

Lands and Places of Milarepa

by PETER AUFSCHNAITER

Milarepa despised, and warned of, worldliness: a house, clothes, good food, family life, social standing — for himself and others. But he allowed himself and his fellow men to love nature, the beauty of the highland: he did not say not to love the blue sky, the flower, the bird in the tree, and so many of the places mentioned in his life story and in the legends have a personal touch about them.

The English translations, of the *Namthar* by Dawa Samdup of Sikkim, and now of the *Gurbum*, for the first time complete, by Garma Chang, find an ever increasing circle of readers, especially since they have become available in pocket editions. Their purpose was mainly to convey to Western readers the religious and spiritual content of these books, while other details, such as folklore and geography, remained rather marginal. In Tibet, where these books on Milarepa were the most popular reading matter, the religious aspect was no doubt important in producing this popularity. A special attraction, however, for Tibetans, lay in the picture of everyday life as reflected in them which, although referring to a thousand years back, was so strikingly similar to that of their own days, until quite recently. The realism of these books was further enhanced for them in an important way by the large number of geographical names, many of which were known to everybody.

The *Namthar* deals with Milarepa's earlier life, while episodes of his later life are merely listed there. In the *Gurbum* the sites of the legends, with few exceptions, are all not far from his native land. When, for the first time, a piece of Milarepa's text was published, by Jaeschke, just over a hundred years ago, very little was known of the geography of Tibet and in particular of the lands forming the background of Milarepa's life. The only guess the translator could then make, based on animals and plants mentioned, was that it was a place not typical of the Tibetan highland, but rather of a lower Himalayan valley, in which he was of course right. Other translators that followed in years much later than Jaeschke had a much better starting point, but just for the regions which are of interest in this connection, there still remain some uncertain points. Much detail, however, has come to light in recent years as a result of the publication of mK'yen rtse's guide, by Ferrari and Petech, and the *'dzam gling rgyas bśad* by Wylie, but above all from the encyclopaedic work of Prof. Tucci.

(*) The following abbreviations have been used: DS = Dawa Samdup's translation of the *Namthar*, ed. by EVANS-WENTZ, also as Oxford University Press paperback, 1969; GB = the

Gurbum, transl. by GARMA CHANG, also as pocket edition; DT = *The Blue Annals*, transl. by G. DE ROERICH.

Both Dawa Samdup and other translators of Milarepa have to some extent obscured the geographical data by translating names whenever they thought fit. In fact, such names, in books, may be in many cases nothing but a phonetic rendering, while the original meaning is lost in the hoary past. To quote only one example: a village in western Tibet usually marked as Tadum on maps is officially written as *skra bdun*. On the other hand, the name of this village, or rather its *gonpa*, occurs in the list of monasteries founded by Srongtsan Gampo as *bra dum rtse*, which agrees with the actual pronunciation even today. Yet those fond of translating such names would render it — in this case correctly — as ‘seven hairs’. Such translated names also tend to hide their geographical identity. There are of course many exceptions, where the indication of the meaning is desirable, e.g. for the high-sounding names of the caves which Milarepa chose for his meditation.

The present notes are based on journeys to and in some of the areas, where places connected with the name of Milarepa were by chance found to exist. In a few cases journeys were undertaken for the purpose of seeing such a place. On such occasions information was obtained on the spot and from pilgrims’s guide books. The result cannot be a final study, but only a contribution to a subject which so far has been neglected.

To come now to the names of places in detail, they will be arranged in the following order regionally: 1) Gungthang and Mangyul; 2) Nyanang; 3) Labchi and Chhubar.

These are the regions where the largest number of names occur, including some important places in Nepal. Other regions are Lhokha and Lhobrag, and Purang, which however will not be treated here. Besides, there are some places along routes on which Milarepa travelled on the way to distant areas.

Gungthang and Mangyul (figs. 1, 2)

Like some other rivers of Nepal the Trisuli river, a major tributary of the Gandaki, has its sources quite far up in Tibet. The river basin formed in this way, inside Tibet, includes the districts of Gungthang and Mangyul. The chief place of Gungthang is Dzongga *rdzoi dga*, that of Mangyul is Kyirong.

