in Tibet, that is to say Chinese, Khotanese and other Central Asians. There was in fact a clan called *Le'u*, possibly of Chinese origin (Richardson 1977b: 24). The bell at bSam-yas was cast by 'the abbot, the Chinese monk Rin-cen' (Richardson 1954: 170-171). Our man, however, seems to have been a lay craftsman; the suffix *-mkhan* always seems to denote a professional specialist known for his particular skills. If he were a monk then would he not have had a Tibetan name such as this Rin-cen? On the strong hypothesis that this *cong* must be the cousin or sister of the Tibetan examples we can suggest that she was cast in the latter half of the 8th century: while the bell of Yer-pa is undateable, those of bSam-yas and Khra-'brug were cast at the behest of 'Bro-bza' rGyal-mo-brtsan, one of the wives of *Khri Srong-lde-brtsan* (ruled 755 - 797). This lady took the name of *Byang-chub* when she became a nun and is referred to by this name in the Khra-'brug bell. There is not yet sufficient evidence to conclude that the *Byang-chub* in the dKon-mchog-gsum bell is the same person or indeed that this would refer to a person at all: *pyang-chub* on the Yer-pa bell figures as *bodhi* ('enlightenment'). It can still, however, stand as a possibility since this queen seems to have had a great regard for these bells and if two of these her favourite votive offerings have survived, why should not a third? There is sufficient difference between the bells at bSam-yas and Khra-'brug to admit further variations issuing from the same source.

The bell thus carries great potential significance for the early history of the area: if the *cong* can be shown to belong to the temple where it is now found it would be the single and indisputable relic of Tibetan missionary activity south of the Himalayas in this early period. The connection between Tibet and Nepal at this time rests on a few scattered references in the contemporary inscriptions and literature, but it seems to have had nothing to do with religion (Tucci 1958: 287). The bell may therefore stand, together with the testimony of those texts, as the only conclusive evidence of Tibetan activity of any kind south of the main Himalayan range during the period of dynastic rule.

### Related Objects

Besides the obviously legendary nature of the local story of the bell's destruction by Tibetan troops who had heard its chimes across the mountains and who came to claim it as their rightful property (which could have arisen out of a simple need to explain the broken condition of this strange heavy



object whose origins had been long forgotten), there are several features of the dKon-mchog-gsum temple which point to its great antiquity. It is of a solitary diminutiveness quite uncharacteristic of Bhutanese temples, even smaller than the original shrines of sKyer-chu and Byams-pa. The central image is a Vairocana, usually a sign of antiquity, and in the temple forecourt stands a most peculiar and interesting object resembling the fragment of a pillar standing on a stepped plinth (Plate 3). The object seems to be referred to in the *rGyal-po bka'-thang* (f. 75b) in a passage describing the *gter-ma* of rTse-lung which is, as we shall see below, the old name for this temple: 'To the right of Bum-thang rTse-lung there is a stone surface. On its waist is an oblong stone hole. On breaking this, inside there are . . . and many other [*gter-ma*]'.<sup>56</sup> Incised on top of the 'pillar foot' today is the same eight-petalled lotus that we find on the bell. Just outside the gateway leading into the forecourt stands a long piece of stone wedged into a large circular stone trough on which is carved the famous six-syllable mantra (Plate 2). The 'megalith' is in a highly weathered condition and no writing is visible. None of these objects as presently disposed convey very much to us in the wider context of Bhutanese or Tibetan ritual artifacts. The most rational explanation would suggest that the 'megalith' now in the trough outside is the upper part of an ancient pillar whose base is the object in the forecourt.

If the pillar at dKon-mchog-gsum is part of a pre-historic megalith it must of course predate the temple and cannot have been erected to commemorate the temple's foundation in the way that might be expected by analogy with Tibetan temple pillars. If this hypothesis is correct then it may be assumed that the site was chosen for the construction of the temple because of the hallowed associations of the megalith itself. Set against the testimony of the written material, which provides ample evidence of the adaptation to Buddhism of ancient pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices, this physical incorporation of a 'pagan' symbol into a Buddhist temple seems perfectly credible. The same would appear to have happened at the temple of gSum-phrang ('Sombrang') in the U-ra district of Bum-thang where a remarkable stone pillar is found actually inside the principal shrine room. According to the temple's eulogy (*gnas-bstod*) it is 'a self-created stone pillar' (*rang-byon rdo-yi ka-ba*), not a *rdo-ring*, the term commonly applied to all standing megaliths. Legends apart, the stone is finely dressed and certainly not an accident of nature. Again at Bya-dkar lHa-khang there is a large stone in the immediate vicinity of the temple which may have had prehistoric associations. At mNa'-sbis in Mang-sde-lung there is a famous 'oath-stone pillar' (*rdo-ring mna'-rdo*) which very likely stands in or near a temple complex. To my knowledge the only megalith standing quite by itself is the one on the pass of 'Shaitang La' (Plate 4), traditionally said to



mark the border between the valleys of sTang and U-ra and therefore perhaps lacking in ritual associations. (See Part one Chapter 2 below.) My suggestion regarding the origin of the standing stones at dKon-mchog-gsum and gSum-phrang (and perhaps Bya-dkar and mNa'sbis) will no doubt be received with some caution. It must, however, be seen against the comparable treatment afforded to the prehistoric stone axe-heads and adzes of Bhutan which were later moulded to the Buddhist tradition in a clear and perceptible manner.

Local traditions claim that below the plinth at dKon-mchog-gsum there lies a subterranean lake from which the great 'text-discoverer' Padma Gling-pa recovered one of his treasures. He sealed it up afterwards with this stone plinth and set his seal of the lotus upon it. There is no account of this to be found in his biography although the temple is mentioned as being near a place where he made some of his finds. Three things might have helped to form this legend. Firstly, the lotus motif (*padma*) would have called to mind the name of this man whose principal residence of gTam-zhing stands close by, a few hundred yards to the north, and whose most dramatic exploit was the alleged recovery of *gter-ma* from the riverine lake of Me-'bar-mtsho some miles to the south-east in the sTang district. Secondly, Padma Gling-pa is also widely remembered as being a highly skilled craftsman in a variety of mediums. Thirdly, the stone plinth might well have recalled the stone slab that seals up the remnant of the Milk Plain lake of Kong-jo's story, which lies in a small chapel in the north-east corner of the Jo-khang, itself the 'Holy of Holies' for pilgrims from Bum-thang and all other districts in Bhutan (Richardson 1977a: 168 and 174). There can be no certainty as to whether these conscious or unconscious associations played a part in forming the local legend. Rather more plausible is the notion that the lotus was incised on the base after the upper part of the pillar had been knocked off. The eight-petalled lotus on the bell might have provided the model. That both the bell and the pillar are in a mutilated condition indeed suggests the activity of an invading force and it could well have been that of Lajang Khan in 1714. Although Pho-lha-nas' biography expressly states that guards were sent to the monasteries and temples of Bum-thang to protect them from pillage and destruction, the order was certainly an attempt to curb something that was already happening (*MBTJ*, f. 108a). Specifically mentioned are the minor religious sites (*gnas-phran*) of the province, among which dKon-mchog-gsum would traditionally have been placed. Mongol troops formed a strong contingent in the invading force. They would not have had quite the same feelings towards these sacred objects as the Tibetan soldiers.

### Related Temples

To return to Padma Gling-pa's own idea (p. 7 above) that a temple of rTse-lung was built by the minister of *Khri-Srong-lde-brtsan* called 'Ba-mi Khri-zheng' with 'the Indian king dByug-ston' acting as patron. Fortunately we have the authority of Kong-sprul to help us identify this rTse-lung: 'As for Bum-thang rTsis-lung, it is the temple where there are preserved the *li-ma* (? bell-metal) statues of the Buddhas of the three times which the Mon-pa call the temple of dKon-mchog-gsum' (*gTer-mam*, f.90a). This is confirmed by *LCB* II, f. 69a. The first *gter-ston* active in Bhutan called Bon-po Brag-tshal-pa recovered *gter-ma* here in the first sixty-year cycle (1027 - 1086). If the temple was thus standing in the 11th century there is every reason to suppose that its foundation dates from the period of the first diffusion of the Buddhist doctrine.<sup>58</sup>

The present name of the temple, dKon-mchog-gsum (*Triratna*), is said locally to relate to the three images referred to by Kong-sprul, though if my memory is correct they are clay images and not made of *li* (bell-metal?). The legend holds that they flew magically to the temple from the Kur-stod district. Padma Gling-pa refers in his prophecy to a large number of *gter-ma* to be recovered by a certain Grags-pa when he is wandering in lHo-mon and these would be found between two 'Mongolian boxes' (*sog-sgrom*) behind the image of Vairocana in Bum-thang rTse-lung. The name must therefore have changed sometime in the centuries between Padma Gling-pa and Kong-sprul. That the temple may already have been partly damaged before or during Padma Gling-pa's lifetime is suggested by the fact that according to his 'prophecy' (f.37a) it was to be converted into 'a house of war' (*dmag-khang*), perhaps as temporary barracks for invading troops.

These scattered references and broken antiquities must therefore stand as eloquent testimony to the ancient origins of dKon-mchog-gsum even though the details are still lacking. Three more temples (Map 2) in Bum-thang could no doubt be placed in this period of primary diffusion but for an even greater lack of evidence. These are:

- 1) A-nu in the village of Gham-ling at the centre of the sTang valley;
- 2) Rin-chen dGe-gnas in the village of Zung-nge in the eastern-most part of the Chu-smad valley; and
- 3) Nam-mkha' in the side-valley of Chu-stod at the top of the sTang valley.

The first two have already appeared in Padma Gling-pa's version of the *mTha'-dul Yang'-dul* scheme as subduing the border and the outer marches respectively. (see p. 6 above). Bum-thang dGe-gnas figures in the *rGyal-po bka'-thang* (f. 75b) and in the *Thang-yig gser-'phreng* (f. 280b), its central image is also that of Vairocana, and the local family whose responsibility it is

## 40 FIRST BUDDHIST TEMPLES

to care for the temple maintains a tradition that it is the contemporary of the *mTha'-dul Yang-'dul* temples. Beyond that nothing is known. Gham-ling A-nu seems to have been frequently refurbished by the descendants of rDo-rje Gling-pa who live in the huge mansion of O-rgyan Chos-gling that towers above this minute temple. Local custom again affirms it to be the oldest religious foundation in the sTang valley. Chu-stod Nam-mkha'i lHa-khang, a few miles north-east of A-nu, occupies a similar position to all these on the floor of its valley and contains a most interesting image of the Buddha that 'dropped from the sky', hence the name Nam-mkha', 'Sky'. It appears to be a focal point for the local cult devoted to the old god Zo-ra-ra-skyes whom we shall be discussing in Part one Chapter 3 below. It must have been the presence of all these buildings and the ancient traditions surrounding them which led great Klong-chen-pa to declare at the beginning of his eulogy of Bum-thang that the province was 'a land to which the excellent kings and ministers of ancient times came, a land in which wondrous temples lie.'<sup>60</sup>

Turning now to the west, the only temples besides sKyer-chu in the sPa-gro valley which might date from this period are the 'Black' and 'White' temples of the Had (pronounced 'Ha') valley at the westernmost end of the country. Two variant local traditions about these have been collected by the author of *LCB* II (f. 64a-b), himself a native of that valley.

1) Srong-btsan sGam-po emanated the forms of two pigeons, one white and one black, and sent them to lHo-rong where they magically built these 'Black' and 'White' temples.

2) Some people suddenly (*had-kyis*) left the three peaks associated with the local god Khyung-bdud at the northern end of the valley and came down to build the temples in a single day. The three hillocks (below which ?) the temples stand came to be called 'the Three-Brother Man-Peaks' (*Mi-ri sPun-gsum*) and the whole valley was named *Had* ('Sudden').<sup>61</sup>

dGe-'dun Rin-chen (loc. cit.) also records the legend of how when the main image of Amitāyus in the 'White Temple' was being made an unidentified person abruptly turned up carrying its head. The image took its head which then soldered itself magically onto its neck; this, it is said, explains why the head happens to be too big for the image. We may perhaps surmise from this that some of the original contents of these two temples survive, upon which later restorative work was added – thus conforming to the general pattern for all these early foundations. No doubt there were more in the west than just these but none are identifiable either in the records or on the ground. The relatively large number of early temples surviving in Bum-thang can no doubt partly be explained by the marked continuity in that province's history and traditions and by the fact that it did not become a great melting-pot of opposing schools as did the western region.

## Conclusion

Much of this discussion has been of a provisional and hypothetical nature, necessarily so because of the nature of our sources. Nevertheless it is hoped that some credibility can now attach to these buildings. Their symbolic importance for the Bhutanese, then as now, is inestimable. dGe'dun Rinchen says of sKyer-chu and Byams-pa: 'As indicated by the beneficence with which the holy religion was [thus] first introduced [through these temples], so was it begun. From then on generations of men too proliferated so that villages and towns were widely established and came into existence' (*LCB* II, f. 64a). Through the medium of these temples the genesis of the Bhutanese themselves is thus linked in a hazy yet sufficient manner to the origins of their religion. Thence issues all the legitimacy and authority upon which, in the eyes of the 'national' historians, the later developments depend. We shall never know the true and exciting story of how the temples were established in the 8th and 9th centuries but we can at least discount the arguments put forward later by many missionaries that they were bringing the first light to a land of darkness. A certain degree of self-interest and an evident ignorance of local history went to form that view.<sup>62</sup>



Plate 7. The temple of sKu-rjes in Bum-thang, legendary site of Padmasambhava's recovery of the 'Sindhu Rāja's soul.

## CHAPTER 2: THE LEGENDARY 'SINDHU RĀJA'

One of the most compelling stories of early Bhutan, recounted both in oral and written forms, concerns the activities of a refugee Indian king called the 'Sindhu Rāja', a patron of Padmasambhava, who is said to have been the founder of a short-lived kingdom in Bum-thang. While the content and nature of this famous story suggest that it is purely legendary, they also give the impression of being rooted in historical fact and one might expect the same mythological development as has been noted in the preceding chapter in the case of the first Buddhist temples. Certain sites associated with the story can similarly be identified on *terra firma*. In the case of the 'Sindhu Rāja', however, to trace the most developed narrative of his story back to its distant sources provides an insight into the evolution and function of the myth itself but we are left hardly the wiser historically. Nevertheless, the glimmer at the end of the tunnel is sufficiently bright to justify the effort and the tunnel itself turns out to have side-chambers full of interest.

### His Biographer

Reference has already been made to the king 'Sendha Ra-tsa' in one of Padma Gling-pa's prophecies (see p. 6 above). The full narrative of the king's story, however, does not appear to be contained in the standard Collected Works of Padma Gling-pa but rather in a short text having a quite independent existence. This is the Biography of King Sindha Ra-dza (*rGyal-po sindha ra-dza'i nam-thar*) recently reprinted in 30 folios. It constitutes a prophecy and is presented as the *gter-ma* of a certain O-rgyan, last in the line of seven *gter-ston*:<sup>1</sup> mNga'-dbag Nyang, [Gu-ru] Chos(-kyi)-dbang(-phyug), Tshe-bstan [Tshe-brtan] rGyal-mtshan, Chos-rgyal Rin-chen Gling-pa, Shes-rab Me-'bar, rDo-rje [Gling-pa] and finally O-rgyan. As we shall see in Part Two, Chapter 2 below, all of these persons (with the exception of the first and last) are easily recognisable as *gter-ston* who were active in Bhutan and their chronological sequence here is broadly correct. The O-rgyan who comes at the end presents some difficulties. He is supposed to be the re-incarnation of lDan-ma rTse-mangs to whom the 'prophecy' containing the biography was dictated by the Guru. Padma Gling-pa normally regarded himself as the

incarnation of Padma-gsal, a daughter of the king *Khri* Srong-lde-btsan whom the Guru had taken as one of his consorts. Padma Gling-pa, however, is often referred to as *O-rgyan* Padma Gling-pa and there seems every reason to identify him with the *O-rgyan* of this text. That he should on occasion have regarded himself as the incarnation of lDan-ma rTse-mangs instead of Padma-gsal would be perfectly consistent with the character of a *gter-ston*, many of whom embody two of the Guru's disciples. rDo-rje Gling-pa (1286 - 1345) was the most prestigious *gter-ston* in Bhutan prior to Padma Gling-pa (b. 1450). For these reasons there seems little doubt that Padma Gling-pa would be considered by local scholars to be the true *gter-ston* responsible for this text which itself affords close parallel to others of his works. This is particularly noticeable in the apocalyptic treatment of the 'evil times' which will befall Bum-thang (f. 21 a-b) which echoes the principal theme of the *Bum-thang dar-gud-kyi lung-bstan* (see note 4 to Chapter 1 above). The latter also exists outside the collection of Padma Gling-pa's works and this leads one to a further possibility as to authorship, namely that these 'extrapolated' texts may be truly apocryphal; instead of being the revelations of Padma Gling-pa they might simply have been disguised as such by later writers who did not themselves carry sufficient weight to ensure the acceptance of their works as *gter-ma*. For the present, however, the Sindha Ra-dza's biography may be taken at its face value despite these reservations since the story of the Indian king was certainly known to Padma Gling-pa. In the Collected Works, the king is referred to in the course of Khyi-kha Ra-thod's story where he fulfils a minor role under the name of Sen-mda' or Senta.<sup>2</sup> We are told nothing except that he is an Indian king living in the palace of lCags-mkhar in Bum-thang. On one occasion he is called 'the emanation of Hayagrīva'. We can assume that there must have been a well-known myth concerning this figure known to Padma Gling-pa and that the text under discussion represents the version known either to Padma Gling-pa or to somebody closely following his tradition.

### The Narrative

The preamble to the text (ff. 1b - 2b) serves to introduce lDan-ma rTse-mangs as the scribe who is about to take down the words of the Guru's prophecy. lDan-ma explains how he accompanied the Guru to Bum-thang where the main events of the narrative took place. Chapter I<sup>3</sup> explains how while the Guru was in India he was invited by the king of India called sNa'u-che to his palace of Rin-chen 'Od-lDan where he converted the King and all his subjects to Buddhism. (As we shall see, this king seems to have been created as a foil to the figure of the Sindha Ra-dza, the protagonist. His name sNa'u-che means simply 'Big Nose'. One is reminded of the common caricature of an Indian depicted on the masks of the *A-tsa-ra* clowns with their huge noses.)

Chapter II<sup>4</sup> begins by announcing King Khyi-kha Ra-thod who lives in the 'hidden land' (*sbas-yul*) of mKhan-pa-lung (and who only reappears in Ch. VI). South of mKhan-pa-lung lies the palace of lCags-mkhar sGo-med ('The Iron Fort-Palace Without Doors'). The palace (which is apparently unoccupied and whose origin is unexplained) is minutely described. It is nine storeys in height, each one made of a different precious substance and it has two main doors (even though described above as 'doorless'); one faces the river to the east and the other to the west, this arrangement making it very strong and secure.<sup>5</sup> The important features of the surrounding country and the major sites in its vicinity are also described, including the palace of King sNa'u-che to the south-west, all the other directions being occupied by various local spirits. The valley where the palace of lCags-mkhar is situated is itself the centre of two-thirds of the world (*'dzam-bu-ling gsum-gnyis-su bcad-pa'i lte-ba*).

The chapter continues by telling us about the person who is destined to occupy the lCags-mkhar. Prince Kun-'joms (the incarnation of King Nam-mkha' 'Ja'-ris-can) is born as the middle of seven sons to King Sing-ga-la of Ser-skya (Kapilavastu). Kun-'joms is of a violent disposition and the ministers decide he should be sent off to pursue a life of religion. The king and Kun-'joms both agree to this but obstacles are put in his path by the king's five hundred consorts and some of the evil ministers. Kun-'joms is defeated and banished to the kingdom of Singdhi (sic) where he becomes the *rāja*. There he contends with the 'King of India' sNa'u-che, is once more defeated and so flees to Bum-thang with his eighty followers. Now known as the Sindha Ra-tsa, he takes control of the palace of lCags-mkhar sGo-med which he surrounds with a wall encompassing half the district of Bum-thang. He then procures himself one hundred consorts from India, Tibet and Mon, five of whom bear him children. Two of these assume important roles in the story: *lHa-gcig* 'Bum-ldan mTsho-mo who has the physical marks of a *ḍākinī* of the *vajra* family, daughter of Nyi-zer-ldan, and sTag-lha Me-'bar,<sup>6</sup> son of Kun-skyong-ma. In addition to his hundred consorts the king has eighty ministers including five important ones from India, Sindha, Hor, Tibet and Mon. In his kingdom the *gnod-sbyin* bDud-'dul is worshipped as a god (*lha*), rDo-rje Gags-ldan as a battle-god (*dgra-lha*), the *klu-bdud chen-po* sPyi-bdud Kha-la Me-'bar as a local spirit (*gzhi-bdag*) and dBang-phyug Chen-po also as a god (*lha*). (The idea expressed here is clearly that, while retaining the worship of the Hindu deity Śiva (dBang-phyug Chen-po), the king now adopts the cult of the local spirits of Bum-thang.)

Chapter III (ff. 5b - 9b) begins by explaining how Prince sTag-lha Me-'bar extends his father's kingdom by taking over four new settlements (*yul-gsar*): rDo-rje-brag in Tibet, Khang-gsar in Mon, Gling-gor in Hor and Sindha-phari



in India. At the age of twenty, however, the prince is killed by his father's old enemy King sNa'u-che.<sup>7</sup> His father retaliates by burning one thousand settlements belonging to sNa'u-che who then destroys twenty of his own. Thereafter the war is waged sometimes to the advantage of India and sometimes to the advantage of Mon. In his misery at the loss of his son the Sindha Ra-tsa foregoes the worship of his *pho-lha* (i.e. his guardian or ancestral spirit) and commits various impurities.<sup>8</sup> These cause injury to all the spirits who convene in a *vajra*-tent and decide to punish him by stealing his life-force (*bla*). The chief of all the gods and demons (*lha-dre*) called Shel-ging dKar-po<sup>9</sup> declares he has more right to it than all the other *lha-dre* and so he seizes the king's *bla-srog*. The king falls ill, his flesh and blood waste away leaving just skin and bones and his eyes become like stars reflected at the bottom of a pail of water. His ministers cannot think of a lama powerful enough to effect a cure but eventually a 'minor ruler of the border barbarians' (*mtha'-khob-kyi rgyal-phran*) says that sNa'u-che's lama, the Indian tantrist (*sngags-pa*) called Padma 'Byung-gnas, is capable of it. He is sent off with a measure of gold powder to invite the Guru and so Padma 'Byung-gnas arrives in Mon Bum-thang.<sup>10</sup> The *rāja* promises to fulfil any commands given to him by the Guru if the latter can cure him. The Guru replies by saying that all he needs is a tantric consort (*gzungs-ma*) for his meditation. Seeing the twenty-one marks of a *dākinī* on *lHa-gcig* 'Bum-ldan mTsho-mo, the *rāja*'s daughter by Nyi-zer-ldan, he takes her off to the cave of rDo-rje brTsegs-pa which is the 'vajra-cave' of the malignant spirits. The guru meditates and the princess acts as the *sgrub-sde-mo*, fetching water and laying out the *gter-ma* (= *gtor-ma*?). She makes all gods, demons and humans happy and so they address her as their 'single mother', *Ma-gcig* 'Bum-ldan. After seven days the Guru leaves the imprint of his body on the rock. Shel-ging dKar-po introduces himself to him:

- 1) under his common name by which he is known when acting as chief of the *srog-bdag* ('life-owning') spirits; also as
- 2) Gang-ba bZang-po, chief of *gnod-sbyin*,
- 3) dMu-rta Zhur-chen, chief of *dmu*,
- 4) sKye-bu-lung-btsan, chief of *btsan*,
- 5) gZa'-bdud rGyal-po Ra-hu-la, chief of *gza*,
- 6) 'Chi-bdag Zo-ra-ra-skyes, chief of *bdud*,
- 7) Klu-chen mGo-dgu, chief of *klu*,
- 8) Dam-sri Me-mo, chief of *ma-mo*.

(The assimilation of all these deities to the figure of Shel-ging dKar-po employs a common means of increasing the stature of a single god who normally plays a minor role. The 'mundane deities' enumerated here are all well known with the exception of Zo-ra-ra-skyes who has an important role to play in the story of Khyi-kha-ra-thod.) Shel-ging dKar-po declares that

apart from 'breathless earth and stones' he has authority over all beings who have breath. He returns the king's life-force to the Guru in the form of 'breath' contained in a 'rodent trap' (*bra-ba'i slu-bu* ?) described as *ther-hyang-se* (?) which is inside a metal box. Inside the 'trap' is 'a white tube' (*dom dkar-po = dong-po dkar-po* ?) which is the king's *bla*. The Guru and the princess<sup>11</sup> return to lCags-mkhar and the 'trap' is placed in the king's nose. From within, the tube which is like 'a trembling immaterial rainbow' comes out and is absorbed into the crown of the king's head. The king recovers and a great celebration ensues. The king is given the initiation of Vajrapāṇi and to protect him in the future an amulet called 'The Mouth-union of a Lion and Scorpion' (*Seng-sdig kha-sbyor*) is tied to his body. Offering a cup of grape wine to the Guru, the king declares he will give him anything he should desire from his wealth and subjects. The Guru declines saying that he cannot remain in Bum-thang since the whole of the visible world is his palace. The world is full of his own wealth, what would he do with just the king's wealth ? Since all the gods, demons and humans are his patrons, why should he show partiality to any one in particular ? He desires nothing except that the king should heed his command and follow a path of virtue. The king agrees.

In Chapter IV<sup>12</sup> the Guru enquires of the king the cause of conflict between him and King sNa'u-che and so all is explained. The Guru says that both kings must meet him on the border of India and Mon and he himself sets off to summon sNa'u-che. Both parties then assemble on a broad field that has a natural stone floor where no trees or bushes grow. The kings are reconciled and receive the initiation of the *sGrub-pa bka'-brgyad*. Before the *maṇḍala* is dismantled and in answer to the king's enquiries about his intentions, the Guru explains to them his future responsibilities in India, Nepal and Tibet. A pillar is erected on the spot and the Guru then declares that henceforth whoever contravenes ('gal) 'this oath-stone pillar' (*rdo-ring mna'-rdo 'di*), his heartblood would immediately be transferred to this field and so he would die. Henceforth the troops of India must not trespass ('gal) beyond this pillar towards Mon and the troops of Mon must not trespass in the direction of India. If they do they will be destroyed. All the kings and ministers place their hands on the pillar and swear: 'So shall it be done! *Sa-ma-ya-na-ra-kan!*' The field where this took place becomes known as *mNa-'thang* ('Oath-Field') and since the oath was taken in relinquishment of their own power (*dbang-med-du*), the pillar becomes known as *dBang-med* ('Powerless').<sup>13</sup> Finally the Guru hides thirty *gter-ma* around the pillar and appoints the local spirit Rong-btsan as the guardian of the *gter-ma*. All return to their own countries.

### The Oath

The actual place where the oath is said to have been taken is the village of mNa'-sbis (pronounced 'Nabzhi') which lies just south of the holy mountain of Jo-bo Dung-shing ('The Lord Fir-tree' known as the Black Mountain on the British maps) in the area east of Mang-sde-lung. It lies on the old route that leads up from the Indian plains and it is a matter of some regret that George Sherriff, the only modern traveller to have taken that route and visited the place, has left just a passing reference to the 'monastic village of Nabzi (4,600 feet)' (Fletcher 1975 : 131). It would, however, be most surprising if the principal temple there were not in some way associated with an old megalith as at dKon-mchog-gsum and gSum-'phrang. Investigations at the site will certainly reveal much more than can be gleaned from this legendary account.

The animal and human sacrifices that accompanied the swearing of oaths in ancient Tibet were offered together with imprecations vowing the same fate on those who might break the oath in the future (Stein 1972 : 200). Padmasambhava's threat that anyone breaking the oath would have his heartblood brought to the site of the oath by the guardian divinities would appear to be a tantric Buddhist adaptation of this ancient feature of the oath ceremony. The swearing of oaths in temples devoted to the guardian deities is a practice still in force in Bhutan to this day. As in ancient Tibet, such oaths must be taken before human and divine witnesses and while absent from this account of the 'Sindhu Rājā's oath, the convention finds careful mention in the narrative of an oath of loyalty sworn by the local rulers of eastern Bhutan to the 'Brug-pa authorities (*Lo-rgyus*, f. 21 a-b). A point of interest in the ceremony of the 'Sindhu Rājā's oath is the laying of hands on the pillar by the participants as they pronounce the oath. Logical as this may seem, it is a feature to which no parallel can be found in other texts. It would be dangerous to hazard a guess as to whether the action is recorded as a genuine folk memory of such oaths or whether it was introduced into the narrative as a convincing, though imagined, detail.

### The Pillar

While many of the surviving Tibetan pillars bearing inscriptions had a simple commemorative purpose and do not seem to have been accompanied by any sort of an oath, others (notably the pillar recording the treaty of 821-822 between the Chinese emperor Mu-tsung and the Tibetan king *Khri gTsug-lde-brtsan*) were undoubtedly erected soon *after* the swearing of an oath; the actual ceremony enacting the oath made use of a text written on paper which was later copied on the pillar. Such oaths are recorded on the Zhol rDo-ring in lHa-sa, and on the pillars at Zhwa'i lHa-khang and bSam-yas.

The actual record of a grant accompanied by oaths and commemorated by a pillar appears to have been described as *gtsigs* (or *rtsis*) and this appears to have survived in the term *gtan-tshigs* which means 'charter'. It can probably be assumed that in the period before the introduction of writing (and probably long after too) oaths were in fact sworn over a stone (the *mna'-rdo* of our text) which was intended to serve as a perpetual reminder. The cosmological symbolism of tomb pillars has been studied by Tucci (1950) and tentatively placed in the wider context of Tibetan megaliths by A. W. Macdonald (1953). A further use of the pillar in dynastic Tibet, and the one to which the 'Sindhu Rāja's pillar relates most closely, is for the demarcation of borders. There survives plenty of evidence in the Chinese annals of the T'ang dynasty to show that pillars were erected at different times both by the Tibetans and the Chinese to fix their common frontiers.<sup>14</sup> This function of the pillar is well known to the Bhutanese. On the pass of 'Shaitang La' between the valleys of U-ra and sTang in the Bum-thang district there stands a fine megalith (Plate 4) which, according to the local legend, was carried and erected there by the *gDung* Nag-po of U-ra to mark the western border of his principality. The 'Sindhu Rāja's pillar at mNa'-sbis seems to be placed at a spot that could realistically have approximated to the southernmost extension of an early kingdom centering around Bum-thang, that is to say before its inhabitants penetrated to the southern foothills adjoining the Indian plain. It would be difficult to imagine, however, that the converse is also true, namely that the site marked the northernmost extension of an Indian power. More likely the site loosely connotes a 'half-way house' on the journey down to India from Bum-thang. If, as seems very likely, there is a pillar still standing in the immediate vicinity of a Buddhist temple of later construction one is more attracted to the possibility of a ritual origin, as distinct from one of border demarcation. The close proximity of mNa'-sbis to the present centres of the Mon-pa 'aboriginals' around 'Prumzur' also deserves notice. If these people are the descendants of those prehistoric groups who manufactured stone implements and erected menhirs, then it seems plausible to suggest that they were displaced by later groups arriving from the north who took over the settled agricultural land of mNa'-sbi and much later built a temple around the old *rdo-ring* there. The Mon-pa people, according to this hypothesis, abandoned their previous way of life and took to shifting agriculture in the forest some miles to the east where they still survive. Pending a thorough survey of the area, we can but conjecture.

### A Forgotten Source

The manner in which imprecations were uttered prior to the oath, the supposed function of the pillar as a boundary mark, the 'naming' of the

pillar, even the words spoken by the Guru – all these features suggest a direct line of continuity with the most ancient traditions. It is as if the distant memory of various rites associated with oaths and pillars had been synthesised for the purpose of the story. The episode stands as strong evidence for a survival of traditions relating to the earliest period of true history. Unfortunately, there can be little doubt that the event itself never took place for there exists a further text, of a sufficiently independent origin to cast a quite different light on the 'Sindhu Rāja' and one which seems to dissolve him back into the myth from where he came. The following account constitutes the *lo-rgyus* or 'narrative' explaining the origin of a protective amulet dedicated to the Red Hayagrīva in the *Ekavira* aspect. It forms part of the *dPal rta-mgrin dpa'-bo gcig-pa'i man-ngag gnam-lcags me'i 'khor-lo* (10 folios in Vol. *La* of the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod*) and is said to have been the discovery of the *gter-ston* Mol-mi-'khyil whom Kong-sprul (*gTer-rnam*, f. 277b) places in the 2nd Sexagenary Cycle (1087 - 1146).<sup>15</sup>

(fol. 6a)

*The Life-Wheel of the King [Entitled] the Weapon Which Strikes at the Vitals of All Sprites* is contained [herein].

In the language of India, *Ra-dza tsitta tsakra tsa-tu*.

In the language of Tibet, *The Life-Wheel of the King*.

Obeisance to Padma 'Byung-gnas.

As for the account of this protective wheel, in the centre of Bum-thang [in] Mon-yul, there was a king of Mon called Se-'dar-kha. He was a person who committed non-virtuous deeds in his work and a punishment of the gods and demons of the visible world came to him. All the gods and demons assembled before him and deliberated and the king saw them. Thereupon, the leader of the Eight Classes [of *lHa-srin*] [who was] (1) in the language of the holy *dharma*, the King of Worldly Existence Shel-ging dKar-po, (2) in the language of everlasting Bon, the Owner of Life Nyi-pam-sad, (3) in the language of the Eight Classes [of *lHa-srin*], Ra-hu Ra-tsa, (4) in the language of the *nagas*, Nag-po mGo-dgu, declared: 'I rule over the lives of all beings. I cause the afflictions of human and cattle diseases, (fol. 6b) of leprosy, plague and strife, all these. I bring forth epidemics among cattle and cause frost and hail. I act as king of all gods and demons. I rule over the life of Se-'dar-kha. Therefore you offer me the essence of [his] life.' Having deliberated, the Eight Classes of *lHa-srin* offered his life's essence. 'Act as our king', they said and so he [Shel-ging dKar-po] was thus installed in power. He was established in perpetuity as their so-called 'king'. Then various kinds of calamities befell the realms of Se-'dar-kha: epilepsy, accidents, plague, insanity and fainting diseases, cattle epidemics, frost and hail on the fields and so forth all variously arose. Thereupon the king of Se-'dar-kha also contracted a serious illness and although many examinations were made to effect a cure, they

did not help. On coming near to death, when no means could be found to effect a recovery, his retinue and subjects assembled and the king declared: 'If there is a person who knows a means of delivering me from this injury caused by the Eight Classes [of *IHa-srin*], I shall give him a consort together with a dominion.' A minor ruler of the border barbarians from among the retinue and subjects replied: 'Give me a full measure of gold powder and I shall show a means of curing the king.' Then when the minor ruler had been given the gold, he said: 'In the cave of Yang-le-shod in the country of Nepal there is a person called Padma 'Byung-gnas the Great Man of U-rgyan who has gained mastery of the religion of secret *mantra* and who has subjugated and bedazzled the visible world. (fol. 7a) If you call him, he can help.' Thereupon a swift messenger was dressed up in yellow apparel in the manner of a religious person and despatched. He conducted U-rgyan Padma [to Bum-thang] and when he had come before the king of Se-'dar-kha, the king said: 'If you cure me and counter this punishment of the gods and demons I shall do whatever you say and offer you whatever you like.' Padma replied: 'I do not want any offerings. [Instead] you must give up the evil deeds of this country and strive in works of virtue. When you have agreed to enter my faith, I have a means of effecting a cure. Thereupon the king and his subjects, the people of the country, gave up evil and agreed to do anything they were told, and so Padma 'Byung-gnas was delighted. He performed meditative rites at the Red Rock of rDo-rje brTsegs-pa ('Piled *Vajras*') and after three days the gods and demons, the Eight Classes [of *IHa-srin*] with Shel-ging dKar-po at their head appeared before U-rgyan. Making their obeisance, they offered [the king's] life-essence [to the Guru] and were tied to an oath. Then having turned the *All-Binding Wheel of the King*, the *ācārya* subjugated [the gods and demons]. Thereafter he tied the wheel to [the body of] Se-'dar-kha and so he [the king] came to be delivered from the injury of the Eight Classes [of *IHa-srin*]. The region became happy and fortunate.

Thus has the account and origin of the wheel been revealed.

*Sa-ma-ya rGya-rgya-rgya Ithi*<sup>16</sup>

### A Probable Pedigree

What strikes one immediately about this story is the complete absence of the Indian element that so dominates the 'Sindhu Rāja's biography. Far from being a refugee, the king in this account is the local (and probably hereditary) ruler of Bum-thang. His name of Se-'dar-kha is applied both to him and to his kingdom. The suffix *-kha* is an element in many place-names in Bhutan and its use is generally optional both in colloquial speech and in literary forms (Aris 1976 : 625 note 61). The king is therefore the eponymous ruler of a place called Se-'dar in its most basic form. It is presumably

the nasalising function of the 'a-chung in the second syllable which led to the *Sen-mda'*/*Senta* in Padma Gling-pa's Collected Works, and thence to the *Sendha/Sindha* in the 'prophecy' and the 'biography' respectively. These latter forms finally become *Sindhu* in the later literature.<sup>17</sup> The sequence can, if we accept the attribution to the *gter-ston* in each case, be set out broadly as follows:

- 1) Se'dar(-kha) [11th - 12th centuries]
- 2) Sen-mda'/Senta [15th - 16th centuries]
- 3) Sendha/Sindha [15th - 16th centuries, or later]
- 4) Sindhu [18th century up to the present]

Clearly the most crucial step in this progression is from (1) to (2) and (3). Can the *gter-ma* of Mol-mi-'khyil have provided direct inspiration for that of Padma Gling-pa and his school? If the Indian element in the most evolved version is subtracted we are left with exactly the same story as found in Mol-mi-'khyil with the exception that the deity to whom the king's protective amulet is dedicated is Hayagrīva in Mol-mi-'khyil and Vajrapāni in Padma Gling-pa. The discrepancy is probably a minor one if it is set against the treatment accorded to Shel-ging dKar-po who is associated with four languages (*chos, bon, lha-srin* and *klu*, corresponding to four deities) in Mol-mi-'khyil and with eight classes of spirits (*srog-bdag, gnod-sbyin, dmu, btsan, gza', bdud, klu* and *ma-mo*) in Padma Gling-pa. The latter almost certainly derive from the constant mention of the 'Eight Classes of *lHa-srin*' in Mol-mi-'khyil who remain unspecified in that text. More pertinently, the four deities found there all appear in Padma Gling-pa's set with the exception of the Bon-po god Nyi-pam-sad.<sup>18</sup> It is evident that deities can be manipulated or substituted to suit the spiritual affinities of those concerned. If, however, we turn our attention for a moment to the isolated references to the *rāja* that appear in the accepted corpus of Padma Gling-pa's works (stage 2 in the sequence suggested above), one of these directly links the *Senta Ra-dza* to Hayagrīva, calling him the emanation of that deity. This comes in yet another of Padma Gling-pa's 'prophecies', the *Nang-gi lung-bstan gsal-ba'i sgron-me* (Vol. *Ca* (= *Tsa*), p. 383), in an interesting passage foretelling that one of Padma Gling-pa's wives would be the rebirth of the *Senta Ra-dza's* daughter known as 'Bum-ldan-skyid or rDo-rje-mtsho (the 'Bum-ldan mTsho-mo of the 'biography'). There seems every reason to believe that Mol-mi-'khyil's account, or a tradition based on it, served as the inspiration for the later Bhutanese versions. But who was Mol-mi-'khyil and what is the history of his text? Kong-sprul (1813-1899) has this to say:

*mNga'-bdag* Mol-mi-'khyil was born [in the 2nd *Rab-'byung*, 1087 - 1146]<sup>19</sup> at the extremity of the southern region (*lho-rgyud-kyi mthar*) of gTsang-stod in a lineage descending from the rulers (*mnga'-bdag*)

[of ancient Tibet]. It is apparent that he lived in the manner of one having the calling of a tantric monk of royal descent (*rten lha-rigs sngags-btsun*). He was prophecied to be the rebirth of the 'Meditator from Mon' Ha-mi-nā-tha who was the personal disciple of O-rgyan Rin-po-che. He recovered the *rTa-mgrin dpa'-bo-gcig-sgrub*, the *rGyal-po srog-gi 'khor-lo*, the *Pe-har gnad-'bebs* and the *Dregs-pa gnad-'bebs* from the bracket of a pillar (*ka-phog* ?) in the temple of Byang Pra-dun-tse. Although in the intervening period [since its discovery] the continuity of the *rGyal-po srog-gi 'khor-lo* and its practice came to flourish, it happened that later not even a copy of it was to be seen in these parts. Thereupon an old copy of previous times came into the hands of Lord mDo-sngags Gling-pa ['Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, 1820-1892] as a trust (*gtad-rgya*) of a *ḍākinī*. Thereafter, from the grace of O-rgyan, father and sons, he put it in order as a 'sequel treasure' (*yang-gter*) [whose initiation and authorisation] I have myself gratefully received. (*gTer-ram*, f. 103a-b)

According to this account the text was first hidden, then recovered by Mol-mi-'khyil, subsequently lost, once more recovered by mKhyen-brtse in the last century, then bestowed on Kong-sprul who included it in the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod*. Further details (which complicate the picture even more) can be added from the preamble and colophon to the text itself and from the information given in the *sādhana* to it composed by Kong-sprul.<sup>20</sup> According to both the preamble and the *sādhana*, the text was first bestowed by the Guru on the king *Khri* Srong-lde'u-btsan who in turn entrusted it to Ha-mi-nā-tha of Mon, telling him to hide it in the ancestral temple of Pra-dun-tse. This is the same temple as the one figuring in the *mTha'-'dul Yang-'dul* group, located in Western Tibet in the area west of Sa-dga' rDzong. Later the 'wheel' was used once more by the Guru to subjugate demons in the district of gTsang La-stod and then 'sealed up' (*rgyas-btab*) in Pra-dun-tse, which appears to contradict the information concerning Ha-mi-nā-tha's activity in this respect. The *gter-ston* is described in the *sādhana* as Mol-mi-'khyil, 'the descendant of the great ruler of the South' (*lho'i mnga'-bdag chen-po'i rgyud-pa*). He is said to have come from the 'southern ravine country (*lho-rong-zar* ?) of gTsang Ru-lag'. The implication one would like to see in this is that Mol-mi-'khyil had some connection with the Mon-pa people of an area to the south of central Tibet which might conceivably be Bhutan. The evidence, however, is altogether too vague to permit any firm conclusion. The colophon to the text states that Mol-mi-'khyil passed it on to a certain Rin-chen-grags of Yar-lung who had offered him 'sons, horses and religious teachings' (*bu rta chos gsum*) for it. The *sādhana* says that it was recovered once more by mKhyen-brtse in the year 1880 (*lcags-'brug*). It is the only firm date in the entire history of the text.



An enquiry into other texts devoted to these 'wheels', which function both as a form of tantric weapon and as protective amulets, may eventually shed some light on the king of Se-'dar-kha's story. The *Rin-chen gTer-mdzod* has a collection of such texts in Vol. *Phi* (=44) and the first group in this section consists of the discoveries credited to a certain Phur-bu of the rGya clan, born in lHo-brag and a contemporary of Mar-pa (1012 - 1296). The *gTer-rnam* (ff. 98b - 99a) explains how Phur-bu's texts were recovered from two temples in Bhutan, sKyer-chu in sPa-gro and dGe-gnas in Bum-thang. They were combined into a single collection called the *Bum-lcags lhan-dril*. Unfortunately, another text which would have afforded close comparison with Mol-mi-'khyil's has, according to Kong-sprul, not survived. This is the *Rlung-'khor srog-gi spu-gri* which is supposed to have been recovered from the same place as Mol-mi-'khyil's, i.e. sPra-dun-tse, by a certain g.Yas-ban Ya-bon, a Bon-po. His dates are not clear as Kong-sprul places him confusingly both in the first and third sexagenary cycle (*gTer-rnam*, ff. 106a and 228a). An important clue might be found in the way Kong-sprul links the names of g.Yas-ban Ya-bon and Phur-bu (spelt sPur-bu) with the sites of their 'wheel' discoveries in Pra-dun-tse and Bum-thang dGe-gnas. The discoveries are treated as having a single composite nature in the 'reverential petition' (*gsol-'debs*) accompanying the lives of the *gter-ston*: '[We] entreat g.Yas-ban Ya-bon and sPur-bu Bya'u-mgon [who together discovered] the *Srog-gi chan-pa myur-rgyogs las-byed-kyi bcud-'byin sngags-grub* in Pra-dun-tse and Bum-thang dGe-gnas' (f.5a). Whatever the texts may have been that went to form this collection, there exists a further 'wheel' text in Padma Gling-pa's Collected Works in which Pra-dun-tse and Bum-thang are similarly linked and one in which Hayagrīva plays a part too. It is the *Bum-thang srog-'khor dgra-bo'i srog-gi (m)chan-pa* ('The Life-Wheel of Bum-thang, the Shears [Which Destroy] the Lives of Enemies') in the Collected Works, Vol. *Da* (pp. 561 - 571). The narrative account of its origin explains that an Indian heretical teacher called Kha-phung Nag-po destroyed the Buddhists in a kingdom called Bha-ra-ta-tsha by using a text contracted from the tantra called '*Byung-ba 'khrugs-byed rgyal-po'i rgyud*. Kha-phung Nag-po hid this in the *liṅgam* of a Śiva statue in the temple of Ru-pa-ta-tsha, written out on a copper scroll in silver letters. The text was recovered by Padmasambhava and used by him against the heretics. He then took it to Pra-dun-tse where he 'put it in order'.<sup>21</sup> Later when an unspecified temple was being built in Bum-thang he hid it in the form of a scroll inside the phallus of the Hayagrīva image that acted as the gate-guardian (*sgo-srung*) of the temple. It seems likely that the temple in question is meant to be dKon-mchog-gsum (ancient rTsis-lung or, as here, rTse-lung) because a companion to this text in the same volume is the *Mu-stegs gu-lang nag-po'i skor*

which is said to have been recovered by Pad-ma Gling-pa from 'the armpit' of the blue gate-guardian of rTse-lung Temple in Bum-thang.' The actual form and content of the *Bum-thang srog-'khor* is strikingly similar to that of the *rTam-mgrin gnam-lcags me-'khor* containing the story of Se-'dar-kha. Both are taken up with a minute description of their respective amulets, their manner of preparation and consecration. No doubt these similarities are derived more from the particular *genre* of ritual to which they both obtain, rather than from direct lines of transmission or adaptation. However, the existence of these closely related texts with their important geographical implications does at the very least suggest the sort of way in which the story might have gained currency in Bum-thang in the period prior to Pad-ma Gling-pa.

A convincing alternative to the view which holds Mol-mi-'khyil's text as the direct source of inspiration for that of Padma Gling-pa or his school is the one which looks upon Mol-mi-'khyil's story as the expression of a local legend of Bum-thang presented to a Tibetan audience as the authority for the Hayagriva ritual. According to this interpretation Mol-mi-'khyil recorded the *locus classicus* of the 'Sindhu Raja' as preserved in Bum-thang in an oral or written form, a story which was later known to Padma Gling-pa also. This obviates the need to look for a direct stimulus in operation across the chronological and geographical haze that lies between these two figures. Nevertheless, despite our reservations about the true authorship of the *rāja's* 'biography', there is sufficient evidence in Padma Gling-pa's main corpus to show that in his day the Indian element had already been grafted on to the 'classical' version for it is the Indian troops of the *rāja* who support the mysterious Khyi-kha Ra-thod in his attempt to destroy the temple of bSam-yas. This episode is omitted from the 'biography' where the main account ends with the oath sworn between the *rāja* and sNa'u-che. In all that follows (chapters V to VIII) the hand of the *gter-ston* is most apparent, for a whole series of events are added to bolster the authenticity of the prophecy that comes at the end of the text. Padmasambhava goes to India where he destroys the heretical opponents of Buddhism and restores the temple at Bodh-gaya. The story of Khyi-kha Ra-thod is introduced in Chapter VI and in Chapter VII we find the Guru once more returning to the palace of lCags-mkhar in Bum-thang to bestow the prophecy on the *rāja* and on Khyi-kha Ra-thod (who accompanied him there from mKhan-pa-lung). The destruction of lCags-mkhar during the time of King Glang-dar-ma of Tibet is foretold ' . . . so that not a single iron nail will remain ' (f.18a). The *rāja* is comforted by the Guru's assurance that in the future his reincarnations will be born in the lineage of the *btsan-po* in Bum-thang and will gain secular power (*rgyal-srid*). It is this statement (and many more like it) which suggests the

true *raison d'être* of the text, namely to justify the pretensions to divine authority on the part of the *gter-ston* in an age when religious affiliations carried the strongest possible secular implications. We have no means of identifying the *btsan-po* whose lineage survived in Bum-thang but, as we shall see when considering the ancestral myths of the *gDung* families, there were several groups in that area claiming some sort of descent from the ancient royal family of Tibet. Following the usual practice in this prophetic literature, the names and attributes of the persons destined to fulfil the predictions are all disguised in a thoroughly cryptic fashion, but one that was not too obscure to have prevented the contemporary audience from identifying them.

### The Indian element

The transformation of Se-'dar(-kha) into Sindhu provides an obvious parallel to an apocryphal tradition which claims an Indian origin for the first kings of Tibet, a tradition favoured by the monk Ngag-dbang in his study of the eastern Bhutanese clans.<sup>22</sup> As is well known, *Sindhu* (originally the Indus river) is the ancient form for *Hindu*, the latter word resulting from the Persian inability to pronounce an initial *s*. It would be hazardous to venture an opinion as to whether or not the Bhutanese were conscious of the full weight of their *rāja*'s name in its final stage of evolution (or indeed the precise connotations which the name carries even now). However, just as the subscript *ha* in *Sendha/Sindha* achieved a full 'Indianization' of *Sen-mda'/Senta*, it must remain at least a possibility that *Sindhu* arose by unconscious analogy with *Hindu*. The need to look for illustrious precedents is often the pre-occupation of a newly created state and it is probably significant that the form *Sindhu* seems to have gained currency only in the 18th century and later among 'national' historians. Set against the information provided on the early history in *LCB I*, the story of the 'Sindhu Rāja' ceases to act in the isolated context in which it is originally expressed but becomes part of a general pattern in which the whole genesis of the country is dominated by the Indian contact:

Indian settlements (*yul-grong*) were established with their rulers and subjects in these southern regions and their homes enjoyed happiness and great strength and riches. Thus even today [there survive the ruins of] a palace of an Indian king in front of some sandalwood trees in the forest of rTsa-chu-phu, the ruins [of a palace] of another king who lived at Ja-zhag dGon-pa and so on. There are more mistaken pronunciations [of place-names] such as Ra-mtsho-'og in the Shar District which should, however, be called Ra-dza'i-'og ('Under [the dominion of] a *Rāja*'). Furthermore, it is said that in the districts of Bum-thang to the east there are as many towns (*grong-khyer*) together with their

subjects [that once belonged to] the lCags-mkhar rGyal-po and to other [rulers] as there are stars in the sky. It is also said that *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye-'dren was the daughter of that man [lCags-mkhar rGyal-po = 'Sindhu Raja']. Thus it was that Thed [the sPu-na-kha valley], Thim [-phu] and sPa[-gro], [these] three, the Eight Hosts of the Shar District (*Shar-tsho-brgyad*), the Four Regions of Bum-thang (*Bum-thang sDe-bzhi*) and other areas were at first barbarous border regions devoid of religion. [Passage on Padmasambhava omitted.] Eventually, during the time of the king of Tibet, Khri Ral[-pa]-can who was the emanation of Vajrapāṇi, the forces of the nine regions (*gling-dgu*) of the Tibetan realm were assembled and the Indian kings, the rulers together with their officers and subjects, were adroitly expelled and banished to the border. Most of the [Tibetan] soldiers were delighted with the country and, having established estates (*gzhis*) in its various parts, they resided there without returning [to Tibet]. The origin [of the name of the area ?] now called Mi-log ('No-Return') is therefore also reported in that manner. Just as they [the Tibetan soldiers] had come from among specific peoples and districts such as dBus and gTsang, Dags[-po] and Kong[-po], so also did they come to settle here gradually in such districts as Wang, sBed-med, Ka[-wang] and Cang. Although there are many explanations concerning how they variously spread from the direction of Tibet to this Southern Land and also those regarding the origin of the names given to Thed, Thim and sPar, [these] three, and to the Eight Great Hosts [of the Wang] and so on, I decline [repeating them here] because I think [it would require] much writing and that of no great substance. Thus it was, however, that the races (*rigs-rus*) of this Southern Land are said to be descended from the old monkey *bodhisattva*, the emanation of Ārya [-Avalokiteśvara]. (*LCB* I, ff. 6a - 7a)

The identification of isolated ruins in Western Bhutan with the palaces of Indian kings seems to have gone out of vogue and none of my informants in Bhutan had anything pertinent to say on the matter. The whole story of Indian rulers being expelled by Tibetan forces who stayed to settle the country is roundly dismissed by the author of *LCB* II who maintains correctly that it is a tradition preserved only in the later literature. There seems every reason to discount it as the product of popular imagination but again certainty can only be reached by a careful examination of the ruined sites if these can be located. The legend may have focussed on certain forts or settlements of the prehistoric period in a manner similar to that proposed for the lCags-mkhar in Bum-thang. Apart from the 'Sindhu Rāja' the only Indian ruler in Bhutan to receive a name is the dByug-ston who is mentioned in the *Bum-thang dar-gud-kyi lung-bstan* as the patron of rTsis-lung (see p. 7 above). The name does not seem to occur anywhere else. Various attempts have also been made to show that it was to the area of Bhutan

that the Buddha in his previous lives came to meditate, invariably as a royal figure (*LCB* I, f. 5b and *LCB* II, f. 60a-b). The *Sūryagarbha-sūtra* is used in much the same way as the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*, so favoured by Tibetan historians for its early 'prophecies' concerning their country. The former is claimed to show that while the Buddha himself did not come to the area of Bhutan, he had the Mon region in mind as a place where his teachings would flourish in the future (*LCB* II, f. 60a-b). The conversion of the Kha-khra Mon is placed as far back as the *kalpa* of the Buddha Kāśyapa when they were 'non-humans' (*mi-ma-yin*). One hundred 'Black Mon-pa' were brought into the retinue of Mahākāla at this time (loc. cit.). The true agent of conversion is, however, always the figure of Padmasambhava and it is surely significant that in the passage quoted above the Indian rulers are still regarded as part of the general barbarism preceding his arrival.

Some would perhaps be tempted to look for a link between these legendary associations of Bhutan with India and a quite unfounded claim made in the British colonial writings that the country was first settled by an Indian people called the 'Tehpoo' (e.g. in *Political Missions* 1865:108). The whole notion has been taken up with some seriousness in works by Indian authors (e.g. Das 1974:2, Mehra 1974:81, Labh 1974:4). The origin of the claim can, however, be traced back without any difficulty to the extremely garbled report on Bhutanese history by Kishenkant Bose who spent the year 1815 on deputation to Bhutan (*Political Missions* 1865:187). In Scott's translation of the account given by Bose we read that 'the caste or tribe of Thep' settled in sPu-na-kha are the descendants of 'a raja of the Cooch tribe' who had been ousted by the arrival of the first *Dharmarāja* of Bhutan (*Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal). The *rāja* referred to is Padmanarayan of Cooch Bihar with whom the *Zhabs-drung* enjoyed close relations but there is no evidence to suggest that he ever visited Bhutan in person and certainly none pointing to his having had political authority there. The term 'Thep' (contraction of Thed-pa) is well known in western Bhutan where it is used to refer to the inhabitants of sPu-na-kha (often called the Thed valley). The most that can be said of the apocryphal tradition is that it may derive ultimately from a desire on the part of some Indian slave families in sPu-na-kha to connect their origins with the person of the great *Zhabs-drung*. If that is the correct interpretation, it seems extraordinary that this wishfulness should have its present effect in claims made for the 'Tehpoo' as the first Indian inhabitants of the country.

### Back to Tibetan origins

Despite its dubious etymology, the term Mi-log in the above passage of *LCB* I is of considerable interest for it is an open affirmation of the central

Tibetan origins of the Western Bhutanese. The story which explains the term probably derives from a similar Tibetan legend which explains how frontier troops at the time of the kings were ordered to settle in the border regions and were called *bKa'-ma-log*. This seems to create something of an embarrassment for modern historians in Bhutan who are most sensitive to the notion that their people are anything but indigenous to their own country. In the 18th century at least the Bhutanese had no qualms about this, as we also see in Ngag-dbang's *rGyal-rigs* (Section V) where it is specifically stated that a long time had not elapsed since the Tibetans came down to the Southern Land. It is by no means sure how the term Mi-log was employed and today it does not seem to have survived in Western Bhutan outside the literary sources. In the *lHo'i chos-'byung* it can be taken to apply equally to a people, to a village or to an area. Among the Bum-thang people the term is applied to the whole area of Western Bhutan and is pronounced 'Menlé', but the Western Bhutanese say this is the name of a village in the Shar district under dBang'dus Pho-brang rDzong. The term was used by Padma Gling-pa in what seems to be the same sense accorded to it in Bum-thang today. In a song that laments the behaviour of the Westerners which he composed during a trip to the area of *rNga-long Men-log* (sic) he says: 'On seeing the conduct [of the inhabitants] of the Men-log Country, I am sad.'<sup>24</sup> rNga-long or sNga-slong is the term used in reference to themselves or their language by the westerners but never to the area they occupy. Men-log, according to Padma Gling-pa, seems to be the area they inhabit. Similarly, *Dag-pa Be-mi Sa-ri* in Ngag-dbang's chronicle signifies the villages of Be-mi and Sa-ri occupied by the Dag-pa people (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 27a; p. 558 below). Further research into the use of the terms Mi-log, Men-log and 'Menlé' will no doubt help us greatly to clarify the ethnic picture of early Bhutan.

### CHAPTER 3: KING KHYI-KHA RA-THOD AND HIS 'HIDDEN' LAND

In the previous chapter it was noticed how the story of one Khyi-kha Ra-thod had been interpolated into the narrative of the 'Sindhu Rāja's 'biography', although the substance of this interpolation was not examined. Khyi-kha Ra-thod is in fact a quite independent figure in traditional Bhutanese history, but although a substantial *gter-ma* literature is devoted to him and to the cult of the 'hidden land' (*sbas-yul*) with which he is associated, unlike the 'Sindhu Rāja' he never attained national significance in Bhutan. He is presented as Prince Mu-rum bTsan-po, son of dMar-rgyan (known elsewhere also as Tshes-pong-bza'), one of the queens of *Khri*Srong-lde-brtsan; Khyi-kha Ra-thod is a derogatory nickname which alludes to the prince's illegitimate and bestial paternity. As in the case of the 'Sindhu Rāja's story, the person first responsible for recording the myth seems to have been Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521). He appears to have drawn his material from ancient folklore, some of it already extant in written form. This he recast in a visionary manner that gave it a coherent form and purpose. In its new guise the myth travelled far beyond the frontiers of Bhutan where it gave rise to many oral variants, each adapted to local aspirations and circumstances. Some of these derived traditions were then recorded by at least one other *gter-ston* for his own purposes. This appears to have been the way in which the myth was set down and diffused, but the close interaction between the oral and written forms in this process will probably remain elusive for ever. In the *bKa'-thang sde-lnga* and other early *gter-ma* we can see the *gter-ston* borrowing heavily from earlier literature but in the comparable works of Padma Gling-pa and others like him the impression is altogether less 'bookish'. It is as if a self-educated peasant with a strong spiritual bent had recalled fragments of stories he had read and heard. In a kind of dreamlike vision he reconstituted these into a new form having strong directive purpose, namely to authenticate the cult of the hidden land of mKhan-pa-lung (also called mKhan-pa-ljongs). This high valley just south of the Tibetan border had been used as a place of spiritual retreat from at least the second half of the 13th century. It appears in a list of places where Me-long rDo-rje (1243-1303) meditated, along with several well known holy sites in the vicinity.<sup>1</sup>

Me-long rDo-rje was one of the earliest masters of the rDzogs-chen ('Great Perfection') tradition, and thus one of Padma-Gling-pa's spiritual ancestors.

### The 'Discovery'

The unpretentious, almost rustic quality of the writing ensured the guide to mKhan-pa-lung a wide appeal. The forceful character who thus 'discovered' it had yet to do so physically and concretely before it could become acceptable; hence the great pains taken to reveal its place of concealment. Padma Gling-pa is most circumstantial:

At that time I went to mKhan-pa-lung in consequence of the prophecy that had appeared at the end of the *dGongs-pa bla-med*, the 'treasure' [recovered previously from] the Patterned Rock.<sup>2</sup> Having found the door [to mKhan-pa-lung] at bKra-shis-sgang<sup>3</sup> I stayed there for a few days. At that time I had a dream in which a girl wearing white clothes appeared and said: 'Tomorrow go and extract the guidebook to mKhan-pa-lung.' When I asked her where the guide book was she replied: 'At a place half a day's journey up from here there is a cave with three levels (? *phug-pa thog-rang rim-gsum*) [inside] a black boulder shaped like an erected tent of felt [which lies] at a certain point below the Red Cave of sTong-shod. From this high position, if you measure out a rope nine spans in length downwards [you will find] a cave on the side of the cliff. Inside it there is a mark to the treasure shaped like the female parts. Once this is removed, the guidebook to mKhan-pa-lung is inside, so take it out.' As soon as she had said this I awoke. Then on the following day many of us, priest and patrons, went off and when we arrived at the foot of that rock and looked it was just as it had appeared in the dream. Thereupon, when the votive cakes had been prepared for the guardian-spirits of the treasure (*gter-bdag*) the sky suddenly became very dark and fierce hail, rain and a terrific gale came swirling down like an earthquake. Commands were issued and the truth of the matter conveyed to the two treasure-guardians, Zo-ra-ra-skyes<sup>4</sup> and Khrag-mig-ma,<sup>5</sup> and once they had been made offerings the sun shone forth. Then, having tied to my waist a rope nine spans in length I went down from the top of that cliff, holding on to the right and to the left. On arriving at the main cave I looked and it was just as in the dream. When I struck the mark with a chisel the treasure-box came out and in its place I put in various grains and a five-spoked *vajra* and then left it blocked up as before. Then I returned and stayed for a day at bKra-shis-sgang. Then I went to the village of dByim-bya, and on the following day the Nas-pa people came forth in battle and surrounded the village, saying: 'You have taken out a treasure from our land.' For my part I summoned the Chus-pa people from Rung in gTang [= sTang]. So on the following day my own soldiers arrived when the sun was warm and they chased them off. Their weapons



were seized and a prisoner was taken. Then together with my own force I went to Rung in bTang [= sTang] and while staying there for a few days I brought hail down upon the Nas-pa people and for three days it would not melt. All their crops were wrecked. Then I sent this message to the Chus-pa's place: 'Is this hail enough or shall I send some more ? The treasure came to me as a result of my prayers to O-rgyan and besides that I have not seized your wealth. Now shall we settle this with [the compensation of] a human life or a cow's life?' (*da mi-la gtong-ngam / nor-la gtong*) Unable to withstand this, they came in submission with a meat-feast of one cow. They offered [me] the land of mKhan-pa-lung and agreed [to become] my patrons (*yon-bdag*). When the prisoner who had been taken was set free they were reconciled.<sup>6</sup>

How much of this mysterious story is true and plausible ? The autobiography is replete with incidents of this kind which must have been witnessed by Padma Gling-pa's close associates to whom this account of his life is chiefly addressed. Particularly interesting here is the violent reaction of the Nas-pa people to the discovery of the 'treasure-box' containing the guidebook to mKhan-pa-lung whose traditional proprietors they must have been. The idea that Padma Gling-pa's 'discovery' could have been no more than a clever sleight of hand never seems to have occurred to them. Elsewhere in the autobiography there are many passages recalling instances when the author had to defend himself against charges of fraudulent deceit in the matter of his *gter-ma*, charges which he claims to have defeated in every case.<sup>7</sup> Although Padma Gling-pa is certainly the first among the very few figures in Bhutanese history to come to life in the surviving literature, the whole question of his *gter-ma* discoveries remains something of an enigma. If the view is taken that the saint indulged in a long series of elaborate and cynical hoaxes, sustained with great effort over many decades, this seems to run against the overall picture of his character conveyed in the text. It is not a problem I would attempt to solve here but any effort in that direction must take into account the strong impulse to endow new religious works aspiring to a quasi-canonical stature with the aura of sanctity that surrounded the earliest religious traditions. This hold true for rNying-ma-pa doctrines from about the 10th century onwards. Padma Gling-pa's concerns were, however, more to do with the ritual expression of doctrine than with doctrine *per se*. Ritual compilations form the main content of his huge corpus of 'discoveries' but the need to link them to sources of ancient authority is as important in them as it is in the philosophical works of Klong-chen-pa whose incarnation he is reckoned to have been.

In this eulogy of the Bum-thang area Klong-chen-pa employs the term *sbas-yul* ('hidden land') in a somewhat vague manner, suggesting a spiritual

Arcadia where ideal geographical and human qualities together conspire to create perfect conditions for the religious life. There is no hint at all of the Messianic sense which Padma Gling-pa came to give the term in his guide to mKhan-pa-lung. For him a *sBas-yul* is a concealed area in the high mountains awaiting the war that will cause the faithful to flee there, a paradise which will be revealed only when the right time comes. His main concern is to show how it is to be discovered and settled but it is the myth of the land's origin and the part which Khyi-kha Ra-thod plays in it which is of the greatest interest. The historical associations of the origin myth and the themes which imbue it are studied below, but first let us examine the text itself.

### The Guide to the Hidden Land

There are in fact two separate texts devoted to mKhan-pa-lung (or mKhan-pa-ljongs) in the Collected Works, both in Vol. *Ca* [= *Tsa*] :

- 1) *sBas-yul 'bras-mo-gshong dang mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig* (48 folios, pp. 397 - 491) and
- 2) *sBas-yul mkhan-pa-ljongs-kyi gnas-yig padma gling-pa'i gter-ma* (13 folios, pp. 493 - 517).

The first one is a guide to both Sikkim and mKhan-pa-lung and may have been incorporated into the Collected Works by its unknown author. The treatment given to mKhan-pa-lung here closely follows that of the second text (which I take as the one whose 'discovery' was narrated above) though the extent of the relevant portion has been much expanded into 14 chapters as compared with the 10 chapters of the second text. Practically omitted from the first text, however, is the origin myth occupying chapters 1 to 3 and 5 to 6 of the second text. These are translated below. Some of the more interesting variant details contained in two oral versions of the myth given by 'Jam-dpal rDo-rdo (JD) and *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags (LP) can be found in the footnotes.<sup>8</sup>

[Title: f. 1a]                    *Guide to the Hidden Land of mKhan-pa-ljongs, the Treasure of Padma Gling-pa, from [the ritual collection of] the Klong-gsal [gsang-ba snying-bcud] is contained herein.*<sup>8a</sup>

[Ch.I: ff. 1b-2a]            [Eleven indecipherable letters in *mkha'-gro brda-yig*]  
Obeisance to the *mahācārya* Padma 'Byung-gnas.

This guide to the hidden land of mKhan[-pa]-ljongs  
Was reported to O-rgyan Padma himself  
At the solitary retreat of lCags-phur-can<sup>9</sup>  
By me, the girl [Ye-shes] Mtsho-rgyal, such as I am.

It is set in writing for the sake of future generations.  
May it meet the destined son ! *Sa-ma-ya*

The hidden land of mKhan-pa-ljongs is west of the three Seng-ge rdzong [of] Ne-rings,<sup>10</sup> north of the near road (? *mtha'-nye-lam*), east of the pastoral land of mTshams-pa,<sup>11</sup> south of Gro-bo-lung.<sup>12</sup> To the south-east lies the Indian rTsang-lung,<sup>13</sup> to the south-west Bum-thang sTang, to the north-west rDzi-ba-lung,<sup>14</sup> to the north-east Seng-ge-ri;<sup>14</sup> it lies at the collective centre of all these places. It has four gates: one gate [leads] from Bum-thang sTang, one gate from the pastoral land of mTshams-sa [= -pa], one gate from Gro-bo-lung, and one gate from mKho-mthing.<sup>15</sup> Thus it has four gates. In previous times, from the beginning, it was an empty valley. It lay on the border of Tibet and India.

The first chapter delineating the  
boundaries of the hidden land.

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[Ch.II: ff. 2a-3b]

As for the account of how humans resided [in mKhan-pa-ljongs]: The king who protected religion called *Khri* Srong-lde'u-btsan<sup>16</sup> was born to Khri-rje bTsan-po [*Khri* lDe-gtsug-brtan], his father, and to Ma-shang [= Kim-sheng] Kong-jo his mother, [these] two, at Glorious bSam-yas of Brag-dmar [which lies] at the centre of Tibet, the general realm of Himavat. At the age of eleven he took *bZa'* dMar-rgyan as his consort. Up to the age of thirteen and fifteen the forces of Hor came and fought. At the age of seventeen in the Year of the Bull, the idea of building bSam-yas came to his mind and the abbot Zhi-ba'tsho [Sāntarakṣita] was invited from Za-hor [Mandi]; although he [tried to] tame the land, it could not be tamed. Subsequently the *ācārya* Padma was invited from India and he blessed the ground. He bound to oaths all the proud gods and demons. One hundred and eight temples with three kinds of roof-tiers at their top were built. After their consecration had been completed the king beat the great drum of the law and requested the abbot and the *ācārya* to sit on golden and silver thrones which he had set up in the centre of the great sword of bSam-yas. Once the red and black crowds (?) had assembled, the king offered golden and silver *maṇḍalas* and declared: 'Oh abbot and *ācārya* both, please consider my words. After completing the construction of these temples as a physical support, the holy *Dharma* must be translated as a verbal support.' The abbot and *ācārya* both replied: 'Oh king who guards the faith ! If you should desire the holy religion to be translated many translators must be sent to India. Collect together plenty of youths to study Sanskrit (*sgra*).' Having gathered lots of Tibetan children of sharp intelligence, the king offered them to the sight of

both the abbot and the *ācārya*. The abbot, at the start of his Sanskrit lesson, announced: 'Na-mo Buddha-ya. Na-mo dharma-ya. Na-mo samgha-ya.' The children recited: 'Na-mo bhu-ha-ya. Ma-mo bib-ha-ya. Ma-mo sa-sa-ya. We don't know it.' They could not get the sound of the Sanskrit right. Thereupon the Guru prophesied to the king: 'In the land of sPa-skor is the son of He-'dod called Gan-jag-thang-ta.' He was summoned and came to bSam-yas. The abbot and the *ācārya* both taught Sanskrit to Gan-jag-thang-ta and to gTsang Legs-grub and once they had become proficient they were sent to India in search of religion. After undergoing sixteen austerities they reached India. They met twenty-five scholars including Shri Sing-ha [Śrīsimha]. They received in their entirety the external *Pitaka*, the internal *Mantrayāna* and the result [of both in the] teachings of the *Anuttara[-yoga]*. Returning once more, when they had come to bSam-yas the demon-ministers with dMar-rgyan at their head were induced by the Indian *gcan-'phrang* (?) to declare, so as to prevent the power of the *dharma* translated by Bee-ro-tsa-na [Vairocana = Gan-jag-thang-ta] the Second Buddha, from growing in Tibet, that he should [either] be drowned [or] exiled to the border. The king unhappily exiled him.

The second chapter in which Bee-ro-tsa-na was exiled to the border at the time when the Buddha's teachings came to Tibet.

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[Ch.III: ff. 3b-4b]

At that time the king had four consorts and he used to pay each of them honour for three days at a time, but for three years he did not go to dMar-rgyan's place to do her honour. At that time dMar-rgyan-ma's lust increased and, seeing a dog and a goat, she consorted with the guard-dog on the top floor [of her palace] and with the goat on the ground floor. After nine or ten months everyone knew that dMar-rgyan was carrying a child in her body; many people talked about it one to another so that everyone came to know and discussed it. Now dMar-rgyan had a household official and it was said that because three years had gone by since the king had been to dMa-rgyan's palace, who could it have been if not the household official? So the household official was greatly troubled, fearful that the king's law would be visited upon him. However, a goat-herd seeing him [so distressed] said: 'Our king's consort, dMar-rgyan, copulated with a goat on the groundfloor.' Also a beggar boy declared: 'I too saw her leading a dog to the top of the palace and copulating with it.' Then after nine or ten months a son was born and for nine years he was brought up in secret by his mother. Then the *dharmarāja* learned about it and sent a message through the Minister of Messages: 'dMar-rgyan, I have heard that you have a son. Give him to me and I will endow him with authority.' Thereupon, being com-

pelled to offer him in the centre of the red and black crowd which had assembled on the great sword of bSam-yas, dMar-rgyan offered him. As it turned out that he was not of the same lineage as the king, but instead was someone who had the head of a goat and a mouth resembling that of a dog, the king let loose his loathing upon the queen. Assembling his subjects, he declared: 'This son of dMar-rgyan is very likely an evil presage of calamity for the land of Tibet. He will therefore be banished to the border as a scapegoat [or ransom] for all of us, lord and subjects.' Having collected together the Buddhist monks, tantric priests, and Bon-po of Tibet, they were compelled to perform many thread-cross rituals. The demon-ministers and the personal subjects of his mother were committed to Khyi-kha Ra-thod ('Dog-mouth Goat-skull') as his subjects. Each was made to wear rags (? *gos-dum*)<sup>17</sup> and carry a bag on his back containing various kinds of seeds, and so they were banished to the border. Then after Khyi-kha Ra-thod, the lord and his subjects, had resided for three years at a place called sGyid<sup>18</sup> in lHo-brag, the king became aware that they had led forth an army and left their home. Thereupon Khyi-kha Ra-thod, lord and subjects, were expelled to Mon mKhan-pa-lung. At that time Mu-khri bTsan-po, the son born to the king's consort Mandhe bZang-mo (?) was conferred with authority. dMar-rgyan was so jealous that she killed him with [poisoned] food. This caused the king great grief and he imposed a punishment upon dMar-rgyan, expelling her to the lower part of Yar-rgyab Gra-gzhung<sup>19</sup> [on the bank of] the gTsang-po river. There dMar-rgyan built the temple of sGra-tshad and invited the abbot Zhu-ba-'tsho [Śāntaraksita] to perform the consecration. dMar-rgyan made an aspiration to the effect that, with the exception of the future bKa'-gdams[-pa] School, the *mantrayāna* should not come to flourish.

The third chapter in which punishments  
were imposed upon dMar-rgyan, mother  
and son.

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[Ch.IV: ff. 4b-6a]

['The fourth chapter revealing the sites of the hidden land of mKhan-pa-ljongs' is omitted since it adds nothing to the narrative.]

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[Ch.V: ff. 6a-7b]

Now, as for the manner in which Khyi-kha Ra-thod, the lord and his subjects, stayed in that country: The king's palace was established in Yang-re-lung. The habitations of the craftsmen and of the Bon-po were established in Bye-dkar-lung. The habitations of the officers and subjects and of the retinue were established in the valleys (? *lung-srol*) and on the sides of the mountains. At that time Ku-re-lung and all the regions of Mon were the home of Indians and all their houses were made

of bamboo, grass or wood. The palace of their king [Khyi-kha Ra-thod] was also made of wood. It was built of broad dimensions and of great height, having decorated pillar-capitals, projecting beams and a roof ornament and, being annointed with precious extracts, it shone with light. It was beautifully arranged with certain features including windows, many doors and balconies, and was surrounded by three walls and had two main gates. Outside there were one hundred and sixty-one houses surrounding it for the subjects and retinue. Inside resided the king together with his servants and followers. Since the place was on the border of India and Tibet the trade up and down was conveyed there and so an inconceivable wealth and prosperity arose. All the houses were built in a mixture of the Tibetan and Indian styles. The settlements of the retinue and subjects were also built in a similar fashion. Thus there were thirteen villages in Yang-re-lung. In Bye-dkar-lung a Bon-po called Ye-shes Thod-dkar<sup>20</sup> gained power over three hundred and sixty Bon-po magicians (? *bon-'phrul*) and, having settled in a place called bKra-shis rDzong-mkhar, he enjoyed great prosperity. He took control over seven villages having the Bon village at their head. At the top end of the valley, black female yaks (*'bri-gnag*), goats and sheep, and at the bottom end cows and bulls, and in the middle part sheep, horses and goats, [these] three - a vast number of animals and much material wealth was gained. Then the king and his subjects resided for sixty-one years in a state of rich prosperity. Then Khyi-kha Ra-thod conceived a plan to lead an army to Tibet against his father and, having assembled the subjects and retinue, the king commanded his subjects: 'My father banished me, Khyi-kha Ra-thod, to the border and expelled my mother from her fixed home. Now the Indian forces must be collected and an invasion made.' The lord and subjects assembled the Indian forces and then bSam-yas was invaded. At that time the *dharmarāja Khri* Srong-lde'u-btsan had died and Mu-tig bTsan-po had just begun his reign. O-rgyan and Mu-tig bTsan-po were residing in the Crystal Cave of Yar-lung and when the Indian forces arrived at bSam-yas, O-rgyan knew it. The Guru induced [the god] gNam-thil dKar-po<sup>21</sup> to cast seven lightning flashes which caused the soldiers to return in haste to their own home, trembling in fear.

The fifth chapter in which Khyi-kha Ra-thod made a home in the hidden land of mKhan[-pa]-ljongs.

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[Ch.VI: ff. 7b-10a]

At that time Prince Mu-tig bTsan-po declared: 'Oh *mahācārya*, if King Khyi-kha Ra-thod is not expelled from his home he will commit injuries to these ancestral temples again and again. I beg you therefore for a means of expelling him from his home so as not to leave him even in mKhan-pa-ljongs.' Thereupon O-rgyan Padma

went to the hidden land of mKhan-pa-ljongs and, having transformed himself into a fearsome black man,<sup>22</sup> he declared these words to the king: 'Oh, Lord Mu-rum bTsan-po! I shall act as the lama of you, lord and subjects. After we, priest and patron, have come to full accord we shall defeat all those who hold to the side of the *Mantrayāna*. We shall destroy the temples including bSam-yas and shall cause water to spill over them (? *chu-la 'bo-bar bya'o*).' The king thought to himself: 'It's possible that this person is a magical apparition of the fraud Padma 'Byung-gnas. If he is, then a punishment must be meted upon him now.' Thinking this, he declared: 'Aren't you, black man, the phantom of the fraud Padma 'Byung-gnas? If you are, then since you sought to do me harm many times in the past you must now be wanting to harm me again.' On commanding the ministers to seize and kill him, the black man said: 'The Padma 'Byung-gnas who is now at bSam-yas and I are not on good terms. I am the heretical teacher called Ha-ra Nag-po. I commit whatever injuries I can against his teachings. Therefore, since it is said that you the king and he have bad relations, I have come from India in the hope of defeating his teachings on the strength of your power. After we, priest and patron, have consulted together we shall injure his teachings in whatever way we can.' Then the king said: 'Now you show a miracle.' So [the Guru] danced upon a flat stone shaped like a basin at a point south-west of the king's palace and eighteen footprints were left upon it. So the king gained faith in him and said: 'Oh *mahācārya*, I beg you to build here a temple such as my father *Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan* and Padma 'Byung-gnas have built.' The *ācārya* replied: 'Oh great king, the bSam-yas temple which *Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan* and Padma 'Byung-gnas built is the most excellent in Tibet, but we two can build an even more wondrous one. So listen, king, to my words.' The king said: 'If you can make an even more wondrous one, then I shall listen to whatever you tell me to do.' The *ācārya* said: 'Then let us, priest and patron, build a wooden *garuḍa* that can fly in the sky, made so that the king and his retinue to the number of five hundred can enter into its belly. It should be made in the style of a heavenly palace, divided up with windows and partitions. Many hearths should be fixed within. We shall make it so splendid and rich that it will be said that no more excellent thing exists in the world of gods and humans.' The king was delighted. 'Oh we shall do it,' he said. A vast number of wood-craftsmen were assembled and a *garuḍa* of broad and lofty dimensions was made. When two nail-heads had been made in it, [one] to seize the wind,<sup>23</sup> the *ācārya* said: 'May the king and the subjects all assemble today for the consecration of the *garuḍa*.' The lord and the subjects without exception therefore entered the belly of the *garuḍa*. While they were enjoying themselves with food and drink, singing, dancing and so forth, the *ācārya* declared: 'King and subjects, listen to me. Whatever strange signs appear such as trembling, rolling

(? 'khrig-pa = 'khri-ba), shaking and so on, sit back comfortably without fear.' The *ācārya* went to the top of the *garuḍa* and, holding an iron club in each hand, he struck the two nails which agitated the unwanted wind so that the *garuḍa* flew up into the sky and departed. At that time the king heard the clear bark of a dog. Feeling disturbed, he declared in verse:

'Oh the fraud Padma 'Byung[-gnas] who is above me  
Is said to be a Buddha but commits injuries upon sentient beings  
He's said to act for the benefit of others but is really a cheat.  
I have done you no harm.'

O-rgyan replied:

'Oh Khyi-kha Ra-thod, listen to me.  
Son of the perverse dMar-rgyan,  
You do not possess your father's lineage.  
You are the son of two animals,  
The king of heretics, a wild barbarian.  
That sound of a dog's bark just now  
Was [actually in] the dog-language of the Indian rTsa-lung [=rTsang-lung].'

Again Khyi-kha Ra-thod declared:

'Listen, cheating fraud!  
My father and his ministers cheated  
Us, mother and son, banishing us to the borders.  
You are said to be a *Buddha* but lead Tibet to suffering.  
You are said to meditate on compassion but banish me to the border  
Not content with banishment, you now expel me from my home.  
Even if I am an evil lord, I have never seen anything like this.  
If retribution is just, let it be meted upon the fraud.'

To this O-rgyan replied:

'Oh listen, Khyi-kha Ra-thod, son of animals!  
In the land of Tibet, you perverse two, mother and son,  
Have broken the father's order and brought demon-ministers to power.  
The translators including Bee-ro[-tsa-na]  
Have been banished to the border and the sun of the holy *dharma* is setting.  
Leading an army, you planned to destroy the *dhamarāja's* temple.  
You even have an evil mind to kill me if you can.  
Since you intend in the future to destroy the *Buddha's* teachings  
You, evil king, are expelled from your home for the sake of sentient beings.'

Having said this the Guru struck by turn all the nails which caused the unwanted wind to move and at that very instant [the *garuḍa*] arrived at the village of dKar-nya in Bum-thang. Striking the nail which seized the wanted wind, it came down to earth.<sup>24</sup> Leaving it there, O-rgyan went back by magic to mKhan-pa-ljongs. All the wealth of the lord and his subjects was hidden as treasure. The sites of mKhan-pa-ljongs were sealed up internally, externally and secretly so as to be invisible, and all the guardian spirits of the treasure were entrusted to care for them and were given commands. It was done so that nobody should see [the hidden land] until the time should come. Even though the king and his subjects then searched for it they did not find it. Thereupon Khyi-kha Ra-thod, the lord and his subjects, settled down at Khyi-mtshums in sTang and stayed there for a long time.<sup>25</sup> O-rgyan went to lCags-mkhar as the lama of King Santa Ra-dza and resided in meditation at the rock of Piled *Vajras*.<sup>26</sup>



The sixth chapter in which King Khyi-kha Ra-thod together with his retinue was expelled from his home in mKhan-pa-ljongs.

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[Ch.VII: f. 10a-b]	['The seventh chapter which reveals the time (when the door to the hidden land is to be opened up).']
[Ch.VIII: ff. 10b-11a]	['The eighth chapter (concerning the person who will) open the door.']
[Ch.IX f. 11a-b]	['The ninth chapter (concerning) the method of undoing the outer, inner and secret seals.']
[Ch.X: ff. 11b-12b]	['The tenth chapter (containing) the itinerary (to the hidden land).']
[ff. 12b-13a]	['An account of the qualities of that place.']

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### Themes

The legend as we have it here is a compound of several themes linked by their common *leit-motif* of expulsion and recovery. Although brought together in a manner that is dramatically so convincing as to obscure the manner of their linking it is not difficult to separate the various strands and locate their probable sources. If for us these elements emerge to cover the whole spectrum of historical, quasi-historical and mythological fact, the story itself will always stand for its traditional audience as an account of 'what actually happened'. Since the historical consciousness helps to determine a people's view of its place in the world, and because that view, in turn, acts as an important factor in its reactions to events that are truly historical, the exercise of unravelling such a legend is by no means without relevance to historical studies *per se*. The term 'syncretism' has been applied by Stein (1959a) to the formation of the Ge-sar epic in Tibet, representing as it does a huge and marvellous amalgam of heterogeneous themes; the more concentrated aim of the *gter-ston*, and the homogeneity of the themes present in this short legend would here incline one more to the term 'synthesisism'.

### THE EXPULSION OF VAIROCANA

The basis of the Khyi-kha Ra-thod story is formed by the legend of Vairocana, a disciple of Padmasambhava, as it appears in two of the *gter-ma* of O-rgyan Gling-pa (born in 1323), namely the well-known *bTsun-mo bka'*.

*thang* and *Padma thang-yig*. The development of the legend in these and other works has recently been summarised by Anne-Marie Blondeau (1976) and the question of Vairocana's sojourn in India has been studied by Karmay (1975a). Vairocana's importance for the rNying-ma-pa rests largely on the fact that he is regarded as the person who introduced the *rDzogs-chen* ('Great Perfection') tradition into Tibet from India where he is supposed to have received it from a certain Śrīsimha. Karmay (1975a: 149) concludes, however, that the traditional account of Vairocana's meeting with Śrīsimha cannot be found in texts earlier than the 13th century. This in itself is not sufficient to discount the likelihood of the story and it must be remembered that Vairocana was undoubtedly an historical figure, as his name appears among the first seven Tibetans who received monastic ordination in bSam-yas, in sources that are generally accepted. According to the *Padma thang-yig* it is the jealousy of the Indian tantrists (the *gcan-'phrang* of our text) whom Vairocana met during his period of study which is the real cause of his expulsion from central Tibet to Tsha-ba-rong in eastern Tibet. The Indians, angered by his having taken away their secret doctrines, spread a rumour in Tibet that he has brought false and heretical doctrines. The king, who has a strong regard for Vairocana, does not want to kill him. However, he pretends to do so by putting a beggar boy disguised as Vairocana into a sealed pot which he throws into the gTsang-po. Everyone believes Vairocana is drowned. When Vairocana himself hears of it he suspects the boy has been used as a scapegoat (*glud*) to fool the Bon-po ministers. The boy is in fact recovered from the river by the castellan (*mkhar-gyi bdag-po*) of mKhar-stag 'Ol-ma in 'Ol-dga'. He is adopted, married to the daughter of the castellan and his descendants become the Grong-tsho family of rGyug-thang lHung-mi in 'Ol-dga' (*Thang-yig*, f. 216a). This sub-plot echoes the theme of expulsion and discovery in the main plot which continues with Queen dMar-rgyan of the Tshes-spong clan stumbling upon the fact that Vairocana is still alive. She had followed the king suspecting a lover, only to find out that he was visiting Vairocana in secret. She betrays this to the Bon-po ministers who this time compel the king to banish Vairocana to Tsha-ba-rong. The *Padma thang-yig's* explanation of why dMar-rgyan took this action seems to form the principal link with the variant version contained in the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang*, and ultimately with Padma Gling-pa's legend too. The *Padma thang-yig* offers the explanation more or less as an after-thought. Toussaint (1933 : 296) translates as follows:

Ces paroles de Parure-Rouge [dMar-rgyan] avaient un motif.  
 Vairocana était beau, extrêmement beau;  
 la dame lui avait offert un rendez-vous et il n'était pas venu.  
 Par dépit elle le dénonçait.

Hell has no fury like a woman scorned, but the feelings of amorous spite which compel dMar-rgyan to plot Vairocana's exile belong properly to the story of the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang* where we read that when Vairocana refuses to be seduced by dMar-rgyan, she rends her clothes and flees to the king pretending that she has been raped. Unwillingly, the king banishes him to Tsha-ba-rong. The above quotation from the *Padma thang-yig* appears to allude to this sequence of events in the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang*, but the relationship of these two texts is complicated by the fact that the former was 'recovered' in 1352 and the latter between 1384 and 1393 (Blondeau 1971 : 42). However, we owe it to Anne-Marie Blondeau's researches (1976: 116-119) that the sources of the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang* are now much clearer, and in particular she has demonstrated that the story of dMar-rgyan's pretended rape has an exact parallel in the story of Yid-kyi Khye'u-chung in the Bon-po text of the *gZer-mig*, to the extent that whole passages in the former text (and in other volumes of the *bka'-thang* of O-rgyan-gling-pa) may be said to be direct plagiarisms from that work. She has further shown that this story in particular may derive from that of Putiphar's wife, which enjoyed a wide diffusion in Tibet through the medium of Indian Buddhist literature. Thus, if we accept the probable dating of O-rgyan Gling-pa's texts, the quotation from the *Padma thang-yig* given above may derive more from the *gter-ston's* original source material than from an attempt to achieve consistency with the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang*; the latter amplified the theme in such a way as to overshadow the story of the jealous Indian teachers, which is elsewhere used to explain not only the expulsion of Vairocana to Tsha-ba-rong but also, for instance, that of Nam-mkha'i sNying-po to mKhar-chu in lHo-brag on the Bhutan border (*Thang-yig*, f. 206b and Ferrari: 57, 138). Tucci conjectures that it must have been the Indian teacher Kamalaśīla (famous for his participation in the great debate of bSam-yas of 792-794) who engineered the expulsion of Vairocana. From Tsha-ba-rong he is said in the *Vairo 'dra-bag* to have proceeded to China where he studied the Ch'an teachings which, according to Tucci (1958: 110-11, 120-21), came to colour those of the rDzogs-chen in Tibet. This, however, leads us into a delicate area of speculation. Suffice it to say that the sequel to Vairocana's expulsion as found in the different texts all carry a note of strong optimism; the expulsion is turned to the ultimate profit of Buddhism. In Padma Gling-pa's legend, although the happy sequel is omitted in regard to Vairocana himself, it is more or less implicit in the tenor of all that follows.

#### THE EXPULSION OF MU-RUM (MU-RUG) AND DMAR-RGYAN (TSHES-SPONG-BZA')

On f. 7b of the *gnas-yig* above Khyi-kha Ra-thod is addressed as Mu-rum bTsan-po by the Guru who is trying to ingratiate himself with the 'king' in

order to lull him into a trap. The identification of Khyi-kha Ra-thod with Mu-rum who was an historical figure, one of the four sons of *Khri Srong-lde-btsan*, takes one into vexed problems of succession and chronology covering the period from the abdication of *Khri Srong-lde-btsan* in 796/7 to the accession of his guardian, *Ral-pa-can* (*Khri gTsug-lde-btsan*) in 815. It is without doubt the most confusing period in early Tibetan history and has taxed the minds of many historians of Tibet, native and western.<sup>27</sup> Our text throws no light on these problems at all since it dates from such a late period and is of a purely legendary character. Nevertheless, it does reflect certain received traditions; the use to which these are put is of central interest to the development of the legend.

It seems to be generally accepted now that *Khri Srong-lde-btsan* had four sons: *Mu-khri bTsan-po* (firstborn who died young, son of the 'Chims queen, *lHa-mo-btsan*), *Mu-ne bTsan-po*, *Mu-rum* (or *Mu-rug*, *Mu-rub*) and *Mu-tig bTsan-po* (*Sad-na-legs Khri lDe-srong-btsan*), the last three being the sons of the *Tshes-spong* queen, *dMar-rgyan* (or perhaps more correctly, *rMa-rgyal*). In 796/7 the king handed over his authority to *Mu-ne* (in our text confused with *Mu-khri*) and himself retired to *Zung-mkhar*. He also gave *Mu-ne* his Buddhist queen from the *Pho-yong* clan, *rGyal-mo-btsun*, probably to protect her from the powerful *Tshes-spong* queen who seems to have been a *Bon-po*. However, she killed *Mu-ne* in 798 when his father was still alive. The traditions which relate what followed are totally confused, particularly since *Mu-rum* and *Mu-tig* (and all their variant names) often seem to be confounded both with each other and with the two younger sons who had by now died. What concerns us here is the tradition that *Mu-rum* was disqualified for the throne, although he was next in line for the succession, because he had murdered 'U-rings (or *dBu-ring*), a minister of the *sNa-nam* clan related to *Khri Srong-lde-btsan* through his mother. *Mu-rum* is therefore supposed to have been banished either to the north or to the south (depending on the tradition), and the succession passed to the youngest brother *Mu-tig*. On his way back to Tibet *Mu-rum* is said to have been killed by the *sNa-nam* clan. What is sure is that he was alive in the early years of *Mu-tig's* reign since he is specifically mentioned in the inscription of *Zhwa'i lHa-khang* as 'the elder brother *Mu-rug-btsan*' (Richardson 1952:141). His tomb is located by tradition in *Yar-lung*, among those of the Tibetan kings. *Haarh* (1960:166) has construed this as evidence in support of his theory that *Mu-rum* actually acted as king during the minority of his younger brother, *Mu-tig*. However he appears to have overlooked the fact that there also exists a tomb in *Yar-lung* attributed to 'Jang-tsha *lHa-dbon* who is *not* said to have reigned. The Chinese annals of the *T'ang Shu* say, that a Tibetan king died in 804. While Richardson sees this as applying to the old king *Khri Srong-lde-btsan*, *Haarh* insists that it refers to *Mu-rum* as the *de facto* ruler.

It seems to be a fair assumption that all the stories of banishment whether to the north or to the south and whether applied to Mu-rum or Mu-tig, all derive from a single event; in every instance the cause is the same, namely the murder of 'U-rings by a royal prince. In *sBa-bzhed* (p. 65) it is Mu-tig bTsan-po who is banished to Mon. He is later summoned to be king but is murdered by the sNa-nam-pa. Stein (1959: 186), who found the same tradition in the 5th Dalai Lama's chronicle, suggests that this is 'the Mon of the east' in the Sino-Tibetan borderland, inhabited by indigenous non-Tibetan peoples. This interpretation helps to achieve consistency with the other tradition, namely that Mu-rum was expelled to mDo-khams in the north (found in the *rGyal-po bka'-thang*, dPa'-bo gTsong-lag and also in the 5th Dalai Lama). For the central Tibetan sources, however, Mon is invariably used to designate the cis-Himalayan regions. According to one garbled Bon-po tradition, Prince Mu-thug (who seems to combine both the names and attributes of Mu-rug and Mu-tig) is banished to sPa-gro, recalled to be king on the death of Mu-ne, becomes weary of his subjects, and once more goes to sPa-gro where he conceals some important Bon-po *gter-ma* (Karmay 1972: 102 - 103). Shakabpa (1976: 199 - 200), basing himself on unspecified sources, says that Mu-tig (but properly Mu-rum) was banished to lHo-brag which is contiguous with the area of Bhutan where the legend of Khyi-kha Ra-thod is best known. Shakabpa went to the trouble of making a special journey to lHo-brag to investigate the local traditions concerning the prince's exile and found near mKhar-chu three caves on the side of a mountain which were said to have been occupied by the prince during this period. 'The inhabitants even related a good many stories, beautiful and sad, about the period when Mu-tig bTsan-po was residing there.'<sup>28</sup> Thus it would appear that the oral traditions of lHo-brag speak of two sites associated with the pseudonyms of Mu-rum: Mu-tig bTsan-po at mKhar-chu and Khyi-kha Ra-thod at sGyid (see note 18 above). This alternation presumably reflects two different stages in the development of the same legend. Shakabpa does not realize the connection between Mu-tig and Mu-rum though he does appreciate the identity of Khyi-kha Ra-thod and Mu-rum whom he says was a son born to the Tshes-pong queen before she met *Khri* Srong-lde-btsan, quoting as his authority '*Me-long-ma'i 13-na-l'* which is untraceable in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* to which he is presumably referring; he rightly points out, however, that it is this 'Mu-rug btsan-po' who 'on account of his bad colour' (? *mdog ngan-pas*) was banished to mKhan-pa-ljongs and whose lineage survives in Bum-thang in Bhutan, the whole story being preserved in the *gnas-yig* translated above.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the absence of further documents from lHo-brag where the legend seems to originate, it does seem likely that Khyi-kha Ra-thod was at first a quite independent figure who only later came to be aligned with the story of

Mu-rum. He is exiled three times; from bSam-yas to lHo-brag, from lHo-brag to mKhan-pa-lung and from mKhan-pa-lung to Bum-thang, each stage bringing him closer to the home of the *gter-ston* and his audience. If the legend was to have any meaning for his audience it had to be taken out of its original context (which can no longer be known) and shaped into a new form that was 'historically' plausible, emotionally satisfying and dramatically exciting. The stories of Vairocana, dMar-rgyan and Mu-rum provided suitable scope for this transformation. Although Mu-rum's exile is nowhere recorded as having had a happy ending, that of Khyi-kha Ra-thod is pregnant with inverted hope. The kingdom which he founds in the twilight border area is transformed into a future paradise, even though he himself is expelled from it. That he is able to establish himself at last in Bum-thang despite his maleficent character, and even father a lineage there, surely tells us something about the psychological makeup of the people claiming to be his descendants. Their sense of cultural inferiority causes them to focus on this outcaste figure, half man and half animal; at the same time, the quasi-royal status which surrounds him is a real attraction. This highly ambivalent nature is also seen in his comi-tragic character, part buffoon and part hero. The principal theme of his successive expulsions followed by his successive recoveries is echoed in the fate of his mother; the bestial and jealous dMar-rgyan poisons her son the king and is banished, only to found herself a temple, though not, it seems, one dedicated to the form of Buddhism favoured by the *gter-ston*. Nevertheless she, like her son, survives her exile and puts it to good use.

### THE EXPULSION OF THE SCAPEGOAT

One of the most interesting points to be noted in the *gnas-yig* is the way Khyi-kha Ra-thod is banished from bSam-yas to lHo-brag in the form of a scapegoat or ransom (*glud*), taking with him all the evil which he presaged for Tibet. The ritual of expulsion conforms in outline to the public rites associated with the two famous Glud-'gong rGyal-po who used to be driven out from lHa-sa by the Tibetan government during the New Year festival (Nebesky 1956: 508 - 11). Thread-crosses were certainly an important item on that occasion and correspond to the *mdos-chog* ('thread-cross ritual') in our text. The distinctive apparel of the Glud-'gong rGyal-po's rough fur cape, the turned out hair, and conical cap are not mentioned; instead Khyi-kha Ra-thod and his subjects are all made to wear what appear to be rags (*gos-dum*). Whereas the Glud-'gong are accompanied by certain animals (white horse, white dog and white bird), Khyi-kha Ra-thod is given the 'demon-ministers' and his mother's subjects for his companions. While the Glud-'gong take with them the provisions they have demanded from the lHa-sa populace during the New Year, Khyi-kha Ra-thod and his party are given bags of seeds to

take with them, presumably to plant in their place of exile. One of the Glud-'gong was chased off to 'Phan-yul. The other was chased first to bSam-yas, where he spent a week, and then to Tshe-thang. This double expulsion in the latter's case may correspond to the triple expulsion of Khyi-kha Rathod. Although the details vary in each of these correspondences, the overt and explicit allusion in the *gnas-yig* to these features of what must be an early version of the Glud-'gong ritual seem beyond question. Similar allusions, but of a more covert and implicit nature, have been painstakingly noted by Stein (1959a: 557 et. seq.) in his study of the Ge-sar epic.<sup>30</sup>

### THE WOODEN GARUḌA AS A VEHICLE OF EXPULSION

For the village audience the legend's appeal lies mainly in two things: the shocking story of dMar-rgyan's affair with the animals, and the manufacture and control of the *garuḍa* 'aeroplane'. Dreams and legends about mechanically controlled flight seem to be very common in the history of certain pre-industrial societies and it need cause no real surprise to find a sophisticated example of this here. Despite the apparent anomalies in the number and function of its 'joysticks' and the way in which the one that effects take-off 'agitates the unwanted wind' and the one that lands the machine 'seizes the wanted wind' (logically it should be the other way round), it is evident that the whole mechanism has been reasoned out most imaginatively. The captain's advice to his passengers is particularly pleasing, namely that they should sit back comfortably and not be afraid despite the trembling, rolling and shaking of the aeroplane. Is all this the dream of Padma Glingpa or did he use existing material? Berthold Laufer's fascinating paper (1928) on 'The prehistory of aviation', written to celebrate the first flight across the Atlantic, leaves little doubt on this score.<sup>31</sup> As Needham says, Laufer's ' . . . main failing was a tendency to take the legendary material too seriously' (1965:569 note a). It appears that he puts the following story about a 'dirigible airship' in a quite different category to his account of seven league boots, hippoplanes, aerial chariots and such like. It is taken from 'The Twenty-five Tales of a Vetāla' which were well known in Tibet. Laufer's paraphrase reads as follows:

The heroes of this tale are six young men, -the son of a rich man, a physician's son, a painter's son, a mathematician's son, a carpenter's son, and the son of a smith, who leave home in quest of adventure in a foreign land. The first of them won the hand of a beautiful woman of divine origin, but she was soon kidnapped by a powerful king who took her into his harem. The six youths conspired to rescue the stolen wife from her captivity, and the carpenter's son hit upon the scheme to construct a wooden bird, called Garuda, whose interior was equipped with an elaborate apparatus which allowed the machine to

fly in various directions and to change its course at will: it was provided with three springs. When the spring in front was touched, the aeroplane flew upward; when the springs on the sides were tipped, it floated evenly along; when the spring beneath was pressed, it made its descent. The painter's son decorated the Garuda in various colours, so that it could not be distinguished from a real bird. The rich youth boarded the machine, pressed the spring, and crossed the air in the direction of the king's palace, where he soared above the roof. The king and his people were amazed, for they had never before seen such a gigantic bird. The king bade his consort to ascend the palace and offer food to the strange visitor. So she did, and the bird descended. The aviator opened the door of the machine, made himself known, seated his former wife inside, and hopped off with her, navigating his way back to his companions - in the same manner as we have all seen it in the movies with modern airships.

(Laufer 1928:47-48)

Another story noted by Laufer is contained in the *Panchatantra* (I, 5) and concerns a weaver who is so infatuated with a king's daughter that he persuades his friend, a carpenter, to make him a wooden *garuḍa* which is 'set in motion by means of a switch or spring'. The weaver uses it to visit the princess and eventually to fight her father's enemies, assisted by the god Viṣṇu whose traditional mount is a *garuḍa*. Laufer says: 'The most interesting point of this story is that the bird-plane is utilized for military purposes to defeat and rout an army. When we read [elsewhere] that Abhayakara, a saint of the ninth century from Bengal, assumed the form of a Garuda to disperse an army of the Turushkas (Turks), we must understand that he was mounted on a Garuda-plane which functioned as a war-plane.' (op. cit. p. 47) This certainly takes too serious a view of the story. However, one of these Indian legends, or a similar one, is likely to have been available in translation to Padma Gling-pa who saw the *garuḍa*'s value as a vehicle of expulsion and combat. It is the scene of the delightful verbal contest sparked off by the guru's barking at the 'king', intended as a mocking allusion to the latter's name and origin. (The significance of 'the dog-language of the Indian rTsang-lung' on f. 9a is somewhat lost.) The oral tradition related by 'Jam dpal rDo-rdo (see note 25 above) concerning the *garuḍa*'s concealment as a *gter-ma* at mTho-ba-brag once more recalls the theme of expulsion/recovery.

The closest parallel to this story in Tibetan tradition is found in the mythology of the important protective deity, Pe-har, one of whose forms and epithets is Shing-bya-can, 'Possessor of a Wooden Bird' (Nebesky 1956: 109-10). According to the index to the sNar-thang *bKa'-gyur*, Pe-har is supposed to have been brought to bSam-yas by the prince Mu-khri bTsan-po from the Bha-ta Hor meditation college (Thomas 1935:300-302). According to the 5th Dalai Lama and other historians the god is said to have come 'riding



a wooden bird' which was apparently preserved till recently in bSam-yas. (Tucci 1949:735 and 742, note 66). A strong connection of Pe-har with the Vaiśravaṇa cycle has been suggested by Tucci who has tried to explain how elements of that cycle became absorbed into the local cult of Pe-har in central Asia. He points to examples of magical flight in the Vaiśravaṇa paintings of Tun-huang and Turfan where the birds in question are taken to be *garuḍas*, and so introduces the idea that the legend of Pe-har's flight may have originated as an interpretation of a painting. In the 5th Dalai Lama's history and in Tucci's 'rNying-ma-pa Apology' the hero is actually our Mu-rum bTsan-po who is sent to guard the northern frontiers after his murder of 'U-rings and who provokes the capture of Pe-har by Vaiśravaṇa (Tucci 1947:320, 323; 1949:735).

### Bhutanese Developments

Unlike the 'Sindhu Rāja', Khyi-kha Ra-thod never gained sufficient respectability to attain national significance in Bhutan, and his cult is confined to the centre and east of the country. Although completely bypassed in the national histories he was soon adopted as an ancestral or mythological hero not only within Bum-thang, the original location of the legend's dénouement, but also in eastern Bhutan, in Arunachal Pradesh and in various parts of northern and even southern Nepal. While the eastward diffusion towards the Kameng Frontier Division presents no particular problems, the westward movement to Nepal seems to have occurred along lines that are yet to be properly determined.

In the above *gnas-yig* the last we hear of Khyi-kha Ra-thod is his settling down in the sTang valley. In the alternative source which lacks the origin myth (the *sBas-yul 'bras-mo-gshong dang mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig*), we read on f. 40b that one of his 'royal descendants' (*rgyal-brgyud*) must be among the group destined to reveal the hidden paradise. His descendants are said to live in the village of rGyal-mkhar (or rGyal-blon-mkhar, see note 25 above) a mile or so south of Bya-dkar rDzong in Bumthang. Their descent is both laughed at and taken seriously by their neighbours. Other groups in Bum-thang claimed descent not from the king but instead from his retinue. In the chapter dealing with mKhan-pa-lung in the 'biography' of the 'Sindhu Rāja' Khyi-kha Ra-thod is accompanied on his journey south to Bum-thang by fifteen 'religious ministers', twenty 'demon-ministers' and many wives. These are established in camps and estates on the way.<sup>32</sup> Among the 'religious ministers' appear the Then spun-dgu, the 'Nine *Then* Brothers', a set of ancient Bon-po deities associated with nine levels of atmospheric space. The great antiquity of these *Then* (more correctly, '*Then*') has been noticed by Stein (1971:547), who remarks: ' . . . la divinisation des phénomènes atmos-

phériques et leur insertion dans le panthéon remontent à l'époque des manuscrits de Touen-houang.'<sup>33</sup> They are also found in the *Bum-thang dar-gud-kyi lung-bstan* where the 'Sindhu Rāja' is here replaced by King dByug-ston: after the latter's departure for India, the 'Tibetan king' Khyi-kha Ra-thod comes to Bum-thang in company with the 'Nine *Then* Brothers'. Their descendants survive for just thirty years and then disappear together with the Buddhist temples which were built prior to their arrival by dByug-ston.<sup>34</sup>

There is a reference to these 'ministers' who settled at rGyal-mkhar in a text that predates the above 'prophecy', namely the eulogy of Bum-thang written by Klong-chen-pa in 1355.

At the bottom [of the Chos-'khor valley] is a district castle of an ancient king

And a village of [his] ministers called rGyal-blon-sa (King-minister-place).

The people of this place are of most noble extraction and

Their bodies too are more excellent than those of other people.<sup>35</sup>

The tradition must have persisted in various forms because in the early eighteenth century we find the historian Ngag-dbang recording the legend that three of the 'Six *Vajra* Brothers' of lHa-lung dPal-gyi rDo-rje met the descendants of Khyi-kha Ra-thod's companions in Bum-thang (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 41b). They are said to be few in number, the only inhabitants of the district. It is their search for a ruler who would bring order to their quarrels and contentions which introduces the origin myth of the *gDung* families of Bum-thang (op. cit. f. 32a). The same thing occurs when Prince gTsang-ma (a much more important ancestor figure) arrives in east Bhutan at Wang-ser-kung-pa, a place I cannot locate (op. cit. ff. 12b-13a). There he too meets the actual companions of Khyi-kha Ra-thod who are settled in the area.

### Himalayan Developments

Further to the east in the Kameng Frontier Division of Arunachal Pradesh live the Sherdukpen people (also called the Senji-Thongji) who preserve an extraordinarily garbled version of the myth. Their historical legends as recorded by Sharma (1961) centre around the story of how a certain 'Japtang Bura', the son of Srong-btsan sGam-po by an Ahom princess, finds his way to Rupa (locally known as Thongthui, the main Sherdukpon village), where he establishes himself as chief with the aid of his maternal grandfather, the Ahom king. 'Japtang Bura' is said to have had an elder brother called 'Jabung Ngowang Namje' (= *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal!) who won control over Bhutan. He also had an illegitimate brother called 'Khi Bu Rowa' who is undoubtedly our Khyi-kha Ra-thod in a different guise; he is the product of an illicit union of the Ahom princess with 'Rigpu Chhan' (= Rig-pa-can?), the minister sent to fetch her as Srong-btsan's bride. (This must be a confusion

with mGar sTong-btsan Yul-zung, the minister sent by Srong-btsan to fetch his Chinese queen, of whom a similar legend survives.) Unfortunately Sharma gives no further information on 'Khi Bu Rowa' or the exploits credited to him by the Sherdukpen. 'Japtang Bura' is claimed by them as their ancestor, and their subordinate clans are said to be descended from the porters and servants who accompanied him to Rupa from Tibet. Sarkar (1975: 44) informs us that according to a manuscript preserved in the rTa-wang monastery, 'Meme Gyapten' was in fact a lay associate of the Mon-pa lama bsTan-pa'i sGron-me, a disciple of the 2nd Dalai Lama (1475-1542), who figures in the genealogical traditions of the Jo-bo clan of lHa'u and who was responsible for introducing the dGe-lugs-pa school into the area. Despite its mangled appearance, the importance of the Sherdukpen myth, like many of the Bhutanese myths, lies in the way it helps to reconcile the local aspirations of a small people with their domination by powerful neighbours; the glory and strength of these neighbouring countries is reflected upon the small community in its central position midway between them. Weakness is thus turned to strength. (The Aka origin myth related on p. 126 below is a better example.) The appearance of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal in the legend can only be explained by contact with Bhutan and indeed Sharma (1961 : 50) supplies plenty of information concerning successive waves of Bhutanese immigrants coming into the Sherdukpen area, who probably also brought with them the story of Khyi-kha Ra-thod. There is in fact another 'hidden land' somewhere to the north of the Sherdukpen area which may be allied to the mKhan-pa-lung/mKhan-pa-ljongs in Bhutan. Mr. Richardson informs me that in the 6th Dalai Lama's official biography his birthplace at La'og Yul-gsum (a district which encompasses rTa-wang) is described as situated near to a certain sBas-yul mKhan-pa-steng. This may, however, be a mistake for the sacred place called Khrom-pa-steng which is supposed to be situated at the top of the La'og Yul-gsum district in sBas-yul sKyid-mo-ljongs (*Vaidūrya-ser-po*, pp. 395-397). This latter 'paradise' also turns up in Nepal as sBas-yul sKyid-mo-lung (Aris 1975 : 56 - 66).

In 1969 the late Professor Franz Bernhard of Hamburg University paid a brief visit to Bhutan. One of his aims was to try and locate the position of mKhan-pa-lung and enquire into its mythology. While pursuing his researches in Nepal he had come across a guidebook to a hidden valley bearing the same name in the Shar Khum-bu area and had been told that another mKhan-pa-lung existed somewhere in Bhutan. Unfortunately, none of the people he talked to in Western Bhutan could help him since this *sbas-yul* is practically unknown to them, and I too, having spent all my time up to this date in the west, could provide him with no information. By the time I heard about mKhan-pa-lung two years later in Bum-thang and had located the local litera-

ture on the subject, he had already met his untimely fate in Mustang. When I visited Nepal in 1973 I met A. W. Macdonald, then Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Tribhuvan, and learnt from him about the Sherpa mKhan-pa-lung. One of the relevant guidebooks in his collection consists of part two of the second version attributed to Pad-ma Gling-pa, omitting the first part on Sikkim, and claims to be a copy of a manuscript belonging to a monk from the famous 'Brug-pa monastery of gSang-sngagsChos-gling in Bya-yul near Tsa-ri. The other two works are *gter-ma* attributed to Rig-'dzin rGod-ldem (rGod-kyi lDem-'phru-can), a *gter-ston* of the 16th century according to Stein (1959a: 346). However, according to the *gter-rnam* (f. 123a) and the recent rNying-ma history (ff. 277a - 279a) by bDud-'joms Rin-po-che, Rig-'dzin rGod-ldem (*alias* dNgos-grub rGyal-mtshan) was the founder of the *Byang-gter* tradition and lived between 1377 and 1409, that is to say *before* Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521). This certainly poses a problem to the notion of a westward diffusion of the myth from Bhutan but it may perhaps be resolved if it can be shown that these texts attributed to rGod-ldem are later reworkings of the Padma Gling-pa material. The two modern authorities cited above, however, maintain that rGod-ldem discovered the guidebooks to seven major *sbas-yul*. He is particularly remembered for a journey he made late in life to Sikkim. One of the two works attributed to him in the Macdonald Collection is entitled *sBas-yul mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-kyi lam-yig dang-po*. The other lacks a title but seems to reproduce portions of the former work. Another work that has since come to light in the library of the Toyo Bunko in Tokyo (I owe it to Professor Stein for drawing my attention to it) is the *sBas-yul mkhan-pa-lung-gis lde-mig mthong thos regs-pa* (sic) in 22 folios, also attributed to Rig-'dzin rGod-ldem. It seems to be very close indeed to Macdonald's texts, and may indeed turn out to be the same. Further material on the Sherpa mKhan-pa-lung is available in the Collected Works of rDza-sprul Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu, Vol. *Ja*, which contains much information on the sacred mountains of the Everest region<sup>36</sup>

A preliminary reading of some of this material suggests that the mythology of the Bhutanese mKhan-pa-lung has simply been transposed into the Nepalese setting. Thus the principal guardians remain Zo-ra-ra-skyes (usually spelt as Su-ra-rwa-skyes) and Khrag-mig-ma. Khyi-kha Ra-thod is frequently introduced as the king ruling the hidden land, but there is no consistent account of his legend. Most of the localities associated with the Bhutanese version are similarly transferred into the surrounding Sherpa country. The place is venerated both by the Sherpas, and by the Rai people who live directly to the south.<sup>37</sup> In 1973 I led a small team for the University of California to the districts of Kutang and Nubri in the Manaslu area of northern Nepal and in the village of Samargaon (known locally as Ros) I found a clan called dPon-

bzang ('Good Chief') which claimed direct descent from Khyi-kha Ra-thod himself (Aris 1975: 73-74).

Thus there clearly exists wide scope for coordinating the various traditions about Khyi-kha Ra-thod and his hidden land. The key probably lies in the figure of *Rig-'dzin* rGod-ldem and, if they exist, in his biography and the corpus of 'discoveries' properly attributed to him. If it should turn out that the latter do not contain the texts in the Macdonald and Toyo Bunko Collections, then it can be assumed that these do represent an adaptation of the Padma Gling-pa tradition to the Nepalese environment but if they can be shown to be the 'authentic' finds of rGod-ldem then there must be a different explanation for their diffusion.

### Conclusion

The concept of the 'hidden land', its origin and development, is most relevant to the study of Bhutanese history; by transferring the notion from a small, delimited locality such as mKhan-pa-lung to the area as a whole, it came to provide a mythic formula that accounted for the origin of the country after it had been united in the 17th century. Both of the 'national' histories so far prepared by the Bhutanese explain the early history of their country in terms of 'how it turned into a hidden land'.<sup>38</sup> As we shall see in the next part, it was from the earliest times to this region that several of the major and many of the minor Tibetan Buddhist teachers fled to take refuge from troubles in Tibet. In Bhutan their traditions, lineages and schools took root, thus turning their expulsion to profit and recovery. The cult of the 'hidden land', which carried this as its principle theme, thus provided a rationale to the whole movement. In the words of Padma Gling-pa, it was:

A time when unprecedented stars shine in the sky,  
 A time when the earth and stones, peaks and cliffs split open and fall  
 down,  
 A time when epidemics of eye disease are rife,  
 A time when even fathers and sons split up,  
 A time when mad dogs, mad horses and mad people proliferate,  
 A time when people search for the main door to mKhan-pa-lung,  
 A time when people of many different races come,  
 A time when earth and hail pound the crops,  
 A time when the religious communities of dBus come to Mon;

A time when the people of Tibet come forth to Mon.<sup>39</sup>

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**Note:** An important tradition parallel to that of Khyi-kha Ra-thod which permits a closer look at its distant sources is contained in the Bon-po text of the *gZi-Brjid*. An interesting analysis is given in Per Kvaerne's forthcoming paper on 'Mongols and K'i-tan in a 14th. C Tibetan Bonpo text'.

## CHAPTER 4: PRINCE GTSANG-MA AND THE SECRET HISTORY OF HIS LOST CLANS

Prince gTsang-ma, eldest son of King *Khri lDe-srong-brtsan* (ruled c.800-815), is only a minor figure in Tibetan history but came to acquire great significance in the eyes of the eastern Bhutanese for it was from him that all their ruling clans claimed direct and uninterrupted descent. Evidence for gTsang-ma's activities in or very near Bhutan is found in almost all the Tibetan histories, in passages which speak of the events that led to the collapse of Buddhist rule and the usurpation of the throne by his brother, the anti-Buddhist Glang Dar-ma ('U'i-dum-brtan, ruled c. 836-842). The whole subject, however, appears only in late texts and finds no mention in the Tibetan records found at Tun-huang or in the T'ang histories. Despite the lack of contemporary sources, gTsang-ma's story has all the appearance of a valid tradition derived from the ancient archives which survived for the use of some of the later historians. Unlike the three subjects dealt with so far in Chapters 1 to 3 above, this is not a *gter-ma* tradition but rather one handed down in the historical literature and somewhat elaborated with the passage of time. As gTsang-ma was never more than a minor figure for the Tibetans, the fanciful elements that surround the brief episode where he makes his only appearance have apparently been kept to a minimum. By contrast, the eastern Bhutanese developed an entire myth concerning gTsang-ma quite independent of the Tibetan material but one whose origin is perfectly consistent with it. The monk Ngag-dbang recorded the myth in 1728, pointing out this *prima facie* consistency. What is of particular interest is that the clans who claimed gTsang-ma as their common ancestor appear to have done so without recourse to the history books, depending instead on folk traditions which (with the advantage of hindsight) we can see are more or less borne out by those books, as Ngag-dbang himself sought to demonstrate (*rGyal-rigs*, ff. 10a-11b).

### His Credentials

Like the 'Sindhu Rāja' and Khyi-kha Ra-thod, it is as a royal refugee that Prince gTsang-ma is said to have come to Bhutan. The first mention of him appears in the royal genealogy of the Sa-skya historian, Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan

(1147-1216), and can be dated to c. 1215. Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan was clearly dependent on two unspecified sources which he seems to have summarised separately. gTsang-ma therefore appears in the same context in two different passages:

1) Then the throne was taken by *Khri* lDe-srong-btsan. He married 'Bro-bza' lHa-rgyal Gung-skar-ma who bore three sons. The eldest, *Khri* bTsan-ma [= gTsang-ma], was banished to Bum-thang in the South and was killed by poison by 'Brom-bza' Legs-rje and sNa-nam-bza' Me-rje-the'u.

2) The eldest of the three brothers, gTsang-ma, was banished in the Male Iron Year. Having failed to take control of the royal power, he was killed by poison by 'Bro-bza' Legs-rje and sNa-nam Mang-mo-rje at Bum-thang in lHo-brag; his lineage remains.<sup>1</sup>

These rather cryptic statements belong to a tradition which Tucci (1947) has shown drew on documents similar to those found in Tun-huang, a tradition whose reliability for this late period is suggested by the many close parallels between its treatment of the earlier period of dynastic rule and that found in the Tun-huang Chronicle. Broadly speaking, it was the views expressed in this text (and in that of another Sa-skya historian, 'Phags-pa, dateable to 1275) which later formed the basis of many Tibetan histories. Despite fanciful embellishments, it can therefore be argued that Tibetan historiography rests on reasonably firm foundations. Nevertheless, for the events leading up to, surrounding and following the rule of Glang Dar-ma, we still lack an independent yardstick of comparison to corroborate the Sa-skya tradition.

There are several problems connected with the interpretation of the above passages. Why was gTsang-ma, as the eldest son, unable to succeed to the throne? Most sources say that it was because he was an ordained monk but that tradition finds no place in this earliest reference. Rather, I would suggest that it may represent an attempt to find an aetiology for his name that was both convincing and convenient; *gtsang-ma* ('pure') calls to mind the character of a monk. In the first passage he is referred to as *Khri* ('the Enthroned'), suggesting perhaps that he may indeed have acted as king by reason of his primogeniture, if only for a short period. In the *bShad-mdzod* (f. 85a) he is actually referred to as *mNga'-bdag* ('The Ruler') *Khri* rTsang-ma.<sup>2</sup> Haarh (1969: 339) has attempted to resolve this difficulty by saying: 'What really took place seems to have been that gTsang-ma, as a Buddhist monk, waived his right to the throne, but took the actual government into his hands on behalf of his younger brother Ral-pa-can, who was, or became, incapable of exercising it. At the same time gTsang-ma for many years, until he was poisoned, protected the king against the fate which had long been intended for him by the Bon-po.' As we have seen above in the case of Mu-rum, Haarh always

seems ready to look for *de facto* kings acting by the side of brothers who were 'shadow' kings. However, in the absence of supporting evidence his arguments can only remain an interesting speculation. To suggest that a figure belonging to the early ninth century was a king merely because he is accorded a regal title in texts of the twelfth and fifteenth century seems a doubtful proposition, especially since these late texts often got their names wrong and their titles misapplied. This is particularly evident in Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan's handling of the names he gives to the two royal ladies who are supposed to have poisoned gTsang-ma after his banishment. The form *bza'* seems to have been used exclusively by the wives of kings but neither of these ladies are truly identifiable and the problem is further complicated by the fact that the two passages preserve their names in different forms:

- 1) 'Brom-bza' Legs-rje / 'Bro-bza' Legs-rje;
- 2) sNa-nam-bza' Me-rje-the'u / sNa-nam Mang-mo-rje.

The latter alternative is in each case more convincing. Although there was a minor clan called the 'Brom, there is no record of it ever having provided a wife for the Tibetan kings, whereas there were plenty from the 'Bro. The only one alive at this time, however, was gTsang-ma's own mother, who is called here lHa-rgyal Gung-skar-ma. She is lHa-rgyal Mang-mo-rje in the Tunhuang records, Khri-mo-legs in *Khri lDe-srong-btsan's* edict preserved in dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, and lHa-rtse in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*. Legs-rje, then, seems to be an echo of some of these forms, but if gTsang-ma had been murdered by his mother one would expect the story to have survived elsewhere in some form of tradition, as it did in the case of Mu-ne, killed by his mother of the Tshes-pong clan (see chapter 3). In fact it seems likely that Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan has confused the two: the name he gives to gTsang-ma's mother, i.e. lHa-rgyal Gung-skar-ma, seems to be modelled on the one he gives to the Tshes-pong queen, i.e. rMa-rgyal mTsho-skar-ma. These forms are only preserved in this text and in a seventeenth century Sa-skya genealogy which derives from it.

In the case of the second lady, the queen from the sNa-nam clan, we may be on firmer ground. According to dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, Glang Dar-ma ('U'i-dum-brtan), the second brother who was also passed over in the succession, married a lady of this clan. The sNa-nam first provided a queen for *Khri Srong-lde-brtsan* and may originally have come from somewhere near Samarkand (Richardson 1977b): *passim*). The name of the queen here, Me-rje-the'u, has a most improbable look to it, with a rather wicked flavour; the *the'u* recalls the malignant *the'u-rang* spirits, and the lady in question is commonly represented as the crafty woman who tried to pass off an adopted child as her own son, Yum-brtan. The form Mang-mo-rje which figures in the alternative reading is something in the nature of a title. It is applied to many of the great



ladies of the period. The Tun-huang Annals, for instance, give it to the 'Bro queen of *Khri* Srong-lde-brtsan whom we discussed above. At all events, it must be to Glang-dar-ma's wife that the text refers and in view of the antagonism which he apparently felt for his brothers, there is no particular reason for discounting the idea that his wife took up his cause and murdered one of them on his behalf.

It is most unfortunate that the date of gTsang-ma's banishment is as obscure as the identity of the royal ladies who murdered him. It is impossible to say whether Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan intended us to understand *lcags-pho* as one of the six male years (*'brug, rta, spre, khyi, byi* or *stag*), or whether *pho* is a mistake for some specific year (*yos* or *phag* perhaps). If there is any historical basis for the statement, the only year that seems to fit any of these hypotheses is *lcags-spre* ('Iron Monkey' = 840).

The point of greatest interest for us is the statement that gTsang-ma was exiled to Bum-thang in 'the South' (*lho*). The second passage places Bum-thang in lHo-brag which may not be as inaccurate as it appears. Certainly in Padma Gling-pa's day Bum-thang was linked in a somewhat vague manner to the lHo-brag province whose civil officials had some authority in Bum-thang. (See pp. 118-119 below). Even more relevant, is the firm statement that gTsang-ma's lineage (*srid-rgyud*) survived into the early twelfth century which implies that Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan and his contemporaries understood that gTsang-ma had fathered his children in his place of exile. Some two and a half centuries or so later, Klong-chen-pa describes the valley of U-ra in Bum-thang as 'an excellent place due to the fact that the line of descendants of the lord *Dharmarājas* [still] reside there and people from the pure Tibet live there.'<sup>3</sup> One would, of course, like to see *gtsang-ma'i bod-rnams* meaning 'the Tibetans of [or descending from] gTsang-ma' but it is without doubt an allusion to the ancient poetic description of Tibet as *sa gtsang*, 'a pure land'. In the same passage, U-ra is described as 'similar to the dBus [province] in the land of Tibet' (*bod-yul dbus dang 'dra-ba*). This is a notion one still meets with today and the U-ra people are invariably regarded by their neighbours as descended from Tibetans. Their ruling family, the *U-ra gDung*, did claim a connection with the ancient Tibetan dynasty (as we see in the *rGyal-rigs*, Section 3, pp. 125-129 below) but not apparently with gTsang-ma himself. In fact none of the Bhutanese stories speak of gTsang-ma's descendants holding sway in this part of the country and the traditional itinerary ascribed to him took him through areas to the south of Bum-thang in his journey from the west to the east.

Starting with *sBa-bzhed*, some of the Tibetan sources say that it was to sPa-gro rather than to Bum-thang that gTsang-ma was banished. The date of *sBa-bzhed* is still subject to investigation but it is certainly not later than the

fourteenth century. Richardson (1971:437) says it may even be earlier than Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan's genealogy to which it affords some considerable contrast in the handling of the gTsang-ma story:

The *zhang-blon* who were enamoured of evil held consultations and deliberated in secret on the destruction of the religious law, during which it was said that unless the *btsan-po* was first killed, the religious law could not be destroyed. Some of them said: 'Although Ral-pa-can [*Khri* gTsug-lde-brtsan] has no son, the youngest brother gTsang-ma who is enamoured of religion [might] take hold of the power and so the religious law would not be destroyed.' [To this] it was said that gTsang-ma could be banished. It was then declared that since the Great Monk [Dran-kha dPal-gyi Yon-gtan] was virtuous in religion and had great power, the religious law would [still] not be destroyed. After [these] consultations had been held, a slander was put about to destroy the religious law to the effect that the Great Monk and Ngang-tshul-ma [the queen of *Khri* gTsug-lde-brtsan] had made arrangements to fornicate. When this was reported to the ears [of the king], a punishment was meted [upon the queen ?] at Che-thang (?) and the Great Monk too [ . . . ]<sup>4</sup> was killed. As soon as that happened, the Divine Prince gTsang-ma became a monk and, with a great equipage, he was exiled to sPa-gro Mon.<sup>5</sup>

This account of a grand Bon-po conspiracy, culminating in the assassination of *Khri* gTsug-lde-brtsan, was adopted by all the later writers who dealt in any detail with this confused period. By a simple misreading of the text, Bu-ston in his *chos-'byung* of 1322 has Gro-mo (i.e. the Chumbi Valley) instead of sPa-gro as the place to which gTsang-ma was banished.<sup>6</sup> This was later followed by the *Hu-lan deb-ther* of Tshal Kun-dga' rDo-rje (1346) and the *rGya-bod yig-tshang* of sTag-tshang-pa Śrībhūtibhadra (c. 1438), ff. 18b and 126 respectively. All other sources say the place was sPa-gro or some vague area in lHo-mon, with the exception of dPa'-bo gTsug-lag (f. 134b) who combines the Sa-skya and *sBa-bzhed* traditions and indicates that it was at the temple of mKho-mthing that gTsang-ma was poisoned by the sNan-am-bza' of Mang-rje (sic). The *bShad-mdzod* (f. 85a) similarly has lHo-brag Mon in place of sPa-gro Mon, and on f. 85b it adds the vital information that 'the kings of Southern Mon are the descendants of the Ruler gTsang-ma, but [concerning them] look to their own historical records'.<sup>7</sup> Thus in the fifteenth century we can be quite certain that the ruling families of eastern Bhutan already possessed documents claiming their descent from gTsang-ma. The monk Ngag-dbang probably used these in compiling his history, the *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khung gsal-ba'i sgron-me* presented in Part Five below. It has been suggested by Gene Smith in his introduction to the *bShad-mdzod* that its author, Don-dam sMra-ba'i Senge, was himself a descendant of gTsang-ma in the princely family of Gru-shul, or else possibly a household

priest to this family, citing as evidence for this the testimony of the passage above. However, Gru-shul (or Gro-shul) where the text was composed is a small district which lies between gNyal and Lo-ro, due north of the easternmost extremity of Bhutan (Ferrari 1958: 127), and the term *lho-phyogs Mon* as used by a native of Gru-shul must refer to that area of Bhutan where these 'royal' families were so prominent. The inhabitants of Gru-shul were in regular contact with the Eastern Bhutanese and Gru-shul itself is described as 'the bridge between the south and north'.<sup>8</sup> A man of letters from that area would have had ample opportunity to learn about the legends and traditions of his southern neighbours, just as the great 'Jigs-med Gling-pa did, as revealed in his 18th century *gTam-tshog* miscellany. The converse is also true, and there are several indications (which I point out in my notes to the *rGyal-rigs*) that Ngag-dbang, the early 18th century historian of eastern Bhutan, had access to the *bShad-mdzod* itself. His prime source for Tibetan history, however, was for him as for many others, the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* by the Sa-skya scholar bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan, most probably written in 1368. It is the statement in that work that gTsang-ma's place of exile was sPa-gro in the west of the country rather than some place in the east (a statement which derives from the *sBa-bzhed*) that presumably impelled Ngag-dbang to seek for traditions concerning the prince's journey from the west to the east where most of his alleged descendants were living. That Ngag-dbang was aware of the conflicting nature of the accounts concerning gTsang-ma's place of exile is abundantly clear in a passage where he tries to harmonize them: ' . . . although the Divine Prince . . . had intended to proceed in the direction of lHo-brag, due to the power of his aspirations made in previous lives, from the direction of Phag-ri in gTsang he went to gNam-thong dKar-po in sPa-gro' (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 11b).

It would have been strange if other groups in the west of the country had not regarded gTsang-ma as their ancestor in the same way that the ruling clans did in the east. Ngag-dbang (*loc. cit.*) himself records a tradition which held that two such groups, the rGyal-gdung of sPa-gro and the gDung-'brog of Thim-phu, were descended from the union of gTsang-ma with a girl of the village of gNam-thong dKar-po in sPa-gro. Much more important, however, is the claim in the biography of Ye-shes dNgod-grub (f. 23b) that there were many different groups in 'the South' who were properly descended from gTsang-ma. In the area of western Bhutan there are said to be two such groups (families, clans, tribes ?) called the Wang-gdung and the Mi'i-rgyal-mtshan. In an interlinear note someone has appended the information that the former is also known as the Nyung-tshan, a clan (?) of 'most noble ancestry'.<sup>9</sup> None of these names are remembered by the western Bhutanese today, but the Wang people are those inhabiting the valleys of Thim-phu

and sPu-na-kha (Aris 1976: 8 and Note 61) and the Dung (or gDung) seem to have been a scattered people living in various parts of the country (see the next chapter). We may perhaps conjecture that the Wang-gdung were a western branch, presently surviving as the Wang. The relationship between the terms Wang-gdung and Nyung-tshan seems to be hinted at in an old saying quoted in *LCB I* (f. 7b) in an obscure passage dealing with ancestral feuds: 'Just as the Wang fight with the dGung, so do the Mang-tshan (? 'Many Families') fight with the Nyung-tshan (? 'Few Families').'<sup>10</sup>

Before turning to the subject of Ngag-dbang's important work (the *rGyal-rigs*), some notice must be given of the handling of gTsang-ma's story in the *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* and the way this affected later Tibetan and Bhutanese writers.

gTsang-ma is introduced as the eldest brother who in his early life apparently became a monk and was therefore passed over in the succession, just as Glang Dar-ma was because of his evil character (f. 89b). This contrasts with the *sBa-bzhed* where we learnt that gTsang-ma became a monk just before his banishment, maybe because the Buddhist robes were still regarded as sacrosanct. After the *rGyal-rabs*, all the Tibetan histories emphasise gTsang-ma's monkhood. The *La-dwags rgyal-rabs* even says that he composed 'a treatise which gave counsel on worldly rites'.<sup>11</sup> As is usual with dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, in his *lHo-brag chos-'byung* we find an extra snippet on the subject of gTsang-ma's monastic status. As perhaps befitted a member of the royal family who had taken the cloth, he is accompanied by monks, translators and pandits on his journey to exile. On reaching the gTsang-po river a discussion is held during which gTsang-ma announces in verse:

I have no power to stay but must go to the earth's end.  
 Though guiltless, nothing can be done about this expulsion.  
 I beg you monks to return from here in peace  
 My mind is decided, so cast off the boat's mooring.<sup>12</sup>

As we saw above, according to this version gTsang-ma ends up at mKho-mthing in lHo-brag where he is poisoned by sNa-nam-bza'. This little side-show to the play very likely derives from a local lHo-brag tradition known to the author, himself a native of lHo-brag. The 5th Dalai Lama takes the theme of gTsang-ma's ordination to absurd lengths, with much verbiage on the prince's feelings of renunciation (f. 41b of his chronicle). All this about his monkhood contradicts gTsang-ma's major role as an ancestor figure in Bhutan and it is interesting to observe how Ngag-dbang leaves out all mention of gTsang-ma's ordination, even though he depends very heavily on the *rGyal-rabs* where his monkhood was first mentioned.<sup>12a</sup> A monk could not be described as a man who 'cohabits with an extremely beautiful young girl as his

play-mate' (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 11b) who bears him an illegitimate son. Faced with such inconsistencies in his source material, Ngag-dbang generally attempts to resolve them through synthesis but here he has simply omitted the unacceptable.

Another point concerning the *rGyal-rabs*' handling of the story and the way this was put to use by Ngag-dbang is the idea that the Bon-po ministers bribed the diviners and astrologers; they are rewarded for their false prediction that all sorts of troubles would afflict the king and his realm if gTsang-ma continued to reside in Tibet that year. This point is quite absent from the corresponding passage in the *sBa-bzhed*, the principal source for this whole episode in the *rGyal-rabs*. I would, however, argue that it does derive from a quite separate part of the *sBa-bzhed* (on p. 13) where it crops up in a context not very different from this one, although there it is the Buddhist minister Khri-bzang who bribes the experts in divination (the *phyag-spring dang mo-ma dang / bltas-mkhan*) to make the false prediction. In order to avert astrological obstacles (*sku-chags*) to the person of King Khri Srong-lde-brtsan and harm to the state, they are compelled to declare that the most powerful of the anti-Buddhist ministers, the Zhang Ma-zhang, should be dismissed to a 'tomb' (*mchad-pa*) for a period of three years.<sup>13</sup> The young king is in fact referred to as 'prince' (*rgyal-bu*) and this may have helped to confound the incident with gTsang-ma's story and the grand conspiracy to oust him. While the odd term *mo-ma* (which I take as 'diviners' or perhaps 'female diviners') is absent from the *rGyal-rabs*, it turns up again in dPa'-bo gTsug-lag (as *mo-ma phywa-mkhan*) and in the *rGyal-rigs* (as *mo-ma rtsis-pa*). The latter work expands the story still further by saying that the fortune-tellers were bribed to declare that if gTsang-ma stayed in Tibet that year, obstacles would arise both to himself and to his brother the king; we are maybe intended to understand that their stars were in such unfavourable conjunction that this would do enormous injury to them and the country at large. At all events, the king is completely duped, but instead of banishing his brother he politely sends him off to enquire into the welfare of his subjects in lHo-mon, and so gTsang-ma arrives in sPa-gro on the first leg of his journey. It would appear that the Bhutanese of the east did not wish to claim descent from an exiled figure of low fortune and this would explain the particular twist which Ngag-dbang gave to the story. (It should also be recalled that in the passage from the biography of Ye-shes dNgos-grub quoted above, gTsang-ma was despatched not as an exile but rather as a general.)

Thus no longer a monk or exile, the prince is all set to fulfil his destined role in Bhutan. Meanwhile back in Tibet the queen, the chief minister and eventually the king all meet their death. Glang Dar-ma succeeds, the Bon-po triumph and the Buddhist monks are deprived of their privileged status and

reduced to that of householders and hunters. Those who resist are killed. Such is the usual version, but dPa'-bo gTsug-lag adds a note saying that 'some of the pandits who did not escape in flight were sold to Mon'.<sup>14</sup> As slaves? There is no way of telling but if, as seems likely, the Mon referred to here signifies the area of present-day Bhutan, and if one can believe the statement, then these Buddhist scholars would probably have carried with them the torch of religion that was dying in Tibet. If, as it has been argued in Chapter 1, the districts of sPa-gro and Bum-thang were already centres for the Buddhist faith during this period of the 'early diffusion' (*snga-dar*), then the light from that torch would not have fallen on total darkness. Whether or not gTsang-ma was himself a monk, there is no doubt that he really was on the side of the Buddhists and since all the indications point to Bhutan for his banishment, then he too could have helped to keep the fire burning there. What is sure is that from the earliest times certain districts in Bhutan provided a natural refuge for people fleeing from central Tibet, as the events of 1959 have again so recently demonstrated. What is more, if there existed tenuous political links between these districts and central Tibet then they would most certainly have been fit to receive political exiles. Remote enough to prevent them from brewing up trouble, these exiles could still be kept under the eye of the authorities. Such at least was the usual practice in later Tibetan history.

### Living Traditions

Although the historical associations of the story are most evident, for the traditional audience its function is mythical and concerned with remote origins. To add a contemporary dimension to the discussion I include below the translation of a version related to me in Dzongkha by *Slob-dpon* bSod-nams bZang-po, the most noted lama of the 'Brug-pa school in Bhutan today and himself a native of that part of the country where these traditions are still just current. The account was tape recorded on 23rd July 1973 in Thimphu. Although very short, it contrasts most interestingly with the version contained in Sections 1 and 2 of Ngag-dbang's text.

*lHa-sras* gTsang-ma was the brother of King *mNga'-bdag Khri* Ral-pa-can. The latter was the eldest brother, the middle one was *lHa-sras* Dar-ma, that is to say Glang-dar, and the youngest was gTsang-ma. Glang-dar consulted with the demon-ministers (*bdud-blon*) about killing the king and about his plan to take over the throne, saying that there was no other way he could become king. The ministers, however, declared that even if the king were killed there would still be *lHa-sras* gTsang-ma and so he would not be permitted to become king. On discussing ways and means by which they could achieve their aim, it was said that since the king and *lHa-sras* gTsang-ma were of the same birth-year, it was not an

auspicious year for them to reside together. The diviners (*mo-btab-mi*) were presented with bribes of money and told to spread this about. So the diviners declared that it was not proper for the king and *lHa-sras* gTsang-ma to reside together that year. gTsang-ma was told to go away and reside in a monastery, and so he was exiled to the border at sPa-gro. Finding no place at sPa-gro he wished to settle in, and not understanding the language spoken there, he proceeded on his way through Kheng to the eastern region. On arrival there he found good land and saying he would stay there, he built himself a bamboo house and took up residence. That place was called sNga-tshang ('The Ancient Abode'). But he was not happy there, so he went on his way and after crossing the pass of sKo-ra La he arrived at bKra-shis-sgang. He found the land there very pleasant and quite unlike any other he had seen. 'If I reside in this place would it be of benefit to sentient beings, to myself and others?' Now his father had given him a golden arrow and a silver arrow, telling him to use them as protective amulets at a time in his life when he faced severe trouble. His father was Mu-khri bTsan-po. Firing off the golden arrow across to the opposite side of the valley, water came out from where it struck the ground. The so-called gSer-chu ('Golden River') still exists today. Firing off the silver arrow across the river, water again came out from where it struck the ground. The so-called dNgul-chu ('Silver River') still exists today. They are the so-called gSer-chu dNgul-chu. 'Ah, a good auspice has come forth,' he declared. Proceeding on his way he came to Byams-mkhar on the opposite side of the river to bKra-shis-sgang and a bit further down. There was a large crowd of people assembled there who all declared: 'Such a handsome and tall person as you, who is quite unlike ourselves, should be kept here as our chief, our lord!' And so they consulted among each other. The prince agreed but said that if he were to reside there as chief, a palace would be needed. A palace (*pho-brang*) is what the Tibetans call *mkhar* as in 'the first of the palaces Yam-bu-bla-mkhar'. The people agreed, saying they would easily build a palace, using the word *byams* (? 'jam) for 'easy'. So the palace was built and called Byams-mkhar ('The Easy Castle'). It no longer exists today. About seven sons were born to the prince after that. It was the time when the king had been killed in Tibet, the doctrine was declining and temples were being destroyed by Glang-dar. A very large number of Tibetans fled from Tibet and arrived in this direction. One of the prince's sons, the eldest, was sent to Mu-khum, and even though a long time has elapsed since these events took place there are still descendants of his at Mu-khum who say: 'At that time *lHa-sras* gTsang-ma gave us his son from whom this son was born, from whom that son was born, from whom that was born - who was sent at that time as a bridegroom [to that family]' and so on. All this is contained in writings which they still possess. This village of Mu-khum is situated above the so-called

She-ri Bridge, on the opposite side of the valley to sGra-mi-rtse. Then another son was sent to Kheng-mkhar. The story of this one is also contained in writings, together with the story of how *lHa-sras* gTsang-ma came down from Tibet. Then recognising his youngest son as an emanation of the Buddha, even though he did not know much about religion, he sent him off to a place opposite where I [bSod-nams bZang-po] stay at Yong-la dGon-pa which was called Chung-mkhar ('The Castle of the Youngest'), named after him. After he had taken up residence there, many people came up from India to see him. They felt great faith in him, recognising him as the descendant of the kings of Tibet who were themselves of the Shākya lineage of India. They said they would present him with all the land stretching towards Bhutan in a line from Gauhati to Alipur. The writings concerning this are said to be kept in Gauhati even now. Having gained power over the Indian borderlands, all the people of Chung-mkhar gained faith in him and so he resided there as their king. However, besides the oral traditions, this particular story is not contained in the records [preserved in eastern Bhutan]. (The *slob-dpon* ends the account with an incident told him by the late *rdzong-dpon* of gZhong-sgar who had married into the family at Chung-mkhar that claimed descent from gTsang-ma. Apparently when he once made a trading trip to Gauhati in Assam he was accosted by a stranger who insisted on giving him a sum of seventy rupees, saying: 'In previous times the king of Chung-mkhar was our ruler and we enjoyed great prosperity and good fortune. I have books ('kitap') about this.')

It is most unlikely that today more than a handful of people are able to give a connected account such as this. It must be borne in mind that bSod-nams bZang-po has a special antiquarian interest in old traditions, an avocation which leads him into the world of old manuscripts and half-remembered oral traditions. The major literary source for his version is, of course, Ngag-dbang's work of 1728 but since gTsang-ma is presented unequivocally as an exile we can be quite sure that he was familiar with the story as it appears in at least one of the Tibetan histories. However, apart from discrepancies in place names, it is the *rGyal-rigs* which sets the pattern more or less up to the point where gTsang-ma starts producing the sons from whom his descendants variously issued at Byams-mkhar, Kheng-mkhar, Mu-khum and Chung-mkhar. The lines of diffusion are at total variance with that contained in Ngag-dbang's work, the names of each of the sons are lacking and so also are the genealogies which so preoccupy the *rGyal-rigs*. Only the general pattern remains, that of sons being invited to districts to become rulers, from whom lineages are said to be traced. My impression is that these lineages are today probably credited to families which gained prominence in the not too distant past. However it may be, we can at least be sure of one thing: whereas in



present traditions the lines of descent are credited to individual families, up to the early eighteenth century they appear to have been the preserve of several families who together belonged to a single clan or sub-clan. In point of fact, none of the clans whose history Ngag-dbang sketched have survived. The reason for this extraordinary example of social change is all too apparent in the second work of Ngag-dbang presented in Part Five below, the *Lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long* which describes the campaign organised by the great Mi-gyur brTan-pa in the middle years of the 17th century to subdue this part of the country. While we are told (on f. 24a) that the hereditary clan chiefs were reinstated in their customary rights after being defeated and after swearing oaths of allegiance to the 'Brug-pa, it is beyond question that their powers were thereafter much weakened. Reduced to the status of titular heads of their clans possessing no real authority and with large numbers of their clansmen forced into government service as lay servitors and monks, the whole structure of clan organisation disappeared completely. It should be stressed, however, that in many parts of Tibet and the Himalayas, clans seem to have a tendency to vanish almost without trace. The fate suffered by the eastern Bhutanese clans therefore forms part of a broad process whose true explanation may perhaps lie more in the realm of social anthropology.

### The Principal Bhutanese Source

Before trying to consider, on the basis of the *rGyal-rigs*, how the old clans were constituted, some thought must be given to the scope and composition of that work. Nothing is known about the author beyond the meagre information provided in the colophons to his two works, but reading between the lines it is apparent that he was born a member of the Byar clan descending from gTsang-ma's grandson, Gong-dkar-rgyal. He was probably admitted as 'monk-levy' (*btsun-khral*) to the state monastery housed in bKra-shis-sgang rDzong (where he wrote the *rGyal-rigs*) some years after it had been established in about 1657. In his old age he set down in the *Lo-rgyus* the eye-witness accounts of the campaign as related to him by the *dbu-mdzad* Dam-chos Rab-rgyas and others. In 1728 he wrote the *rGyal-rigs*. Certain passages suggest that he was well acquainted with Tibet where he may have gone for study and pilgrimage. By 1728 sufficient time had elapsed since the takeover of east Bhutan for the ancient ruling clans to realise that they had lost the traditional bases of their authority. Either separately or in a group their leaders came to Ngag-dbang and asked him to record their genealogies for posterity. Thus the *rGyal-rigs* was occasioned by sentiments of preservation in the face of a collapsing clan organisation. Could these sentiments have been directed towards covert political action? The answer depends on how we interpret the opening verses (ff. 1b-4b) which describe the work as 'a

secret little song' (*gsang-ba'i glu-chung*) intended for 'nobles of equal standing' (*ya-rabs pho-mnyam*) and not for 'the audience of all ears' (*kun-gyi ma-ba'i thos-rgya*). It was written in the hope that in the future 'a true descendant of the ancient kings might come forth like a star that appears during daytime' (*rje-rgyal brgyud-pa nyin-skar byung srid-na //*). There seems no easy way of deciding whether it was intended to be a 'secret history' to be hidden from the 'Brug-pa authorities (whose overthrow was perhaps desired by the ruling clans displaced by them) or whether it was to be hidden from the public in general (which might misuse the history). At the same time it must be remembered that 'outbreaks of genealogical fever', to use the phrase of J. H. Plumb, often take place as a result of the imposition of some form of foreign control. As David Henige (1974:6-7) comments on the phrase: 'Some of the greatest historical works of antiquity were written during periods of foreign domination and with the expressed purpose of portraying the historians' peoples in a way at once palliative to their lost sovereignty and impressive to their new rulers.' These circumstances would seem to fit the case of the *rGyal-rigs* very well but for its alleged secret nature.

On the face of it, Ngag-dbang must have been a man of somewhat divided loyalty. As a member of the ancient ruling nobility and a confidant of the ousted rulers, his inherited sympathies lay with his own people and their traditions. As a monk dedicated to the 'Brug-pa school, essentially an alien body which had imposed itself by force on the area, he was committed to the furtherance of that school's secular and spiritual aims. His two surviving works are separately devoted to these two areas of sympathy and it is an interesting key to the man himself that the two should have been written by the same person. It is, however, the monk in Ngag-dbang which ultimately seems to triumph and the efforts towards synthesis displayed in both works doubtless provide the only true hint to his character. Ngag-dbang 'the Harmoniser' would be a fitting epithet.

We have already noticed how he deprived gTsang-ma of certain unacceptable attributes in order to groom him for his role as an ancestor figure, thus reconciling the story as it appeared in the textual sources with the oral myths known to him. In a similar manner he adjusted the literary anomalies concerning the place of gTsang-ma's exile. Something of his method is revealed in his discussion of names (on f. 11 a-b) where he implies that since one person can be known by several names, so can a single story be recounted in many, apparently conflicting, ways. Thus for Ngag-dbang an isolated version perhaps never reveals the whole truth. This becomes very clear in two instances:

- 1) The varying accounts of the origin of the so called *gDung* families of U-ra and Mol-ba-lung are reconciled (on f. 40a) by virtue of the fact

that *gDung* lHa-dbang Grag-spa, their common progenitor, was himself the offspring of a supernatural being, a *lha-klu* ('*nāga*-god'). Thus he could assume different appearances in the sight of different persons.

2) Again a higher order is invoked to explain away all the conflicting interpretations (Bon-po, Buddhist and Brahmanical) which could be brought to bear on the subject of clan origins, particularly the ancient theme of a god's descent to earth on 'the divine *rmu*-ladders and the gold and silver *phya*-cords' (ff. 45b-46a). Only an enlightened being is said to be capable of perceiving the real truth that lies behind these interpretations. Ngag-dbang seems to accord them an equal temporary validity.

Despite these dexterous fence-sitting solutions to the problems posed by variant traditions, Ngag-dbang would have found it impossible to write his work without attempting to bring order to rival genealogical claims. His work was intended to be a definitive account that substantiated (*khungs-bcad*) some versions and rejected others as apocryphal. Until material parallel to his own comes to light we have no means of knowing what really constituted his methodology. The character and credentials of his 'wise old men of the world'<sup>15</sup> who acted as his informants probably had much to do with it, as also the nature of his documentary sources and, not least perhaps, his own natural bias. A real impartiality, however, can be seen in the way he considers all clans, families and groups to be worthy of mention; none is singled out for special treatment, certainly not his own clan of the Byar. While this is not dispassionate history, it does seem to contain as fair and balanced an account as any local chronicler can ever achieve. By contrast, the Addendum dealing with the history and rights of the Wang-ma clan is self-congratulatory and crudely parochial in tone, as one might expect of its author, the ruler of a 'one-valley kingdom' in decline. It must represent the kind of text which Ngag-dbang had to assess and use, though this particular one seems more or less contemporary with his own work.

Both the *rGyal-rigs* and the *Lo-rgyus* come closer to the notion of 'secular' history than any other known work from Bhutan. The reasons for this are quite evident. Whereas in the rest of the country civil authority lay in the hands of powerful religious lineages which were closely associated with various Buddhist sects, in the east of the country the situation is quite different. There we find authority vested in the ruling families of local clans, each of which enjoyed complete control over its territory. Their legitimacy depended on their ability to trace their descent from a royal figure and in nearly every case their choice fell on Prince *gTsang*-ma. By the early 18th century there were certainly families of ecclesiastical nobles in the east, notably those descending from the 'text-discoverers' *Gu*-ru Chos-dbang, *Padma* Gling-pa and *rDo*-rje Gling-pa, but these are not mentioned by Ngag-

dbang at all. It is also clear that some of the 'royal' families, the alleged descendants of gTsang-ma, had acquired a quasi-religious status as suggested by their use of the titles of *chos-mdzad* and *lha-btsun*. In Tibet the latter always denotes a monk of royal ancestry. In the case of the Wang-ma clan of Yo-gdung we can see in the Addendum [III] that its rulers entered into the contractual relationship of *mchod-yon* ('priest and patron') with the abbots of a local branch of the 'Brug-pa school. It seems that the threat posed to this branch by the ruling dGe-lugs-pa school in Tibet must have been one of the main causes of the 'Brug-pa campaign to take over the area. Thus by the middle years of the 17th century eastern Bhutan was ripe for absorption by the emergent theocracy of the west. Nevertheless, despite these fragmented precursors of a single religious polity in the east, the ancient unit of rule there is that of the secular principality free of monkish influence. Even though the history of the clans which ruled these little principalities was written by a monk, the abiding tone of that work remains secular to a degree and, except for the opening section and the relevant myths of origin, the course of history is written in terms that are refreshingly down to earth and prosaic. Even though the two works of Ngag-dbang are almost (together with the autobiography of Padma Gling-pa) the only extant sources for the history of eastern Bhutan yet known to us, they seem to have been ignored by the later religious historians because of their 'profane' character. Thus the author of *LCB* II, who had access to the text and who indeed provides a little synopsis of gTsang-ma's doings on the basis of the *rGyal-rigs*, declines to make full use of it: 'Although there are endless accounts of the origins [of noble families in eastern Bhutan], there is no need to count minute atoms in the world of existence, and so [matters that pertain to] religion are chiefly pursued herein.' <sup>15a</sup>

### The Clans of Eastern Bhutan

For Ngag-dbang and his contemporaries this counting of 'minute atoms' was a matter of some urgency because the legitimacy of clan rule, even though by then subject to the 'Brug-pa theocracy, depended on it. Do these 'atoms' dispose themselves into a pattern and can that pattern be said to reflect true history? Any answers attempted to these questions must be of an interim nature pending the completion of a great deal of work on the ethnology of the east and on other surviving texts. The picture thus gained will then have to be set against that provided by other clan histories in Tibet and the Himalayas. Nepal seems to be a likely area for comparison in view of the texts found there by Levine (1976), Macdonald (1971) and Oppitz (1968).

I take the terms *gdung*, *gdung-rus* and *rus* as used by Ngag-dbang to mean 'clan', literally the 'bone' which is passed down the male line as distinct from

the flesh and blood which is thought to pass down the female line. In Tibet the term *pha-spun* ('cousin-brothers with the same fathers') is sometimes used to refer to the exogamous clan (Stein 1972: 95) but in this text it seems to retain its most literal meaning. The term *rigs* seems to signify 'family' or 'lineage' and is used in a very general and vague sense. *pha-tshan* (roughly 'paternal relatives') is used more precisely for 'family' in the sense of a 'set of parents and children, or of relatives living together or not' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*). The words *rus* and *gdung* seem to be entirely coterminous here (the latter being simply the honorific form) and *gdung-rus* can be explained as a pleonastic compound. Stein (1959b: 3) however takes *gdung* as 'issue' or 'progeny' ('lignée') which in our text appears mainly as *brgyud-pa*. Clearly all these terms, and especially their compounds and derivatives, cover a multitude of meanings which have shifted from area to area and from period to period. All attempts to find equivalents in our own language must bear in mind Stein's caution: 'Ce n'est qu'un pis-aller et une convention qui ne doit en rien faire préjuger du contenu sociologique réel de ces termes.' (loc. cit.) Because of the paucity of material on the ancient clans of Tibet and the way in which they were heavily schematised, no scholar has yet attempted to define precisely their nature and development. It is difficult even to suggest a makeshift model to serve as the prototype. A reading of the scattered literature on the subject leads one however to expect that a clan should have the following features:

- 1) It should trace its descent from a common progenitor and its diffusion from an ancestral homeland;
- 2) each clan or sub-clan should have its own hereditary ruler and hereditary vassals;
- 3) clan marriages should be strictly exogamous;
- 4) each clan should have its own god who is intimately associated with the person of the ruler;
- 5) clan territory should be well defined.

Taking each of these features, let us see what Ngag-dbang's work permits us to conclude about the nature of his clans.

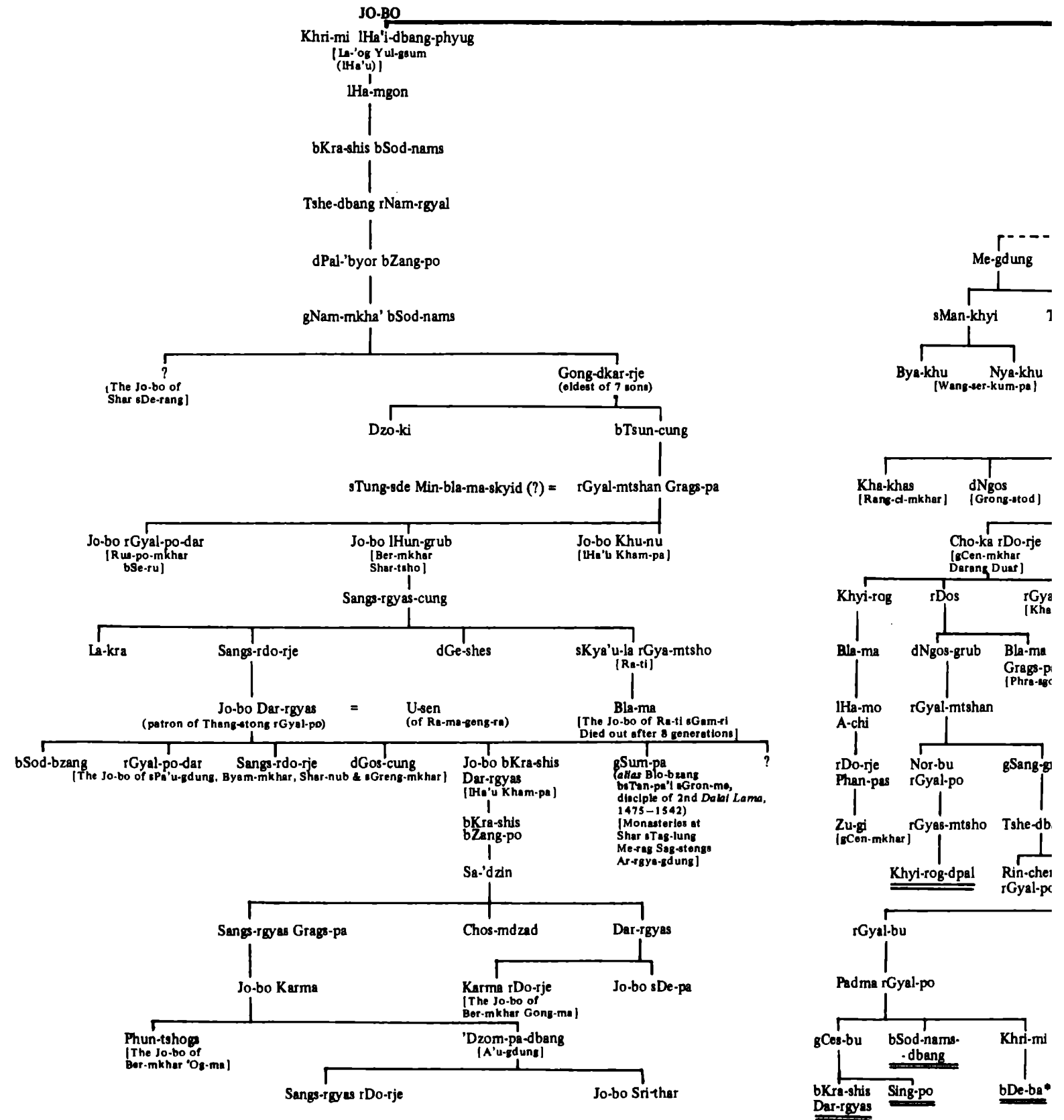
**COMMON DESCENT AND DIFFUSION.** It is surely this element more than any other which gives a clan its cohesion. The six ruling clans of the Jo-bo, rJe, Byar, Yas-sde, sTung-sde and Wang-ma are alleged to descend variously from the sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of Prince gTsang-ma himself. The genealogical table (V) constructed on the basis of Section II of the *rGyal-rigs* therefore shows these clans as collateral lineages and sub-lineages issuing from gTsang-ma. The names of his immediate descendants who founded the clans all appear in an odd three-syllable form of antique appearance, as in the case for the standard lists of the descendants of 'Od-

Table 5

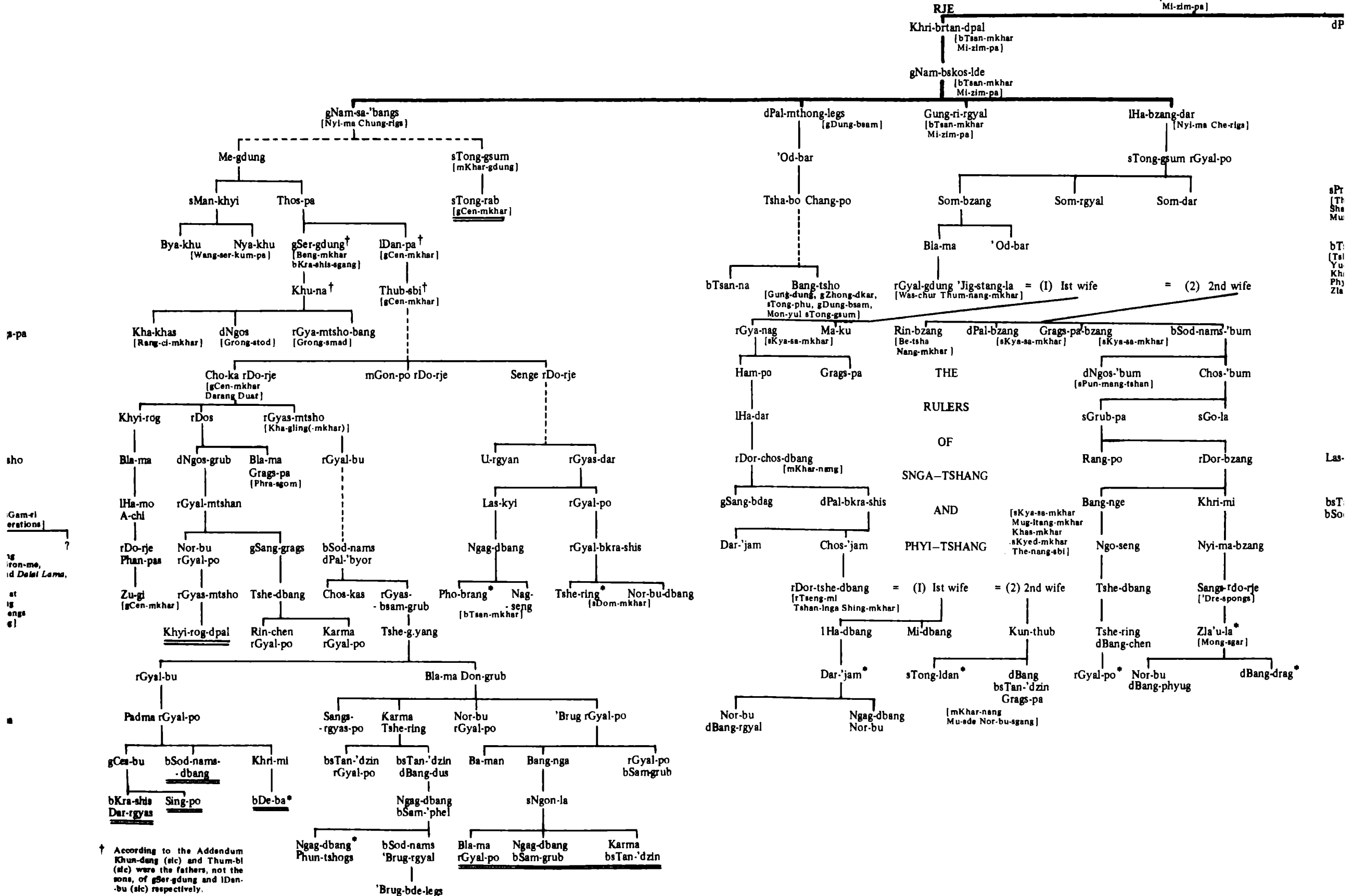
GENEALOGICAL TABLE  
OF  
THE RULING CLANS  
OF  
EASTERN BHUTAN  
CLAIMING DESCENT FROM  
LHA-SRAS GTSANG-MA

(according to Chapter II of *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khungs gsal-ba'i sgron-me*, ff. 10a-32a)

- Notes:
- (1) Names in heavy type at the top of each branch (e.g. RJE) are clan names.
  - (2) The equals sign (=) indicates 'married to'.
  - (3) A broken line denotes an unspecified gap of several generations.
  - (4) Names within square brackets (e.g. [sKya-sa-mkhar]) indicate the places where particular members of each family settled or where their descendants gained prominence. In some cases the rendering of these place-names is tentative (e.g. Was-chur Thum-nang-mkhar as opposed to Was-chur-thum Nang-mkhar).
  - (5) A double line below names indicates that the lineage expired.
  - (6) Children do not necessarily appear in the order they are given in the above work.
  - (7) Persons with an asterisk (\*) after their name are the subject of independent corroboration in the *Lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long* (where they are mentioned among the chief protagonists in the war with the 'Brug-pa authorities of central Bhutan) and in the colophon of the *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khungs gsal-ba'i sgron-me* (where they appear in the list of those who requested its composition).

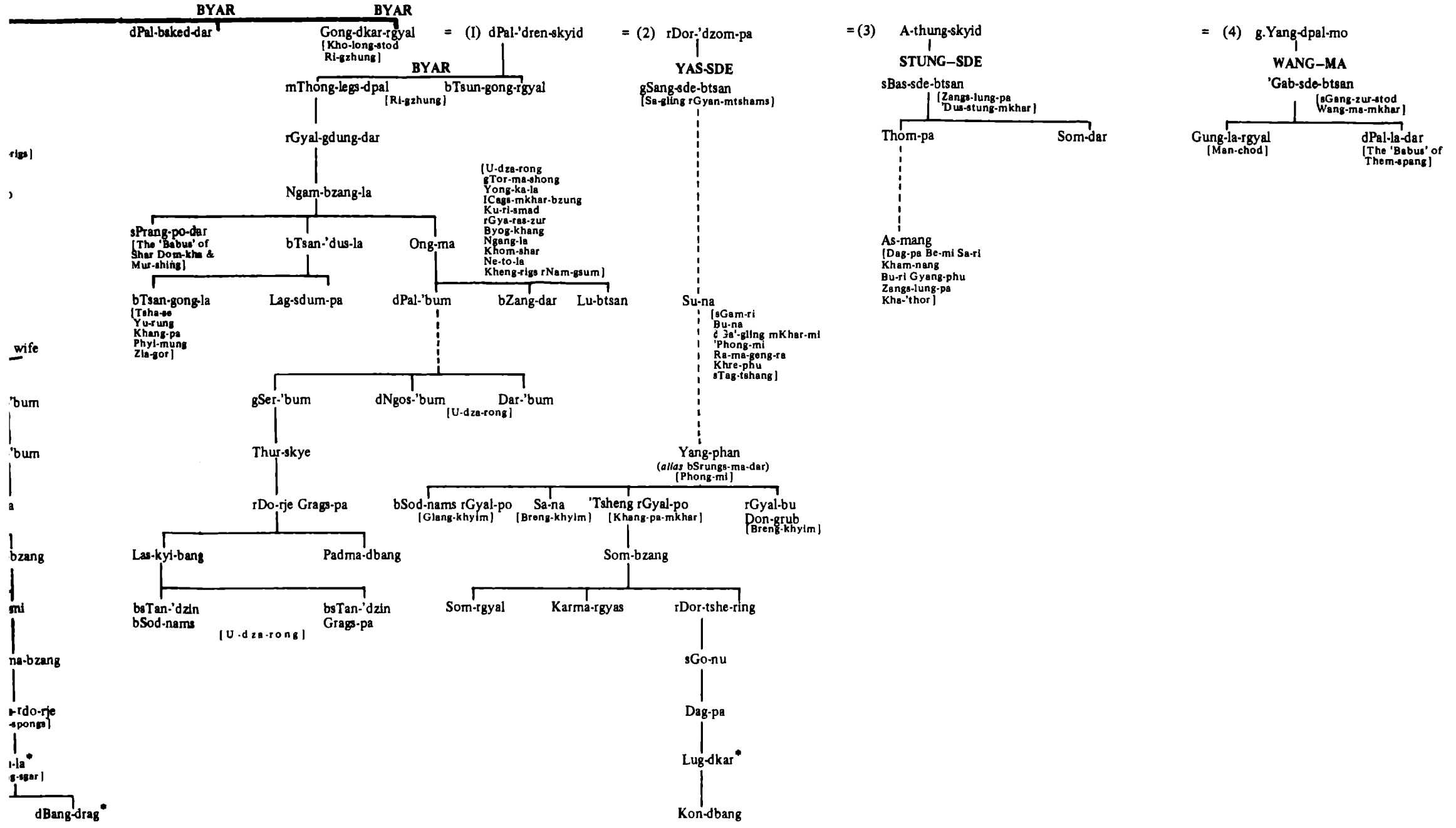


† According to the Addendum Khun-dang (sic) and Thum-bi (sic) were the fathers, not the sons, of gBer-gdung and lDan-bu (sic) respectively.



† According to the Addendum Khun-deng (sic) and Thum-bi (sic) were the fathers, not the sons, of gSer-gdung and lDan-bu (sic) respectively.

r-btsun





srung, son of King Glang Dar-ma of Tibet. This pattern is maintained for anything up to five generations of gTsang-ma's descendants. As we shall see, however, one such name can be fixed to the year 1507. The names further down the table take on a very local character, many of which (such as sMan-khyi, Kha-khas, Som-dar etc.) must have been peculiar to this region. Interspersed with these are standard names such as Tshe-ring, Ngag-dbang, bSod-nams dPal-'byor and so on. Leaving aside for the moment the fascinating case of the 'babus' of Dom-kha and Mur-shing, the only sure evidence that these pedigrees are at least partly historical lies in the appearance of two members of the Jo-bo clan, Dar-rgyas and Blo-bzang bsTan-pa'i sGron-me, who were followers of Thang-stong rGyal-po (1385-1464) and the 2nd Dalai Lama (1475-1542) respectively. Also at the end of the lines we meet with identifiable figures who are either mentioned in the *Lo-rgyus* for the part they played during the wars with the 'Brug-pa, or who appear in the colophon to the *rGyal-rigs* as among those who requested its composition. The impression we are left with is that large stretches of these lines must be genuinely derived from valid written and oral material. The upper reaches of the tree, however, seem to dissolve into myth and the delightful folk etymologies which Ngag-dbang applies to the names of the clans themselves lead one to expect that their true origin had long since been forgotten. It would also be most unreasonable to expect all the clans to descend in fact from gTsang-ma and we are certainly entitled to doubt whether he had any descendants at all in the area. Until more texts are found it is impossible to say where the myths end and true history begins. What is important meanwhile is the claim of common clan origin; the pains taken by Ngag-dbang to substantiate the claim were really directed towards giving the motley peoples of the east a unified identity. A single structural principle and a single mythological scheme served to account for the heterogeneity that existed among the clans and lineages. Ngag-dbang's abiding aim is to give them a corporate existence. Could this aim have caused him to ignore schemes that did not fit the pattern at all? The Addendum [I] on the Wang-ma shows that it traced its line back to a certain bZhi-khri bTsan-po, but in its hopelessly garbled account of the Tibetan kings the name is applied to a brother of Ral-pa-can whose descendants come to Mon-yul; probably gTsang-ma in strange guise and not some rival figure. A feature of the *rGyal-rigs* which really appears to throw some doubt on its overall scheme is the treatment accorded to the rJe clan descending from Khri-brtan-dpal, and to the 'babus' of Dom-kha and Mur-shing.

The extraordinary profusion of the collateral branches of the rJe are disposed into a medley of independent units generally described as 'royal families' (*rgyal-rigs*). By rights the name rJe should apply to this whole multitude acting as a single clan, but in fact it is found only once on f. 14b

where it is given either as the clan name or title of Khri-brtan-dpal himself, and it never recurs in the way the other clan names do. If all the 'royal families' whose descent Ngag-dbang traces from Khri-brtan-dpal had really considered themselves members of this clan, surely its name would have cropped up again here and there. The Addendum [I and II] provides a partial corroboration of the pedigree of the kings of gCen-mkhar who were closely associated with the Wang-ma sub-clan of Yo-gdung. They figure in the main work under the general clan name of rJe but the Addendum containing the records of the Yo-gdung Wang-ma has no mention of the name at all. Was there indeed a clan called rJe at all? If not, then some of these ruling families might have functioned outside the clan system in the same way, for instance, as the *gDung* of Bum-thang (see Chapter 5). They may indeed represent some early stage in the break-up of the old clans even before the 'Brug-pa campaign. Whatever their true social position, they do appear to have considered themselves as preserving gTsang-ma's 'bone' and like the true clans they trace their geographical diffusion back to a place called Mi-zim-pa which is said to be at bTsan-mkhar in 'Brong-mdo-gsum. According to one informant, bTsan-mkhar is supposed to be in the area between sKur-stod and Mong-sgar, close to another place called sDom-mkhar. However, neither the name Mi-zim-pa nor 'Brong-mdo-gsum seem to be remembered now. The Addendum [I] further confirms that Mi-zim-pa was regarded as the ancestral homeland by all the ruling clans. Its proper identification remains an urgent necessity.

The other point which casts some suspicion on Ngag-dbang's work is his treatment of the so-called 'babus' of Shar Dom-kha and Mur-shing who are alleged to descend from sPrang-po-dar of the Byar clan. There are some unexpected references to this line of rulers in the *Blue Annals* of 'Gos Lotsa-ba, the *lHo-brag chos-'byung* of dPa'-bo gTsug-lag and in the autobiography of Padma Gling-pa, all of which complement each other in a most pleasing manner. In the *Blue Annals* we read that at a time when the first Karma-pa incarnation, Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa (1110-1193), was staying in a monastery called Bya-lkog:

Mu-dbon had many excellent visions there. After sGam-po-pa had made a prophecy [Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa] took with him five measures of salt and went to the place of Ga-thung King of Mon. After he [the king] had become his patron, [Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa] went to Sha-'ug sTag-ngo and resided there. <sup>16</sup>

Mr. Richardson has pointed out to me that a work in his possession which contains brief lives of the Karma-pa incarnations has a reference to the same incident. It adds the information that the King's Tibetan consort acted as interpreter for Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa on this occasion. Further corroboration is provided by dPa'-bo gTsug-lag in a passage which speaks of a descendant of Ga-thung making a visit to the 7th Karma-pa incarnation, Chos-grags

rGya-mtsho (1454-1506), while the latter was staying in the district of Dwags-po in south-eastern Tibet:

Don-grub King of Mon arrived to pay a visit, being the descendant of Gwa-thung King of Mon who in ancient times had been a patron while the Lord Dus[-gsum] mKhyen[-pa] was meditating at Dom-tshang in Mon. [He, Don-grub,] was the owner of myriarchies, one among each [group of the] Mon, Tsang-mi, Ka-tsa-ra and Indians. He made limitless offerings. He gave a son [of his to Chos-grags rGya-mtsho] and requested him to found a monastery in Mon. As he declared that he would act as the patron of the great shrine of Dom-tshang-rong, an abbot (lit. *vajradhara*) was appointed there and so the shrine came to flourish. <sup>17</sup>

Later in his life the same Karma-pa met another king whom I take to be a son of Don-grub:

There [in Kong-po] Jo-'bag King of Eastern Mon came with a large party of attendants to visit [Chos-grags rGya-mtsho]. Infinite offerings were made and he himself offered his tonsure and requested [Chos-grags rGya-mtsho] to establish the teachings [in Mon]. <sup>18</sup>

As it turns out, Padma Gling-pa corroborates this passage in a most interesting and detailed account of his own visit to Jo-'bag, but before looking at that, here is dPa'-bo gTsub-lag's notice of a final visit by Jo-'bag's son to the Karma-pa of his own day, Mi-skyod rDo-rje (1507-1554). This son is none other than sPrang-po-dar whom Ngag-dbang claims to be the ancestor of all the 'babus' of Shar Dom-kha and Mur-shing (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 24 a-b).

Quite a long time before this the person known by the affectionate nickname of sPrang-po-dar ('Flourishing Beggar') who was the son of Jo-'bag, himself the descendant of Gwa-thung King of Mon, arrived to see [Mi-skyod rDo-rje] together with four ministers and myriarchs. He even offered his tonsure. He was given [the initiation of ?] the *Go'i-shri'i las-kha*. He made infinite offerings and the minister Sin-ti-ka also made a special gift. <sup>19</sup>

All the above passages are cited in Stein (1959a: 186-187) in his analysis of the geographical framework to the Ge-sar epic, taking them to support his idea that the people of Mon can be located not only in the Himalayan ranges but also in the Sino-Tibetan marches. He interprets King Ga-thung (or Gwa-thung) to be a sort of legendary or divine ancestor of the Mon, allied to the Ge-thung 'King of *dMu*' who is invoked in a *bsangs* ritual, to the sacred mountain of dGe-tho in the Amnye Machen range, and to Khro-thung (alias Ge-thung or Ger-thung), the paternal uncle and antagonist of the hero Ge-sar. This complex of gods, mountains and epic figures has its proper location in the eastern borderlands, but Stein's discovery of Ga-thung in the passage from the *Blue Annals* quoted above, where the king is placed in Mon, an area normally thought to border on India, caused him to review the

geographical orientation of the myth. He read the first passage from dPa'-bo gTsong-lag as a gloss on the episode in the *Blue Annals*, wrongly taking the whole account to refer to a visit of King Don-grub, descendant of Ga-thung, to the first Karma-pa Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa, whereas it clearly applies to a visit paid to the seventh incarnation Chos-grags rGya-mtsho while the latter was staying in Dwags-po. In this way Ga-thung acquired a purely ancestral quality in Stein's eyes, one which aligned with his mythological preoccupations. The unexplained appearance of somebody called Mu-dbon in the *Blue Annals* passage was taken to refer to a 'uterine nephew' of the dMu deities over whom Ge-thung (of the *bsangs-yig*) ruled as king. While conceding a southern location to some of the kings of Mon on the unambiguous evidence of dPa'-bo gTsong-lag's first passage (but placing them wrongly in Dwags-po), Stein then took the reference in the next passage to Jo-'bag as 'King of Eastern Mon' to provide the desired link with the scene of the epic. Finally, the description of Jo-'bag as 'descendant of Gwa-thung' in the last of the passages quoted from dPa'-bo gTsong-lag led Stein to his statement: 'Il est donc certain que Ga-thung, roi des Mon, se réfère à un premier ancêtre dont seraient issus aussi bien les Mon du Sud que les Mon de l'Est'.

The Bhutanese records not only contradict these interpretations but serve to put the whole subject on firm ground. The four 'Kings of Mon' (Ga-thung, Don-grub, Jo-'bag and sPrang-po-dar) all belong to a single historical lineage stretching from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries and all of them were patrons of the Karma-pa incarnations of their day. dPa'-bo gTsong-lag may well have met sPrang-po-dar on the occasion of his visit to Mi-skyod rDo-rje who was his own teacher. He was quite aware of the traditional links between these kings and the Karma-pa; twice he recalls the figure of Ga-thung who had forged the link with the first incarnation, presenting him not as the legendary ancestor of the kings of Mon but as their historical forebear who had initiated the special relationship with his own school. He was also perfectly aware of the true location of the area ruled by these kings; 'Eastern Mon' (or 'The Mon to the East') was situated east of proto-Bhutan (i.e. Mon proper) and not in eastern Tibet. Thanks to the Bhutanese records we can be even more exact. The kings had their palace in the village of Dom-kha which a Survey of India map for 1917 shows to lie at an altitude of 6,970 feet, two miles east of Moshing (Mur-shing of the *rGyal-rigs*) in the southern part of the Kameng Frontier District of Arunachal Pradesh.