It is near Dzongga that Milarepa was born at a place which is now called Tsalung; in the *Namthar* the place is called *skya rna rtse*, or *rtse*. The main river enters a deep rocky gorge not far down from Dzongga, and the first valley on the left (east) is Tsalung. There is only one village consisting of two groups of houses at the same level, altogether about eight houses, surrounded by fields, at an altitude of 4300 m. Just above the village there are some ruins of a house on a small hill rising in the middle of the valley. Below the village the valley falls away at a steeper rate on its way to the main river. Above the village the valley forms a wide, flat basin where there are some high snow-covered peaks standing to the south and east; one of them, in the south, is about 6700 m. high. Several glaciers of which one is quite a large one, come down from these snowy mountains.

As a true offspring of drogpa ancestry, Milarepa’s father mentions this *p’u* as number

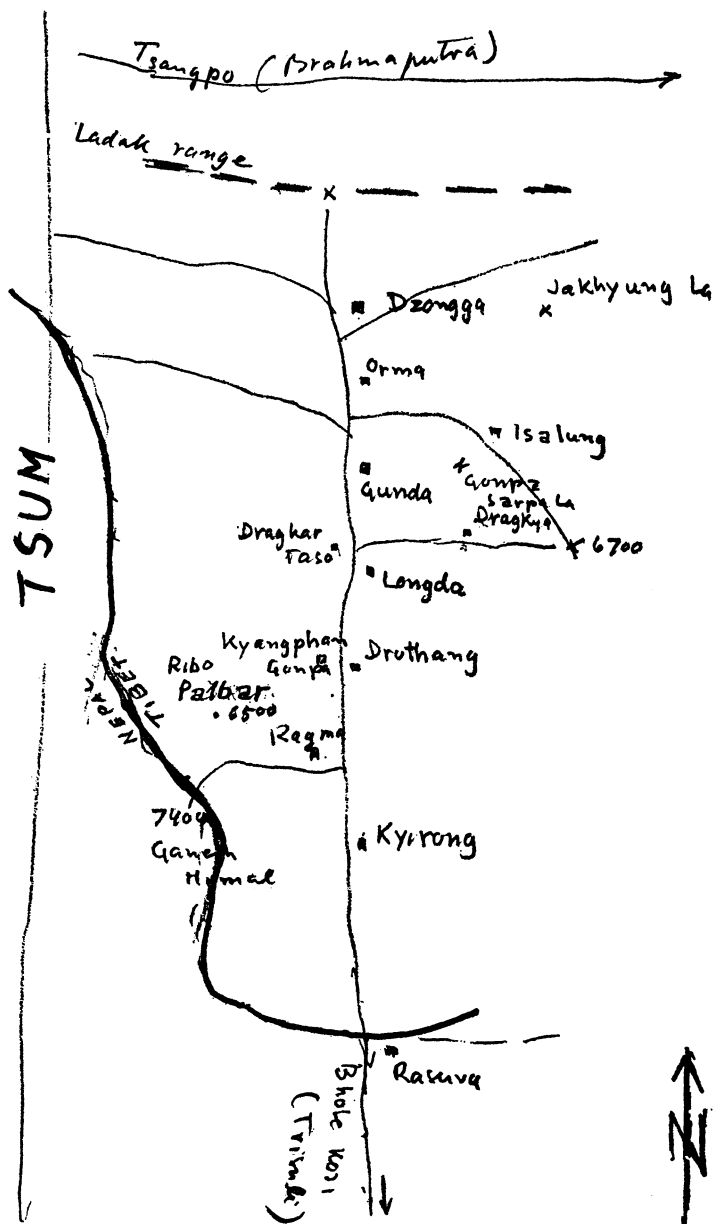


Fig. 1 - Sketch map of the Trisuli basin south of Dzongga (districts of Gungthang and Mangyul).

one in his last will: *nai p'u na nor gnag rta lug gsum*, « in the upper part of the valley my animal property of yaks, horses and sheep ». DS here has « cattle » for *gnag*, which here means 'yak'; with the Sherpas of Khumbu, south of Mt Everest, *nak* is the yak-cow, which is otherwise 'abri(-mo).