Padma Gling-pa first met 'King Jo-'phag Dar-ma of Shar Dong-kha' in 1504 while he was engaged in constructing the temple of gTam-zhing (IHun-grub Chos-gling) which is still to be seen in the Chos'-khor valley of Bum-thang to this day.<sup>20</sup> While the king was staying there, Padma Gling-pa was

challenged by a rival to demonstrate his miraculous powers and so he claims to have implanted his footprint on a stone. Weeping with faith, the king begged him for it but the chief of Chos-'khor, Kun-thub by name, insisted that the stone should be kept in the temple. Later, however, it was presented to one *Chos-rje* Yang-ldan rTse-pa. Some four years later in 1507 emissaries from the king arrive to invite Padma Gling-pa to Dong-kha and so we are treated to a quite detailed description of the king's court (ff. 162a-164b). After a journey of thirteen days Padma Gling-pa arrived at a place called Dung-mtsho Karma-thang where he was met by the king accompanied by fifteen horsemen and by soldiers wearing armour. He was invited to sit in 'an Indian litter adorned with a dragon's head and precious jewels.'<sup>21</sup> He declined it and, riding a horse with silken reins, he arrived at an open ground where all sorts of food including sugar cane and *rgu-ba* (?) had been prepared after the Indian manner. Padma Gling-pa pauses here in his narrative to reflect on the result of his visit. The syntax of this passage is quite muddled but the sense is clear:

From the time of that king's ancestor's they had to kill about five hundred humans and goats and an enormous number of cows and bulls to supplicate the great Siva with blood-offerings on account of a demon which prevented them from reaching the age of twenty-five, and also as a ceremony at times of illness. Fearful of the karmic punishment which would befall him for killing and [other such acts of] evil, he [King Jo-'phag Dar-ma] took refuge with the Black Hat Incarnation who protected him for a period of three years. Subsequently, from the time I arrived at the palace I was able to protect him and so for thirty-nine years he was able [to refrain from blood sacrifices]. During that period a son was born to him and there was no occasion for him to commit acts of evil.<sup>22</sup>

Padma Gling-pa was then led along a path lined with huge butter lamps which took him up to the threshold of the palace. Inside he was taken to a very fine Indian throne in the assembly room, to the right of which stood many images including a lifesize Vajradhara which was said to have belonged to the king's father, all surrounded with ritual objects of gold and silver. On the following day he bestowed certain private initiations on the king and gave a public blessing to his subjects who presented him with various offerings. There follows a long list of the precious objects, textiles and animals which the king offered to him on the next day. During the course of his stay at Dom-kha, a certain Rāja of Kāmata paid him a visit:

At that time the Rāja of Kāmata also came to see me and offered a length of white, red, and striped silk as a ceremonial scarf and made his obeisance in a devoted manner. Thereupon, since he was a most powerful king of India, I myself stood up and waited. Touching my foot with his hand, he placed it upon his own head. After prostrating once again, he went outside and departed.<sup>23</sup>

Before reverting to Padma Gling-pa's narrative to consider what it tells us about the kings of Dom-kha, some thought must be given to this rāja and the reason for his appearance in the area. The ancient Hindu Kingdom of Kāmata was a long way from the scene of these events and had its capital, Kāmatapur, on the west bank of the Dharla river in modern Cooch Bihar, that is to say in the plains of West Bengal bordering on western Bhutan. The ruins of the city are carefully described in Hunter (1876: 362-370). The kingdom was conquered by Ḥusayn Shāh, the Moslem Sultan or Nawab of Bengal, and the capital destroyed. The date of this has long been a subject of debate among scholars but after a careful consideration of all the conflicting literary sources and with fresh epigraphic and numismatic evidence to hand, Digby (1973: 601) has decided that the conquest must have taken place sometime between the years 1501 and 1505. There appears to have survived into the early nineteenth century a semi-oral tradition to the effect that Nilambhar, the last Rāja of Kāmata, escaped from the destruction of his capital and fled to the mountains from where he would one day return to restore the kingdom and drive out the Bhutanese, Assamese, Koch and Yāvana people (Buchanan-Hamilton 1838:10 and Hunter 1876:370). Although the whole subject deserves much more investigation, it seems we are forced to the conclusion that the Rāja of Kāmata whom Padma Gling-pa met in 1507 was none other than Nilambhar himself who must have fled to these mountains during the Moslem invasion of his kingdom. The meeting with Padma Gling-pa was not as entirely fortuitous as we might suppose. Nilambhar's forebears had received Buddhist lamas at their court; they probably included the great bridge-building saint Thang-stong rGyal-po (1385-1464) whose visit is described partly in mythical terms on ff. 149b-153a of his standard biography. Long before that *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po (1162-1251) received presents from 'King Bhra-nan-la of rGya Ka-ma-rta' (ff. 36b-37a of his *mam-thar*). All this helps to explain the excessive respect which Rāja Nilambhar showed in greeting Padma Gling-pa, which is suggestive of sentiments one would not normally credit to a Hindu monarch. The implication of the passage is that, hearing of the presence of a famous Buddhist in the area, he deliberately sought him out to receive his *darshan*. As we have seen, the court of King Jo-'phag Darma maintained a quasi-Indian character and that too suggests that Nilambhar would not have felt completely out of place in this situation.

Although King Jo-'phag Darma, his lamas and officers (*dpon-po*) all requested Padma Gling-pa to stay at Dom-kha for a whole year, he left after eleven days on a return journey that took him north to Dirang. He was accompanied part of the way by the king and a party of musicians who played 'lots of music after the manner of the country'.<sup>24</sup> He had to wear armour himself on this journey as a protection against the Kha-khra (lit.

'The Striped Mouths', perhaps the Aka tribesmen who live in the area immediately to the east). The king took his leave at Phu-dung. Padma Gling-pa at this point explains that the king was mentioned in the 'prophecy' of the *Kun-gsal me-long* as an incarnation of 'O-bran dBang-phyug who would render service to Padma Gling-pa. The next stage of the journey took the saint to the King of Dirang (Dung 'Di-rang) whose pedigree is traced in the *rGyal-rigs* (f. 29a) to the Jo-bo clan of lHa'u. The Addendum [I] places the kings of sDi-rang (sic) among a list of seven kings who spread from the ancestral homeland of Mi-zim-pa. After being entertained by the king, Padma Gling-pa proceeded to the temple of O-rgyan-gling close to rTa-dbang rDzong (not yet built) where he had many family connections. (The 6th Dalai Lama who was born in the village of Ber-mkhar close by traced his descent from Padma Gling-pa on the strength of these connections, but more of that later.) Next he went to bDe-stong-mkhar where he was received by sTong-sde rGyas-pa-dar (f. 164b). This is without question the place called 'Dus-stung-mkhar in the *rGyal-rigs* (f. 26b) where a branch of the sTung-sde clan is said to have settled. That work locates it in the village of Zangs-lung(-pa) which features as Sanglung in the Survey of India map of 1920, just inside the present border of Bhutan, north-east of bKra-shis-sgang rDzong. The qualification of rGyas-pa-dar as sTong-sde (= sTung-sde) is the second of just two references I can find in Padma Gling-pa to the clan names that appear in the *rGyal-rigs*; the first, to the Jo-bo clan of La'og Yul-gsum, comes on f. 95b. He only seems to have visited this area about three times and his accounts are very short, but they do provide independent testimony to the existence of these clans in the sixteenth century. What is more, the transposition and alternation of 'Dus-stung-/sTung-sde and bDe-stong-/sTong-sde must have some bearing upon the formation of clan eponyms and toponyms, and on the nature of the other *-sde* clan (Yas-sde).

While the term 'babu' does not carry in Bhutanese the pejorative associations which it has in Anglo-Indian idiom, for Ngag-dbang it certainly refers to a person of lesser status than a 'king'. He uses the term in his work for the petty rulers from the north who obtained a degree of power over Indian subjects to the south. In the case of the ruling family of Dom-kha he was aware of only one of their line, sPrang-po-dar, who had flourished in the 16th century some two hundred years or so before he wrote his work. As we have seen, Ngag-dbang was absolutely mistaken in supposing that sPrang-po-dar was the founder of the lineage. There existed a long line of ancestors before him stretching back at least to the 12th century and probably further still, of which Ngag-dbang was quite ignorant. Somehow these 'babus' had to be accounted for and so they were squeezed into the Byar clan allegedly descending from Prince gTsang-ma. The successive demotion of the ruler from 'King of Mon' and 'King of Eastern Mon' (in dPa'-bo gTsug-lag), to

'King of Dom-kha' (in Padma Gling-pa), to 'babu' (in Ngag-dbang) must surely reflect certain social and political realities. The Ahom dynasty of Assam between the 16th and 18th centuries was on the ascendant, cutting back the authority of the hill people on the fringe of the plains. From the other end, the dGe-lugs-pa School of Tibet was already established in the area of Mon-yul by the 16th century, and later converted some of their monasteries into forts. The monastery of Shar sTag-lung founded by Jo-bo gSum-pa, alias Blo-bzang bsTan-pa'i sGron-me (see *rGyal-rigs*, f. 30b) is shown on the Survey of India map of 1917 as a fort ('Talung Dzong'), and it lies just a few miles south of Dom-kha. Sandwiched between the expanding sovereignties of Tibet and Assam, the kings whom dPa'-bo gTsug-lag tells us once possessed 'myriarchies' (*khri-tsho*) among their own Mon-pa people, among the Tsang-mi (now the Tsangla speakers of eastern Bhutan spilling over into Kameng), the Ka-tsa-ra (probably the Akas or Mijis), and among the Indian border peoples, ultimately became just one noble family among many. The chief of the family was probably one of the 'Seven Rājas' known to the Ahoms towards the end of their dynasty, whose fate was described by Gait (1926:311-312) in these words: 'East of the Bhutān Duārs of Darrang is another, known as the Koriāpāra Duār, which was held by certain Bhutia chiefs called Sāt Rajas, whose hills form part of the province of Tōwang, an outlying dependency of Lhasa. Here also, there were numerous outrages and disputes until 1843, when the local chiefs ceded the Duar in return for an annual payment of Rs. 5,000, or one-third of the supposed revenue, which is handed over to them every year at the time of the Udalguri fair.' Unlike the ruling families of eastern Bhutan who did not survive the imposition of 'Brug-pa rule, those of the Mon-yul corridor seem to have outlasted the dGe-lugs-pa regime that was thrust upon them. Do they survive today? Who were the 'Seven Rājas' of the area and can we identify them in the *rGyal-rigs*? Did they all make human sacrifices to Śiva on one side and act as 'patrons' of famous Buddhist saints on the other? Who indeed were these Mon-pa and where did they come from? What was the true substance of their myths of origin? The answers to these riddles, and to many of those which also confound the early history of eastern Bhutan, all lie locked away in the Kameng Frontier District to which access is now closed. Meanwhile we shall have to be content with stumbling around the *rGyal-rigs* in order to continue the discussion on Ngag-dbang's clans, some of which have begun to look like pseudo-clans.

**HEREDITARY RULERS AND VASSALS.** All the ruling families are shown to have originated outside the communities which they govern, having attained their position either by conquest or, more usually, by invitation of their subjects. Once established, the office of ruler passes down the male line,



but not necessarily according to primogeniture. Thus 'kingship' should never arise spontaneously within a community but always by external intervention. The claim to a 'foreign' origin may simply derive from a need to invest the line with prestigious attributes that were felt lacking in the community itself. The true condition of barbarism is 'the absence of a graded order between ruler and subjects' (*rje-'bangs-kyi rim-pa med-pa*); all the benefits of civilisation ensue from that order once it is established. What is never really made clear in Section II is the relationship between the ruling clans and their subjects. Was it one of kinship or one of social position? The picture gained from the fragmentary testimony provided in the Addendum suggests that the ruling families which constituted the sub-clans of the Wang-ma were an élite group who had no blood relationship with their subjects. Section V of the *rGyal-rigs* provides a list of twenty-six 'clan names which differentiate the families [of subjects].'<sup>25</sup> Although I showed the list to many people native to the area, none of them could recognise a single name or provide any information. We must conclude that these subject clans, like those of the ruling clans, have also disappeared without trace. One wonders if they each had their own hereditary leaders who acted as vassals to the 'kings' and if the office of *gtso-rgan* (literally, 'chief elder') might have been their traditional privilege. The Addendum [III] provides a list of eleven incumbents (one of them acting jointly with his son) but it does not really indicate whether the office was hereditary in a single family or whether it rotated in the community at large. In eastern Bhutan and among the Mon-pa of Kameng today the *gtso-rgan* is the district headman, the equivalent of the 'gap' (*rgad-po*) in western Bhutan. Opinions vary as to whether the office should rotate in the district or pass down in a family. Only in one instance can we be sure that there existed a vassal lineage. The Addendum [V] provides a list of eleven generations in the lineage of an Assamese family called the Thakur who owed allegiance to the Yo-gdung Wang-ma clan. The 'myriarchs' (*khri-dpon*) of the Dom-kha kings were certainly their vassals but we do not know how they obtained office.

**EXOGENOUS MARRIAGE.** The genealogical table unfortunately does not reveal much information about the prevailing marriage system but we can confidently assume that the ruling families always married outside their own clan. Exogamy appears to be a *sine qua non* for all true clan systems in the area of Tibet and the Himalayas. The only marriages noted in the *rGyal-rigs* are those of:

- 1) gTsang-ma himself to a lady of the Tibetan A-mi clan,
  - 2) Gong-dkar-rgyal and rGyal-gdung 'Jig-stang-la who took two and four wives respectively, from whom separate clans and lineages descend,
- and

3) rGyal-mtshan Grags-pa and Dar-rgyas, both members of the Jo-bo clan, whose marriages were probably intended to create political alliances with other clans.

Except in the case of the polygamous marriages for which the details are lacking, all these unions were unquestionably exogamous. However, they cannot be taken by themselves to prove the general rule of exogamy. We can perhaps find a hint of it in Ngag-dbang's opening verses where he speaks of '[this] very time when families and lineages (or clans) have become disordered'.<sup>26</sup> How else could this confusion have occurred except by a breaking of the marriage rules? Today the western Bhutanese sometimes say that the easterners are 'extremely choosy' when it comes to matters of marriage, as compared with themselves and other groups in the country. If this is correct then the greater circumspection which the easterners display in selecting a bride may perhaps be a vestige of the old and strict rule of clan exogamy.

CLAN GODS. The clans that survive among the Sherpas and Nyinbas of Nepal each have an ancestral god whose cult reinforces the clan's unity on specific, seasonal occasions. These are called *pho-lha* ('god of the male'), but in Tibet they were in recent times called *pha-lha* ('father-god') or *phug-lha* ('god of the inner closet'). The clan myths link these deities to the person of the clan's founder and from him the relationship is passed down his lineage encompassing the whole clan. Much of the early mythology of Tibet and her kings is concerned with gods who must have first functioned as clan gods. However, with the exception of the 'royal' deities, it is difficult to trace the association of any of the early Tibetan clans (whose interactions would be the main concern of the historian if their texts had survived) with one particular deity. Similarly, the total silence which Ngag-dbang preserves on the subject does not necessarily indicate the absence of such cults among the clans of eastern Bhutans. Even he, 'the Harmoniser', would have found it impossible to maintain the pre-eminence of gTsang-ma as their common ancestor and at the same time speak of their individual hierophanies. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next chapter to this part, when Ngag-dbang turned his attention to groups whom he did not wish to include in his structured principle of descent from gTsang-ma, i.e. to subject clans within his area and to ruling families bordering on his area, he was able to abandon his artificial framework in such a way as to give us a glimpse of these hierophanies.

CLAN TERRITORY. It is quite clear from the Addendum [IV and V] that the clan principalities had well recognised borders (*sa-mtshams*). The 'kings' of these principalities ruled their territories from defensive buildings called 'royal castles' (*rgyal-mkhar*) which provided the names for their respective

capitals. No less than twenty-four place-names appear in the text with the *-mkhar* affix.<sup>27</sup> The area covered by these names extends far beyond the Tsangla speaking districts: to the west as far as Nya-mkhar in the Kheng district of Mang-sde-lung, to the east as far as dPal-mkhar in Arunachal Pradesh, and to the north across the main watershed to a place called mTsho-sna bSe-ba-mkhar. The latter probably represents the uppermost reaches of the so-called Mon-yul Corridor. To these can be added a further five sites in the Chos-'khor valley of Bum-thang whose names were supplied to me by *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags: lCags-mkhar, gSham-mkhar, lCam-mkhar, rGyal-mkhar and Gong-mkhar.<sup>28</sup> It was tentatively suggested in Chapter 2 above that lCags-mkhar might originally have been a defensive settlement of the pre-historic period. All that we can say with reasonable certainty is that the *mkhar* of Chos-'khor do not appear to fit the general pattern for the area further east which is made up of single castles dominating entire principalities of the nature of 'one-valley kingdoms'. A detailed investigation of the present toponomy of eastern Bhutan in contrast to the place-names preserved in the *rGyal-rigs* and *Lo-rgyus*, combined with a physical examination of the surviving ruins of these *mkhar*, will eventually tell us a great deal about the history and ancient function of these buildings among the peoples speaking the languages of Bum-thang, Tsangla and Mon-pa. Those who have seen the ruins describe them as square stone towers and we do not have to look far to find parallels in Tibet: 'From the seventh century onwards Chinese historians associate these people [the Ch'iang] with monumental stone structures, like towers or fortresses, which are still found among them, but are also to be seen in Kongpo and Lhotrak (in south-eastern Tibet), and are apparently the prototypes of Tibetan architecture in general.' (Stein 1972 : 29. See also 1959a : 80-81 note 222). The latter group are said to have ' . . . nine or ten stories and are sometimes octagonal, sometimes square, with very thick walls. A similar nine-storied tower is reported in Kongpo, back in the early twelfth century.' (op. cit. 120). The eastern Bhutanese *mkhar* are probably every bit as ancient as Ngag-dbang would have us believe.

### Eastern Bhutan and Assam

Just as the account of these castles carries broad historical credibility, so also does the general pattern revealed on the subject of the southward extension of clan territories into the Indian planes of Assam. The fertile tracts of land adjoining the approaches to the Bhutan Himalaya are commonly called the *duars*, a word related to our own 'door'. The term used in our text to refer to these areas below the foothills in *las-sgo* (lit. 'work-door') which always carries the sense of a border mart at the foot of a pass and the area in its immediate vicinity. The winter migration of large sections of the eastern

Bhutanese towards the warmer areas of the south must have brought them into contact at an early date with the local tribes inhabiting the plains. The clan rulers of eastern Bhutan appear to have gradually won traditional rights of taxation over these border people and both the *rGyal-rigs* and its Addendum are replete with cases of such rulers regarding themselves as the absolute owners of their *duars*. The same pattern recurs further to the east where other groups who were broadly 'Tibetan' won a measure of control over the plains. As we have seen, the Mon-pa of Kameng gained authority over the large Kariapara Duar and further east still there existed the 'Bhutias' of Char Duar and of Thebengia (B.C. Allen 1905 : 53-55, and Gait 1926: 312). Many other tribal groups in Arunachal, including the Akas, Daflas and Miris, similarly won rights for themselves over the adjoining plains. The policy of containment which the Ahom empire of Assam directed towards these southern incursions has been studied in detail by Devi (1968). Her work throws much light on the extremely complicated history of the seven Assamese *duars* which were formally ceded to the Bhutanese government during the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663). The seven *duars* divide into five in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup (namely Bijai, Chapakhamar, Chapaguri, Baksa and Gharkola) and two in Darrang (Buriguma and Khaling). The last one is mis-spelt Killing in Devi (op. cit.) but appears correctly in Allen (1905: 53). It is unquestionably the Kha-gling of our text (f. 19a). It was one *rGyas-mtsho*, son of Cho-ka *rDo-rje* King of *gCen-mkhar*, who was responsible for subjugating the area and building a royal castle there. *rGyas-mtsho* was probably following in the footsteps of his father, Cho-ka *rDo-rje*, who is alleged (on f. 18b) to have wrested the whole tract from the *rDo-rong Rwa-dza* who is the Darrang Raja of the Ahom histories. This however does not accord with the Addendum [II] where we learn that the Wang-ma sub-clan of Yo-gdung was already in possession of these *duars* before the time of *mChog-ka rDo-rje* (sic) and that it was from them instead of from the Darrang Raja that he had won them in a battle fought at *Rgyal-gdung sMan-mkhar*. Later the ruling clans of Yo-gdung and *gCen-mkhar* made plans for a peace settlement. It appears that the Yo-gdung clan sent a girl to marry into the clan of their former enemies in return perhaps for a partial restitution of their rights over the *duars*. Certainly at the time of the Addendum's composition, the Wang-ma had regained control over a very considerable tract of the plains, as shown in the long list in part [V] of what must be Assamese villages and districts, all of them described as *las-sgo*. Two of them had been lost: Nye-ba-li as a result of what appears to be a complicated family squabble [VII], and Mo-long-dga' because they had presented it to the 'Brug-pa authorities, perhaps to *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang *rNam-rgyal* himself [VIII].

It is most regrettable that none of this material is objectively quantifiable, nor can a single date be extracted to provide a chronological framework to the whole movement. It must also be stressed that the Wang-ma of Yo-gdung were just one clan among several who enjoyed proprietorial rights over the Assamese *duars* which together encompassed an area of 1,600 square miles. The biographer of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (1638-1696) maintains that it was in 1655 that the whole of the area 'up to Kha-ling in the east' (f. 59b) fell to the authority of the 'Brug-pa. This refers presumably to the campaign led by Mi-gyur brTan-pa but the *Lo-rgyus* which narrates the course of it has nothing to say about this *duar* or any other. It seems likely that for a time these continued to be controlled by the clans until their rights were ceded to the government, as in the case of the Mo-long-dga' *duar*. Later the government must have tried to take over full control of the Indian territories. Several officials called the *rGya-drung* were appointed to manage them, as we see in the *bKa'-khrims* (ff. 107a and 109b). The tempestuous relations which developed between the Ahom and Bhutan governments as outlined in Devi's work must surely be set against a picture of the ancient clans trying to maintain their hold on the *duars* in defiance of their government, or stepping beyond the terms agreed upon in the treaty signed with Jayadhvaj Singha. This stipulated that in return for an annual tribute to the Ahom ruler and presents to his vassal the Darrang Raja, the right of the Bhutanese to the entire area bounded on the south by a highway called the Gohain Kamal Ali was permanently recognised (Devi op. cit. 203). Eventually an arrangement was reached whereby the three passes leading to Bhutan from the Darrang district were controlled by the Ahoms for a period of four months every year. The later history of these *duars* lies well outside the scope of the present study but it may be mentioned in passing that they fell partly under the control of the Burmese during their occupation of Assam. They were formally annexed by the British in 1841 in payment of a 'quit-rent', and permanently wrested from Bhutanese control during the Bhutan War of 1864-5.<sup>29</sup>

While the formal claims of the Bhutanese to these Indian lands underwent many changes in fortune, in at least two respects their relations with Assam show remarkable continuity. The themes of Indian trade and pilgrimage which find mention in the Addendum [I and IX] are still today a major pre-occupation of the easterners during the winter months. Particularly interesting is the proud boast of the Yo-gdung Wang-ma that their king INga-rigs rGyal-po and his lama, the 'Brug-pa bKra-shis dBang-rgyal, were responsible for discovering and opening the pilgrim route to 'Kusinagara' (rTswa-mchog-grong), the place where the historical Buddha died. The place identified to be Kusinagara was the famous Hindu temple of Madhava at Hajo which lies nine

miles north-west of Gauhati on the banks of the Brahmaputra. It was of course a mistaken identification, the real Kuśinagara being some thirty-five miles east of Gorakhpur in modern Uttar Pradesh. Yet for centuries it was to the temple of Hajo in Assam that Buddhist pilgrims are reported to have come from all over Bhutan and Tibet, and even from as far afield as Ladakh and southwest China. Waddell (1894:307-314) is the only person who gives any information on the site and its Buddhist traditions. He explains the mistaken ascription by the fact that a village in the neighbourhood of Hajo has the name Sāl-Kuśa, and maintains that this must have sparked off a chain of associations that led to the identification.<sup>30</sup> The eastern Bhutanese today maintain a tradition that it was Karma Pakṣi (1206-1283), the second Karma-pa incarnation, who received a vision which caused him to search for the place and find it. My informant *Slob-dpon* bSod-nams bZang-po claims that in this vision the Buddha revealed how since all the other holy places in India were inaccessible to pilgrims from Tibet, this one had been given a status and value equal to the true Kuśinagara in the west. Unfortunately, there is no mention of this in Karma Pakṣi's biography. The first Karma-pa incarnation came closest to the area, to Dom-tshang in Kameng, but that is still far from Hajo. According to my informant, the Bhutanese never gained rights over the Hajo temple in the way they did over temples in Nepal and the Kailash area of western Tibet. Apparently guardianship of the 'Buddhist' shrine was committed to people of Khams-pa stock by the temple authorities. It was in fact a lama from Khams at Hajo who told Waddell all the traditional stories concerning the site.

Certain other ancient sites in Assam were also wrongly recognised as Buddhist by the Bhutanese and Tibetans, notably Singri which lies some twenty miles or so west of Tezpur. No less a person than Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) tried to make the journey there, but turned back after reaching Bum-thang where he heard about the dangerous paths that lay ahead (*dPag-bsam ljon-bzang*, p. 226). In the *Blue Annals* (p. 693) we find *gTsang-pa* Blo-gros bZang-po (1360-1425), disciple of 'Ba'-ra-ba rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang, also visiting the place. No doubt many more references to such pilgrimages can be found. In fact Assam never seems to have been a centre for Buddhism in any period and it was perhaps the vague reports concerning the activities in that area of certain Tantric *mahāsiddhas* like Saraha which prompted the search for early Buddhist sites.

There is no particular reason to discount the notion that the eastern Bhutanese were the people responsible for discovering 'Kuśinagara' since they were certainly closer to it than any other group which might have had a similar incentive to find it. News of its discovery would have travelled quickly to central Tibet and Khams from where Assam is one of the most accessible

parts of India. The Bhutanese were classed as 'raiders' (Gongar) by the Assamese, a word which they continue to apply both to them and their language. Similarly, in the eyes of the British in the 19th century the Bhutanese were seen as an intractable hill people who despoiled the plains. Yet for their part it is clear that the Bhutanese regarded the Indian lands to their south not only as their rightful property upon which a great deal of their traditional wealth depended, but also as the gateway to the sacred land of their faith's origin. Although formally deprived of these lands, they still travel there in large numbers for trade every winter and although few of them still believe Hajo to be the place where the Buddha died, the myth of Karma Pakši's vision still permits them to hold it in reverence. The Indian attitude to their northern neighbours is much more ambivalent. While the Bhutanese stand beyond the pale of Hindu culture, the mountains they inhabit are romantically held to be the seat of their Hindu gods. The incarnation of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal's son received his Indian name of Ganapati from two Indian yogins who were on pilgrimage in the area (*LCB* I, f. 62a *gong*). The devotion shown to Buddhist lamas by the succeeding dynasties of Kāmata and Cooch Bihar cannot be explained in political terms alone.

### Conclusion

The nature of the eastern Bhutanese clans as revealed in this brief survey of broad historical patterns remains quite elusive. Except in regard to the hereditary and territorial aspects, the evidence of the *rGyal-rigs* is inconclusive as to those qualities we should expect the clans to possess. We cannot make a clear distinction between 'ruling clans' and 'local kings', or perceive their true relationship. The discussion, however, has at least served to underline the way in which the schematic preoccupations of a local historian can so colour his writing as to alter the true order of reality. By intent and ignorance, lineages were foreshortened and some clans appear to have been invented. Ngag-dbang cannot wholly be blamed for this because many groups had no doubt already forgotten their origins and had accepted gTsang-ma as their founder. Indeed, they scrambled over each other to win him as their ancestor. For the present then, the testamentary value of the *rGyal-rigs* relates perhaps more to its own age than to the past of which it speaks. We shall obtain a much sharper view of the ancient clans when more texts come to light and when detailed fieldwork has been completed in the area. The contrasted picture thus gained of the *rGyal-rigs* will tell us a great deal about the formation of its schema and that of similar works from other areas.

## CHAPTER 5: THE GDUNG AND THEIR DIVINE ANCESTRY

The only patrilineal noble families preserving a lay, as distinct from a religious, character to have survived the vicissitudes of theocratic and monarchical government in Bhutan are the so-called *gDung* who live where the language of Bum-thang is spoken, that is to say in Bum-thang proper, K̄heng and sKur-stod. Elsewhere in the country and in the afore-mentioned districts too, there are plenty of other families who may be termed 'aristocratic' because they are descended from some famous religious teacher of the rNying-ma-pa or 'Brug-pa schools. The heads of such families are usually called *Chos-rje* (*Dharmasvamin*, 'Lords of Religion') and their line generally passes down through the eldest son. Although from the point of view of their economic status they are today often indistinguishable from the peasantry at large, they still enjoy a respected place in the local community because of their venerable ancestry. Scattered throughout the country, they introduce a strain of cultural homogeneity to the pattern of ethnic and linguistic diversity. For the present at least, the early history of the country has to be written largely in terms of the interactions of these ecclesiastical nobles not only because we are the slave of sources which relate the course of history in this way, but also because it is clear that for long periods civil authority lay truly vested in their hands. Nevertheless, we are bound to ask who the local rulers were before the establishment of these powerful religious lineages. Were it not for Ngag-dbang's work we would not have the slightest inkling that in eastern Bhutan there existed a whole complex of 'one-valley kingdoms' each with its hereditary ruler. The impression one receives of western Bhutan is that the authority of the religious nobility was implanted there so strongly and at such an early date that if there did exist a literate culture associated with indigenous forms of rule before its arrival, then the records never survived. Certainly they would not have been of much interest to later historians who were anxious to propound the glories of their own schools in contempt of all that went before. The fate of the *rGyal-rigs* itself is a witness to this in regard to the east. As we have seen already, the 're-discovered' texts of Padma Gling-pa gave expression to certain feelings of independence on the part of the central Bhutanese in Bum-thang by recon-



stituting old myths and stories in a way that shed great prestige on the area. These stories, however, were formed more by adapting an external mythology to the local conditions of Bum-thang than by developing the local myths themselves, and they tell us virtually nothing about historical conditions obtaining there. It is to the *rGyal-rigs* once more that we owe an insight into the ancient mythology of the *gDung* families of Bum-thang. Section III of the work is devoted to this subject and provides two alternative versions of their origins. A third version is contained in the biography of the 2nd *Gang-stengs sPrul-sku*, bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i Don-grub (1645-1726) who descended from one of these families. Before examining these in some detail, notice should be given of the present conditions of these families so far as I could determine it during a long stay in Bum-thang in 1970.

### The Families Today

The term *gdung* (honorific for 'bone') should suggest something of a clan organisation by analogy with the use of the term in Section II of the *rGyal-rigs*. However, no trace of an organisation binding together these families is to be found today. They never seem to claim relationship with each other except by virtue of common ancestorship. This places them on the same elevated social footing but does not prevent them from occasionally intermarrying. Their corporate existence is referred to in a modern work by the term *gdung-rigs*, literally 'the *gDung* families' (LCB II, f. 79b). The term *gDung* itself functions as a title of the head of the family (e.g. *gDung lHa-dar*, *gDung Grags-pa dBang-phyug* etc.). By qualifying it with a place name (e.g. *U-ra gDung*, *Dur-ba'i gDung* etc.) it is used just as specifically to refer to their individual households. There is no difference at all between the use of the term in the literature of the 18th century and that found in common speech today. It is, as far as I can see, an institution peculiar to this region of the country and there do not appear to be any exact Tibetan parallels. The *gDung* surviving today in the villages of rGya-tsha and Dur are in a greatly depressed condition having no authority over their communities whatsoever and there seems to be no sense of divine mystique separating them from their neighbours. All they retain is public respect for their ancient ancestry. None of them, however, seemed to remember their origin myths except for one or two scholars who had read the *rGyal-rigs*. While their origins were never associated with religious sects as were the *Chos-rje*, and although they never functioned (except somewhat fortuitously) as lamas, it would have been impossible for them to claim legitimacy for their rule without investing their line with certain divine properties. All the myths discussed below have precisely that aim, but the search for divine origins does not seem to have altered the fundamentally lay character of the institution. There seem to be

only two exceptions to this pattern. The *gDung* families of Lug-khyu and Nya-la in sKur-stod claim uninterrupted descent from the great lama *gTerston* Gu-ru Chos-dbang (1212-1273) through his son Padma dBang-chen (LCB II, f. 71b). It is possible that they appropriated the title from the 'original' *gDung* families as they do not appear listed among them in the *rGyal-rigs*. Alternatively they might have substituted a 'religious' myth for an earlier 'royal' myth. The other exception to the pattern of lay descent is provided by the *gDung* of Chu-smad in Bum-thang who are intimately associated with the lineage of Padma Gling-pa through his son *Thugs-sras* Zla-ba rGyal-mtshan. Again this claim may represent a late 'feedback' as their family is certainly listed among the original set in the *rGyal-rigs* (f. 35b). It may be that Zla-ba rGyal-mtshan married into the family and in later generations was credited with the role of an ancestor. Be that as it may, as a collateral branch of the same powerful lineage that ultimately produced the present royal family, the *gDung* of Chu-smad escaped the fate of the other *gDung* families in Bum-thang. The only others who maintain the title today are those of rGya-tsha and Dur. The sDom-mkhar *gDung* appear to have disappeared without trace. The Ngang *gDung* left the area and went to sBon-sbis where they became a *Chos-rje* family. That at least is the implication of a passage in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i Don-grub (see below Page 138) and I could find no trace of it in their original village. The line of the U-ra *gDung* is said to be extinct.

Unfortunately I have no up to date information about the *gDung* of the Kheng district. The *rGyal-rigs* (f. 35b) maintains that they lived in the villages of sTung-la-sbi, Go-zhing, Phang-mkhar, Ka-lam-ti and Nya-mkhar. A further four families of '*gDung* and chiefs (*dpon*)' are listed in the *Lo-rgyus* (f. 13b), those of Su-brang, Go-phu, Ta-li and 'Bu-li. There is no doubt that as late as the 17th century the *gDung* of Kheng still regarded themselves as the absolute rulers of their territories although it is clear that one of them, the *gDung* of Nya-mkhar, was trying to create some sort of a hegemony. This met with a good deal of local opposition and Nor-bu dBang-phyug, the rival *gDung* of sTung-la-'bi (or sTung-la-sbi), seized the chance of destroying him by inviting the 'Brug-pa forces that had steadily been taking over the areas further east to join the fray. It seems to have been one of the principal policies of the 'Brug-pa campaign to interfere in local squabbles in such a way that whole areas came into their sovereignty. In Kheng, as in gZhong-sgar and Kur-stod, the leaders of the campaign took the side of those that harboured grievances against the Nya-mkhar *gDung*, the most powerful of the local rulers. In voluntarily submitting to 'Brug-pa sovereignty or being compelled to do so by force, the local rulers always seem to have expected a confirmation of their traditional privileges after making a suitable surrender.

This was granted in return for oaths of loyalty to the 'Brug-pa and an acceptance of their right to levy taxes and impose government corvée. Thus it seems in Kheng even the *gDung* of Nya-mkhar was able to come to terms with the invading power, though in his case he had to provide hostages as a pledge for his good behaviour (*Lo-rgyus*, ff. 13a-14b). It is not clear from the sources presently available how long these temporising solutions worked or when the *gDung* of Kheng finally had their traditional powers removed. Nor is it sure that today they even preserve their titles as some of their peers do in Bum-thang and sKur-stod.

### Historical Transition

Except for the U-ra *gDung*, all the other *gDung* families in Bum-thang proper appear to have lost their powers long before the establishment of the 'Brug-pa theocracy. In the valley of Chos-'khor at least it was the line of hereditary chiefs called the *Chos-'khor sde-pa* (or *Chos-'khor dpon-po*) which seems to have supplanted the *gDung*. In Padma Gling-pa's biography there is constant reference to *dPon-po* Kun-thub who must have been the incumbent of his day. Padma Gling-pa enjoyed his patronage for most of his life but in one passage he remarks: 'In the Year of the Tiger (1506) I was greatly distracted by involvement in litigation on many matters with *dPon-po* Kun-thub and so there were not many initiations, instructions and so forth [given by me that year].'<sup>1</sup> The legal authority to whom these matters would have been put must have been the official known as the *Nang-so* of lHa-lung who controlled the area of lHo-brag which bordered on Bhutan. The *lHa-lung Nang-so* was another hereditary office and several incumbents acted as the patrons of Padma Gling-pa during his long life from 1450 to 1521. On one occasion Padma Gling-pa addresses one of these in unmistakable terms as the overlord of the districts surrounding Bum-thang: '[You] *Nang-so* are yourself the chief of the southern region.'<sup>2</sup> This official was in turn subordinate to the *sde-pa* of sNa-dkar-rtse on the banks of the Yar-'brog lake due north of this region of lHo-brag. The ultimate authority in Tibet during this period was held of course by the princely house of Rin-spungs which had gradually ousted the rule of the Phag-mo-gru-pa princes of sNe-gdong, although the latter continued to play an important role in politics. Padma Gling-pa appears to have been greatly respected by both the Rin-spungs and sNe-gdong families though the former were presumably unaware of the fact that in 1502 he had performed a *dmag-zlog* ceremony to avert their threat of invading the territory of the *lHa-lung Nang-so* who is said to have annoyed them for some reason (*Pha*, f. 143a). In any case, Padma Gling-pa was summoned by the Rin-spungs authorities in 1503 to meet their most respected lama and ally, the 7th Karma-pa, Chos-grags rGya-mtsho. (It will be recalled that this Karma-

pa was the one whom King Jo-'phag (or Jo-'bag) Darma of Shar Dong-kha met and that the king later turned from him to Padma Gling-pa as his principal guru.) Most of the Karma-pa incarnations seem to have been attached to rNying-ma-pa 'text discoverers', regarding it as one of their main duties to promulgate these teachings. Padma Gling-pa entrusted a number of his discoveries to Chos-grags rGya-mtsho, and this is corroborated in the latter's biography (f. 137b). The gift greatly pleased the Rin-spungs ruler, Don-yod rDo-rje. Padma Gling-pa points out that this ruler of Tibet was mentioned in one of his prophecies as 'the subduer of dBus, gTsang and lHo-rong without exception'.<sup>3</sup> lHo-rong is certainly here the area of Bhutan and we can take this passage as confirming that in theory the Rin-spungs hegemony extended at least to Bum-thang where the *Chos-'khor dPon-po* occupied the position of a minor vassal. At all events, even if nothing can be said about the crucial question of taxation, the area was only loosely attached to the complicated world of Tibetan politics and Padma Gling-pa always makes a clear distinction in his writings between Mon (Bhutan) and Bod (Tibet), as if the two were quite separate entities. Some eight years after meeting the Rin-spungs ruler, Padma Gling-pa was summoned in 1511 to the princely house of rGyal-rtse whose members were one of the foremost enemies of the Rin-spungs-pa (*Pha*, f. 173a) and in 1513 while helping to consecrate a new temple at bSam-yas he was invited to meet the *sNe-gdong Gong-ma* himself (*Pha*, f. 182b). This must have been bKra-shis Grags-pa who in the preceding year had even succeeded in calling a meeting of ministers above the head of the Rin-spungs ruler (Shakabpa 1967:89-90). Although Padma Gling-pa seems to accord to the Rin-spungs a degree of precedence over their rivals who also patronised him, they are all treated in his accounts more or less equally as powerful nobles who showed him favour. The impression conveyed by his writing is that if the Rin-spungs writ ran in Bum-thang then it did so as the successor to an earlier authority which had imposed itself for a time on the area, perhaps creating the office of *Chos-'khor dPon-po* in order to keep a hold on it. A vestige of this control remained in the links between the *lHa-lung Nang-so* and the *Chos-'khor dPon-po*. Lower down the scale in the Chos-'khor valley we find very minor officials called *mi-dpon* who acted as village headmen (see for instance *Pha*, f. 116a and *Lo-rgyus* f. 7a). These were directly accountable to the *dPon-po* and are again suggestive of a political organisation imposed from outside.<sup>4</sup> If that was the case, then we can perhaps assume that it might have been the same external intervention which deprived the *gDung* families of Chos-'khor and Chu-smad of their traditional powers.

### Tribal Origins

It is in the light of the above hypothesis that I should like to interpret certain passages in the 'Chronicles of Gyantse' translated by Tucci (1949:

662-670). I believe that they provide an independent glimpse into the early history of Bhutan in the same way that dPa'-bo gTsug-lag's history does for the area just east of Bhutan. The Chronicles also appear to confirm the historical connection between the areas of Bum-thang and rTa-wang which, even though geographically apart, still share a unique and ancient language.

The princely house of rGyal-rtse traced the inception of its powers back to the period of Sa-skya rule in Tibet. Later they became ministers of the Phag-mo-gru-pa and supported them in their struggles with the Rin-spungs-pa. Although they were patrons of the dGe-lugs-pa school they seem to have lost their authority by the time of the 5th Dalai Lama and they never survived as one of the major aristocratic families. Their chronicles were written between 1479 and 1481 by the Sa-skya monk 'Jigs-med Grags-pa. The first of their line to make a real name for himself was dPal-ldan bZang-po (1316-1370) and the details of his long and distinguished career as a high official of the Sa-skya government occupy most of the first nine folios of the chronicle (Tucci 1949:662-664). His rise to power was intimately connected with his (and his brother's) handling of a series of military campaigns against a people known as the Dung, divided into a southern branch (the lHo-dung) and an eastern branch (the Shar-dung).<sup>5</sup> Five of these campaigns took place between the years 1340 and 1354 and because most of them seem to have been conducted in the region of lHo-brag, Tucci (op. cit. 702 note 746) has assumed that the Dung were tribes from lHo-brag itself. I would myself identify the lHo-dung with the ancestors of the present *gDung* families of Bum-thang, and the Shar-dung with the Mon-pa people living in the vicinity of rTa-wang. If the Dung were truly from lHo-brag some information on their subsequent history would surely be available since that province is well known in later periods. All the indications point to their being foreign invaders and the most likely direction they would have come from would have been the south. We can accept the Dung of the South as the *gDung* of Bum-thang on the simple grounds that the latter must at one time have been powerful enough in this region of the Himalayas to be capable of foreign invasion. The local spelling of their name does them credit with its associations of ancient descent, but as invaders their name is recorded phonetically (without the *ga* prefix) and takes on a strongly pejorative note in one passage where it appears as *Dung-reng* ('the obstinate Dung' f. 4a). There is still not enough evidence to explain how the name of a whole people in one period turns up much later as the hereditary title of just a few families.

Turning now to the eastern group, the leader of the Shar-dung in 1353 was called Don-grub-dar (f. 5a), a name which exactly matches the *-dar* names so favoured by the ruling families of eastern Bhutan and Kameng listed in the *rGyal-rigs*. Just as the term Shar-mon in the *lHo-brag chos-'byung*

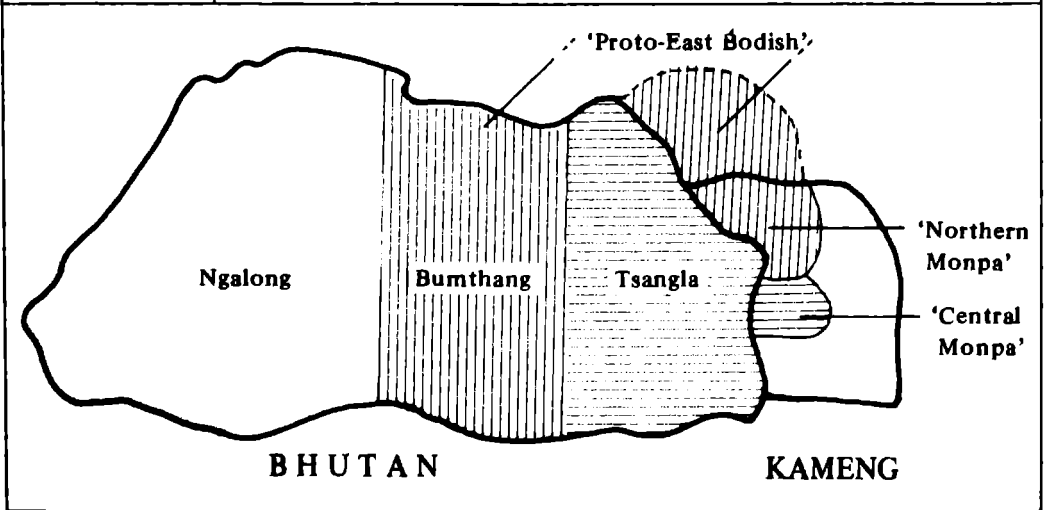
refers to the Mon-pa living east of the main group to the south, so also the Shar-dung can be taken to live east of the lHo-dung, and not in some vague area to the east of Tibet. Although no families on the eastern borderland of Bhutan seem to use the *gDung* title, many of the place names of the area contain the syllable *gdung* as a suffix. The *rGyal-rigs* has mKhar-gdung, Ar-rgya-gdung, sPa'u-gdung and rGyal-gdung (ff. 20v, 30b, 31a, 50b respectively). The *Lo-rgyus* has Gung-gdung (f. 8b). Das Gupta (1968: i-vi) has Nyug-ma Dung, Kudung, Phudung and Mathalang-phudung. Most of these places can be found on the maps precisely in the area we would expect, that is to say among the so-called 'Northern Monpa' who live in the vicinity of rTa-wang. Similarly, the *rGyal-rigs* contains several personal names with the *gdung* syllable: gSer-gdung, Me-gdung, rGyal-gdung-dar, Yo-gdung and Dung-bu (= gDung-bu ?; ff. 18a, 20b, 24a, 50b respectively). The *Lo-rgyus* has dKar-po-gdung (f. 9b). However, the most concrete proof of the fact that the Bum-thang people are in reality one and the same with the Mon-pa of rTa-wang is of a linguistic nature. Figure IV lists the pronunciation of the numerals 1 to 10 in all the relevant major language groups of Bhutan and Kameng. Those for Bhutan are taken from my own field notes and those for Kameng from Das Gupta (1968:164). According to Das Gupta's classification, 'Northern Monpa' is spoken in the vicinity of rTa-wang and 'Central Monpa' in the vicinity of 'Di-rang. 'Southern Monpa' has been omitted from the list for lack of date.<sup>6</sup>

It may be argued that a comparison of numerals alone provides a rather crude way of showing linguistic affinity but it does seem to me the table indicates that while Tsangla and 'Central Monpa' remain absolutely identical, the languages of Bum-thang and 'Northern Monpa' today reflect different stages in the development of the same basic speech. With the Tsangla-speaking peoples sandwiched between them, these languages have clearly taken different paths of evolution. There is today very little contact of any sort between the two areas but one or two of my informants in Bum-thang who had had occasion to go to rTa-wang assured me that they could make out a good deal of what was said to them by the local inhabitants. In the middle years of the 14th century the two groups could still be recognised by outsiders as branches of the same people, the Dung.

On folio 5a of the 'Gyangtse Chronicles' we read that in 1352 the lHo-dung were defeated by dPal-ldan bZang-po not in lHo-brag but rather 'in Rin-chen-sgang and in the environs of Phag-ri' (Tucci 1949:663). This statement could be an obstacle to the identification proposed above since Phag-ri is way over to the west in the Chumbi Valley and it is difficult to imagine what an invading force from Bum-thang would have been doing in that area. The most likely direction from which that invasion could have come is western Bhutan and, most conveniently, there is plenty of evidence pointing

Fig 4: The numerals 1 – 10 in the languages of Bhutan and Kameng \*

		BHUTAN			KAMENG	
Written Tibetan		Ngalong	Bumthang	Tsangla	'Northern Monpa'	'Central Monpa'
1	<i>gcig</i>	chi	tek	thur	hi	thur
2	<i>gnyis</i>	nyi	zon	nigtsing	nei	nitsing
3	<i>gsum</i>	sum	sum	sam	sum	sam
4	<i>bzhi</i>	zhi	ble	pshi	pli(h)	b(i) ci
5	<i>lnga</i>	nga	yanga	nga	lyange	nga
6	<i>drug</i>	dru	grok	khung	gro	khung
7	<i>bdun</i>	dun	nyit	zum	niss	zum
8	<i>brgyad</i>	gye	jyat	yen	get	yen
9	<i>dgu</i>	gu	dogo	gu	tugu	gu
10	<i>bcu</i>	chu	che	se	ci(h)	se



\*See pp. xiv – xviii of the Introduction

to the existence of a further branch of the Dung in that area. The *spyi-dpon* ('headman?') of the gDung is said to have been among the leaders of western Bhutan who swore allegiance to *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom in the 12th century (see f. 28b of his *rnam-thar*). We have already met the Wang-gdung (P.88) as descendants of gTsang-ma in a biographical tradition peculiar to western Bhutan. They were perhaps ancestors of the Wang people who still migrate between Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha. It was also noticed that the *rGyal-rigs* (f. 11b) records a local tradition concerning two 'important clans' (*rus che-ba*) in the west, the *rGyal-gdung* of sPa-gro and the gDung-'brog of Thim-phu, both of whom were descended from a son of Prince gTsang-ma. It is the only mention of clans in western Bhutan and it may be wondered if *rus* here does not perhaps indicate 'tribe' rather than 'clan'. No one seems to remember the *rGyal-gdung* and gDung-'brog today, though a motley group of jungle-dwellers living far to the south of sPa-gro are still called the gDung. They all fall under the jurisdiction of an official called the *gDung Rab-'byams* (formerly the *gDung gNyer-pa*) who used to be appointed by the *sPa-gro dPon-slob* but is now appointed by the central government. Their conversion to Buddhism is said to be fairly recent and is attributed largely to the activities in that area of the famous lama Grags-pa rGya-mtsho (1646-1719), the disciple of the equally famous refugee teacher *gTsang mKhan-chen* 'Jam-dbyangs dPal-ldan rGya-mtsho who was the biographer of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal. Unfortunately the account in Grags-pa rGya-mtsho's biography (ff. 74a-76b) of his visit to gDung-yul (sic) is most uninformative. All we learn about the inhabitants is that they were hunters and that Grags-pa rGya-mtsho made them swear to forego this occupation in the future. If they are indeed the remnants of one branch of the lHo-dung we may conjecture that they were pushed south either by one of the Tibetan campaigns directed against them or else by a fresh wave of migration from the north.

Somewhere in the huge corpus of Tibetan literature there must survive further references to the lHo-dung and Shar-dung but until these come to light we are wholly dependent on the scanty information provided in the 'Gyangtse Chronicles'. Nevertheless, the identification of the lHo-dung with groups in Bhutan and the Shar-dung with the 'Northern Monpa' greatly helps the interpretation of later patterns and events which remain otherwise inexplicable. The 'Chronicles' claim success for the Sa-skya campaigns and we may infer that some measure of control was thereafter imposed on the Dung. This may have taken the form of creating the office of *Chos-'khor dpon-po* in Bum-thang. It is interesting to note that in the artificial scheme proposed in the *rGyal-rigs* (Section IV) to account for a single origin for a number of noble families, the first *Chos-'khor dpon-po* is, according to one local version which does not fit the scheme, supposed to have come from sPa-gro in



western Bhutan. The *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* (f. 16a) confirms this and says the first *Chos-'khor dPon-po* was the ousted king of dPal-'byor-gling in sPa-gro. These references at least indicate that in the 18th century people remembered that the office had been imposed by external authority. The creation of the office must surely have coincided with the collapse of the indigenous rule of the *gDung* in Chos-'khor and Chu-smad and very likely explains why those families never posed a threat to the 'Brug-pa government in the 17th century. The *gDung* families which did survive to resist the 'Brug-pa lived in areas to the south where they had lain beyond the reach of Tibetan incursions in earlier periods, that is to say in U-ra and Kheng. As we have seen above, the Kheng group were taken over in the middle years of the 17th century by the military campaign led by Mi'gyur brTan-pa. We cannot yet be certain of the date of this campaign but it must have occurred a few years before or after the large scale invasion of Bhutan by the dGe-lugs-pa government of Tibet in 1657. Tibetan and Mongol troops made a concerted attack along the border between sPa-gro and bKra-shis-sgang and were assisted by some of the traditional leaders within the country who were disaffected with the new 'Brug-pa regime. Among them we find mentioned *gDung* Nag-po of U-ra (*LCB* I, f. 51b). Although the invasion took more than nine months, it was unsuccessful and the leader of the Sa-skya school finally negotiated a peace treaty which led to stable relations between the Tibetan and Bhutanese authorities during the next thirty-seven years. The literature is silent about the fate of *gDung* Nag-po of U-ra but the oral traditions (see below) affirm that he was defeated by the 'Brug-pa government and it seems probable that this occurred in 1657. Nevertheless, his line quite clearly continued into the 18th century, as Ngag-dbang shows in Section III of the *rGyal-rigs*. Today the line is completely extinct but there does survive in the village of sTang-sa-sbe a family which claims collateral descent from *gDung* Nag-po. Following the usual pattern during this period, his defeat and subjection were probably acknowledged in an oath of loyalty to the 'Brug-pa government which partially restored to him his hereditary rights and privileges. This arrangement probably continued under his successors until the line died out sometime in the later 18th or 19th centuries. For Ngag-dbang writing in 1728 the U-ra *gDung* still occupied the position of *primus inter pares* because, according to the origin myth of his family, all the other *gDung* families in the region were supposed to be the offshoots of the U-ra family. Whatever the historicity of the claim, it must have reflected certain social and political realities which obtained before and during the period when the *rGyal-rigs* was composed. The substance of this U-ra tradition contrasts interestingly with the origin myths of some of the *gDung* families in other areas.

### Variant Ancestries

THE U-RA TRADITION. The legendary origins of the U-ra *gDung* centre around the simple story of a god descending from heaven on a heavenly rope which links the world of humans with that of the gods. This is an ancient pre-Buddhist theme which appeared at the beginning of Tibetan history in the legends of the early dynasty. The whole notion of ropes or ladders connecting sky to earth is thought to derive from the mythology of the Ch'iang people of western China with whom the Tibetans were in contact from early times. The words for these ropes and ladders are qualified by the syllable *rmu* (or *dmu*) and *phya* (or *phywa*) both of which come from a word in the Ch'iang language meaning Sky or Sky God (Stein 1972 : 211). Under Buddhist influence, the account of the first kings' descent to earth from their original home in heaven was gradually replaced by legends which sought an Indian origin for Tibetan kingship, but the early mythology survived in various transmuted forms. The significance of the U-ra tradition lies in the way it preserves a relatively unadulterated version of 'royal' origins according with the most ancient Tibetan ideas. In the 18th century the legend was still held to provide a valid account of the origins of the *gDung* of U-ra and of the other *gDung* in the area who were regarded as offshoots of the U-ra *gDung*. Even more interesting is the fact that this was by no means the only survival in Bhutan of the old theme of descent on a rope or ladder. Ngag-dbang makes this quite clear when he says: ' . . . some people, in recounting the various oral traditions say that the origins [of their ancestors lay in a] descent to the land of humans after grasping the divine *rmu*-ladders and the gold and silver *phya*-cords' (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 45b). This comment and the ensuing passage which looks for a theological interpretation of the theme come in Section V of the *rGyal-rigs* which deals with the 'subject' peoples in east Bhutan. Thus, whereas the concept of heavenly descent was originally the preserve of royalty and nobility, later it appears to have been appropriated by individual communities who stood much lower on the social scale. In the case of eastern Bhutan we can probably assume that these communities were constituted into clans which occupied a position subordinate to the ruling clans. The latter, we must conjecture, held that their first ancestors had come down on 'golden *phya*-cords', while the servants of those ancestors had descended on the 'silver *phya*-cords' to act as the progenitors of the subject clans. To what extent the latter accepted this arrangement we have no means of telling. Ngag-dbang is annoyingly silent on the whole matter. Nevertheless, further evidence on the allocated use of ropes and ladders made of different substances can be found in the mythology of the Aka people from the Kameng district of Arunachal. These 'tribals' are also of Tibeto-Burman extraction and were till quite recently in contact with the eastern Bhutanese. The following extract from Kennedy

1914 (quoted in Elwin 1959 : 438 note 2) tells the story of the Aka origin myth. The passage in parenthesis is Elwin's summary of Kennedy.

Long long ago all men descended from heaven by means of ladders. The Assamese and the Akas of the royal blood came down by a golden ladder; the remaining Akas had a silver ladder; the Tibetans and Monbas [Mon-pa] were given a ladder of iron; the Daflas and Abors had to be satisfied with a bamboo ladder; while the Cacharis and Khoas shared a plantain ladder. (All these people came to earth on the Longkapur Hill in the Lohit Valley, whence they scattered in search of land. The Assamese were the first to start and chose the plains. The Akas spent so much time resting and drinking beer that the others got the best land and they had to accept what was left.)

Given the broad universality of the descent theme in the myths of Asia, it is perhaps difficult to argue in favour of direct contact between the Aka and eastern Bhutanese versions. Nevertheless, they provide the only examples known to me of the means of descent being made of various materials in a manner that differentiates social groupings; for the eastern Bhutanese the myth affirmed the distinction between ruling and subject clans, while for the Aka it relates to the view of their place in the world at large by determining their attitude to all their neighbouring peoples, besides making the distinction between 'the Akas of the royal blood' and 'the remaining Akas' on exactly the Bhutanese pattern. Their common feature of a specific means of descent allocated to each group is a late development of the theme. It appears to be quite absent from Tibetan sources of any period. As the Aka and the eastern Bhutanese are near neighbours it would be surprising if one version had not inspired or influenced the other. If we accept that many of the clans of eastern Bhutan originally claimed direct descent from heaven and only later accepted the prestigious figure of gTsang-ma as their ancestor, then it seems quite conceivable that the culturally 'inferior' Aka might have borrowed the descent theme from them at a time when it was still current in eastern Bhutan.

Although the U-ra tradition preserves an early version of the theme, some Buddhist influence is also apparent. The people of Bum-thang, the original companions of Khyi-kha Ra-thod, have no ruler to settle their quarrels and so they pray for one to the God of Heaven, 'O-de Gung-rgyal. The god despatches his son, Gu-se Lang-ling, to U-ra on the 'divine *rmu*-cord' and he enters the womb of bSod-nams dPal'dren who possesses the marks of a *dākinī* of gnosis. Despite the curses of 'Dzom-pa-sgron who is the wife of the headman of U-ra, lHa-bzang-rgyal is born to bSod-nams dPal'dren as the incarnation of Gu-se Lang-ling. He is referred to as 'the divinely emanated *gDung*.'<sup>7</sup> In the early non-Buddhist tradition, Gu-se Lang-ling would have come down the rope in corporal form and not as a 'divine emanation'. According to Tibetan

mythology, the first kings not only descended to the human world on ropes or ladders but at their death they went back to heaven the same way. This continued until the time when one of them, Gri-gum bTsan-po, inadvertently severed the means of communication.

Much significance attaches to the names of 'O-de Gung-rgyal<sup>8</sup> and Gu-se Lang-ling. The former appears in a document from Tun-huang as the name of a god who turns up later in the complicated genealogies which reveal the divine origins of the Tibetan kings and clans. As the youngest of the six Yab-lha (or Yab-bla) bDag-drug, 'O-de Gung-rgyal is regarded as the ancestor of the primitive clans, particularly the Rlangs. He is also a sacred mountain in 'Ol-kha which is held to be the 'father' of eight other such mountains throughout Tibet. These god-mountains are termed 'the nine gods of the creation of the world' (*srid-pa chags-pa'i lha dgu*) and are generally classed as *mGur-lha*, divinities whose special function is to protect the royal line. Ariane Macdonald (1971: 292-309) has recently examined the royal cult of the *sKu-lha* (or *sKu-bla*) gods and her researches show beyond doubt that these were identical with the *mGur-lha*. Their intimate association with the person of the king is brought out in her words: 'Les Sku-bla de la tradition ancienne paraissent donc avoir été considérés à la fois comme des divinités-montagnes, des ancêtres et les supports du principe vital des rois (*srog* ou *bla*) dont ils assuraient la protection et l'existence tant qu'ils restaient liés à sa personne, mais dont ils provoquaient la mort quand ils 'abandonnaient leur vie' ' (op. cit., 303). 'O-de Gung-rgyal is the foremost sKu-kha because it was from him that the first mythical kings, 'O-lde sPu-rgyal and gNya'-khri bTsan-po, were descended. Our text omits the intricate theogony in which 'O-de Gung-rgyal is normally placed and instead presents him simply as the 'God of Heaven' (*gnam-lha*). It is under this epithet that he is invoked later in the legend when the men of U-ra go to Yar-lung in search of the reincarnation of *gDung* Grags-pa dBang-phyug (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 33b) and again in the variant tradition of gZhong-sgar and gDung-bsam where he is confused with the Hindu god Indra (op. cit., f. 36a).

Strangely enough, the son of 'O-de Gung-rgyal who comes down from heaven on the 'divine *rmu*-cord' to become the progenitor of the *gDung* families, that is Gu-se Lang-ling, is not known elsewhere in Tibetan tradition. In fact, the name seems to be preserved only in the *rGyal-rigs*. It may possibly derive from a toponym: Gu-se or Gling Gu-se (also spelt 'Gu-zi, mGu-zi) is the name of a small principality in eastern Tibet that was formerly ruled by a chief claiming descent from the adoptive son of the epic hero Ge-sar (Stein 1959a : 128). It is a place intimately associated with the Rlangs clan, and the alternation Rlangs/Gling seems well attested (Stein 1959b : 78-79). Alternatively Lang-ling can be taken as a descriptive word suggesting 'swaying,

dangling, hanging' (Goldstein 1975 : 1114). Mention of a certain *Jo-bo lHo-bu Lang-ling* is found in the Tun-huang document P.1289 (Stein 1971 : 517).

If the legend of Gu-se Lang-ling is as ancient as it would appear to be, then in its pristine form the god surely came down in person on the divine rope to the peak of a mountain near U-ra. The most sacred mountain in the area is *sKu-lha mKha'-ri* (note the form of the name: '*sKu-lha Sky-Mountain*') which lies on the Tibetan border just a few miles north of Bum-thang. Nebesky (1956 : 204) noted the iconography and some of the traditions about *sKu-lha mKha'-ri* from the Tibetan viewpoint without, however, giving its location. The cult of the god in Bum-thang survives today only in local *gsol-kha* invocations but in Padma Gling-pa's day he seems to have been more important. That at least is the impression conveyed by a long passage in Padma Gling-pa's biography (ff. 164b-170b) describing a vision in which this deity figures prominently under the name *dGe-bsnyen mKha'-ri*. He introduces himself by saying: 'I protect the teachings of the *dharma* in the area of the South'.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he does not figure in any of the Bhutanese legends known to me and his true importance doubtless lies more in his role as a Tibetan *sKu-lha* associated with the southern border of that country. Within U-ra itself, however, there does survive a mountain cult unique to the valley and further investigations may one day prove it to be connected with the figure of Gu-se Lang-ling. In the autumn every year a group of women go to the top of a mountain in U-ra and perform a circular dance accompanied on a hand-drum. The performance is now described as *A-lce lHa-mo* ('The Lady Goddess'), a term which is usually applied to the well known dance-dramas of Tibet, also performed by the Dag-pa and 'Brog-pa people of eastern Bhutan. The U-ra version of *A-lce lHa-mo*, however, has no dramatic function at all and consists solely of the circular dance. An extract from the accompanying song has appeared on a gramophone record prepared by the late John Levy entitled *Tibetan and Bhutanese Instrumental and Folk Music* Lyrichord LLST 7258, Side B Band 5, not 6 as listed). We recorded the song at the palace of *dBang-'dus Chos-gling* where the U-ra ladies had come to perform it for us. There is some confusion surrounding the text of the song which, according to our informants, is supposed to be sung in *gsang-yig* ('secret letters'). The text written down for us at the time of the performance is a hymn of praise to the goddess *A-lce lHa-mo* herself and does not correspond to the words actually sung on the record. The solution to this conundrum and to the important question of why women, rather than men, should play such a vital role in the cult of U-ra will have to await further investigations. Meanwhile it is worth noting that their ritual role has a social parallel.

A noble family whose line passes down from mother to daughter still lives in U-ra, the head of the family being called the *U-ra A-lce* ('The Lady of

U-ra'). Matrilineal families such as this one also survive elsewhere in Bumthang (at Zangs-gling, bSam-gtan-gling, Ngang, gTam-shing, Dur and lCags-mkhar) and in sKur-stod (at mTsho-gling, mKhos-ma and Na'i). Nothing is known about the origin of all these *A-lce* and today they are in a very reduced condition. It is with some amusement that people today explain how many of the *A-lce* are unable to find themselves husbands because of their straightened circumstances. This is contrasted with the distant past when they are said to have been rich and powerful. The marriage of *gDung* lHa-dbang Grags-pa of U-ra to *A-lce* sGron-'dzom of Chos-'khor (*rGyal-rigs*, f. 35b) must have been of the nature of a political alliance. The same may hold for the liaison 'on the side' (*zur-du*, loc. cit.,) of their son *gDung* Grags-pa dBang-phyug II with the 'Chieftainess' (*dPon-mo*) bKra-shis dBang-mo of gZhong-sgar; theirs seems to have been an affair of the heart but it still carried important political implications for it was their sons and grandson who spread the institution of the *gDung* to all the surrounding areas. Doubtless the tradition at this point is still legendary and may relate to popular ideas about how some of the ancient matrilineal families were absorbed into, or became subordinate to, those of the *gDung*.

One of the most interesting points to be noted in the development of the U-ra tradition is how the theme of divine descent is ultimately replaced by one of descent from the ancient royal dynasty of Tibet. *gDung* Grags-pa dBang-phyug I dies without issue but his line continues after a brief interregnum through his incarnation, *gDung* lHa-dbang Grags-pa, who is abducted from Yar-lung. Investigations made later by the U-ra people confirm that the child is descended from the *Dharmarājas* through a branch of their descendants that had settled at Yar-lung (*rGyal-rigs*, ff. 33b-35a). Exactly the same story of abduction is found in the tradition of gZhong-sgar and gDung-bsam (op. cit., ff. 39b – 40a). This development of the legend may have arisen from a genuine break in the line of the *gDung*, or perhaps the break was introduced artificially in order to allow for the development. In any case it must have taken form at a time when the old pre-Buddhist notion of heavenly descent was no longer held to confer sufficient prestige upon ruling families. Legitimate rule by this stage depended upon the ability to claim a connection with the true kings of history. Fortunately, in the traditions of the *gdung* this later claim never obscured the earlier versions which continued to exercise a tenacious hold on the popular imagination, as we shall also see below.

THE GZHONG-SGAR AND GDUNG-BSAM TRADITION. Properly speaking, the legend recounted on ff. 36a-39b of the *rGyal-rigs* should have nothing to do with the *gDung* families as it really contains the origin myth of a quite

separate family, the *rJe* of Yong-lam in gZhong-sgar. The reason why it was set down as a valid alternative version of the *gDung* origins appears to be quite simple. The people of U-ra today still migrate south to the warmer region of gZhong-sgar every winter. There they have estates producing rice which cannot grow at the high altitude of their original homeland in U-ra. This pattern of transhumance brought them into contact at an early date with the Tsangla-speaking people of gZhong-sgar, and the records suggest that the latter came under the sway of their northern neighbours. Thus the ruling *rJe* family of gZhong-sgar was, according to the U-ra tradition, the offshoot of the *U-ra gDung*. From the point of view of gZhong-sgar, however, the position is reversed: the *U-ra gDung* is held to be the offshoot of the ruler of gZhong-sgar, but not necessarily of the *Yong-lam rJe*. Ngag-dbang belonged to a different area of the country and could therefore adopt in his *rGyal-rigs* an impartial view towards these rival claims. The two versions are neatly harmonised on ff. 39b-40a in a manner that has already been alluded to in the previous chapter. The southern tradition, like the northern one of U-ra, begins with certain ancient themes upon which the story of abducting a royal child is superimposed. However, it is more of a compendium of themes drawn from several sources, in contrast to the U-ra tradition whose kernel revolves around a single theme. Before attempting to separate these strands, here is the legend as it survives today in an oral tradition related by *Slob-dpon* bSod-nams bZang-po in the Dzongkha idiom of the Ngalong language (tape recorded in Thim-phu on 23rd July, 1973). The reservations voiced about his account of the 'Sindhu Rāja' also apply to this one, namely that it probably owes much to the literary account contained in the *rGyal-rigs* itself. Nevertheless, a comparison with that account shows quite clearly that the tradition still survives and this is as clear a version of it as one can hope for today.

The *gDung* families were actually descended from King 'Od-srung. At that time a powerful ruler on the Indian border at a place called Khang-pa-di (sp ?) obtained for himself a wife who was the daughter of the ruler of mTsho-sna, the mTsho-sna-pa. As she was coming down for her wedding the guardian spirit (*gnas-bdag*), in fact a *nāga*-demon (*klu-bdud*), of a place called Tson-g-tsong-ma (sp ?) which is near, or rather on the opposite side to bKra-shis-sgang, made its appearance as she was sleeping the night in that place. The *nāga*-demon took the form of a white snake and crossed back and forth over her body three times and so she conceived a child, a boy. Enormously strong, being the child of a non-human, he grew up very quickly, taking but a few months whereas ordinary children require years. When he grew up he went down to India on a trading trip and on his way there was a lake which normally did nothing to people passing by. Since, however, he was the son of a non-human it became agitated, raining hail and stones on him so that he

could not proceed on his way. He found no way of solving the problem and so fell to wondering what he should best do. 'If I knew who my father was I could ask him for help but my mother will not tell me who he is. Before trying anything I should get the assistance of my father's brothers and his people.' On the way home he sharpened his sword and then went to his mother. 'Are you going to tell me who my father is? If you are, then tell me immediately. If not, then I am going to kill you right now.' 'You have no father,' said his mother. 'It's no good saying I have no father,' he replied. So she told him the story about what had befallen her at the lake while she had been sleeping there for three nights, how it had happened and how he had been conceived. Collecting together three white kinds and three sweet kinds of medicine (*sman dkar-gsum dngar-gsum*) he went to the lake, threw them in and cried out: 'Father, father!' At that instant a figure emerged from the lake, the top part of his body being human in shape and the lower part a serpent, asking: 'What is it?' 'Are you my father?' 'Yes, what do you want?' 'There is this lake which does nothing to harm other people when they pass by, but being my enemy it will not allow me to pass. I have to fight a battle with this lake and for this I need assistance.' 'That's easy. You needn't worry. I'll do it. Today you stay here and I'll bring you plenty of food. Tomorrow you go down there and I'll help you.' When he got up the next morning his father brought him many kinds of food. 'What sort of help are you going to give me?' he demanded. 'That's easy. There's nothing for you to do,' replied his father. He gave him a tube of bamboo with its opening carefully sealed. 'Now take this off with you to the lake and open it up when you get there. Don't open it until you arrive.' 'All right,' he said and set off. On his way he became uneasy and thought to himself: 'There is probably nothing in this to help me. When I get to the lake I shall probably drown and die.' He opened up a minute crack in the bamboo and two or three snakes looking like monkeys (?) escaped. He quickly closed it up again. The place and house where this happened is called sBrul-chugling ('Snake-Water-Place') and even today there are snakes there which are descended from those ones. Later when he arrived at the lakeside he opened the tube and masses of snakes issued forth and went into the lake, tearing it up at its top and bottom so that in an instant it all emptied of water leaving just white stones lying around. He went down to see what it was like and in the middle of where the lake used to be he saw a large bronze vessel turned upside down. Thinking this must be the palace of a *nāga* he went and turned it over. Inside there was a most beautiful and attractive girl holding a golden ladle with which she struck him on the head, cracking his skull and killing him there. His brain was eaten by a fish and since he was the son of a non-human his consciousness entered the fish. Wondering how he could obtain a human body he went down the river and then up the river which passes



bKra-shis-sgang, rTa-wang and so on up to Mon mTsho-sha. He went wherever the river took him but could find no way out. Then he went up the Ku-ru Chu river to Kur-stod but there was no means of exit that way either. Then he went to Grub-thob Zam-pa in gZhong-sgar on his way to Bu-thang (sp ?) but at Trus-thang (sp ?) he got caught in a fish net which a man had left in the river there. As the man approached to kill him he cried out: 'Don't kill me. I shall help you.' 'My, this fish speaks in our human tongue. It is a bad auspice. What can this mean?' said the man. He did not let the fish go but instead placed it in a box full of water and took it away thinking that in a day or two the fish would die and that he would then eat it. But on the next day it hadn't died, nor on the following day, staying just as it was. One day he went off to work and when he came back he found his food already prepared and ready to be eaten. 'My goodness, what can this be? Who could have come to my house today? I have nobody myself who could have done this. What could have caused it?' Saying this, he fell to eating the food and then went to sleep. On the next day he went off to do his work at some distance and the same thing had been done for him on his return. 'Now what can this mean? It must be the consciousness of the fish which is helping me. It must surely be a magical trick played by the fish.' Having said this, he went out of his house, entered the forest and returned through the jungle until he came to a large tree from the top of which his house could be seen. Climbing this, he stayed to watch his house. From inside the fish which was inside the box of water there emerged a handsome youth who proceeded to light a fire and prepare food. Going as quickly as he could, the man returned and flung the corpse of the fish into the fire. 'Oh, you've burnt it. That was a bad mistake. I must pull the tail out.' The youth pulled his tail out of the fire and so later there came about a great abundance of meat, butter, clothes and everything in the man's storeroom. When the youth had gained immense power the people said he should become their king, the king of Trus-thang. It is said that the fortress of gZhong-sgar which nowadays still exists [in ruins] was built by him. He has a name but I . . . Then everyone in that place became afraid of him and there was nobody who could match his power. He subdued everyone to his authority, treating those beneath him very well, giving them food and compelling them not to bully others. Eventually when he came near to death the people declared: 'There is nobody now who would be able to support us after you die. You must take a consort now so as to produce a son who would act as your heir.' He replied: 'I am myself the descendant of a non-human and so you would not derive any benefit from my lineage.' He had no son therefore, and when he was dying he said: 'When a time comes that you are in trouble about five years from now, take this and go to Yar-lung in Tibet. In the lower part of Yar-lung there is a school for all the children. The children

there will be playing dice and at that time you must show them my dice. The child who recognises my dice is the one who will be of benefit to you. Bring him down here.' [Saying this, he died.] When in accordance with these words they went to Yar-lung, at the lower end of Yar-lung there was a large school in which there were very many children, just as they had been told. They were playing dice and when the dice [the men had brought with them] was thrown amongst them, one of the children grabbed it and said: 'Oh! Where have you brought my dice from?' They immediately caught him by the hand and took him off. Placing him in a wickerwork basket, they brought him down to Trus-thang which is the place where the gZhong-sgar rDzong now stands. The large estate which [the palace of] dBang-'dus Chos-gling [i.e. the present royal family] owns at Trus-thang used to be his estate. After he had come there he grew up and became chief, he the descendant of the kings of Tibet, the reincarnation who had been taken down from up there. Then he went up to U-ra and became the *U-ra gDung* Nag-po. Every winter he used to go down to gZhong-sgar and so he went back and forth. His sons who settled in villages in Bum-thang and Mang-sde produced the families known as *gDung* who are the descendants of the *U-ra gDung* Nag-po. After he had come this way, having become a man again after being a fish, he went to see the lake. The copper vessel was still there and he took it away with him. Inside the vessel there was an image of Phyag-na rDo-rje (Vajrapāṇi) one cubit in height. Somebody made off with it at some time and it is now at a place called Bi-gdung (sp ?) near bKra-shis-sgang. It can be seen to this day, a kind of 'lake-treasure' (*mtsho-gter*). The copper vessel which had been taken away was brought to U-ra and kept by the *U-ra gDung* Nag-po. During the time of Zhabs-drung [Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal] the *U-ra gDung* Nag-po refused to submit to him and a force of the Shar-bod and Wang-bod [i.e. the militia from the district of Thim-phu, sPu-na-kha and dBang-'dus Pho-brang] was sent to destroy him. After his defeat the vessel was taken away and brought to sPu-na-kha where it is still kept [in the fortress] and known as the *mTsho-chen rGyal-po'i rDzam* ('The Pot of the King of the Great Lake').

The main divergence between bSod-nams bZang-po's oral account of 1973 and Ngag-dbang's written account of 1728 is the complete absence in the former of the complicated preamble to the story occupying f. 36a-b of the *rGyal-rigs*. This preamble appears to be derived from a textual tradition, namely the *gter-ma* of Bon Thang-la 'Od-dkar which Ngag-dbang lists as one of the sources of the legend. The oral traditions of gDung-bsam and gZhong-sgar which together form the rest of the legend seem to have been grafted upon this textual tradition. Until the *gter-ma* comes to light once more, that seems to be the basic picture of the legend's structure. The fragment of the *gter-ma* that survives in the preamble has an ancient quality

despite its mention of the Hindu god Indra (posing as the God of Heaven 'O-de Gung-rgyal in the Buddhist heaven of Trāyastriṃśat). Apart from these accretions, the names that appear are all pre-Buddhist in origin (Gu-se Lang-ling, *rMu* in *rMu-yul*, *rMu'i* rje-dpon, *rMu-btsan* lHa-gnyan Chen-po and perhaps Mu-ku-lung; bSe-ba-mkhar and gDung-mtsho, see below). The name of the *gter-ma* itself is that of a Bon-po god, Thang-la 'Od-dkar; the form of the name (which does not seem to be found elsewhere) variously reminds one of the Bon-po god and saint sTag-la Me-'bar, of Tha-le 'Od-dkar the sister of the epic hero Ge-sar (Stein 1959a : 535), and finally of the mountain god Thang-lha (Nebesky 1956 : 205-208). Despite these considerations, the textual tradition really seems extraneous to the original form of the legend and its inclusion may simply represent an attempt on the part of Ngag-dbang to give a greater depth and significance to the whole tradition. This interpretation is borne out by the way the preamble is aligned to the local tradition as preserved in the *rGyal-rigs* and by the fact that it is quite missing in the contemporary oral account.

The main point of the legend, taken as a logical and consistent whole, is to show the series of adventures a divine being must experience if he is to act as a ruler of ordinary mortals. His essential nature is incompatible with that of humans and must gradually be transformed and tamed. Upon this assumption rest all the odd permutations of existence through which Bar-skyes (alias Ral-pa sTobs-chen, alias lHa-dbang Grags-pa) has to pass before he can become the true founder of a ruling line. Each of these permutations is associated with a particular locality in eastern Bhutan and very likely enjoyed to begin with an independent currency. The legend evolved by assimilating to it these local stories, one by one, until it developed into the final complex form recorded by Ngag-dbang. The oral recension of bSod-nams bZang-po emphasises the continuing associations which each part of the legend has with specific places; one possible approach to the analysis is therefore geographical in nature. In fact there seems to be no problem in determining the original setting of each component of the legend. The 'preamble' is set in the vicinity of Me-rag Sag-stengs inhabited by the 'Northern Monpa', the story of Bar-skyes is set in gDung-bsam (Mon-yul sTong-gsum), the story of Ral-pa sTobs-chen in gZhong-sgar (Mol-ba-lung) and the account of the latter's abduction from Yar-lung as lHa-dbang Grags-pa seems to be a direct borrowing from the U-ra tradition.

Underlying all these separate plots (except the last one) is the theme of lakes and rivers and their divine or semi-divine inhabitants. The watery element dominates the legend and helps to conceal its syncretic structure. mTsho-sna ('Lake-Beginnings' or 'Diverse Lakes') in the preamble is very important in Tibetan mythology for its associations with the origins of Tibet

and the Tibetans (Stein 1972 : 37-38). It used to be the administrative capital of Mon-yul and lies just beyond the present border with Kameng. According to the preamble, when the ancestors of the Me-rag Sag-stengs people were fleeing from their ruler at mTsho-sna, Gu-se Lang-ling was sent by the God of Heaven to help them and their lake-god at lHo gDung-mtsho sKar-ma-thang, perhaps a local protector of those people. The lake is certainly a real, not imaginary, one as it appears in Padma Gling-pa's autobiography (f. 62a) spelt, perhaps significantly, as Dung-mtsho Karma-thang. A *Dung-mtsho* ('Origin Lake') is mentioned in the *Po-ti bse-ru*, according to the 5th Dalai Lama (Haarh 1969 : 256-7, 287-8). After various transmutations, Gu-se Lang-ling turns up again as the lake-god of Mu-ku-lung, where in the form of a white serpent he impregnates the bride of the king of gDung-bsam. She conceives Bar-skyes who later unwittingly upsets the rival *nāga*-demon (*klu-bdud*) of the lake at Ngas-tsang-long-pa. Despite the gift of a snake army by his father, Bar-skyes is killed by the rival god and his consciousness enters a fish. The fish is eventually caught by a bachelor whom it assists by performing household chores, transforming itself into a youth for this purpose when the bachelor is working in his fields. The bachelor discovers this, destroys the body of the fish and so the youth becomes human as Ral-pa sTobs-chen, the ruler of gZhong-sgar. The concept of a primal lake seems to be muted and overshadowed in this narrative by the idea of lakes as the home of dangerous spirits, principally the *klu* who appropriated the character of the Indian *nāga* spirits. The 'tshomem' (*mtsho-sman-mo*) are another class of such semi-divine beings specifically associated with lakes in Bhutan. The uncanny behaviour of the Ngas-tsang-long-pa lake (somewhere between gDung-bsam and India) is a typical example of the ominous and sinister nature still credited to lakes in popular folklore. The strength of these beliefs is illustrated by the way in which Gu-se Lang-ling, who should properly be associated with a mountain (and is in fact briefly linked in the preamble with the mountains of Gangs-ri dKar-po and Wang-seng), is finally transformed into a *klu-bdud* ('*nāga*-demon') in the gDung-bsam tradition.

The point of most central interest in this gDung-bsam tradition concerns the episode when Bar-skyes, having turned into a fish, is caught by a bachelor whom he secretly assists around the house until he regains a human body and becomes the man's adoptive son. A very close parallel to this story is found in the mythology of the Thulung Rai of east Nepal. The Thulung version has been discussed at length by Nicholas Allen (1976: 102ff.). He traces the story back to one that is recorded in two separate recensions in the Tunhuang literature, namely the marriage by capture of rBeg-ga rBeg-shi (or Tseng'gi rBag-zhing) by Gyim-po Nyag-cig (edited and translated by F. W. Thomas 1957: 16-44). The first of several Thulung versions recorded by Allen may be briefly summarised as follows:

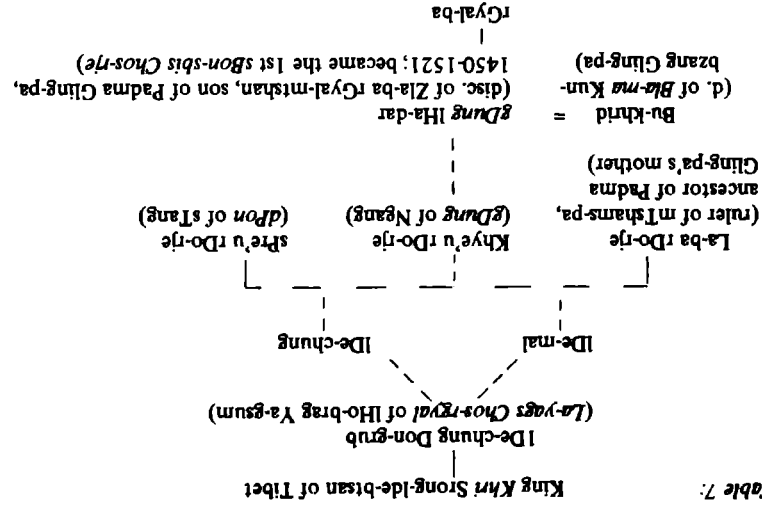


Table 7:

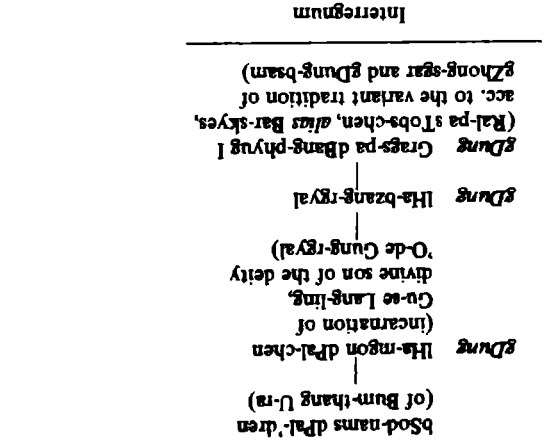


Table 6:

Table 6: Origins of the gDung families: the U-ra tradition (according to Section III of *rGyal-rtse byung-khungs gsal-ba'i sgron-me*, ff. 32a-40a)

Table 7: Origins of the gDung families: the Ngang tradition (according to the biographies of bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa! Don-grub, ff. 22b-24a, and Mi-pham dBang-po, ff. 5b-6b)

Khakcilik, a poor orphan who works as a fisherman, catches a stone in his net one day. Each time he casts it back into the water it gets caught again until finally he decides to take it home with him. The stone is actually a girl, Wayelungma, and while Khakcilik is away fishing, she slips out to sweep the house and prepare a meal. Khakcilik returns and, astonished, declares: 'Who is this who has been looking after a poor orphan like me? Come and we'll eat together.' One of his neighbours, an old woman, pretends that she has been helping him and so he shares the food with her. The whole business is repeated two or three times until the truth of the matter is explained to Khakcilik by another neighbour: 'Pick up your net as if to go fishing. Then take a winnowing fan and broom, and hide in the corner by the doorway. When your helper [Wayelungma] comes to get the broom, grab hold of her.' Khakcilik does so and the two of them settle down as man and wife.

The two recensions of the Tun-huang version contain many unsolved textual problems and there are a number of fairly minor discrepancies in their accounts. However, their basic unity is quite evident. The following *précis* of Allen's paraphrasing of Thomas' somewhat doubtful translations allows itself some licence in order to bring out the common features of the two recensions:

A girl (rBeg-ga rBeg-shi or Tseng-'gi rBag-zhing) changes herself into a peacock (or takes on the character of a bird) to save herself from a fiend which has killed all or most of her close kin. Gyim-po Nyag-cig, a poor and solitary figure separated from his six rich brothers, catches the peacock in a snare and takes her home. (In one version she is caught and released by him several times.) While Gyim-po is away pasturing goats or gathering wood, the girl-peacock secretly sets out a meal which he eats on returning. Pretending to go out to cut wood, he hides behind a dung-heap. The peacock-girl comes out from her place of hiding to lay out another meal. Gyim-po catches her and makes her his wife.

All three versions (Tun-huang, Bhutanese and Thulung) form part of extended legendary cycles having different aims and functions but in each one the man is a lonely figure (orphan, bachelor, separated brother). His bride or adoptive son is captured first in a snare or net while disguised as peacock, fish or stone. They are finally caught red-handed in their true form while secretly performing household chores for the man who, suspecting the truth had pretended to go off on his work in order to lure them out. The shift from 'captured wife' to 'adoptive son' in the Bhutanese story may be explained by the fact that the latter forms a sub-plot in the legendary origins of a line of *male* rulers. The common motifs, however, seem to outweigh the obvious points of contrast so strongly as to suggest that the stories are truly *versions* of a single legend and not merely vague and fortuitous parallels.

Many explanations can be used to account for a single story occurring in several areas. The most likely one in this case would appear to be that the Bhutanese and Thulung versions share a common external ancestor derived from the Tun-huang version, though this interpretation cannot be proved. The peripheral survivals in Nepal and Bhutan carry ancient associations with the mythology of Tibet's dynastic period. In Bhutan's case this tends to underline many of the conclusions reached in this part. It is, however, particularly apt that the old story should be found in the legends of a family calling itself *rJe*, for it probably represents part of one of the original myths of the huge *rJe* clan; all these became buried later under the scheme that claimed the figure of *gTsang-ma* as a royal progenitor.

**THE NGANG TRADITION.** Two works which must have been composed at almost exactly the same time as the *rGyal-rigs*, namely the biographies of *bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i Don-grub* (1645-1726)<sup>11</sup> and of *Mi-pham dBang-po* (1709-1738),<sup>12</sup> clearly indicate that the supremacy accorded the *U-ra gDung* family in the *rGyal-rigs* was not always accepted by the *gDung* families of other areas. *bsTan-'dzin Legs-grub* was the second incarnate head of the great monastery of *Gang-steng* which belongs to the school of *Padma Gling-pa* and is situated in the *Shar* district of western Bhutan. He was born in a *chos-rje* family of *sBon-sbis* that descended from the *gDung* family of *Ngang* which is why the origins of the *Ngang gDung* are explained in his biography (ff. 22b-24a). A similar account is found on ff. 5b-6b of the biography of his nephew *Mi-pham dBang-po*, who was the first incarnation of *bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas* (1638-1696) and who ruled as the 10th '*Brug sDe-srid* from 1729 to 1736. As we might expect, in the scheme which these works adopted (illustrated in Table 7) the ancestry of these two important figures is traced back to the Tibetan kings in a late and artificial manner, but one that is not devoid of interest.

King *Khri Srong-lde-btsan* of Tibet is said to have had 'a beloved natural son'<sup>13</sup> called *lDe-chung Don-grub* upon whom he conferred the province of *lHo-brag*.<sup>14</sup> Two of his descendants *lDe-mal* and *lDe-chung*, became the so-called *Dharmarājas* of *La-yags*, a village located somewhere across the border with Bhutan, as we know from the biography of *Padma Gling-pa* who knew the place (see for instance f. 74b). *lDe-mal* and *lDe-chung* can very likely be identified with *lDe-po* and *lDe-chung*, historical figures who appear in a recognised branch of royal descendants settled in this area (see *Deb-ther dmar-pog sar-ma*, p. 167). The *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (f. 99a) notes that *lDe-po* took control of a place called '*Ban-tshigs* and that the family's line passed down through his immediate descendants. *lDe-chung* died without issue. At this point the *Ngang* tradition picks up and adapts part of a scheme which is

fully explained in Section IV of the *rGyal-rigs* where it is used to account for the origins of a motley group of ruling families, but not those of the *gDung*. Three brothers (La-ba rDo-rje, Khye'u rDo-rje and sPre'u rDo-rje) who descend from lDe-mal and lDe-chung come south to Bum-thang. Each becomes the first of a line of local rulers. Khye'u rDo-rje settles in the two villages of Dur and Ngang and subdues by magic a large snake, the emanation of a *klu-bdud*, which had been devouring the local inhabitants on the path between the two villages. The people of Ngang are delighted, appoint him their ruler and so he becomes the first *gDung* of Ngang. His elder brother settles in mTshams-pa (some miles north of Ngang) and we are told that the mother of Padma Gling-pa was descended from him. The youngest brother becomes the ruler (*dpon*) of sTang. The two key figures in whose biographies this tradition was recorded were descended from *gDung* lHa-dar of Ngang, himself the supposed descendant of the legendary Khye'u rDo-rje.

According to Section IV of the *rGyal-rigs* (ff. 40a-43b) the three legendary brothers arrive from sPa-gro, not lHo-brag, and are among the so-called Six Vajra Brothers of lHa-lung dPal-gyi rDo-rje, the famous assassin of King Glang Dar-ma 'the Apostate'. The three brothers who do come by way of lHo-brag are Kha-rtsing Las-kyi rDo-rje, Pho-mtshar Grags-pa rDo-rje and sMras-mkhas sPyang-rig rDo-rje, each of whom become rulers in the areas south and east of Bum-thang. Four out of the total of six become *dpon*<sup>15</sup> (or *dpon-po*, *dpon-chen*, *dpon-chen zhal-ngo*) in Bum-thang and the area east, among them the *Chos-'khor dPon-po* (discussed above) who occupies here the position taken by the *Ngang gDung* in the biographical tradition.<sup>16</sup> Could all these *dpon* have been established by Tibetan authority as vassal rulers in the manner suggested for the *Chos-'khor dPon-po*? We have no means of knowing. One of the remaining two brothers becomes the untitled head of the pastoral families of mTshams-pa and the other the progenitor of the *Kheng-po* families of gZhong-sgar, a name one would like to link to that of the Kheng people who extend into this area.

The whole schema of these paired triads with their matching names and epithets must derive from a much earlier tradition which is now lost. Indeed it must have disappeared already by the early 17th century, leaving behind simply a convenient formula that could fit ancient ruling families into an acceptable, unified pattern. What is not clear is the extent to which the three authors, Ngag-dbang, Shākya Rin-chen and bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, were using or adapting the formula on their own initiative. Or were they recording oral traditions in a truly untampered form as they would have us believe? The whole twilight area of these partly oral, partly literary traditions tends to defy such an analysis.



## CHAPTER 6: PATTERNS AND PROSPECTS

Chapters 1 to 5 above have examined the historical background to the themes which imbue those myths which survive today as accounts of what happened at the dawn of Bhutanese history. As a convenient basket into which the best known of these stories have been placed, Part One reflects the diverse nature of the material itself. The texts which form that material have been studied on their individual grounds and merits, and the conclusions reached are those which have been suggested in the course of analysis. Underlying these conclusions, however, are a few common factors which can now be briefly summarised.

One generalisation that holds true for the early myths of Bhutan is that they are 'early' only in regard to the events of which they speak. In the form in which they have come down to us they date from the 15th to the 18th centuries, ignoring here the legend of Srong-btsan's temples which is properly speaking Tibetan. In a certain sense, these 'early' myths of Bhutan may be said to be the 'late' myths of Tibet but the latter carried direct echoes from the dynastic period that led to Buddhist conversion in the 7th to 9th centuries. By picking up these echoes in the written and unwritten traditions of their own age, Padma Gling-pa and Ngag-dbang were able to adapt them to their own circumstances of place and time. Not only could their reconstituted versions carry validity precisely because of these ancient associations, but they gave powerful expression to the local aspirations of their audiences in Bhutan in a way that ensured their works success. Their authors were not inventing fanciful tales for the entertainment of illiterate peasants but rather fulfilling a basic need in their respective societies for a share of the divine source. Without that source lineages would remain meaningless, the ground unhallowed and all institutions of rule unfounded. (The phrase *'byung-khung med-pa* (lit. 'sourceless') is most often used in Bhutan with the derived meanings of 'stupid' and 'upstart'.) For the historian the chief interest in texts which 'substantiate the source' (*'khungs chod-pa*), whether by revelation in the case of *gter-ma* or by simple investigation in the case of chronicles, lies in the way these reveal the local complex that is adapted to the source. Here we meet with truly historical phenomena and the search

for these has taken us to temples, pillars, rulers, clans and families. It has been no part of the aim to 'debunk' the myths, but in the meantime the line between fact and imagination has become a little clearer. It may be argued that this is a rather circuitous way of revealing the past, but in the absence of other source material of a more concrete nature we are forced to consider this chain of mythological testimonies. In any case, surely the substance of myth is as revealing of a people's inner aspirations and history as hard fact.

If there is a single thread which more than any other links together the myths examined above it is the way they all look upon the region that later became Bhutan as a borderland where foreign rulers could find refuge and re-establish their authority. They arrive as exiles, refugees and outcasts, or are brought there by abduction or sent as emissaries or generals. All these figures carry the divine aura of kingship and the local inhabitants, yielding to them as subjects, come to partake of that aura in a relationship that is passed down from generation to generation among their descendants. At no time does there arise a universal king and the local polities seem everywhere circumscribed by the ethnic boundaries which divide the land into its many units.

The traditions of east Bhutan were recorded by Ngag-dbang during a period when the ancient institutions of rule peculiar to that region had already been undermined by the expansion of the 'Brug-pa theocracy from the west. The traditions very soon ceased to have any relevance and are today almost forgotten. Certainly they never passed into the mainstream of Bhutanese historiography whose inspiration and provenance has since the 17th century been largely limited to the west of the country. On the other hand, the traditions 'rediscovered' by Padma Gling-pa, himself an easterner, survived into quasi-orthodoxy because they were cast in a legendary religious mode acceptable to all forms of rule in all periods. Moreover, they were not concerned with real institutions as in Ngag-dbang's case, but rather with remote figures who had never given rise to ruling lineages that survived into the period of 'Brug-pa dominance. The ultimate success of Padma Gling-pa's portrayal of the 'Sindhu Rāja' and Khyi-kha Ra-thod was above all due to the inseparable associations which these kings had with the key figure of Padmasambhava, the 'second Buddha'.

The traditions concerning Padmasambhava himself form a constant *leitmotif*. Here we move into a world of mystical revelation that stands apart from our present concerns, rooted as they are in the sphere of the mundane. For the local chronicler Bhutanese history really begins with Padmasambhava who is said to have visited countless places throughout the country which later became his shrines (see particularly *LCB* I, f. 6a-b, *LCB* II, ff. 62b-67a and *gTam-tshogs*, f. 118a-b). He quite overshadows the person

of Srong-btsan sGam-po who is credited with the foundation of the two temples in Bhutan at a period earlier still. All the mythic complexes reviewed above can to a greater or lesser extent be linked to historical phenomena, but this is not possible in the case of Padmasambhava's traditions in Bhutan, whatever significance the manuscript *Pelliot tibétain* 44 may have for his associations with Nepal and Tibet. For this reason it has been thought best to leave him mostly in the heaven from whence he came. Nevertheless, a study of the last of his eight forms, rDo-rje Gro-lod (Plate 9), will eventually tell us much about the growth of the Bhutanese tradition for it was under this aspect that he is said to have travelled to thirteen 'tiger's nests' where he revealed the teachings on Vajrakīla (*gTer-rnam*, f.13b). Foremost among these is the shrine of sTag-tshang (Plate 8) in the sPa-gro valley. Another of them is Senge rDzong north of Kur-stod. Some traditions hold that the pregnant tigress which acts as the mount for this form of the Guru is none other than the transformed daughter of the 'Sindhu Rāja'. The child she is to conceive is the wisdom latent in all beings but, given the ancient association of the country with tigers, she symbolises in particular the inhabitants of Bhutan whose barbarism is transmuted by the wrathful activity of the Guru into spiritual awakening. The country as a whole is transformed by him into the spiritual Arcadia of a 'hidden land' (*LCB* I, f. 6b, *LCB* II, f. 59a et. seq.). The role attributed to Padmasambhava in Bhutan as the first bringer of religion, who came both in person and by magic to tame the country, has of course many parallels throughout the Himalayas and in many parts of Tibet too. His direct, though legendary, associations with each locality give the inhabitants a new and special status which is contrasted with the one they had in the age of darkness before his arrival. This did much to offset the Buddhist notion that border people stood beyond the pale of the doctrine. Indian tradition sometimes identified the border barbarians with the 'mleccha-rājas who dwell in the Himālayas' (*Blue Annals*, p. 45). Tibetan traditions took this up without hesitation, as we see in the words of the *Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung*:

kLa klo [*mleccha*] is a designation of the inhabitants of any of the thirty-two border regions beginning with the kLo.kha.khra. It is the habit of the kLa.klo to call killing a virtue and so they count the slaughter of living beings as something good. Although the kLa.klos of the border regions look like human beings, their minds do not work properly and so they cannot be turned toward the Noble Doctrine (Guenther 1959:23).

The Bhutanese sometimes see themselves as descendants of the Kha-khra ('Striped-Mouths') referred to here, a vague term applied by the Tibetans to the pre-literate tribals of Arunachal (cf. note 34 to Chapter I above and the *rGyal-rigs* note 20). As late as 1714 Lajang Khan could address the

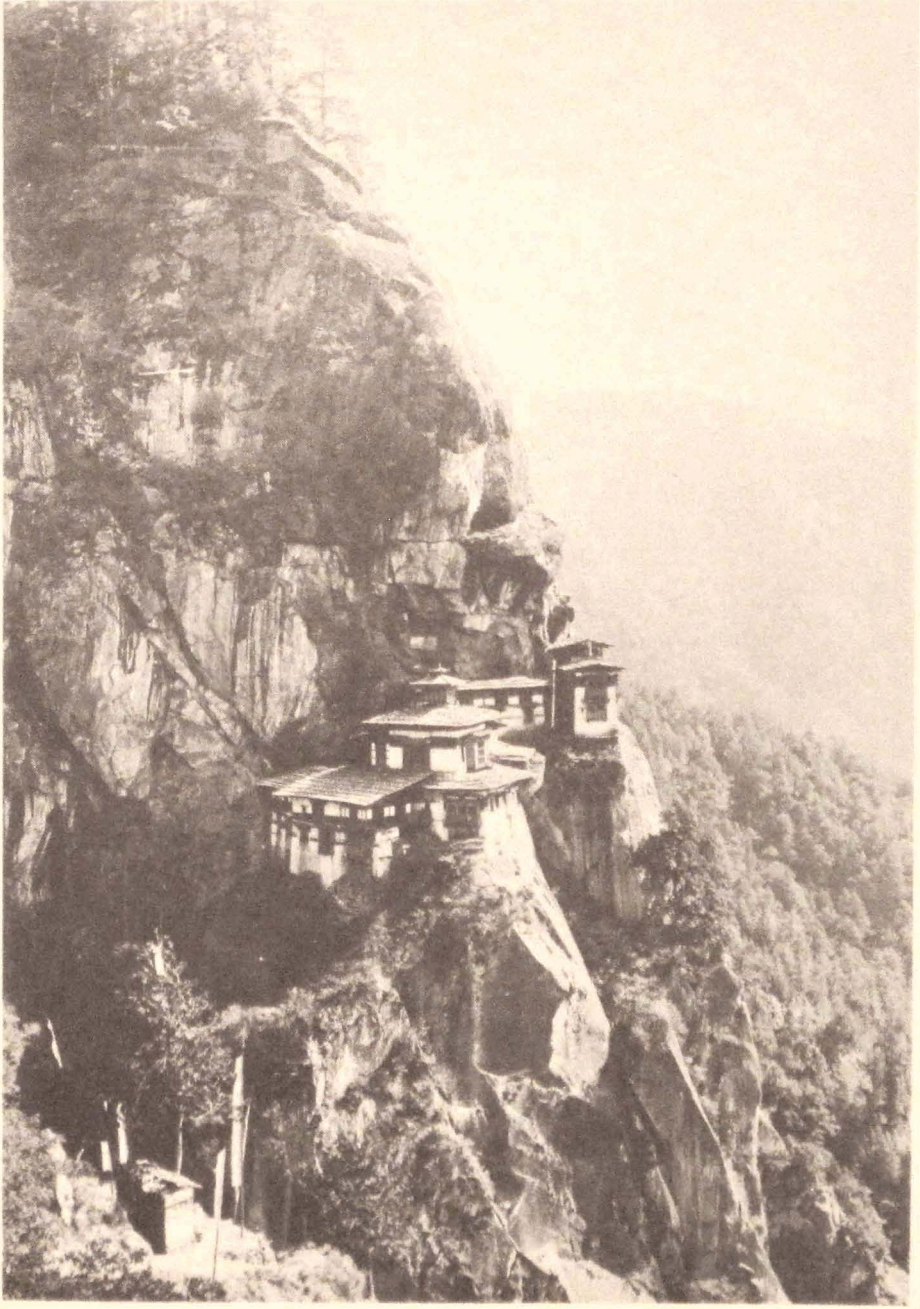


Plate 8. The temples of sTag-tshang in the sPa-gro valley. (Photo by John Claude White)





Plate 9. Wall-painting of the deity rDo-rje Gro-lod, last of the emanations of Padmasambhava, at his principal shrine in the main temple of sTag-tshang.

8th 'Brug sDe-srid of Bhutan in writing as 'barbarian king.'

Returning now to the vestiges of true history, what scope is there for finding further material, written or otherwise, which might help us achieve a sharper picture of the country before the arrival of the Buddhist saints and rulers who occupy the next chapter ? Unless some particularly interesting *trouvailles*, real *gter-ma* in fact, should come to light, it seems unlikely that we shall ever learn much more about the west of the country from the literary records. In the east, however, there must surely be considerable scope for enhancing the picture given by Ngag-dbang in his works, particularly if some of his own sources are found. These may well be preserved in scattered private collections on both sides of the eastern border. Not only will these tend to illuminate each other, but their true import will gradually be revealed as corroborating material is found in the independent sources of Tibet; so far the best interpretive insights seem to have been those afforded by the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod*, dPa'-bo gTsong-lag and the 'Gyangtse Chronicle', but many more 'tie-ins' can surely be culled from the bottomless pit of Tibetan literature. Of equal potential value would be the pursuit of archaeological, ethnographic and linguistic research throughout the country. These would help to determine the early pattern of diffusion and settlement in a manner that would certainly demand a re-appraisal of the existing records. The tools of social anthropology as applied to the content of oral traditions and the nature of social change could also perhaps be used with some profit in this area. It may be hoped that these disciplines will one day produce solid grist to the historian's mill which has here revolved almost exclusively around the fragile husk of the texts available to date.



Plate 10. *left* Klong-chen-pa (1308–1363), with the figure of 'Jigs-med Gling-pa (1730–1798) below. A wall-painting at the monastery of Chos-rje-brag in Bum-thang.

*right* The great 'text-discoverer' Padma Gling-pa (1450–1521). A gilt-bronze statue at his residence of Kun-bzang-brag in the sTang valley of Bum-thang.

## **PART TWO**

### **Buddhist Schools and Monastic principalities (Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries)**



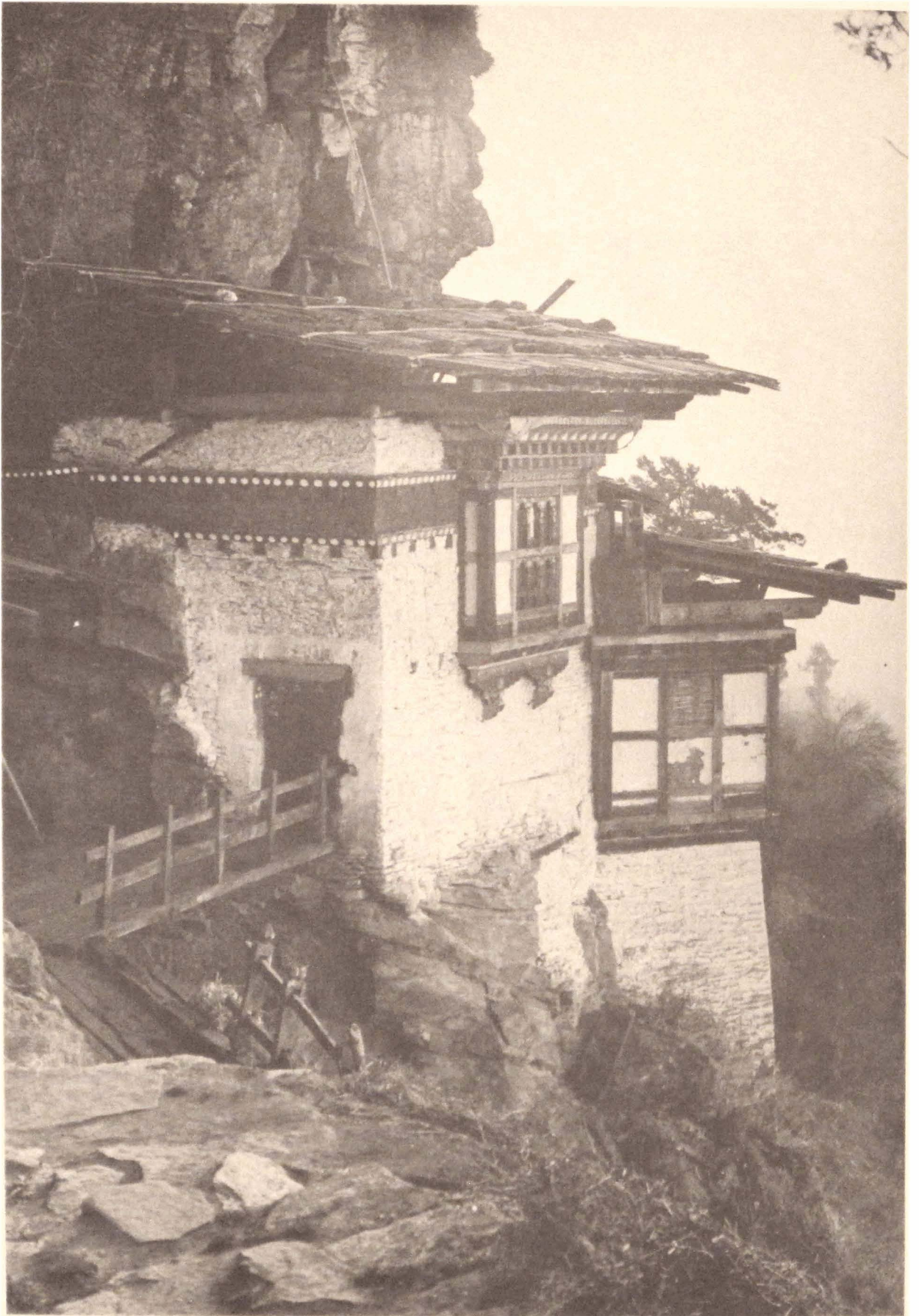


Plate 11. The principal temple of Kun-bzang-brag, seat of Padma Gling-pa.

## BUDDHIST SCHOOLS AND MONASTIC PRINCIPALITIES

Just as the early monarchy in Tibet came to be followed by diversified religious polities which were finally dominated by a single school so also in Bhutan secular principalities appear to have given way to small units of ecclesiastical rule which were in the end replaced by a single, unified theocracy associated with one particular school. The comparison is, however, a crude one in that it does not take into account the direct transition from secular principalities to full theocracy in eastern Bhutan. As an historical model, therefore, this picture of development really only holds for the west of the country and even there it rests on a hypothesis; we still cannot reveal the pattern of lay rule which must have existed there prior to the arrival of Buddhist princes. It was, however, the area that later formed the territorial basis for unification, and so the model may perhaps stand - together with its imperfections.

To separate the mundane from the spiritual concerns of those iconesque figures who fill the pages of early Bhutanese history is an invidious task. Not only do these levels continually overlap but in the last resort both are presented as reflections of a higher order just as, in philosophical terms, the relative truth of *kun-rdzob* and the ultimate truth of *don-dam* are held to disappear into something altogether removed from present dualities. Thus to subject the literature to a search for the secular is to do it enormous injustice and any such survey is bound to give a very distorted account of the culture from which it sprang. Nevertheless, a Buddhist teacher in the capacity of ruler always demanded, and sometimes even received, the same unquestioning obedience from his subjects as he would have from his immediate personal disciples. The perpetuation of his rule, using that term in the widest sense possible, depended on a family or incarnation lineage (as distinct from an ordination or disciple lineage) which passed down his authority. The interaction of these lineages (whether from father to son, uncle to nephew, or from incarnation to incarnation) with their subjects, spiritual and temporal, is what constituted 'history' as we know it. All these human lineages were identified with particular schools of Buddhism which had arisen more from efforts to promulgate individual traditions rather than from overt doctrinal

differences. Certainly each had its own set of ritual cycles, meditative techniques and philosophical interpretations, but they rarely stood in conflict with those of any other order. The late 'reformed' school of the dGe-lugs-pa did contradict some of the doctrinal foundations of the older schools but it never held full sway in Bhutan.

All the schools that came to be established in Bhutan were implanted there from Tibet where they had their origins. The most that can be attempted here is a minimal account of their Tibetan antecedents, the story of their introduction and development in Bhutan, and their subsequent fate at the hands of the 'Brug-pa theocracy. Little attempt will be made to distinguish between their individual teachings as that would take us into matters too abstruse and rarefied. The present concern is simply to establish something of the human record of these schools, bearing in mind however the reservations expressed above on the difficulty of separating the mundane from the spiritual. Each school will be treated in what appears to be the chronological order of its arrival in the country. Some attempt will be made to determine the nature and reliability of their historical traditions, probing behind the formulaic character of the texts to try and determine the substance (or void) upon which they rest.

### Bon-po

Despite continuing Tibetan assertions to the contrary, the 'assimilated' Bon tradition which developed during the so-called 'later flowering of the Doctrine' from the late 10th century onwards so concerned itself with adaptations of Buddhist doctrine and ritual that it lost its 'pagan' character and became one among many schools of Buddhism. It did, however, maintain a complex substratum of pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices in a more overt manner than the followers of the 'true' *dharma*. The process of adaptation was achieved largely through the medium of 'rediscovered' texts and this movement seems to have begun at about the same time as the rNying-ma-pa rediscoveries. Bhutan is alleged to have been one of the major centres of rediscovery in the 11th and 12th centuries both for the Bon-po and the rNying-ma-pa. We find the same figures claimed by both traditions making their rediscoveries in the sPa-gro and Bum-thang districts. The most important of them is probably Khu-tsha Zla-'od who is credited with the disclosure of a large group of Bon-po texts known collectively as the *sPa-gro-ma*.<sup>1</sup> These in turn constituted one of the major components of the 'Southern Textual Treasures', all of which are said to have had their provenance in Bhutan and the Tibetan border region adjoining it.<sup>2</sup> Khu-tsha Zla-'od's recoveries were made at a place called Phug-gcal in sPa-gro, where the texts in question had been hidden by Mu-thug bTsan-po and Khyung-po Gyer-zla-

med (see p. 74 above). They included Bon, Buddhist, astrological and medical texts, and among them is mentioned a group dedicated to the Vajrakāla cycle with which sPa-gro always seems to be associated. Phug-gcal, the site of the discovery, must be identical with gCal (or gCal-kha, 'Chekha' in Bhutanese pronunciation), a place to the north of the main sPa-gro valley, now occupied by a military check-post. The Buddhist tradition claims Khu-tsha Zla-'od as one of its *gter-ston* under the name Ku-sa sMan-pa ('Ku-sa Doctor'), but denies his identity with the famous physician g.Yu-thog as maintained by the Bon-po.<sup>3</sup> mGar-ston Khro-rgyal, son of his disciple mGar-nag 'Bum-chung, is also held to have found texts in sPa-gro at the *Yang-'dul* temple of sKyer-chu. They too included rites dedicated to Vajrakāla.<sup>4</sup> Other *gter-ston* known to Buddhist tradition who are asserted to have found both Buddhist and Bon-po texts in Bhutan during this early period are Bon-po Brag-tshal,<sup>5</sup> Khyung-po dPal-dge<sup>6</sup> and Ra-shag Chos-'bar.<sup>7</sup> Their dates are never given but they are said to have lived in the first sixty-year cycle: 1027-1086.<sup>8</sup> The last of the Buddhist *gter-ston* in Bhutan to be appropriated by the Bon tradition seems to have been rDo-rje Gling-pa (1346-1405),<sup>9</sup> whom we shall meet again in the rNying-ma-pa context.

The interdependence of the Bon-po and rNying-ma-pa in the matter of their *gter-ma* is attested in the late histories but its true nature will only be revealed after a careful survey of the contents and colophons of the texts in question. Meanwhile it can be noted that the Bon tradition in its developed form never gained a proper hold on Bhutan and the tradition of Bon-po texts discovered there is properly speaking Tibetan. A single exception is provided by the undocumented claim that some Bon-po monasteries were founded in the Shar district at the start of the 'later flowering of the Doctrine'.<sup>10</sup> One *Zhabs-drung* mTshan-ldan bDe-ba from the monastery of Ra-la g.Yung-drung-gling ('a seat of the upholders of the order of gShen-rabs, Teacher of the Everlasting Bon') is said to have founded the monasteries of sKu-'bum, Se-ba-sgang and others. Nothing of them remains, but '... the continuity of the oblations (*bskang-gso*) according to the Bon tradition and the invocations (*gsol-kha*) of Srid-rgyal-mo<sup>11</sup> survives up to the present.' Here the author is speaking from direct experience and we may conclude that although the formal institutions of Bon never survived, some of their ritual practices still hold sway on the village level. These no doubt form part of the liturgical repertoire of certain local priests called *Pha-jo* who are today especially found in the districts of Shar and Krong-sar and are said to be adepts in divination (*mo*) and 'village rites' (*grong-chog*). In his youth Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521) studied Bon rituals at his home in Bum-thang.<sup>12</sup> Those performed today by the *Pha-jo* could well be the same ones, though it is perhaps unlikely that any priest would now refer to himself or his practices as Bon-po.<sup>13</sup>

### rNying-ma-pa

Loosely constituted and lacking a universally accepted hierarchy, the 'Old Order' of the rNying-ma-pa is one of the most complex phenomena in the Tibetan world. What separates this school from the other Buddhist orders is the claim that it maintains intact the teachings and traditions introduced into Tibet during the royal period. These are said to have survived the collapse of Buddhism in the 9th century through to the official restoration in the 10th century and beyond. In contrast to the rNying-ma, all other schools are known collectively as 'the New' (gSar-ma) and they trace their origins without hesitation to the period of restoration. The unbroken continuity of the rNying-ma-pa tradition is held to have been achieved in two ways: by the direct transmission of doctrinal texts (known as *bka'-ma*) from the time of their founder, Padmasambhava, and by the rediscovery of texts hidden by Padmasambhava (known as *gter-ma*). A third method, that of direct revelation (*dag-snang*), can perhaps be regarded as another form of *gter-ma* in that it is allied to the notion of 'mind-treasure' (*dgongs-gter*). Whatever critical view is adopted towards this arrangement (though none seems to be warranted yet by detailed research), it reflects a peculiarly Tibetan solution to the problem of authenticity. Moreover, it is one which encourages constant attempts towards resynthesis in a way that permits new formulations to develop. The history of the rNying-ma-pa is scattered with the names of famous teachers who succeeded in bringing order to the mass of 'original' texts. At the same time there were others who appear to have been independent and original scholar-sages within the traditional framework. The distinctness of the doctrinal expressions that lie behind the rDzogs-chen ('Great Perfection') system of meditation was one of their particular achievements.<sup>14</sup> Despite their cultivation of disciplines as rigorous as those of the 'New' schools, the rNying-ma-pa were so closely associated with the everyday life of the people in their capacity of married tantric priests that when rivalries arose it was easy to charge them with being bogus hedgepriests (no doubt some of them were). The slur tended to cast its shadow on their monastic life which, however, does not seem to have been any the more lax, generally speaking, than that of the other 'non-reformed' schools. All this, combined with theological attacks on the nature of their scriptural texts and on their doctrinal positions, forced the rNying-ma-pa into defensive arguments and justifications. The strength of their arguments, together with the pervasive, practical role of the rNying-ma-pa in the village and the fact that they never ceased producing saintly figures, are some of the reasons for their continuing survival. Moreover, the rNying-ma-pa never wielded concerted temporal power and this was ultimately a source of strength rather than weakness. They remained diffuse, popular and wholly credible, even if on occasion not entirely respectable.

A full account of the rNying-ma-pa in Bhutan, as that of any other school settled in the country, would have to take into account all the subtle permutations of their history and doctrine in Tibet. That lies well beyond the scope of this study. All that can be done here is to point to names, dates, places and lineages as these dispose into a general pattern.

IHO-MON KA-THOG-PA. The first rNying-ma-pa to arrive in a formal sense came from the monastery of Ka-thog in eastern Tibet, situated on the east bank of the Yangtse in the sPa-yul district.<sup>15</sup> It was founded in 1159 by Shes-rab Seng-ge (1122-1192), the first of a line of thirteen abbots (known as *rGyal-tshab*).<sup>16</sup> According to sources available to the author of *LCB II*,<sup>17</sup> the fifth incumbent in this line, dBu-'od Ye-shes 'Bum-pa (1245-1311), came to sPa-gro sTag-tsang on his way to Sikkim and founded there the monastery of O-rgyan rTse-mo. The building today, which stands on a cliff immediately above the main shrine of sTag-tshang (Plate 8), is a modern construction on the site of the old Ka-thog-pa monastery. Two of the disciples of Ye-shes 'Bum-pa, namely bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan and his son, rNam-grol bZang-po settled at sTag-tshang and built a further two temples at a site called sPang-dkar-po. I have myself seen an old *dbu-med* manuscript containing a work by bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan, dated Iron Tiger (?1290) written at O-rgyan rTse-mo.<sup>18</sup> There are reputed to be various versions of his biography by a certain rNam-grol bZang-po, and an autobiography. The proliferation of the sub-school of the Ka-thog-pa known as the lHo-mon Ka-thog-pa or Mon-lugs Ka-thog-pa seems to be attributed largely to the work of bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan and his son. It divided into two main branches, the one founded in sPa-gro and the other founded in the Shar district by *Ka-thog sPrul-sku* bsTan-'dzin Grags-pa whose dates I cannot give. The main monastery was sPyi-rdzong at Lud-mtsho-ri with its principal branch monasteries of Ba-ling and Theg-chen-sgang in the region of mKho-thang. However, the sPa-gro branch seems to have been more important and a number of *Chos-rje* families belonging to this branch of the Ka-thog-pa school gained prominence there. They were attached to the monasteries (or temples) of Dol-po Sha-la-brag, mKha''gro sPyi-'dus, bTsan-stong Chos-sdings and Byi-dgon Gong-ma. Most of the information provided in *LCB II* concerns the family of Dol-po Sha-la-brag which seems to have acquired considerable holdings in and around the side valley of Dol-po ('Dop' in the vernacular). The names of six of their successive *chos-rje* are given, the line passing either from father to son or from uncle to nephew. The third, gSang-sngags Kun-legs, was a disciple of the 10th Karma-pa, Chos-dbyings rDo-rje. There is nothing to suggest that they maintained connections with the mother house in eastern Tibet and by the time the 'Brug-pa were firmly established in the country they seem to



have been absorbed into the new state, but not without difficulty. Two Ka-thog-pa monasteries (or perhaps lineages) which were opposed to *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal are mentioned in a letter he wrote in 1640 to the *gTsang sDe-srid* with whom he was attempting to come to terms after a long period of enmity (*PBP*, f. 109a-b). The Ka-thog-pa were probably included in the so-called 'five groups of lamas' (*bla-ma khag lnga*) who opposed his creation of the unified state. No trace remains of their families today, but their temples are all said to be standing. The guardianship of the great shrine of sTag-tshang is said to have passed into the hands of the *Zhabs-drung*, when he went there in company with the famous rNying-ma-pa teacher, Rig-'dzin sNying-po, in 1645 (*LCB* I, f. 42b, *PBP*, f. 133b & f. 301b of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas' *rnam-thar*). Nothing is remembered locally about the Ka-thog-pa school except that it once had charge of this important shrine. Much more will come to light when the sources used so briefly by dGe-'dun Rin-chen in *LCB* II are made available.

**RDZOGS-CHEN-PA.** The 'School of Great Perfection' never appears to have been an organised sub-sect associated with any particular monastery or group of affiliated monasteries. It was more in the nature of a religious movement within the rNying-ma-pa, one which passed down the 'heart-drop precepts' (*snying-thig*) in a line that is said to stretch back to the Indian teacher Śrisimha. Other formulations of these meditative precepts are claimed to have been revealed in vision or as *gter-ma*. An important set of the latter is said to have been hidden by the Indian Vimalamitra and discovered in the 11th or 12th century by one lDang-ma lHun-rgyal. They are known as the *Bi-ma sNying-thig* and formed one of four groups of such precepts codified later by Klong-chen-pa (see below) in his *sNying-thig ya-bzhi*. Long before this codification took place, the chief disciple of lDang-ma lHun-rgyal known as Kha-rag sGom-chung is supposed to have come to Bum-thang where he founded the little temple of Lug-gi Rwa-ba, perhaps at the instigation of his disciple lHo-pa ('the Southerner') who is mentioned in the *Blue Annals* (p. 557). Nothing is known about the history of the temple, and even its ascription to Kha-rag sGom-chung depends on oral traditions. Some affirm that it later became the head of a group of monasteries in Bum-thang. A *stūpa* alleged to contain the relics of the founder is preserved in the temple whose walls are covered with paintings of different periods and schools, including those of the Karma bKa'-brgyud-pa and the rNying-ma-pa.

The importance of Klong-chen-pa (1308-1363)(Plate 10a) is best summarised in the words of Gene Smith (1969a:4-5): 'The figure of Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa was for the Rdzogs-chen school what St. Thomas Aquinas was for Christian scholastic philosophy. In a number of magnificently original

treatises like the *Mdzod bdun* Klong-chen ordered the philosophical and psychological truths and corollaries of Rdzogs-chen into a cohesive system. For stylistic lucidity and structural organisation Klong-chen has seldom been equalled in Tibetan literature. Nyingmapa philosophy is Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa.' His personal name was Dri-med 'Od-zer but he is more commonly referred to by his epithet which he received from the great Ta'i Si-tu Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan, the effective ruler of Tibet during this period of the early Phag-mo Gru-pa supremacy.

It was a quarrel with Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan lasting ten years which caused Klong-chen-pa to take refuge in Bhutan and some of the surrounding areas. In Bhutan he founded eight monasteries<sup>19</sup> and wrote some of his finest treatises, including the short but important guide to Bum-thang referred to in Part One above. Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521) claimed to be his incarnation and provided a fascinating sketch of his life at the start of his own autobiography.<sup>20</sup> It was surely based on local traditions concerning the master as they survived in Bum-thang a century or so after his death. Padma Gling-pa explained the whole question of how Klong-chen-pa, a monk, came to have a son by a nun at the monastery of Thar-pa-gling. The son, Zla-ba Grags-pa, was later incarnated in a long line of rDzogs-chen teachers known as the *Thugs-sras* ('Mind-Sons'), the first being Grags-pa 'Od-zer (b. 1416).<sup>21</sup> Several of them were born in Bum-thang where they held the seat of bSam-gtan-gling. The formal continuity in Bhutan of Klong-chen-pa's systemisation of the rDzogs-chen tradition must have been partly ensured by the existence of this and other related lineages. In the west of the country the monasteries he founded do not appear to have lasted long in their original form. Two of his sPa-gro monasteries were taken over by the Hūm-ral family of the 'Brug-pa school.<sup>22</sup> dPal-'byor rGyal-mtshan, one of Klong-chen-pa's chief disciples, had founded a number of monasteries and temples<sup>23</sup> dedicated to his master's teachings to the east of sPa-gro in the Shar district, and these seem to have fared better than the western group. dPal-'byor rGyal-mtshan was himself reincarnated in the line of the *mDa'-stong sPrul-sku*, one of the very few, and certainly the most ancient, of the incarnation lineages in the west of the country to survive today. However, during the time of the *mDa'-stong sPrul-sku* O-rgyan Phun-tshogs their rDzogs-chen traditions are said to have merged with the *gter-ma* traditions of Padma Gling-pa.<sup>24</sup>

The rDzogs-chen school is generally divided into two historical streams: the sNying-thig Gong-ma ('Upper Heart-Drop Teachings') of Klong-chen-pa and the sNying-thig 'Og-ma ('Lower Heart-Drop Teachings') of 'Jigs-med Gling-pa (1730-1798). (Plate 10). The latter stream is said to have achieved a revitalisation of the school, and certainly in the case of Bhutan it gave wonderful impetus to the founding of new monasteries by 'Jigs-med Gling-



pa's main Bhutanese disciple, Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan (alias 'Jigs-med Kun-grol). He had started his career as a lay servitor in the 'Brug-pa fortresses of western Bhutan, rising to the post of 'keeper of the meat-store' (*shagnyer*) in Krong-sar rDzong in central Bhutan. Revulsion for his work caused him to flee to the great rNying-ma-pa monastery of sMin-grol-gling in Tibet where his studies brought him into contact with 'Jigs-med Gling-pa at bSam-yas. After a period of close association with the master, Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan returned to eastern Bhutan where he introduced monastic communities at mTho-ba-brag in Bum-thang and at Yong-legs dGon-pa in gDung-bsam. This second wave of the rDzogs-chen was taken to the western region of the country by his disciple, Sangs-rgyas rGyal-mtshan, founder of the monastery of bDe-chen Chos-gling in the Shar district. Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan figures strongly in the biographies of the 1st and 2nd *Pad-tshal-gling sPrul-sku* of Bum-thang: rNam-rgyal lHun-grub<sup>26</sup> and 'Jigs-med bsTan-pa'i rGyal-mtshan (1788-1850).<sup>27</sup> The rDzogs-chen in the 18th and 19th centuries never became affiliated to powerful lineages in Bhutan, and the direct lines of continuity which link its present practice with that period of the second wave appear to have been marked more by the ties of master and disciple than by lineal inheritance within families dedicated to the school. The rDzogs-chen-pa, like the whole rNying-ma-pa school, was never banned in Bhutan.

**GTER-STON.** More than a score of 'text-discoverers' active in Bhutan between the 11th and 16th centuries are treated by Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas in his biographical sketches contained in the *gTer-mam*. Significantly, he traces the whole movement from its beginnings in western Tibet in the 11th century to its greatest diffusion in central Tibet and Bhutan (referred to as lHo-mon) up to about the 17th century, and thence to eastern Tibet where it was revived in the 19th century.<sup>28</sup> Although other schools include some of these *gter-ston* among their leading patriarchs, the movement as a whole is associated with the rNying-ma-pa.<sup>29</sup>

The *gter-ston* associated with Bhutan fall into two categories: those who came down from Tibet, discovered texts and departed, whose traditions and lineages did not take root in Bhutanese soil and who are quite minor figures from the Bhutanese standpoint; and those major figures, either Tibetan or Bhutanese, whose lineages and traditions remained.

The first group of minor *gter-ston* to arrive were the four figures who are alleged to have found Bon-po works in Bhutan in the 11th century, as noted above. Most of those following them are also considered relatively minor figures by Kong-sprul in that they are not the subject of those prophetic statements contained in the *Padma Thang-yig* which are deemed to foretell the great discoverers. Four of them are placed in the 1st and 2nd *rab-byung*:

1027-1146. Se-ston Ring-mo is said to have got the list of books destined to be found in gCal-kha at the top of the sPa-gro valley. This had been entrusted to two monks by its original discoverer, *lHa-btsun* sNgon-mo. The monks had been killed by the people of the adjoining valley of Ha and the list eventually came into Se-ston Ring-mo's hands. Kong-sprul notes that these discoveries did not survive into his own day.<sup>30</sup> rGya Phur-bu (Phur-bu-mgon of the rGya clan)<sup>31</sup> is associated with discoveries at the temples of sKyer-chu in sPa-gro and dGe-gnas in Bum-thang, referred to jointly as the *Bum-lcags lhan-dril* (as noted on p. 54 above). rGya-ston brTson-'grus Senge-dar is credited with the discovery of a ritual text devoted to the protective deity rDo-rje Brag-btsan. It was later widely used by the 'Brug-pa school.<sup>32</sup> Gru-gu Yang-dbang is said to have found in sPa-gro a large cycle of similar ritual texts dedicated to the deity Hayagrīva.<sup>33</sup> A further set of five *gter-ston* are placed, again vaguely, in the 3rd and 4th cycles: 1147-1266. Bal-po A-hūm-'bar, a native of southern gTsang, not Nepal as his name might suggest, is said to have found numerous texts at gCal-kha.<sup>34</sup> The only ones found by A-jo dPal-bo of bSam-yas to have survived into the 19th century are those claimed to have been discovered by him in 'the temple of Bum-thang' (i.e. Byams-pa'i lHa-khang).<sup>35</sup> La-stod dMar-po (Dam-pa dMar-po of La-stod) was one of the many *gter-ston* whom the traditions link with the cave at gCal-kha in sPa-gro.<sup>36</sup> A certain *Bla-ma* Grum and his patron, one mKhar-nag of sPa-gro, are jointly credited with finding a book called the *Bar-snang hom-khung-ma* from within a leather box hidden inside the image of a *garuḍa* at sKyer-chu lHa-khang in sPa-gro.<sup>37</sup> They and Tshe-brtan rGyal-mtshan (alias Chos-kyi Blo-gros),<sup>38</sup> who found texts at Chu-mo-phug in sPa-gro, are believed to have been prophesied in the *Padma thang-yig*. The latter may himself have been a Bhutanese. mGon-po Rin-chen of the Shud-bu family of gTam-shul in lHo-brag found in his youth the 'list' (*kha-byang*) of his destined discoveries in Bum-thang, but had to wait till his fifties before these came to light in the mTsho-sna region.<sup>39</sup> A line descending from his nephew (*dbon-rgyud*) is said to have survived in Gru-shul. He is placed in the 7th *rab-byung*: 1387-1446. Kong-sprul is unable to give even approximate dates for the last of the minor *gter-ston* associated with Bhutan. He is Sar-po Bya'u-mgon, discoverer of the *Srog-gi chan-pa nag-po bum-thang-ma'i skor* which is claimed to have lain hidden in the old temple of dGe-gnas in the Chu-smad valley of Bum-thang.<sup>40</sup>

Among those classed here as major *gter-ston*, the first was a true Bhutanese and came as early as the 1st *rab-byung* (1027-1086): Sar-ban Phyogs-med, born in sPa-gro. He is said to have found a text called the '*Jam-dpal rdzogs-pa chen-po'i chos-skor* from a 'turquoise encrusted rock' at the principal shrine in sTag-tshang.<sup>41</sup> He was followed by the very famous Gu-ru Chos-dbang (1212-1270), native of lHo-brag.<sup>42</sup> He found texts in Bum-thang. The *gdung*

families of Lug-khyu and Nya-la in Kur-stod claim descent from him through his son Padma dBang-chen.<sup>43</sup> Much more important, however, were the families claiming descent from rDo-rje Gling-pa (1346-1405),<sup>44</sup> many of whom survive to this day. rDo-rje Gling-pa was active in both Bum-thang and sPa-gro. All the families are said to trace their pedigrees back to his son Chos-dbyings rGya-mtsho who took control of his father's monastery at Gling-mukha. The custodians of the temples of Bya-dkar and lCags-mkhar in Bum-thang are among the minor nobility descended from him. The family of O-rgyan Chos-gling in the sTang valley of Bum-thang makes similar claims. In the nineteenth century it was a powerful force in local politics. One member, mTsho-skyid rDo-rje became the governor of eastern Bhutan (*Krong-sar dPon-slob*). One of rDo-rje Gling-pa's own disciples, O-rgyan bZang-po who was born in Bum-thang, is regarded as having been a *gter-ston* in his own right.<sup>45</sup> In the west of the country, rDo-rje Gling-pa's traditions were kept alive not only by his descendants but also by his reincarnations. Two of them, mChog-ldan mGon-po and mDo-sngags 'Byung-gnas, established new monasteries in the Shar district.

Another important *gter-ston* was Shes-rab Me-'bar, born in Khams in the 5th *rab-byung* (1267-1326).<sup>46</sup> He is said to have come to Bhutan late in life after making many discoveries in Tibet. In sPa-gro he was forced by the local chief to extract *gter-ma* which were not his due share - with disastrous results. The chief died and so did the *gter-ston* himself before long. His body is said to have been preserved and later kept in the *rdzong* in sPa-gro until it burnt down. The head had been removed before the fire and is said to be at the temple of sPang-pa'i-sa in sPa-gro to this day. Shes-rab Me-'bar is held up as an example of a *gter-ston* who broke the rules of the cult. Before the episode that led to his death, he 'mistook the auspices' while removing *gter-ma* from a lake west of Ha. Most of the *gter-ma* were lost, and the *gter-ston* had to flee from the wrath of the guardian spirit, Khyung-legs-rtsal, appeasing him later with certain oaths. Various temples in sPa-gro are still associated with the name of this *gter-ston*, and he is often confounded with Padma Gling-pa who is alleged to have rediscovered some of the scrolls of texts which he had reburied after their untimely extraction. In Bum-thang a very small, recently restored temple at sTang-sa-sbe ('Tangsbzhi') in U-ra is said to have been founded by him.

Two important Bhutanese *gter-ston* of the 14th-15th centuries were Ngag-dbang Grags-pa<sup>47</sup> and his disciple Tshe-ring rDo-rje.<sup>48</sup> Both were born in sPa-gro, and the former was the son of sPrul-sku dPal-'byor rGyal-mtshan whom we met above as one of the chief disciples of the great Klong-chen-pa (1308-1363). Both are credited with the discovery of certain *rDzogs-chen* texts in sPa-gro and in various places in central Tibet. Ngag-dbang Grags-pa founded

the monasteries of Bod-mo-ri and gNas-phu in sPa-gro and was reincarnated in the line of the *gNas-phu sPrul-sku* which continues to this day. At the time of a certain *sPrul-sku* gSang-sngags rGyal-mtshan, the rDzogs-chen tradition which they maintained became merged with the *gter-ma* traditions of Padma Gling-pa and Nyi-zer-sgang (see next paragraph). Today the line seems to be quite absorbed into the 'Brug-pa school and all that is said to remain of their early rNying-ma affiliations is the continuity of certain rituals dedicated to the guardian deities. Exactly the same fate was experienced by the line descending from Tshe-ring rDo-rje. His incarnation and descendant, sKal-ldan rDo-rje, founded the monastery of Kun-bzang Chos-gling at gDong-dkar in sPa-gro. One of his embodiments, Ngag-dbang Shes-rab, turned to the Padma Gling-pa and 'Brug-pa schools. Nothing remains of their early rDzogs-chen tradition and the only rNying-ma-pa character still maintained derives from surviving *gter-ma* rituals of Padma Gling-pa. Otherwise they are indistinguishable from the 'Brug-pa at large.

One lineage whose origins are difficult to trace is that of the *Nyi-zer sPrul-sku* who have their principal seat at the monastery of dGe-'dun Chos-gling at Nyi-zer-sgang in the Shar district. They are the reincarnations of one 'Ug-pa Gling-pa. The author of *LCB II* speculates that he may have come as early as the 4th or 5th cycle: 1207-1326.<sup>49</sup> He was the descendant of a certain *Zur-gdan-pa* 'Ug-bya-lung-pa and followed a fusion of the *bka'-ma* and *gter-ma* traditions of the rNying-ma-pa. The line is said to have merged with the 'Brug-pa at the time of 'Gro-mgon 'Phrin-las Rab-rgyas, disciple of Yon-tan mTha'-yas, the 13th Head Abbot of Bhutan (*regn.* 1771-1775), who was largely responsible for the forging of official links between the 'Brug-pa and rNying-ma-pa schools at this time. Several branch monasteries of Nyi-zer-sgang were founded by 'Phrin-las Rab-rgyas and his successors. The present *Nyi-zer sPrul-sku* 'Phrin-las lHun-grub is at the moment (1978) reigning as the 67th Head Abbot of Bhutan.

Almost all that is known of the vast majority of the text-discoverers is the long litany of their improbable names and the even more improbable finds credited to them. Behind these cult figures lie certain historical realities for there can be no doubt that they were real people and there is no reason why their dates, even if vague, should not be accepted. However, they all conform to a type in the surviving literature; this is not only a reflection of later attempts to systematize the tradition but seems to stem also from the highly developed role of the *gter-ston* themselves, who appear to have had a professional code governing the established procedure for locating and finding their destined texts. Although one must certainly agree with the statement that 'no imaginative and roguish group of Tibetans sat down to invent all the stuff out of their heads' (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968:172), it is hard to

accept the face value of the traditional assertions concerning the origins of the *gter-ma*. Some of the best clues to a deeper understanding of the cult seem to be found in the personal memoirs of Padma Gling-pa (1450-1521), the 'discoverer' *par excellence* for the Bhutanese.<sup>50</sup> (Plate 10b). His autobiography was written with the specific aim of clearing the doubts entertained by his disciples on the matter of his *gter-ma*. He is always most circumstantial as was seen above (in Part One, Chapter 3) in his account of the discovery of the guidebook to mKhan-pa-lung. Each discovery is, moreover, heralded by a prophecy contained in a text previously revealed, all of them forming in this way an uninterrupted and self-sustaining sequence. Whatever their true origin might have been, there seems little doubt that Padma Gling-pa was himself convinced of his rôle. His conviction must have been so strong in him that what appeared to others as a process of forgery was perhaps for him simply a justified means towards achieving his destined end.<sup>51</sup> His writings, particularly his poetic effusions, show him to be a true visionary, but at the same time a man of considerable practical abilities. Both of these qualities must have been at work in the production of his *gter-ma*. It is with some relief that we also notice an absence of the scholastic preoccupations which so often disfigure much of the biographical writings of other lamas. His language is simple, direct and untutored, and contains passages of what seems to be true spiritual sensitivity.

Padma Gling-pa was unique in many ways. He never acknowledged anyone as his master (except the divine guru Padmasambhava), admitting to his famous contemporary 'Brug-pa Kun-legs that: 'I have no lama and am not myself a disciple.'<sup>52</sup> Several ladies bore him children, and his affairs with them are all duly recorded. He paid frequent visits to Tibet where he was received with great respect by the Phag-mo Gru-pa, Rin-spungs and Karma-pa hierarchs of his day, as was noticed above.<sup>53</sup> Apart from his activities as a *gter-ston* which formed the most constant thread to his life, he is also remembered today in Bhutan as a celebrated craftsman who worked chiefly in metal. This would seem to be a valid oral tradition; he himself recorded how, following the birth of his elder brother, his mother had been unable to suckle him and so gave him into the charge of a blacksmith called *A-mi* Yontan Byang-chub who reared him on a mixture of flour and honey, and taught him the art of metalwork.<sup>54</sup> He was also the originator of a large number of sacred dances known collectively as the *Pad-gling gter'-cham* which were revealed to him in visions and dreams. They are of astonishing beauty and vigour, and are still performed in all Bhutanese festivals. The accounts of their revelation are carefully described in his autobiography and their choreographic scores are all found in his Collected Works. The tradition probably owed much to Guru Chos-dbang of the 13th century (see above), perhaps

the first of the *gter-ston* to compose sacred dances. Padma Gling-pa's most famous exploit occurred at the age of seventeen when he recovered certain *gter-ma* from a pool in the sTang river.<sup>53</sup> He claimed to have done this while holding a burning lamp and this was later thought by many to be a fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the *Padma thang-yig*:

One called O-rgyan Padma Gling-pa will come forth;  
 And the treasure-hoard hidden at the Burning Lake will be removed.  
 Having revealed the sign that it is not to be left, but extracted.<sup>56</sup>

Although Padma Gling-pa himself did not claim in his account of the incident to have fulfilled the prophecy, there seems every reason to believe that he assumed both his name and rôle, perhaps retrospectively, from this passage of the *Padma thang-yig*. (The name his parents had given him was dPal-'byor.) Although it is clear that several of his rivals refused to accept his authenticity (or that of the texts forming his esoteric baggage), the tide was definitely in his favour and he soon won enormous prestige which brought him rich offerings, both out of devotion and in exchange for his teachings. Yet his wealth never accumulated and was largely spent on the construction or refurbishment of temples throughout eastern Bhutan, all of which seem to be still standing. It would be facile to point to the attraction of these offerings as an important motive. Padma Gling-pa spent most of his winters on begging trips in the Bum-thang and Mang-sde-lung districts, collecting together sufficient stores of food to see him through the year in exactly the same manner as religious persons do in that area to this day.

His autobiography is particularly important for all the precise and dateable information provided on the religious society of his day as he experienced it on his many travels within and far beyond the present borders of Bhutan. He travelled at the invitation of lay and religious potentates who were anxious to meet a genuine *gter-ston*, and more specifically on the enigmatic business of his 'discoveries'. The long list of his disciples<sup>57</sup> shows that they came from the entire area where Tibetan Buddhism held sway, except Mongolia. This, combined with the efforts of his successors aimed at promulgating his teachings, explain how some of his ritual compilations (particularly the *Bla-ma nor-bu rgya-mtsho*<sup>58</sup>) became so enduring and widespread. His importance for the *gter-ma* movement as a whole is shown by his classification as fourth of the five 'text-discoverer kings' (*gter-ston rgyal-po*).<sup>59</sup> Among his personal disciples are numbered six other *gter-ston*,<sup>60</sup> but they do not seem to include the one who is best remembered by later tradition: Las-'phro Gling-pa (alias Nam-mkha' rDo-rje), born of the sNyi-ba family of gNyal-stod in Tibet, the 'discoverer' of many *gter-ma* at sTag-tshang and sKyer-chu in the sPa-gro

valley.<sup>61</sup> However, the only *gter-ston* in Bhutan who came after Padma Gling-pa still widely remembered today was a certain 'Brug-sgra rDo-rje. His biography has not yet come to light but he appears to have been active in the first half of the 18th century. Fragments of what appear to be his political prophecies are still current in Bhutan. His guide to the shrine of Chu-mo-phug ('Chumphu') in the sPa-gro valley, dated *chu-stag* (1722 ?), is preserved in the Musée Guimet, Collection David Neel No. 320.

A complex network of lineages descend from Padma Gling-pa, all of which seem to have been established soon after his death in 1521.<sup>62</sup> They are important because one line produced the 6th Dalai Lama, Tshang-dbyangs rGya-mtsho (1683-?1706), and another line the present Royal Family of Bhutan. Some preliminary attempt has to be made to sort out the basic pattern.

All the traditions affirm that Padma Gling-pa was born in the gNyos clan which had been established in Bum-thang by two of the sons (or perhaps descendants) of *rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa* (1164-1224), the founder of the lHa-pa bKa'-brgyud school.<sup>63</sup> According to the *Vaidūrya Ser-po* (p. 399), one of them was called sMyos mGar (alias mGar lCags-kyi rDo-rje).<sup>64</sup> Together they founded the temple of gSum-'phrang (or So-'brang) in the U-ra valley of Bum-thang. Padma Gling-pa's father, Don-grub bZang-po, was the descendant of one of them in a collateral line to that of the *gSum-'phrang Chos-rje*. This latter line survives to this day and the present *Chos-rje*, Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin, recited to me a list of seventeen incumbents stretching in an unbroken succession from Padma Gling-pa's father down to himself. In fact Padma Gling-pa's father was not a *gSum-'phrang Chos-rje* but, as indicated above, a collateral descendant from their ancestor. Unfortunately Padma Gling-pa himself tells us nothing about his family besides the names of his parents, that his clan was the gNyos and that he belonged to a line of rNying-ma-pa priests (*rnying-ma'i sngags-brgyud*).<sup>65</sup> By his day it is unlikely that the clan name would have meant very much. For him, just as for the 6th Dalai Lama, it served to point to distant and respectable origins, not to a living social institution. Besides, the clan system did not exist in Bum-thang as it did in the area further east. There, 162 years after Padma Gling-pa's death (six generations later according to the *Vaidūrya Ser-po*, p. 400), the 6th Dalai Lama was born at Ber-mkhar in Kameng in a line descending from Padma Gling-pa that had merged with the local clan of the Jo-bo.<sup>66</sup> Yet the Dalai Lama's clan is never held to have been the Jo-bo, but instead the non-existent gNyos. On one of his trips to that area, Padma Gling-pa had helped to arrange the marriage of O-rgyan bZang-po, perhaps his nephew,<sup>67</sup> to the daughter of one Jo-bo Don-grub, the hereditary incumbent of the temple of O-rgyan-gling. This lady, rDor-rdzom, had been having an affair with O-rgyan bZang-po but the 'gossip' (*mi-kha*) feared by her father and Padma Gling-pa

was not caused by the illicit nature of the affair so much as by the prejudice against the union of people coming from 'different racial stock' (*mi-rigs mi-gcig-pa*). This prejudice was disregarded on the grounds that Padma Gling-pa and Jo-bo Don-grub had a karmic bond from their previous lives. The marriage took place and the descendants of the couple could thereafter claim a pedigree going back to Padma Gling-pa and his ancestors. This turned out to be a mixed blessing for the 6th Dalai Lama whose amorous exploits could be interpreted as unorthodox rites of sexual magic inherited from his ancestor in the old 'unreformed Red Hat Sect'.

The noble families descending from Padma Gling-pa in eastern Bhutan may turn out to have their own records but these have not yet come to light. Until then we are mainly dependent on the oral traditions.<sup>68</sup> Padma Gling-pa's three most famous sons were:

- 1) Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan,
- 2) *Thugs-sras* Zla-ba rGyal-mtshan, and
- 3) *mKhas-grub* Kun-dga' dBang-po.

The first of these inherited his father's principal temple of gTam-zhing in the Chos-'khor valley of Bum-thang and from him descend the family of the *gTam-zhing Chos-rje*. The second, Zla-ba rGyal-mtshan, settled at sPra-mkhar ('Prai') and his descendants became the *Chu-smad gDung*. The third, Kun-dga' dBang-po, settled at mKho'u-chung in Kur-stod and started the line of the *mKho'u-chung Chos-rje*. A branch of this family was established by one bsTan-pa'i rGyal-mtshan who moved to a place called Dung-dkar, also in Kur-stod. After four of five generations, the line of the *Dung-dkar Chos-rje* produced two brothers nicknamed as Pha-la and Phi-la. Pha-la (whose real name was mGon-po dBang-rgyal) was in turn the father of the *Krong-sar dPon-slob* 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal: the most powerful figure in Bhutan in the second half of the 19th century, the chief opponent of the British, and father of O-rgyan dBang-phyug who became the first hereditary king of Bhutan in 1907. At least one factor in the rise of his dynasty was the prestigious position occupied by his family as descendants of the great 'discoverer'. In the 18th century the family had established a link with the central government because a son born to the *Dung-dkar Chos-rje* was recognised as the third incarnation of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje, son of the great *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the founder of the Bhutanese state.<sup>69</sup>

Alongside the diffusion of all these families came the proliferation of three incarnation lineages associated with Padma Gling-pa's teachings. The *gSung-sprul* ('mind-incarnations') of Padma Gling-pa himself began with bsTan-'dzin Grags-pa (1536-1597), the first of a line of ten embodiments who had their seat across the border at the important monastery of lHa-lung in lHo-brag.<sup>70</sup> They were all closely associated with eastern Bhutan and several of them were born into the families mentioned above, as were



the *Thugs-sras mChog-sprul* incarnations of Klong-chen-pa's son who also had their seat at lHa-lung. This monastery became the true centre for Padma Gling-pa's teachings in their monastic form and it exerted a constant influence on the Bhutanese monasteries of the school to the south from just across the border. Another *Thugs-sras* incarnation line, apparently also based at lHa-lung, was that descending from Zla-ba rGyal-mtshan, Padma Gling-pa's son who had settled at 'Prai' in Bum-thang. Yet another line was that of *his* son, *Rig-'dzin* Padma 'Phrin-las, who founded the large monastery of sGang-steng in the Shar district. The incarnation line of the sGang-steng lama was the most significant from the point of view of the school's hold on western Bhutan. The second in this line, bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa's Don-grub (1645-1726), was very friendly with all the great figures of the ruling 'Brug-pa school. The institutional acceptance of Padma Gling-pa's traditions by the government at this time is ascribed to him and to his well-known disciple, Ngag-dbang 'Brug-pa of mTshams-brag.<sup>71</sup> Today the sGang-steng monastery survives as the only private foundation outside the 'Brug-pa school to maintain a flourishing community in western Bhutan. However, like most of the important lineages, that of the sGang-steng lama appears to have gone into decline in the last century, and it is not clear whether there is an incumbent today.

These lines which descend from Padma Gling-pa, his son and grandson intermingled both with each other and with the families claiming human descent from the 'text-discoverer'. The monasteries of lHa-lung and sGang-steng, and all their daughter houses, kept up a constant exchange right down to the time of the recent annexation of Tibet by China. Several reasons could be suggested to account for the school's survival under 'Brug-pa rule. Like the rNying-ma-pa at large, it remained loosely constituted and diffuse, never wielding concerted authority. Perhaps a more important reason is that this school was, in its origins and development, essentially Bhutanese and closely wedded to local interests and aspirations. No matter to what degree other schools became implanted in Bhutanese society, in the last resort they seem to have remained local offshoots of their Tibetan source. Consequently they stood at the mercy of those historical currents which arose within the country itself. The single exception to this picture is provided by the case of the 'Brug-pa school which became so closely associated with local interests in the west of the country that to all intents and purposes it could be considered Bhutanese. Certain circumstances eventually arose to enable this school to emerge as the dominant political force. The best symbol of 'Brug-pa support for the order of Padma Gling-pa is provided by the fate of Padma Gling-pa's earthly remains; the *stūpa* containing them was removed from the temple of gTam-zhing by the 'Brug-pa campaign which subjugated this area of the country in the middle years of the 17th century. Far from being despoiled, the

sacred reliquary was taken to the capital at sPu-na-kha where it was eventually placed alongside the mortal remains of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the founder of the 'Brug-pa theocracy.<sup>72</sup> The ashes of Padma Gling-pa and the corpse of the 1st *Zhabs-drung* were together removed to safety during each of the successive fires which reduced the capital fortress to a smouldering ruin. They were restored, phoenix-like, to their original positions side by side in the central tower after each rebuilding of the *rdzong*. Together with the relic of gTsang-pa rGya-ras (1161-1211) (Plate 22), the founder of the 'Brug-pa school, they are still today the objects of greatest veneration. Another clear token of the enduring hold of Padma Gling-pa's heritage is seen in the history of his descendants, among whom the present Royal Family now stands foremost. The complicated story of how in this century it came to replace the theocracy with its own form of hereditary rule lies well beyond the scope of this book.

### bKa'-brgyud-pa

The 'School of Oral Transmission' is made up of a bewildering complex of sub-schools all of which trace their origins to the figure of Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros 'the Translator' (1012-1097) who instructed a few carefully chosen disciples in certain esoteric practices which he had received from his Indian master Nāropa. In the West the school has come to be associated with the figure of Mar-pa's most famous disciple, the poet-saint Mi-la Ras-pa (1040-1123) (Plate 12), whose biography and songs have long been recognised rightly as among the finest examples of Tibetan literature. What served to stimulate the popular reputation of these works more than anything else was the notion that they preserved an authentic tradition which had been set down very soon after the master's death. This gave great piquancy to the esoteric and mystical content of the works which had found its setting in the account of an ascetic life whose details of character and circumstance argued direct experience. The ineffable was seen to be firmly locked to the practical realities of place and time. We owe it to Gene Smith (1969) that the authorship of the biography and the compilation of the songs are now properly credited to gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507) who completed the first blockprint edition at La-stod in about 1495, that is to say some 372 years after the death of Mi-la Ras-pa. The works now have to be seen in the context of a considerable cult developing over many centuries. Their reputation, however, is not likely to suffer from the retrospective interpretations which have now come partly into view for they remain masterpieces in their own right. Nevertheless, it is in the light of the cult that Mi-la Ras-pa's association with Bhutan has to be seen. It finds mention in a quite rare and separate collection of six of his songs entitled *rDo-rje mgur-drug*, compiled by lHa-



Plate 12. The poet-saint Mi-la Ras-pa (1040–1123), a wall-painting in the temple of Ri-mo-can in the sTang valley of Bum-thang.

*btsun* Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557), the chief disciple of *gTsang-smyon* (Smith 1969:27). *lHa-btsun* drew on the same material available to his teacher, the full details of which are still lost. The song in question was not known to the Bhutanese until very recently when the author of *LCB II* gave notice of it.<sup>73</sup> Had Bhutanese historians of earlier times been aware of its existence it is certain they would have made much of it, for the name of Mi-la Ras-pa is as much a household word in Bhutan as it is in Tibet and other neighbouring countries. The song is an exposition of the 'Ten Signs'<sup>74</sup> of yogic attainment and was composed by the master after he had spent three months meditating at the sacred shrine of sTag-tshang (Plate 8) in the sPa-gro valley. He is said to have sung it in reply to a group of four yogins who refused to believe him capable of sustaining himself without food for so long. Stray, yet significant, encounters of this kind marked the beginnings of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school, and it was only later that lineages, monasteries and patrons arose to create that extraordinary complexity which still partly survives.

Mi-la Ras-pa is said to have 'transmitted the lineage of meditation' but the more formalised teachings of his master as received in four 'currents' (or 'commandments', *bka'-babs*) were passed on by three of Mar-pa's close disciples who, together with Mi-la, are known as the 'Four Pillars'.<sup>75</sup> One of these, *rNgog-ston* Chos-sku rDo-rje (1036-1102), is held to have been the founder of certain monasteries in Bhutan, including that of Glang-mo-gling which still stands in the sTang valley of Bum-thang, just south of Mar-pa's home in lHo-brag.<sup>76</sup> If the tradition is correct then the monastery may have later been attached to the school of the rNgog-pa bKa'-brgyud based at sPre'u-zhing near rGyal-rtse where the descendants of Chos-sku rDo-rje kept it flourishing until about the 15th century.<sup>77</sup> The Glang-mo-gling monastery is today a government temple of the 'Brug-pa order, its custodian being appointed from the state monastery of Krong-sar.

No doubt many more references to the area's associations with the unformalised beginnings of the bKa'-brgyud-pa could be found. Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa (1110-93), founder of the Kam-tshang (or Karma) bKa'-brgyud-pa, certainly visited sPa-gro.<sup>78</sup> Although his school became the dominant force in Tibet from the late 15th to the early 17th centuries, it never gained a proper footing in Bhutan. The only monastery which seems to have come into its hands is Thang-kha-sbe in the Chos-'khor-stod district of Bum-thang, which preserves a clay image of the 8th Zhwa-dmar-pa ('Red Hat') incarnation, Chos-kyi Don-grub. He went there in company with the 12th Zhwa-nag ('Black Hat') incarnation, Karma-pa Byang-chub rDo-rje. That the foundation existed long before their time is clear from the autobiography of Padma Gling-pa (f.39a).

The evolution of the bKa'-brgyud-pa into what came to be regarded as four 'major' schools deriving from Dwags-po lHa-rje (1079-1153) and eight

'minor' schools deriving from Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje rGyal-po (1110-70) still awaits detailed investigation but the broad lines are already clear.<sup>79</sup> The classification into 'major' and 'minor' is chronological and does not reflect the size or duration of the schools in question. These in turn gave rise to a host of offshoots which are not directly accounted for in the above classification. In western Bhutan three of these orders took root; one of them (the 'Brug-pa) is reckoned as 'minor' and the other two (lHa-pa and 'Ba-ra) as 'offshoots'. The lHa-pa came first, followed by the 'Brug-pa and 'Ba-ra.

**lHA-PA.** The lHa-pa bKa'-brgyud appears to have been the first school to gain a broad measure of control over western Bhutan. Its introduction there was achieved by its founder, *rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa* *alias* gZi-brjid rDo-rje (1164-1224), from whom this school takes its name. We have already met him (p. 162) as the ancestor of Padma Gling-pa. He was a disciple of 'Jig-rten mGon-po (1143-1217), founder of the important 'Bri-khung school, and for this reason his own order is sometimes regarded as an offshoot of the 'Bri-khung but in reality it had an independent existence. It remained very much a family interest allied to the important clan of the gNyo which provided its prince-abbots. The family had been associated with Bhutan for many generations before the emergence of the lHa-pa school. The great-great-grandfather of lHa-nang-pa was the famous Yon-tan Grags-pa 'the Translator of gNyo', the contemporary of Mar-pa in whose company he travelled to India. According to the history of the gNyo clan 'the translator [Yon-tan Grags-pa] was offered all the estates, monasteries and rights which belonged to rGya-pa in the Southern Land of Four Approaches.'<sup>80</sup> It is not clear if rGya-pa was a person, family or clan, or what the origin of these holdings was. It was presumably these which *rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa* inherited a century or so later from his father, *gNyo-nag* Grags-pa-dpal, the great-grandson of the translator. lHa-nang-pa spent eleven years in Bhutan, mostly at gCal-kha to the north of sPa-gro, the site of all the *gter-ma* discoveries discussed above.<sup>81</sup> The building was ruined by an earthquake in the next generation and his nephew Rin-chen rGyal-po transferred the seat of the school across the present border to Phag-ri Rin-chen-sgang. gCal-kha was restored, however, as we find two of Rin-chen rGyal-po's sons (i.e. gZi-brjid rGyal-po and bSod-nams rGyal-po) visiting the place. This is as much as is apparent from the available Tibetan records which otherwise concern themselves with the major centres of the school at lHa-nang and Gye-re, probably located in the Kailash area of western Tibet. Nothing seems to be known about the school in Tibet beyond the 14th and 15th centuries when their own history and the *Red* and *Blue Annals* give us a picture of its flourishing condition.

In Bhutanese tradition the lHa-pa are depicted as the bane of the 'Brug-pa school which ultimately triumphed. No account of their own view of their

position has survived for the reason that they were proscribed during the time of the 1st *Zhabs-drung*. The official view is totally coloured by the rôle given to the lHa-pa in the biography of *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po (Plate 13), a somewhat doubtful authority if we consider the story of its compilation. It purports to have been written by *Pha-jo*'s son Dam-pa (in the 12th century) and later rediscovered by Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin (son of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, 1455-1529) when he was fifty years old, i.e. in about 1580.<sup>82</sup> The blockprint we now have is a second edition prepared at the behest of an unidentified *rdzong-dpon* of Thim-phu, bSod-nams dBang-rgyal. It is full of appalling spelling mistakes, yet the work remains one of the most popular in the country for the story it tells of the arrival of the first 'Brug-pa lama and his struggles with the lHa-pa. The accounts given in *LCB* I (ff. 7b-11a) and *LCB* II (ff. 92a-97b) are entirely based on it.

The enemy is referred to as gNyos or lHa-pa but he can probably be identified with *rGyal-ba* lHa-nang-pa himself, as the dates seem to fit.<sup>83</sup> *Pha-jo*, we are told, first came into contact with this gNyos 'chief of the South' (*lho-nang-gi dpon-po*, f, 21b) when, sometime after his arrival from Ra-lung, he received a contemptuous letter from lHa-pa at gCal-kha in which it was declared that since nobody who refused to subscribe to the lHa-pa sect was allowed to stay in the area, *Pha-jo* could only do so if he agreed either to look after one of their monasteries or else become one of their herdsmen, failing which he would lose his life. In his reply *Pha-jo* dismissed the order and justified his presence on the grounds of the prophecy given by *gTsang-pa rGya-ras* (1161-1211), namely that he, *Pha-jo*, should be sent to the South to take the 'Brug-pa order there. On receipt of this, lHa-pa resolved to kill him in an act of ritual murder by removing his heart and placing it in the temple dedicated to the guardian deities at gCal-kha. An outbreak of 'tantric warfare' ensued with both sides working their magic against the other. (Plate 13). In the course of this, the fortress of lHa-pa at gCal-kha was burnt to the ground. The local rulers of western Bhutan (described as the *spyi-dpon* of gDung, sGod-phrug, Has, Cang, Wang and sDong) gained faith in *Pha-jo* and told him of their plight under the lHa-pa rule. Every year each district was made to supply huge quantities of rice, butter, cotton, *srin-do* (?) and iron, in addition to undertaking three periods of corvée.<sup>84</sup> If they failed, then 'laws according to Tibetan practice' were exacted on them, and so they begged *Pha-jo* to replace these with 'the legal customs of a lama', swearing allegiance to him. lHa-pa then fled to the sBed-smad district where he built the fortress of lTo-kha rDzong. From there he sent two of his monks to serve poisoned sugar to *Pha-jo*. The effect of the poison was slow, and *Pha-jo* died of it eventually at the age of sixty-eight; this would have been in 1276, if we

accept his birth date as 1208 (*sa-pho-'brug*, f. 2a). In his dying will he foretold the continuation of the struggle with the lHa-pa and the ultimate triumph of his own school of the 'Brug-pa.

This synopsis has excluded all the rest of *Pha-jo's* doings to highlight the theme of his struggles with lHa-pa, but we shall meet him again (p. 173) as the ancestor of the powerful families of the 'Brug-pa school in western Bhutan. In both capacities he is cast in such a legendary role that it is not possible to accept the 12th century origin that is claimed for his biography. The account of the struggle with lHa-pa has an exact ritual parallel in the sacred drama that is enacted annually at the temple of Cang Nam-mkha' lHa-khang in sPa-gro. During this festival, which just precedes the celebration of the Agricultural New Year, five 'generals' act the part of the magical army emanated by *Pha-jo*.<sup>85</sup> (Plate 13). This dramatic version, like the written account, serves to explain and justify the final triumph of the 'Brug-pa in Bhutan. The written account must surely have been produced on the basis of various traditions as they survived in the 17th century when the lHa-pa and the 'Brug-pa were locked in strife. The 'discovery' of the work in about 1580 by Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin, son of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and incarnation of *Pha-jo's* son Gar-ston, is also suspect. One is tempted rather to look to this person's own son, Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin (alias rTa-mgrin rGyal-mtshan) who claimed to be the incarnation of *Pha-jo* himself and who lived from 1574 to 1643.<sup>86</sup> The core of the 'secret' biographies of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs which deal with this mad saint's encounters in Bhutan is attributed to him, the grandson of the saint.<sup>87</sup> Significantly the poetic refrains which extol the sexual exploits of *Pha-jo* and 'Brug-pa Kun-legs are almost identical in both works; the one attributed to the latter is rather more polished.<sup>88</sup> Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin was the close ally of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the founder of the Bhutanese state, and he must have been deeply involved in the latter's contentions with the lHa-pa. He also shared one of his wives with the *Zhabs-drung* (see p. 217 below). The lady, Dam-chos bsTan-'dzin, came from another family of the religious nobility claiming descent from *Pha-jo*, that of lCang sGang-kha in the Thim-phu valley.<sup>89</sup>

The lHa-pa, unfortunately, never come to light in the records. They are cast in the symbolic role of chief enemy, 'head of the five groups of lamas' who opposed the *Zhabs-drung* (LCB II, f. 84b). Their final submission seems to have taken place just before they handed over their old fortress of rDo-rngon rDzong (or rDo-snyug rDzong) in Thim-phu in the year 1641.<sup>90</sup> This was turned into the summer capital of the 'Brug-pa government under the name of bKra-shis Chos-rdzong. It is now the permanent seat of government. The other fortresses of the lHa-pa, probably defensive monasteries, appear to have been destroyed by fire during the struggles when the enemy lamas





Plate 13. *top* Clay image of *Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po* (1208–1276)  
*bottom* Two of *Pha-jo's* generals who defeated the IHa-pa forces as portrayed during the festival at Nam-mkha' IHa-khang, in sPa-gro.



joined forces with the *gTsang sDe-srid* in 1632 and after. They included *Bya-thal rDzong*<sup>91</sup> and *sBed-med lTo-kha rDzong*. Towards the end of the 17th century there were still groups whose earlier associations with the *lHa-pa* were remembered, and who were therefore regarded with some disfavour by the central government.<sup>92</sup>

'BRUG-PA. This school naturally receives tremendous emphasis in the Bhutanese histories, but it was in reality just one among several established orders before it rose to dominate and unify the country. The short account given here takes the story from its origins down to the start of the 17th century when the movement towards consolidation was begun by *Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal*.

The 'Brug-pa school had its beginnings in one of those sustained outbursts of devotional asceticism which so marked the 11th to 12th centuries. Its founder was *gTsang-pa rGya-ras Ye-shes rDo-rje* (1161-1211)<sup>93</sup> who is linked in the formal pedigree of the school to the main *bKa'-brgud-pa* order through his own master, *Gling Ras-pa Padma rDo-rje* (1128-88), the disciple of *Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje rGyal-po* (1110-1170). *Ye-shes rDo-rje* was the 'discoverer' of a number of esoteric doctrines which included the *Ro-snyoms* ('Equal Taste [of Appearances]') hidden by *Ras-chung-pa* and the *rTen-'brel* (a meditative cycle on the *pratityasamutpāda*). These texts formed the particular teachings of his school which came to be named after the monastery of 'Brug founded by him in about 1189. The monastery took its name from the 'thunder-dragons' ('brug) which are said to have resounded through the sky on the occasion of its consecration. The whole of Bhutan ('Brug-yul) eventually took its name from the school, not the other way round as maintained recently by Tucci (1973:63-4).

The 'Brug-pa appear to have had a wide appeal for people who wished to pursue their vocations as simple mendicants intent on salvation through solitary meditation rather than as members of large communities where the formal study of Buddhist scholasticism was paramount. It was not long before this latter side developed too but, to begin with at least, ' . . . the hermits belonging to the 'Brug-pa school were devoid of the prejudices and dissensions of sectarian and scholastic partiality and were all extremely humble' (*Blue Annals, Nya*, f. 118a). The founder himself is said to have dispersed his many followers to all the major shrines of the Buddhist world, in Tibet, India and China - an area referred to as 'eighteen days flight of a vulture' (*bya-rgod nyin-lam bco-brgyad*). This gave rise to the often quoted saying in Tibet:

Half the people are 'Brug-pa,  
Half the 'Brug-pa are beggars,  
Half the beggars are saints.

The proliferation of the school into three distinct branches is traced to three disciples of Ye-shes rDo-rje, namely:

- 1) the Bar-'brug ('Middle 'Brug-pa') from *Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras* Darma Seng-ge (1177-1237), nephew of the founder,
- 2) the sTod-'brug ('Upper 'Brug-pa') from *rGod-tshang-pa* mGon-po rDo-rje (1189-1258), and
- 3) the sMad-'brug ('Lower 'Brug-pa') from *Lo-ras-pa* dBang-phyug brTson-'grus (1187-1250).

From the point of view of Bhutan the only important one was the dominant middle branch, which came under the control of a line of prince-abbots in a family of the rGya clan descended from Ye-shes rDo-rje himself. Nevertheless the other two branches were represented in the country, if only briefly, before being absorbed into the 'Middle 'Brug-pa'. *Lo-ras-pa* founded the monastery of Chos-brag (or Chos-rje-brag) in Bum-thang, on the cliff just above the later and more famous monastery of Thar-pa-gling founded by Klong-chen-pa.<sup>94</sup> It was later administered as a state monastery of the 'Brug-pa from western Bhutan and survives today as a nunnery of the rNying-ma-pa order. *Lo-ras-pa* also travelled in the west of the country where the story of his conversion of the demon dByar-sa-pa is still remembered. The 'Upper 'Brug-pa' was introduced to sPa-gro by sPyil-dkar-ba, disciple of *rGod-tshang-pa*, who founded a monastery now called sPyi-dkar-kha where his remains are said to be still preserved.<sup>95</sup> From him descended an important family of the religious aristocracy which maintained a large estate in sPa-gro. This was the family of the *gZar-chen Chos-rje* which still has its seat at the family temple of bSam-gtan Chos-gling in the village of gZar-chen-kha. Their line did not actually begin until seven generations after sPyil-dkar-ba when a certain brTan-pa founded this temple and certain others on the sKyid-la Pass to Ha, where his brother and uncle took up residence.<sup>96</sup> Even by this time the family was more associated with the main 'Brug-pa school based at Ra-lung than with the branch established by their ancestor's master, *rGod-tshang-pa*. (One important offshoot of that branch, the 'Ba'-ra bKa'-brgyud, did establish itself in Bhutan and is considered separately below.) It comes as no surprise to find the family of the *gZar-chen Chos-rje* among the chief allies of the great *Zhabs-drung* in the first half of the 17th century. In the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* (see below) we find them intriguing against their rivals, the *Hūm-ral Chos-rje*, to win tax dispensations from the *Zhabs-drung*. A charter signed *bDud-'joms rDo-rje* (the personal name of the *Zhabs-drung*) is still in the possession of this family today.<sup>97</sup> They produced a number of famous abbots and statesmen in later history.<sup>98</sup>

Much more important, however, were the many families in western Bhutan who claimed direct descent from *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po (Plate

13) and who were thereby linked to the powerful 'middle' 'Brug-pa based at their seat at Ra-lung. Whatever reservations we may have about the authenticity of *Pha-jo's* biography, it must be based in part on historical fact. Padma dKar-po (f. 303a-b of his chronicle) maintains that: 'His (i.e. *Sang-srgyas dBon-ras*) disciple, 'Gro-sgom Zhig-po subjugated the Southern Region of Four Approaches.' This form of his name, based on ancient sources, may turn out to be the original one. Kong-sprul, writing in the 19th century, alludes briefly to *Pha-jo's* discovery of a Hayagrīva *gter-ma* and to the fact that his descendants were reputed to survive at Nang-chen in Tibet (*gTer-mam*, f. 196a). In the Bhutanese biography long sections are devoted to the *gter-ma* in question, but all of his four surviving sons are alleged to have been born within the country. (Three of the original seven, it is said, turned out to be demons and were drowned in an ordeal by water.) *Pha-jo* achieved his will in western Bhutan by deputing his sons to the control of its various districts. He himself stayed at the important monastery he founded at the head of the Thim-phu valley. It was called rTa-mgo ('Horse-head') after the saint's associations with the deity Hayagrīva (rTa-mgrin, 'Horse-necked'). When he was there, King Bhra-nan-la of Ka-ma-rta (Kāmata) is said to have sent him presents which included a talking parrot (*ne-tsho smra-mkhan*), 'grape-wine' (*sgun-'brum-gyi chang*) and other things (ff. 35b-36a). Similar presents were received from the 'man of substance' (*phyug-po*) of Mon-yul rTsang-sgang, perhaps the 'Tsangla' area of eastern Bhutan. His sons were deputed as follows: <sup>99</sup>

- 1) Gar-ston was appointed to gDung, Ha and sDong, and to control the eastern passes (*las-sgo*), his descendants becoming the *Zhal-ngo* families of Wa-can and many other places in the Shar district; <sup>100</sup>
- 2) Nyi-ma was sent to dGung and lCang (in Thim-phu) from where he was told to control the 'outer' passes; his descendants became the *sGang-kha Zhal-ngo* (see next paragraph);
- 3) dBang-phyug was sent to control the passes of Thed-lung (sPu-na-kha) and 'O-'dus (?); and from him descended the *gSang-ma'i Zhal-ngo* of dGon-stod (the region bordering on Tibet);
- 4) Dam-pa inherited his father's seat at rTa-mgo and established two further foundations at Nam-mkha'i lHa-khang (or sNang-dkar lHa-khang) in sPa-gro and bDe-chen-phug in Thim-phu. From him descended all the 'Brug-pa nobility of sPa-gro.

However mythical these origins may have been, there is plenty of evidence pointing to the existence and strength of all these families. One of them, which preserved the line of the *Hūm-ral Chos-rje* in sPa-gro, kept their records. They have come down to us in the form of a work entitled: *Grub-mchog hūm-ral drung-drung yab-sras-kyi nam-thar mdo-tsam gleng-ba rin-chen do-shal* (*Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* for short, 71 folios, *dbu-can* ms.) <sup>101</sup> It was



Plate 14. *top* Kun-dga' Seng-ge (1314–1347). *sPa-gro rDzong Collection*  
*bottom* The old monastery of bDe-chen-phu at the top of the Thimphu valley, seat of the guardian deities of the 'Brug-pa School.

written in 1766 (*me-pho-khyi*) by a member of the family called O-rgyan Tshe-dbang (alias Kun-dbang). Coming as it did just half a century after Ngag-dbang had composed his clan records in the east, the work must have been occasioned by much the same motives of preservation in the face of the sweeping changes that had been introduced in the course of the 17th century. Among the oral and written sources mentioned in the colophon to the work appear some of a truly primary character, namely 'the draft documents, dedicatory colophons and important papers written by successive ancestors'.<sup>102</sup> Covering the whole period from the 12th to the 18th centuries (some fifteen generations), it presents a fascinating story of shifting alliances with collateral branches of the same 'Brug-pa nobility in other valleys, of the founding of daughter monasteries, and of the rights and privileges exacted from the subject 'patrons' attached to the family. A very close relationship persisted between the Hūm-ral family and the head monastery of their school of the Bar-'brug at Ra-lung in Tibet. The Hūm-ral family were among the chief local patrons of the school and a large number of them received their religious training at Ra-lung, studying the ritual and meditational cycles peculiar to the 'Brug-pa, which they would then disseminate on returning to Bhutan. For their part, the prince-abbots of Ra-lung made frequent visits to this area of the country, promulgating their teachings, consolidating their ties and extending their holdings. These affiliations, covering the whole spectrum of religious and political endeavour, were to have far-reaching consequences for the creation of a unified country; it was surely due to them that *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the prince-abbot of Ra-lung, was able to build his state after arriving as a refugee in 1616. They were, in a traditional phrase, 'prefigurative auspices' (*snga-ltas-kyi rten-'brel*, LCB I, f. 12a). A brief attempt can be made to determine their history and nature.<sup>103</sup>

The first prince-abbot of Ra-lung to come in person to western Bhutan was the 7th incumbent to that position, Kun-dga' Seng-ge (1314-1347) (Plate 14a). He was invited by the grandson and incarnation of Dam-pa, *sPrul-sku* Blo-ldan rGyal-po, who had his seat at his grandfather's monastery of bDe-chen-phu (Plate 14b). That place has ever since been regarded as the 'palace' of the guardian divinities of the 'Brug-pa school in Bhutan. Kun-dga' Seng-ge is said to have subdued and converted the god *dGe-bsnyen Chen-po* Jag-pa Me-len and turned him into the 'protector' *Srog-bdag* gShan-pa dMar-po. The abbot was then brought to the sGang-kha temple further down the valley by another of *Pha-jo*'s descendants, *Bla-ma* bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan, presumably the grandson of Nyi-ma. (At this place he is claimed to have introduced a monastic community, which must have involved an expansion of the original building. It was perhaps at this time that the extraordinary paintings which still survive there were executed (Plate 15

They depict a host of subterranean, terrestrial and astral deities in a cosmological arrangement that stems no doubt from a particular ritual cycle in use at that time. The figures (particularly those of the nine planets and the twenty-eight lunar asterisms) combine what appear to be certain features of Central Asian dress with ancient Indian motifs. The paintings may well be the oldest in the country and seem to have been preserved because the temple in which they are found is classified as a *mgon-khang* dedicated to guardian spirits. These are not so often subjected to that continuous process of refurbishment which has effaced the ancient art of the country.) Kun-dga' Seng-ge also founded the bDe-chen-sdings monastery at dGon-kha in sPa-gro. While in the north of the country he married a daughter of a certain *Bla-ma* dPal-ldan Seng-ge (another of *Pha-jo*'s descendants) and to them was born the next of the prince-abbots of Ra-lung, Blo-gros Seng-ge (1345-1390). After his installation and education at Ra-lung he returned to his homeland in the northern mountains and established a further monastery. Two more, sPol-dud dGon and mDo-sde-brag in Thim-phu, were founded by Nam-mkha'i rNal-'byor, whose position in the family is not clear.

In the 14th century the 'Brug-pa school rose to occupy a powerful position in the complicated Tibetan politics of that time. It acquired large landholdings in central Tibet as a result of the patronage of the Mongol king Togon Temür (d. 1370) but its temporal authority never really equalled that of the Phag-mo-gru-pa, Sa-skya-pa, Karma-pa or 'Bri-khung-pa schools which all rose to various degrees of dominance under Mongol patronage. Factional rivalries eventually depleted the holdings of the 'Brug-pa and military and political defeats further weakened it, but the prestige of the school was maintained by the line of scholar-sages who occupied the family throne at Ra-lung. The area of western Bhutan was linked to this monastery (east of rGyal-rtse) by an easy road from the Chumbi valley and there must have been a constant reciprocal movement along it from the 14th to the early 17th centuries. The ties were very much strengthened by the activities of the 13th incumbent, rGyal-dbang-rje Kun-dga' dPal-'byor (1428-1476), incarnation of the founder (*gTsang-pa rGya-ras*) and one of the best known savants of his age. He came to the area, as far west as Bum-thang and as far east as sPa-gro, on three extended trips during which he founded a host of monasteries, temples and retreat centres, most of which are still standing. The most famous of these is probably rDo mChod-rten in sPa-gro, where he spent a long period in meditation in company with his chief local follower, Drung-drung (alias rGyal-mchog) from whom the Hūm-ral family descended. Drung-drung was one of two sons (the other was rGyal-'dzom) born to Blo-ldan rGyal-po, the patron of Kun-dga' Seng-ge and therefore another of *Pha-jo*'s descendants. His biography (ff. 8b-26b of the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs*) is enormously interesting for its realistic





Plate 15. Wall-paintings from the *dgon-khang* of lCang sGang-kha in Thim-phu, showing:  
*top* The 'lunar asterism' Uttarabhadrapada (Khnums-smad); *bottom left* The planet moon (gZa' Zla-ba , Sk. Candra); *right* Nor-rgyas-bu, one of the eight *nāga-rāja*.



account of family feuds intermixed with the details of his spiritual life.<sup>104</sup> He was the founder of the fortress called Hūm-ral rDzong, named after the local protective deity Hūm-ral mGon-po with whom he had a special relationship. It was this building which his descendant in the seventh generation, *Bla-ma* 'Brug bSam-gtan, offered to the first *Zhabs-drung* in 1645, the latter converting it into the provincial fortress of Rin-spungs rDzong. Drung-drung was also the patron of Ngag-dbang Chos-rgyal (1465-1540) who succeeded *rGyal-dbang-rje* as the 14th abbot of Ra-lung in 1476. This figure established no less than eighteen new foundations in sPa-gro, Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha. Drung-drung assisted in the case of the well-known temple of 'Brug Chos-sdings which stands in the sPa-gro market-place, but he seems to have been more directly concerned with the construction of a series of water-driven 'prayer-mills', nine of which are named. This gave rise to the saying: 'The 'Brug-pa have built monasteries, so don't get up off your knees. The Hūm-ral-pa will introduce prayer-mills, so don't divert the source.'<sup>105</sup>

Another contemporary of the two Drung-drung brothers was the mad saint 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (1455-1529) (Plates 16 and 17), the younger relative of Ngag-dbang Chos-rgyal. He only appears briefly in the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* (loc. cit.) for his composition of a song about the brothers, but there is wide scope for collating all the Bhutanese traditions concerning him, a great number of which are found in the local biographies cited in Note 87 above. These will one day have to be compared with the accounts of his life still sung in verse by the wandering bards ('manip') and contrasted with the standard edition of his own anecdotes, so finely translated into French by Stein (1972). For the Bhutanese 'Brug-pa Kun-legs always represents everything that is most belovedly unorthodox; and yet the shocking irregularity of his conduct is thought to have been the reflection of a free, yet disciplined, spirit that embodied the very essence of their religion. The growth of the Bhutanese tradition with all its emphasis on sexual humour and village bawdiness marks a genuine departure from the more sober picture conveyed by the saint's own memoirs. It was an unconscious selective process which enabled him to fill the rôle of cultural hero. That process was certainly assisted on a formal level by his descendants in the 17th century who rose to positions of great favour and importance in the new state.