The next thing to be mentioned in his will are, of course, in the lower part of the valley (*mda*) the fields around the village of Tsa, but « foremost » the field called *or ma gru gsum* which first belonged to a man from Orma « a village in the neighbourhood of Tsa », from whom he had bought it. Orma is a small village at the entrance to the gorge in the main valley. A short distance below the village of Tsa is a *chorten*, which is the only religious monument left in this area.

The main approach to Tsalung is from Gunda, a village in the main valley, leading from the southwest over a pass called Gonpa Sarpa La. There are many houses along this road — thirty or more — of a peculiar form, like towers, all in ruins. Also a large building, with three very large *chortens* which are heaps of rubble, is visible near the pass on its south side. It is possible that this was the “new monastery” from which the pass got its name.

In DT the place where Milarepa’s father, after having come from *gcuñ*, settled down and where Milarepa was born, is recorded as *ko ron sa*. This word occurs in the *Namthar: yul skya rña rtsa yi ko ron na*. (DS has: « in the wretched glen of Tsa »).

The next village, following the river downstream from Gunda, is *gloñ mda*. There, high up in the rocks of the steep hillside, is *brag dkar rta so*, the most important place in the later life history of Milarepa, where he spent nine or, according to others, twelve years in continuous meditation beginning from 1083, when he was 43 years old. There are quite heavy building constructions set on and into the rocks. The building most highly praised in the first place is that which is called *dbu ma rdzoñ* and stands on an airy rock shelf. The *grub p’ug* is a large cave in the rock wall and is reached by a tall ladder ⁽¹⁾. Near Longda is the cave of *liñ ba brag (dmar rdzoñ)*.

Dragkar Taso is at a height of about 3600 m. A little above Longda a side valley comes into the main valley from the east where, at the foot of the great snow-capped mountain of Tsalung, on its southwest side, is the monastery on the site of the important cave of Milarepa, whose name is *brag skya rdo rje rdzoñ*, but which is usually called Dragkya Gunpa.

Following the valley southwards one comes to the small plain of *gro t’an* in the midst of dark forests that cover the steep hillside. Just opposite the village across the river on the outer bastions of the snow-covered mountain *ri bo dpal ’abar*, is the cave *skyañ p’an nam mk’a rdzoñ*, where the demon king of Drothang *gro t’an rgyal po* appeared to Milarepa. There is a small temple near the cave, high above the valley where, as he says in his song, far down the blue river flows — *gtsañ c’ab sñon mo* (= *gtsañ c’u*, with the hon. *c’ab* instead of *c’u*).

Then, after a short walk further south, a side valley is reached on the right, rather flat and wide but short. Here is situated *rag ma*, a fairly large village, at the foot of the immense rock walls rising up to the summit of Ribo Palbar, which dominates the valley of Kyirong to the south. At about 3000 m., this is the lowest of the places visited by Milarepa in the district of Mangyul. About 150 m. higher in the rocks is the cave *byañ c’ub rdzoñ*, where at the request of the villagers of Ragma, when they visited him in this cave, he composed the song in praise of their land, beginning with the line *p’u na lha btsan gañs dkar mt’o*. This snow-covered mountain is Ganesh Himal, 7400 m. high, on the Nepal border. On the flat floor of the valley there are recognizable the black forest and the water pools which are also mentioned in the song. The place is marked by *darchog* flags. (A little further up the Ragma valley on the same mountain slope is the famous Palbar Gonpa, which is dedicated to the memory of Padmasambhava).

(1) In the *Namthar* the name *brag dkar rta so dbu ma rdzoñ* applies to the cave.

From Ragma to the south extends the Kyirong valley. The town of Kyirong is scarcely mentioned, but there is *skyid groñ ts'oñ 'adus* (market place) from where those rough-tempered hunters came and visited the hermit in his cave at Dragkar Taso. Kyirong town is the main market place for Nepal-Tibet barter trade; there is also the small village of Tsongdü. Other allusions are: « in a village » — *groñ k'yer žig na* — in « Mangyul-Kyirong », i.e. the Kyirong valley. In the *Gurbum* high praise is given to *'ap'ags pa wa ti bzaiñ po*, which in conjunction with other places of pilgrimage — Lhasa etc. — are possibly later additions by widely travelled yogis. The *'ap'ags pa* Gonpa of Kyirong which belonged to the order of the gelugpa, and contained the “jo bo”, is the only important building of Tibet in the pagoda style of Nepal.

From Kyirong, at 2700 m., the river descends more steeply until at Rasuva Garhi, where it crosses the Nepal border, the height is only 1600 m. In the villages of the adjoining part of Nepal the people are still the same and speak also the same dialect of Tibetan, many features of which are recognizable in Milarepa's language. In Nepal the river becomes the Bhote Kosi, and after a short distance it gets its final name of Trisuli or Trisuli Ganga, from a small stream coming from the holy lake of Gosainkund.

A few days march further down this valley is the small Newar town Trisuli Bazar called Chumshe by Tibetans. At 500 m. this is probably the lowest place ever reached by Milarepa. There, high up on a ridge, are the buildings of Nawakot (seat of district government, until 1971), which in Tibetan is called *bal po rdzoñ*. In coming to this place he followed an invitation of an Indian yogi, Dharma Bodhi. According to the *Gurbum* he accepted the invitation only after some hesitation. In the *Namthar*, however, there is another version of this meeting, according to which it was the Indian yogi who on his part went to see the Tibetan hermit at Nyanang ⁽²⁾.

There is another place in this area of Nepal which Milarepa liked to visit. Turning away from the Trisuli valley higher up, and crossing the high Gosainkund ridge, he came to Yolmo. In the list of his meditation places that of *yol mo gans ra* ranks high. This is the cave of *stag p'ug sen ge rdzoñ* in the “Sengala forest”. There is still a fairly dense forest around it on a steep slope, at about 2000 m. altitude. Helmu — the Nepali name, also Helambu — is a small valley region on the south side of a snowy range, only about three days' march north of Kathmandu. The cave is a little below the villages. There is a hut built in front of the cave and well maintained; the cave is facing north, its ceiling is rather low and there are a few statues, two of which are of Milarepa. There was a Khampa lama there at the time when I visited this place some years ago. A *dākinī* — *yol mo gži bdag mo* — is mentioned as one of the followers of *ts'e riñ ma*, in the *Gurbum*.

From Trisuli the next valley to the west is that of the river Buri Gandaki — or Buri Ganga — in Nepal where there is another place preserving the memory of Milarepa, high up

⁽²⁾ According to DS, p. 241. The text however says that the meeting took place at Balpo

Dzong (... *dha rma bo dhi daiñ bal po rdzoñ du mjal*).