Throughout the 16th century the monastic estates which had been established by the princes of Ra-lung, particularly Ngag-dbang Chos-rgyal, continued to flourish. His two sons were especially active in establishing monasteries. The eldest, bsTan-pa'i rGyal-mtshan (alias Ngag-dbang Grags-pa, 1506-38) ruled as the 16th abbot of Ra-lung. He spent some time at his father's monastery of sPang-ri Zam-pa in Thim-phu, which still stands, and founded new ones in the Shar district. His younger brother, Ngag-gi dBang-





Plate 16. 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (1455–1529), wall-painting at the monastery of rTa-mgo.  
(Photo by kind permission of James George)

phyug (1517-54), is claimed to have founded monasteries in eastern Bhutan on sites where a chain of fortresses were constructed a century later under *dPon-slob* Mi-'gyur brTan-pa.<sup>106</sup>

Meanwhile in the west of the country the 'Brug-pa nobility of the 16th century rose to ever-increasing prominence as testified by the proliferation of the Hūm-ral sub-lineages. Some of these arose as a result of the founding of new monasteries by younger sons, and others by the arrangement of political marriages with collateral lineages descended from *Pha-jo*. The issue of such marriages were regarded as 'uncle-families' allied to the principal family based at the ancestral seat in sPa-gro.<sup>107</sup> The rights and privileges of the head family were such that in the dedicatory colophon to a manuscript copy of the *bKa'-gyur*, Nam-mkha' rGyal-mtshan (son of Drung-drung rGyal-mchog) could make the claim that the males of his family were 'kings of the Southern Country'.<sup>108</sup> There is nothing to suggest, however, that their powers extended beyond their own estates in the western valleys, and their constant feuds with other groups there alone point to the extraordinary fragmentation of all rule at this time. Interposed between the domains of the local nobility stood the growing fiefs attached to the 'mother-house' at Ra-lung in Tibet. The 'auspices' for unified 'Brug-pa rule had truly been prepared but, as we shall see below, their potential would never have been realised but for the life and character of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, the true founder of Bhutan.

'BA'-RA-BA. This school takes its name from the epithet of its founding patriarch, *'Ba'-ra-ba* rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang (1310-1391).<sup>109</sup> He was recognised as the re-embodiment of Yang-dgon-pa (1213-1258), himself the founder of a separate branch of the sTod-'brug known as the Yang-dgon bKa'-brgyud-pa. rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang was born in the Shangs district and his school is therefore also called the Shangs 'Ba'-ra. This has sometimes led to its confusion with the quite independent school descending from Khyung-po rNal-'byor known as the Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa, which stands outside the main bKa'-brgyud-pa complex.<sup>110</sup>

rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang founded the monastery of Don-grub-sdings at 'Ba'-ra-brag at his home in the Shangs valley north-east of gZhis-ka-rtse,<sup>111</sup> and most of his activities were concentrated in Tibet proper. He did, however, make at least two journeys to Bhutan. A lot of information is found in the prose passages with which he introduced his sacred song-poems.<sup>112</sup> These he composed throughout his long life in reaction to a wide variety of experiences. We learn (on f. 107a) that his first visit to 'the South' was made on pilgrimage to the shrines of sKyer-chu and sTag-tshang in company with his chief local disciples. About two years after his return to Tibet he heard news

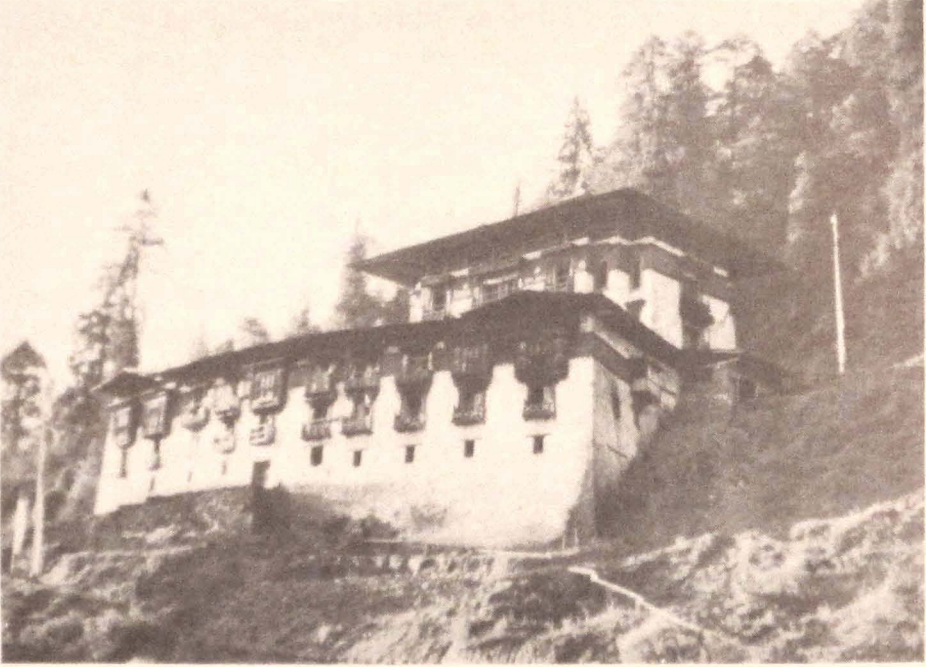


Plate 17. The monastery of rTa-mgo at the top of the Thim-phu valley, founded by *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom and seat of the descendants of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs.

that the *rdzong-pa* (governor?) of sTag-tshang (no doubt one of the Ka-thog-pa lamas) and the forces of the dBus province of Tibet were waging war. One hundred followers of the *rdzong-pa* had been defeated, perhaps killed (f. 110b). He also heard that the *rdzong-pa* got into trouble with the sMon-pa (Mon-pa?) of Shangs-mthong which had led to the death of a certain *dBon-po* Ne-tso from Gur (f. 113b). The following autumn his Bhutanese patrons sent him a letter insisting that he should come back to sPa-gro. It was a time of conflict in Tibet; no details are given but the troubles may have been those occasioned by the struggle between Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan and Sa-skya (c. 1345-58). rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang decided to escape by accepting the invitation. He resolved to spend three years in 'the South' where peace had returned, where the inhabitants had faith in religion and where the old ties of 'priest and patron' continued.<sup>113</sup> He was met at Phag-ri by a large number of porters and bodyguards, the latter in order to protect him from brigands.<sup>114</sup> He recalled later how during the three years he spent in the area he had been able to make peace three times between contending parties (f. 125a). He was particularly proud of having resolved a quarrel between his two chief followers, Sa-mkhar rDo-rje and Khro-rgyal who previously had been allies and were so powerful that nobody could rival them. Fearing their strength, others had sought to separate them with false slanders, and in the feud which followed someone had been killed. Both of them had been responsible for building him a new monastery at 'Brang-rgyas-kha in sPa-gro with a view to making him settle down under their patronage, as they had felt some shame at his having accepted the favours bestowed on him by other followers, particularly the bequest of another monastery at 'On-'dul by the previous owner, his disciple 'Phags-pa rDor-rgyal (ff. 119a-120a). The new monastery of 'Brang-rgyas-kha seems to have become his favourite seat in this area, and it was there that his successors in the 'Ba'-ra-ba school came later to visit. rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang appears to have had a very considerable following from all over the west of the country, and many of these ties were doubtless also inherited by his successors. One of his disciples was the so-called *brgya-dpon* (an official responsible for one hundred families) of sTengs-chen-kha in Wang-yul. On the point of death he was persuaded to forbid the slaughter of cattle for his funeral rites; normally, we are told, local custom demanded that two or three hundred cattle should be sacrificed when an important person died (f. 121a). Regrettably, no clue is given as to how the *brgya-dpon* had come to office, whether by heredity or by Tibetan or local appointment.

This sketch of the master's doings in Bhutan gives one a sense of how the spiritual affairs of a great teacher carried with them enormous temporal responsibilities. In fact no such distinctions would have been present in the

minds of those involved in the relationship of 'priest and patron' for it was one that, ideally speaking, involved the whole person, not parts of him, in an act of total submission. These contractual bonds were permanent, to be kept inviolate not just in this lifetime but also through successive rebirths and through the person's natural descendants. Conflicts of interest and loyalty were inevitable as the pattern changed with the rise of new luminaries, their schools and their sub-schools. What may have begun in an act of great selflessness could eventually, through the permutations of history, become warped into vicious and narrow sectarianism. So human an institution was it that the act itself of entering into the special relationship of priest and patron seems to have been prone to abuse. Nevertheless, it had strong appeal and continues to do so today.

The sources do not permit us to see how the relationship was passed down in the case of the little school of the 'Ba-ra-ba bKa'-brgyud. It evidently expanded under the control of the main monastery of 'Brang-rgyas-kha in sPa-gro. Branches were established at Yul-tshe-phug in the north of the country, at sNang-gsal dGon-pa and 'Go-'bur dGon-pa in sPu-na-kha, at rGya-mdud dGon-pa in Ha, and also at rDo mChod-rten and Che-bal mDze-chu dGon-pa in sPa-gro (*LCB* II, f. 90a). The last two also had ties with the 'Brug-pa, but their associations with the 'Ba-ra-ba in the 15th and 16th centuries find mention in the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* (ff. 20b and 41a). The reincarnations of the founder, who had their seat at Don-grub-sdings in Shangs, continued to pay visits to the area and probably controlled these local monasteries together with their patrons. One of them, sPrul-sku Nam-mkha' rGyal-mtshan, is mentioned in *LCB* II (f. 90a).

The school came to blows with *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal when he was creating the unified state. In about 1636 he is claimed to have killed by magic a lama of the school at dGon Tshe-phug (or Yul-tshe-phug) in the north (*LCB* I, f. 35a). The 'Ba'-ra-ba is therefore reckoned among the 'five groups of lamas' opposed to the *Zhabs-drung* (*LCB* II, f. 90a). The defeat of the school may be connected with the exodus of a group of refugees from dGon who settled across the border in Tibet (*LCB* I, f. 43a). Their main monastery at 'Brang-rgyas-kha was taken over by the 'Brug-pa and it became the seat of the monastic official in charge of the sTag-tshang shrine (Plate 8). The first incumbent was the well-known lama sByin-pa rGyal-mtshan, brother of the even more famous bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (see Part Three, Chapter 3). It is not clear when 'Brang-rgyas-kha ceased to be the official seat and all that remains today is a single temple in a poor state of repair with no trace of its former connections with the 'Ba-ra-ba school. Like this one, two of the other monasteries of this school, in Ha and sPu-na-kha, were taken over by famous teachers of the 'Brug-pa school. (See *LCB* II, f. 90.)<sup>115</sup>

### lCags-zam-pa

One of the key figures in the cultural history of the area is the 'iron bridge builder' (*lCags-zam-pa*) Thang-stong rGyal-po (Plate 18) whose dates are now usually given as 1385-1464. This interesting figure is not only remembered for his many iron chain suspension bridges and boat ferries, but also as the alleged composer of all the occupational songs (which accompany threshing, building and other activities) and of a series of dance-dramas known as *A-lce lHa-mo* ('The Lady Goddess'). He was also a 'text-discoverer' and, furthermore, he has been given an important rôle in the Ge-sar epic. In Bhutan he is said to have constructed about eight of his bridges and founded several monasteries and temples (*LCB* II, ff. 75b-76b). The latter appear to have been affiliated to each other in such a way that they represented the independent interest of a separate school, known as the lCags-zam-pa. The head monastery of the school was at Ri-bo-che in Tibet, founded by Thang-stong rGyal-po in 1444. It was there that his incarnations had their principal residence.

The standard biography<sup>116</sup> of Thang-stong rGyal-po has long been a source of disappointment to scholars. Tucci (1949:163) remarks: ' . . . in this biography actual facts are overcome by legends and accounts of miracles to such extent that little can be gleaned from it of which we may be certain.' Also: ' . . . historical reality is wrecked on myths, contours are lost, facts fade away.' The dates it supplies for Thang-stong rGyal-po (i.e. 1361-1485) are improbable and in conflict with its own statement (f. 171b) that he lived to the age of 128. Consequently, most authorities prefer to accept the dates given in the *Vaidūrya dkar-po* and the *dPag-bsam ljon-bzang* (i.e. 1385-1464).<sup>117</sup> The biography itself is claimed in its colophon (ff. 172b-173a) to have been written in *sa-mo-bya* (1609) by one 'Gyur-med bDe-chen, who based his work on an earlier one written by a nephew of Thang-stong rGyal-po called dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas, the incumbent of a temple at Phag-ri, just across the Bhutanese border. A reading of the biography in this recension does indeed suggest a mixing of fact and legend, but the two seem rather to work in counterpoint to each other and have not entirely coalesced. It is perhaps at the vital beginning and end of the work that the legendary and miraculous quality most dominates. In the body of the work there appears a mass of detailed and practical information which helps to authenticate his work. The rôle assigned to the saint in the Ge-sar epic is lacking, there is no mention of his alleged theatrical interests, nor do we find any connection with the rite of exorcism known as *pho-bar rdo-gcog* which he is claimed to have instituted and which was till recently performed by itinerant monk-actors from Spiti in the western Himalayas.<sup>118</sup> Instead, Thang-stong rGyal-po is cast in the typical role of a tantric lama, but one



who achieved particular distinction through his association with bridges and ferries. He was also noted for building a number of *stūpas* on geomantic principles to ward off the evil influence of local spirits and to counter a Hor invasion. His practical avocations aligned him to all the strange Indian *mahāsiddhas* (*grub-thob*) who are said to have achieved enlightenment through the mindful pursuit of ordinary professions and he is consequently often classed in their ranks.

The bridge-builder's connections with Bhutan were first noted as long ago as 1783 by Turner who greatly admired the bridge at Chu-kha on the road to India south of sPa-gro. He recorded the architect's name in the quaint form of 'Tehuptehup' (= *grub-thob*).<sup>119</sup> Had he turned left at the confluence of the sPa-gro and Thim-phu rivers instead of proceeding to the capital on Hasting's affairs, he would have passed the monastery of rTa-mchog-sgang built by 'Tehuptehup' and heard more about this 'dewta'. Another of his bridges stood there until it was washed away in the floods of 1969. The monastery (which now lacks a community) is the seat of a family known as the *rTa-mchog Chos-rje*. It claims descent from a certain *Mon-pa* bDe-ba bZang-po, a local disciple of the saint. During my stay in Bhutan I obtained brief access to what I then thought was the standard biography of Thang-stong rGyal-po, in a manuscript copy preserved by the present *rTa-mchog Chos-rje*. I therefore only copied the two passages (ff. 130a-135b and 140b-143b) which deal with the activities of its subject in Bhutan. On return to England, I compared these excerpts, together with the title and colophon, with those that appear in the standard biography, only to discover that the Bhutanese version is without doubt an earlier recension and consequently of tremendous potential value for approaching the true, un-mythicised figure of the bridge-builder. Unfortunately only those excerpts made in Bhutan are presently to hand, and these are of no use in solving the many problems of chronology that mark the standard version. In the meantime, twenty volumes of the saint's collected works are said to have come to light in Bhutan and these are being reprinted in India. It is to be hoped that the biography will resurface in this collection to await exhaustive study.

The work (hereafter Version A) is entitled *Bla-ma thang-stong rgyal-po'i rnam-thar gsal-ba'i sgron-me*. It is a manuscript in cursive containing 294 folios divided into 108 chapters. The scribe, Sangs-rgyas Don-grub, seems to have made the copy at the behest of one of the *rTa-mchog Chos-rje* (referred to as 'Uncle Lama'). It is full of crude spelling mistakes and contains many small lacunae. The colophon proper<sup>120</sup> is in two parts. The first attributes the work to a certain dKon-mchog dPal-bzang, the subject of one of the saint's prophetic statements, who wrote it apparently at Chu-bo-ri. He seems to have based his information on the 'discourses' (*gsung-gros*) of the saint in

person, and on those of *rJe-btsun A-sgron Chos-sgron*, the saint's wife. To these he added the prophecies of the saint which were not given in the 'discourses' and which would presumably have been contained in a separate text. The picture conveyed in this first part of the colophon is confused by that given in the second part, according to which the work was composed by *Mon-pa bDe-ba bZang-po*, who had also been the subject of prophecy. It is claimed that he wrote it in a cave hermitage attached to *rTa-mchog Nor-bu-gsang* 'on the border of *sPar [sPa-gro]* and *Wang* [the district under *Thimphu*]. This second attribution looks suspicious and may have been interpolated by a member of the family of the *rTa-mchog Chos-rje* which claims descent from this figure.<sup>121</sup> The person named *dKon-mchog dPal-bzang* in the first part is in fact identical with *dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas*, the author of the original source of the standard biography (hereafter Version B).<sup>122</sup> There seems every reason to conclude, therefore, that Version A was itself the original source for B. Colophons apart, the following should help to make this clear.

Chapters 61 and 64 in Version A deal with *Thang-stong rGyal-po's* visits to *Bhutan* and correspond to ff. 81b-85b and 99b-102a in Version B. The first of these visits took him to western *Bhutan* and the second to central *Bhutan*. While the western visit seems to have lasted the best part of a year (1433-4 according to Version B) during which he built many bridges and temples, the later visit to central *Bhutan* was more in the nature of a pilgrimage. The account of this latter trip is taken up with the saint's visit to the shrine of *Padmasambhava* at *sKu-rjes* and with the story of how someone who had fallen into an ice crevice on the *Mon-la Pass* was saved from death by his faith in the saint. The accounts in Versions A and B are substantially the same, but the latter has clearly summarised the itinerary found in the former.<sup>123</sup> As far as I could determine, there are no traditions in this region about the saint's visit, whereas there are a great many still related in the areas to the west and east.<sup>124</sup>

*Thang-stong rGyal-po's* western visit seems to have been made with the express purpose of collecting iron for his most famous suspension bridge over the *gTsang-po* at *Chu-bo-ri*, the site of his main monastery.<sup>125</sup> He had probably heard of the old iron-workings in western *Bhutan* which produced the material from which the fine swords and daggers of the country used to be made. His journey took him from *Chu-bo-ri* to *Phag-ri* by way of *sNa-dkartse*, *Ra-lung* and *gNas-rnying*. On the border he is said to have been welcomed by all the old mountain gods, including *Jo-mo lHa-ri*, *rDo-rje Brag-skyes* of *sPa-gro* and *Khyung-bdud* of *Ha*, who promised to give him the iron he wanted. On arrival in *sPa-gro* he went directly to *sTag-tshang* from where he recovered his most famous *gter-ma*, described (in Version A, f. 131a) as 'a scroll ten



spans in length containing the *Man-ngag 'phrul-gyi lde-mig*, the profound essence of all sutras and tantras.<sup>126</sup> At this point the author of Version B interpolated a passage (ff.82b-83a) concerning a miraculous visit of the saint to the Assamese shrine of Singri (Shi-gi-ri, see p. 113 above), a place still held to be a Buddhist site by the eastern Bhutanese. The account is totally lacking in Version A, which passes directly to the story of the saint's construction of the beautiful little *stūpa*-temple of Zlum-brtsegs lHa-khang in sPa-gro. This exquisite building, still standing in sPa-gro, was sited geomantically in order to tame the malignant spirit of the snake-shaped mountain which divides the main sPa-gro valley from that of Dol-po. The exceptionally fine wall paintings on its three floors are of a late period, having been commissioned by the 25th Head Abbot of Bhutan, Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan (regn. 1836-9).<sup>127</sup> He enlarged the ground floor with a bigger outer wall and restored the basic edifice with a set of huge pillars whose sides bear the names of the villages from which they were carried. The basic structure is, however, undoubtedly the one built by Thang-stong rGyal-po as confirmed by both versions of his biography and all the local traditions. The account in the biographies<sup>128</sup> is particularly interesting for the mention of the saint's followers from the Indian kingdom of Kāmata who later made offerings to the temple itself. Thang-stong rGyal-po's encounter with the king of Kāmata after a later journey which took him through western Bhutan down to India is found in Version B (ff.149a-153a). I do not remember seeing mention of this in Version A but certainty on this point will only be reached when the work becomes available again.

The narrative continues with the story of how the saint went about collecting offerings of iron for his bridge at Chu-bo-ri and how he built a number of bridges in this area. The first of them was the one at rTa-mchog-sgang, where he also built the temple that was to become the seat of the *rTa-mchog Chos-rje* (Version A, ff. 131b-132a). A further bridge was built at Bar-grong close to dBang-'dus Pho-brang (f. 133a); it is no longer standing and all that remains is a pile of the original chains on the river-bank. He built another at the confluence of the Chu-mo and Chu-pho rivers in the Shar district (f. 134a), probably not to be confused with the Pho-chu and Mo-chu rivers of sPu-na-kha. His journeys were marked by several unsuccessful attempts on his life by people who wanted to steal the gold and turquoise he had received as gifts. The iron he collected was forged into seven thousand links by eighteen blacksmiths from five villages in sPa-gro. At least one of these villages, that of Bye'u, is still inhabited by families of blacksmiths. The links, together with all the gifts of grain and other things he had received, were packed into 1,400 loads and taken by the sPa-gro people across the border to Phag-ri. Version B (f. 84a) maintains they did this because a bridge at Chu-bo-ri



Plate 18. *right* The bridge-builder Thang-stong rGyal-po (1385–1464), rare soapstone (?) figurine. By kind permission, Scratton Collection, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

*left* Slate-carving of Thang-stong rGyal-po at Srin-mo-rdo-kha rDzong, Thim-phu. Photo by Anthony Aris.

would help them to make the pilgrimage to lHa-sa. It also says (on f. 86b) that Kun-bzang 'Phags-pa, the *Chos-rgyal* of rGyal-rtse (also referred to as *bDag-po* Rab-brtan) helped to build the saint's new temple at Phag-ri and to transport the iron links to Chu-bo-ri. This prince's edict (dated 1440) appears in the 'Chronicles of Gyantse' translated by Tucci (1949:662-670); there is specific mention (on f. 36) of the duty of the Phag-ri people to transport loads for the government. The edict was issued just six years after the alleged date of Thang-stong rGyal-po's visit to western Bhutan.

The miraculous element in Version A of the biography is just as strong as in Version B, but it is clear that the former work forms a more solid basis for any approach to the saint as an historical figure. Unfortunately, our sources do not permit more than a bare glimpse at what happened to the legacy of the saint in Bhutan. The family of the *rTa-mchog Chos-rje* probably maintained a link with Chu-bo-ri where the incarnations of Thang-stong rGyal-po held authority. The other temples he built in Bhutan (namely Phur-rdo dGon-pa, Dol-steng Sil-ma'i lHa-khang and Zlum-brtsegs lHa-khang) may have been affiliated to rTa-mchog-sgang. The latter place is almost certainly the one referred to as belonging to the lCags-zam-pa school in a letter written by *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal to his enemy, the *gTsang sDe-srid* (PBP, Vol. *Nga*, f. 109a-b). It is mentioned along with two Ka-thog-pa monasteries as being opposed to the *Zhabs-drung's* rule. The author of *LCB II* says (on f. 76b) that the lCags-zam-pa in Bhutan were among the five schools of enemy lamas, and that their principal seat at rTa-mchog-sgang was destroyed. It was later restored by the 4th '*Brug sDe-srid*, bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (regn. 1680-95). He commissioned the *rDzong-dpon* A'u Tshering to undertake the work of reconstruction as a penance for his sins. The family must have been reinstated with some of their old rights and privileges at that time. Today they preserve a status only as members of a faded ecclesiastical gentry and are otherwise indistinguishable from the peasantry at large. The heritage of the bridge-builder is preserved in the country through the continuity of his 'life-sustaining' (*tshe-grub*) rituals which are still quite popular. The iconographic form (Plate 18) of the saint shows him holding in his left hand the vase (*tshe-bum*) which symbolises this ritual cycle, and in his right hand a few links of iron chain which represent his bridges.

### gNas-rnying-pa

The great monastery of gNas-rnying which lies some miles south-east of rGyal-rtse has enjoyed a continuous history from the ninth century, if we are to believe its chronicle contained in the *gNas-rnying chos-'byung*<sup>129</sup> and allow for a period of interruption during and after the reign of Glang Dar-ma. What remained of its ancient frescoes and sculpture after the serious damage inflicted on it during the Younghusband Expedition in 1904 has been studied by Tucci (1932-41: Vol. 4) who first drew attention to the chronicle. It is one of the most convoluted works in Tibetan literature and is used here mainly in regard to the large number of Bhutanese monasteries which were affiliated to gNas-rnying from the 14th to 17th centuries.

King Ral-pa-can of Tibet (805-c.836) is said to have rewarded his minister mGos Khri-bzang with the grant of a large land-holding that came to be called mGos-kyi Phag-ri (after the name of the principal settlement in the Chumbi Valley) or mGos-yul sTong-gsum. The southernmost limit of this principality was marked by the old temple of sKyer-chu in the sPa-gro valley of western Bhutan.<sup>130</sup> gNas-rnying itself is held to have been founded by mGos Khyang-mgos-rtsal, one of the two sons of the minister. He installed as abbot the family guru, 'Jam-dpal gSang-ba of the rGya clan and it was a family belonging to this clan which is claimed to have provided the successive incumbents to the abbacy, just as another branch of the rGya supplied the incumbents of the principal 'Brug-pa foundation at Ra-lung, as we have seen above. The rGya of gNas-rnying intermarried with the descendants of the founder in the mGos clan, but their lineage is traced confusingly to one dByil rGyal-ba Grub-pa of the La-stod district of gTsang. The monastery was reconsecrated by the great Indian teacher Atīśa who arrived in Tibet in 1042 and it was presented with all its estates to one of his disciples, *mKhan-po* Yol-chen-po, by a member of the family called rGya Jo-sras Phur-ba. gNas-rnying appears to have become one of the important centres of the bKa'-gdams-pa school which stems from Atīśa, though the religious interests of the family also linked it to all the other emerging schools. The monastery clearly underwent many changes of fortune, and the list provided in the chronicle of its forty-four successive abbots properly begins with one dKon-mchog-mkhar of La-stod, the associate of 'Bre Shes-rab-'bar (a chief disciple of Atīśa), Kun-dga' sNying-po (1092-1158, founder of the Sa-skyā school) and the famous yogin Khyung-po rNal-'byor. The bKa'-gdams-pa character of the monastery, however, seems to have been preserved and it is no surprise to find it later becoming very closely associated with the so-called 'New bKa'-gdams-pa' or dGe-lugs-pa school founded by Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419).

According to Bhutanese tradition it was an abbot of gNas-rnying called 'Chi-med Rab-rgyas, a disciple of Tsong-kha-pa, who brought the monastery

into the fold of the dGe-lugs-pa and extended its influence south into Bhutan. The long list of monasteries<sup>131</sup> which are claimed to have been founded by him in the western valleys probably represent most of the holdings of the gNas-rnying-pa school in Bhutan; they are more likely to have been established by a succession of the gNas-rnying abbots. The *gNas-rnying chos-'byung* never seems to have been available to Bhutanese historians though at least a part of it was written at the specific behest of one of their followers from the Bhutanese monastery of dGon-gsar-kha called *Bla-ma* bDe-legs. It was he who requested the monk Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan from gNas-rnying to compose sketches of the lives of two of the head abbots of gNas-rnying who had had close relations with Bhutan. The abbots, who were brothers, were Rin-chen-grub (1403-52) and rGyal-mtshan Rin-chen (1405-68). Their lives occupy ff. 47a-53b of the *gNas-rnying chos-'byung* and were included in the work at the time of its compilation. The life of the elder brother was written in 1457 (*me-mo-glang*) just five years after his death. That of the younger brother was probably also written soon after his death, though no date is provided. Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan points out (on ff. 49a and 53b) that he had written extended biographies of the two abbots but I do not know if these have survived.

The father of the two brothers, Rin-chen rGyal-mtshan, had preceded them as abbot of gNas-rnying. In spite of severe criticism, he had received permission from the prince of rGyal-rtse, *bDag-po Nang-chen* Kun-dga'-'phags, to give up his vows and take a wife in order to ensure the continuity of his line. The lady he chose came from the sDing-ma (or lDing-ma) family who were close allies of the Sa-skyapa hierarchs. The sons born to this couple received some of their training at the hands of the two most famous disciples of Tsong-kha-pa, namely mKhas-grub-rje (1385-1438) and rGyal-tshab-rje (1364-1432). The elder brother, Rin-chen-grub, ruled as the abbot of gNas-rnying for thirty-one years from the age of twenty to fifty (*more tibetico*), in the course of which he paid two visits to what are described as 'our main and branch monasteries in the Southern Land of Four Approaches'. However, it is in the biographical sketch devoted to his younger brother, rGyal-mtshan Rin-chen, that most of the information concerning these monasteries is found. Unfortunately the origins of only one of them, rDzong-brag-kha in the sPa-gro valley, are properly explained, and these tie in very well with the picture afforded in a local text. This is the untitled 'guide' (*gnas-yig*) to rDzong-brag-kha, preserved in a manuscript belonging to the present *rDzong-brag Chos-rje* who kindly allowed me to copy it. Byang-chub bZang-po, provincial abbot of the state monastery in sPa-gro, composed the guide, probably in the 19th century, after completing certain works of restoration and enlargement there.

rDzong-brag-kha ('The Rock Fortress') (Plate 19) is one of those spectacular cliff-hanging complexes which are found all over the area. In sPa-gro it stands second only to sTag-tshang for the beauty of its location and architecture. Its foundation is ascribed in the chronicle (f. 50b) to *Grub-thob* mGon-po rDo-rje who was the nephew of a certain *Kun-mkhyen Mu-srang-pa* dPal-ldan Seng-ge from 'the old and proud monastery (*dgon-rnying dregs-pa-can*) of Mu-srang at sTag-rtse in La-stod Byang'. Both the chronicle and the guide<sup>132</sup> assert that mGon-po rDo-rje was sent south to Bhutan by one of the gNas-rnying abbots, *rNam-mkhyen* Rin-chen bSam-gtan, whose dates I cannot provide but who appears to have lived in the 14th to 15th centuries. The *grub-thob*, it is said, was directed by the abbot to recover a *gter-ma* in the form of 'a relic of the Sugata' from a particular rock in sPa-gro. The story explaining how mGon-po rDo-rje did this is recounted with all the zest of high adventure. In the course of it we are supplied with folk etymologies for several of the place-names at the lower end of the valley and these are all reproduced with the accompanying legend in *LCB* II (ff. 85b-86b). The quest for the *gter-ma* ended with its discovery at rDzong-brag-kha where a brick *stūpa* was built to contain it. It is the famous mChod-rten dKar-mo 'Gul-shes ('The White Stupa Which Moves'), so named because it is said to shake of its own accord on certain occasions. There are constant references to it as a place of pilgrimage in all the later biographical material from Bhutan. The line of the *rDzong-brag Chos-rje* claims descent from an unnamed incarnation of mGon-po rDo-rje and one of its two branches still act today as custodians of the main temple at rDzong-brag-kha. The other is said to have died out. The fact that their temple once contained a flourishing community of the gNas-rnying-pa school has been completely forgotten and the only reference to this in the local literature comes in the guide in a hidden form (see Note 132). As we shall see, the family had good cause to forget its true origins. The present *chos-rje* maintains that mGon-po rDo-rje was a lama of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa. He has no male heir or nephew and the local opinion is that the line will die out with him.

The impression given in the chronicle is that by the first half of the 15th century the gNas-rnying-pa were very firmly established in the western valleys. The biographical sketch devoted to rGyal-mtshan Rin-chen deals almost exclusively with his activities in Bhutan. We find him fully occupied there in renewing the links formed by his predecessors, and founding new temples and monasteries. In sPa-gro he took the initiative in settling a bitter feud between the villages surrounding rDzong-brag-kha and another group further up the valley. He made substantial gifts to all the contending parties and extracted from them an oath to renounce the feud for a period of twelve years. In Thim-phu and sPa-gro we find him enjoying close and friendly





Plate 19. The old gNas-rnying-pa foundation of rDzong-brag-kha in sPa-gro.

relations with some of the 'Brug-pa families who descend from *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po, particularly Drung-drung rGyal-'dzom (whom we met on p. 177) at the monastery of bDe-chen-phug. It was still the age when sectarian rivalries were more the product of conflict between lay patrons than the result of institutional narrowness. The gNas-rnying-pa themselves appear to have drawn on all the emergent schools and it is unlikely that they would have considered themselves part of the dGe-lugs-pa order during this period. It is not clear how their Bhutanese monasteries were administered or how they were formally linked to the mother-house at gNas-rnying. Some of the wealth derived from the monastic estates would have been payable to gNas-rnying as a tax in the same way that one presumes the branches of some of the other schools had to fulfil certain secular obligations to their head monastery in Tibet.

At all events the gNas-rnying-pa were a late arrival. Although certain families must have risen to positions of power and authority as their patrons, these probably never compared with the old 'Brug-pa families who had risen to prominence long before. While in terms of the number and diffusion of their monasteries they seem to have come close to the 'Brug-pa, their foundations did not lie so deep in the Bhutanese soil. Consequently they appear to have collapsed as an integrated force when *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal unified the country under 'Brug-pa rule in the first half of the 17th century. Nothing is revealed about how this happened, but they are now affirmed (in *LCB* II, f. 88b) to have been among the schools attached to the group of five enemy lamas who sided with the *gTsang sDe-srid* against the *Zhabs-drung*. The leader of the gNas-rnying-pa at that time may have been *Bla-ma* dPal-ldan of Wang Glang-ma-lung who led the attack on the *Zhabs-drung's* fortress at Srin-mo-rdo-kha in about 1530 and who lost his life in the battle (*LCB* I, f. 33b). In sPa-gro the story is still told how one of the gNas-rnying-pa monasteries, dPal-ri dGon-pa, was stripped of its golden roof ornament as a mark of official proscription. On the opposite side of the valley to that monastery stand the shrines of the rDzong-brag-kha complex whose hereditary incumbents have quite forgotten their former affiliations with the gNas-rnying-pa school. In the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (1689-1713) the troubles that led to his murder are attributed to his enemy *sDe-srid* 'Brug Rab-rgyas (rcgn. 1707-19) being the incarnation of the *gNas-rnying rJe-btsun-ma* (f. 117b). The latter had sworn vengeance on the *Zhabs-drung* when the gNas-rnying-pa were being deprived of their livelihood and facing expulsion from the country.

### Sa-skyapa

With the exception of the rNying-ma-pa, the only order permitted to flourish alongside the ruling 'Brug-pa school was that of the Sa-skyapa which



had dominated Tibet under Mongol patronage during the century from 1254 to 1354. They were the last to arrive in Bhutan and, in view of their later survival, it is surprising how very little they come to light in the records.

The temple of lHa-lding isolated to the north of sPa-gro probably had connections with Sa-skya. It is said to have been founded by a lama called dPa'-bo sTag-sham-can in the 5th cycle (1267-1326). His consort, Me-tog gSal-sgron, came from the ruling family of Sa-skya and it is from there, the chief monastery of the order, that the main image of lHa-lding is said to have been brought (*LCB*, ff. 86b-87a). Almost all that we have to go on for the true history of the Sa-skya-pa in Bhutan, however, is the statement in *LCB* II (f. 89a-b) that one 'Phrin-las Rab-yangs founded a number of monasteries in the 8th cycle (1447-1506). These included sPyi-zhing in Wang-yul, Shel-dmar dGon-pa in sKyabs-khra and sNe-ba dGon-pa in Shel-sna, the first of these being the main seat. 'Phrin-las Rab-yangs belonged to the disciple-lineage that stemmed from Kun-dga' bZang-po (1382-1444), the founder of the Ngor-pa sub-school of the Sa-skya-pa. He is said to have been followed by another lama belonging to the Ngor-pa branch, a certain *Grub-thob* Nya-rong Don-grub, who founded two monasteries in the northern region of Bhutan, namely Ri-tshogs dGon-pa and Dol-ma-can. The main branch of the Sa-skya-pa was introduced, about the same time it seems, by the *rKyang-'dur Pan-chen* sGra-pa who established sPa-gar dGon-pa in Wang-yul, Shar-wang dGon-pa in Nags-rnying and Phang-ye dGon-pa in the Shar district. Each of these sets of Sa-skya-pa monasteries is said to have had its own lineage of lamas, the most famous being the one attached to Phyi-zhing. Their chronicle, known as the *Phyi-zhing bla-ma'i gdan-rabs*, is rumoured to exist. sPa-gar, the principal monastery of the group founded by the *rKyang-'dur Pan-chen*, was 'colonised' by *mKhas-grub* Kun-dga' rGya-mtsho, a famous 'Brug-pa lama of the early 18th century. The place must have already gone into decline by the time he brought it into the 'Brug-pa fold. In fact all the Sa-skya-pa foundations appear to have died a natural death in the face of 'Brug-pa supremacy. Memories of the Sa-skya-pa are preserved in folk tales still recited in the Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha valleys. They all tell of the humorous exploits of bKra-shis, the lay servant of the *Phyi-zhing Bla-ma*, who constantly outwitted his master. Another set of satirical stories centre in the same way around the figure of an ordinary layman, Wang 'Brug-rgyal, who occupied himself in discomfiting the powerful *rDzong-dpon* of Thim-phu. Both bKra-shis and Wang 'Brug-rgyal correspond to the legendary Tibetan joker, *A-khu* sTon-pa.

The reason why the Sa-skya-pa were permitted to co-exist with the 'Brug-pa is perfectly clear. The *Zhabs-drung* was friendly with the leaders of the Sa-skya-pa school throughout his life. <sup>133</sup> As we shall see, he twice used them

as intermediaries after he had come to Bhutan when he was in conflict with the Tibetan authorities. In both cases the Sa-skyapa intervention led to temporary peace. Later a marriage was arranged between the *Zhabs-drung's* son 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje and a lady from an important family allied to the Sa-skyapa.<sup>134</sup> In view of these friendly relations it is hardly surprising to find him and his successors favouring the branch of their school that had been established in Bhutan some two centuries or so earlier.

### Some conclusions

One of the apparent failings of the source material is that it assembles the complex mosaic of Buddhist schools that took root in Bhutan in such a way that the basic, emergent pattern might apply to almost any region of the lamaist world; at no point are we in touch with the features that distinguish Bhutanese life and society from those of its neighbours. The conceptual categories of Tibetan Buddhism, the unchanging qualities of the literature, the very purpose and nature of that literature have together exerted a powerful equalising effect upon all circumstances of place and time. We are transported to the 'shared' world of Tradition where one century looks like any other and where human motivation is always simple as in a fairy story. Moreover, while the lay strata remains elusive, the dominant spiritual forms are invariably expressed in terms of universals. The strength of the recording tradition seems to depend largely on those instances when certain vital figures are seen to transcend the morass of hagiography by revitalizing the ancient clichés of experience. Even in such cases, however, very little of the individual personality of the subject comes to light. We are on occasion afforded a glimpse of broader historical forces at play, but again these are of a fortuitous nature and incidental to the main concern, which is to plot a course to enlightenment along lines that are mainly pre-determined. Paradoxically therefore, the resilience of the spiritual tradition and the values which underlie it present certain obstacles to the study of its history.

Despite these difficulties, even the most superficial level of analysis would suggest some conclusions that hold true for the early history of western Bhutan where these schools gained authority. It can be noticed firstly that to bring a sense of order to the diffuse material available, each school has here been considered separately; but this unitary approach has inevitably blurred the many points of contact which a cohesive narrative account would otherwise reveal. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that such an account would convey a picture any the less fragmented than the one given here; this is because the schools and lineages remained in a state of constant fission set against a backcloth of ethnic and geographical complexity.

It is remarkable how many of the founding figures who stand at the head of their traditions in Tibet were so active in Bhutan that offshoots of their

schools or lineages developed there too. As we have seen, this is true to a varying degree of *rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa*, *Klong-chen-pa Dri-med 'Od-zer*, *Loras-pa dBang-phyug brTson-'grus*, *'Ba'-ra-ba rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang*, *Padma Gling-pa* and *'Brug-pa Kun-legs*. Of these, only *Padma Gling-pa* was a native of Bhutan. The others were attracted to the area by the great pilgrim shrines, by the search for local patronage and recognition and by the desire to escape from the turmoils of Tibetan politics to the peace of the secluded Bhutanese valleys. Some of these patriarchal figures inspired local traditions linked in later history to the mainstream of their schools in Tibet, and were themselves given the rôle in Bhutan of great cultural heroes. The most notable of this type were *Thang-stong rGyal-po*, *Padma Gling-pa* and *'Brug-pa Kun-legs* - all of whom were active in the 15th and 16th centuries. The songs and dances attributed to them enjoy a wide currency far beyond the few families who claim descent from them. Moreover, these folk traditions are cast in a local mode which contrasts them with the Tibetan traditions that are also associated with the names of these figures. The fact that the *'Brug-pa* school which later rose to dominance lacked a great figure who had been active in Bhutan at the beginning of its history meant that it had to create its own folk hero: *Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po*.

In trying to trace the local development of Buddhist schools no mention has been made of the many isolated figures and communities that stand removed from the broader patterns. These include the two Indian teachers *Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas* of the 11th century and *Vanaratna* ('the last of the Pandits', 1384-1468).<sup>135</sup> Even though there is no doubt about the visit of the latter, neither left any discernible effect apart from the places that are still associated with them. One or two monasteries in the north of the country are classed as having belonged to the *Shing-rta-pa* school, an offshoot of the 'reformed' *dGe-lugs-pa*, introduced to that area by the disciples of *'Phan-yul-pa dPal-ldan rDo-rje*, who was in turn one of the chief disciples of *Tsong-kha-pa* (1357-1419).<sup>136</sup> The *Shing-rta-pa* may have been among the local schools opposed to the *Zhabs-drung*. The visit of *Tsong-kha-pa* himself to *Bum-thang* was noticed in Part One, Chapter 4. At least one important family in the *sKyabs-khra* ('Chapcha') district had its origins in the *'Bri-khung-pa* school but it became totally absorbed into the *rNying-ma-pa* and *'Brug-pa* (Aris 1976:619 Note). The record could be expanded indefinitely.

Only the slenderest of evidence points to the area of 'proto-Bhutan' coming under the control of various central Tibetan governments. The *Sa-skya*, *Rin-spungs* and *gTsang-pa* authorities have each appeared briefly on the local scene. Their sporadic efforts, insofar as we can determine their nature at all, seem to have been directed towards the subjugation of those districts most accessible from Tibet. That they may for some periods have been

successful has been suggested by the existence of the minor official posts in Bhutan of *mi-dpon*, *spyi-dpon* and *brgya-dpon*. These probably took on a hereditary nature which became divorced from any Tibetan authority. By contrast, the evidence pointing to the existence of ecclesiastical estates governed either by Tibetan or local families is overwhelming. These were autonomous and had nothing to do with any Tibetan government as far as we can see. So numerous were they that one wonders whether by the early 17th century there were indeed any communities in the main western valleys that were not tied as patrons to the schools that had become implanted there during the preceding centuries. Only in the eastern area did there still survive the ancient pattern of clan rule; but even in those districts it was noticed that forms of religious rule had begun to be established. It is, however, particularly in the fragmented history of western Bhutan that there gleams and fades and gleams again an ideal as enduring and impressive as the old buildings which still testify to its early attraction, namely that an enlightened being should take charge of the destinies of lesser mortals. That which came to be regarded as the triumphant fulfilment of the ideal by *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, which led to the ultimate unification of Bhutan and which occasioned all the attempts to perpetuate his rule, form the main theme to Part Three which follows now.



Plate 20. *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (1594?1651). sPa-gro rDzong Collection.

## **PART THREE**

### **The Zhab-drung and the Creation of Bhutan (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries)**





Plate 21. The *Zhab-drung* in wrathful aspect. Wall-painting in the *dgon-khang* of dBang-'dus Pho-brang rDzong.

## CHAPTER 1: THE LIFE OF THE ZHABS-DRUNG (1594–?1651)

The story of the *Zhabs-drung*'s life and death is the story of the founding of Bhutan as we can still recognise it today despite the constitutional changes that were introduced at the beginning of this century with the establishment of an hereditary monarchy. While the account of his life reveals the first steps towards the creation of a unified state, the peculiar circumstances surrounding his death seem to provide the most important clue to an understanding of the theocracy which was his enduring legacy. This chapter therefore explores his life, the next one his death, and the third his regency and succession. Of crucial importance is an evaluation of the available sources.

### The Biography

The standard, undated biography (*PBP*) of the *Zhabs-drung* by *gTsang mKhan-chen* 'Jam-dbyangs dPal-ldan rGya-mtsho (1610-84) is one of the most deeply frustrating works in the historical literature of Bhutan. The author belonged to the Karma-pa school and was one of the most accomplished scholars of his day, but he was not personally very well acquainted with his subject and seems to have spent only short periods in his company. He relied mainly on a few Bhutanese informants and on an existing chronological list of the *Zhabs-drung*'s achievements. These circumstances would augur well for the work except that the author's own spiritual and scholarly accomplishments tend to obscure his subject. The *Zhabs-drung* emerges from the work a ghostly figure wrapped in the complicated categories of Buddhist thought to which his activities are correlated throughout by the author. A little of his resoluteness and sense of humour survives the constant padding. We are also made aware of his central preoccupation: namely his obligation both as hereditary leader of the 'Brug-pa and as the incarnation of its greatest scholar to defend the school against its political enemies, while still remaining true to the fundamental Buddhist call for compassion and meekness. Traditionally these apparent poles are harmonised by the lama identifying himself closely with the guardian deities of his school, whose wrath is said to issue from a heart of compassion. This notion was intensely developed in Tibet for, quite apart from its systematic use in tantric medita-



-tion, it provided a happy rationale for the activities of political monks who were engaged either in defending their own schools or in attacking others. In Bhutan it seems to have blended easily with the tough and resilient qualities of its people, and in the new state created by the *Zhabs-drung* it very soon became enshrined in a host of public rituals. For the local chronicler it was the hold which the *Zhabs-drung* exerted over the guardian deities of the 'Brug-pa and his ability to convert the local gods of the country which served to account for his defeat of all external and internal enemies. While this is by no means the dominant theme in the biography of *gTsang mKhan-chen*, it was brought into the foreground in the synoptic accounts provided by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal (in *LCB* I, ff. 12a-54a) and by Shākya Rin-chen (in Vol. *Ka* of his *Collected Works*). It was the former of these versions which really came to influence the historical consciousness of the Bhutanese; when traditional scholars today speak of the *Zhabs-drung* they have in mind the masterful character, surrounded by his 'familiar' spirits, as culled by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal from the chimerical bulk of the 'standard' biography which, although 'standard', is not often consulted.

The best insight into the forces which compelled the author of this work is provided in his own autobiography<sup>1</sup> where we find that an inconceivable wealth of Buddhist concepts have been applied to the story of his experiences in a far less artificial manner than that shown in his life of the *Zhabs-drung*. *gTsang mKhan-chen* was a great scholar-sage whose every experience was recalled as open confirmation of the truths he had encountered in a lifetime of reading and meditation. The abstractions he wove around the smallest event occupied all his waking hours and nowhere is this more evident than in the fascinating account of his three trips to India.<sup>2</sup> There we find him totally engrossed in a world of tantric visions and encounters, each of them sparked off by a chain of associations which linked his extensive readings on the ancient land of the Buddha with the details of life in Cooch Bihar and Assam in the middle years of the 17th century. Although the Buddhist faith had long since disappeared from the land of its origin, he saw himself moving still in the same society which had produced the Lord Buddha who, for him, remained the central figure of his world.<sup>3</sup> We learn practically nothing about 'real' conditions obtaining at that time in Cooch Bihar and Assam but on its own grounds his account is quite as honest and valuable as the detailed and 'rational' picture of northern India given later by 'Jig-med Gling-pa in his *gTam-tshogs*.

In his biography of the *Zhabs-drung*, however, the imaginative preoccupations which so dominate *gTsang mKhan-chen's* own life lose their power and direction when applied to events he never witnessed himself. Bhutanese historians have consequently been hard put to find the pith and substance of

the *Zhabs-drung's* doings in this work and both of the figures mentioned above who used it to produce their own accounts adopted a rigorous process of selection which emphasises their interest in the rôle of the guardian divinities. While their versions are very similar in their general arrangement, both are inevitably marked by personal idiosyncracies of choice; the one by Shākya Rin-chen tends to put more stress on the *Zhabs-drung's* artistic interests, while that by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal brings in some extra evidence on the later years of the *Zhabs-drung's* life as contained in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (1638-96).<sup>4</sup>

### His Youth and Education in Tibet

Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (the *Zhabs-drung*) (Plates 20 and 21) was born in 1594 at the ancestral monastery of mGar-grong in Tibet near the oldest foundation of his school at 'Brug Byang-chub-gling. His father, bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma (1567-1619), was then twenty-eight years old and his grandfather, grandfather, Mi-pham Chos-rgyal (1543-1606), was still reigning as the 17th prince-abbot of the 'Brug-pa school from its main seat at Ra-lung. Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal was therefore born as heir not only to the main monasteries and estates with which his father had been invested, but also as the destined successor to the chief throne of the 'Brug-pa hierarchs. It never seems to have been his grandfather's intention to step down in favour of his son, or even bequeath him the throne after his death; instead, Mi-pham Chos-rgyal looked to his grandson, the *Zhabs-drung*, to continue the line, and so from an early age he was groomed to fulfil that aim.

The *Zhabs-drung's* mother, bSod-nams dPal-gyi Bu-khrid, was the daughter of the governor of the lHa-sa district, an official who bore the title *sDe-pa sKyid-shod-pa*. According to one tradition,<sup>5</sup> she had previously been given in marriage to the ruler, the *gTsang sDe-srid* bsTan-bsrung dBang-po. Following the birth of a daughter (also known by her title, *A-lce Drung*) the couple had separated and it was after this that the lady married bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma. Her estrangement from the ruler may have been a factor in the hostility that developed between him and the *Zhabs-drung*, though this is never suggested in the literature.

The seeds of the trouble which later forced the *Zhabs-drung* to take refuge in Bhutan became apparent very early in his life. Padma dKar-po 'the Omniscient' (1527-92), the greatest scholar of the 'Brug-pa school to whose name there attached enormous prestige, had died two years before the birth of the *Zhabs-drung*. This person, whose scholastic achievements have been compared with those of the great 5th Dalai Lama, also a powerful monk statesman, had been born outside the ruling family of the 'Brug-pa, in a family of the local nobility of Kong-po. He had been recognised as the

incarnation of the founder of the 'Brug-pa school, *gTsang-pa rGya-ras* (1161-1211), in a line of embodiments that passed from *rGyal-dbang-rje* Kun-dga' dPal-'byor (1428-76) to *'Jam-dbyangs* Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523), and thence to him. The incarnation previous to him, Chos-kyi Grags-pa, had also been born outside the ruling family of the 'Brug-pa. There does not, however, appear to have been much tension between the family and these 'external' incarnations during their own lifetimes, but their success in winning patronage for their new monastic foundations in the Bya-yul province north-east of Bhutan seems to have later threatened the cohesion of the school. Thus in spite of the enormous prestige which Padma dKar-po brought to the whole 'Brug-pa tradition, the ruling family at Ra-lung must often have wished that besides being of their spirit, he were also of their blood. It has in fact been claimed<sup>6</sup> that the 15th and 16th centuries saw in Tibet a gradual erosion of the lines of family descent in the old religious aristocracy by the development of the principle of the recognised rebirth. To discover a new incarnation within the ruling family was not only the obvious solution to this problem but also a powerful means of reinforcing the family's claim to semi-divine sanctity.

Some years after the birth of Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, his father entered into retreat for three years. In the course of this he is said to have received signs which confirmed what was alleged to have been the will and prophecy of Padma dKar-po, namely that he would be reborn in the ruling family of the 'Brug-pa. Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal was recognised as his incarnation on the strength of these signs and prophecies, but before long his father, bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma, was invited to give recognition to another claimant, namely the natural son of the hereditary prince of 'Phyong-rgyas. bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma went to 'Phyong-rgyas, subjected the candidate to various tests which he is said to have failed, and politely gave him his tonsure and his name, dPag-bsam dBang-po.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, until near the end of his life (1593-1641) dPag-bsam dBang-po was held to be the true incarnation by his family, by their supporters and by the Tibetan ruler, the *gTsang sDe-srid*, to whom the dispute was subsequently put. The latter's support was given in spite of a clear dismissal of the 'Phyong-rgyas claim by certain other 'Brug-pa lamas from lHa-rtse, whose letter of refusal is quoted in full in *PBP* (Vol. *Ga*, f. 19b).<sup>8</sup>

*Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal was ordained in the minor vows and installed on the throne of 'Brug at the age of eight by his grandfather. The installation was probably intended also as an open declaration of his claim to be Padma dKar-po's incarnation. Thereafter his studies began in earnest, supervised mainly by his father on the basis of a curriculum laid down by his grandfather. One of his principal teachers was the great astrological

scholar lHa-dbang Blo-gros Suresāmatibhadra who had studied under Padma dKar-po.<sup>9</sup> (The Jesuits Cacella and Cabral later met him in the *Zhabs-drung's* company when they came to Bhutan). The *Zhabs-drung's* studies covered every branch of Buddhist scholarship, including logic, medicine, art, tantra and poetry. In addition to these subjects, he was trained in meditation from an early age. At the age of twelve he accompanied his father on a long pilgrimage to the holy sites of central and southern Tibet. These travels also took him to the south-east where his rival, dPag-bsam dBang-po, was already installed on Padma dKar-po's throne at gSang-sngags Chos-gling. The local patron of the monastery, the *sDe-pa Bya-pa*, tried to arrange a celebration to mark a reconciliation between the rivals, but it failed; it appears that the *Zhabs-drung's* throne had been placed at a slightly lower level to that of dPag-bsam dBang-po, and so he refused to participate.

After the death of his grandfather, the *Zhabs-drung* was brought in 1606 at the age of thirteen from 'Brug to Ra-lung and installed as his successor (*rgyal-tshab*), the 18th prince-abbot of the 'Brug-pa. The Jesuit Cabral noted in 1628 that he ranked fifth in the whole Tibetan hierarchy without, however, supplying the names of those who were regarded as his superiors.<sup>10</sup> The ceremony of his enthronement was attended by a large concourse of lamas who represented the schools of the Sa-skyapa, Karma-pa, 'Bri-khung-pa, sTag-lung-pa, Tshal-pa, sTod-'brug and Bar-'brug. The civil authorities were also represented, gifts being received from the following princes: sNe-gdong-rtse-pa, Gong-dkar-pa, sKyid-shod-pa, Shun-pa, 'Phyong-rgyas-pa, Bya-pa, Yar-'brog-pa, rGyal-rtse rTse-chen[-pa] and others.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note here the presence of the 'Phyong-rgyas emmissary; the dispute with that house was still perhaps a quite separate issue to that of the formal succession to the abbatial throne. Neither the *gTsang sDe-srid* nor the dGe-lugs-pa were represented, but various missions from Bhutan were most significantly present. One of these was headed by Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin (alias rTa-mgrin rGyal-mtshan, 1574-1643), the grandson of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and the alleged incarnation of *Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom Zhig-po*.<sup>12</sup> This person was later to become the chief ally of the *Zhabs-drung* in Bhutan. The installation ceremony at Ra-lung was very likely the first occasion when the *Zhabs-drung* came into direct contact with the Bhutanese. There were also a large number of monks from Bhutan who formed part of the established community at Ra-lung. This is certain, because many of them later accompanied him to Bhutan and formed the core of his monastic government there.

Much later he recalled that until he reached the age of nineteen in 1613 he was largely undisturbed by secular affairs and had devoted himself without interruption to his religious studies. Particularly important in view of later developments was the intimacy that developed between him and the head

of the Sa-skya school, bSod-nams dBang-po (1559-1621), from whom he received many teachings. During these years he is also said to have come into close contact with a number of Indian yogins and scholars who came to Ra-lung, particularly with one called A-mri-na-tha. Unfortunately no clues are given as to who they were or where they came from. The *Zhabs-drung's* main teacher continued to be lHa-dbang Blo-gros who no doubt directed his meditational training too. The *Zhabs-drung* is said to have gained considerable mastery in meditation, commanding his servants to throw water on him should he show signs of falling asleep during either the day or night while his retreats lasted. At the same time, his practical skills in painting and sculpture continued to develop.<sup>13</sup>

### The Dispute

At the age of nineteen circumstances began to conspire against him so that four years later he would have to flee into voluntary exile in Bhutan. The *gTsang sDe-srid* had failed to reply to a letter requesting him to pass fair judgement in the dispute over his recognition as the incarnation of Padma dKar-po. Evil omens seen and heard at the *gTsang-pa's* palace of bSam-grub-rtse caused the *Jo-nang rJe-btsun* Tāranātha to warn the ruler that he should come to terms with the *Zhabs-drung* since the latter had control of the powerful protective deities of his school. The *gTsang-pa* therefore agreed to a meeting and so the *Zhabs-drung* at the age of twenty-one eventually set off for bSam-grub-rtse. On his way there he met for the first time the *gTsang mKhan-chén*, his future biographer, when the latter was aged about five or six. On arrival at bSam-grub-rtse the *Zhabs-drung* refused to dismount from his horse and rode up the steps of the palace to the discomfiture of the ruler who had prepared a respectful welcome for him there. Despite this, it is claimed that the ruler, Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal (son of bsTan-bsrung dBang-po), who was then aged only sixteen or seventeen, held a cordial discussion with the *Zhabs-drung*. Nothing is said of the outcome, but it seems that no solution was found to end the dispute. The reaction of the *gTsang-pa*, or those who acted in his name, to an unfortunate incident that occurred on the *Zhabs-drung's* return journey shows that the latter had done little to endear himself to the ruling authorities. At a ferry over the *gTsang-po* called sTag-gru-kha a brawl arose between the lay bodyguards (*sgar-pa*) of the *Zhabs-drung* and those serving the *dPa'-bo sPrul-sku* of lHo-brag, an important Karma-pa lama and ally of the *gTsang-pa*. Both parties insisted they had the right to use the ferry first. During the fight, the ferry carrying the lHo-brag party overturned. The *Zhabs-drung* ordered his men to save them from drowning but it seems that some of them could not be rescued. After his return to Ra-lung, a case was brought against him at the court of the ruler. It appears that his enemies

at 'Phyong-rgyas used this opportunity to advance their claims. The outcome of the case determined that the *Zhabs-drung* should pay a 'manslaughter-fine' (*mi-stong*) for those who had died at the ferry, and also that he should hand over all the ancestral relics of the school which were preserved at Ra-lung. This latter provision is a clear indication that the *gTsang-pa*'s favour of the 'Phyong-rgyas candidate was now in the open. The *Zhabs-drung* refused to comply with these orders. He soon received secret intelligence from a minister who was well disposed to the 'Brug-pa that the ruler was preparing a force to attack Ra-lung and kill him. He is then said to have embarked on a course of black magic which brought about the death of three of the princes hostile to him, namely those of lHa-rtse, 'Phyong-rgyas and lHun-po-rtse.<sup>14</sup> Evil omens appeared all over the *gTsang* province and the *Zhabs-drung*'s biographer claims he witnessed some of them himself. Undeterred, the ruler decided that if reconciliation were impossible the *Zhabs-drung* had now to be eliminated once and for all. At this point the *Zhabs-drung* is said to have had a visionary dream in which he went flying after a raven to a place situated to the south. The bird was taken to be the raven-headed form of Mahākāla, chief protective deity of the 'Brug-pa, and the place to the south was later recognised by the *Zhabs-drung* to be the old monastery of sPang-ri Zam-pa at the top of the Thim-phu valley in western Bhutan. 'The Raven-headed Mahākāla of Action having thus come and conducted him along a path of clear light, gestures of offering this country of the Southern Land to him as his heavenly field (*zhing-khams*) were made' (*PBP*. Vol. *Ga*, f. 124b). This vision was the immediate justification for his rule in Bhutan, later supported by all sorts of prophecies attributed to Padmasambhava. In *LCB* I (f. 23a) we find the corresponding passage has unequivocally introduced the word 'religious estate' (*mchod-gzhis*) for 'heavenly field'. After this vision, he began packing up the most famous relics of his school, chief of which was the 'self-created' image of Karsapani (a form of Avalokiteśvara) which had been found in one of the vertebrae of *gTsang-pa rGya-ras*, the founder of the school, after his cremation (Plate 22). Eleven years later the *Zhabs-drung* confided to the Jesuits Cacella and Cabral that it was the *gTsang sDe-srid*'s plan to take possession of 'a bone of his dead father' which had caused him to flee from Ra-lung.<sup>15</sup> It was of course not the object itself but all that its possession signified for the ruling family of the 'Brug-pa which was at stake. Today it is regarded as the most precious state treasure of Bhutan.

### Flight to Bhutan

When in 1616 at the age of twenty-three the *Zhabs-drung* set off on his fateful journey across the natural barrier of the Himalayas to take refuge in Bhutan, he was following in the footsteps of hundreds of people who

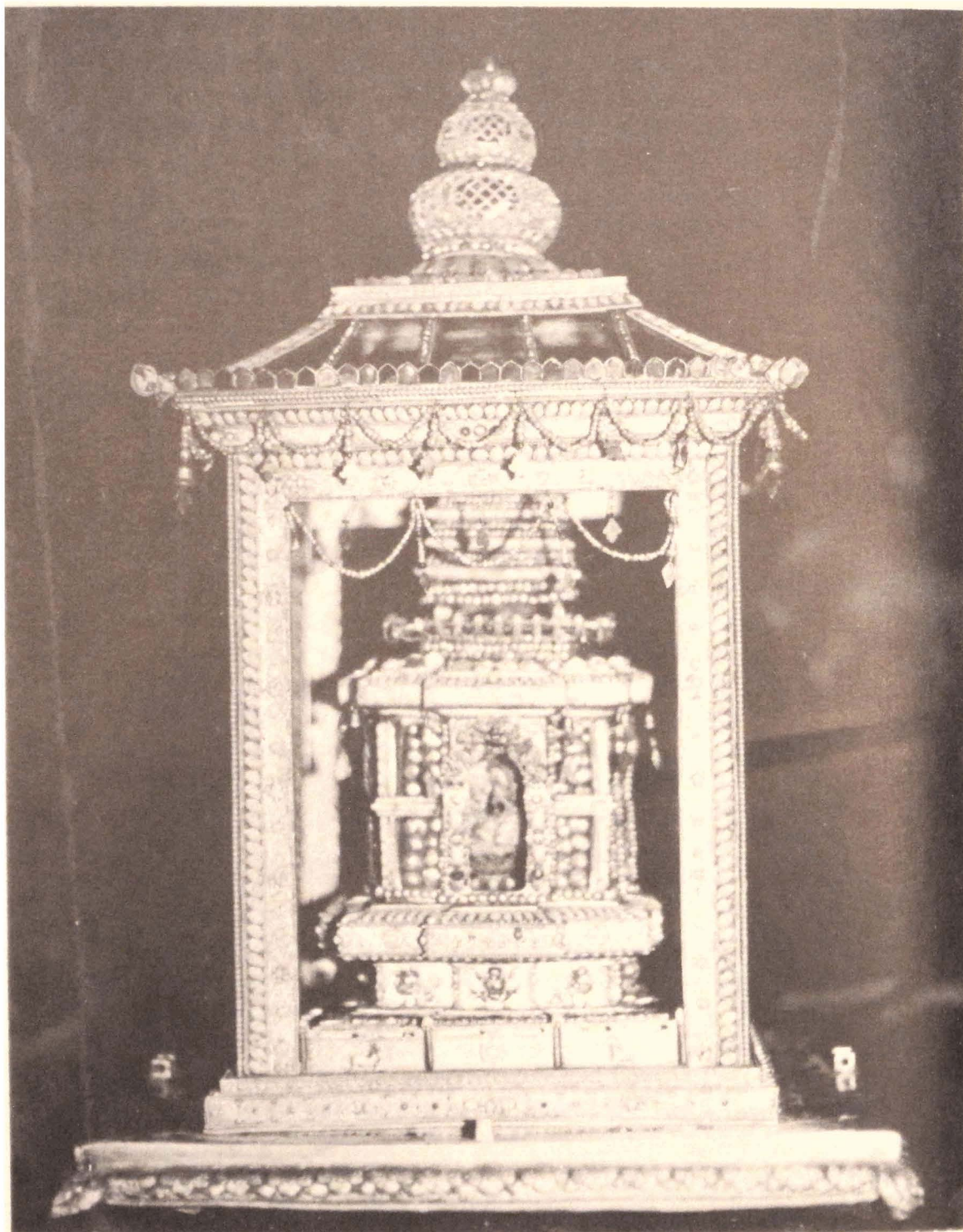


Plate 22. The highly-venerated relic of the 'self-created' Karsapani. Silver reliquary of Newari workmanship preserved in sPu-na-kha rDzong.



from the earliest times had been forced to make the journey south in order to escape from political strife in Tibet. All these had arrived among communities which had themselves long earlier been established by migrants pushed south by upheavals in the north. The *Zhabs-drung's* activities therefore formed part of a long historical process which continues even today; it was so forcibly demonstrated in 1959 with the arrival of thousands of Tibetan refugees. Many circumstances, however, singled out the *Zhabs-drung* from this general movement and helped him become the key figure in Bhutanese history. Not the least of these was the uncompromising attitude he always adopted to his own position as head of the 'Brug-pa school, a huge network of political alliances and spiritual affiliations. As we have seen, many of these links connected the area of western Bhutan with the head monastery of the school at Ra-lung in Tibet. The 'precentor' (*dbu-mdzad*) of the monastery was a Bhutanese who later became the first '*Brug sDe-srid*' ('Deb Rāja') of Bhutan. It was very likely he, bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas, who encouraged the *Zhabs-drung* to flee to Bhutan and it was certainly his family, the 'Obs-mtsho-pa, who first welcomed the *Zhabs-drung* to their home on his arrival in the north-east of the country.

According to *LCB* I (f. 23b) it was a lama of the 'Obs-mtsho-pa, a 'district chief' (*yul-dpon*) of mGar-sa, who sent a letter to the *Zhabs-drung* as he approached the border, inviting him to take over 'the South' since there was no lama or chief who controlled the whole area. The *Zhabs-drung* replied that the lama should himself come to receive him, which he did in the company of an armed force. The *Zhabs-drung* therefore arrived with full local backing. He first spent some time in the northern district of dGon receiving the gifts and homage of the local 'Brug-pa families. Among them are specifically mentioned the 'upper and lower' (*gong-'og*) families of the 'Obs-mtsho-pa concentrated in the pastoral region of La-yag. This set the pattern for much of the rest of the *Zhabs-drung's* lifetime, long periods of which were spent on the move from patron to patron, and this also continued after he had built permanent residences in the central valleys.

From the northern region he came south to the top of the Thim-phu valley where he recognised the old monastery of sPang-ri Zam-pa (built by his forebear, Ngag-dbang Chos-rgyal) from the prophetic vision he had had at Ra-lung. The building is close to the village of dKar-sbe whose inhabitants had long been associated with the 'Brug-pa and who now displayed their loyalty. In a small side-valley nearby stands the even older temple of bDe-chen-phug (Plate 14), the seat of the principal guardian deities of the 'Brug-pa. It must have been there that the *Zhabs-drung* offered his thanksgiving ceremonies for a safe arrival from Tibet. Thereafter, we are told, he gained control over the chief protector still associated with this temple, namely



the form of dGe-bsnyen known as Jag-pa Me-len ('The Fire-Fetching Brigand'). From Thim-phu he went over the 'Bras-la Pass to the sPa-gro valley where he installed himself in another old temple of his school, 'Brug Chos-sdings, next to the ancient market, the largest in western Bhutan.

### The Tibetan Invasions Begin

Sometime after his arrival in sPa-gro (no dates are given) there took place the first of three separate invasions mounted by the Tibetan ruler *gTsang sDe-srid* against the *Zhabs-drung*. The authorities in Tibet had taken control of the school's monasteries at 'Brug and mGar-grong and had sent a threatening letter to the *Zhabs-drung* whose sarcastic and contemptuous reply is quoted in full.<sup>16</sup> Before long the invaders arrived in sPa-gro under the command of an officer called La-dgu-nas and the *Zhabs-drung* retired to the 'Bras-la Pass where he is said to have had another vision of Mahākāla offering him the country and its people as his 'ecclesiastical subjects' (*lha-'bangs*). The battles which ensued are described as a magical show, the *Zhabs-drung* and his troops attired in tantric dress and accoutrements, to the terror of the invaders. More credible is the rôle played by a certain Lug-mi Ser-po from sPa-wang who took up the *Zhabs-drung's* cause and collected together an auxiliary force from the Wang district and other places. The Tibetans succeeded in capturing the temple of 'Brug Chos-sdings in sPa-gro, but after being driven out from there they 'borrowed' the old fort of Hūṃ-ral rDzong which, as we have seen, was the ancient seat of the 'Brug-pa family of the Hūṃ-ral-pa. The *Zhabs-drung*, who never took to the field himself on these occasions, fled from 'Bras-la to the Shar district where he took refuge in Wa-can rDzong, another old fort of his 'Brug-pa allies, descendants of *Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom*. Before long the Tibetan army was defeated and the head, hands and heart of the commander La-dgu-nas were brought to him impaled on a banner. They were later placed in the temple dedicated to the guardian deities at lCags-ri as 'secret supports' (*gsang-rten*). Some objects from the captured temple in sPa-gro were recovered by monks and returned to the *Zhabs-drung* while others came into lay hands and were not returned. The victory, according to the Bhutanese records at least, was quite decisive and the rumour is said to have spread throughout India, Tibet and Hor (an obvious exaggeration) that 'the great army of the *gTsang-pa* had not been able to subdue this single yogin.'

### Meditations and Travels

From his stronghold in the Shar district the *Zhabs-drung* returned to the west and came to the rTa-mgo monastery (Plate 17) of Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin, grandson of the mad saint 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (Plate 16), who

had attended his installation at Ra-lung in 1607. This person presented him with all his estates and thereafter he seems to have become his most effective ally. At rTa-mgo the *Zhabs-drung* settled down for a time in a cave in order to perform tantric rituals aimed at destroying his enemy the *gTsang sDe-srid* Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal, this time with complete success, or so it is claimed. The ruler, his wife and many of his followers died within a month of each other from smallpox. According to *PBP* (f. 31a) the death of Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal was kept secret for three years,<sup>17</sup> but it was known to the *Zhabs-drung* who offered thanksgiving ceremonies. It was at this point that he promulgated the document which came to be incorporated into his personal seal, the *Nga bcu-drug-ma* ('The Sixteen I's):<sup>18</sup>



Fig 5. The great seal of the *Zhabs-drung* (coll. Anthony Aris)

I am he who turns the wheel of the dual system (of spiritual and secular law).

I am everyone's good refuge.

I am he who upholds the teachings of the Glorious 'Brug-pa.

I am the subduer of all who disguise themselves as 'Brug-pa.

I achieve the realisation of the Sarasvati of Composition.

I am the pure source of moral aphorisms.

I am the possessor of an unlimited view.

I am he who refutes those with false views.

I am the possessor of great power in debate.

Who is the rival that does not tremble before me ?

I am the hero who destroys the host of demons.

Who is the strong man that can repulse my power ?

I am mighty in speech that expounds religion.

I am wise in all the sciences.

I am the incarnation prophesied by the patriarchs.

I am the executioner of false incarnations.

After a further period spent in meditation in the same cave, which was partly destroyed by a great earthquake but which he survived, the *Zhabs-drung* set off with his retinue on an important journey to sKya-khra ('Chapcha') in the south at the invitation of local patrons. Chief of these was a wealthy person called Dar-phyug rGyal-mtshan who was in touch with the ruler of the adjoining Indian state of Cooch Bihar, *Rāja* Padma Narayan. The *rāja* learnt of the *Zhabs-drung's* presence in the area and sent him valuable presents, to which the *Zhabs-drung* responded with a letter and his own gifts. A later exchange brought a suggestion from the *Zhabs-drung* that the *rāja* should abjure the worship of Siva and take up that of 'the god Triratna' instead. Padma Narayan responded with an assurance that he had done so and with a gift of what was claimed to be a palm-leaf manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 'which is even now kept in the Bal-po lHa-khang [of bKra-shis-chos rDzong]' (*LCB* I, f. 28b). No doubt it was burnt later in one of the many fires, and a search at lCags-ri for Padma Narayan's letter during the time of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (1689-1713) produced only a copy.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, it is beyond question that the exchange took place and it marked the beginning of formal relations between Bhutan and Cooch Bihar. The *Zhabs-drung's* host at sKya-khra, Dar-phyug rGyal-mtshan, turns up again much later in about 1673 when we find him in Cooch Bihar on favourable terms with the ruler.<sup>20</sup> (Relations with Cooch Bihar were consolidated under the 4th 'Brug sDe-srid, bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (regn. 1680-95)<sup>21</sup> and continued through various vicissitudes down to the first Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1772 which wrested the state from Bhutanese control.)

On returning to rTa-mgo, the *Zhabs-drung* came to hear of the death of his father, bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma, in Tibet. He arranged to have the

corpse brought down over the Himalayas in secret and undertook divinations to determine a favourable site to house the ashes after cremation. The omens pointed to a hill close to rTa-mgo and so in 1620 at the age of twenty-seven he began to construct the temple of lCags-ri ('Cheri'), which was to become his first settled residence (Plate 23). His patrons at sKya-khra supplied quantities of silver and with Newari artisans summoned from the Kathmandu valley of Nepal, the famous silver *stūpa* to contain the ashes was made. It is still there in the temple to this day. It was at lCags-ri that the *Zhabs-drung* first set about organising all the monks in his attendance into a regular community. It began with just thirty monks and their officials. Their code was contained in a document the *Zhabs-drung* had already composed for his old monastery at Ra-lung, known as the *bCa'-yig Chen-mo*. The community later formed the core of the state monasteries of sPu-na-kha and Thim-phu, and by the time of his death it numbered more than 360 monks.<sup>22</sup> The *Zhabs-drung's* old teacher, lHa-dbang Blo-gros (Sureśamati-bhadra), was invited down to be the main teacher of lCags-ri and it was there that he composed some of his best known works.

In 1623 the *Zhabs-drung* entered a three year retreat in total seclusion in a cave above the main temple of lCags-ri, having delegated to various monks his 'secular responsibilities'.<sup>23</sup> He also appointed a representative to Ra-lung which even at this date had not been taken over by the Tibetan authorities.<sup>24</sup> He is said to have written up a sign in the cave, saying: 'Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal Stay Aware! Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal Stay Aware!' Towards the end of this, his longest retreat, he came to a decision to forego his desire for further meditation and to commit himself firmly 'to administer the Teachings according to the dual system [of religious and secular law]' (*LCB* I, f. 31a). He therefore circulated a document to all the 'gods, demons and men' (*lha 'dre mi gsum*) of the 'Southern Land of Four Approaches', enjoining them to abide by his commands and threatening them with severe punishments if they did not. We may assume that up to this point the *Zhabs-drung* had been content to let his destiny reveal itself without much active encouragement on his part. Hereafter he took things more into his own hands, but he always seems to have preferred voluntary submission to direct coercion. There seems every reason to believe that personal charm and magnetism were his most effective weapons. When, however, it came to direct confrontation, he never hesitated. As we shall see, the measures he took in countering active opposition, from inside or outside the country, seem to have been the main cause of his ultimate success.

After the celebrations marking the end of his three year retreat, the *Zhabs-drung* set off eastward on an extended tour of the Shar district in order to re-establish ties with the many families there who were by tradition loyal





Plate 23. *top* The temple of ICags-ri at the top of the Thim-phu Valley, first residence of the *Zhabs-drung* in Bhutan.  
*bottom* sPu-na-kha rDzong, the winter capital, founded 1637. Engraving by William Daniell after a watercolour by Samuel Davis painted in 1783. Reproduced from a copy of Caunter's *Oriental Annual* (1837) in the Indian Institute Library, Oxford, by kind permission.

to the 'Brug-pa. He visited (and presumably took over control of) the monasteries founded there by his forebears and settled a long-standing feud between two branches of the descendants of *Pha-jo* Gar-ston (son of *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom) who for years had been quarrelling over their lands. It was while he was there that he heard of a neighbouring peak called *Bya-ra-sgang* which had an uninterrupted view of the Tibetan border. He seems to have thought it a good idea to post a sentinel there to warn him of a Tibetan invasion, as this would give him time to escape to India.

### The Jesuit Mission

It seems practically certain that it was during this long tour that he met the Jesuits Cacella and Cabral who in 1627 found him encamped in a sort of peripatetic monastery and who accompanied him back to his residence at lCags-ri, spending some eight months in his company. The Jesuits were the first Europeans to enter Bhutan, and the *Relação* which Cacella sent from lCags-ri to his superior at Goa dated 4th October 1627 (see pp.xxxii-iii above) is of the greatest importance for an understanding of the country, its people and the character of the great *Zhabs-drung*. Here at last is a dependable eyewitness account written in terms that strike an immediate note of credibility. It would be as well to pause here briefly to consider just a few of its implications. (Its relation to the evidence contained in the Bhutanese histories is studied separately in Part Five on microfiche.)

The hazards and adventures which the Jesuits faced in reaching the central valleys of Bhutan on their way to Tibet show very clearly that the *Zhabs-drung's* writ at this time only ran in his own court and among his own patrons. It was ' . . . a country where no one takes any action, every one of these men being an absolute lord in his own house.' On a more positive note, Cacella speaks elsewhere of 'the liberty which there is in this kingdom.' And yet the *Zhabs-drung* is described unmistakably as the 'King and at the same time the chief lama.' He had, just a decade after his arrival in the country, attained this position without any serious opposition. His rule was characterised by the 'gentleness for which he is highly reputed,' and this is brought out well in Cacella's words when he says that ' . . . the people have a very voluntary subjection to their king without any obligation on their part to defer to him or without any obligation to follow his doctrine, nor does he have power over the people to make anyone do anything; rather since his principal revenue is in what they give him voluntarily he does not wish to have any of his subjects discontented and every one of them is very free to do what he wants, as the King himself said to us on many occasions when he was talking to us even about his own lamas who are the people most subject to him.' This account of his 'great benevolence' has to be remembered in considering

his reaction to the combination of internal strife and external invasion that he was soon to face, for it was out of these struggles that Bhutan was really created. Only a hint of the coming troubles is provided by Cabral who explained in his letter that he had to depend for his onward journey on 'a lama who is not quite friendly to the king' who was in touch with his enemy in Tibet, the *gTsang sDe-srid* (Wessels 1924:153). Something of the *Zhabs-drung's* political skill, however, is evident in his own dealings with the Jesuits. Despite the 'dislike and coldness' he came to feel for Christianity, though he seems at first to have admired its moral teachings, he was anxious to keep the Jesuits in his court because their presence did him great credit in the eyes of the neighbouring rulers. He even offered them land in *sPa-gro* to build a church and actually lent them a room at *lCags-ri* as a chapel. He also committed some of his own monks to them for instruction. Thus an eye for expediency and a certain capacity for dissimulation is evident. Nevertheless, a strong impression is given of his personal charm, his austerity, his commanding presence and his gifts as a man of letters and the arts, qualities which had attracted a large number of people from all over Tibet and the Himalayas to his court at the time of the Jesuit mission. He evidently felt that his prestige would be badly damaged if the Jesuits left him for Tibet, and it was only with great difficulty that they managed to counter 'the resolution of this man that we should go no further.' Cacella eventually managed to leave, followed some months later by Cabral.

### First Fortress and Local Opposition

In 1629, two years after their mission, the *Zhabs-drung* began building at *Srin-mo rDo-kha* in *Thim-phu* his first major palace, *gSang-sngags Zab-don Pho-brang*. It was strategically sited to control the main route which connected the *Thim-phu* valley with *sPu-na-kha* and the area further east. While it was being built, the whole army of the so-called 'five groups of lamas' (*bla-ma khag nga*) is said to have made its first concerted attack, surrounding the building and cutting off its water supply. (It will be remembered that attempts were made in Part Two to identify these enemy groups with some of the Buddhist schools long since established in Bhutan.) The leader on this occasion was the *Bla-ma dPal-ldan* of *Wang Glang-ma-lung*, identified above as the local leader of the *gNas-rying-pa* school. He was shot dead with a gun and the attack was defeated. *lHa-dbang Blo-gros* was brought from *lCags-ri* to assist in the consecration of the palace, and it was about this time that the *Sa-skyapa* lama, *mThu-stobs dBang-po* (b. 1588), came there too.<sup>25</sup>

### Birth of Heir

Two years later, in 1631, the *Zhabs-drung's* desire for a male heir was realised with the birth of his only child, 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje. We are not told who his mother was, but may speculate that it was a lady called Dam-chos bsTan-'dzin, the daughter of the *chos-rje* of lCang sGang-kha and consequently a descendant of *Pha-jo* 'Brug-sgom's son, Nyi-ma. We know from the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (f. 13a) that after the *Zhabs-drung* had lived with this lady for a long period, he passed her on to his chief ally, Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin, and that the couple had three children, among them bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas himself.<sup>26</sup> Up to this point the *Zhabs-drung* had never taken the vows of a fully ordained monk, only those of the 'minor orders' which permitted him to follow the life of a married lama. Four years before, he had confided to Cacella that he would receive the tonsure of a full monk 'as soon as he has a son who will succeed him in his Kingdom' (*Relação*, f. 15). True to his intention, in the following year (1632) he was ordained at lCags-ri by his old master, lHa-dbang Blo-gros, who was then eighty-four. He also took the vows of a *bodhisattva* in front of the *rang-byon* Karsapani (Plate 22). Nothing more is said in the biographies about the son upon whom he had placed so much hope. He was in fact an invalid and quite incompetent to succeed, as shall become evident in Chapter 3 below.

### Invasions and More Fortresses

In 1634<sup>27</sup> there occurred the second invasion by the *gTsang sDe-srid*, this time organised by bsTan-skyong dBang-po, son of the deceased Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal, at the instigation of the five enemy groups. It took place on a much larger scale and consisted of six columns attacking at various points on the border as far west as sPa-gro and as far east as Bum-thang. This time the *gTsang* forces appear to have been rather more successful for they captured the palace at Srin-mo-rdo-kha and demanded hostages. The *Zhabs-drung* is said to have commented to his followers: 'Don't put me or Māhākala in that line [of hostages]. Apart from that, you yourselves will know what to do.' The Tibetan troops who had captured the palace are supposed to have died in an explosion of the gunpowder store, and the invasion as a whole appears to have been a fiasco. At this point the biographer introduces an account of the arrival of a party of Portuguese who presented the *Zhabs-drung* with a gift of guns, canons, and a telescope, and made him the offer of an army which, however, he declined (*PBP*, ff. 96b-97a). The passage may perhaps derive from a garbled memory of the Portuguese Jesuits who had come seven years earlier.<sup>28</sup>

The next few years were again spent on tour throughout western Bhutan, in the intervals of which the *Zhabs-drung* continued to reside at lCags-ri



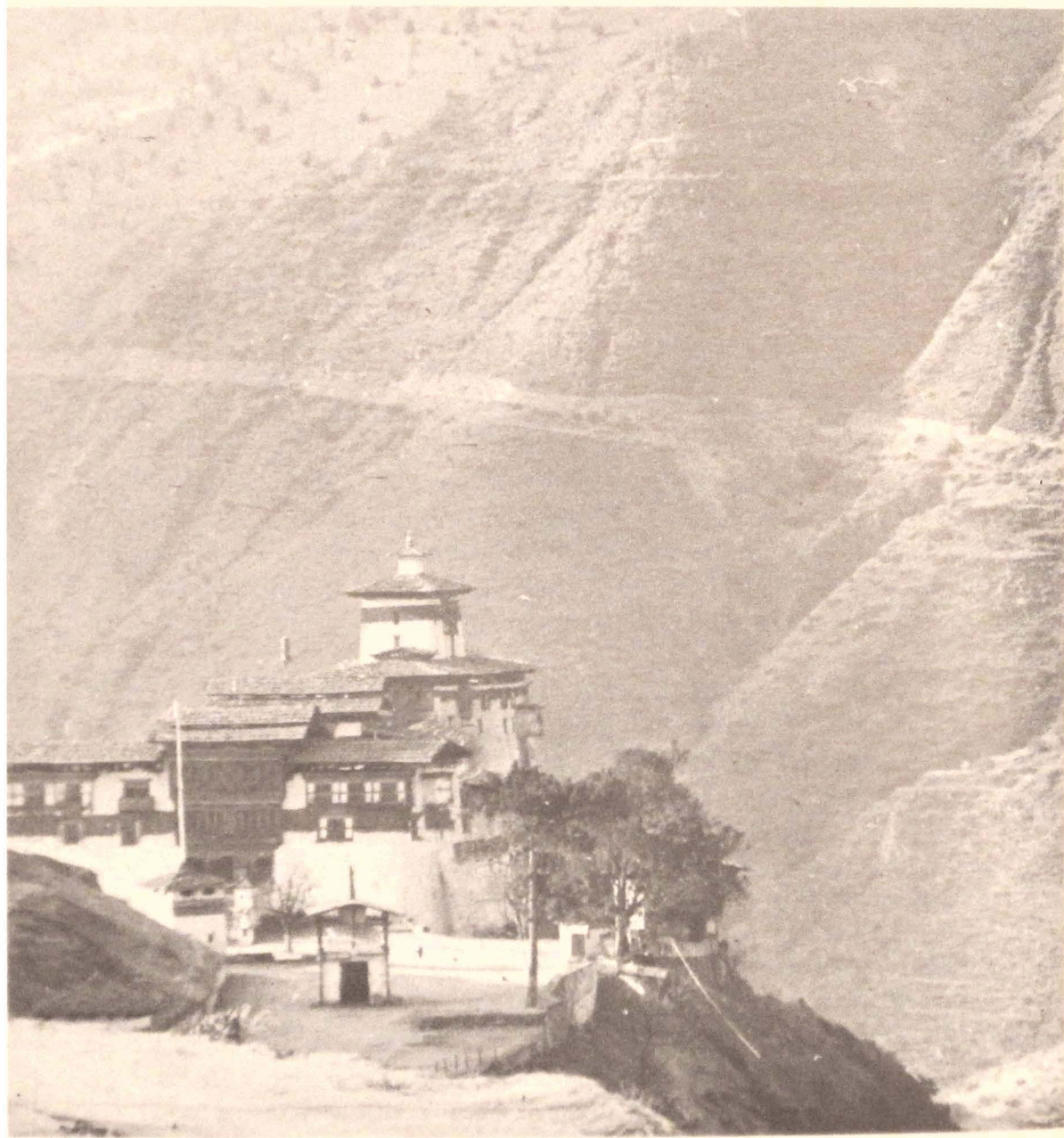


Plate 24. dBang'dus Pho-brang rDzong, founded 1638.

and Srin-mo-rdo-kha. While in the dGon district, the scene of his first arrival, he is supposed to have killed by magic a lama of the 'Ba-ra-ba school. In 1637 he began building the huge fortress of sPu-na-kha, known as sPung-thang bDe-chen Pho-brang rDzong (Plate 23). Located at the confluence of the Pho-chu and Mo-chu rivers, it commanded the whole sweep of this rich valley in the central heartland of the country. The building was designed to accommodate six hundred monks, and the first of these were transferred there from lCags-ri. By the end of the *Zhabs-drung's* reign the state monks who lived there numbered more than 360, as noted above. The original target seems to have been reached about fifty years later and has remained fairly constant ever since. The fortress became the winter capital of the country, the summer capital (Plate 25) being built at the higher altitude of Thim-phu four years later in 1641 when the old fort of rDo-rngon (or rDo-snyug) rDzong was taken over from the lHa-pa. This seasonal arrangement was determined by the pattern of transhumance which still causes some of the Wang people of Thim-phu to migrate to the warmer valley of sPu-na-kha for the winter months. No doubt most members of the monastic community at this time were themselves from the Wang.

In 1638 the *Zhabs-drung* built another fortress, that of dBang-'dus Pho-brang (Plate 24), lower down the Pho-chu Mo-chu river at the point where it is joined by the Dangs-chu. This one became the provincial capital of the Shar district and contained a provincial monastery subject to the authority of the head community at sPu-na-kha. What is not clear from the texts is the degree to which the secular responsibilities of the emergent government were physically separated from the life of the monastic communities in these first fortresses. Today in every one of them there is a clear dividing line between the monastic area and that taken up by the civil officers, and this seems to have been the rule for many centuries. To begin with, however, all secular responsibilities were the concern of monastic officials; but for the increasing presence of lay servitors, who later became admitted to these duties on taking the vow of the 'minor orders', the fortresses appear to have been nothing but huge defensive monasteries, true strongholds of the embattled 'Brug-pa order.