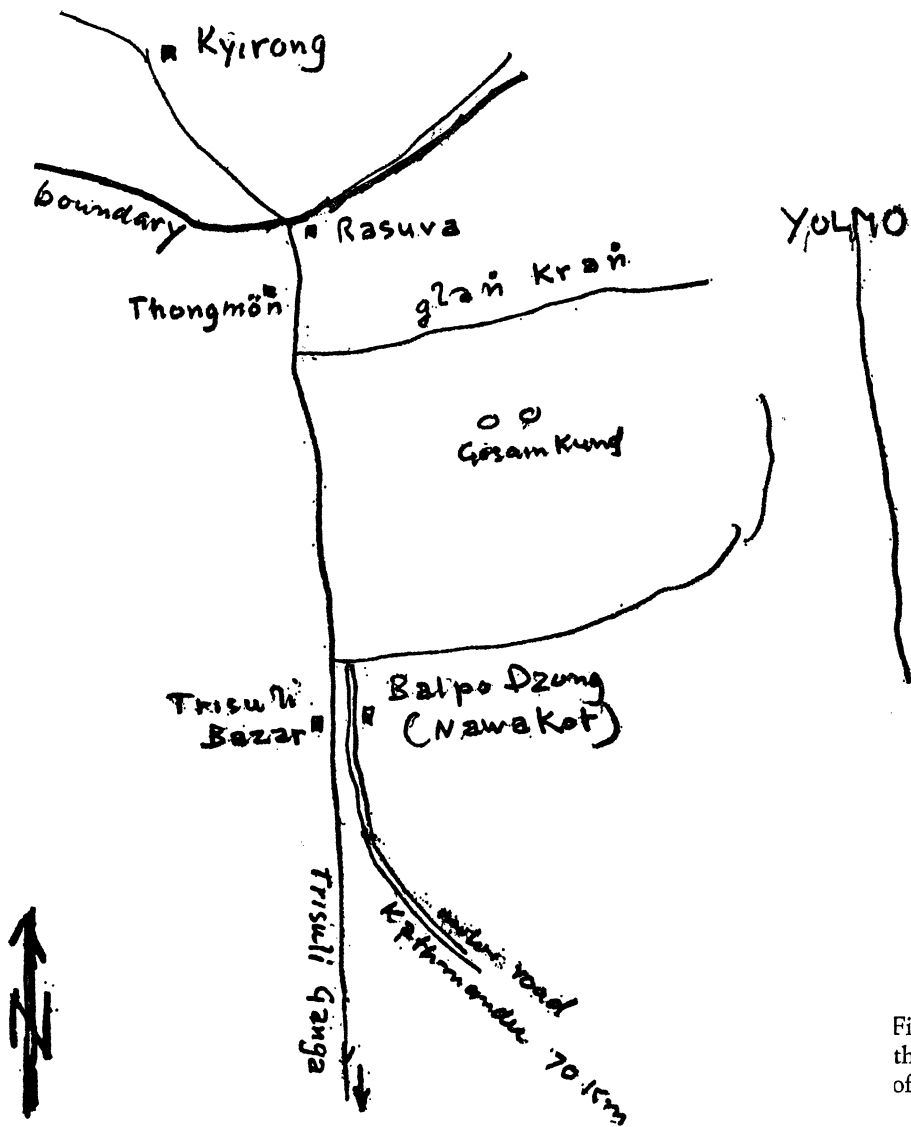


Fig. 2 - Sketch map of the Trisuli basin south of Kyrong (Nepalese territory).

near the Tibetan border. In its upper course the valley has two branches; the western one is Nubri, the eastern one Tsum Kuthang (Shiar Khola on the map) which in Milarepa's time was part of *bod* — Tibet — as is stated once in the *Namthar*. Now Kuthang, including Tsum and Nubri, is part of Nepal. At the main place of Tsum there is still an old house, in ruins, called Dzong. A little higher up the valley above Ngaggyü, an important place for barter trade, is the cave of Milarepa, *p'u ron p'ug*, which is high up in the rocks on the right-hand slope of the valley. There is a small monastery building beside the cave built into the rock, but without much decoration inside (when I saw it about 20 years ago). There are *darchog* flags, and a number of *chortens* made of earth, hollowed out by wasps. This cave of the pigeons is quite near to Dragkar Taso, the latter being on the other side of the frontier pass Mun La Dragchen.

From the village of Larkia (Pabuk) in Nubri a road leads over a high pass to the next

valley to the west, that of the Marsyandi river. There is the valley region called Manang in Nepali and on maps, while the people themselves call it Nyishang — *sñi šan*. It is usually held to be an area of Bhote (Bhotia), Tibetan-speaking people, hence Manang-bhot on the map. The people of Nyishang are like Tibetans in nearly everything, clothes, food, religion, and they speak Tibetan, perhaps all of them, but the language they speak amongst themselves is one of the Tibeto-Burman or Himalayan languages, similar to Gurung (from which they say it differs), Magar etc. This fact is indicated by the old Tibetan designation — *mon sñi šan* — as in the *Gurbum*. In Nyishang there is another cave of Milarepa, although the people there rather prefer to call it the cave of Gonpo Dorje who was one of themselves, a hunter who was converted to Buddhism by Milarepa when he met him in that cave while on a hunting expedition. It seems that the names of the place as given in the *Gurbum*, *gu rta*, and of the cave *ka tya* are not known to many people nowadays. The cave is quite high up on the right side of the valley, at about 4000 m., below the ice walls of the Annapurna range, just above the tree line; there are some groves nearby. (I have seen this place in the winter in deep snow, it is a north-facing slope). It is not originally a cave, but only an overhanging rock. A tiny hut has been built against the rock, there are *darchog* flags and flower offerings by pilgrims, and a large wooden plank (which it is to be hoped will remain there for ever) with paintings, scenes of Milarepa's life, including the monkeys and the *mi dred*. In the rocks above the cave are hanging the bow and arrows of *mgon po rdo rje* who afterwards became one of Milarepa's disciples under the name of *k'yi ra ras pa*. There is a hut for pilgrims and a stone with foot prints — *žabs rje*.