In 1639 the fortresses of sPu-na-kha and dBang-'dus Pho-brang were attacked during the third invasion led by *sDe-pa sGo-lung-pa*, again at the invitation of the five groups of enemy lamas. On the *Zhabs-drung's* side this time we find a son of King Sen-ge rNam-rgyal of La-dwags, who is referred to as *rGyal-po bsTan-'dzin*.<sup>29</sup> The sequence of events is difficult to follow but again a complete victory is claimed for the Bhutanese side, attributed once more to the magical powers of the *Zhabs-drung* who at one point in the campaign had gone to lCags-ri to perform his destructive rituals. There is mention



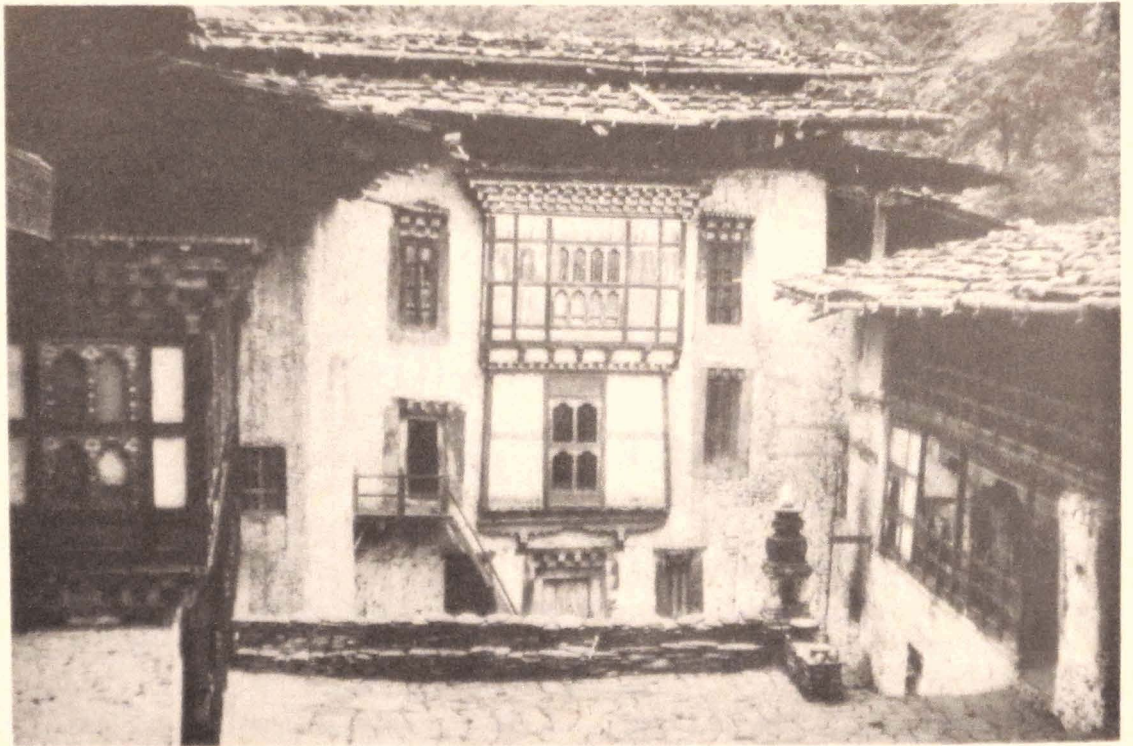
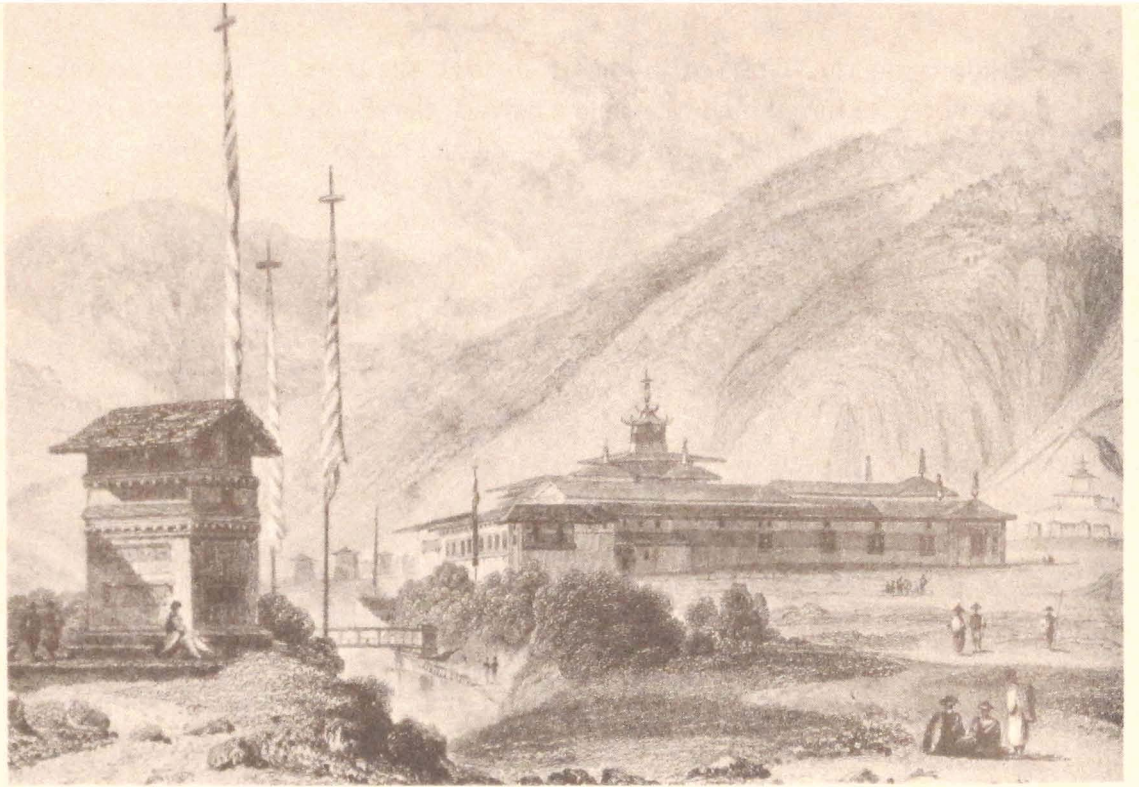


Plate 25. *top* bKra-shis-chos rDzong in Thim-phu, the summer capital, founded 1641. Another Daniell engraving from the same publication as for Plate 23.  
*bottom* lHun-rtse rDzong in sKur-stod, founded c. 1655. (Photo Anthony Aris)

of a 'peace settlement' (*gzhung-khrid*). We know from the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* (f. 66a) that one of its terms provided for the handing over of hostages to the Tibetan authorities, and this certainly suggests a Tibetan rather than a Bhutanese victory. According to this source, *sDe-pa dBu-mdzad*, the right-hand man of the *Zhabs-drung*, had to arrange for each of the important Bhutanese families to deliver up one of their sons as hostages; 'Brug bsTan-'dzin of the Hūm-ral-pa family consequently spent twelve years in captivity in Tibet and was only released long after the *gTsang-pa* rule had been supplanted by that of the *dGe-lugs-pa* school. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Bhutanese still retained some bargaining power, and this was again assisted by the mediation of the *Jo-nang rJe-btsun Tāranātha* and the *Sa-skya Bla-ma mThu-stobs dBang-po* who persuaded the *gTsang sDe-srid*<sup>30</sup> to adopt a conciliatory tone. Two of the *Zhabs-drung's* letters written during the course of negotiation have survived.<sup>31</sup> The first is a detailed restatement of his claim to be the true incarnation of Padma dKar-po and contains a thorough review of the dispute with dPag-bsam dBang-po and his chief supporter, the *Chos-rje lHa-rtse-ba*. The second is more directly concerned with the provisions for a permanent settlement. It contains a long passage explaining the *Zhabs-drung's* refusal to take part in a trial by ordeal normally reserved for criminals; he would have had to extract a stone from a cauldron of boiling oil, and his case would have been won if he had done this without burning himself. The letter also contains the only truly contemporary reference to his struggles with the five leaders of the various Bhutanese schools, those perhaps of the lHa-pa, gNas-rnying-pa, lCags-zam-pa and two sub-groups, it seems of the Ka-thog-pa. Mention is made of a 'contract' (*khra-ma*) governing the privileges and relations of the first two of these branch-schools which had been drawn up as long ago as the time of a certain *sDe-srid* Kun-spangs-pa of the Sa-skya school, who seems to have held some authority in Tibet in the middle of the 14th century at the end of the period of Sa-skya supremacy.<sup>32</sup> In both letters (which would certainly repay detailed study), the *Zhabs-drung* is quite uncompromising, and this must surely reflect the secure position he had won in Bhutan by this date. His only concession seems to have been his promise to forego further acts of black magic in the event of a satisfactory conclusion to the dispute. This in fact seems to have been reached shortly after the exchange of letters. The *gTsang sDe-srid* is said to have made a complete capitulation and offered the 'Southern Region of Four Approaches' to the *Zhabs-drung* as his dominion. The dispute with dPag-bsam dBang-po also seems to have been resolved as a result of the efforts of the 10th Karma-pa, Chos-dbyings rDo-rje. Unfortunately, we do not yet know the actual terms agreed upon by the contending parties. There must have been some element of reciprocity and it was probably at this time that the *Zhabs-drung* agreed to pay a rice tax (*'bras-khral*) to the *gTsang*

authorities of Tibet in return for their recognition of his position.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, we have already seen that the hostages who had earlier been delivered to the Tibetans were still in captivity. Under these arrangements, it is unlikely that the question of true independence for the Bhutanese would have arisen, although the *Zhabs-drung* was by now the *de facto* ruler of western Bhutan and accepted as such by the Tibetan authorities. His rival dPag-bsam dBang-po died in 1641 just a year or two after the settlement and *his* incarnation, Mi-pham dBang-po (1641-1717), eventually became established as the *rGyal-dbang 'Brug-chen*, the head of what came to be a northern branch of the 'Brug-pa (the Byang-'brug), while that of the *Zhabs-drung* continued as the southern branch (the lHo-'brug). The temporary nature of the settlement with the gTsang authorities was more immediately underlined, however, by the decisive defeat of the latter by the Mongols in 1642. This brought in the rule of the great 5th Dalai Lama, and until 1951 the government of Tibet has always been associated with his school of the dGe-lugs-pa. Under the new régime, the struggle with the emergent country of Bhutan took on a new intensity.

The first dGe-lugs-pa invasion in 1644 was an unqualified disaster for the seven hundred Mongol soldiers who took part in it, according to the 5th Dalai Lama's biography.<sup>34</sup> The campaign may have occurred as a reaction to Bhutanese support of the unsuccessful revolt of the sGar-pa, a family that led the opposition of the older schools against the joint forces of the Mongols and the dGe-lugs-pa.<sup>35</sup> The army attacked Bhutan from the region of lHo-brag where it had been fighting the sGar-pa. At least one detachment came down to Bum-thang, an area which only came into the hands of the 'Brug-pa a decade later. There too they were defeated, and in the west of the country (where the unidentified Ka-wang rDzong was briefly taken) the Tibetan officers *Nang-so* dNgos-grub, 'Brong-rtse-nas and 'Dus-'byung-nas were all taken prisoner. Most of the common soldiers were permitted to return to Tibet. Shakabpa (1967:112) claims that the Bhutanese victory ' . . . shattered the myth of an invincible Mongol army and, in the future, Mongols were unwilling to fight in the humid southern regions.' Unwilling or not, they certainly did attack again, as we shall soon see.

Two years later, in 1646, the Sa-skya and Pan-chen lamas appear to have mediated a peace settlement which provided for the return of the Tibetan officers captured during the invasion, and the restoration of the rice tribute that had formerly been paid to the gTsang-pa authorities.<sup>36</sup> According to the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (f. 31a-b, repeated in a rather garbled form in *LCB* I, f. 41a-b), the Tibetan commanders had to make a public display of submission to the *Zhabs-drung*, enthroned in full state at sPu-na-kha. They were compelled to deliver to him in person their captured





Plate 26. bKra-shis-sgang rDzong, founded c. 1656.  
(Photo Anthony Aris)

weapons and armour which were placed in the temple dedicated to the guardian deities at sPu-na-kha. On their return to Tibet, a lampoon went the rounds, punning on the names of one of the disgraced commanders and of the officer who had been sent to the border to enquire into the defeat, sDe-pa Nor-bu:

The lama resides in the South.

Offerings have been made to the South.

The 'Brug-pa have gathered the bounties (dNgos-grub).

The jewel (Nor-bu) had to take heed.<sup>37</sup>

### Consolidation and Expansion

In the period between the first and second dGe-lugs-pa invasions the *Zhabs-drung* consolidated his power in western Bhutan, which in 1644 had been based mainly in the two valleys of Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha (the latter extending southwards into the Shar district). In 1645 he returned to sPa-gro this time in the company of the important rNying-ma-pa teacher, Rig-'dzin sNying-po (descendant of Sangs-rgyas Gling-pa, 1340-96) who had come to Bhutan from his home at Kong-po in Tibet. The whole valley came into his hands with the gift of the old Hūṃ-ral rDzong from the head of the Hūṃ-ral-pa family, 'Brug bSam-gtan. In return, the *Zhabs-drung* promised the family a reduction in their obligations to provide hostages (*bu-gte*), pay taxes (*khral*), and take part in government corvée (*'ul*). He also gave out orders to the other *rdzongs* in the valleys to the east to the effect that if members of the family ever went there, they were to be accorded special privileges (*bdag-rkyen mthong-srol*).<sup>38</sup> In fact the family seems to have gone into a rapid decline though a generation later they managed to have these rights renewed by the *sPa-gro dPon-slob*.<sup>39</sup> Their old fort, under the new name of Rin-spungs rDzong, has, ever since 1645, been the provincial capital of sPa-gro. The many districts to the south and west which were subject to it were ruled by the *dPon-slob*. The family of the *gZar-chen Chos-rje*, like that of the Hūṃ-ral-pa, also received concessions from the *Zhabs-drung*.<sup>40</sup> It was the obvious way to win the political support of the old religious nobility, or rather those sections of it which were not actively hostile. The visit to sPa-gro also saw the *Zhabs-drung's* appropriation of the valley's most sacred shrine at sTag-tshang, hitherto in the hands of the Ka-thog-pa.

This period also witnessed the take over of the important district on the Tibetan border, due north of the western valleys. The soldiers for this brief campaign were conscripted from the Wang people of sPu-na-kha and Thim-phu, the first who had fallen to the *Zhabs-drung's* rule. They were divided into groups according to their villages, known collectively as the 'Eight

Great Hosts of the Wang'.<sup>41</sup> They came to form something of an élite in the country, having the status of 'chief patrons' (*sbyin-bdag-gi gtso-bo*),<sup>42</sup> and it was their militia which formed the core of the army that later took over the whole territory of eastern Bhutan in the middle 1650's.<sup>43</sup> Their first exploit on this occasion was the defence of the mGar-sa district, where the fortress of bKra-shis mThong-smon rDzong was built. In Gling-bzhi, another smaller fort (g.Yul-rgyal rDzong) which lacked a monastic community was built at a strategic point on the border. It is today the only one of the *Zhabs-drung's* fortresses to have gone to ruin. These years also saw the deployment of the Wang militia southwards towards the Dar-dkar-nang area on the Indian border. The fortress, seat of the *Dar-dkar dPon-slob*, was built rather later when the *gNyer-pa 'Brug rNam-rgyal* went with a second force in about 1650. Thus apart from this one and those built later in the east of the country, all the fortresses constructed by the *Zhabs-drung* during his lifetime were completed by 1649, the date of the second Mongol-Tibetan invasion.<sup>44</sup>

### Further Tibetan Defeats

This time the enemy forces concentrated on western Bhutan where the *Zhabs-drung* was best equipped to counter them. Even though it was planned on a larger scale than the previous one, the invasion was again a fiasco for the Tibetans and Mongolians, despite temporary successes. The army of the dBus province of Tibet forced its way as far south as sPu-na-kha, and that of the gTsang province captured Srin-mo-rdo-kha in Thim-phu. Another detachment, perhaps the Mongols, surrounded the *rdzong* in sPa-gro. The Bhutanese retaliation was a complete success, partly due, it seems, to the inefficiency of the Tibetan commander in sPa-gro, *sDe-pa Nor-bu*; he appears to have been the nephew of the Tibetan 'regent' bSod-nams Chos-'phel and the same Nor-bu, it seems who had been sent to investigate the previous defeat.<sup>45</sup> On fleeing from sPa-gro he and his troops had to abandon all their tents and weapons which were taken with great glee by the Bhutanese. Nor-bu himself had to suffer the embarrassment of a common tent in place of the great central pavilion he had previously pitched at Phag-ri at the start of the campaign. After this defeat, the invading troops who were installed in Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha also beat a retreat, and their commanders too had to suffer great shame on their return to Tibet.<sup>46</sup> When the *Zhabs-drung* was asked if there would be any further invasions, he replied with what was thought to be a prophetic joke: 'If they are imprudent they will come again, but they will not be able to do us any harm. If they should come once more, although we now have sufficient weapons, we still require tea, clothing and silk.'<sup>47</sup>



It was at this point that the *Zhabs-drung* introduced at sPu-na-kha the extended ritual dedicated to the multiple forms of Māhakāla which came to form the basis for the celebration of the official New Year Festival in Bhutan. By appropriating some of the features of the ancient Agricultural New Year, the festival took on a strong local aspect, one which was designed to celebrate the victorious ascendancy of the 'Brug-pa.<sup>48</sup>

With evident feelings of remorse, the *Zhabs-drung* also began at this time the construction of a large *stūpa* at sPu-na-kha dedicated for all those who had died on both sides during the fighting. It is said to have occupied him to such an extent that he delegated to his chamberlain and his precentor the responsibility for supervising all matters external and internal to his court. As long ago as 1627 Cacella had commented on the official who was 'the whole government of the King'.<sup>49</sup> There is no difficulty in recognising him as the precentor bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas who now, two years before the date commonly accepted for the death of the *Zhabs-drung*, took over the fullest responsibility for external matters. The chamberlain, *Drung* Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan, had control of the internal affairs of the court.

### Last Years and Achievements

Having divested himself of secular duties, the *Zhabs-drung* seems to have spent his last years regulating the life of the state communities he had founded in his principal fortresses. In Thim-phu and sPu-na-kha he introduced the whole curriculum of monastic rituals which have been performed with regularity ever since. The formal constitution of these monasteries does not seem to have suffered at all during the recurrent sieges. In fact the dGe-lugs-pa opposition to some of the older schools in Tibet had the paradoxical effect of encouraging some of their best qualified teachers to take refuge in Bhutan where a few of them took posts in the state monasteries of the *Zhabs-drung*. His biographer, the *gTsang mKhan-chen*, arrived soon after the dGe-lugs-pa triumph of 1642 because his monastery was besieged by Mongol troops.<sup>50</sup> The *Zhabs-drung* received him at sPu-na-kha with great delight and tried to persuade him to take charge of a new college for philosophical logic attached to the main community. The study of logic was to be based on the teachings of Padma dKar-po, but the abbot declined and instead pursued a private life of teaching and meditation which brought him into contact with many Bhutanese disciples who would have important rôles to play in the future. In place of the abbot, the *Zhabs-drung* managed to obtain the services of a certain *Khu-khu Slob-dpon* from gSer-mdog-can in Tibet to organise the college. He was later assisted by a *dGe-bshes* Kun-dga' Nor-bzang from 'Bras-yul sKyed-tshal in Tibet. Thus the *mtshan-nyid grwa-tshang* ('college of logic') which continues today to form part of the principal state

monastery of Bhutan had its origins during the tumultuous period of the state's founding. The author of *LCB I* insists that the chief and most abiding concern of the *Zhabs-drung* throughout the thirty-five years which he spent in Bhutan was to 'uphold, guard and diffuse the community of the *sangha*, which is the root of the Teachings.'<sup>51</sup> His other achievements in building fortresses, defeating the invaders, organising the internal administration and so on, are presented as quite subordinate to this principal aim, as means to its realisation, not ends in themselves. The final result, however, was that ' . . . by introducing laws where there had been no Southern laws and by fixing handles on pots where there had been no handles, he committed many actions which established beings on the good path to beneficial happiness.'<sup>52</sup> The references to pot-handles is of course a figurative expression alluding to the material benefits of civilization.

The recognition of the *Zhabs-drung's* state by his contemporaries at home and abroad is affirmed in the biographical literature by virtue of the goodwill missions and 'tribute' embassies he received towards the end of his life. The details are vague, but two more embassies sent by *Rāja* Padma Narayan are mentioned, as well as others from Nepal, western and eastern Tibet, and from the *Sa-skyapa* and other important lamas of central Tibet. None were ever received from the power that really mattered, the *dGe-lugs-pa* government of the 5th Dalai Lama and his Mongol overlords; the struggle between the Tibetan authorities and the new state of Bhutan was to continue for a long time. Within the country, however, the *Zhabs-drung* was fully accepted as ruler wherever he had built his giant fortresses, and there are some indications that his power was already beginning to extend towards the eastern region where he had not attempted to impose direct control. In the main biography (*PBP*, f. 113b) there is a list of the tribute missions received in the course of a single year and they seem to have become a regular institution: the missions from eastern Bhutan (*Kha-ling*, *Me-rag Sag-stengs*, *gDung-bsam*, and the Indian borderland as far as *rTsa-mchog-grong*, i.e. *Hajo*) arrived in the first month of the lunar calendar; those from *sPa-gro*, *Cooch Bihar* and *Phag-ri* came in the eighth month; those from central Bhutan (*A-sdang*, *Rus-kha*, *rTse-rag-dum-bu*, *Dar-dkar*, and the adjoining Indian lands of *Bye-ma* and of the *Chu-bar Ra-dza*) came in the tenth month; so also did those from the pastoral regions (*'brog-yul*) of the north (*Gling-bzhi*, *Phi-yags-la*, *Lung-nag* and *dGon*). Several of these regions fell outside the natural boundaries of Bhutan and later became a bone of contention between the governments of Bhutan and those of Tibet and India. All those areas situated within the natural frontiers were tied to the central government somewhat loosely through the regional capitals located in the district fortresses. These enjoyed a varying degree of autonomy depending on the strength of their governors

and the weakness of the central government. The tribute missions from the districts continued in altered form; whereas at the beginning they seem to have been the spontaneous expression of loyalty on the part of individual communities who sent off their chosen representatives to the capital according to seasonal convenience, later they became formalised into an annual obligation: the regional governor would have to bear the tribute of his area to the capital during the New Year festival at sPu-na-kha. The 'tribute' was composed of the tax revenue of his district, levied either in cash or in kind. Thus many of the institutions of the new state had their informal origins during the time of the founder himself, but became regulated in perpetuity somewhat later.

It is as a nation-builder that the great *Zhabs-drung* will be remembered longest but he and his contemporaries were probably unaware of the long-term implications of his achievements. They witnessed the creation of a strongly-defended ecclesiastical estate which drew its energy and vigour as much from the measures taken to protect it from internal opposition and external attack as from the natural zeal of the Bhutanese for independence which was released and co-ordinated during this period. It is not at all clear how much of the responsibility for the suppression of the old schools which had hitherto wielded secular authority in western Bhutan can be attributed to the *Zhabs-drung*. Their opposition must have been peculiarly intense for him to have abandoned that tolerant position which Cacella had noted with such emphasis in 1627, some years before the main valleys fell to the *Zhabs-drung's* rule. Although some of the old loyalties must have struggled to survive for a generation or two, the concerted power of the enemy lamas and their schools was definitely broken during the lifetime of the *Zhabs-drung*. Their military defeat seems to have occurred at the same time as that of the supporting invasions sent down by the *gTsang sDe-srid* in 1632 and 1639, that is before the dGe-lugs-pa and Mongol invasions of 1644 and 1649. When these latter arrived, we may assume that the absence of local support contributed to their defeat. Another factor was certainly the unfamiliar nature of the country and its climate. Some credit must also be given to the Bhutanese commanders, but nothing is known of how the *Zhabs-drung* exercised his overall command or indeed if he did so at all. In view of his clear preference for delegation, it does appear likely that on these occasions he handed over the actual command to one of his officers, probably the precentor. Nevertheless, all the Bhutanese sources insist that the defeat of the six Tibetan invasions<sup>53</sup> which took place during his lifetime were made possible by him alone, more particularly by his magical control of the guardian deities of the 'Brug-pa. That the *Zhabs-drung* did indulge in rites of black magic is beyond question for it has been seen that they were specifically

alluded to in the peace negotiations with the *gTsang sDe-srid*. It is difficult for the historian to assess their significance, beyond pointing out that they would at the least have formed a vital psychological factor on both sides. For the Bhutanese the memory of them has cast the *Zhabs-drung* in the rôle of a militant saint of heroic stature, their first king and unifier. It will come as a surprise to some that Buddhism should countenance such a thing as a 'militant saint', a contradiction in terms if we accept the fundamental tenets of that faith to be what we are constantly told they are. The full explanation of this conundrum would take one into the history and nature of tantric developments in Tibet, but suffice it to say here that the issue is not openly accepted as a conundrum in the traditional society. For this reason there exist two iconographic forms depicting the figure of the *Zhabs-drung*: the first and best known (Plate 20) shows him in the full regalia of a 'Brugpa monk, in the earth-touching posture of the Buddha, complete with the long beard of which he was so proud and which Cacella tells us he usually kept wrapped up except on important occasions;<sup>54</sup> The second, rarer, form (Plate 21) shows him in the wrathful 'Black Hat' apparel of lHa-lung dPal-gyi rDo-rje, the 9th century assassin of the anti-Buddhist king Glang Dar-ma. In a sense, both figures seem to have truly co-existed in the one historical person, but the tensions they set up between them have become totally blurred in the surviving literature where a very low premium has been placed on anything as ephemeral as human personality. The tensions undoubtedly did exist, not just in the mind and character of the *Zhabs-drung* but also in the life of the state he created. Some of these will become apparent in the following chapters.

On the 10th day of the 3rd month of *lCags-mo-yos* (1651) the *Zhabs-drung* entered upon his final retreat in his apartments at sPu-na-kha rDzong. He was aged fifty-eight by Tibetan reckoning. According to his biographer, he had chosen to enter this period of meditation for the sake of the doctrine in general, and in particular to counter the threat of further invasion.<sup>55</sup> According to *LCB I* (f.49b), the retreat was occasioned by a vision he had received of Māhakāla and Padmasambhava. That is the last we hear of him in the standard biography, but in *LCB I* (f. 50a) there is mention of a detailed will in which all the 'external' responsibilities of the state were once again entrusted to the precentor bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas, who thereafter ruled for five years as the 1st '*Brug sDe-srid* (the 'Deb Rāja' of the British). All matters pertaining to the *Zhabs-drung* whilst in retreat were in the hands of his chamberlain *Drung* Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan who, like the precentor, knew the *Zhabs-drung* long before he came south to Bhutan. Like his master, he too was a Tibetan.<sup>56</sup> The same source (*LCB I*, f. 50a-b) provides a list of the important officers appointed by the *Zhabs-drung*. It is not clear if their names were

mentioned in the will or if they had already been commissioned by the time the retreat started. They included the three *rdzong-dpon* of sPu-na-kha, dBang-'dus Pho-brang and Thim-phu; the three *dpon-slob* (or *spyi-bla*) of Krong-sar, Dar-dkar and sPa-gro; the *gZhung mGron-gnyer* whose functions are never clear, but who clearly held important ministerial duties, perhaps akin to those of the Tibetan *mGron-gnyer Chen-po*; and the Head Abbot of the state monasteries, the *rJe mKhan-po* Pad-dkar 'Byung-gnas. The last we hear of the *Zhabs-drung* in this source (f. 51b) concerns the next invasion of the country by Tibet in 1657, some five years after he had entered into retreat and when it was still continuing. The passage is not found in the standard biography and is partly based on the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (f. 64b). Neither the standard biography nor any of the synoptic versions based upon it contain any information on the death of the *Zhabs-drung*. This looks highly suspicious in the life of a Buddhist teacher, where one would normally expect to find a long section devoted to the death and funeral of the subject. The solution to this problem provides the key to the later history of Bhutan insofar as it centres around the questions of succession and stability.

## CHAPTER 2: THE DEATH AND SECRET 'RETREAT' (?1651–?1705)

The death of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal was apparently kept a state secret for more than half a century. The present purpose is to explore this extraordinary question by close reference to the surviving literature and by drawing attention to some of the many parallels which can be found during the same period in Bhutan and Tibet. The aim in Chapter 3 below is to study briefly the reasons for the secret and its implications for the problem of succession and the nature of rule during the half century following the *Zhabs-drung's* demise. It will soon become clear that the whole issue is very complex and that only a preliminary appraisal is offered here.

### Traditional Accounts

The reason why the main biography ends with the *Zhabs-drung* entering into retreat is quite simple: the retreat was supposed to be continuing when it was written some time between 1674 to 1684.<sup>1</sup> The authors who used this source to produce their synoptic versions wrote their accounts after the secret had been revealed but preserved silence on the subject partly, it seems, for fear of departing from what had become the accepted model. In other writings they briefly allude to the whole matter. Thus Shākya Rin-chen (9th Head Abbot, regn. 1744-55) wrote in his biography (1757) of the first incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*, Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal (1708-36): 'By force of certain needs, after he [the *Zhabs-drung*] had demonstrated the manner of passing beyond sorrow, it was sealed up as if he were in retreat and kept extremely secret.'<sup>2</sup> But this comes more than a century after the alleged death and so the value of its testimony could be in doubt. We shall come back to Shākya Rin-chen in Chapter 3 below: in his biography of the 7th Head Abbot Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las (regn. 1730-38) where he refers to the 'retreat' and to the first unsuccessful attempt to secure an incarnation during the reign of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas as 4th '*Brug sDe-srid* (1656-67) while the secret was still being maintained. bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, the author of the other synopsis of the *Zhabs-drung's* life, introduced the idea of the secret elsewhere in his work (*LCB* I, ff. 62b, 66b-67a) at almost exactly the same

time as Shākya Rin-chen (whom he succeeded as Head Abbot), that is to say in the years 1757-59.<sup>3</sup> He does not discuss the actual death of the *Zhabs-drung* but he tells us who let out the secret of his 'retreat': Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (1689-1713), the first of a line of five incarnations of the *Zhabs-drung*'s son 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje (1631-?1681). We are told that: 'Although the secret of the *Zhabs-drung Ma-chen*'s retreat had not been disclosed and there was great benefit in it [the corpse] remaining just as it was, this lord [Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan] let out the secret. It is even said that the guardian deities were displeased because of this, and obstacles to his life therefore arose.'<sup>4</sup> In a later passage (*LCB* I, ff. 66b-67a) the author explains what happened when the corpse was disturbed: the consciousness of the dead *Zhabs-drung* arose from *samadhi*, three rays issued from his body, speech and mind, and these departed for different places in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet where the first incarnations of the *Zhabs-drung* were later born. Leaving aside for the moment the cause and rationale for this 'theological' explanation which became the accepted orthodoxy (see Chapter 3 below) it is fortunate that the brief reference to the secret's disclosure in *LCB* I leads us to another source where we find the person who is said to have been responsible for its disclosure, i.e. Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, actually telling us how it happened. We cannot date the event precisely but from internal evidence it clearly happened during the middle of the reign of the 7th 'Brug sDe-srid, dBon dPal-'byor (1704-7). It comes in the biography of the 4th Head Abbot, Dam-chos Pad-dkar (regn. 1697-1707) which Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan began shortly before the death of the abbot, his chief teacher.<sup>5</sup> The setting is sPu-na-kha rDzong where he and the abbot had come to spend the winter with the state monks: 'There, from the force of certain circumstances it became necessary to disclose the secret concerning the retreat of the Glorious Ngag-gi dBang-po [the *Zhabs-drung*], and so on that day the Precious Lord [Dam-chos Pad-dkar, the abbot] also came to see the corpse.'<sup>6</sup> The old abbot was greatly affected by the experience, it is said, and offered gifts and prayers to the corpse. Here, then, is a direct eye-witness account of the event, recorded just a few years after it took place. Fifty years or so later, as we have seen in the account of bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, the tragic death of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan in 1713 was attributed to his disclosure of the secret. Most significantly, it was only after the pretended retreat had been brought to an end that the first official incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung* was recognised: Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal, born in 1708 just three years or so after the secret was out. But why had it been kept for more than half a century, how had it been kept and by whom ?

### Motives, Precedents and Parallels

The reason for prolonging artificially the power of a dead ruler is abundantly clear. No matter how masterful and energetic a character he might be,

a ruler is always dependent on his officers. Much of the daily business of government lies in their hands, but the legitimacy and strength of their authority depend entirely on that of the ruler. In the event of his death, unless the succession is secure and favours the continued authority of his officers, their position is in real danger. There is quite enough evidence to show that in Tibet there existed a device for concealing the death of a ruler or important lama in such circumstances of latent or impending conflict. The *Zhabs-drung* himself claimed in a letter to the Tibetan ruler (given in *PBP*, f. 101a) that Padma dKar-po's death in 1592 had been concealed from the authorities of the 'Brug-pa school at Ra-lung; this had allowed *Chos-rje* lHa-rtse-ba time to find his own candidate for the incarnation. A tradition that the *gTsang sDe-srid*'s death was kept secret for three years has already been noted in Chapter 1 of this Part. Although not yet properly verified, it is accepted by Shakabpa (1977:405). A similar tradition concerning the death of King Phyag-rdor rNam-rgyal of Sikkim (d. 1716) is found in an official Sikkimese history (now in the India Office Library, M/2/199).

The best known and most carefully documented example, however, is provided by the case of the 5th Dalai Lama. His death was concealed by his regent, the *sDe-srid* Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho (1653-1705), for a period of fifteen years from 1682 to 1697. At the end of this period, during which the Dalai Lama is said to have been in retreat, the regent officially informed the K'ang-hsi emperor of the secret and of the fact that the 6th Dalai Lama, Tshangs-dbyangs rGya-mtsho (the 'descendant' of our Padma Gling-pa), had long since been recognised.<sup>7</sup> The period of concealment coincided with the very much longer one of the *Zhabs-drung*, and so we are faced with the odd situation that during these years the Tibetan and Bhutanese states were both ruled by corpses, in a manner of speaking.

Some of the Bhutanese parallels indicate that the solution could be adopted not only as a temporising measure pending the recognition of a new incarnation, but also for the more immediate aim of forestalling the problems attendant on the death of an important lama, one who would not be expected to incarnate. The problems here probably centred around the funeral arrangements, the division of his property and such like. This seems to have been the case with the *Zhabs-drung*'s chamberlain, *Drung* Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan, who died in forced retirement (or perhaps semi-imprisonment) at dBang'dus Pho-brang. All we are told is that his death was concealed for three months.<sup>8</sup> (We have to come back to this later.) The same is true of Dam-chos Pad-dkar, the old abbot who witnessed the disclosure of the *Zhabs-drung*'s secret, as noted above. His own death at lCags-ri in 1708 was concealed for six months. This is confirmed in two independent sources, both of them attributing the need to vague 'temporal circumstances'.<sup>9</sup> In all these cases there is a uniform conspiracy of silence on the exact cause.



The remaining six cases, not counting that of the *Zhabs-drung* himself, concern Bhutanese dignitaries whose deaths occurred in the period c. 1681 to 1738 and whose incarnations were subsequently recognised. They are:

- 1) 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje, son of the *Zhabs-drung*, d. ? 1681; <sup>10</sup>
- 2) bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas, 4th '*Brug sDe-srid*, d. 1696 (it seems his death was *wrongly* believed to have been concealed); <sup>11</sup>
- 3) bsTan-'dzin Legs-grub, 2nd *sGang-steng sPrul-dku*, d. 1726; <sup>12</sup>
- 4) 'Jigs-med Nor-bu, 2nd *rGyal-sras sPrul-sku*, d. 1735; <sup>13</sup>
- 5) Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal, 1st *Zhabs-drung gSung-sprul*, d. 1736; <sup>14</sup>
- 6) Mi-pham dBang-po, 1st *Khri-sprul*, d. 1738. <sup>15</sup>

In each of these cases the concealment of death is described in unmistakable terms but no explanations are offered. It can be noted in passing that bsTan-'dzin Legs-grub was the only one who was not of the 'Brug-pa school. All the others were official figures of the ruling régime. None of the sources permit us to see with certainty whether the incarnations of these persons were recognised during the periods when their deaths were being concealed. Nevertheless, it is clear that we are confronted here with a well-established practice, a sort of state ritual, but one which is surrounded by a strong air of the unmentionable.

### A Lama's Approach to Death

Before turning back to the main case of the *Zhabs-drung*, supported now by all these parallel examples, it would be as well to recall briefly what normally happens to the body of a lama after death. By tradition all lamas are encouraged by their attendants to die in the upright, cross-legged posture of meditation, and to prepare themselves for the great event in a peaceful manner. While still in possession of their faculties they are requested to make a last will, which is sometimes written down. After 'physical' death has occurred, the 'consciousness' (*rnam-shes*) of the lama is believed to remain with the body up to the point when it topples over to one side. The lama is said to be in meditation (*thugs-dam*) during this interim between his physical death and the release of his consciousness. During the 'meditation' the lama is treated exactly as if he were alive; food is offered, visitors are received and he is addressed in person. The only difference is that the body must not be touched in any way because that would interrupt the 'meditation', and the consciousness of the lama would then depart in an untimely manner. The greatest saints are said to have continued in this state, their bodies gradually shrinking, until they depart in a blaze of light leaving nothing behind but their hair and nails. This is called 'the great transference by the rainbow body' (*'ja'-lus 'pho-ba chen-po*). In the case of other lamas, their spiritual accomplishments are thought to be reflected in the duration of their 'meditation'; the longer this is, the better they are regarded. Only when the

'meditation' is properly ended do the complicated funeral arrangements begin. For this reason the *Zhabs-drung* was thought to have continued in 'meditation' from the time of his death right until the time when the sealed door to his chamber was opened and his body disturbed by Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan in about 1705. It was this which justified the recognition of a child born in 1708 as his incarnation. Those responsible for the recognition might have reflected that whether the *Zhabs-drung* had actually been in 'retreat' (*skumtshams*) or in 'meditation' (*thugs-dam*) for part or all of the preceding half century was immaterial, a mere technicality: in both cases, he would have been sunk in *samadhi* (*ting-nge-'dzin*, 'absorption', lit. 'holding to the depths'), working for the benefit of sentient beings, his few requirements (if alive) cared for through the trap-door arrangement (*bug-sgo*) used by those in retreat.

### The Evidence

The only unequivocal statement on the death of the *Zhabs-drung* comes in the same work which recounts the disclosure of its secret. We read on f. 10a-b of the biography of Dam-chos Pad-dkar that the *Zhabs-drung* was poisoned by 'bad food' (*gsol-ngan*) and that

' . . . this great being departed to the realm that is free from affliction on the 10th day of the middle month of spring in the Year of the Hare [1651]. On that occasion the precious lama himself declared in his will: 'Out of great need, be sure to keep it secret for twelve years'. Accordingly, apart from the *sDe-pa dBu-mdzad Chen-po* [bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas] himself and a few who had attended on his person, by strict command it was kept secret so that nobody else might know. Thereupon, all the monks, old and young, became suspicious at the appearance of all sorts of omens and apparitions. In particular, when a long time had gone by without the young lord [Dam-chos Pad-dkar] having been able to see his lama, he stayed in perpetual hope, wondering: 'When will the time come that the precious lama's retreat ends and I shall be able to see his countenance.' '16

The following points can be noted on the nature of the evidence contained in this passage. Firstly, the account of the death and will of the *Zhabs-drung* is at best second-hand, but the date tallies with that of the start of the so-called 'retreat' described in the standard biography and the versions deriving from it. Secondly, the reactions of the state monks and of Dam-chos Pad-dkar are almost certainly described from his recollections as told to the author of his biography. Thirdly, there is a discrepancy between the tradition recorded here, that the secret was to be kept for only twelve years, and the apparent reality: as we have seen, it appears to have been maintained for about half a century. We know from two other sources, however, that in

1662 (twelve years after 1651 by local reckoning) a large *stūpa* was built in memory of the *Zhabs-drung*. In that year a workshop was established at sPu-na-kha for the silver-work needed for 'the *stūpa* of the *Sugata*' (*bde-gshegs mchod-rten*, *PBP*, f. 148b). The same construction is mentioned in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (f. 59b) as 'a funerary memorial for the most excellent lama' (*bla-ma mchog-gi dgongs-rdzogs*). The lama in question can only be the *Zhabs-drung* himself, but how could it have been made when he was supposed to be still in 'retreat'? The former work (*PBP*) was written while the 'retreat' was still continuing and so it does not refer to the real motive for building it. The biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas was written in 1720 after the secret had been released and consequently it could refer to the real motive for its construction. The author knew what this was because he was the intimate disciple of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas who was, as we shall see, one of those guarding the secret. Whether or not there existed some kind of a link between the 'will' and the *stūpa* there seems every reason to believe that its construction was secretly intended to serve the purpose of commemoration.

The *stūpa* was not the 'tomb' of the *Zhabs-drung* as surmised by Petech (1972a:208) because the body is even today housed in sPu-na-kha rDzong, attended by its own chamberlain. This official is known as the *Ma-chen gZims-dpon* and is the successor to those who served the *Zhabs-drung* during his life and 'retreat'. The chamberlain receives his appointment from the Head Abbot and is the only person who has direct contact with the corpse in the *Zhabs-drung*'s locked apartment on the second floor of the central tier of temples (*dbu-rtse*). As noted in Part 2, the corpse was removed to safety during each of the great fires of sPu-na-kha. In the early years of this century, the *Phyogs-las sPrul-sku* Ye-shes dNgos-grub (1851-1917, Head Abbot *regn.* 1915-17) is said to have died as a result of disturbing it.<sup>17</sup>

It should have become evident by this point that to make any sense of the whole business we have to rely on literary detection; the records as they stand can be made to produce a picture of the subject only insofar as they interlock to allow plausible insights. The most immediate question still seems to be: Was the *Zhabs-drung* truly believed to be still in retreat for the whole of the half century after his apparent death? Unfortunately, with two important exceptions the evidence on this all comes in sources written *after* the disclosure of the secret. It is best summarised by point in chronological order as follows:

- 1) There is a reference in the autobiography of the *gTsang mKhan-chen* (f. 447a) to an occasion during the second of his undated Indian visits when he received news from some Bhutanese in the area that the *Zhabs-drung* had entered *samadhi* on the command of the guardian

deities. Nothing more than this is said, and the autobiography was interrupted on the next folio by his own death. The remainder (ff. 448b-458a) was completed by a disciple called Ha-ya. It seems most likely that the passage relates to the events of 1651. (It is also possible that the *gTsang mKhan-chen* wrote his biography of the *Zhabs-drung* in the true belief that he was still alive; there are some cases of biographies being written during the lifetime of their subjects, though this is on the whole rather rare.)

2. The best account of the official doctrine on the 'retreat' is found in the biography of *bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas* (f. 49b et seq.) which was written after the disclosure but its subject matter all falls within the period of concealment. The evidence of *LCB I* (ff. 49a-50a) is entirely based upon it. We read that the *Zhabs-drung* entered his retreat on the 10th of the 3rd month, 1651, having commanded the precentor, *dBu-mdzad bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas*, to give individual orders to all the officials and monks in his court since he was too ill (*khams-kyis milcogs-pa*) to do so himself. He is said to have given detailed orders only to the precentor. The young *bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas* (aged fourteen) is said to have felt such unbearable longing to be in contact with the *Zhabs-drung* again after the retreat had started that he was driven to the rather circuitous and desperate measure of investigating the contents of the private cess-pit beneath the *Zhabs-drung's* chamber. Evidently it was still in use. Three months after the start of the retreat, the precentor summoned a grand council of state to convey to it the order of the *Zhabs-drung*, namely that he was on no account to be disturbed by anyone and that he alone would decide when the retreat was to end.

3. The third large-scale *dGe-lugs-pa* invasion of Bhutan took place in 1657 when, according to *LCB I* (f. 51b) the *Zhabs-drung* had already been in retreat for five years. (However, it should have been reckoned at six years or perhaps seven by local reckoning if it did begin in 1651.)

4. In 1661 the forces of Mir Jumla, the *Nawab* of Bengal, invaded Cooch Bihar and the *Rāja* escaped to Bhutan. The history of the campaign was recorded a year later in the authoritative *Fathiya i Ibriya*, partly translated in Blochmann 1872.<sup>18</sup> We read there that the invaders captured a Bhutanese and learnt from him about the '*Dharmrāja*' of Bhutan, an ascetic over a hundred and twenty years old. In return for his life the prisoner was despatched to the *Dharmrāja* with a letter asking him to seize and return Bhim Narayan, the *Rāja* of Cooch Bihar. In his reply ' . . . the *Dharmrāja* excused himself by saying that he had not called Bhim Narayan; but as he had come unasked, he could not well drive away a guest.' The *Nawab* decided not to waste time with this 'impertinence' and went off elsewhere to do battle.

5. On the death of the 2nd *'Brug sDe-srid* in 1667, Mi-'gyur brTan-pa was alleged to have been appointed his successor by the *Zhabs-drung* (referred to as the *Gong-sa*); the order was written on the narrow wooden board (*samṭa*) used for this purpose by those in retreat. In the passage dealing with this event in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (ff. 68b-69a, repeated in *LCB* I, f. 94b), we learn that Mi-'gyur brTan-pa believed that the two previous incumbents to the office of *sde-srid* had had many problems because of their inability to consult with the '*Zhabs-drung* father and son'; he therefore insisted that he should meet them in person. Nothing more is said, but he fell out with the chamberlain *Drung* Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan who would have been responsible for conveying the order of appointment. We know from the same source (f. 76a-b) that it was the chamberlain who held 'all responsibility for religious duties during the retreat of the precious *Zhabs-drung* after the *sDe-srid dBu-mdzad Chen-mo* [bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas] had died [in 1656].' Previous to this, the arrangement had been for the preceptor to oversee 'external matters' and the chamberlain to have charge of 'internal matters'.<sup>19</sup>

6. In 1672 the 1st Head Abbot died and his successor, bSod-nams 'Od-zer, was alleged to have been appointed by the *Gong-sa Chen-mo* (i.e. the *Zhabs-drung*) on the recommendation of the *sDe-srid* Mi-'gyur brTan-pa and bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (see f. 83b of the latter's biography). This is confirmed in the biography of the abbot himself who is said to have received gifts in the name of the *Zhabs-drung* during his installation ceremonies.<sup>20</sup>

7. Shortly after this, Dam-chos Pad-dkar (1639-1708) hurried back from Nepal where he had travelled as far as the Kingdom of Jumla in the west. He had heard a false rumour that the *Zhabs-drung's* 'retreat' had at last ended.<sup>21</sup> It is clear that on his return he discovered it to be still continuing, and it may be recalled that it was Dam-chos Pad-dkar himself who witnessed the official disclosure of the secret later in c. 1705.

8. An important event in the reign of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas as 4th *'Brug sDe-srid* (1680-95), but one which is difficult to date, was his successful release from Tibetan imprisonment of the *Zhabs-drung's* consort, mother of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje who had died in about 1681.<sup>22</sup> The lady was treated with great respect by the authorities in sPu-na-kha, and at the closed entrance to the chamber where her husband and son were both said to be in retreat, she prostrated herself and received gifts in their name.<sup>23</sup> The son's corpse is said to have been mummified and kept alongside that of the *Zhabs-drung*; the custom of appointing its chamberlain and butler-in-chief also continues until today.<sup>24</sup>

9. Just before his death in 1689 the Head Abbot bSod-nams 'Od-zer decided to make a present to the *Zhabs-drung* of a fine piece of cloth

which he had intended to offer at the end of the retreat. He went to the closed entrance (*sgo-'gag*) of the *Zhabs-drung's* chamber to make the offering (presumably through the chamberlain). From outside, the abbot addressed a prayer in which he made a supplication to be reborn in the *Zhabs-drung's* service. <sup>25</sup>

10. *gSol-dpon* Sa-ga, the butler-in-chief to the *Zhabs-drung*, is mentioned by name in a passage relating to the events of c. 1700, during the reign of dGe-'dun Chos-'phel as 5th '*Brug sDe-srid* (1695-1701). <sup>26</sup>

11. In c. 1705 the secret was finally disclosed and the first incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung* was born in 1708, as was noted earlier in this chapter.

### Credibility and Implications

All this tends to confirm the fact that the *Zhabs-drung* was thought to have been alive in the period 1651-c.1705, that orders of appointment were issued in his name, that his officers and monks were looking forward to the end of his 'retreat', and that there was an established procedure for presenting him with gifts. The butler-in-chief, moreover, would have continued to serve up his food, or rather would have pretended to do so, through the hatch in the locked door to his apartment. In moments of crisis, his commands could be fabricated on the writing board used by those in retreat. Formal letters could be written in his name too, as we saw in the case of the *Nawab* of Bengal. These glimpses, though very few, appear to add up to a picture that stretches one's credibility to the utmost. There must have been an extraordinary suspension of disbelief in the minds of all concerned if they accepted that the *Zhabs-drung* was still alive in 1705 at the age of one hundred and eleven. And yet we know for certain that even in 1661 a simple commoner believed him to be aged at least one hundred and twenty. The longevity of saints is accepted without question in the traditional society of Bhutan, and the *Zhabs-drung* was nothing if not a saint in the eyes of his people. Despite this, rumours must have been rife throughout the period of concealment; we have it on good authority that they existed in the very year of his death. Suspicions would have increased, countered from time to time by apparent signs of his continued existence. The air of unreality surrounding the whole affair must have been felt just as strongly then as it is now; the difference is simply that then it was felt as the peculiar intangibility of saintly existence, whereas with the benefit of hindsight we see now that it was the unreality of a deception, sustained with brilliant ingenuity. Yet the perspective of hindsight was also available to the local historians who lived in the period following the disclosure. Why then was the secret ignored in all their writings except those which either speak of its disclosure or of the effect this had on the recognition of the *Zhabs-drung's* incarnations? Several

reasons for this could be adduced, but the main and over-riding ones seem evident. Firstly, the legitimacy of his incarnations could not be established except by reference to the end of the 'meditation' (*thugs-dam*) which coincided with the end of the pretended 'retreat' (*sku-mtshams*). Secondly, to have discussed the actual operation of the deception would have had the immediate effect of impugning the legitimacy of those past figures who were supposed to have been appointed by the *Zhabs-drung* during his 'retreat'. It would have destroyed the foundations of their rule and pushed them into a world of chaos and fantasy. The main aim of the local historian is to trace an orderly and unbroken lineage which passes down legitimate authority, not to reveal the chinks and gaps in that chain. By the time their sources came up for reappraisal by Bhutanese historians of this century, the secret was still so deeply buried that its implications were completely passed over; in two of the five official draft histories written in recent years, but never sanctioned or published, it is only mentioned in passing. The external framework imposed upon Bhutanese history in *LCB I*, long accepted as the definitive work, could still be used as the basic model.

## CHAPTER 3: THE REGENCY AND SUCCESSION (1651–?1705)

### Longer Perspectives

The foregoing discussion has established the existence of the secret but we are still none the wiser as to the real cause. The aim now is to explore this question, and two points have to be emphasised. Firstly, it was impossible for a true and legitimate successor to occupy the *Zhabs-drung*'s throne until his death was public knowledge; until that happened we are faced with the development of various institutions which provided for rule by vicarious authority. Secondly, there is a danger in over-estimating the importance of the secret: the vacuum left by the *Zhabs-drung* during his 'retreat' was filled by a succession of powerful figures who completed the unification of the country. In their own eyes and in the eyes of their contemporaries, however, they were the delegates or stand-ins for the *Zhabs-drung*, never his successors. This was of course well known to the author of *LCB I* who applied the broad term *rgyal-tshab* ('royal representative') not only to the 'stand-ins' but also to the recognised reincarnations of the *Zhabs-drung*; thus a more or less fictitious line of authority was created to satisfy the perpetual need for legitimate descent. A glance at the list and dates of these *rgyal-tshab* in *LCB I* (ff. 54b-70a) should make this clear:

- 1) bsTan-'dzin Rabs-rgyas, the *Khri Rin-po-che*, 1638-96 (regn. as 4th 'Brug sDe-srid 1680-95).
- 2) Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, 1st rGyal-sras sPrul-sku (Incarnation of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje, son of the *Zhabs-drung*) 1689-1713.
- 3) Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal, 1st *Zhabs-drung gSung-sprul*, 1708-36.
- 4) 'Jigs-med Nor-bu, 2nd rGyal-sras sPrul-sku, 1717-35.
- 5) Mi-pham dBang-po, 1st *Khri-sprul* (incarnation of No. 1 above) 1709-38 (regn. as 10th 'Brug sDe-srid, 1729-36).
- 6a) 'Brug-sgra rNam-rgyal, 3rd rGyal-sras sPrul-sku, 1735-62.
- 6b) 'Jigs-med Grags-pa, 1st *Zhabs-drung Thugs-sprul*, 1724-61.

The term *rgyal-tshab* seems to be found only in this source (*LCB I*) and in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas: both were written with the aim of establishing the continuity of the *Zhabs-drung*'s rule through all the complicated strife that had occurred in the period between the time of his death and their own day. Later, the incarnations of the final figure in the above list



eventually became accepted as the true successors of the *Zhabs-drung*; no matter how nominal their actual authority, they were the legitimate heads of the Bhutanese state, known to the adjoining Indian kingdoms in Assam and Bengal, and to the British, as the *Dharmarājas*. This title had first been applied by the Indians to Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal himself.<sup>1</sup> To the Bhutanese the incarnations were simply known as the *Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che*, but in correspondence with the Indian authorities they would use the title *Dharmarāja*.<sup>2</sup> None of them ever wielded anything like the power of the first *Zhabs-drung*, and throughout the period of theocratic rule the executive government was vested in the office of 'Brug *sDe-srid* (the 'Deb Rājas' to the British). The term *sde-srid* (or *sde-pa*) used to be the title of the ruling aristocracy of Tibet ('*Phyongs-rgyas sDe-pa*, *gTsang sDe-srid* etc.), but later in Tibet it slowly came to acquire the meaning of 'regent'. In Bhutan the *sde-srid* (or rather a succession of them) continued as head of the executive government throughout the lifetime of the head of state. There appears to have been very little consistency in the manner of their appointment, and generally speaking it was the strong man of the moment or his nominee who held office, defending it as best he could against the rivalry of the provincial governors. In the early period, however, some of the incumbents were highly effective figures and were blessed with relatively long reigns. What is important to understand is that at least in theory they all held office from the *Zhabs-drung*, no matter to what degree circumstances would suggest otherwise. Without that sanction, even if only faked or ritualised beyond all semblance of reality, their rule could have no justification.

These general perspectives are necessary before returning to the matter of the 'retreat' because when essential motives are not discussed in the sources we have to look to the general pattern of history to provide the clue. The bonds which came to develop around the rival figures of the new state were of an intense and personal kind, the direct inheritance from the period of fragmented rule when each community was tied to its own ecclesiastical or clan ruler. With the steady collapse or transformation of the old units, loyalties appear to have been easily reforged in the arena of the new state. When these loyalties found expression in political action or in any way passed beyond the bounds of 'spiritual' activity, the sources either preserve complete silence on the matter or allude to it so passingly that we are left hardly the wiser. It is quite impossible, therefore, to do justice to this period without some careful conjecture.

### Failure of the Line

When in 1651 the *Zhabs-drung*'s precentor, bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas, announced to the government assembly that his master had been in retreat

for the last three months and was on no account to be disturbed, all power came into his hands. We can be practically certain that the *Zhabs-drung* had died. Under normal circumstances his son 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje, then aged twenty, would have succeeded to the throne. He was the only heir, and we know from Cacella that it had been the *Zhabs-drung's* wish even before 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje was born that a son should succeed him. The survival of his ancient line which stretched back to the founder of the school, *gTsang-pa rGya-ras*, depended upon it. So also did the perpetuation of his rule in Bhutan. Following the birth of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje in 1631, the *Zhabs-drung* had taken the vows of a fully ordained monk and remained celibate thereafter. All should have been well for the succession, and indeed 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje lived on until about 1681 to the age of fifty, but neither his enthronement, nor any single act or decision of his is recorded in the literature, and he is not even named in the shadowy list of the *rgyal-tshab* (p. 243). All we are told is that he received a religious education and that at a certain point he had become ill.<sup>3</sup> It must have been a serious physical incapacity to bar him from the throne of his dead father. It can be assumed that his incapacity had already become clear by 1651, and that it was perhaps the immediate cause for the decision to keep the death of the *Zhabs-drung* secret. There may have been a vague hope that 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje would eventually marry and produce a male heir to continue the line, but it seems unlikely that the 'retreat' of his father could have been planned to tide over the gap until that eventuality. As it happened, 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje did marry much later the daughter of the *Ngor Zhabs-drung* Klu-sdings-pa and produced a daughter, mTsho-skyes rDo-rje in 1680.<sup>4</sup> She seems to have been influential in Bhutanese politics for a short period, but with her we come to the very end of the line. In 1651, however, there would have been no serious thought of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje producing an heir.

According to *sDe-srid* Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho, it was the 5th Dalai Lama himself who on his deathbed commanded the *sde-srid* to arrange the pretended retreat, and it seems perfectly conceivable that the same tradition in the *Zhabs-drung's* case is correct. The Dalai Lama told the regent to search for his incarnation soon after his death and admitted that: 'If I enter now into [pretended] seclusion it is solely in the interest of our government. Thanks to your [the regent's] past actions and to your destiny, thanks to the strength of the aspirations you made in your previous lives, the government of our doctrine will not be menaced.'<sup>5</sup> Had the death of this most powerful of all Tibetan rulers been made public, it is thought that the Mongols would have used the opportunity to advance their interests at the expense of the Tibetan government headed by the regent.<sup>6</sup> It was surely the same threat of external attack and internal disruption which decided the *Zhabs-drung* of Bhutan and

his regent; after death the immediate cohesion of his new state would depend entirely on the simulation of his continuing presence since there was no one fit to succeed him. There is also no particular reason to discount the tradition that the pretence was to have lasted twelve years. Unfortunately there are no means of knowing what measures the *Zhabs-drung* or his regent intended to use to find his successor. As will be seen, the regent died long before the end of the stipulated period, and by that time the whole device had become essential to the state's survival.

### The First sDe-srid

The rule of the precentor bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-rgyas as the 1st *'Brug sDe-srid* became a model for the future, we are told, and his unwritten ordinances on all aspects of government seem to have been passed down the line of his successors.<sup>7</sup> Today he is largely remembered as the devoted servant of the *Zhabs-drung*. He and the chamberlain *Drung*, Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan are always depicted one either side of the main figure of the *Zhabs-drung* in peaceful aspect (e.g. Plate 20). Together they must have managed the whole pretence of the 'retreat'. During the early years of his regency the entire area of eastern Bhutan began to fall into the hands of the 'Brug-pa government of the west. The campaign was directed by the *dPon-slob* of Krong-sar, Mi-gyur brTan-pa, and the force he commanded was raised from among the new subjects of the west headed by the 'most favoured patrons', the Wang people of the capital districts. Its primary purpose was to remove the recalcitrant *Chos-'khor dPon-po* of Bum-thang but by playing on the rivalries of the clan rulers further east the commanders were able to win a good deal of local support, and one by one the old clan territories fell to the invading army. Four of the five fortresses established during the course of the campaign became the permanent provincial capitals of eastern Bhutan (Plates 25 and 26), and the campaign as a whole ushered in that dominance of the east by the west which has remained ever since. The *Lo-rgyus* (Text II in Part Five) explains how the annexation took place in the cause of the 'Teachings' of the 'Brug-pa. Although the campaign commanders were all monks and the ideology of the new theocracy provided the necessary justifications, the campaign itself seems to have had little of the flavour of a crusade or *jihad*. It was more the reflection of a confident expansionary trend in the new state, justified but not occasioned by religious prophecy and sentiment.

### The Second sDe-srid

The 1st *sDe-srid* seems to have retired in 1656, and probably had a hand in the appointment of his successor bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-grags, an illegitimate son of bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma and therefore half-brother to the *Zhabs-drung*,

who had appointed him *sPa-gro dPon-slob*. It was from this position that he came to the *sde-srid*'s throne. At all events, he must either have been a member of the inner clique guarding the secret of the 'retreat' or made party to it at the time of his accession. A year later there occurred the third large-scale invasion of Bhutan by a Tibeto-Mongol force. Among its immediate causes Shakabpa (1976:443) mentions the extermination by the Bhutanese authorities of a pro-Tibetan faction led by one *Chos-rje* Nam-mkha' Rin-chen. He also points to constant military support given to the new Bhutanese state by the King of La-dwags, Senge rNam-rgyal; the king, however, had died much earlier in 1642 and there seems little evidence for direct Ladakhi involvement in this campaign. Even though the entire Tibeto-Mongol army seems to have been unleashed on Bhutan, the invasion proved to be another disaster. The 5th Dalai Lama attributed this to the bickerings between the chief Tibetan commander, Nor-bu, who controlled the troops invading western Bhutan, and the Mongolian commanders of the detachments from the Tibetan province of dBus, Kong-po and Khams, who invaded Bum-thang in the central region of Bhutan. He also pointed to an outbreak of various epidemics among the troops.<sup>8</sup> (A ceremony commemorating the Bhutanese victory in Bum-thang is still performed every year by the state monks of Krong-sar on arrival at Bya-dkar rDzong for their annual visit to Bum-thang.) The temporary success of what seems to have been the eastern column is described in the *Lo-rgyus*<sup>9</sup> where it is made clear that the invaders could rely on the support of the Mon-pa people of Kameng who were already dGe-lugs-pa subjects. A constant feature of all these Tibetan campaigns becomes apparent in that source, namely the difficulties faced by the invaders in turning their temporary successes into decisive victories; warfare was still largely a seasonal business, and in the hot Bhutanese summer the invaders generally seem to have retreated to the Tibetan plateau. This left the undefeated Bhutanese with a strong bargaining position in any subsequent peace negotiations. The 1657 campaign was thus brought to an end in a settlement arranged by the *Sa-skya Bla-ma* bSod-nams dBang-phyug.

### The Third sDe-srid

The reign of the 2nd *sde-srid*, indeed of all the successive *sde-srid*, is recorded largely in terms of the 'good works' he undertook in refurbishing the fortresses with chapels and other such things. At his unexpected death in 1667, the chamberlain forged a letter in the name of the *Zhabs-drung* appointing the *Krong-sar dPon-slob* Mi-'gyur brTan-pa the 3rd *sde-srid*, as noted above. It was presumably the new *sde-srid*'s fury on discovering that he had not been made party to the secret long before which led to his clash with the chamberlain who eventually died in some kind of semi-imprisonment away from the

capital at dBang-'dus Pho-brang. One of the new *sde-srid's* first acts was highly significant in relation to the 'retreat'. He accorded bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (the great-grandson of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, and son of the *Zhabs-drung's* chief ally, Tshe-dbang bsTan-'dzin) a status equal to his own, carrying the same privileges and honours.<sup>10</sup> Up to this point the young bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas had been a respected member of the monastic community but his position in the collateral lineage of the Ra-lung family had not singled him out for special preferment. It can be assumed that the *sde-srid's* discovery of the *Zhabs-drung's* pretended retreat led him to groom the young monk as an official stand-in for the *Zhabs-drung* while the pretence continued. Under the *sde-srid's* patronage bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas soon rose to assume full responsibility for the spiritual affairs of the government; as noted above, he and the *sde-srid* had their candidate for the vacant abbacy 'approved' by the *Zhabs-drung* in 1672.

Mi-gyur brTan-pa had been responsible for pushing the boundaries of Bhutan to their eastern limits, and after acceding to the *sde-srid's* throne he turned his attention to the western border. The Lepcha people who inhabited the area south of Sikkim were the first to feel the effect of the 'Brug-pa expansion in this direction and in 1668 their chief, A-lcog, turned to the dGe-lugs-pa government of Tibet for military support.<sup>11</sup> In the 11th month a Tibetan force invaded Bhutan again, one column directed towards the mTsho-sna area in the east, another towards Bum-thang in the centre of the country, and a third towards 'Brug-rgyal rDzong at the head of the sPa-gro valley. The outcome is not clear, but a temporary truce seems to have been declared while the passes were blocked with snow. The intention seems to have been to draw up a proper peace treaty at a later date but before this could be settled, trouble again flared up between the Bhutanese and the Lepchas in 1675. The following year the Bhutanese invaded the Chumbi valley, Sikkim and the area south of Sikkim. The Lepcha chief was then killed, and in retaliation the Tibetan government arranged yet another invasion of Bhutan, perhaps the largest undertaken during the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama. Five columns advanced by way of sPa-gro, Gling-bzhi, Bum-thang, bKra-shis-sgang and Phag-ri, but their only lasting achievement was the expulsion of the Bhutanese troops from Sikkim. According to the Bhutanese account,<sup>12</sup> thirty Tibetan nobles (*drung-'khor*), sixty officers (*lding-dpon*) and more than three hundred common soldiers were captured and imprisoned. Two years later in 1678 a great council of peace was convened at Phag-ri presided over by three Tibetan mediators: the head lama of the Sa-skya school, the steward (*phyag-mdzod*) of the Panchen Lama and the governor of the lHa-sa district.<sup>13</sup> We read in the Bhutanese account that peace was assured, that the Tibetan prisoners were all returned, and that no further invasion of Bhutan took place

during the next thirty-seven years. In the Tibetan source used by Shakabpa (loc. cit.), however, it is said that peace was not concluded because the Bhutanese insisted that the Lepcha chief had been their subject (*mi-rtsa*), and that the control of sGang-tok, capital of Sikkim, should be shared between them and the Tibetan authorities. Consequently, the whole of the Bhutan-Tibet border stretching from Shel-dkar to mTsho-sna is said to have been sealed and all trade prohibited, though it is not clear for how long. The area south of Sikkim, the original subject of dispute, remained in Bhutanese hands until it was annexed to India during the Anglo-Bhutanese war of 1865.

The reign of Mi'gyur brTan-pa (1667-1680) marked the high point of Bhutanese expansion and under his successors the borders were all consolidated. It was during his reign too that the internal administration is said to have been regularised on a nation-wide basis. Bhutanese contacts abroad were also strengthened, particularly by the appointment of monastic officials to western Tibet and La-dwags (Ladakh). It is not clear when these ties first began but it was most likely in the reign of King Senge rNam-rgyal of La-dwags (d. 1642). By the 1670's the 'Brug-pa government of Bhutan had been granted several monasteries together with their estates. In 1678 Mi'gyur brTan-pa consulted with bsTan'dzin Rab-rgyas over the appointment of his delegates to the areas of Kailash, Gar-sha (Lahul), Zangs-dkar and La-dwags; the two Ladakhi monasteries were rNgud (unidentified) and sTag-sna where the old associations with Bhutan are still very much remembered.<sup>14</sup> It was also during Mi'gyur brTan-pa's reign that the first mission to Nepal was sent in about 1673 under the leadership of Dam-chos Pad-dkar, as noted above. The contact lasted for almost two centuries and brought the Bhutanese government grants of ecclesiastical estates, particularly in Glo Mon-thang (Mustang) and Dol-po. For much of this period the Bhutanese also had legal rights over the important Buddhist shrine of Swayambhunāth in the Kathmandu valley.

Mi'gyur brTan-pa was deposed in 1680. No details are given in *LCB I* (f. 96a) except that the *sde-srid's* fate is said to have been determined by his past *karma*; in particular by the many deaths he had caused while directing the annexation of eastern Bhutan and by the fact that he had 'failed to repay the kindness' of the *Zhabs-drung's* chamberlain who had put him on the throne. According to another tradition<sup>15</sup> it was dGe'dun Chos'phel, the *rdzong-dpon* of sPu-na-kha, who deposed the *sde-srid*. The *rdzong-dpon* had suffered the indignity of a military defeat during the Tibetan invasion of 1676 and he is said to have harboured a grudge against the ruler on this account. After his deposition, Mi'gyur brTan-pa retired to lCags-ri and died there the same year. He was succeeded by his own protégé bsTan'dzin Rab-

rgyas, who already enjoyed spiritual authority and now came to be invested with the full temporal power of the *sde-srid*. The state monks probably had a hand in his elevation in consultation with the regional governors. No doubt the appointment had the seal of approval of the (dead) *Zhabs-drung* as in the cases of his predecessor and the ruling abbot, bSod-nams 'Od-zer.

### The Fourth sDe-srid

bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (Plate 27) reigned as the 4th *sDe-srid* for fifteen years (1680-95) and he is reckoned one of the great figures in Bhutanese history. He was perhaps the only effective ruler after the great *Zhabs-drung* who combined in his person complete spiritual and temporal authority; the full weight of the term *rgyal-tshab* seems applicable to him alone. A reading of his biography shows that he was accepted without question as the legitimate 'representative' of the *Zhabs-drung* by virtue of their distant blood relationship and because the *Zhabs-drung* is supposed to have indicated before the start of his 'retreat' that the young bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas was to be carefully prepared for a position of authority. He came to be known as the *Khri Rin-po-che* ('the Precious Enthroned') and his incarnations are often referred to as the *Khri-sprul* or *Bla-ma Khri-pa* ('Lam Trip' in the vernacular). They are supposed to have represented the *Zhabs-drung* incarnations during the period of their minority just as bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas represented the 1st *Zhabs-drung* during his 'retreat'. In point of fact this view is also an oversimplification, and the vicarious authority of the *Zhabs-drung*'s official stand-in was by no means always limited to the *Khri-sprul*. It depended rather on the political circumstances of the moment.

### The Search Continues

It is difficult to evaluate the rule of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas because in his huge official biography by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub the secret of the *Zhabs-drung*'s 'retreat' is never discussed even though it had actually been revealed by the time this work was written in 1720. Nevertheless there are occasional glimpses of the continuing secret as seen in the previous chapter. Most revealing of all, however, is a passage in the biography of the 7th Head Abbot Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las (regn. 1730-38) by Shākya Rin-chen.<sup>16</sup> It relates to events in the reign of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas which are omitted in his official biography. We learn, in the most highflown language but without evasion, that after the *Zhabs-drung* had died in the course of his actual retreat his unnamed incarnation was born in a village on the Bhutan-Tibet border in the district of 'Gos-yul (the Phag-ri area). The Bhutanese government accepted him as the true incarnation and made secret preparations to bring him to Bhutan. Due to the relations between the 'Brug-pa authorities of Bhutan and





Plate 27. bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (1638-1696). Thang-kha in Thim-phu rDzong.



the dGe-lugs-pa of Tibet, however, the young incarnation fell into the hands of the Tibetan government and so the Bhutanese had no means of securing him for the succession. Later, when bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas had acceded to the *sde-srid*'s throne he tried every means to bring the incarnation to Bhutan, but he too failed. Eventually the incarnation went to China and died. The date of his death is not given. The passage is introduced in this source in connection with the discovery and recognition of this person's incarnation, the first *Thugs-sprul* of the *Zhabs-drung*, i.e. 'Jigs-med Grags-pa I (1724-61). Vague and imprecise though it is, the passage stands solitary witness to the protracted and secret attempts to find the true heir of the *Zhabs-drung*. For bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas the immediate incentive to re-open the secret negotiations surely came shortly after his own accession to the *sde-srid*'s throne at the death in c. 1681 of the *Zhabs-drung*'s invalid son 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje; the legitimate successor to the *Zhabs-drung* could now only be an incarnation because the male line had died out. Moreover, the attempt to find an incarnation long before 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje had died fully confirms 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje as incompetent to succeed. It seems probable that the first initiative to find the incarnation was taken by Mi-'gyur brTan-pa sometime after he had come to the office of *sde-srid* in 1667 when he discovered that his letter of appointment had been faked by the chamberlain in the name of the dead *Zhabs-drung*. The acceptance of an incarnation so early suggests that quite a number of people must already have been in the secret. Presumably the Tibetan authorities, who appear to have been guarding the incarnation as a potential pawn, were aware that the *Zhabs-drung* had died.

Late in life bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas appears to have confided to his close attendants that his sole aim had been to administer the state until an incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung* could be found. This appears in his own official biography (f. 327a) where the whole matter of the 'retreat' is shrouded in almost impenetrable mist. Towards the end of this work there are similar vague and passing references<sup>17</sup> to the fact that the *Zhabs-drung* had died; the impression gained is that by now the inner clique guarding the secret must have slowly increased in number. Nevertheless, the Head Abbot bSod-nams 'Od-zer apparently died in 1689 in full belief, if we are to believe his biography, that the *Zhabs-drung* was still alive.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the chamberlain *gZims-dpon* Sa-ga who would have been responsible for the practical details of the deception was still active in the reign of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas and in that of his successor.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately the biographer of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas never tells us what he knows of the truth.

### Feuding Successors

The long and peaceful reign of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas came to an unhappy end in 1695. The details are complicated but all those who played a part in

the affair must have belonged to the inner coterie guarding the long secret. The favourite of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas was one *Drung* Nor-bu who had previously been in the personal employment of dGe-'dun Chos-'phel, the *rdzong-dpon* of sPu-na-kha. (This latter person, it will be remembered, had deposed Mi-'gyur brTan-pa, the previous *sde-srid*.) Nor-bu rose very high in the regard of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas, and came to occupy the dual position of chamberlain to the *sde-srid* (i.e. *gong-gzims*) and *rdzong-dpon* of the summer capital in Thim-phu. Thus in power and influence he far outshone his previous master, dGe-'dun Chos-'phel; the latter eventually murdered him, probably out of sheer jealousy and spite, bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas is said to have been so saddened by the affair at a time when he was suffering from a severe illness that he resigned his position and retired to his ancestral home at the monastery of rTa-mgo. dGe-'dun Chos-'phel himself then took the vacant throne of the *sde-srid* and installed mTsho-skyes rDo-rje, the granddaughter of the *Zhabs-drung*, as a sort of puppet head of state; bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas died of his protracted illness at rTa-mgo shortly thereafter.

Very little is known about mTsho-skyes rDo-rje. The author of *LCB I* maintains (on f. 61b) that she was put on the throne 'in the manner of a fake man' (*khyo-rdzus-su*). We know that she appointed the 4th Head Abbot Dam-chos Pad-dkar in 1697 and died a year later, probably of smallpox.<sup>20</sup> We learn in the biography (f. 33b) of the same abbot that just after she had appointed him, several monks had the same dream of the *Zhabs-drung's* retreat finally coming to an end and of his ordering the arrangements for the new abbot's ceremony of enthronement. mTsho-skyes rDo-rje does not appear in the official list of the *rgyal-tshab* (p. 243) though in theory at least that seems to have been her true position; she was the 'representative' of the *Zhabs-drung*, the very last of his line, and in spite of her sex it was felt she had sufficient standing to confer legitimacy on the ruling *sde-srid*. Not, however, in the eyes of the author of *LCB I* (loc. cit.) who commented: 'In reality I think it preferable for incarnations alone to uphold the Teachings, rather than descendants.'<sup>21</sup> After her death this was the only possible solution. It was adopted the following year by the *sde-srid* when he brought Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, the incarnation of her father, to the capital.<sup>22</sup> Under conditions of secrecy the nine year old boy was fetched from eastern Bhutan, subjected to the usual tests and recognised to be 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje's rebirth.'<sup>23</sup> It was the first time the principle of incarnation was used to find the *Zhabs-drung's* 'representative'. It must be assumed that the delay in finding the *Zhabs-drung's* own incarnation was occasioned by the fact that the candidate chosen by bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas and his predecessors was still known to be alive in Tibet, or China where he eventually seems to have died. That Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan was the *Zhabs-drung's* 'representative' and

not the true heir is quite clear because the *Zhabs-drung* was still in 'retreat' and it was Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan himself who, on his own admission, finally disclosed the secret.

### The Old Secret Revealed

However, this did not happen until about eight years later. By that time his patron dGe-'dun Chos-'phel, had been killed by his enemies in a bloody revolt at sPu-na-kha,<sup>24</sup> and the office of *sde-srid* had passed first to the 6th *sDe-srid*, Ngag-dbang Tshe-ring (*regn.* 1701-4) and then to the 7th *sDe-srid*, dPal-'byor (*regn.* 1704-7). It was about half-way through the latter's reign (c. 1705) that ' . . . from the force of certain circumstances it became necessary [for me, Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan] to disclose the secret concerning the retreat of the Glorious Ngag-gi dBang-po [*the Zhabs-drung*] and so on that day the Precious Lord [Dam-chos Pad-dkar, the Abbot] also came to see the corpse.'<sup>25</sup> It is difficult to imagine how the 'retreat' could have been anything but an open secret by this stage, known to most of the senior monks and government officials of the capital. For them the term 'retreat' was perhaps little more than a euphemism, even if the public at large still believed the *Zhabs-drung* to be alive, having entered the 'retreat' more than half a century earlier. Could it be that somewhere along the line the whole charade slipped from being an ingenious political device into a matter of ritual formality, or were these two aspects in constant and ambivalent interaction? The answer, if there is one, will have to await the appearance of more sources for this period, or fresh insights from those already used. What is certain however is that for as long as it lasted, the 'retreat' continued to have the deepest implications for any claim to legitimate rule. At the very least it stands as sure evidence of the enduring hold which the founder exerted on the minds and hearts of his subjects and on the powerful figures who later ruled in his place.

## **PART FOUR**

### **Looking Ahead (Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries)**



Plate 28. Shes-rab dBang-phyug, 13th 'Brug-sDe-srid (regn. 1744–1763).  
sPa-gro rDzong collection.



Plate 29. Padma Tshe-dbang bKra-Shis, Chamberlain of the *dBang-'dus Pho-brang rDzong-dpon* Ang-'brug Nyi-ma (modern drawing by Kun-bzang sTobs-rgyal).

In concentrating on the tangled issue of succession, Bhutanese history after the *Zhabs-drung* has had to be grossly oversimplified. When all the sources eventually become available it should be possible after long and careful study to clear some of the areas of doubt to reveal more of the wood and less of the trees. The 'wood' of the Bhutanese state had in fact been well and truly planted throughout its mountains and valleys by the time the *Zhabs-drung's* secret was revealed in c. 1705. Thereafter, the complex foliage of its many species appears to have come to maturity in the mid 18th century before it experienced a long autumn and winter in the 19th century, and a new spring in the 20th century. In this concluding section a bird's eye view is taken at some of the developments in this later period.

### The Doctrine of Multiple Reincarnation.

After the official ending of the 'retreat' the way was open for the installation of an acceptable candidate as the true incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*. An orthodox account was later developed to explain how it came about that several candidates received recognition by rival powers at different times in a manner that shed suspicion on all of them. The theological solution used in this explanation can in a sense be compared to that of the 'retreat' upon which it was based. Moreover, as in the case of the 'retreat' several parallel examples could also be found in Tibetan and Bhutanese history without difficulty. The first clear account of it probably comes in *LCB I*, completed in 1759:

Now if I am to relate in truth what I have heard and come to believe: Previously, at the time when the secret of the *Zhabs-drung's* retreat was disclosed, as soon as he arose from the *samadhi* in which he had been residing, three rays of light issued from his body, speech and mind and these came down at three places: Sikkim, Dar-dkar-nang [in southern Bhutan] and [the region] called Grwa-nang in the dBus province of Tibet.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years after these words were written, the same doctrine of multiple incarnation was explained to Hasting's emissary as follows:

In ancient times this hilly country was parcelled out among a number of independent chieftains. A lama from the north united them under one government, and introduced his religion among them. His death gave birth to three lamas. His body fell to the share of one; his heart to another; and his mouth or word to a third. Upon the death of these holy men, their souls pass into the bodies of children, who, after a strict examination into their identity, are recognised; and thus a succession of saints under various forms, but animated by the same spirit, have continued, at different intervals, to enlighten this corner of the world. (Markham 1879:33)



A separate study would be required to explain the full course of events which led to the adoption of this doctrine but the main lines are clear. After the 'retreat' ended the first official incarnation, Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal (1708-36), was discovered in the area of Dar-dkar-nang and installed on the throne in about 1712 during the reign of 'Brug Rab-rgyas as 8th *sDe-srid*. Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal appears to have been universally accepted as the undisputed incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*. A year after his installation, Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (incarnation of the *Zhabs-drung*'s son and the person responsible for disclosing the *Zhabs-drung*'s secret) appears to have been murdered at the behest of *sDe-srid* 'Brug Rab-rgyas, perhaps because his former status as a 'representative' had come into conflict with the sovereign position of the new *Zhabs-drung*.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan may have been killed simply because he was known to have sympathised with the *sde-srid*'s enemies. Whatever the reason, *Zhabs-drung* Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal's position as rightful sovereign was now secure while his patron the *sde-srid* remained in office.

In 1714 the country was invaded by Lajang Khan, the last of the Qośot rulers of Tibet, in retaliation for Bhutanese pressure on the dGe-lugs-pa stronghold in rTa-wang.<sup>3</sup> The invasion was not a success and left the *status quo* undisturbed. Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal continued to receive his monastic education at the hands of some of the most competent Bhutanese scholars and all was well until some years after his patron, 'Brug Rab-rgyas, had been succeeded in 1719 by his nephew, Ngag-dbang rGya-mtsho. For reasons that are not clear, the uncle and nephew fell out with each other and there followed a long and complicated civil war in western Bhutan which led to the invasion of the country by the Tibetan ruler Pho-lha-nas in 1730.<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps the only truly successful invasion by the Tibetans against the Bhutanese; it led to a formal acceptance of Manchu suzerainty in Bhutan (never implemented by the Chinese and soon repudiated by the Bhutanese) and to the establishment of a regular diplomatic mission to the Tibetan capital which eventually helped to place Bhutan on an independent footing equal to that of Nepal and Ladakh in Tibetan eyes.

The effect of the civil war and the invasion on the country's own internal constitution was in the long run just as decisive.<sup>5</sup> In the peace settlement negotiated with the help of the Karma-pa and Zhwa-dmar-pa lamas, the Tibetan ruler arranged a temporary division of the country: the area of sPa-gro was to remain in the hands of the *sPa-gro dPon-slob* 'Brug Don-grub, ally of the *sDe-srid* 'Brug Rab-rgyas who had been killed in the fighting, while the rest of the country was to remain in the hands of the Bhutanese government. It was agreed that this arrangement would continue for as long as 'Brug Don-grub (also called *Ka-spe* Don-grub) remained alive; thereafter it



was agreed that the sPa-gro valley would revert to the central government, and any of the supporters of 'Brug Don-grub who wished to accept Tibetan refuge would be free to do so. In the meantime, the legitimacy of *Zhabs-drung* Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal had been impugned by the government faction that had defeated his late patron and he had with great difficulty succeeded in escaping from the winter capital at sPu-na-kha. He fled to the protected enclave of *dPon-slob* 'Brug Don-grub in sPa-gro and there he died of natural causes in 1736 saying, it is claimed, that he would be reborn in the family of his new patron. The death was kept secret for about a year and this allowed time for his disciples to find his incarnation, Shākya bsTan-'dzin (1736-80). The child seems to have been the nephew of 'Brug Don-grub but the insecurity of his position became evident when 'Brug Don-grub himself died in the same year. True to his word, the Tibetan ruler agreed to take under his protection all those loyal to the dead *dpon-slob* when his area came back into the hands of the Bhutanese government in accordance with the original peace settlement. A small group, therefore, including the infant Shākya bsTan-'dzin, his mother and the chief disciple of the late *Zhabs-drung*, made its way across the border to Phag-ri. From there the refugees eventually went south to the outlying area of Bhutan under the control of brDa-ling rDzong in what is now West Bengal. After many adventures and difficulties they were permitted to return to central Bhutan and the young 'unofficial' *Zhabs-drung* ended up in imprisonment in Dar-dkar-nang, where his previous embodiment had been born.

Despite the sympathy which many government officials felt towards him, it was impossible for this *Zhabs-drung* to have his unofficial status turned to formal recognition; the central authorities in the capital had long since been trying to secure their own candidate, one who would retrospectively occupy the position of the late Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal whose legitimacy had been denied. The vacuum in the years 1730 to 1746 was filled by no less than three 'representatives', two incarnations of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje and one incarnation of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas, the *Khri Rin-po-che*. This latter incarnation, Mi-pham dBang-po, had unwillingly come to the *sde-srid*'s throne in 1729. In 1736 he managed to run away to Tibet and his position of *sde-srid* fell to his uncle dPal-'byor. After reaching lHa-sa, Mi-pham, dBang-po was received with great respect as if he were still the ruler of Bhutan by the 7th Dalai Lama and by Pho-lha-nas, the Tibetan ruler.<sup>6</sup> It was while he was in lHa-sa that Mi-pham dBang-po met a child born at Grwa-nang who was said to be the incarnation of the un-named figure whom bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas and his predecessors had so long ago tried in secret to bring to Bhutan while the 'retreat' was still in progress. On his return to Bhutan, Mi-pham dBang-po reported the matter to the Head Abbot Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las (regn. 1730-

38) and thereafter it seems to have become government policy to establish this child as the official *Zhabs-drung*.<sup>7</sup>

On the death of the 12th *sDe-srid* in 1744, the child was still in Tibet and every effort to bring him south had run into difficulties. The new *sde-srid*, Shes-rab dBang-phyug (Plate 28) was one of the most effective figures in Bhutanese history. Two years after his accession he succeeded in resolving the whole situation. The child born in Grwa-nang was brought down and installed as *Zhabs-drung* 'Jigs-med Grags-pa (1724-61) and the 'unofficial' *Zhabs-drung* Shākya bsTan-'dzin (1736-80), whom the *sde-srid* had long ago assisted, was released from imprisonment at Dar-dkar-nang and accorded a position of respect.<sup>8</sup> Thus in 1746 there were two *Zhabs-drung* in the Bhutanese capital, one senior and the other junior. Thirteen years later during the rule of the same 13th *sde-srid* the doctrine of multiple reincarnation was first published in the official history of *LCB* I, as was seen above (p.258). Thenceforth the incarnations of 'Jigs-med Grags-pa reappeared as the *Thugs-sprul* (embodying the 'mental' principle of the *Zhabs-drung*). (It seems to have been conveniently forgotten that 'Jigs-med Grags-pa was first regarded as the incarnation of the 'secret' candidate of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas and his predecessor.) The incarnations of Shākya bsTan-'dzin reappeared as the *gSung-sprul* (the 'verbal' principle). The *sKu-sprul* ('physical' principle) was deemed to have been the son of a king of Sikkim. Due to continuing disturbances between the two countries he was never brought to Bhutan and so the line never became established. Although there is more to learn about this last phantom (perhaps a confusion with the 'secret' candidate), the doctrine enunciated in *LCB* I on the basis of the situation existing in Bhutan in the middle years of the 18th century has remained to this day the official orthodoxy.

Until the events of the early twentieth century the *Zhabs-drung Thugs-sprul* was to remain the one figure who could command the universal allegiance of a sovereign. Samuel Davis who was with Turner in Bhutan in 1783 noted in his journal that the 2nd *Zhabs-drung Thugs-sprul*:

. . . is without exception acknowledged to possess an inherent right to the absolute dominion of the whole country, and . . . the Deib Raja is no more than his prime minister, vizier, or dewan (Davis 1830:497).

He went on, however, to say that:

. . . the Rajah would not be inclined to admit the temporal control, or to share any part of the real authority with another, nor is it likely that the young Lama will at any time hereafter find himself in a condition to assert such a claim.

Also:

. . . there is little doubt that the policy of the government will provide that he be still secluded from any interference in public

concerns, and wholly confined to the contemplation of his spiritual dignity.

### The Church-state

The history of the Bhutanese theocracy could in part be written as a commentary on these statements, on the inevitable triumph of secular interests over spiritual principles. But until the establishment of the monarchy those interests never became fully identified with a particular group or class, and the spiritual principles underlying the theocratic ideology remained the accepted norm. The doctrine of the 'dual system' of religious and secular law had first been developed in the second half of the 13th century at a time when the Kublai Khan and the 'Phags-pa lama were trying to work out the ideal political balance in their relationship. When it was adopted in Bhutan (mainly through the writings of *gTsang mKhan-chen*, it seems) the concept came to imply the total subservience of the state to religion. This is evident throughout the legal code given in Part 5 below. The 'dual system' never helped to define the political relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities as it surely did in Tibet where many of the civil officials had their monastic counterparts, the pairs working together on an equal basis. In Bhutan the situation appears to have been quite different; lay officials had to assume a semi-monastic character before reaching high positions. In particular, if a layman happened to become the *sde-srid* he was usually required to take the vows of the minor order and receive a new name. (For this reason many of the later incumbents have two names, whereas most of the fully ordained *sde-srid* have a single name plus a monastic nickname.)

As far as one can tell, every one of the lay *sde-srid* who came to power did so in the course of a career which began on the bottom rungs of the government ladder. Most seem to have been from the families of ordinary peasants, who were required to place one of their sons in government service in return for tax exemptions. This obligation was quite separate from another which required families to place one of their sons in the state monastery of their district as 'monk tax' (*btsun-khral*).

In point of fact the monks in the capital fortresses of sPu-na-kha and Thim-phu appear to have been roughly matched in number by the lay government servants, not counting those at the very top who could be either monks or laymen. In the account of the 13th *sDe-srid*'s virtuous achievements we learn (on f. 93b) that on his retirement in 1763 after fourteen years of rule, there were 679 lay government servants. These were divided into six ranks starting with 14 'ordinary' officers entitled to double salaries-in-kind (*gzhung-gi nyis-skal dkyus-ma*; in present vernacular, 'nyikem').

Below them stood 90 officials entitled to a government horse (*rta-thob; chibs-bzhon* in the honorific), and so on down to the sixth rank of 'common servitors' (*lto-gzan dkyus-ma*), 280 in number. Among these latter were perhaps included the men from families of Indian slaves, captured in the plains and tied in perpetuity to the capital and regional fortresses. Such slave families also seem to have constituted quite a large proportion of the total work force in the country, most of the wealthier Bhutanese families having such a slave family attached to them. (All slaves received manumission in the 1950's.) On a smaller scale the situation in the capital was reproduced in all the provincial capitals. Part 3 of the legal code of 1729 constitutes a set of civil service rules governing the rights and duties of all government servants. Much of it is clearly written in reaction to petitions to remove the abuses of unscrupulous officials. The arrival in the village of a group of tax assessors, the periodic tours of government officials, the holding of trials — in short every event which involved the public with the bureaucracy could become an occasion for extortionate malpractice. The checks and safeguards depended mainly on the strength and character of the ruler.

### British missions and the civil wars

The rather unsavoury picture of the state's involvement in the life of its subjects as conveyed in the code has to be set against the enthusiastic and detailed account of Bhutanese life given by Hasting's emissaries. Like travellers of any period they were at the mercy of subjective impressions, but the conclusion reached by Davis in his journal of 1783 tends to sum up their attitude in broader terms:

. . . The Bouteas . . . have also a free openness of carriage and an apparent sincerity of behaviour, that might be thought incompatible with the despotism of the government. But the government, although in appearance as absolute as one can be, is not administered with that rigour and injustice which produces an abject servility and meanness in the manners of the people governed. (Davis 1830:501-2)

There is a world of difference between the inspired and sympathetic accounts written by Bogle, Turner, Davis and Hamilton in the 18th century and all the dull invective of British officials in the 19th century. Some of that difference can surely be attributed to more than a change in British imperial attitudes and a decline in English prose style. The well known picture of Bhutan as a country immersed in chaos and peopled by brigands and despots was conveyed during a period when British policy to contain Bhutanese expansion in the plains was steadily failing. Moreover, the 19th century ambassadors were never welcomed at the court of Bhutan with the warmth and sympathy accorded to those of the 18th century: the former

were grudgingly admitted after long and complicated negotiations which damaged British prestige.

At the same time the 19th century really did see wave upon wave of civil dissension in the country. If there were two rivals for the office of *sde-srid* they would both have themselves installed, one in the winter capital and the other in the summer capital.<sup>9</sup> In the three years from 1850 to 1852 there appear to have been no fewer than five *sde-srid*. The *Zhabs-drung* of this period, 'Jigs-med Nor-bu (1831-61), was totally ineffective in stemming the tide of revolt and counter revolt. Under these conditions the central government was virtually nothing in comparison with the practically autonomous power of the regional *rdzong-dpon* and *dpon-slob*. Just as Cacella had noted in 1627 that every person was "an absolute lord in his own house", so in the 19th century it could have been said that every baron was a king in his own province.

The secular ethos, however, never found expression in writing although echoes of it appear in the unrecorded oral literature. One of the best known narrative poems (*blo-bsrel*) tells a tragic story of the mid-19th century concerning the lay chamberlain of the *rdzong-dpon* of dBang-'dus Pho-brang, himself also a layman. (Plate 29) The hero's fate determines that he should take up his master's cause and do battle in the east. All the omens point to his inescapable death but the chamberlain keeps faith with his lord and goes off with a band of companions to his certain end. The expression of such ideal loyalty (*dam-tshig gtsang-ma*) forms part of the background to the interminable battles of the 19th century. Many of these were more in the nature of ritual occasions when contending sides screamed imprecations, cast their magic spells and fired off their blunderbusses. As early as 1774 and 1783 Bogle and Turner witnessed minor insurrections entailing very little loss of life which appear to have conformed to this pattern. The flavour of these affairs seems to survive in the grand contests of archery, so much part of the local scene in Bhutan. But in the 19th century there certainly occurred many civil wars on a serious scale, when each side drew its forces from the subjects who, under the law, were obliged to render military service. The British were consequently often at a loss to know with whom, if anyone, they could properly negotiate. By 1865 when the Bhutan War was about to break out over the question of the Indian Duars, the newspapers in Calcutta could refer with wryness to bloody events (or their rumours) in Bhutan as having occurred '*more Bhootanico*'.

The semi-monastic character of government never allowed the hereditary principle to determine succession to the chief posts until after the situation had completely deteriorated. In the end the principle triumphed, the present monarchy became established and the independent baronies all

collapsed. It could be said, therefore, that the real unification of the country only took place in the present century. This view, however, does great injustice to the theocracy which succeeded in imposing a uniform set of institutions on the whole country. This more than anything helped to develop a sense of national and cultural identity to overshadow the ancient divisions of race and language. At the same time the repeated invasions by Tibetan and Mongol forces in the century after the arrival of the founding *Zhabs-drung* clearly had an effect opposite to the one envisaged; instead of subduing the country to Tibetan authority they served to unite the Bhutanese against a common enemy. The campaigns were a disaster for the Tibetans and were construed by the Bhutanese as their own total victory. The success of the Tibetan ruler Pho-lha-nas in 1730 was turned into a diplomatic triumph but never achieved lasting conquest. It was the last time the Tibetans ever invaded.

### Spiritual life and expression

The monastic communities based in the capital and regional fortresses were not the havens of peace that Buddhist monasteries are supposed to be, but they provided the one indispensable factor of stability in the state through all the wars, epidemics, fires and earthquakes these buildings suffered. There are constant references to senior monks intervening in turbulent disputes, arranging truces and convening councils at times of crisis to appoint a new *sde-srid*. The monasteries themselves were governed by a consensus of the older monks, who generally chose their own abbot according to his seniority and accomplishments. Most of the *sde-srid* who held office were themselves of a mature age and there clearly evolved an irregular assembly of senior government officers under the leadership of the *sde-srid*. Loosely constituted, the assembly's character seems to have owed much to monastic example and precedent. (The present National Assembly could in turn be said to have developed out of the tradition of the *sde-srid*'s council). It must be stressed that it was only a particular type of monastic official whose duties entailed participation in the affairs of government; the community as a whole maintained a strict curriculum of study and ritual.

The stable years of the 18th century saw the astonishing development of a truly Bhutanese school of scholarship based in the state communities but enlivened by contacts with the best of the Tibetan world of learning. Most of the Head Abbots of this period were highly accomplished writers and a study of their works and biographies will one day reveal the best of the cultural heyday of the theocracy. In the fine arts too, the Bhutanese achieved great distinction and confidence in their own peculiar adaptation of existing forms and techniques. There is a boldness and richness which

speaks of the unlimited patronage available to government artisans in executing commissioned works. Much of the government revenue went directly towards the external 'supports' of religion not only for the state institutions but also for private temples and monasteries throughout the country. The account of the 13th *sDe-srid*'s merits carefully lists over four hundred private religious foundations to which the government had donated new statutes. <sup>10</sup>

Those monks who had a bent for the contemplative life could rely on an established procedure for obtaining permission from their abbot to go off to a hermitage, or to receive special training from a master. Ironically, many of the clergy were driven by the constant political upheavals to take refuge in the practice of renunciation which truly lies at the heart of Buddhist monasticism. The poetic writings and biographies of the great abbots are filled with remorse and sadness at the violence which surrounded them. In cases where religious figures were unwillingly placed in positions of secular authority they rarely held to their posts for more than a few years. Invariably they resigned and fled to the peace of a hermitage.

### **The office of *sde-srid***

It seems to have been only at the very beginning of the state's history that the monk-rulers achieved lasting success, but many of the lay *sde-srid* whose rules were genuinely guided by spiritual principles seem to have been effective and competent figures. In the two and a half centuries of the theocracy, that is from the time the founding *Zhabs-drung* went into 'retreat' until the first hereditary king O-rgyan dBang-phyug (Plate 30) came to the throne in 1907, there were approximately fifty-five *sde-srid*, who reigned for an average of about four and a half years. Many of course ruled for much longer and some for just a few months, while others shared the throne with another through choice or necessity. (See Appendix.) Even if one allows for the doubtful testimony of such an average, it does show how many of the *sde-srid* came to their positions late in life shortly before retirement or death in office. Six of them appear to have been killed and at least twelve deposed. For all its hazards the office enjoyed remarkable continuity. By the latter half of the 19th century, however, the position could have had few attractions. Indeed many of the *sde-srid* of that period including the last (Plate 31) were the nominees of the *Krong-sar dPon-slob* 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal and his son O-rgyan dBang-phyug who preferred to leave the office to trusted men of their choice while they wielded power from behind the throne.

### **Foreign contacts and final independence**

Much of what has been said in this study will have given the impression that Bhutan is a large country and it would be as well to remember how very





Plate 30. Sir O-gyan dBang-phyug, First King of Bhutan (*regn.* 1907–1926).  
(photo John Claude White).





Plate 31. *Phyogs-las sPrul-sku Ye-shes dNgos-grub*, last in the line of the  
*'Brug sDe-srid* (regn. 1903–1905). (photo John Claude White).

small it is and how very tiny its population. The survival of a diminutive country surrounded by powerful nations largely depends on the tacit compliance and cooperation of its neighbours, no matter how well protected it is by natural barriers or how stable its government. The 18th century saw the Bhutanese enter into diplomatic relations with the Ahom kings of Assam, and with the courts of Sikkim, Nepal and Ladakh. A *modus vivendi* was eventually developed with the Tibetan authorities which did great credit to Bhutanese sovereignty. As to the idea of Chinese suzerainty, it remained entirely undeveloped and notional, although they continued from time to time to make vague claims over Bhutan and to meddle in local Bhutanese politics. In the 19th century the internal situation deteriorated to such an extent that if a foreign policy could be said to have existed at all it was one of isolation. Many of the old monastic enclaves over which the Bhutanese had acquired traditional rights in the western Himalayas, Ladakh and Nepal were lost at this time. Only the large estates around Kailash in western Tibet remained in Bhutanese hands until the Chinese took over Tibet in the 1950's. Up till then relations with Tibet remained cordial despite occasional friction on the border, but the political importance of these ties were quite superceded by contacts with British India. After the loss of the duar plains during the Bhutan War of 1865-6, Bhutan assumed with British help its proper status as a buffer country between India and Tibet. Today, although the country is within the Indian sphere of influence, its independence is internationally recognised by membership of the United Nations.

## APPENDIX

**Chronological lists of the rulers, head abbots and important incarnations of Bhutan after the Unification**

With the exception of the offices of '*Brug sDe-srid*' and '*Brug rGyal-po*', all these lists are based on information provided in *LCB* II, ff. 123a - 168a. For the '*Brug sDe-srid*' I am dependent on notes kindly provided by *Slob-dpon* Padmalags who has taken great pains to correct the faulty chronology of *LCB* I. The dates of the '*Brug sDe-srid*', *rJe mKhan-po* and '*Brug rGyal-po*' are all regnal.

The *Zhabs-drung Thugs-sprul*, 'mental incarnations' of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal 1594 - ? 1651 (the 'Dharma Rājas' of the British Records).

- |    |                       |             |
|----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1) | 'Jigs-med Grags-pa I  | 1724 - 1761 |
| 2) | Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan | 1762 - 1788 |
| 3) | 'Jigs-med Grags-pa II | 1791 - 1830 |
| 4) | 'Jigs-med Nor-bu      | 1831 - 1861 |
| 5) | 'Jigs-med Chos-rgyal  | 1862 - 1904 |
| 6) | 'Jigs-med rDo-rje     | 1905 - 1931 |

The *Zhabs-drung gSung-sprul* (*Phyogs-las sPrul-sku*), 'verbal incarnations' of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal.

- |    |                       |             |
|----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1) | Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal | 1708 - 1736 |
| 2) | Shākya bsTan-'dzin    | 1736 - 1780 |
| 3) | Ye-shes rGyal-mtshan  | 1781 - 1830 |
| 4) | 'Jigs-med rDo-rje     | 1831 - 1850 |
| 5) | Ye-shes dNgos-grub    | 1851 - 1917 |
| 6) | 'Jigs-med bsTan-'dzin | ? - ?       |

The *rGyal-sras sPrul-sku*, incarnations of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje (1631 -? 1681), son of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal.

- |    |   |             |
|----|---|-------------|
| 1) | Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan<br>(alias Gha-na-pa-ti) | 1689 - 1713 |
| 2) | 'Jigs-med Nor-bu                              | 1717 - 1735 |
| 3) | 'Brug-sgra rNam-rgyal                         | 1735 - 1762 |
| 4) | 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal                          | 1763 - 1795 |
| 5) | 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje                             | 1798 - 1829 |

The *Bla-ma Khri-pa (Khri-sprul)*, incarnations of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas 1638 - 1696.

- |    |  |             |
|----|--|-------------|
| 1) | Mi-pham dBang-po   | 1709 - 1738 |
| 2) | 'Jigs-med Seng-ge  | 1742 - 1789 |
| 3) | Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dpal rGya-mtsho<br>(alias Tshul-khrims Grags-pa) | 1790 - 1820 |
| 4) | 'Phrin-las rGya-mtsho  | 1835 - ?    |
| 5) | Mi-pham rNam-rgyal   | ? - ?       |
| 6) | ?  | ? - ?       |

The *Byams-sprul*, incarnations of *Byams-mgon* Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan  
1647 - 1732.

- |    |   |             |
|----|---|-------------|
| 1) | Ye-shes rDo-rje   | 1757 - 1805 |
| 2) | 'Jam-dbyangs bsTan-'dzin<br>(alias bDud-'joms rGyal-mtshan) | 1831 - 1855 |
| 3) | rGyal-mtshan  | ? - ?       |
| 4) | rGya-mtsho  | ? -         |

The '*Brug sDe-srid* (The 'Deb Rājas' of the British Records).

- |     |  |             |
|-----|--|-------------|
| 1)  | bsTan-dzin 'Brug-rgyas   | 1651 - 1656 |
| 2)  | bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-grags  | 1656 - 1667 |
| 3)  | Mi-'gyur brTan-pa  | 1667 - 1680 |
| 4)  | bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas  | 1680 - 1695 |
| 5)  | dGe-'dun Chos-'phel  | 1695 - 1701 |
| 6)  | Ngag-dbang Tshe-ring   | 1701 - 1704 |
| 7)  | <i>dBon</i> dPal-'byor   | 1704 - 1707 |
| 8)  | 'Brug Rab-rgyas  | 1707 - 1719 |
| 9)  | Ngag-dbang rGya-mtsho  | 1719 - 1729 |
| 10) | Mi-pham dBang-po   | 1729 - 1736 |
| 11) | <i>Khu-bo</i> dPal-'byor   | 1736 - 1739 |
| 12) | Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan  | 1739 - 1744 |
| 13) | Shes-rab dBang-phyug   | 1744 - 1763 |
| 14) | 'Brug Phun-tshogs  | 1763 - 1765 |
| 15) | 'Brug bsTan-'dzin  | 1765 - 1768 |
| 16) | bZhi-dar   | 1768 - 1773 |
| 17) | Kun-dga' Rin-chen  | 1773 - 1776 |
| 18) | 'Jigs-med Seng-ge  | 1776 - 1788 |
| 19) | 'Brug bsTan-'dzin  | 1788 - 1792 |
| 20) | bKra-shis rNam-rgyal<br>(alias bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan)<br>+ <i>dBu-mdzad sKyab-khra-pa</i> | 1792 - 1799 |
| 21) | 'Brug rNam-rgyal   | 1799 - 1803 |
| 22) | bKra-shis rNam-rgyal (again)   | 1803 - 1805 |

- |     |   |               |
|-----|---|---------------|
| 23) | Sangs-rgyas bsTan-'dzin   | 1805 - 1806   |
| 24) | <i>dBu-mdzad sPa-gro-ba</i><br>+ No. 25   | 1806 - 1808   |
| 25) | <i>Bla-ma</i> Chos-grags  | 1808 - 1809   |
| 26) | <i>Khri-sprul</i> Tshul-khrims Grags-pa   | 1809 - 1810   |
| 27) | <i>Thugs-sprul</i> 'Jigs-med Grags-pa II  | 1810 - 1811   |
| 28) | <i>Phyogs-sprul</i> Ye-shes rGyal-mtshan  | 1811 - 1815   |
| 29) | <i>Tsha-phug-pa</i> rDo-rje   | 1815          |
| 30) | bSod-nams 'Brug-rgyas   | 1815 - 1819   |
| 31) | bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-sgra  | 1819 - 1823   |
| 32) | Phur-rgyal<br>(alias Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan)   | 1823 - 1831   |
| 33) | rDo-rje rNam-rgyal  | 1831 - 1832   |
| 34) | 'Phrin-las  | 1832 - 1835   |
| 35) | Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan (again)   | 1835 - 1838   |
| 36) | rDo-rje Nor-bu<br>+ No. 37  | 1838 - 1847   |
| 37) | bKra-shis rDo-rje   | 1847 - 1850   |
| 38) | dBang-chen rGyal-po   | 1850          |
| 39) | <i>Thugs-sprul</i> 'Jigs-med Nor-bu<br>(ruled from Thim-phu)  | 1850 - ? 1852 |
| 40) | lCags-pa Sangs-rgyas<br>(ruled from sPu-na-kha)   | 1851 - ? 1852 |
| 41) | Dam-chos lHun-grub<br>(alias <i>Bar-cung-pa</i> )<br>+ 'Jam-dbyangs bsTan-'dzin   | 1852 - ? 1856 |
| 42) | Kun-dga' dPal-ldan<br>(alias bSod-nams sTobs-rgyas)<br>(ruled from sPu-na-kha)<br>+ U-ma-de-ba<br>(alias Shes-rab mThar-phyin)<br>(ruled from Thim-phu) | 1856 - 1861   |
| 43) | Don-grub<br>(alias gNag-rdzi Pa-sangs,<br>alias Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal)   | 1861 - 1864   |
| 44) | Tshe-dbang Sri-thub   | 1864          |
| 45) | Tshul-khrims Yon-tan  | 1864          |
| 46) | dKar-brgyud dBang-phyug   | 1864          |
| 47) | Tshe-dbang Sri-thub (again)   | 1864 - 1866   |
| 48) | brTson-'grus Pad-dkar   | 1866 - ? 1870 |
| 49) | 'Jigs-med rNam-rgyal  | 1870 - 1873   |

50)	<i>sKyid-tshal-pa</i> rDo-rje rNam-rgyal	1873 - 1879
51)	Chos-rgyal bZang-po	1879 - 1882
52)	<i>Bla-ma</i> Tshe-dbang	1882 - 1884
53)	dGa'-ba bZang-po	1884 - 1886
54)	<i>dByangs-slob</i> Sangs-rgyas rDo-rje	1886 - 1903
55)	<i>Phyogs-sprul</i> Ye-shes dNgos-grub	1903 - 1905

The *rJe mKhan-po*, Head Abbots of Bhutan

1)	Pad-dkar 'Byung-gnas	? - 1672
2)	bSod-nams 'Od-zer	1672 - 1689
3)	Pad-dkar lHun-grub	1689 - 1697
4)	Dam-chos Pad-dkar	1697 - 1707
5)	bZod-pa 'Phrin-las	1707 - 1724
6)	Ngag-dbang lHun-grub	1724 - 1730
7)	Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las	1730 - 1738
8)	bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu	1738 - 1744
9)	Shākya Rin-chen	1744 - 1755
10)	bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal	1755 - 1762
11)	Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las	1762 - 1769
12)	Kun-dga' rGya-mtsho	1769 - 1771
13)	Yon-tan mTha'-yas	1771 - 1775
14)	bsTan-'dzin rNam-rgyal	1775 - 1781
15)	Kun-bzang rGyal-mtshan	1781 - 1784
16)	Shes-rab Seng-ge	1784 - 1791
17)	<i>Byams-sprul</i> Ye-shes rDo-rje	1791 - 1797
18)	'Jam-dbyangs rGyal-mtshan	1797 - 1803
19)	Ngag-dbang Chos-rgyal	1803 - 1807
20)	<i>Phyogs-sprul</i> Ye-shes rGyal-mtshan	1807 - 1811
21)	'Jam-dpal Grags-pa	1811 - 1816
22)	'Jigs-med rGyal-mtshan	1816 - 1826
23)	'Jam-dpal Grags-pa	1826 - 1831
24)	<i>Chos-rje</i> Shākya rGyal-mtshan	1831 - 1836
25)	Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan	1836 - 1839
26)	Yon-tan rGya-mtsho	1839 - 1840
27)	Padma bZang-po	1840 - 1847
28)	Rin-chen bZang-po	1847 - 1848
29)	Padma bZang-po (again)	1848 - 1850
30)	'Jam-dpal rGya-mtsho	1850 - 1851
31)	Yon-tan rGyal-mtshan	1851 - 1858
32)	Tshul-khrims rGyal-mtshan	1858 - 1860
33)	Kun-dga' dPal-'byor	1860 - 1861
34)	bShad-sgrub 'Od-zer	1861 - 1865

35)	Shākya rGyal-mtshan	1865 - 1869
36)	Yon-tan dPal-bzang	1869 - 1873
37)	Kun-dga' Seng-ge	1873 - 1875
38)	Shākya rGyal-mtshan (again)	1875
39)	Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan	1875 - 1878
40)	Pad-dkar 'Od-zer	1878 - 1881
41)	Ngag-dbang Don-ldan	1881 - 1886
42)	<i>Chos-rje</i> 'Phrin-las rGyal-mtshan	1886 - 1888
43)	bsTan-'dzin lHun-grub	1888 - 1889
44)	<i>Chos-rje</i> 'Phrin-las rGyal-mtshan (again)	1889 - 1891
45)	'Phrin-las rGya-mtsho	1891 - 1894
46)	Dam-chos rGyal-mtshan	1894 - 1899
47)	Shes-rab lHun-grub	1899 - 1901
48)	'Jam-dbyangs Rin-chen	1901 - 1903
49)	Rig-'dzin sNying-po	1903 - 1907
50)	'Jam-dpal bShes-gnyen	1907 - 1909
51)	Byams-pa'i sTobs-bzang	1909 - 1912
52)	dPal-ldan Seng-ge	1912 - 1915
53)	<i>Phyogs-sprul</i> Ye-shes dNgos-grub	1915 - 1917
54)	Ye-shes Zla-ba	1917 - 1918
55)	dPal-ldan Seng-ge (again)	1918
56)	Mi-pham dBang-po	1919 - 1922
57)	Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan	1922 - 1927
58)	Srid-zhi rNam-rgyal	1927 - 1931
59)	Chos-kyi dBang-phyug	1931 - 1940
60)	Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las	1940 - 1946
61)	bSam-gtan rGya-mtsho	1946 - 1955
62)	Yon-tan brTson-'grus	1955 - 1956
63)	'Phrin-las lHun-grub	1956 - 1961
64)	bSam-gtan dPal-bzang	1961 - 1965
65)	Ye-shes Seng-ge	1965 - 1968
66)	Kun-dga'	1968 - 1971
67)	Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las lHun-grub ( <i>Nyi-zer sPrul-sku</i> )	1971 -

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The '*Brug* rGyal-po, hereditary kings of Bhutan.

1)	O-rgyan dBang-phyug	1907 - 1926
2)	'Jigs-med dBang-phyug	1926 - 1952
3)	'Jigs-med rDo-rje dBang-phyug	1952 - 1972
4)	'Jigs-med Seng-ge dBang-phyug	1972 -

## BIBLIOGRAPHIES

### Note

The literature on the later period of Bhutanese history is voluminous but much of it falls outside the scope of this study and only those works cited or referred to are included here. Many of those I did use were reprinted in facsimile editions in India while this study was in progress but since my research has been mainly based on the original texts I copied in Bhutan, for the sake of consistency I do not supply references to the Indian editions. Under A), therefore, I give the authors and titles of all the primary Bhutanese sources used, and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the many friends in Bhutan who helped me to make copies. Under B) I include unedited Tibetan blockprints and Indian reprints of Tibetan works. Texts edited or translated by Western and other scholars, and modern works of scholarship, are given in C). The entries in A) and B) appear in Tibetan alphabetical order while those under C) follow the Harvard System.

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- dGe-'dun Rin-chen : *dPal-ldan 'brug-pa'i gdul-zhing lho-phyogs nags-mo'i ljongs-kyi chos-'byung blo-gsar rna-ba'i rgyan*; (a recently composed religious history of Bhutan) blockprint in 192 ff., completed in 1972.
- Ngag-dbang of the Byar clan : *dPal-'brug-par lung lha'i gdung-brgyud-kyis bstan-pa'i ring-lugs / lho-mon-kha-bzhi-las nyi-ma shar-phyogs-su byung-zhing rgyas-pa'i lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long*; (account of the 'Brug-pa annexation of eastern Bhutan) *dbu-can* ms. in 24 ff., no date (Text II in Part 5 of this study).
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- bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal (1701-67) : *rGyal-kun khyab-bdag 'gro-ba'i bla-ma bstan-'dzin rin-po-che legs-pa'i don-grub zhabs-kyi rnam-par thar-pa ngo-mtshar nor-bu'i chos-sdong*; (biography of the 2nd *sGang-steng sPrul-sku* bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i Don-grub, 1645-1726) *dbu-can* ms. in 123 ff.
- bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal : *lHo-'i chos-'byung bstan-pa rin-po-che'i 'phro-mthud 'jam-mgon smon-mtha'i 'phreng-ba zhes-bya-ba / gtso-bor skyabs-mgon rin-po-che rgyal-sras ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal-gyi rnam-thar kun-gyi go-bde gsal-bar bkod-pa*; (the famous *lHo'i chos-'byung*, a religious history of Bhutan) blockprint in 151 ff., written in the period 1731-59.
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- Byang-chub bZang-po (19th cent.) : Untitled guide (*gnas-yig*) to the complex of temples at rDzong-brag-kha in sPa-gro; *dbu-can* ms. in the form of a scroll, no date, preserved at rDzong-brag-kha. Partly reproduced with variants in the *gNas-mying chos-'byung*, ff. 50b-51b (see below).

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## NOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. Mr. John Ardussi of the University of Washington, Seattle, has also been engaged on a thesis devoted to Bhutanese history.
2. Some of the following paragraphs in this section and the next one are partly based on Aris 1977:6-II.
3. An abstract of the 1969 Census may be found in Rose 1977:41.
4. Some Christian missionary tracts have been written in Dzongkha but their distribution in Bhutan is minimal.
5. Hoffman (n.d.:7) has suggested that Toto bears affinity to the ancient language of Zhang-zhung but I have not seen the evidence for this claim.
6. The lists vary slightly from text to text. See Aris 1976:627 Note 63.
7. See Part 2 Note 80 below. Another fourfold Mon region is the *Mon dbral-kha-bzhi* mentioned in a document dating from the reign of *Khri Srong-lde-brtsan*, 755-797 (*mKhas-pa'i dga'-ston*, Vol. JA, f.19a et seq.). A connection with *IHo-mon Kha-bzhi* is improbable.
8. See especially Bell 1931:213-214. *Kha-bzhi* is improbable.
9. Their accounts can be found in Markham (1879) and Turner (1800). See also Davis (1830).
10. Petech 1972a:203.
11. *LCB I*, and the biographies of *bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas* (1638-96) and *bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal* (1700-67).
12. There is a detailed analysis of the contents of *LCB I* in Yamaguchi 1965:159-162.
13. See Rahul (1971), Das, N (1974), Labh (1974) and Mehra (1974).
14. Some thought must be given to the following passage in *gTsang mKhan-chen's* biography of the *Zhabs-drung* (PBP, ff. 96b-97a, repeated almost verbatim in *LCB I*, ff. 34b-35a). It comes after the account of a Tibetan defeat at *Srin-mo-dho-kha* ('Simtokha') in 1634, that is to say at least seven years after *Cacella's* stay. The Tibetans forming this second *gTsang-pa* invasion had captured the palace. The guardian deities of the 'Brug-pa are then claimed to have ignited the gunpowder store and the enemy soldiers are said to have died in the fire.

/dus-skabs-de'i tshe / phy'i'i rgya-mtsho chen-po'i gling-phran purdhu-kha zhes-bya-ba'i yul-nas / me'i mda' dang / me'i sgyogs-kyi 'khrul-'khor / me'i rdzas dang-bcas-pa 'bul-bar / gling-de'i rgyal-po'i pho-nya sngon ma-mthong-ba'i mi-tshul dang byad mi-'dra-ba mang-po rgya-mtsho chen-po-la zla-ba bcu-gnyis-kyi gru-gzings btang-nas rgya-mtsho dang nye-ba'i yul gho-ba zhes-bya-ba dang / A-bzir-ya dang A-zir-ka zhes-bya-ba'i srin po'i yul-gyi cha-shas-dag 'das-te / shar-phyogs za-hor rgyal-khams brgyud / rgya gha-ta-kha-nas 'ongs-te / sku-zhabs rin-po-cher 'byor-te / me-mda' dang me-sgyogs me'i rdzas dang-bcas-pa-dag dang / rgyang-ring-po-na yod-pa'i dngos-po phra-mo-yang drung-na yod-pa ltar mthong-ba'i shel-mig sogs ngo-mtsar-ba'i yo-byad sna-tshogs phul-zhing / bla-ma khyed-la 'gran-bdo-ba'i dgra yod-na / nged-kyi rgyal-po'i yul-nas dmag-dpung chen-po 'bod-thub ces-zer-yang / kla-klo'i dmag 'dren-pa sogs rang-gi skyabs-'gro-la gnod-pa'i bya-ba ci-la-rung bsam khas-len ma-byas gsung / dus de-yan-du me-mda' ma-dar zhing / srol-med-pas skad thos-pa-tsam-gyis dgra-sde'i tshogs 'jigs-shing skrag-par gyur-to //

At that time there came to the Precious Lord [*Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal*] from the country called *Purdhu-kha* [*Portugal*], a small island in the great outer ocean, some messengers from the king of that island, being a kind of men that had not previously been seen and having many strange features, in order to make offerings that included muskets.

the magical device of canons, gunpowder and so forth. After sailing a ship for twelve months on the great ocean they had passed through a place near the ocean called Gho-ba [Goa] and some parts of the Land of Demons called A-bzir-ya [Asir ? = 'Hassier'?] and A-zir-ka [Asirgadh?], and then by way of the eastern realm of Za-hor [Punjab ? Mandi ?] they came [here] from Gha-ta-kha [Cooch Bihar] in India. Offering various marvellous objects which included the muskets, cannons and gunpowder, also an eye-glass which caused one to see even minute objects at a distance as if they were right in front, they declared: "Lama, if you have enemies that harass you, we can summon a large army from the country of our king." However, [the *Zhabs-drung*] said [to me, *gTsang mKhan-chen*, once]: "Thinking [to myself] how could it ever be fitting to invite a barbarian army or commit other such acts that would injure one's own refuge [in the Triple Gem], I did not accept [the offer]." Up to this time fire-arms had not flourished [in Bhutan] and since the custom did not exist, the enemy became terrified just on hearing the sound.

Is this a garbled account of the Jesuit mission or does it in fact relate to a quite separate visit paid by a group of Portuguese soldiers of fortune ('fidalgos') of whom no trace remains in the available western records? Certainly the date, the alleged mercenary character of the visitors, the nature of their presents and possibly their itinerary all suggest the latter possibility. On the other hand, the chronology of *PBP* is often confusing and the fact that both visits are apparently affirmed to have been the first made by Europeans to Bhutan might point to their identity. The problem largely hinges on the Portuguese gift of guns, which finds no mention in Cacella. Could Cacella have omitted them from his report as being a subject too indelicate for the ears of his Provincial? I would prefer to leave these various possibilities as they stand pending further research.

## NOTES: PART ONE – CHAPTER 1

1. It is surely indicative of this that the Bhutanese quite often describe the temples of sKyer-chu and Byams-pa as two of the one hundred and eight religious foundations of Srong-btsan sGam-po (which according to the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* were part of an abortive scheme of his Nepalese queen), rather than as forming part of the *mTha'-'dul Yang-'dul* paradigm (see below) which can carry pejorative implications for any notion of early Bhutanese sovereignty.
2. *bar-na thang yangs chu-bo'i shar-phyogs-la //*  
*bsam-yas me-btsa' chos-'khor lha-khang dang //*  
*nub-na byams-pa sgrol-ma lha-khang gnyis //*  
*lha-sa 'u-shang-rdo-yi lha-khang bzhengs //*  
*(Bum-thang lha'i sbas-yul-gyi bkod-pa me-tog skyed-tshal, f. 24a).*
3. A medical origin for the term is suggested by the fact that *me-btsa'* also signifies *moxa* (Jaschke, *Tibetan-English Dictionary* p. 434), the use of which as a counter-irritant is well known to the Tibetans.
4. *Bum-thang dar-gud-kyi lung-bstan*, 8 fols. The colophon says this was abbreviated by Padma Gling-pa himself from the section below Ch. 30 of the *Lung-bstan kun-gsal snying-po*, another of his 'discoveries'. I have not traced this in his Collected Works and it has probably come down independently. I am grateful to Karma dGe-legs who allowed me to make my copy from the one in the library of his late father-in-law, *Drag-shos* Phun-tshogs dBang-'dus, in Bla-ma'i dGon-pa, Bum-thang. I cannot supply references to the original folio numbers, having omitted to mark these in my own copy.
5. His name must be a corrupted form of that of the minister sBa [= dBas] Khri-bzher Sang-shi-ta in *sBa-bzhed*, p. 50.
6. Another parallel can be found in the chronicles of Zangs-dkar where at the beginning we read that the Guru built a set of three temples on the head, heart and feet of a demoness whose spread-eagled body encompassed the whole region (Francke 1926: 152).
7. *rGyal-po sindha ra-dza'i rnam-thar*, 30 fols. A modern print, no indication of date or provenance, forming the *Lung-bstan gsal-ba'i me-long*. It does not seem to have survived in the Collected Works. I am most grateful to Ariane Macdonald for giving me her copy. Some of the problems faced in attributing the work to Padma Gling-pa are outlined in chapter 2.
8. This assertion is repeated in Padma Gling-pa's *Lung-bstan kun-gsal me-long*, f. 37a (= *Collected Works* Vol. 1 p. 91).
9. Also asserted in op. cit., f. 38a (= *Collected Works* Vol. 1 p. 93).
10. See also op. cit., ff. 14b and 17b (= pp. 46 and 52).
11. I) *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* of the 12th to 14th centuries? (Punakha edition in two volumes. See Vol. E, f. 137a = p. 273).  
 II) *Chos-'byung* of Bu-ston, 1322 (IHa-sa edition, f. 124b; translated by Obermiller, Heidelberg 1932 Vol. I, p. 185).



- III) *rGyal-po bka'-thang*, c. 1350 (dGa'-Idan Phun-tshogs-gling edition of 1674, Ch. IV, ff. 40b, 76b and 77a. Anne-Marie Blondeau (1971 : 42) suggests this was 'discovered' by O-rgyan Gling-pa (1323-?) prior to 1368).
- IV) *rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long of Sa-skyapa* bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan, 1368 (Ed. Kuznetsov, Leiden 1966 : 120-122. I have been unable to check Kuznetsov's spellings, often faulty or wrongly corrected, against the editions of either lHa-sa or bDe-dge).
- V) *rGya-bod yig-tshang* of Śrībhūtibhadra, 1434 (Mr. Richardson's copy, f.97b. See A. Macdonald (1963) on this work).
- VI) *Chos-'byung mkhas-pa'i dga'-ston (lHo-brag chos-'byung)* of dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba, 1565 (*Sata-Piṭaka Series*, Vol. 9(4), ed. Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi 1962. See Vol. *Ja*, 39b-40a).
- VII) *Chos-'byung bstan-pa'i padma rgyas-pa'i nyin-byed* of Padma dKar-po 1575 (*Sata-Piṭaka Series*, Vol. 75, ed. Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi 1958. See ff. 159a-b).
- VIII) *Gangs-can yul-gyi sa-la spyod-pa'i mtho-ris-kyi rgyal-blon gtso-bor brjod-pa'i deb-ther rdzogs-ldan gzhon-nu'i dga'-ston dpyid-kyi rgyal-mo'i glu-dbyangs* of the 5th Dalai Lama, 1643 (Ed. Ngawang Gelek Demo, New Delhi 1967. See p. 23.).
- IX) *dPag-bsam ljon-bzang of Sum-pa mKhan-po* Ye-shes dPal-'byor, 1748 (Ed. Das, Calcutta 1908. See p. 168).
- X) *gSung-'bum of Klong-rdol Bla-ma* Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang 1719-1805 (Ed. Dalama, Mussoorie 1964. See Vol. 'A, pp. 334-335).
12. See *gTer-rnam*, f.227b. Ariane Macdonald (1971 : 203 note 59) seems to disagree with Kong-sprul in her suggestion that Nyi-ma 'Od-zer and mNga'-bdag Myang-ral are two different persons. She has yet to substantiate this idea.
13. Stein 1959a: 37-38 and 1959b: 89. Ariane Macdonald (loc. cit.) gives the dates 1124 or 1136-1204.
14. Compare their biographical sketches in *gTer-rnam*, ff. 47b - 50b and 41a-b respectively.
15. *Blue Annals* 941 - 942 and 1006. The *Bon* tradition, however, holds that dNgos-grub was active a century earlier. He is supposed to have discovered the *rDzogs-chen yang-rtse klong-chen* in 1088. See Samten Karmay 1975 : 215.
16. See the *dkar-chags*, f. 11b.
17. Richardson 1977: 168 and 273. The ascription is supported by the 5th Dalai Lama's guide to the Jo-khang.
18. Vostrikov 1970:54.
19. *Pha 'brug-sgom zhig-pa'i rnam-thar thugs-rje'i chu-rgyun*, ff. 10b and 32b.
20. Stein 1959a: 37 - 38 and 1959b: 89.
21. *par-thang khra-bo sum-cu-rtsa-bzhi*, f. 121a.
22. *rgya-yi gtsug-lag gab-rtse sum-brgya-po*, f. 122b.
23. *gtsug-lag-gi rtsis*, f. 129b.
24. The text reads (f. 130a): / *bum-thang-gi mchod-rten de'i steng-du lha-khang brtsigs-na* / ('If a temple is built on top of the *stūpa* of Bum-thang . . .') This makes little sense and is absent from B. A better reading would surely be something like: '*o-thang-gi mtsho-steng-du* . . . / As if in justification of this passage the author later (f. 135a) makes a *stūpa* arise magically from the lake. Again this is absent from B.
25. *rang-bzhin-gyi yon-tan*, f. 130a.
26. *rgya-nag-po sa'i dpyad*, f. 131a.
27. On a stone phallus still to be seen on the north-eastern projection of the roof over the Jo-bo see Richardson 1972: 27-28 and 1977: 188.
28. This is widely thought by Tibetans to be the origin of the capital's name; *Ra-sa*, 'Goat-Earth', became lHa-sa, 'God-Place'
29. *sa'i bcos-kha-rnams*, f. 133b.

30. *rgya'i ldem-mkhar*, f. 135a. B has *rgya'i dha-hen khang-pa*, f. 199a.
31. A later list on ff. 137b - 138a (corresponding to B f. 199b) adds 'a *maṇḍala* in accordance with the tantrics'. Haahr (1969: 384-391) confuses these foundations of the Jo-khang for those of the Ra-mo-che temple. He claims that in the form of these foundations is preserved the basic structure of the royal tombs in Yar-lung.
32. Although the story of these temples occupies a single folio (137) the entire chapter is entitled *Ru-bzhi mtha'-'dul yang-'dul-gyi lha-khang-rnams brtsigs-pa'i mdzad-pa* ('The Action of Building the Temples of the *Ru-bzhi*, *mTha'-'dul* and *Yang-'dul*'). While there is complete agreement between A and B in the list of these twelve temples, with only a few minor differences in their spelling, the same does not hold for the temples founded by Srong-btsan's queens. A (f. 139a) has:

- 1) *lHa-gcig Kong-jo* : the Jo-khang;
- 2) *Mong-bza' Khri-lcam* : Brag-rtsa lHa-khang;
- 3) *Zhang-zhung-bza'* : Brag-lha Klu-phug; and
- 4) *Ru-yong-bza'* : Khrim-bu sKol-pa. B (f.206a) has: 1) *lHa-gcig Khri-btsun* : Ra-sa'i lHa-khang gnyis; 2) *lHa-gcig Kong-jo* : Ra-mo-che; 3) *Zhang-zhung-bza'* Li-thig-sman : Khrim-bu lKog-pa; 4) *Ru-yongs-bza'* rGyal-mo-btsun : Brag-lha mGon-po; and 5) *Jo-mo Mong-bza' Khri-lcam* : lHa-sa Yer-pa'i gTsub-lag-khang.

Of these only the Jo-khang, Ra-mo-che and Yer-pa are well known and easily identifiable. Mr. Richardson informs me that Brag-lha Klu-phug is a cave temple on the side of the lCags-po-ri hill in lHa-sa. See also f. 5b on the temples built by the queens.

33. Needham 1959:501. The *Yu Kung's* five zones are expanded in the *Chou Li* to nine zones and these form the model for later imperial cities. On the nine zones see Legge 1865: 149. For a Bon-po cosmology consisting of five concentric zones centred upon the mountain of g.Yung-drung dgu-brtsigs see Snellgrove 1967 : Diagram XXII. According to Karmay (1975b:173) these five zones are traditionally divided into three: *nang-gling* (I), *bar-gling* (II-IV) and *mtha'-gling* (V). This arrangement affords a close parallel to the scheme under discussion.
34. See the *La-dwags rgyal-rabs* (as quoted by Haahr 1969:284) for a reference to the 62 *mTha'-khob* and the 60 *Yang-khob*. See also the *bShad-mdzod* (ff. 93b-94a) on a classification of the ninety-one barbarian tribes of the border. The very last of these is *sPa-gro Mon*. It would seem to have a very broad location in this scheme:
- /mnga'-ris bod-kyi sa 'di-la / pa-gro mon-gyi skor-ba-la*  
*/mtha' khob yul-gru gcig-tu rtsis /*
- Padma Gling-pa brings together the notions of *mtha'-khob* and *mtha'-'dul* in a passage of his biography describing a shrine room which he redecorated in the famous temple of O-rgyan-gling near rTa-wang in Arunachal Pradesh :
- /mtha'-'khob mtha'-'dul-gyi sems-can-rnams tshogs-gnyis gsog-pa'i rten-du mchod-khang gzab-par bzhengs-so //*

(Collected Works Vol. *Pha*, f.42b = p. 86). On Padma Gling-pa's association with this temple see p. 106.

35. On the location of the *ru* according to dPa'-bo gTsub-lag see Tucci 1956: 77-79.
36. The *bShad-mdzod* is thought to be a late 15th or early 16th century compendium but it draws on a great deal of material that would have been available long before. The converse argument, namely that the story in the *bShad-mdzod* is an adaptation of the one in the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum*, does not seem very plausible. seem very plausible.
37. See Kuznetsov 1966 : 110.
38. *rgya-nag-po'i rig-pa ma-lus-pa*, f. 194b.
39. By the end of the 8th century an official geomancer (*sam-mkhan*) was employed at the Tibetan court: the post comes last in the list of government functionaries preserved in Pelliot No. 1089 (Lalou 1956: 13). Unfortunately the divination tables found in Tun-huang are not geomantic in character. One of them reveals 'les présages signifiés par l'éclair aperçu dans chacune des huit directions et pour chaque

moment de la journée.’ (Bacot 1913:445). The texts that deal with this form of divination ‘... sont des adaptations de notions indiennes, non bouddhiques, à des notions proprement tibétaines.’ (A. Macdonald 1971: 282).

40. *ra sa'i gtsug lag khang las stsogs pa* / (Richardson 1949 : 51 lines 5 - 6).
41. *mKhas-pa'i dga'-ston*, Vol. *Ja*, f. 110a: '*khri srong-btsan-gyl ring-la / ra-sa'i bi-har brtsigs-te* . . . ' And f. 128b: '*dang-po mes srong-btsan-gyis mkhyen-nas / lha-sa'i dpe-har brtsigs-pa* . . . '
42. *mtha'-mi thams-cad-kyang bod-du chos-la 'du-ste*, f. 208b.
43. *dbus-mtha' kun-tu gtsug-lag-khang brtsigs-te*, Bacot et al. 1940: 114.
44. *dbung-mthar gtsug-lag-khang brtsigs-ste* (Richardson 1949: 54 line 14).
45. On the Thob-rgyal district see Wylie 1962:142-143. Also *Thang-yig*, f.280b. Peter Aufschnaiter made a visit to the gTsang-gram temple and there are relevant notes in his collection at Zurich.
46. On lHa-rtse see Wylie 1962:135. On 'Grom-pa see Thomas 1935 I:277 and Tucci 1956: 80 (note 3). On the temple itself see *Thang-yig* f. 282a. Tucci (1973: plates 78 and 79) illustrates a great *mchod-rten* at rGyang near lHa-rtse which may perhaps be connected with Grom-pa-rgyang.
47. *dPal-ldan bla-ma dam-pa'i mdzad-pa rmad-du byung-ba ngo-mtshar bdud-rtsi'i thigs-pa*, f. 18a. rGyal-dbang-rje revealed a 'hidden land' (*sbas-yul*) in the hills above Bu-chu. The *Thang-yig* (f.280b) refers to the temple as Shar-kong Bu-chu Dar-legs lHa-khang. Mr. Richardson informs me that the temple was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1950.
48. See Wylie 1962:137 (Richardson's note) and also *Thang-yig*, f. 281a.
49. Aris 1975:74-76. See also *rGyal-po bka'-thang*, f.77a and *Thang-yig*, f.280b. For a pundit's report on his journey in 1875 to 'Tadum' (= sPra-dun) and his 'ineffectual attempt' to visit the temple see the *Geographical Journal*, 45 (1875), 350-363. Kawaguchi (1909: 217-218) spent a day at 'Tadun' in 1900, calling it 'the most famous temple in northern Tibet.' Local tradition asserted that 'the hair of seven Buddhas are interred here', thus providing a false etymology (sKra-bdun = 'seven hairs') for its peculiar name (sPra-dun). Heinrich Harrer was also detained there for several days but his account, like Kawaguchi's, has no information on the history or contents of the temple. Aufschnaiter is reputed to have obtained a guide (*gnas-yig*) to sPra-dun which may be preserved in Zurich.
50. On sNye-thang see Wylie 1962:147.
51. See Richardson's comment in Ferrari 1958:142 and a photograph of the Ru-gnon gTsug-lag-khang on Plate 44. Also *rGyal-po bka'-thang*, f. 77a-b and *Thang-yig*, f.280b. We can be quite sure that the scheme was known to O-rgyan Gling-pa even though it does not appear in this context; it is referred to on f.65b of the *bTsun-mo bka'-thang*.
52. On a dPal-dbyangs of the dBas clan see *sBa-bzhed* p. 54, Thomas 1951 : 86, and Heather Karmay 1975:14.
53. *LCB* II, f. 64a. *LCB* I (f.6a) has no specific mention of the temples at all but instead refers to Srong-btsan sGam-po's blessing the area with rays of compassion in order to prepare it for the arrival of Buddhism.
54. Richardson (1977:173) says the name of the famous Capuchin bell in the Jo-khang is *Ye-shu'i cong chen-po*. A line of the *gSol-'debs le'u bdun-ma* reads: / *cong gling zil bu ta la la* / ('The trembling of bells and flutes - - *talala!*')
55. Letter dated 7th October, 1976. I am also most grateful to Monica Von Schulthess for her great kindness in taking more photographs for me on the spot. Efforts to secure a better reading by means of a latex mould have not yet met with success.
56. • *bum-thang rtse-lung-gi g. yas-phyogs rdo'i steng zhig yod* • *de'i sked-pa-na rdo'i chol nar-mo zhig yod* • *de bcag-pa'i nang-na* . . . *la-sogs-pa mang-po yod* •
57. This no doubt will help to load the cannons of those who would look on the 'megalith' wedged in the stone trough as a Śaivite *lirga*. The trough is in fact

explained locally to be an old mortar such as would have been used for pounding grain. We can perhaps speculate that the *Ma-ñi* on it was carved at the same time as the lotus on the base of the pillar.

58. It has been suggested tentatively (p. 6) that Klong-chen-pa's 'Temple of Chos-'khor' on the east bank of the river corresponds to this temple. Given that it is one of the first temples in the area, it could on occasion have easily appropriated the name of the whole Chos-'khor valley, just as Byams-pa assumes the name of the whole province of Bum-thang in the Tibetan sources.
59. *Lung-bstan kun-gsal me-long*, f. 39a (= *Collected Works*, Vol. *Ka*, p. 95); also ff. 42b and 119a of Padma Gling-pa's autobiography (*Collected Works*, Vol. *Pha*, pp. 86 and 239).
60. *Bum-thang lha'i sbas-yul-gyi bkod-pa me-tog skyed-tshal*, f. 22b. Klong-chen-pa might have intended us to include among these the many shrines to Padmasambhava in Bum-thang. However, these are usually referred to as *gnas* even if a *gtsug-lag-khang* is to be found there.
61. Both versions are nice examples of the etymologizing that is always depended upon to produce 'rational' explanations of unknown origins. It is a device that can at the least be said to be used invariably in respect to institutions of ancient (and usually foreign) provenance, especially clans.
62. It was only on the completion of this study that I discovered Ariane Macdonald's report of her valuable studies on the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* in the *Annuaire* (1969) of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. We learn that the contents of the *Ma-ñi bka'-'bum* listed in a manuscript history dated 1376 (whose title she does not provide, but which is presumably the *Deb-ther brdzongs-dmar-ma*) excludes mention of the two biographical works on Srong-btsan wherein the story of his temples first seems to appear. One of them must therefore have circulated independently long earlier if it acted as the direct source of inspiration for the corresponding passage in the next history to pick up the story, namely the *Bu-ston chos-'byung* of 1322.

## CHAPTER 2

1. See ff. 19b - 20a. O-rgyan is in fact intended to come at the end of a list of eight *gter-ston* but only seven are mentioned.
2. See pp. 383, 464 and 511 of the Collected Works, Vol. *Ca* [= *Tsa*] and Part One, Chapter 3.
3. *O-rgyan rin-po-che* [Padma] *'byung gnas-kyis rgya'l rgyal-po sna'u-che 'bangs'khor chos-la bkod-pa'i le'u*, ff. 2b - 3a.
4. *rGyal-blon thams-cad lcags-mkhar-la mnga'-thang gung-la regs-pa byas-nas bzhugs-pa'i le'u*, ff. 3a - 5b.
5. The local traditions of Bum-thang are in total accord in placing the site of the palace at a spot adjoining the present temple of lCags-mkhar whose hereditary proprietor claims descent from rDo-rje Gling-pa (1340-1405). John Claude White visited the site in 1905 and described it as follows:

On the way back we were shown the site of the Sindhu Raja's house, now in ruins, situated on the edge of a high bluff overhanging the river. It appears to have been a square of sixty or seventy feet, and the wall apartments could not have been very wide, as there seems to have been an open space in the centre, unless this again was covered in by a floor above, in which case the building would have been an exact counterpart of the central towers we now find in every Jong [=rdzong]. Surrounding the sides, on the level, was a well-defined ditch, with a continuation on the outer side leading to the river, and also a well-defined path. Tradition states there was also a gate at the opposite corner to the south. The Penlop [O-rgyan dBang-phyug, later to become the first king of Bhutan] has lent me a book of old stories in which there is a glowing description of the old house' (White 1909 : 167).

This book must have been the same as the one under present review but it can be noted in passing that the alignment of the palace's doors does not tally with the information found in this work. The visitor to the site today does not find the 'well-defined' features observed by White but rather a complex of low earth-works having the appearance of deteriorated field boundaries and the remains of what might once have been a series of low ditches. The site appears to be subject to periodical cultivation but when the present writer visited it the ground was lying fallow and being used as grazing for the domestic cattle of the nearby village. There was nothing visible to the eye that could accord with White's description of a square structure surrounded by a ditch. It must be assumed that the remains have been largely altered by agricultural work in the years since 1905 and archaeology alone can resolve the issue. There is no particular cause to discount the local tradition that this most strategic and defensive position was occupied by an early fort. The fanciful description of the building in our text, however, seems to be partly derived from the early Tibetan fort-palaces which are traditionally reckoned to have had nine storeys. The most famous adaptation of this style is shown in the Sras-mkhar dGu-thog allegedly built by the famous poet-saint Mi-la Ras-pa, in the area of lHo-brag just north of Bum-thang. The forts and watch-towers of central Tibet belonging to the historic period are invariably on high ground, unlike the Sras-mkhar which is on the floor of a valley like the lCags-mkhar of Bum-thang. The Sras-mkhar itself may originally have been defensive; the machicolations on its side are now covered with gilded metal, according to Mr. Richardson. The literary account of the lCags-mkhar as we have it now was surely the product of imaginative speculation that drew on the traditional conception of an early fort. If a defensive structure ever occupied this site it would perhaps more likely have belonged to the prehistoric period of the stone megaliths and tools of Bum-thang for in the 'treasure box' (*gter-sgrom*) of the lCags-mkhar lHa-khang adjoining the site is preserved a magnificent stone

axe-head of a dark and highly polished material which is said to have been found locally, perhaps on the actual site of the lCags-mkhar. As expected, it is described as a 'sky-iron' axe (*nam-lcags sta-re*) and one wonders if this could suggest the true derivation of the palace's name (lCags-mkhar = 'Fort-Palace of Iron'). One must beware of producing a 'modern' theory on this as fanciful, on its own terms, as that which imbues the biography of the 'Sindhu Rāja' and one which is similarly founded on meagre evidence. It is very tentatively suggested, therefore, that the site *may* represent a defensive settlement of the 'Late Stone Age', controlling the rich agricultural land of the Chos-'khor valley and providing refuge in case of attack. Its ruins must, in the historical period, have been of a sufficient size and distinctness to have inspired a legend that sought to give it a royal significance within an entirely Buddhist setting. Whether the 'royal' element in that setting is mythical or historical, or more exactly, whether the myth has a seed of historical reality, is an important question to which an answer is attempted below. For the present, let it be suggested that the legend's treatment of the site is a reflection of the same adapting process whereby some of the first Buddhist temples in Bum-thang were built around or near prehistoric megaliths.

6. sTag-lha Me-'bar or sTag-la Me-'bar is the name of the well known Bon-po deity and/or priest (see Karmay 1972 : 46). For the sTag-lha Me-'bar to whom the Phur-ba cycle was revealed later to be rediscovered by Khu-tsha Zla-'od (b. 1024) in sPa-gro, see Karmay 1972: 145-148 and 1975a: 199-200. It has been suggested by Karmay that the legend of this sTag-la Me-'bar has some connection with the Rāmāyana. In both these legends sTag-la/sTag-lha is the son of a powerful king on whose behalf he suffers defeat in a battle.
7. As noted on p. 7 the 'tomb' of sTag-lha Me-'bar is supposed to be the *mchod-rten* by the side of lCags-mkhar lHa-khang. It is said to have been built by the 'Sindhu Rāja' himself.
8. *mi-gtsang-ba'i bsnol* (f. 6a). A clue to the sense of these 'impurities' is suggested in *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags' oral version of the myth (taperecorded in Bhutanese on 16/2/76 when he says:

'The Sindhu Rāja was incensed by the fact that the local *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* spirits had not assisted him in his battles with sNa'u-che. Collecting together all the corpses of the horses, dogs and men who had been killed in battle he placed them in a heap and set them alight. The smoke of this pyre injured the *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* among whom a plague broke out.'

*Slob-dpon* Padma-lags has this to say about the version known to him:

'The original history of the Sindhu Rāja, comprising a single volume, is said to have been taken by King O-rgyan dBang-phyug from the temple of lCags-mkhar and never returned. Whether it came into the hands of *Drag-shos* Phun-tshogs dBang-'dus of Bla-ma'i dGon-pa or whether it went astray somewhere else, it is not clear. [Could this be the work lent to White ?] The present version is based on the synopsis given by *Drag-shos* Phun-tshogs dBang-'dus in his draft history which in turn is perhaps based on the original manuscript from lCags-mkhar.'

The oral account follows our text very closely but some interesting glosses are apparent. These are noted below under the abbreviation LP (= *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags). Another synopsis of the story is given in *dGe-slong gNyer-chen Gres-pa's* draft history. My translation of this has already appeared in Mehra 1974 : 82 - 85.

9. Shel-ging dKar-po ('White Glass-Ging') is generally reckoned to be a form of the important protective deity Pe-har who has *Srog-jbag dKar-po* as one of his standard epithets. It may be significant that, according to one text, Pe-har is known as Raja Shel-ging dKar-po in India (see Nebesky 1975 : 96) The only hint given in Padma Gling-pa's autobiography that he was aware of the 'Sindhu Rāja's' legend comes in

a passage describing a vision of Shel-ging dKar-po acting as guardian of the *gter-ma* hidden at sKu-rjes where Padmasambhava converted this deity (Collected Works, Vol. *Pha*, f. 59b = p. 120).

10. LP: [It is a minister disguised as a *chos-pa* who is despatched to Yang-le-shod in Nepal where the Guru is residing at that time.]

'On arriving at Yang-le-shod the minister went to Padmasambhava and requested him to come to Bum-thang for the sake of the Sindhu Rāja. Knowing that it was his *karma* to go to Mon at this time not only for the Rāja's sake but also for the sake of taming the area of lHo Mon Kha bZhi, the Guru agreed. This was a period prior to his sojourn in Tibet. It was the time when King *Khri* Srong-lde-btsan, Myang Ting-'dzin bZang-po [who actually belongs to the reign of *Khri* lDe-srong-brtsan] and *mKhan-chen* Bodhisattva were constructing the temple of bSam-yas. So the guru came by the southern route [through India] by way of sBas-yul-sgang, which is taken to refer to Prumzur and Mebrag. The impressions of the Guru's foot and *rdo-rje* were left in the rock there [at Mebrag?] as easily as if in mud while he was subduing the demons of the locality and they can be seen to this day. At Urgyanbrag the Guru forced his way through a cliffside, leaving his footprints there too. At Prumzur the places where he thrust his *phur-bu* into the rock while subduing demons can still be seen. 'Prumzur' is really *phur-btsugs* ['Thrusts of the *Phur-bu*']. Eventually he reached Mon Bum-thang . . .'

This part of the legend finds no mention in any of the written versions. The places mentioned are all in the Mang-sde-lung area south of Krong-sar. It is the district inhabited by the true Bhutanese Mon-pa of the forests who are reported to have a special veneration for these sites. The written versions all place the denouement of the legend in this area. (See p. 48).

11. This is the last we hear of the princess. According to many of the Bhutanese traditions she has a different name: *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye'u-'dren. The *LCB* I (f. 6a), for instance, says:

'Furthermore, it is said that in the districts of Bum-thang to the east there are many Indian towns (*grong-khyer*) together with their subjects [that once belonged to] the lCags-mkhar rGyal-po and other [rulers] as there are stars in the sky. It is also said that *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye'u-'dren was herself the daughter of this [lCags-mkhar rGyal-po].'

(/ *gzhan shar-phyogs bum-thang-rnams-su'ang lcags-mkhar rgyal-po sogs rgya'i grong-khyer 'bangs dang-bcas-pa gnam-gyi skar-ma tsam yod-skad-la / mon-mo bkra-shis khye'u-'dren kyang 'di'i sras-mo yin-zer* /)

Kong-sprul says that the lady was born in Mon Tsha-'og but gives no information about her parentage. She is classed by him among the five minor consorts of the Guru:

- 1) Mandha-ra-ba, daughter of King gTsub-lag-'dzin of Za-hor,
- 2) *Bal-mo* Shākya De-bī-ni, d. of King dGe-ba-'dzin of Nepal,
- 3) *Bal-'bangs* Ka-la Siddhi, d. of *Bal-po* Bha-dan-na,
- 4) *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye'u-'dren of Mon Tsha-'og and
- 5) bKra-shis sPyi-'dren, d. of the king of Mon called Ha-mar (or Ha-ma-ra/ Ham-ra: the *tsheg* between the syllables are not visible in this print).

(See the *Zhar-byung dbyings-phyug yum lnga'i rnam-'phrul gu-ru rin-po-che'i thugs-kyi gzungs-ma lnga'i rnam-thar sa-bon tsam* in *gTer-rnam*, ff. 31b - 34b.) *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye'u-'dren must belong to the same tradition as bKra-shis sPyi-'dren, who according to Kong-sprul, finds mention in the *gter-ma* biography of the Guru's principle consort, Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal, discovered by sTag-sham (= bSam-gtan Gling-pa). Both of these Mon ladies are said to have come into contact with the Guru through Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal and both came to sPa-gro sTag-tshang in the form of tigresses on whose backs the Guru rode in the aspect of rDo-rje Gro-lod.

The two ladies are probably one and the same and it may be that her assimilation to the figure of the 'Sindhu Rāja's daughter took place in Western Bhutan where *Mon-mo* bKra-shis Khye'u-'dren is very well known. Her importance lies in the symbolic role she plays as a representative of Mon. The consorts of the Guru, like those of Srong-btsan sGam-po, stand for the countries subdued by them. Also important is the conversion of bKra-shis sPyi-'dren's father, the king of Mon which, like that of the 'Sindhu Rāja', seems to come after the conversion of his daughter.

12. *mNa'-thang-du rgyal-po gnyis mna' byas-pa'i le'u*, ff. 9b - 13b.

13. According to LP the oath-swearing ceremony takes place before the initiation of the *bKa'-brgyad*, not after. The passage describing the oath-swearing deserves quotation in full (ff. 12b - 13a):

The symbol \* here and in the notes below represents the punctuation mark characteristic of *gter-ma* texts.

\* *de-nas sa \* de-kar rdo-ring btsugs-ste \* rgya dang mon-gyi blon- 'bangs-rnams dang gyal-po btsun-'bangs dang-bcas-pa-rnams-la O-rgyan chen-po'i bka'-stsal-pa \* kye rgya dang mon-gyi blon 'bangs-rnams \* dus-la 'pho-'gyur ci-byung-yang \* rdo-ring mna'-rdo 'di 'gal-nas \* su-yang mda'- [= dma'] -bar ma-byed-cig \* gal-ste 'di-las sus 'gal-ba \* padma bdag-la sdos-pa-yin \* snang-srid lha-'dre thams-cad-kysis \* 'di-las 'gal-bar byed-pa de'i \* snying-khrag thang-la phos-nas-kyang \* skad-cig-nyid-la srog-chod-cig \* ces dang deng phyin-chad mna'-rdo 'di-las 'gal-nas rgya-dmag bum-thang-la mi-'gro bum-thang-gi dmag rgya-la ma-'gro gal-te 'gal-na thams-cad brlags-par gyur-cig ces-gsungs-so \* der rgyal-blon thams-cad-kysis \* de-ltar bya'o sa-ma-yana-rakan \* zhes thams-cad-kysis rdo-ring-la lag-pa reg-nas mna'-byas-pas thang de-nyid mna'-thang-du grags-so \* rdo-ring-la dbang-med-du mna'-byas-pas ming-yang dbang-med ces-grags-so \**

14. Excerpts from the Chinese annals relating to Tibet have recently appeared in a Tibetan translation by sTag-lha Phun-tshogs bKra-shis entitled *rGya'i yig-tshang-nang gsal-ba'i bod-kyi rgyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (Dharamsala, 1973). On the condition of these frontier pillars in the year 822, the year of the famous treaty, see p. 115.

15. (6a) / rGyal po srog gi 'khor lo 'byung po thams cad gnad la bebs pa'i mtshon cha bzhugs so

gya gar skad du \* ra dza tsitta tsakra tsa-tu \* bod skad du \* rgyal po srog gi 'khor-lo \* gu ru padma 'byung gnas la phyag 'tshal lo \* srung ba'i 'khor lo 'di'i lo rgyus ni \* mon yul bum thang gi dbus na \* mon gyi rgyal po se 'dar kha zhes bya ba zhig yod de \* las su mi dge ba spyod pa zhig yin pa de la snang srid lha 'dre'i chad pa byung ste \* lha 'dre thams cad de'i ngas su 'dus nas gros byas \* de rgyal po mthong nas \* sde brgyad kyi ded dpon ni dam pa chos kyi skad du srid pa'i rgyal po shel ging dkar po \* g.yung drung bon gyi skad du srog bdag nyi pam sad \* sde brgyad kyi skad du ra hu ra tsa \* klu'i skad du nag po mgo dgu \* skye 'gro kun gyi srog la ngas dbang \* mi nad dang \* phyugs nad dang (6b) \* tsi ti dzwa la dang \* 'khrugs pa dang \* de rnams thams cad ngas thengs par byed \* phyugs la dal yams \* zhing la sad ser ngas gtong bar byed \* lha 'dre'i rgyal po ngas byed \* se 'dar kha'i srog la ngas dbang \* de bas khyed rnams kysis srog gi snying po phul cig zer skad \* de nas lha srin sde brgyad gros byas nas srog gi snying po phul \* khyed nged rnams kyi rgyal po mdzod ces mnga' gsol lo \* rgyal po zhes bya ba'i gtan tshigs so \* de nas se 'dar kha'i rgyal khams rnams la mi bde ba sna tshogs byung ste \* gza' nad dang \* smyo 'bogs brgyal nad dang \* phyugs la dal yams dang \* zhing la sad ser la sogs sna tshogs byung ngo \* der se dar kha'i rgyal po'ang nad drag pos thebs te \* bcos dpyad mang du byas kyang ma phan shi la nye nas sos thabs ma byung ba dang \* 'khor 'bangs rnams bsdus nas rgyal pos 'di skad ces smras so \* nga sde brgyad kyi gnod pa 'di las grol ba'i thabs shes pa'i mi yod na \* ngas btsun mo rgyal srid dang bcas pa sbyin zer bas \*



'khor 'bangs rnam s kyis nang nas mtha' 'khob kyis rgyal phran cig na re @ nga la gser phyed bre gang byin dang @ ngas rgyal po sos pa'i thabs zhis bstan gyis zer ro @ de nas rgyal phran de la gser byin pa dang rgyal phran des 'di skad ces smras so @ bal po'i yul yang le shod kyis brag phug ces bya ba na Orgyan chen po padma 'byung gnas zhes bya ba @ gsang sngags kyis chos la mnga' brnyes shing @ snang srid dbang du 'dus shing zil gyis non pa cig yod (7a) pa de bos na phan zer @ der rkang mgyogs gcig la gos ser chas dang chos pa'i lugs su byas nas btang @ des O rgyan padma sryan drangs nas @ se 'dar kha'i rgyal po'i sngas su byon pa dang @ rgyal po na re @ nga sos nas lha 'dre'i chad pa 'di bzlog na khyed kyis ci gsung bsgrub cing ci mnyes phul zer ro @ padma'i zhal nas nga la 'bul ba ci'ang mi dgos @ khyed kyis yul 'di'i sdig pa'i las spongs @ dge ba'i las la 'bod @ nga'i bstan pa la 'jug par khas longs dang @ ngas phan pa'i thabs yod gsungs @ der rgyal po dang 'bangs yul mi rnam s kyis sdig pa spangs nas @ ci gsung bsgrub par khas blangs pas @ padma 'byung gnas thugs dgyes te @ brag dmar po rdo rje brtsegs par sgrub pa mdzad do @ der zhag gsum gyi steng du O rgyan gyi sryan sngar shel ging dkar pos gtso byas pa'i lha 'dre sde brgyad rnam s byung nas phyal [phyag 'tshal] zhing srog gi snying po phul nas dam la btags so @ der slob dpon gyis rgyal po spyi chings kyis 'khor lo bskor nas dbang du bsdu so der se 'dar kha la 'khor lo btags nas sde brgyad kyis gnod pa las grol bar gyur to @ yul phyogs bde zhing bkra shis so @ 'khor lo'i lo rgyus dang byung khungs bstan pa'o @ sa ma ya @ rgya rgya rgya @ lthi @

16. The text continues with an account of the stages in the drawing of the wheel ('khor-lo bri-ba'i rim-pa, ff. 7a - 9a), the mantras of the gods associated with the wheel (lha-sngags, f. 9a-b), the tying of the wheel to the recipient ('khor-lo gdags-pa, f. 9b), the stages in the perception of the wheel ('khor-lo bzung-ba'i rim-pa, f. 10a), the manner of hiding the wheel as 'treasure' (gter-du sbas-lugs, f. 10a-b), and the colophon (f. 10b).
17. See for instance f. 8a of the *Lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long*.
18. The Nyi-sang-pad of Nebesky (1956 : 14 and 118) must be a mistake; *sad* is the Zhang-zhung for *lha*, 'god'. One wonders if there could be a relation between this deity and the *gNyer-pa* Se-'phang Nag-po of the *lHa-'dre bka'-thang*. (See Blondeau 1971 : 88-89.)
19. *gTer-rnam*, f. 277b.
20. *rTa-mgrin dpa'-bo gcig-pa gnam-lcags me'i 'khor-lo'i sgrub-thabs rjes-gnang dang-bcas-pa gdon-bgegs kun-'joms*, 10 folios (Margin: *Chog-khrigs*) following the *gter-ma* itself in Vol. *La* of the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod*.
21. *gtan-la phabs-pa'o*; the phrase is sometimes used in early texts with the sense of a 'final attestation' or 'approval' of their translation from Sanskrit.
22. See *rGyal-rigs*, ff. 6a - 3a (sic), pp.      and
23. *phyis-'byung-gi lo-rgyus*, f. 60a-b.
24. // *men-log yul-gyi bya-ba mthong-bas skyo* // See the author's *Thugs nges-'byung skyo-shes-kyis bskul-nas ; rang-babs-su mdzad-pa-rnam s phyogs-gcig-tu bslebs-pa* (Margin: *Zhal-gdams*), f. 27b (Collected Works, Vol. *Pha*, p. 250).

## CHAPTER 3

1. See *Blue Annals*, p. 197. The list has: *mKhan-pa-ljongs dang / mKhan-pa-gling /* [the latter is not known] *Seng-ge-rdzong /* [see note 10 below] *Kun-bzang-gling /* [where Klong-chen-pa later built a monastery, in Bum-thang Chu-smad] *mKhar-chu* [see Ferrari 1958 : 57].

*mKhan-pa-lung* lies two days journey north-west of lHun-rtse rDzong in Kur-stod or about three days journey north-east of the sTang valley in Bum-thang. According to Das, *mkhan-pa* is a species of fern.

2. Ri-mo-can is a well known temple at the foot of a cliff in the lower end of the sTang valley, the scene of several of Padma Gling-pa's 'discoveries'.
3. Not to be confused with the bKra-shis-sgang rDzong of Eastern Bhutan.
4. I would identify this deity with the group of six gods called the *Zar-ma-skyes-drug* in the *rGyal-po bka'-thang* (or *Za-ra-skyes-drug* in the *bShad-mdzod yid-bzhin nor-bu*). These sources place the group among the series of divine rulers of Tibet who preceded the arrival of the first king gNya'-khri bTsan-po (Haarh 1969 : 298). They also appear in the entourage of rDo-rje Legs-pa as the *Zur-ra-skyes-drug* (Nebesky 1956 : 156). In Bhutan they appear to have been contracted into a single deity who functions both as the guardian of certain *gter-ma* and also as the local spirit of sTang. He appears there in the form of a yak-headed god during the '*cham*' festival observed at the temple of Chu-stod Nam-mkha'i lHa-khang on the fifteenth day of the tenth month in company with a clown (called the *rgad-po*). Could part of his name (*ra-skyes* = 'Goat-Born') carry lexical allusion to that of Khyi-kha Ra-thod ?
5. Khrag-mig-ma ('Blood-Eyed-Lady') may be related to the Srin-po gNya'-rengs Khrag-mig who is also counted among the divine rulers of Tibet preceding gNya'-khri bTsan-po according to dPa'-bo gTsug-lag (Haarh 1969 : 292). This seems possible in view of her position as the consort of Zo-ra-ra-skyes.
6. *Collected Works*, Vol. *Pha*, ff. 114b - 116a.
7. See for instance his reply to critics: *Padma gling-pa'i gsung-'gros log-lta-can sun-'byin-pa senge'i nga-ro*, *Collected Works* Vol. *Pa*, pp. 493 - 511.
8. These were recorded on 19/2/71 and 16/2/76 respectively.
- 8a \* *Klong gsal las \* sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs kyi gnas yig padma gling pa'i gter ma bzhugs so \* \**

[ . . . . . ] \* slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas la phyag 'tshal lo \*

sbas yul mkhan ljongs gnas yig 'di \*  
 bdag 'dra bud med mtsho rgyal ngas \*  
 lcags phur can gyi dben gnas su \*  
 Orgyan padma nyid la zhus \*  
 phyi rabs don du yi ger bkod \*  
 las can bu dang 'phrad par shog \*  
 sa ma ya \*

sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs kyi gnas ni \* ne rings seng ge rdzong gsum gyi nub \*  
 mtha' nye lam gyi byang \* 'brog mtshams pa'i shar \* gro bo lung gi lho na yod  
 cing \* shar lho mtshams na rgya gar rtsang lung \* lho nub mtshams na bum thang  
 stang \* nub byang mtshams na rdzi ba lung \* byang shar mtshams (f. 2a) na seng  
 ge ri ste \* de rnam 'dus pa'i dbus na yod do \* de la sgo bzhi yod de \* sgo gcig  
 bum thang stang nas yod \* sgo gcig 'brog mtshams sa nas yod \* sgo gcig gro bo  
 lung nas yod \* sgo gcig mkho mthing nas yod de \* de ltar sgo bzhir yod do \* de  
 yang sngong dang po nas lung stong du yod cing \* rgya bod gnyis kyi so mtshams  
 na yod pa'o \* sbas yul gyi sa mtshams bcad pa ste le'u dang po'o \*

mi gnas pa'i lo rgyus ni \* spyir kha ba can gyi rgyal khams \* bod yul gyi dbus  
 mthil \* brag dmar dpal gyi bsam yas na chos skyong ba'i rgyal po khri srong  
 lde'u btsan zhes bya ba \* yab khri rje btsan po dang \* (f. 2b) yum (gyi)  
 ma shang kong jo gnyis kyi sras su 'khrungs \* dgung lo bcu gcig la bza' dmar  
 rgyan khab tu bzhes \* bcu gsum dang bco lnga'i bar du hor dmar byung ste  
 'khrugs \* bcu bdun pa glang gi lo la \* bsam yas bzhenga pa'i thugs dgongs shar  
 te \* za hor nas mkhan po zhi ba 'tsho spyang drangs sa btul bas ma thul \* de'i  
 rting la rgya gar nas slob dpon padma spyang drangs sa gzhi thams cad byin gyis  
 brlabs \* lha sring dregs pa can thams cad dam la btags \* dbu rtse rigs gsum gyis  
 thog drangs gtsug lag khang brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs \* de yi rab gnas tshar  
 ba'i rjes la \* rgyal pos khrims kyi rnga bo che brdungs te \* bsam yas ne thang  
 chen po'i dbus su \* rgyal pos gser khri dang \* dngul khri bshams pa la mkhan  
 slob gnyis bzhugs su gsol \* khrom dmar nag bsodus nas \* rgyal pos gser dngul  
 gyi mandal phul nas zhus pa \* kyee mkhan slob gnyis bdag la dgongs su gsol \*  
 sku'i rten du gtsug lag khang ni bzhengs tshar \* gsung gi rten du dam pa'i chos shig  
 bsgyur dgos \* zhes zhus pas \* mkhan slob gnyis kyis gsungs pa \* kyee chos skyong  
 ba'i rgyal po \* dam pa'i chos bsgyur bar 'dod na \* lo tsa mang po zhig rgya gar du  
 rdzang (f. 3a) dgos pas \* sgra slob pa'i gzhon nu mang po bsags shig gsungs pa  
 dang \* rgyal pos bod kyi byis pa blo rno ba mang po bsodus te mkhan slob  
 gnyis kyi spyang sngar phul ba la \* mkhan pos sgra bslab pa'i thog mar \* na mo  
 buddha ya \* na mo dharmā ya \* na mo sam gha ya \* gyis gsungs pas \* byis pa  
 rnam na re \* ma mo bhu ha ya \* ma mo bib ha ya \* ma mo sa sa ya \* ma shes  
 zer te sgra skad tshad du ma 'khyol. \* yang slob dpon gyis \* na mo gu ru we \*  
 na mo de wa ya \* na mo da ki ni ye gyis gsungs pas \* byis pa na re \* ma mo ga hu  
 ya \* ma mo gre pa ya \* ma mo ba kyi ya \* zer te bod kyi byis pa kha lce ma bde  
 bas sgra tshad du ma 'khyol lo \* der gu rus rgyal po la lung bstan pas \* spa skor  
 gyi yul na he 'dod kyi bu gan jag thang ta bya ba yod kyi gsungs pas \* de bkug  
 ste bsam yas su phyag phebs \* gtsang legs grub dang \* gan jag thang ta gnyis la  
 mkhan slob gnyis sgra bslabs pas \* tshad du 'khyol nas rgya gar du chos 'thsol ba  
 la btang bas \* bka' [= dka'] ba bcu drug spyad de rgya gar du brdol \* shri sing ha  
 la sogs mkhas pa nyer lnga mjal \* phyi sde snod nang gsang sngags \* 'bras bu bla  
 med kyi chos bka' rnam yongs su rdzogs pa zhus \* slar (f. 3b) log bsam yas su  
 phyag phebs tshe \* rgya gar gyi gcan 'phrang bas kskul te \* dmar rgyan gyis gts'o  
 byas bdud blon rnam kyis \* sangs rgyas gnyis pa bee ro tsa nas bod du chos  
 bsgyur ba'i dbang ma byung bar chu la bskur \* mtha' la spyugs byas pas \* rgyal  
 po thugs ma dgyes bzhin du spyugs so \* bod du sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa byung  
 dus \* bee ro tsa na mtha' la spyugs pa'i le'u ste gnyis pa'o \*

de dus chos rgyal la jo mo bzhi yod de \* zhag gsum gsum gyi bsyen bkur byed  
 kyin yod pa las rgyal pos lo gsum gyi bar dmar rgyan gyi sar bsnen bkur la ma  
 byon pas \* de'i dus na dmar rgyan ma 'dod pa rgya te \* khyi dang ra mthong  
 nas \* thog khar sgo khyi la spyad \* 'og khang du ra la spyad pas \* zla ba dgu ngo  
 bcu na dmar rgyan gyi lus la khye'u yod pa kun gyis tshor ste \* mi mang rnam  
 kyis gcig gleng gnyis gleng kun gyis shes par gleng ngo \* der dmar rgyan la nang  
 blon gcig yod pa la \* rgyal pos dmar rgyan gyi pho brang du ni ma byon par lo  
 gsum song \* da nang blon min pa gzhan su yod zer zhing gleng pas \* nang blon  
 la rgyal po'i khrims 'phog gis dogs 'jigs shing sdug bsngal gyis non par gyur pa la  
 \* ra khyu ded pa'i rdzi bos mthong ste smras pa \* nged rang gi rgyal po'i (f. 4a)  
 jo mo dmar rgyan ni 'og khang na ra dang sbyor ba byed kyin yod do zer bas \*  
 yang sprang phrug gcig na re \* ngas kyang mthong \* pho brang steng du khyi khrid  
 de sbyor ba byed kyin yod zer ro \* de nas zla dgu ngo bcu nas bu gcig btsas par  
 gyur te \* yum gyis lo dgu'i bar du gsang nas sos so \* der chos rgyal gyis tshor te  
 \* 'phrin blon la 'phrin bsring te \* dmar rgyan khyod la bu zhig yod zer ba bdag  
 gis thos pas \* de bdag la phul cig rgyal srid gtad par bya'o zhes pa bsring pas \*  
 der bsam yas ne gsang chen por khrom dmar nag 'dus pa'i dbus su 'bul bcug pas

dmar rgyan gyis phul te \* de yang rgyal po'i rigs brgyud dang mi mthun pa \* ra'i mgo la kha 'tshul khyi 'dra ba zhid 'dug pa las \* rgyal pos btsun mo la zhe gnag byas te \* 'bangs rnam sbsdud nas dmar rgyan gyi bu 'di ni bod yul phung ba'i lta ngan yin par 'dug pas \* 'di bdag cag rje 'bangs rnam s kyi glud du mtha' la spyug go gsung nas \* bod kyi bandhe dang \* sngags pa dang \* bon po rnam bsags nas \* mdo chog mang po byed du bcug cing \* khyi kha ra thod la bdud blon rnam dang \* yum dmar rgyan gyi 'bangs mi rnam 'bangs su gtad de \* (f. 4b) gos dum rgyab ba 'bru sna'i sgye mo re thogs pa re re gyon du bcug nas mtha' la spyugs so \* de nas khyi kha ra thod rnam kyis lho brag sgyid ces bya bar lo bcu gsum bsdad dus \* yang rgyal pos tshor te dmag drangs nas yul bton no \* de nas khyi kha ra thod rje 'bangs rnam mon mkhan pa lung du yul thon no \* de dus rgyal po'i btsun mo mendhe bzang mo la 'khrungs pa'i sras mu khri btsan po la rgyal srid gtad pas dmar rgyan gyis phrag dog byas te gsol gyis bkrongs pas \* rgyal po mya ngan gyis non \* dmar rgyan la chad pa phab ste \* gtsang po yar rgyab gra gzhang gi mdar yul bton pas \* dmar rgyan gyis sgra tshad kyi gtsug lag khang bzhangs \* rab gnas la mkhan po zhi ba 'tsho spyang drangs \* dmar rgyan gyis phyi mjug bka' gdams ma gtogs gsang sngags mi dar ba'i smon lam btab bo \* dmar rgyan yum sras la chad pha phog pa'i le'u ste gsum pa'o \*

[sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs kyi gnas bstan pa ste le'u bzhi pa'o \*]

de nas yul der rgyal po khyi kha ra thod rje 'bangs kyis bsdad tshul ni \* yang re lung du rgyal po'i pho brang bzang \* bye dkar lung du bzo rigs [= rig] pa dang bon po'i sdod sa bzang \* lung srol dang ri 'dabs rnam la blon 'bangs dang \* 'khor rnam kyi sdod sa bzang ngo \* de dus ku re lung dang mon phyogs thams cad rgya gar ba'i yul du yod do \* sdod khyim thams cad kyang smyug ma dang \* rtsa khyim \* shing khyim du yod do \* de'i (f. 6b) rgyal po'i pho brang yang shing las grub pas \* ka gzhu ka rgyan \* gdung gdung khebs \* rgya phibs kyi thog dang bcas pa rgya che la 'phangs mtho ba \* rin po che'i rtsi mang po byugs nas 'od 'phro ba byas pa la \* skar khung dang \* sgo mang dang \* rgya mthong rab gsal dang bcas pa'i bkod pas mdzes par bkod pa la \* lcags ri sum skor du yod \* sgo mo che gnyis su yod \* de'i phyi la 'bangs 'khor dud khyim brgya drug cu re gcig gis bskor te yod pa la \* de'i nang du rgyal po dpon g.yog 'khor dang bcas pa bzhangs so \* de yang rgya bod kyi so mtshams yin pas \* yar mar gyi tshong skyas [= bskyas] pas nor dang longs spyod bsam gyis mi khyab pa byung ngo \* sdod khyim thams cad kyang rgya bod kyi lugs 'dres mar byas so \* 'khor 'bangs rnam kyi yul grong yang de bzhi du byas so \* de yang yang re lung du yul tshan bcu gsum yod \* bye dkar lung na bon po ye shes thod dkar bya ba bon 'phrul sum brgya drug cu la mnga' brnyes pa yod pa des bkra shis rdzong mkhar zhes bya ba'i yul gcig bzang ste longs spyod che bar byas so \* der bon yul gyi thog drangs grong tshan bdun 'dzin no \* de yang phu na (f. 7a) 'bri gnag ra lug \* mda' na ba glang \* bar du lug rta ra gsum sogs byol song dang dkor nor bsam gyis mi khab par byas so \* der rgyal po rje 'bangs rnam kyi longs spyod 'byor pa dang ldan par lo drug cu re gcig bsdad do \* de nas khyi kha ra thod kyis bod du yab la dmag drangs rtsis byas te \* 'bangs 'khor rnam sbsdud nas \* rgyal pos 'bangs rnam la bka' stsal pa \* bdag gi phas khyi kha ra thod nga mtha' la spyugs \* yum yul gtan 'don byas pas \* da res rgya dmag bsdad nas dmag drangs dgos so byas te \* rje 'bangs rnam kyi rgya dmag bsdad bsam yas su dmag drangs so \* de'i dus su chos rgyal khri srong lde'u btsan gshegs nas \* mu tig btsan pos rgyal srid mgo bzang tsam yod pa las \* O rgyan dang mu tig btsan po yar lung shel gyi brag phug na bzhangs yod pas \* bsam yas su rgya dmag gis sleb pa O rgyan gyis mkhyen te \* gu rus gnam thil dkar po bskul nas thog mda' bdun phab pas dmag rnam sngangs shing 'dar nas rang yul du myur bar log go \* rgyal po khyi kha ra thod kyis sbas yul mkhan ljongs su yul (f. 7b) bzang ba'i le'u ste lnga pa'o \*

de' dus su \* sras mu tig btsan pos zhus pa \* kyee slob dpon chen po lags \* rgyal po khyi kha ra thod 'di yul ma bton na yab mes kyi gtsug lag khang 'di rnams la gnod pa yang yang byed par 'dug pas \* 'di mkhan pa ljongs su yang mi bzhag par \* yul 'don pa'i thabs shig zhu 'tshal \* zhes zhus pas \* de nas O rgyan padmas sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs su byon te \* mi nag po 'jigs su rung ba zhid tu sprul nas \* rgyal po'i drung du 'di skad gsungs pa \* kyee rje mu rum btsan po \* khyed rje 'bangs rnams kyi bla ma ngas bya yis \* nged rang yon mchod mthun par byas nas \* gsang sngags 'dzin pa'i phyogs rnams pham par byed \* bsam yas la sogs gtsug lag khang rnams 'jig cing chu la 'bo bar bya'o byas pas \* rgyal po'i thugs dgongs la \* 'di zog po padma 'byung gnas kyi razu 'phrul yin pa'ang srid \* yin na da res chad pa zhid bcad dgos bsam te smras pa \* mi nag po khyod zog po padma 'byung gnas khi cho 'phrul ma yin nam \* yin na sngon chad kyang khyod kyis nga la gnod sems mang po byas \* da rung khyod kyis nga la gnod pa skyel bar 'dug (f. 8a) pas \* blon po rnams kyis de bzung la gsod cig byas pa dang \* mi nag po de na re \* da lta bsam yas na yod pa'i padma 'byung gnas 'di dang nga gnyis mi 'cham \* nga mu stegs kyi slob dpon ha ra nag po bya ba yin \* kho'i bstan pa la nga ci gnod byed pa yin \* de bas rgyal po khyod dang kho yon mchod so sor yod zer bas \* nga khyod kyi stobs la brten nas kho'i bstan pa 'joms dgos snyam ste rgya gar nas 'ong pa yin \* nged rang yon mchod gnyis bka' bgros mdzad nas kho'i bstan pa la ci gnod bya'o zer bas \* yang rgyal pos \* 'o na khyod kyis rdzu 'phrul zhid ston dang byas pas \* rgyal po'i pho brang gi lho nub mtshams na rdo leb gzhang pa 'dra ba gcig yod pa'i steng du gar mdzad pas zhabs rjes bco brgyad byon no \* des rgyal po thugs ches par gyur te zhus pa \* kyee slob dpon chen po lags bdag gi pha khri srong lde'u btsan dang \* padma 'byung gnas gnyis kyis bzhengs pa'i gtsug lag khang lta bu zhid 'dir bzhengs par zhu zhus pas \* slob dpon gyis gsungs pa \* kyee rgyal po chen po \* khri srong lde'u btsan dang \* padma 'byung gnas kyis bsam yas bzhengs pa de \* bod du khyad 'phags (f. 8b) par byed do \* nged gnyis de bas ya mtshan pa zhid bzhengs pas rgyal po rang nga'i ngag la nyon cig gsungs so \* rgyal po na re de las ya mtshan pa zhid byung na khyed kyis gang mdzad la nyan zer bas \* slob dpon gyis zhal nas \* 'o na nged rang yon mchod shing gi bya khyung mkha' la 'phur thub pa zhid bzhengs nas de'i khog pa'i nang du rgyal po dpon g.yog lnga brgya tshud par byed cing \* de la skar khung dang bar mtshams mang po bcad nas gzhal yas khang gi rnam pa byas pa'i nang du thab kha mang po bzung nas longs spyod dang 'byor pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa byas nas lha mi'i 'jig rten na 'di las khyad 'phags pa med zer ba zhid bya'o gsungs nas rgyal po thugs dgyens te 'o de bzhin du bya'o zer nas \* shing gi bzo rig pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa bsod nas bya khyung che la 'phangs mtho ba zhid byas so \* de la rlung bskiyod pa dang \* 'dzin pa'i gzer mgo gnyis su byas pa na \* slob dpon gyis gsungs pa \* rgyal po rje 'bangs rnams de ring bya khyung gi rab gnas la tshogs shig gaungs pas \* rje 'bangs rnams gcig kyang ma lus par bya khyung gi khog par zhugs nas bza' btung gi longs spyod glu gar la (f. 9a) sogs byed kyin yod pa la \* slob dpon gyis gsungs pa \* rgyal po rje 'bangs \* bdag la gson cig \* ya mtshan pa'i rtags 'gul ba dang \* 'khrig-pa dang \* 'dar ba sogs gang byung yang ma 'jigs par bde bar sdod cig gsungs nas \* slob dpon gyis bya khyung gi steng du byon nas \* phyag gnyis su lcags kyi dbyug tho re re thogs nas mi 'dod pa'i rlung skyod pa'i gzer gnyis brdungs pas bya khyung nam mkha' la 'phur nas song ngo \* de dus rgyal pos khyi skad lhang lhang cig thos pas \* blo ma bde bar tshig bcad smras pa \*

kyee bdag gi steng gi zog po padma 'byung \*  
 sangs rgyas yin zer sems can gnod pa byed \*  
 gzhan don yin zer min log mgo bskor mkhan \*  
 bdag gis khyod la gnod pa ma byas kyis \*

byas pas \* O rgyan gyis gsungs pa \*

kyee khyi kha ra thod bdag la gson \*  
 log par lta ba dmar rgyan bu \*  
 yab kyi rigs brgyud khyod la med \*

khyod ni byol song gnyis kyi bu ☉  
 mu stegs rgyal po rmu rgod mkhan ☉  
 da lta'i khyi skad zer ba de ☉  
 rgya gar rtsa lung khyi skad yin ☉

zhes gsungs pas ☉ yang khyi kha ra thod kyis smras pa ☉

kyee mgo bskor mkhan gyi zog po, (f. 9b) gson ☉  
 yab rgyal blon gyis mgo bskor bas ☉  
 bdag cag yum sras mtha' la spyugs ☉  
 sangs rgyas yin zer bod sdug gtad ☉  
 snying rje bsgom zer bdag nyid mtha' la spyugs ☉  
 spyugs pa mi tshad yul 'don byed pa 'di ☉  
 sdig dpon yin yang 'di 'dra ngas ma mthong ☉  
 la yoggs bden na zog po'i steng du thong ☉

zer ba la ☉ O rgyan gyis gsungs pa ☉

kyee byol song phru gu khyi kha ra thod nyon ☉  
 Ita log ma mad gnyis kyis bod yul du ☉  
 yab kyi bka' bcag bdud blon dbang bsgyur nas ☉  
 bee ro la sogs sgra bsgyur lo tsa rnams ☉  
 mtha' la spyugs pas dam chos nyi ma nub ☉  
 dmag drangs chos rgyal gtsug lag bshig par brtsams ☉  
 thub na nga yang gzod pa'i bsam ngan yod ☉  
 phyi mjug sangs rgyas bstan pa brlag bsam pas ☉  
 sems can don du sdig rgyal yul 'don no ☉

gsungs nas mi 'dod pa'i rlung g.yo ba'i gzer rnams rim par brdungs pas skad cig de nyid la bum thang dkar nya bya ba'i yul du sleb bo ☉ 'dod pa'i rlung 'dzin pa'i gzer brdungs pas ☉ sa la babs so ☉ der bzhag nas O rgyan gyi rdzu 'phrul gyis slar mkhan pa ljongs su phebs ☉ rje 'bangs (f.10a) kyi dkor rnams gter du sbas ☉ mkhan pa ljongs kyi sa phyogs mi mthong bar phyi nang gsang ba'i rgyas bsdams nas gnas kyi gter bdag rnams la gnyer gtad bka' bagos nas bzhag go ☉ dus la ma bab par sus kyang mi mthong bar byas so ☉ de nas rgyal po rje 'bangs rnams kyis btsal yang rnyed par ma gyur to ☉ de nas khyi kha ra thod rje 'bangs rnams kyis stang gi khyi tshums la yul bzung nas yun ring du bsdad do ☉ O rgyan gyis bum thang lcags mkhar du rgyal po senta ra dza'i bla mar byon nas rdo rje brtsegs pa'i brag la dgongs pa la bzhugs so ☉ rgyal po khyi kha ra thod 'khor bcas mkhan pa ljongs nas yul bton pa'i le'u ste drug pa'o ☉

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[dus bstan pa'i le'u ste bdun pa'o ☉]  
 [sgo 'byed pa'i le'u ste brgyad pa'o ☉]  
 [phyi nang ba'i rgya dkrol thabs kyi le'u ste dgu pa'o ☉]  
 [lam yig gi le'u ste bcu pa 'o ☉]  
 [gnas de'i yon tan bstan pa ni ☉]

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9. On mKhar-chu lCags-phur-can see Ferrari 1958: 57 and 138. On mKhar-chu itself see *rGyal-po bKa'-thang*, f. 78a.
10. Senge rDzong is 'a small temple at the foot of a cliff' (Cooper 1933a: 80) some three days journey due north of lHun-rtse rDzong. It is famous as one of the places visited by the Guru in the form of rDo-rje Gro-lod and, like sTag-tshang in sPa-gro, is said to be one of the sites where the Vajrakila cycle was first revealed. (See *gTer-nam*, f. 13b on Mon-kha Ne-ring Seng-ge rDzong and *rGyal-po bKa'-thang*, f. 77b on Mon-kha sNa-ring (sic).)
11. mTshams-pa is a pastoral area lying at 12,400 feet midway between the pass of Mon-la-khar-chung and Chos-'khor-stod in Bum-thang, presently occupied by a military checkpost. See *rGyal-rigs*, f. 42b.

12. Gro-bo-lung is, of course, the home of Mar-pa, just north of the Bhutanese border in lHo-brag.
13. rGya-gar rTsang-lung is an intriguing problem. Padma Gling-pa in his autobiography seems to refer to the area around rTa-wang as gTsang-lung (f. 116a). There is a connection with the word 'Tsangla' which designates the speech of the Eastern Bhutanese (the Tsang-mi). But why should the area be called 'Indian' here? South of the 'Di-rang area of Kameng lived a certain King Jo-'phag Dar-ma of Shar Dong-kha to whose court Padma Gling-pa was invited and which he described as partly Indian in character (*Pha*, ff. 162a - 164b). dPa'-bo gTsong-lag informs us that these kings possessed 'myriarchies' (*khri-tsho*) among the Indian people (see p. 102 and f. 9a of this *gnas-yig*).
14. Unidentified.
15. One of the *mTha'*-*'dul* temples. See
16. JD: Srong-btsan sGam-po
17. LP: *'glud-chas* ('ransom-apparel'), a kind of fur cape'
18. LP: 'He arrived at lHo-brag sGyid-shod and settled there. The ruins of his castle are still there and I have visited them. sGyid-shod is situated between lHa-lung and rDo-rdzong and it is reached after crossing the sBrum-la Pass near sBrum-thang which lies just to the north of the pass. The ruins lie on the side of the mountain overlooking the village of sGyid-shod.'
19. This may possibly be the area of Grwa on the south bank of the gTsang-po west of Yar-lung (Ferrari 1958 : 54-5).  
The temple of sGra-tshad (perhaps more correctly Grwa-tshad) remains unidentified. Padma Gling-pa's historical hindsight is especially evident in this passage.
20. Unidentified.
21. LP: gNam-the dKar-po. On this ancient form of Pe-har see Nebesky 1956 : 97-8.
22. According to JD the Guru disguises himself as a herdsman and finds employment in dPag-bsam-lung (one of the smaller 'hidden lands' ancillary to mKhan-pa-lung) looking after the king's cows.
23. LP: 'It was arranged so that if a certain nail were struck with a hammer the whole thing would go flying up in the sky, and if another nail were struck it would come down to earth.'
24. JD: 'He (the Guru) steered the aeroplane (*gnam-gru*; LP uses the same word) by dropping struts, each a whole tree trunk, from the machine (*'phrul-'khor*) which caused it to drop in height and so he guided it south to Bum-thang. The tree trunks hit the earth on the way, planting themselves and later each of them grew to a huge size. At the foot of each of these trees, temples were later built. These can be seen today in the Kur-stod district.'
25. LP: 'The king, left all by himself in sTang with no followers and no means of sustenance, felt enormous sadness. He stuck two fingers of his hand in his mouth and produced mournful sounds. If people today play a double-flute (?) they are said to be playing Khyi-kha Ra-thod's flute. After a time he began slowly to recover his strength. He built himself a castle called Khyi-rdzong ('Dog-Fort'). His lineage survives at rGyal-mkhar in the Chos-'khor district of Bum-thang and in the 'Phrad-pa'i-yul (?) of the sTang valley.' JD: 'Having recovered from the shock of being pushed out of the aeroplane Khyi-kha Ra-thod began to settle down in that place. After a time some Indian people on pilgrimage to the mountains in the north met him and, being awestruck by the strange appearance of this man who seemed to be the lord of those parts, payed him honour, made offerings to him and built him a splendid castle. Once again Khyi-kha Ra-thod gained power and became king. He appointed ministers and the place today is called rGyal-blom-mkhar ('King-Ministers-Castle'), pronounced 'Jelkhar'. The people of the village there, it is said, all have pointed mouths like those of dogs. They are said to be the descendants

of Khyi-kha Ra-thod. Although he must have married one of his Indian subjects and although his court at 'Jelkhar' must have been pleasant, it cannot have compared favourably in his mind with his former kingdom at dPag-bsam-lung [= mKhan-pa-lung] for the last we hear of him is this: One day, overcome with regret at having been expelled from his paradise, he walked to the next valley of sTang and climbed up to the temple of mTho-ba-brag where the Guru had hidden his aeroplane. From there he could see way up to the north into dPag-bsam-lung and, behold, there was his palace wrecked, his subjects turned to stone and the whole place a wilderness. Saddened and remorseful, he cut down a bamboo from a thicket nearby and made it into a flute. On this he played a wistful lament. That is why today if a lover looks sad at the loss of his beloved he is said to be playing his flute.'

26. This is the site of the present sKu-rjes lHa-khang. For a further example of how the stories of the 'Sindhu Rāja' and Khyi-kha Ra-thod have cross-fertilised see p. 78.
27. See Petech (1939), Tucci (1949), Demieville (1952), Richardson (1952) and Haahr (1960).
28. "de'i gnas-'dzin-pas mu-tig btsan-po bzhugs-pa'i skabs-kyi lo-rgyus snyan-po dang / sems skyo-po mang-po-zhig-kyang brjod-byung /" See also Shakabpa 1967 : 47.
29. Shakabpa 1976:197 note 88:  
*"Me-long-ma'i l3-na-I yang mu-rug btsan-po-ni chos-rgyal dang btsun-mo bza' dmar-rgyan ma-mjal-gong-gi sras-zhig yin-pa-de mdog ngan-pas khyi-kha ra-thod ces btags-te mkhan-pa-ljongs-su spyugs-pa de'i mi-brgyud-kyang deng-dus lho-'brug 'bum-thang phyogs yod-pa'i lo-rgyus-zhig pad-gling gter-ston klong-gsal gsang-ba snying-bcud-kyi cha-lag mkhan-pa-lung-gi gnas-yig-nang gsal /"*
30. According to Stein's main informant, Byams-pa gSang-bdag, there survived until 1947 at the monastery of Rwa-sgreng a manuscript version of the epic whose sixteenth chapter was entitled *Glo Khyi-rna rgyal-po*, "King Dog-ear of Glo" (Stein 1959a:46). One cannot but wonder if there is a connection with Khyi-kha Ra-thod. The alternation Glo/lHo is one noted by Stein in his work.
31. I am most grateful to Michael Oppitz for drawing my attention to this paper.
32. *sgar dang bzhis-ka btegs-nas byon f.16a.*
33. See also A. Macdonald 1971:207 note 76. The names applied to these deities are quite different from those found in either of the variant readings of the *rGyal-rabs bon-gyi 'byung-gnas* supplied by Das (1902:608) and Stein (1959b: 58-9). The list in the 'Sindhu Rāja' story is as follows, with alternative readings from the *Bum-thang dar-gud-kyi lung-bstan*:
- 1) Then dPal-bzang,
  - 2) Then dGe-dbang,
  - 3) Then Nam-mkha' dBang-phyug,
  - 4) Then Gung-rgyal,
  - 5) Then-bzang (Then mThar-bzang),
  - 6) Then Chos-kyi-dbang (Chos-dbang),
  - 7) Then Ding-ka,
  - 8) Then rGyal (rGyal-mtshan),
  - 9) Then sPra-ra.

These are preceded by a further six deities posing as 'religious ministers', four of whose names begin with Khu and two with Bro. The twenty 'demon-ministers' do not seem traceable to any known list of deities. Their names have an archaic appearance, for example: sPyi-ther, Ba-sa-dbang, Khyen-rgyal, rDos-thar, Kyir-rdzi-shog-ska, dPon-ghon etc. These may prove to be ancient survivals like Zo-ra-ra-skyes and Khrag-mig, or sBal-mgo Khrag-mig-ma attended by the Khrag-gi ma-mo spun-bdun in the 'Sindhu Rāja' story, f. 15a. (See notes 4 and 5 above.) It seems a little unlikely that the *gter-ston* would have simply invented the names.



34. \* *de-nas rgyul-po dbyug-ston rgya-yul-du song-ba'i rjes* \* *bod-kyi rgyal-po khyi-kha ra-thod bum-thang steng [= stang ?]-du yul-'don-ste* \* *de'i blon-po then dpun [= spun] -dgu-ni 'di-ltar-ro* \* [see note 33 above] \* *de'i mi-brgyud-ni tshe-lo sum-cur gnas-so* \* *de-nas gtsug-lag-khang dang then ['then]-gyi ming mi-grags-par stong-ngo* \* *ces gsungs-so* \*
35. *mda'na sngon-gyi rgyal-po'i yul-mkhar dang //*  
*blon-po'i grong yod rgyal-blon-sa zhes-grags //*  
*'di-yi mi-rnams mchog-tu rigs-bzang-la //*  
*gzugs-kyang gzhan-las mchog-tu 'phags-pa lags //* (f. 24a)
36. Some of the rDza-sprul material is discussed in Lodro 1974: 164-167. To complete the list of sources on mKhan-pa-lung so far known to me, mention must also be made of the biographies of Padma Gling-pa's incarnations by the 8th *gSung-sprul* in Vol. *Pha* of the Collected Works, where we find the Bhutanese mKhan-pa-lung frequently mentioned as a place to which they would go for pilgrimage and retreat.
37. My friends Michael Oppitz and Charlotte Hardman have in fact recently succeeded in making the extremely difficult journey to this mKhan-pa-lung in company with a Rai, and they appear to have discovered a great deal concerning attitudes to it from that direction.
38. See *LCB* I, f. 3b and *LCB* II, f. 59a.
39. *rGyal-po sindha ra-dza'i rnam-thar*, f. 21b.

## CHAPTER 4

1. / *khri lde-srong-btsan-gyis rgyal-sa bzung-ngo // des 'bro-bza' lha-rgyal gung-skar-ma bzhes-pa'i sras gsum-gyi che ba khri btsan-ma / lho bum-thang-du bcug-nas 'brom-bza' legs-rje dang / sna-nam-bza' me-rje-the'u dug-gis bkrongs /*

*/ gsum-gyi gcen-po gtsang-ma lcags-pho dbyug // rgyal-srid ma-bzung lho-brag bum-thang-du // 'bro-bza' legs-rje sna-nam mang-mo-rjes // dug-gis bkrongs-te de-yi srid-rgyud bzhugs //*

These passages are taken from the *Sa-skya bka'-'bum*, Vol. *Ta*, pp. 295 and 296 respectively. The text can be found (with some inaccuracies) as an appendix to Tucci's edition of the *Deb-ther dmar-po gsar-ma* (Rome, 1971), and a translation of it in Tucci 1947: 310 - 315. He appears to have missed the sense of *bcug* and *dbyug*, both of which are forms of the better known *spyug*, 'to banish'.

2. There is also another Sa-skya history which preserves the title *Khri* applied to gTsang-ma. It is the *Deb-ther brdzongs-dmar*, of which only one copy survives in the British Museum (Or 6751). According to Ariane Macdonald (1971:391), it was composed by Shakya dPal-bzang-po at sNar-thang in 1376. I am indebted to Mr. Richardson for pointing out to me this reference. We can probably assume that it follows Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan in referring to gTsang-pa (sic) as *Khri*.
3. / *chos-rgyal rje-yi gdung-rabs bzhugs-pa dang /*  
/ *gtsang-ma'i bod-rnams gnas-pas khyad-par 'phags /*  
(*Bum-thang lha'i sbas-yul-gyi bkod-pa me-tog skyed-tshal*, f. 23b.) On f. 22b Bum-thang is also described as "a land to which the excellent rulers and ministers of ancient times did go" ( / *sngon-gyi rgyal-blon mchog-rnams byon-pa'i yul /* )
4. I do not quite understand the sense of *lcags-kyi srog-pa tsa sgrub-pa ma-grub-par / snyan-'phra* [= *snyan-phra*] *btsan-par byas-te*. The text is certainly corrupt here but it carries an allusion to a story fully recounted in dPa'-bo gTsung-lag, Vol. *Ja*, f. 134b, kindly indicated to me by Mr. Richardson: Bran-ka dPal-yon fled to the north and

"in a place underground carried out the rite of making his life source into iron. When he had accomplished this except for about four fingers' breadth on top of his head a blind man and his guide came to that part."

5. / *zhang-blon nag-po-la dga'-ba-rnams gros byas-nas chos-khrims gshig-pa'i kog [= lkog] -gros byas-nas / de-la sngon-du btsan-po ma-dkrongs-na chos-khrims mi-gshig zer / kha-gcig na-re ral-pa-can-la sras med-kyang / cung lha-sras gtsang-ma chos-la dga'-bas srid 'dzin-te chos-khrims mi-gshig zer / gtsang-ma bshugs-pas chog mchi-bas / de ban chen-po chos-la dkar-la dbang che-bas chos-khrims mi-gshig zer / gros byas-nas chos-khrims gshig-pa'i snyan-phra bcug-te / ban chen-po dang / ngang-tshul-ma nal bshams-so zhes snyan-du gsol-nas / chad-pa che-thang-du zhus-pas / ban chen-po yang lcags-kyi srog-pa tsa sgrub-pa ma-grub-par / snyan-'phra btsan-par byas-te bkum / de-ma-thag-tu lha-sras gtsang-ma rab-tu byung-nas / rdzongs chen-po dang-bcas-nas spa-gro mon-du bshugs / (sBa-bzhed, pp. 76-77.)*
6. *lha-sras gtsang-ma rab-tu byung-ba gro-mor spyugs*, f. 130b.
7. // *lho-phyogs mon-gyi rgyal-po rnams*  
// *mnga'-bdag gtsang-ma'i gdung-rgyud yin //*  
*'on-kyang rang-gi yig-tshang gzigs //*

8. *lho byang gnyis-kyi zam-pa*, f. 99b.
9. / . . . mnga'bdag khri ral-pa-can-gyi gcung lha-sras gtsang-ma bya-ba glang-dar-gyis lhor dmag-dpon-du brdzangs-pa-las / (f. 23b) brgyud-pa'i rigs-ma'i bye-brag-gis mang-du snang-na'ang / 'dir wang-gdung / [de-la'ang nyung-tshan zhes-pa shin-tu khungs btsun-pa zhiq dang / ] mi'i rgyal-mtshan-du grags-pa'i rigs gnyis . . . /
10. wang-dgung 'thab-pa dang / mang-tshan nyung-tshan 'thab-pa.
11. mi-chos-la gdams-pa'i bstan-bcos, f. 20a in the Bodleian MS.
12. // bdag-la sdod-pa'i dbang med sa-mthar 'gro // nyes-pa med-par skrod-la thabs ci-yod // dge-'dun thugs-bde 'di-nas ldog-par zhu // sems thag-chad-zin gru-yi nyag-thag thong // (f. 134b)
- 12a. The same holds for LCB II (ff. 24a-b and 68a-b) which draws on both the rGyal-rabs and the rGyal-rigs. LCB I has nothing on gTsang-ma at all. It was written at a time before the Western Bhutanese became acquainted with these eastern traditions.
13. My interpretation of this most difficult passage in the sBa-bzhed is tentative, but the general purport seems fairly clear.
14. / pañḍita broṣ ma-thar-ba la-la mon-du btsongs / f. 137b.
15. 'jig-rten ryan-rabs mkhas-pa, f. 2b.
- 15a. . . . byung-tshul mtha'-yas-par snang-yang srid-pa'i rdul-phran bgrang-ba'i dgos-pa med pas / 'dir gtso-bo chos-kyi rjes-su 'brangs-te . . . f. 68b.
16. / der mu-dbon-la mthong-snang bzang-po mang-du byung / sgam-po-pas lung-bstan-nas tsha bre lnga bsnams-nas mon-gyi rgyal-po ga-thung-gi sar byon / des yon-bdag byas-nas sha-'ug-stag-sgor byon-nas bzhugs / (Nya f. 33a)
17. / sngon rje dus-mkhyen mon dom-tshang-du sgrub-pa mdzad-dus-kyi sbyin-bdag mon-gyi rgyal-po gwa-thung-gi rgyud-pa mon / tsang-mi / ka-tsa-ra / rgya-gar-ste re-re-la khri-tsho re yod-pa'i bdag-po mon rgyal-po don-grub mjal-du sleb / 'bul-zhabs dpag-med byas / sras-po gcig phul-ste mon-du dgon-gnas 'debs-par zhus / gnas-chen dom-tshang-rong-gi sbyin-bdag bgyid-par byas-te rdor-'dzin bskos-pas gnas dar-rgyas-su gyur / (Pha f. 116a)
18. / der shar-mon-gyi rgyal-po jo-'bag dpon-g.yog mang-po mjal-bar sleb / 'bul-ba mtha'-yas / khong-rang-yang gtsug-phud phul-zhing bstan-pa 'dzugs-par zhus / (Pha f. 127a)
19. /'di-las ches sngon-tsam-du mon rgyal-po gwa-thung-gi brgyud-pa jo-'bag-gi sras gces-ming sprang-po-dar zer-ba-de blon-po khri-dpon bzhi dang-bcas-pas mjal-du sleb-ste kho-rang-gi skra-yang phul / go'i shri'i las-kha gnang / 'bul-ba-ni mtha'-yas-par byas-cing blon-po sin-ta-kas kyang khyad-par-du mchod / (Pha f. 225b)
20. gTam-shing was begun in 1501 and completed in 1505. See the autobiography of Padma Gling-pa, Pha ff. 140a - 154a passim.
21. rgya'i 'do-li 'brug-mgo dang / rin-po-che'i nor-bus brgyan-pa-zhiq f. 162a.
22. /de-nas pho-brang-du slebs-pa'i dus-nas bzung-ste / rgyal-po de'i yab-mes-nas lo nyt-shu-rtsa-linga tshun-las mi-thub-pa'i sri dang / smyung [= snyung] - dus rim-gro-la-yang / mi dang ra lnga-brgya-tsam dang / ba-glang gtos-che-ba bsad-nas khrag-mchod-kyis dbang-phyug-chen-po gsol dgos-pa-la / srog-gcod dang sdig-pa'i nyes-dmigs-kyis 'jigs-te / sprul-sku zhwa-nag-pa-la skyabs-zhus-dus lo gum-gyi skyabs mdzad / de-rjes bdag-gis bskyabs-pas lo so-dgur thub-cing / de-dus sras-yang 'khrungs / sdig-pa-rnams byed ma-dgos-so / (Pha, f. 162b).
23. / de-dus rgya-gar ka-ma-ta'i ra-dza yang mjal-du byung-zhing / mjal-dar-la dar-yug dkar dmar khra gum 'bul-zhing gus-pa'i sgo-nas phyag-'tshal-ba-dang / khong-yang rgya-gar-gyi rgyal-po stobs-chen yin-pas / bdag-gis-kyang langs-nas bsad-pas / bdag-gi rkang-pa-la lag-pas reg-nas / kho-rang-gi mgo-thog-tu bzhang-cing 'dug / de-nas yang phyag-btsal-te phyt-gros byas-te song / (Pha, ff. 163b-164a)

24. *yul-lugs-kyi rol-rtseḍ du-ma dang-bcas-te* / f. 164a).
25. *pha-tshan so-sor 'phye-ba'i rus-kyi ming*, f. 45a.
26. *rigs-rus 'chol-bar song-ba'i dus-nyid*, f. 2b.
27. sKya-sa-mkhar, sKyed-mkhar, Kha-gling-mkhar, Khas-mkhar, gCen-mkhar, Nya-mkhar, (Was-chur) Thum-nang-mkhar, 'Dus-stung-mkhar, sDom-mkhar, (Be-tsha) Nang-mkhar, dPal-mkhar, Phang-mkhar, Beng-mkhar, Ber-mkhar, Byas-mkhar, sBis-mkhar, Mug-ltang-mkhar, sMan-mkhar, bTsan-mkhar, Wang-ma-mkhar, Rus-po-mkhar, Shing-mkhar, bSe-ba-mkhar. Other place-names, such as lCags-mkhar-bzung, dGa'-gling mKhar-mi and so on, which do not preserve quite the same pattern have been omitted from the list.
28. The sites of lCags-mkhar and Gong-mkhar are now occupied by temples, that of gSham-mkhar by the palace of dBang-'dus Chos-gling, and those of lCam-mkhar and rGyal-mkhar by villages. A 'district castle' (*yul-mkhar*) seems to have survived at the latter place into the 14th century, if we give credit to Klong-chen-pa's allusion to the Khyi-kha Ra-thod story quoted in Part One, Chapter 3. Speaking of the Chos-'khor valley in general Klong-chen-pa says:  
*yid-'ong grong-rnams 'phyong kha-phyed phibs-can //*  
*snyug-ma'i sbag-khang-dag-kyang grangs mang-la //*  
*mkhar dang khang-bzang shing-gi rgya-phibs-can //*  
*rgyang-nas lha'i khang-bzang mthong-ba-'dra //* (f. 24a).  
 There are beautiful villages [ with houses ] having open lofts and roofs,  
 And in addition to numerous bamboo huts (lit. 'cane-houses of Bamboo')  
 There are castles and mansions which have 'chinese roofs' of wood.  
 Seen from afar they look like divine mansions.  
 The passage of course expresses the surprise and delight of a Tibetan on first seeing the free use of wood in Bhutanese architecture. The 'mansions' must be the same buildings we see now in Bum-thang. The 'castles' have disappeared.
29. Although the British records on the Assam *duars* are now well known (see the bibliography and index in Labh 1974), not much use seems to have been made yet of the Assamese records of the Ahom dynasty. It may be useful to give some notice of these primary sources and references to them in secondary works on Assam: B. C. Allen 1905: 53-55, 65-66; Barua 1951: 100-102, 161-164; Basu 1970: 135-136, 192; Bhuyan 1930: 293, 302, 332; Bhuyan 1933: 123, 175, 151-155, 167-169, 317; Devi 1968: 194-209.  
 References to Ahom embassies and 'tribute' received by the Bhutanese are found in the biography of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, f. 87b and in the eulogy of Shes-rab dBang-phyug, the 13th '*Brug sDe-srid*, ff. 24b, 36a and 73b.
30. It seems Csoma was the first western scholar to learn about the Assamese 'Kusinagara'. It was later conflated with Cooch Bihar by the editor of Buchanan-Hamilton 1838: 15 note.
31. The identification of Hajo as Kusinagara seems to have been fully accepted by many Tibetan authorities, including bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan (see Jaschke 1881: 437), Tāranātha (see Waddell op. cit. 313) and Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho (*Vaidūrya-ser-po*, p. 396). It was certainly known to the western Bhutanese in the 17th century, as it is mentioned in the biography of *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (f. 87b).

## CHAPTER 5

1. *stag-lo'i skabs-su dpon-po kun-thub dang / rtsa-ba mang-po'i kha-mchu thug-nas g.yeng-ba che-bas / dbang khrid sogs cher ma-byung / Pha, f. 159b.*
2. */ nang-so yang lho-rgyud-kyi dpon-po yin / Pha, f. 223a.*
3. *dbus gtsang lho-rong ma-lus dbang-du sdud / Pha, f. 147a.*
4. The *mi-dpon* were certainly part of the system of local administration in Tibet during this period. They are mentioned together with the *brgya-dpon* ('centurions') in the 'Gyangtse Chronicles' of 1481 (Tucci 1949:667). They probably had their origin during the period of Sa-skya or Phag-mo-gru-pa rule.
5. Here are the references to these five campaigns in Tucci's translation:
  - (1) 'Having become his intimate and having attended to the most important affairs, he [dPal-ldan bZang-po] urged that dGe-bshes dGe-'dun rGyal-mtshan of Rong-po might accept him in his retinue in the expedition against the lHo-dung, (which he was preparing). At the age of twenty-three, in the year of the iron-dragon (1340), he went as a lay companion (in the retinue) of dGe-bshes, and in lHo-dung the enemies were destroyed.' (f. 3b ?)
  - (2) The *dge-bshes* appears to have died in the first campaign and dPal-ldan bZang-po was appointed in his place. 'At the age of twenty-five, in the year water-horse (1342), he went to bZang-yul. Among the four offices corresponding to the (four) sections in which Sa-skya was divided, the dGe-bshes dGe-'dun rGyal-mtshan had that of Shar-kha [the eastern section]; as he [dPal-ldan bZang-po] was appointed in his place he was exalted as the glorious Shar-kha-pa. Having conquered the Dung-reng, as the clergy and laymen were pacified, the Sa-skya-pa hierarch too had a high opinion of him.' (f. 4a) In 1347 he is appointed 'administrator of Western lHo-brag'.
  - (3) 'In that year [1352] he [dPal-ldan bZang-po] destroyed the lHo-dung in Rin-chen-sgang and in the environs of Phag-ri.' (f. 5a)
  - (4) 'In the following year the Shar-dung led by Don-grub-dar, having vanquished the Gur minister of Grum-pa and having asked to make an act of submission, it is said that he [dPal-ldan bZang-po] let them remain in his retinue.' (loc. cit.)
  - (5) 'In the year wood-horse (1354) his younger brother 'Phags-pa Rin-chen-pa went to lHo-brag and conquered the lHo-dung and hence deserved well of dBus.' (loc. cit.).

The 5th Dalai Lama's Chronicle (f. 100a) confirms the gist of the above:  
 'From Sa-skya he received the insignia and the diploma of *rgan-po* to subdue Shar-dung and lHo-dung and of valiant archer.' (Tucci op. cit., 646)
6. The sketchmap accompanying this table does great injustice to the many different languages spoken by small pockets of people throughout the area who do not fall into the major groups. A fully documented language map produced after an exhaustive linguistic survey of the whole region would reveal the interconnections of these minor 'border' languages but would not, I believe, greatly alter the broad outlines suggested in this sketchmap. The dotted boundary of 'Northern Monpa' encompasses the area now under the control of China. The inhabitants of Me-rag/Sag-stengs in Bhutan (between the sGam-ri Chu and rTa-wang Chu valleys) are almost certainly speakers of 'Northern Monpa' also. If we accept the identification of the Shar-dung (once an independent people enjoying a corporate identity) with the 'Northern Monpa', then we are today faced with the sad picture of their dispersal under the governments of China, Bhutan and India. An objection may be raised to this proposed identification when it is recalled that in Part One, Chapter 4 we noticed how Padma Gling-pa arrived at the court of the king of *Dung* 'Di-rang (f. 164b of his biography). This might indicate that the Shar-dung once extended south into the area occupied by the Tsangla-speaking 'Central Monpa'.

Elsewhere (f. 100a), Padma Gling-pa seems to speak of the whole areas as *Dung-rong* ('The Ravine Country of the Dung').

7. *lha'i sprul-pa'i gdung, rGyal-rigs*, f. 32b.
8. On 'O-de Gung-rgyal as the divine ancestor of kings and clans, and as a sacred mountain, see Tucci (1949 : 728, 730 and 733), Nebesky (1956 : 208-209), Stein (1959b : 83 note 226), Haarh (1969 : passim), A. Macdonald (1971 : 302).
9. / *lho-rgyud chos-kyi bstan-pa nged-kyi skyong-ba-yin* / f. 167b.
10. The following is Philip Denwood's translation of part of the text supplied, the original of which is presumably still among the late John Levy's papers now preserved at the Institute of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh:
  - Ache Lhamo's conveyance is a horse.
  - Ache Lhamo's incense is from mulu and pulu wood.
  - Ache Lhamo's drink is arak and ambrosia.
  - Ache Lhamo's couch is a white woollen cloth.
  - Ache Lhamo's tea has ginger and sugar.
  - The land of Gangto is pleasant
  - Surrounded by a wall of jewels.
11. *rGyal-kun khyab-bdag 'gro-ba'i bla-ma bstan-'dzin rin-po-che legs-pa'i don-grub zhabs-kyi rnam-par thar-pa ngo-mtshar nor-bu'i mchod-sdong* (123 folios, undated) by bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal, 10th Head Abbot of Bhutan (1701-67, *regn.* 1755-62).
12. *Byang-chub sems-dpa' chen-po ngag-gi dbang-phyug bstan-'dzin mi-pham jigs-med thub-bstan dbang-po'i sde'i rtogs-pa brjod-pa dbyangs-can rgyud-mang* (83 folios, undated) by Shākya Rin-chen, 9th Head Abbot of Bhutan (1710-59, *regn.* 1744-55).
13. *thugs-nye-ba'i sras zur-pa*, f. 22b.
14. The texts refer specifically to the *Ya-gsum* (or *Ya-bo-gsum*) of lHo-brag, an ancient territorial division of a province into three parts (cf. *Klum-ro'i ya-sum* in a Tun-huang ms. quoted in Haarh 1969:242). I would take *ya* or *ya-bo* as cognate to *yan-lag*, 'limb', 'member', 'section'.
15. The kings of the present dynasty in Bhutan, the '*Brug rGyal-po* whose ancestral home is Bum-thang, are still referred to by members of their family and by people from that area as *dpon*, pronounced 'pon' in the local manner, not 'pön'.
16. It is perhaps worth noting that the *dPon* of sTang is (sTobs-ldan) La-ba rDo-rje in the *rGyal-rigs*, but sPre'u rDo-rje in bsTan-'dzin Legs-grub's biography. Similarly, the ruler of mTshams-pa is (mGar-ba) Khye'u rDo-rje in the former and La-ba rDo-rje in the latter.

## CHAPTER 6

1. *kla-klo'i rgyal-po/mleccha-rāja*, in *MBTJ*, f. 104b. The term *kla-klo* is still occasionally used by Tibetans today when seeking to insult the Bhutanese. The sting lies particularly in the way the term repudiates, even ignores, their 'historical' conversion to Buddhism by Padmasambhava and the many centuries that were filled with their own Buddhist saints.

## NOTES: PART TWO

1. See Karmay 1972:145-8. The Bon-po historians give his date of birth variously as 1024 or 1038. Kong-sprul places him in the 2nd *rab-byung*: 1087-1146 (*gTer-rnam*, f. 227b).
2. Karmay 1972:191.
3. Karmay 1972:147 and *gTer-rnam*, f. 42b.
4. Karmay 1972:148.
5. *gTer-rnam*, f. 40a-b and *LCB* II, f. 69a.
6. *gTer-rnam*, f. 43b.
7. *gTer-rnam*, ff. 46b-47a and *LCB* II, f. 69a-b. A number of Bon-po discoverers with the Ra-shag epithet figure in the *Legs-bshad-mdzod* (see Karmay 1972: index).
8. *gTer-rnam*, f. 227b.
9. Karmay 1972:175-6.
10. *LCB* II, f. 83a-b.
11. On this important Bon goddess (more usually called Srid-pa rGyal-mo), see especially Karmay 1972: xxi-xxii.
12. Padma Gling-pa's Collected Works, Vol. *Pha*, f. 27a.
13. A quite separate issue here is the survival of genuine, non-assimilated pre-Buddhist folk rituals standing outside the domain of Bon as it is now conceived. The cult of the *dpa'-bo* mediums comes most readily to mind in this context.
14. On rNying-ma-pa doctrine, see particularly Tucci and Heissig 1973:112-125 and Karmay 1975b: passim.
15. On its location see Wylie 1962:186.
16. I am indebted to Helmut Eimer for some notes he kindly provided on the history of the Ka-thog-pa in a letter dated 11/7/77. His paper on this subject is in the press. According to another tradition (*Blue Annals*, p. 158) the founder of Ka-thog was one bDe-gshegs Shes-pa.
17. See ff. 69b-71b.
18. *Theg-pa thams-cad-kyi gshan-'byed nyl-'od rab-gsal*, 219 folios.
19. These were Bab-ron Thar-pa-gling (in the Chu-smad valley of Bum-thang), Shing-mkhar bDe-chen-gling (in the U-ra valley of Bum-thang), O-rgyan-gling (in the sTang valley of Bum-thang), Kun-bzang-gling (in Kur-stod), 'Bras-bcags-gling (in sNgan-lung), Padma-gling (in mKho-thang), Kun-bzang-gling (in Men-log) and bSam-gtan-gling (in sPa-gro). Thus they covered the whole of the country except for its easternmost region. There are certain indications that some of these monasteries may have been taken over by Klong-chen-pa rather than founded by him. The above list appears on f. 22a of a biography of Klong-chen-pa by Kun-bzang 'Gyur-med mChog-grub dPal-'bar (1725-1762), the 5th *Thugs-sras* incarnation of Klong-chen-pa's son, Zla-ba Grags-pa. It is entitled *Kun-mkhyen chos-kyi rgyal-po gter-chen dri-med 'od-zer-gyi rnam-par thar-pa cung-zad spros-pa ngo-mtshar skal-bzang mchog-gi dga'-ston*, 33 folios, blockprint from lHa-lung. It is based on one of the original biographies of Klong-chen-pa, none of which I have seen. This work was kindly shown to me by the late *Chos-brag Bla-ma* when I was staying in Thar-pa-gling.



20. Vol. *Pha*, ff. 17a-24b.
21. For the full list see the *Zhe-chen chos-'byung*, ff. 116a-122b.
22. *LCB* II, f. 72b.
23. Kom-'phrang bKra-shis rTse-mo, sNgan-lung Pho-sbis-kha, mKhas-dbang lHa-khang and 'Dam-can lHa-khang.
24. *LCB* II, f. 73b.
25. I do not know if there is a biography of Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan. Information on him is found in *LCB* II, ff. 73b-74b. It was the accounts of India and Bhutan he gave to 'Jigs-med Gling-pa which enabled the latter to compose one of the most interesting documents of the period, the *lHo-phyogs rgya-gar-gyi gtam brtag-pa bryad-kyi me-long* forming Chapter 3 of the *gTam-tshogs* (ff. 31b-41b). The colophon says Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan spent three years in Calcutta. He may perhaps have been employed as an emissary of Bhutan to the East India Company. He supplied 'Jigs-med Gling-pa with a good deal of information on the English (Pho-reng = *Ferengi* = Franks).
26. *rJe grub-pa'i dbang-phyug rnam-rgyal lhun-grub-kyi rtogs-pa brjod-pa dpag-bsam ljon-pa'i snye-ma*: *dbu-can* ms. in 18 folios, no author or date given. I am indebted to the present *Pad-tshal-gling sPrul-sku* for giving me permission to copy this work and the one recorded in the next note.
27. '*Jigs-med bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan-gyi ngang-tshul rnams-par* (sic) *gleng-ba sgyu-ma chen-po'i rtogs-brjod*: *dbu-can* ms. in 20 folios by gZhan-phan Rol-pa'i rDo-rje, no date.
28. // *de-ltar-na thog-mar stod mnga'-ris-nas dbu-brtsams / bar-du dbus-gtsang lho-mon / mthar mdo-khams stod-smad-bar gsum-du gtso-bor byon-pa'i gter-ston* . . . (*gTer-rnam*, f. 231a).
29. A full study will one day have to take into account not only the multifarious sources used by Kong-sprul in his work but also certain other histories of the movement which are known to have been written and which may yet come to light. Critical investigation of the texts alleged to have been found will also be of the greatest importance. Meanwhile we are dependent mainly on Kong-sprul himself.
30. *gTer-rnam*, f. 98a-b.
31. Op. cit. ff. 98b-99a.
32. Op. cit. f. 99b.
33. Op. cit. ff. 103b-104a.
34. Op. cit. f. 106a.
35. Op. cit. f. 106a.
36. Op. cit. f. 108a-b.
37. Op. cit. f. 59b-60a.
38. Op. cit. f. 62b-63b.
39. Op. cit. ff. 126b-127a.
40. Op. cit. f. 195b.
41. Op. cit. ff. 100b-101a.
42. Op. cit. ff. 52a-55a.
43. *LCB* II, f. 71b.
44. *LCB* II, f. 75a-b, and *gTer-rnam*, ff. 79b-82a.
45. *LCB* II, f. 75b, and *gTer-rnam*, ff. 116a-117a. The story is told of how O-rgyan bZang-po went to Padmasambhava's heaven in the form of a vulture to clear his doubts as to how he should construct a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* at the temple of sKu-rjes in Bum-thang. While he was returning from heaven, one of his disciples started cremating the body he had left behind at sKu-rjes. O-rgyan bZang-po therefore had to enter the body of a girl who had just died at Mon Tsha-'og. In this new form he returned to Bum-thang but although he (or she) is said to have completed the work of restoring the temple, the *maṇḍala* itself was never finished. His draft sketch was said to be still at sKu-rjes when the *gTer-rnam* was composed.

46. *LCB* II, ff. 74b-75a, and *gTer-rnam*, f. 117a-b.
47. *LCB* II, ff. 76b-77a, and *gTer-rnam*, f. 143b. The latter work (f. 228b) places Ngag-dbang Grags-pa as late as the 9th Sexagenary Cycle (1507-1566) and maintains he was an actual descendant of Klong-chen-pa (1308-1363). This cannot be correct if we accept the convincing assertion in *LCB* II that Ngag-dbang Grags-pa was the son of Klong-chen-pa's disciple, *sPrul-sku* dPal-'byor rGyal-mtshan.
48. *LCB* II, f. 77a-b, and *gTer-rnam*, f. 139a.
49. *LCB* II, ff. 71b-72a.
50. Padma Gling-pa's autobiography, completed by his son rGyal-ba Don-grub, is entitled: *Bum-thang gter-ston padma gling-pa'i nam-thar 'od-zer kun-mdzes nor-bu'i phreng-ba zhes-bya-ba skal-ldan spro-ba skye-ba'i tshul-du bris-pa*; 254 folios in Vol. *Pha* of his *Collected Works*.
51. The Taoist tradition of revealed texts affords some very close parallels to the *gter-ma* movement. Strickman's comment (1977:21) on the origin of these Taoist works is most relevant to the whole question of the *gter-ma*:  
'The definition and evaluation of forgery is obviously a complicated problem, particularly in a religious tradition, where the embroiled questions of motives and methods are further involuted by the cogency of belief.'
52. See Stein 1972b:176 (my translation). See f. 175a of Padma Gling-pa's biography for the account of his meeting with 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, who presented him with a piece of iron on making a request for the Kīla authorisation (*Phur pa'i dpe-lung*). Padma Gling-pa refused. The Bhutanese version of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs's biography (Kalimpong, 1970, ff. 46a-47a) has another interesting account of their meeting in Bum-thang.
53. See Part One, Chapter 4.
54. See the biography, ff. 25b-26b.
55. Op. cit., f. 33a.
56. Cf. Toussaint 1933:387.
57. See the biography ff. 245b-251b.
58. This huge cycle, comprising some seventy-eight separate texts, is found in Vol. *Kha* of his *Collected Works*. It was 'discovered' at sMan-mdo in lHo-brag.
59. See *gTer-rnam*, f. 85b.
60. See f. 250a-b of his biography.
61. See *gTer-rnam*, ff. 130a-131b.
62. Some confusion has reigned on the date of his death which occurred at the age of 72 in *sbrul-lo*, according to rGyal-ba Don-grub who completed his autobiography. This was wrongly taken as *sa-sbrul* (1509) instead of *lcags-sbrul* (1521) by the 8th Pad-gling incarnation in his *Pad-gling 'khrung-rabs-kyi rtogs-brjod nyung-gsal dad-pa'i me-tog* (*Collected Works*, Vol. *Pha*, 45 folios). The date of his birth (*lcags-rta* = 1450) is similarly confused with *lcags-khyi* (1430) in the *gTer-rnam*, f. 85b.
63. On rGyal-ba lHa-nang-pa see particularly the *Blue Annals*, pp. 601-2. On the lHa-pa bKa'-brgyud in Bhutan see pp. 168-172.
64. The spelling sMyos (for gNyos) derives from a variant account of the mythical origins of this clan. Both are summarised in the *Vaidūrya Ser-po*, pp. 398-9.
65. See f. 25a of his biography.
66. On the branch of the Jo-bo clan settled at Ber-mkhar see f. 31a of the *rGyal-rigs*. The *rGyal-rigs* was written 22 years after the alleged date of the 6th Dalai Lama's death.
67. It is not clear from Padma Gling-pa's account (on ff. 113b-114a of his biography) what the relationship was between him and O-rgyan bZang-po. The *Vaidūrya Ser-po* (p. 399) refers to O-rgyan bZang-po as *dbon-po* ('nephew', or less likely 'grandson'). However, the *O-rgyan-gling-gi dkar-chags* (British Library, OR 6750) appears to make him the youngest of nine sons born to Padma Gling-pa's father, Don-grub bZang-po.

68. I am mainly dependent on *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags for the following.
69. On the 3rd *rGyal-sras sPrul-sku*, 'Brug-sgra rNam-rgyal (1735-62) see *LCB II*, ff. 129b-130a.
70. On the first seven in this line, see the *Pad-gling 'khrungs-rabs-kyi rtogs-brjod nyung-gsal dad-pa'i me-tog*, 45 folios in Vol. *Pha* of the Collected Works of Padma Gling-pa. It was written in 1873 by the 7th *gSung-sprul*, Kun-bzang bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma (1843-91) at the 'hidden land' of mKhan-pa-lung. It is followed by a short work by bDud-'joms Rin-po-che in 15 folios on the last four incarnations, entitled: *Pad-gling 'khrungs-rabs rtogs-brjod dad-pa'i me-tog-gi kha-skong mos-pa'i ze'u-'bru*. The present *gSung-sprul* who is mentioned at the end of this work was born in 1968 in a family that has close ties with the Royal Family. His half-brother, *Blon-po* Sangs-rgyas dPal-'byor, is at present the Ambassador of Bhutan to India.
71. On bsTan-'dzin Legs-pa'i Don-grub, see Part One, Chapter 5 ('The Ngang tradition'). The biography of his disciple, Ngag-dbang 'Brug-pa, is entitled: *rGyal-kun brtse-ba'i spyi-gzugs sems-dpa' chen-po gsung-dbang-sprin-dbyangs* [= ngag-dbang-'brug-pa]-*kyi rtogs-pa brjod-pa rig-'dzin kun-tu dga'-ba'i zlos-gar*; 119 folios, *dbu-can* ms., no date, written by one Ma-ti at the behest of Yon-tan mTha'-yas, 13th Head Abbot of Bhutan (regn. 1771-75). See also *LCB II*, ff. 81a-82b.
72. See f. 7b of the *Lo-rgyus*, and Note 23 thereto.
73. See ff. 91b-92a. I first came across the *rJe-btsun mi-la ras-pa'i rdo-rje'i mgur-drug sogs gsung-rgyun thor-bu 'ga'* in the Nubri district of Northern Nepal where it was pointed out to me for the account of Mi-la Ras-pa's visit there and to the adjoining district of Kutang (Aris 1975: 50, 78-9). Unfortunately, the copy I had access to was incomplete and my photocopy does not contain the passage on Mi-la Ras-pa in sPa-gro. Copies of the work can be found at the Cambridge University Library and at the India Office Library.
74. See note 109 to the *rGyal-rigs*.
75. See the *Blue Annals*, p. 405.
76. See *LCB II*, f. 91a-b where the spelling is given as Glang-mo-lung. In local pronunciation it is 'Nangmoling'. The correct spelling is given on f. 43b of the account by Yon-tan mTha'-yas of the virtuous works of Shes-rab dBang-phyug, 13th 'Brug sDe-srid (regn. 1744-63). I failed to visit the place on my way to mTho-ba-brag, having been told that it dated from the 17th century.
77. See the *Blue Annals*, pp. 406-414, and Smith 1970: 3.
78. See the *Blue Annals*, p. 478 and dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, Vol. *Pa*, f. 20b.
79. See particularly Richardson 1958-9, Snellgrove and Richardson 1968: 132-137, Smith 1969b and 1970, and Tucci[and Heissig] 1973: 62-64.
80. *lho-kha-bzhi'i rgya-pa-la gtogs-pa'i gnas-gzhi sde-dgon dbang-rtis thams-cad lo-tsa-ba-la phul* (*Kha-rag-gnyos-kyi rgyud-pa byon-tshul mdor-hsdus*, f. 4b). The work is an *dbu-med* ms of 33 folios, composed at the monastery of Gye-re dGon-pa in 1431. It is preserved in microfilm at the Toyo Bunko, Japan, which kindly made a copy available to me. See Yamaguchi 1970: No. 504-3047.
81. See the same folio of the above work, also f. 38b of the *Red Annals* and the *Blue Annals*, p. 602.
82. In the colophon (f. 42a) the name of the 'discoverer' is disguised as 'son of the great Arrow-holder' (*mda-'dzin chen-po'i sras*). This alludes to the legend of how 'Brug-pa Kun-legs shot an arrow from Tibet to the place in Bhutan where he later took a wife. He is always depicted with bow and arrow like the Indian *mahāśiddha* Saraha, whose incarnation he is reckoned to have been.
83. He is identified as such in *LCB II*, f. 84b.
84. / *lo re-re-la cho* [= tsho] *re-la bras-btang* [= ltang] *rgya* [= brgya] / *bur-btang* [= ltang] *brgya ras brgya* / *srin-dos brgya* / *lcags-dos brgya* / *'bul-dgos 'u-lag theng* [= thengs] *gsum gsum* / (f. 29a)

85. See f. 25b et seq. of the biography, and Aris 1976:608-9 where I have briefly described the festival.
86. His biography by 'Jam-dpal rGya-mtsho (= *gTsang mKhan-chen*) forms the 6th volume to the *PBP*. It is entitled: *Chos-kyi sprin chen-po'i dbyangs-kyi yan-lag rnal-'byor-gyi dbang-phyug dpal rdo-rje gdan-pa'i rnam-par thar-pa*, 34 folios. The story of his father's alleged discovery of *Pha-jo's* biography is found on f. 10b.
87. See f. 81b of '*Gro-ba'i mgon-po chos-rje kung-dga' legs-pa'i rnam-thar rgya-mtsho'i snying-po mthong-ba don-ldan*, and ff. 1b and 51b of '*Gro-ba'i mgon-po kun-dga' legs-pa'i rnam-thar mon spa-gro sogs-kyi mdzad-spyod rnam*s
88. On f. 71a of the above work we read:  
 // *mi-tshos-ni kun-legs nga mje-sbom rje-sbom zer // mje sbom-pas na-chung-gi bu-mo'i snying-du sdug // mi-tshos-ni kun-legs nga rgyo-'dod rgyo-'dod zer // rgyo-'dod-pas gdung-rgyud-kyi sras-po 'khrungs // mi-tshos-ni kun-legs nga rkub-tshum rkub-tshum zer // rkub-tshum-pas 'khor-ba-yi sdug-thag bstungs //*
- On f. 32a-b of *Pha-jo's* biography we read:  
 // *mi-rnams-ni pha-jo rkub-btsums zer // rkub-btsums-pas 'khor-ba'i sdug-thag bcad // mi-rnams-ni pha-jo mje-sbom zer // mje-sbom-pas mkha'-gro sprin-bzhin 'dus // mi-rnams-ni pha-jo rgyod-'dod zer // rgyo-'dod-pas sprul-pa'i rgyal-sras 'khrungs //*
- The variants clearly stem from the fluid oral tradition of Bhutanese folk poetry.
89. See f. 13a of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas.
90. See *PBP*, f. 111a, *LCB* I, f. 38a, and *LCB* II, ff. 84b-85a.
91. One would like to connect the name of this fortress with that of the mythical ancestor of the gNyos clan of the lHa-pa prince-abbots. His name is Bya-thul dKar-po, who married rMu-lcam Ring-mo. See the *Kha-rag rnyos-kyi rgyud-pa byon-tshul mdor-bsdud*, f. 1.
92. See f. 282b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas for mention of such a group, the inhabitants of the district in sPa-gro known as Lam-mgo Tsho-lnga.
93. The dates for the 'Brug-pa hierarchs are taken from Smith (1969b: Appendix III) who obtained them from the individual biographies contained in the *gser-'phreng* of this school. The dates provided by Stein (1972b: chart) are not always in perfect agreement with those of Smith.
94. The statement in the *Blue Annals* (p. 676) that *Lo-ras-pa* found the inhabitants of Bum-thang to resemble beasts (which derives from the unknown author of his biography in the above *gser-'phreng*) stands in contrast to the whole tenor of Klong-chen-pa's guide to Bum-thang (1355). He found them 'of good character, abiding to ancient laws' ( // *mi-rnams bcos-bzang sngon-gyi khirms-la gnas //* f. 24a-b). Information on *Lo-ras-pa's* activities in Bhutan is found in *LCB* I, f. 11a and *LCB* II, f. 85a-b.
95. See *LCB* II, f. 85b.
96. Op. cit., f. 90b.
97. Oral information from *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags.
98. The biographies of at least two of them have survived:  
 1) *mTshungs-med chos-kyi rgyal-po rje-btsun dam-chos pad-dkar-gyi rnam-par thar-pa thugs-rje chen-po'i dri-bsung; dbu-can* ms. in 51 folios, the life of Dam-chos Pad-dkar, 4th Head Abbot of Bhutan (regn. 1697-1707), by *Byams-mgon* Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan (1647-1732).  
 2) *sPa-gro'i chos-rje pad-dkar chos-kyi rgya-mtsho'i nyams-gyur-gyi rtogs-pa brjod-pa'i gtam bcad-lhug spel-ma'i do-shal ces-bya-ba ri-khrod-pa'i mdzes-rgyan-du 'os-pa; dbu-can* ms. in 297 folios, the autobiography of the *gZar-chen Chos-rje* Pad-dkar rGya-mtsho (alias 'Brug Pad-dkar), cousin of the Dam-chos Pad-dkar of the previous work.
99. See f. 31a of *Pha-jo's* biography and f. 97b of *LCB* II.
100. See Note 21 to the *Lo-rgyus*.

101. Another ms. of the same work survives at the village of Hūm-ral-kha close to the *rdzong* in sPa-gro. It has 77 folios and the slightly differing title of *rin-po-che do-shal*. This *gdung-rabs* is certainly worthy of detailed study. Only the briefest notice of it is given here.
102. *pha-mes rim-pa'i zin-bris dkar-chags gal-yig 'dug-pa-rnams*.
103. Apart from the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs*, the following paragraphs are largely based on ff. 11b-12a of *LCB I*, and ff. 98b-102b of *LCB II*. These provide a summary of those passages in the school's *gser-'phreng* which deal with the visits paid to the area by the Ra-lung hierarchs. A good deal more could be gained by going back to the *gser-'phreng* itself. It must be understood that the diffusion of the 'Brug-pa to Bhutan was just one current in the history of the school and the same could be said for all the other schools discussed in this chapter.
104. *skabs 'gar 'khrugs-pa-re dang / skabs 'gar grub-rtags-re bcas bzhugs-pa-las / f. 19b.*
105. */ pus-mo ma-slong-shig / 'brug-pas dgon-pa btab-song / sna-chu ma گزار-shig / hūm-ral-pas chu-rang btsugs-yongs / f. 19b.*
106. They are listed in the modern work *LCB II* (f. 101b) as Krong-sar Chos-'khor Rab-brtan-rtse, Bum-thang Bya-dkar rDzong, Kur-stod lHun-grub-rtse and bsTi-mu-la. With the exception of the last, which I cannot identify, all these appear in the *Lo-rgyus* as new constructions dating from the middle years of the 17th century, quite unconnected with earlier foundations. The claim made for them in *LCB II* has therefore to be viewed with some suspicion. Ngag-gi dBang-phyug, however, must have been active in the area because both his son, Mi-pham Chos-rgyal (1543-1604), and his grandson, bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma (1567-1619), followed him into this region where the 'Brug-pa do not otherwise appear to have had much of a hold. (See, however, the Addendum [III] to the *rGyal-rigs* and Notes 10 and 11 to the *Lo-rgyus* below.) In fact bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma seems to have been only to the east. A son, bsTan-'dzin 'Brug-grags, born to him in the Mang-sde district eventually succeeded to the regency of his true heir, the great *Zhabs-drung* Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (see Part Three).
107. e.g. *zhang-tshan-gyi mthongs dang / srid-phyogs gcig-pa de-ltar byung; Hūm-ral gdung-rabs*, f. 39a.
108. *lho-yul rgyal-po drung-drung yab-sras*, op. cit., f. 31a-b.
109. For the outline of his life see the *Blue Annals* (p. 692) and Smith 1970:10. I have not had access to an extended life of 'Ba'-ra-ba or his incarnations.
110. See for instance Tucci [and Heissig] 1973:64.
111. See Ferrari 1958:69, 159.
112. *rJe-btsun 'ba'-ra-ba rgyal-mtshan dpal-bzang-po'i rnam-thar mgur-'bum dang-bcas-pa*; Vol. Ka (222 folios) in a blockprint edition of his three volume *bka'-'bum*.
113. */ lho dus bde-ba dang / chos-la mos-shing yon-mchod rnying-pa yin-pas*  
... f. 114b.
114. *jag-choms srung-ba'i go-rje mang-po*, f. 119a.
115. I am indebted to John Ardussi for pointing out to me that in the *gser-'phreng* devoted to this school (to which I have not had access) it appears that the attachments of the 'Ba'-ra-ba with western Bhutan were partly revived in the 18th and 19th centuries. Two of the figures who stand in their lineage, *lHo-pa* Ngag-dbang Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho (1755-1831) and Chos-dbyings rDo-rje (1772-1838), paid a succession of visits to the area. They were cordially received by the Bhutanese officials and their local patrons. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that their monasteries and estates were ever restored to them, and the ties were no doubt of a more or less informal nature.
116. *dPal grub-pa'i dbang-phyug brtson-'grus bzang-po'i rnam-par thar-pa kun-gsal nor-bu'i me-long* by 'Gyur-med bDe-chen in *sa-mo-bya* (1609); 174 folios in a modern Indian reprint, based apparently on a blockprint from Ri-bo-che. It is the same work used by Stein (1959a:32) in a sDe-dge edition, and by Tucci (1949:162-3) in an unknown edition bearing the different title: *mTshungs-med grub-pa'i dbang-phyug lcags-zam-pa'i rnam-thar*.

117. See Stein 1959a:238 Note 17. bDud-'joms Rin-po-che in his history (f. 289a) confuses the issue further by giving the dates 1385-1510.
118. On this ceremony see Roerich 1932. On the epic and theatrical associations of Thang-stong rGyal-po see particularly Stein 1959a:219-221, 513-519.
119. Thus it is that the bridge of Chuka is reckoned to be of more than mortal production. No less a being than the dewta Tehuptehup could possibly have contrived so curious a piece of mechanism. Neither the origin nor the history of this renowned Tehuptehup, can be traced with any degree of certainty; but the works they assign him, the road up the mountain we lately passed (many parts of which are held, it may be said, upon a precipice, by pins and cramps of iron uniting together the stones that form it,) and the bridge at Chuka, do credit to a genius, who deservedly ranks high upon the rolls of fame, and justly claims from the inhabitants, decided tokens of respect and gratitude' (Turner 1800:162-3). Engravings of the bridge by Samuel Davis are found on Plates III and IV of this work. All that remains today are the ruins of its foundations. The same is the case with Chu-kha rDo-ba rDzong which stands close by; Davis' drawing of it is not given, but aquatints prepared after his return to England are occasionally to be seen. Much of his original Bhutanese work is kept at the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta.
120. // *Om ma-ñi pad-me hūm / tha [?] grub-thob chen-po'i rnam-thar-'di / lung-bstan thob-pa byang-damrings-pa [?] / dkon-mchog dpal-bzang-gis / dpal ri-bo-cher skod-na-'ang / grub-thob chen-po dang rje-btsun A-sgron chos-sgron gnyis-kyis / chos-sku snang-ba-mtha'-yas-kyi gsung-rgyun / sems-can 'gro-don mdzad-tshul skye-ba dran-pa'i gsung-'gros / lung-bstan-pa-rnams mos-pas thos / lung dang 'thun-par ma-tshangs-pa-rnams kha-skangs-pa'o // bla-ma thang-stong rgyal-po'i rnam-thar gsal-ba'i sgron-me / rgya-mtsho-las chu-thig rtsam-cig blangs-nas / lung-bstan thob-pa mon-pa bde-ba bzang-pos / wang spar 'tshams rta-mchog nor-bu-sgang-gi gnas-mchog / mkha'-'gro gsang-ba'i brag-phug / dben-pa'i gnas su bskod-pa'o //*  
// *bkra-shis dpal-'bar 'dzam-bu-gling brgyan-du dge-legs 'phel / mangalam / / A-khu bla-mas zhal-skad mdzad-mi byas / yig-mkhan sangs-rgyas don-grub-kyis byas / rnam-thar bzhengs-pa-la kha-phan tshig-phan byas rkang-g.yog lag-g.yog byas-pa thams-cad sangs-rgyas thob-par shog //*  
(Version A, ff. 293b-294a).
121. It is interesting to note that both dKon-mchog dPal-bzang and bDe-ba bZang-po find mention in Version A (f. 152b) as the emissaries of Thang-stong rGyal-po to the court of the king of Kāmata, the ancient Hindu kingdom destroyed by Ḥusayn Shāh in the period 1501-5 (see Part One, Chapter 4). dKon-mchog dPal-bzang is described as the *thugs-sras* ('mind-son') of the saint, and bDe-ba bZang-po as 'the man from lHo Pa-gro'. According to Bhutanese legend the latter was born miraculously from the droppings of a bird, in fact the saint in disguise (LCB II, f. 76a).
122. This is proved by the passage in Version B, f. 86b where we learn that *Thugs-sras* dKon-mchog bZang-po was appointed to the guardianship of the new bSam-grub Temple at Phag-ri. In the colophon (Version B, f. 173a) he is referred to as the author of the original source as follows:  
'dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas of the bSam-grub Temple, the nephew of the great bridge-builder and the upholder of his religious traditions.'
123. A (f. 141b) has:  
*/ grub-thob chen-pos bum-thang sde-bzhi / mon glang-ma-'thil / tshong-'dus rta-ll / sbu-ll / rnams zhabs-kyi chags / mon ku-ru-lung-la byon /*

*smon-lam-gyi 'brel-pa bzhag lho-brag mkhar-chu-ru phyag-phebs /*  
 B (f. 100b) has: / *bum-thang sde-bzhi-nas mon ku-ru-lung-tshun zhabs-*  
*kyi bcags / lho-brag mkhar-chur phebs /*

124. See the *rGyal-rigs*, ff. 29b-30b and Note 78 thereto.  
 125. For a photograph of the monastery see Ferrari 1958: Plate 49.  
 126. Cf. *gTer-nam*, ff. 125a-126b.  
 127. A detailed account of its restoration is found in the longer biography of Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan to which I do not have access at present. See also *LCB II*, ff. 155b-156b.

128. Version A, f. 131b  
 / de nas stag-tshang seng-ge  
 bsam-'grub-kyi ri-rgyud /  
 'thur-la rgyug-pa / spa-gro  
 lung-pa bzhung-gshags byed-pa  
 lta-bu de'i sna-la mchod-rten  
 cig bzhengs-pa'i sa-'dul mdzad  
 /mchod-rten 'di grub-pa dang  
 / lho-kha-bzhi-pa mon-yul 'dir  
 rlung-gdon 'og-gdon klu-nad  
 shin-tu nyung-par 'ong / 'dze  
 -pho bde bcas-pa 'di stongs-  
 'gro // *mchod-rten-'di /*  
*rgya-gar skon-mtsho-ba'i 'bul-*  
*ba skyel-cing mchod-pa byed /*  
*rgya-gar ka-ma-ta-ru nga'i*  
*bu-slob 'gro-don byed-pa*  
*yongs gsungs / de nas rdzong-*  
*brag-la byon / mchod-rten-la*  
*rab-gnas gsol-ba'i dus /*  
*chos-skyong phyag-bzhi-pa*  
*zhal-gzigs lhag-par nga'i*  
*'phrin-las 'grub-po zer*  
*mi-snang-par song /*

Version B, f. 83b  
 // de-nas stag-tshang seng-ge  
 phug-gi ri-rgyud dug-sbrul nag-  
 po thur-du rgyugs-pas / pa-gro'i  
 lung-pa gzhung-gshags byed-pa  
 'dra-ba'i sna-la sa-bdag kha-  
 gnon-gyi mchod-rten brtsigs-  
 pa'i sa-dpyad mdzad / phyogs-  
 bzhir lcags-phur re btab / ri-  
 de'i gdong brag rus-sbal mang-du  
 brtsegs-pa 'dra-ba'i steng-du /  
 chos-khri brtsigs-te mtshan-  
 mo'i bzhugs-sa mdzad / mchod-  
 rten-'di grub-pa-dang lho-kha-  
 bzhi-na / da-lta mdze-pho  
 mdze-mo'i sde bcas-pa-'di  
 stongs-'gro / *rgya-gar ka-ma-tar*  
*nga'i bu-slob-kyis 'gro-don*  
*byed-pa-yong / mchod-rten-'di-*  
*la-yang ka-ma-ta'i rgyal-pos*  
*mchod-pa 'bul-zhing / gzhan-*  
*yang mchod-rten lha-khang*  
*lcags-zam sogs mang-du 'grub-*  
*pas /*

I have left the spelling mistakes uncorrected in Version A to give an impression of the state of this important text. I do not know what the sense of *skon-mtsho-ba* is in this passage. Oddly enough, the throne which the saint is said (in Version B) to have built on a rock at the foot of the mountain is still pointed out to one nowadays, just behind the temple. The concluding sentence in Version B (/ *gzhan-yang . . . 'grub-pas /*) comes at the end of a passage in Version A (f. 132a) which is completely omitted in Version B.

129. The full title of the work is: *sKyes-bu dam-pa-rnams-kyi rnam-par thar-pa rin-po-che'i gter-mdzod*, 2 vols. (*Ka* in 17 folios and *Kha* in 88 folios), edited, it seems, by one Ba-spi-gung (?) mNyam-med Rin-chen and printed in *chu-pho-rta* (?), according to the colophon (f. 88b).  
 130. The area which mGos Khri-bzang requested and received from the king is described as follows:  
*gtsang-stod-kyi sa-cha / mon skyer-chu lha-khang tshun / skar-la mtsho-*  
*gzhuq yan-chad / 'bri tshams-rdza smug-po tshun-gyi sa-cha-rnams /*  
 (op. cit., f. 3b).  
 131. In sPa-gro: Nags-mo-che rDzong, Gal-stengs Glang-ma-nang, Cang dPal-ri dGon-pa and lCags-zam Tog-kha. In Thim-phu: dKar-sbe Bya-sreg rDzong, Sa -dmar-rdzing-kha, Tsha-li dGon-pa, Bar-pa lHa-khang and Wang Glang-ma-lung. In sPu-na-kha (Thed): Bar-grong Bye-ma'i rDzong, Gyang dMar-po and Bar-grong Dwangs-sa (*LCB II*, f. 88b). The *rdzong* ('fortresses') are in each case described as 'mother-convents' (*ma-dgon*) and all the rest as 'branch monasteries' (*dgon-lag*).

132. The name of gNas-rnying appears just once in the guide in a form that may perhaps have been purposely disguised by its author, a 'Brug-pa monk-official. We read:  
*/ bod-khams dag-pa'i zhing-gi gnas snying-po'i / mkhan-chen rnam-mkhyen rin-chen bsam-gtan-la /*
133. See, for instance, *LCB* I, ff. 19a, 37a, 47a and 52a.
134. For the details of this marriage see *LCB* II, f. 122b, and f. 109a-b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub.
135. On the Bhutanese traditions concerning *Pha-dam-pa* Sangs-rgyas and his disciple *Ma-gcig* Lab-kyi sGron-ma, see *LCB* II, ff. 83b-84a. On Vanaratna in Bhutan see *LCB* I, f. 11b, *LCB* II, ff. 87a-88a, and Stein 1972: 13.
136. See *LCB* II, ff. 88b-89a.



## NOTES: PART THREE – CHAPTER 1

1. *bsTan-pa 'dzin-pa'i skyes-bu thams-cad-kyi rnam-par thar-pa-la gus-shing rjes-su 'jug-pa'i rtogs-brjod pha-rol-tu phyin-pa dang gzungs dang ting-nge-'dzin-gyi sgo mang-po rim-par phye-ba'i gtam*, 2 vols., *dbu-can* ms.
2. Op. cit., Vol. 2 (*smad-cha*), ff. 426b-449b.
3. *gTsang mKhan-chen* was the author of a life of the Buddha, collated from all the sutras, entitled: *bCom-ldan-'das shākya thub-pa'i rnam-thar mdo-sde kun-las btus-pa chos-kyi 'khor-lo'i deb-gter chen-po 'phrin-las-kyi 'od-stong 'char-ba*, 2 vols., *dbu-can* ms. On the circumstances which led him to write the work upon his return to Bhutan after the last of his Indian visits, see ff. 450b-451b of his autobiography.
4. The brief summary given in this chapter is mainly based on *bsTan-'dzin Chos-rgyal* (*LCB* I, ff. 12a-54a), but I supply notes to the standard biography and to *Shākya Rin-chen* where it seems appropriate to do so. Unfortunately, there are not many sources external to this biographical tradition which can add precision and depth to the study. The autobiography of the 5th Dalai Lama is of some help, the *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs* provides important glimpses, and the *relação* of *Cacella* does rather more, but that would appear to be about all. The biography of *Tāranātha* probably contains important references to the *Zhabs-drung's* struggles with the *gTsang sDe-srid*, the effective ruler of most of central Tibet during this period.
5. See *LCB* I, f. 14a. The claim is not made in *PBP*.
6. Smith 1968:I.
7. See particularly the *Zhabs-drung's* life by *Shākya Rin-chen*, f. 3a.
8. Why the *gTsang sDe-srid* should have favoured the 'Phyong-rgyas candidate is never clear, but it is possible that the family were his traditional allies in the growing struggle with the *dGe-lugs-pa* school. It is perhaps more likely, however, that the *sDe-srid* was simply making mischief or hoping to win a friend he might be able to influence. Paradoxically, it was in this 'Phyong-rgyas family that the man who achieved the final triumph of the *dGe-lugs-pa*, that is to say the 5th Dalai Lama, was born later in 1617.
9. For a discussion of *lHa-dbang Blo-gros's* important work, the *bsTan-rtsis 'dod-spyin gter-'bum*, and a critique of *Schlagintweit's* translation of it, see *Vostrikov* 1970: 140 ff. (notes).
10. See *Wessels* 1924:155
11. *PBP*, Vol. *Ga*, f. 55b and *LCB* I, f. 18a-b.
12. *PBP*, Vol. *Ga*, f. 60a-b. Among the many delegations from Bhutan, special mention is made of the families claiming descent from *Pha-jo 'Gro-mgon Zhig-po* (sic).
13. *PBP*, Vol. *Ga*, f. 76b et seq.
14. *PBP*, Vol. *Ga*, f. 123a-b and *LCB* I, f. 22b.
15. See f. 9 of the *Relação* below, and note 25 thereto.
16. *PBP*, f. 17b, and *LCB* I, f. 24b.
17. *PBP*, f. 31a. *Shakabpa* (1976:362-3, 404-5) appears to place the death of *Phuntshogs rNam-rgyal* in 1631 or 1632, but in *LCB* I (f. 27a) and *PBP* (F. 31a) it is placed before 1619, the date of *bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma's* death.

18. The seal is also illustrated in the frontispiece to Hooker 1854 and at the top of the document containing the oath of allegiance sworn to King O-rgyan dBang-phyug in 1907, reproduced in facsimile in White 1909:226. For the verse describing the form of the seal, see f. 106b of the *bKa'-khrims*, and for the full context of that verse see f. 22a-b of the life of the *Zhabs-drung* by Shākya Rin-chen. The *Nga bcu drug-ma* reads as follows:

*lugs-gnyis 'khor-lo bsgyur-ba nga //*  
*nga-ni kun-gyi skyabs-su bzang //*  
*dpal-ldan 'brug-pa'i bstan-'dzin nga //*  
*nga-ni 'brug-par brdzus-rnams bcom //*  
*rtsom-pa'i dbyangs-can grub-pa nga //*  
*nga-ni legs-bshad 'byung-khungts btsun //*  
*mtha'-bral Ita-ba'i bdag-po nga //*  
*nga-ni Ita-log-mkhan sun-byin //*  
*rtsod-pa'i mthu-stobs bdag-po nga //*  
*nga-mdun mi-'dar brgol-ba su //*  
*bdud-dpung 'joms-pa'i dpa'-bo nga //*  
*nga-nus bzlog-pa'i mthu-chen su //*  
*'chad-pa'i ngag-gi dbang-phyug nga //*  
*nga-ni rig-gnas kun-la mkhas //*  
*gong-ma'i lung-bstan sprul-pa nga //*  
*nga-ni 'dra-min sprul-pa'i gshed //*

19. See f. 87b of his biography.
20. See f. 23a-b of the biography of Dam-chos Pad-dkar.
21. See ff. 161b-163a of his biography.
22. See *PBP*, f. 151b.
23. *'jig-rten phyogs-dang 'brel-ba'i 'gan-khur*, *LCB* I, f. 30a.
24. See Note 20 to the *Lo-rgyus* below.
25. See *PBP*, f. 93a.
26. The same source (f. 146b et seq.) informs us that bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas succeeded in effecting the escape from Tibetan imprisonment of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje's mother (his own mother too, if we accept this identification.) She had been detained in Tibet when 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje was only eight years old and had remained there ever since. A treaty was drawn up between the governments of Bhutan and Tibet to regularise her escape from imprisonment, also to win concessions for the *Bo-dong sPrul-sku* who had taken refuge in Bhutan.
27. The date of this invasion and those of the subsequent ones which took place during the remaining years of the *Zhabs-drung's* life are given in *PBP*, ff. 94a, 99b, 122b, 126b, 136b, [145b].
28. See Note 16 to Introduction.
29. The possibility of an informal alliance between the *Zhabs-drung* and the Ladakhi king at this time should not be ruled out, despite the very considerable distance between the two countries. Seng-ge rNam-rgyal also had to deal with a *gTsang-pa* invasion of his kingdom (see Tucci 1949:62) and the two rulers may perhaps have turned to each other for support.
30. The *sde-srid* is given the name Kun-dga' Rab-brtan in *LCB* I, f. 37a. However, this seems to be a mistake for bsTan-skyong dBang-po, who had succeeded his father, Phun-tshogs rNam-rgyal.
31. See *PBP*, ff. 100b-105a, repeated verbatim in Vol. *Ca*, ff. 20a-28b.
32. See Tucci 1949:636 and Shakabpa 1967:81.
33. See Shakabpa (1976:431), who has not mentioned his source: *Dukula*, Vol. *Ka*, f. 136a.
34. See Shakabpa 1976:428-9.
35. Both Tucci (1949:68) and Petech (1972:204) believe it was the second dGe-lugs-pa invasion of Bhutan in 1648 which occurred in reaction to Bhutanese support

given to the sGar-pa. I am more inclined to think that the sGar-pa revolt may have been a factor in this first invasion.

36. The settlement, if indeed it was ever properly formalised, turned out to be just as temporary as the earlier one with the *gTsang sDe-srid*. The 5th Dalai Lama had only a few months earlier given recognition to the incarnation of dPag-bsam dBang-po (*Dukūla*, Vol. *Ka*, ff. 133a-b). The passage (op. cit. ff. 135b-136a) in which the Dalai Lama describes the complicated negotiations which took place at this time is very difficult to follow, but he took particular exception to a letter from the *Zhabs-drung* in which he said:
- ‘Having brought down a Mongolian army upon the *gTsang-pa*, how is it that you have not got the power to deliver to me a single monastery [i.e. Ra-lung]?’
37. *bla-ma lho-ru bzhugs’dug //*  
*’bul-ba lho-ru rgyab-song //*  
*dngos-grub ’brug-pas bsdus’dug //*  
*nor-bus bya-ra byas-song //*
38. See *Hūm-ral gdung-rabs*, f. 56b.
39. See op. cit., ff. 67b-68a.
40. See *LCB I*, f. 43a.
41. For a full list of the *Wang tsho-chen brgyad* see Aris 1976:625 Note 61.
42. Op. cit. 621.
43. See f. 7b of the *Lo-rgyus* below.
44. Tucci (1949:68) and Shakabpa (1976:431) maintain this occurred in 1648, basing their statements on the evidence of *Dukūla*, Vol. *Ka*, ff. 140b-141a. The Bhutanese sources (*PBP*, f. 136b and *LCB I*, f. 44a) give the date *sa-glang* (1649).
45. See Shakabpa 1976:444-5.
46. See *Dukūla*, Vol. *Ka*, ff. 140b-141a, and Shakabpa 1976: 431-2. The names of the Tibetan commanders are given in abbreviated form as *Drung-che-’or gsum*.
47. See *PBP*, f. 137a, and *LCB I*, f. 45a. Also Aris 1976:613.
48. The festival is discussed in some detail in Aris 1976.
49. See f. 10 of the *Relação*.
50. Cf. the accounts in *LCB I*, f. 39a and on ff. 293a et seq. of the *gTsang mKhan-chen’s* autobiography.
51. See *LCB I*, f. 55b.
52. Op. cit., f. 56a.
53. We have noted three invasions by the *gTsang sDe-srid* (the first of these being undated) and two by the government of the 5th Dalai Lama. According to *LCB I* (f. 51a-b), there were in fact three by the latter, one of them being on a small scale. The details concerning this one seem to have been lost.
54. See f. 15 of the *Relação*.
55. See *PBP*, F. 141a-b.
56. For a short sketch of this person’s life see ff. 74b-76b of the biography of bsTan-’dzin Rab-rgyas.

## CHAPTER 2

- 1674 is the last date mentioned in the work (*PBP*, f. 149a). *gTsang mKhan-chen* died in 1684 (see f. 455a of his biography).
- ... *mya-ngan-las ’da’-ba’i tshul ston-par-mdzad-pa-las / dgos-pa ’ga’-zhig-gi dbang-las sku-mtshams kyi lugs-su bcas-rgyas bsdams-te shin-tu gsang-bar byas-so //* (f. 3b).
- bsTan-’dzin Chos-rgyal took no less than 28 years to write the *LCB I*, i.e. 1731-59 (see the colophon on ff. 148b-151a). He wrote f. 53b in 1757, and the passages dealing with the *Zhabs-drung’s* retreat come shortly after.

4. . . . *gzhan-yang zhabs-drung ma-chen sku-mtshams-kyi gsang ma-brtol-bar de-kho-nar bzhugs-pa sman-yon che-yang / rje-'dis gsang brtol-bas bstan-bsrung ma-nyes-pa'i gzhis-las sku-tshe-la 'gal-rkyen byung-ba-yin-kyang zer-ro / (LCB I. f. 62b).*
5. See f. 101a of the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan by Shākya Rin-chen. This work preserves complete silence on the question: evidently the disclosure of the secret reflected badly in some way on Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, which explains why he does not himself go into the matter of causes in the passage quoted in the next note. I am most indebted to *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags for bringing this passage to my notice. It led me eventually to all the other references given in this section.
6. */ der rten-'brel-gyi dbang-zhig-las dpal ngag-gi dbang-po'i sku-mtshams-kyi gsang brtol-dgos-byung-bas / de'i nyin rje rin-po-che'ang spur-mjal-la phebs-te / (f. 39b).*
7. See Shakabpa 1967:125-8, 1976:463-71, Petech 1972b:9, and Macdonald, A 1977: 134-8.
8. See f. 83a of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub.
9. See ff. 48b-49a of the biography of Dam-chos Pad-dkar by Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan, and f. 16a of the biography of Ngag-dbang Pad-dkar by Shākya bsTan-'dzin.
10. See *LCB I*, f. 54b, and f. 19b of the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan by Shākya Rin-chen.
11. See f. 325b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub.
12. See f. 21a of the biography of Mi-pham dBang-po by Shākya Rin-chen.
13. See ff. 93b-94a of the biography of Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las by Shākya Rin-chen.
14. See f. 29a of the biography of Ngag-dbang Pad-dkar by Shākya bsTan-'dzin; also f. 23a of the *rnam-thar* of Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal by Shākya Rin-chen.
15. See ff. 82a-83a of the biography of Mi-pham dBang-po by Shākya Rin-chen.
16. . . . *bdag-nyid chen-po 'di-nyid / yos-lo dpyid-zla 'bring-po'i tshes bcu-la zag-pa med-pa'i dbyings-su gshogs-par gyur-to / der bla-ma rin-po-che rang-gi zhal-chems-las / lo bcu-gnyis-kyi bar dgos-pa chen-po yod-pas nges-par gsong-shig gsung-ba-ltar / sde-pa dbu-mdzad chen-po rang dang / sku'i nye-bar gnas-pa 'ga'-zhig ma-gtogs / gzhan sus-kyang mi-shes-pa'i bka'-rgya dam-pos gsang-bar mdzad-do / der gra-pa rgan-gzhon thams-cad ltas dang cho-'phrul-gyi rnam-pa mang-du byung-ba-la thugs the-tshom-du gyur / khyad-par rje gzhon-nu nyid bla-ma dang mjal-rgyu-med-par yun-ring-bas / bla-ma rin-po-che sku-mtshams grol-nas zhal-mjal-ba'i dus-cig nam yong-ngam dgongs-pa'i thugs-'dun-la rgyun-chags-su bzhugs-shing /*
17. See *LCB II*, f. 128b.
18. See also Wessels 1924:141-2, and Note 16 to the *Relação* below.
19. *// de-yang de-dus-kyi gtam-la phyi sde-srid phyag-mdzod-pa / nang drung dam-chos rgyal-mtshan zer gleng-la gleng-ba-ltar zhabs-drung rin-po-che sku-mtshams bcad-rgyar bzhugs-te sde-pa dbu-mdzad chen-mo zhing-du phebs-pa-nas gzung chos-phyogs-kyi thugs-'gan thams-cad bzhes-te . . . / See also LCB I, ff. 95b-60a.*
20. See f. 17a of the biography of bSod-nams 'Od-zer by Ngag-dbang dPal-ldan rGya-mtsho.
21. See f. 21a of the biography of Dam-chos Pad-dkar by Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan.
22. As noted on p. 236, the death of 'Jam-dpal rDo-rje was also kept secret but we have no means of telling for how long. The author of *LCB II* maintains (on f. 122b) that he died in 1681. Petech (1972a:205 Note 12) has concluded from notes supplied to him by Mr. F. Gene Smith that the death occurred in 1680 or 1681. See also Part Three, Chapter 1.
23. */ de-bzhin gong-sa chen-mo zhabs-drung yab-sras gnyis-kyi gzim-'gag-nas phyag-'bul-la hyon rtse-shod gnyis-ka-nas na-bza' sogs byon-skyes-kyang gya-nom-pa stsal-bas dngos-mjal-bzhin thugs mchog-tu dges-par gyur-to //*

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- (f. 148a-b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub).
24. / *ding-sang-gi bar-du'ang gdung-brgyud rtse'i gsol-gzims la-sogs bkod-nas mchod-'bul-gyi rgyun bzang-po yod-pa 'di'o* // (LCB I, f. 54b).
- / *sku-pur dmar-gdung-du 'jog-nas phyis-phral byung-rken-gyis 'jigs-kyang yab-sras gnyis dbyer-med mchod-pa'i rgyun bzang-po btsugs-te da-lta'i bar-du rtse'i gsol-gzims 'jog-srol nyams-med byung* / (LCB II, ff. 122b-123a).
25. See ff. 26b-27a of the biography of bSod-nams 'Od-zer by Ngag-dbang dPal-ldan rGya-mtsho.
26. See f. 42b of the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan by Shākya Rin-chen.

### CHAPTER 3

1. See the *Relação* (Notes 1 and 13), and the reference to the *Dharmarāja* in the passage from the *Fathiya i Ibriya* quoted on p. 239.
2. Petech (1972a:203) has maintained wrongly that *rGyal-tshab* was the local title for the *Dharmarāja*, and that *Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che* was an improper, though more common, usage. He notes correctly, however, that the list of the *rgyal-tshab* in LCB I represents '... an attempt to systematize a matter which escaped any consistent frame.' Nevertheless, he himself adopted the framework imposed on Bhutanese history by this work in discussing 'the succession and approximate chronology of the heads of the Bhutanese state,' and the whole matter of the *Zhabs-drung's* 'retreat' escaped his careful reading of the three Bhutanese sources available to him. This has tended towards a rather distorted picture of the period. In every other respect his paper has been invaluable to the present study, particularly in its meticulous approach to chronology.
3. See f. 19b of the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal mtshan by Shākya Rin-chen; also Note 25 above, and Petech 1972a:205 Note 12.
4. See f. 109a of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub; also Petech loc. cit.
5. My translation of the French rendering by A. Macdonald (1977:136).
6. See particularly Shakabpa 1976:463.
7. In the following paragraphs I do not supply references to the original sources in dealing with the succession and rules of the first incumbents to the position of '*Brug sDe-srid*, except where my findings add to the picture afforded by Petech in his major article (1972a) which was based mainly on the evidence of LCB I, *MBTJ*, the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (his abbreviation *TSM*), and a few other Tibetan, Bhutanese and Chinese works.
8. See *Dukula*, Vol. *Ka*, f. 156a-b; partly reproduced in Shakabpa 1976:443-4.
9. See f. 18a et seq; also Note 51 thereto.
10. See f. 131a of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub; also LCB I, f. 56a.
11. See Shakabpa 1976:447-8.
12. See f. 98b et seq. of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas by Ngag-dbang lHun-grub. In LCB I (ff. 51b-52a) the invasion of 1657 is totally confused with this one of 1676.
13. The latter official, the *sDe-pa sKyid-shod-pa*, is referred to as a mediator in the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas (f. 107b), but appears in the source used by Shakabpa (1976:448) as a Tibetan negotiator.
14. See f. 109b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas.
15. *Slob-dpon* Padma-lags informs me that this tradition is found in the biography of Ngag-dbang rGyal-mtshan. I do not have this work to hand.

16. The long passage (f. 129a-b) is so crucial to the issue of the 'retreat' that it merits quotation in full:  
*/ gzhan-yang skabs de-dag-gi tshe / sngon zhabs-drung rin-po-che sku-mtshams rdo-rje'i sgo-glegs 'dzugs-pa'i skabs / thugs zag-pa med-pa'i ye-shes bde-ba chen-po zung-'jug rab-tu mi-gnas-pa'i dbyings / ting-nge-'dzin-gyi sgo rgya-mtsho lta-bu-la snyoms-par 'jug-pa mnyam-gzhag 'od-gsal chen-po'i ngang-las g.yo-ba med-par bzhugs-ring-nas / ye-shes brtse-ba chen-po'i rang-gzugs chu-zla'i rol-gar-bzhin 'char-bas / 'phrin-las 'ga'-zhig-gi dbang-las re-zhig sprul-pa'i zla-zhal 'gos-yul-gyi phyogs lho-bod mtshams-kyi yul-gru zhig-tu tshes-pa 'brug-gzhung-nas thugs-khur bzhes / zab-khog-nas gdan-'dren-gyi sta-dgon bgyid-pa-yin-yang / dge-'brug chags-sdang-gi dbang-las bod-gzhung-du thal-ba bya-thabs med-pa'i gnas-skabs-la thug / de-rjes rin-po-che ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin rab-rgyas khri-thog-tu phebs-pa'i zhal-snga-nas / thabs-mkhas-kyi mdzad-pa ji-ltar rtsom-yang gdan ma-'drongs / mthar rgya-nag-tu phebs-pa sogs 'phrin-las cung-zad bskyangs-nas sprul-pa'i dkyil-'khor gtor /*
17. There is a reference to bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas making offerings to the *Zhabs-drung's* corpse (*gong-sa mchog-gi sku-gdung*) on f. 316a.
18. See Note 26 to Chapter 2 above.
19. On f. 304b of the biography of bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas we find Sa-ga requesting the *Zhabs-drung* for a bead from his rosary; bsTan-'dzin Rab-rgyas wanted one as a charm to cure his illness. See also Note 26 to Chapter 2 above.
20. See ff. 32b-33a of the biography of Dam-chos Pad-dkar by Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan; also *LCB I*, f. 61b.
21. */ don-du bstan-pa gdung-gis 'dzin-pa-bas sprul-pa kho-nas 'dzin-pa dga'-bar 'dug snyam-ste /*
22. See Note 9 to the *Lo-rgyus* below on the alleged ancestry of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan.
23. See f. 31b of the biography of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan by Shākya Rin-chen.
24. *Op. cit.*, f. 45b.
25. See Note 6 to Chapter 2 above.

## NOTES: PART FOUR

1. See *LCB* I, f. 66b. The 'prophecy' which justified this doctrine is said to have been revealed by Padmasambhava to a certain *gTer-ston* dPag-bsam-pa during the reign of one *sDe-pa* [= *sDe-srid*] dGe-khri. The latter can perhaps be identified with Ngag-dbang rGya-mtsho, the 9th *sDe-srid* (Regn. 1719-29), often referred to as *sDe-pa dGe-bshes*.
2. On the circumstances of Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan's death, see f. 114b et seq. of his *nam-thar* by Shākya Rin-chen.
3. On Lajang's invasion see *MBTJ*, ff. 101a-112a; also Petech 1972b:29-30.
4. See Petech 1972b:161-4; also *MBTJ*, ff. 345a et seq.
5. The following account is based on ff. 24b-39b of the *nam-thar* of Ngag-dbang Pad-dkar by Shākya bsTan-'dzin; also f. 17b-23a of the *nam-thar* of Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal by Shākya Rin-chen; and ff. 72a-97b of the *nam-thar* of Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las by Shākya Rin-chen.
6. See ff. 51b-68a of the *nam-thar* of Mi-pham dBang-po by Shākya Rin-chen.
7. See ff. 127a-128-131a of the *nam-thar* of Ngag-dbang 'Phrin-las by Shākya Rin-chen.
8. See ff. 39b-40a of the *nam-thar* of Ngag-dbang Pad-dkar by Shākya bsTan-'dzin; also ff. 123a-124a of *LCB* II.
9. See Appendix.
10. See ff. 41a-44a and 89b-91a.

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## PART FIVE

(Optional Microfiche supplement. This consists of 3 microfiches containing the texts listed below in transcription and translation. If you require these please write to the Publishers).

1. *rGyal-rigs 'byung-khungs gsal-ba'i sgron-me* (1728)
2. *Lo-rgyus gsal-ba'i me-long*
3. *bKa'-khrims* (1729)
4. The *Relacao* of Cacella (1627)

Glossary

See pp. xxviii – xxxiii of the Introduction for the background to these texts.

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□ rdzong (only the major fortresses built in the period 1629-c.1655 are included)

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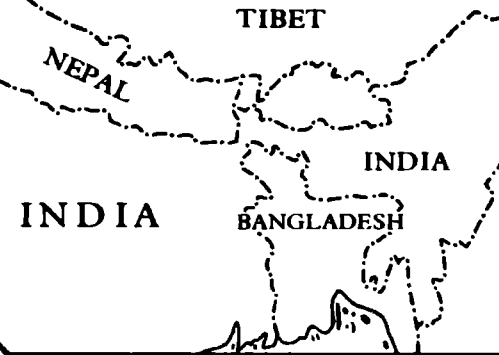
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G T S A N G

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CHUMBI VALLEY  
GRO-MO

S I K K I M

Phag-ri rDzong

Gling-bzhi  
g.Yul-rgyal rDzong

mGar-sa bKra-shis  
mThong-smön rDzong

bKra-shis-chos  
rDzong

Rin-spungs  
zDzong

DAR-DKAR-NANG

bKra-shis  
Yang-rtse rDzong

SPU-NA-KHA

THIM-PU

sPung-thang  
rDzong

Srin-mo-rdo-kha  
gSang-sngags Zab-don rDzong

dBang-'dus  
Pho-brang rDzong

SHAR KRONG-SA

Mang-sde-chu

MANG-SDE  
K H E N G

GZHONG-SGAR

SKUR - STOD

lHun-rtse rDzong

Yang-rtse rDzong

Bya-dkar rDzong

BUM - THANG  
Chos-'khor  
Rab-rtse rDzong

sKur-mu-chu

Grang-ma'i-chu

mTsho-sna rDzong

rTa-wang rDzong

rTa-wang-chu

sGam-ri-chu

bKra-shis-sgang rDzong

Disputed

M O N - A - D U L - K A M E N G

B E N G A L D U A R S

A S S A M D U A R S

Miles

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