Returning to Tibet we come once more to Gungthang, which is sometimes also called Mangyul-Gungthang; another name is *mña ris guñ t'an*. The name of Dzongga is not mentioned in the Milarepa books; the high mud wall from which this name is derived did not exist in the 11th century. But in the *Gurbum* it is said once that Milarepa once came to *k'ab guñ t'an* the 'court' or 'residence' of Gungthang. Although there are many ruins around Dzongga, it is likely that at the site of Dzongga itself was the residence of the former kings of this branch of the West Tibetan kingdom (e.g. monk-king byañ c'ub 'od, who had invited Atisha). It is on the only comparatively large plain of the area which from the beginning would invite settlement on a larger scale. The same name, as *guñ t'an K'ab*, is mentioned as the birth place of Rechhungpa (DT). Not far from Dzongga are the caves of *za 'og p'ug* of Rala and *'od gsal p'ug* of Ron-phu.

An important caravan road leads from Dzongga to the east, ascending to the pass Jakhyung La (5180 m.). It is the pass called *dpal k'un la* by Milarepa, when he crossed it on his way to the plain of the same name, *dpal k'un t'an* (also *dpal than* and *dpal mo dpal t'an*). This extensive plain spreads out on the southeast side of the lake Pelgu Tsho, as it is called on maps. Its very large size has definitely become known only during the last few years, on American maps from satellite surveys. Its size and outline were shown approximately on old Chinese maps (18th century) and details given in descriptions as recorded in China. Both sources also gave already the correct name of this lake in varying form according to the translator e.g. Lamdsou shimdsou, *bla mts'o ži mts'o*. I have heard this name only

locally in the vicinity of the lake, otherwise it is simply called Pelgu Tsho (*dpal k'un*, also *k'ud*). This double name has its origin in the narrowing of the coast lines near the middle of its north-south extension, as a sort of a neck, which may have suggested the idea of the two lakes. The altitude of the lake is 4550 m. In the *Gurbum* this lake is called *dpal t'an mts'o*.

It is near the eastern shore of this lake where the monastery, *la p'ug dgon pa*, stands on the site of Milarepa's cave *la p'ug pad ma rdzon* ⁽³⁾, at the foot of vertical cliffs, at the "neck" of the shore line. On the opposite cape is a large *chorten*, also on the north side 30 km. away, as seen from the south, is a *chorten*. There is another cave in this area, *sbas p'ug ma mo rdzon*, the "hidden cave" of *lug rdzi ras pa*.

Going further east in this region — the drogpa region of Porong — one comes to the village of Betse — *beg rtse* — at the foot of a small hill rising out of the wide plains; there is the cave *'adod yon rdzon*, and a *gonpa* on the hill.

Nyanang (fig. 3)

From Porong one can reach over level ground and over an easy pass — leaving to the right the great mountain Shisha Pangama, more than 8000 m. high — the upper course of the Sun Kosi river, but at a point still quite far up in Tibet. On this route Milarepa must have travelled many times. In the upper part of the main valley there is a side valley with a small village called Lashing — *la žin* or *las žin* — where Milarepa stayed sometimes. There is a monastery of this name (nunnery).

Following the main valley to the south, we come to Nyanang, a small town, which is more frequently mentioned in these books than any other place, but with reference rather to its people, who seem to have been nearer to his heart than those of any other place, and who believed blindly in him. It is here in the cave of *grod p'ug* that Milarepa told his life story to a large audience of his followers at the request of Rechhungpa. Nyanang is situated on a terrace, and one has to descend to the river and cross over the bridge to reach this holy place which now is called Phugdrö. There is a small monastery by the side of the large cave which is on the south-facing slope of a small secondary valley on the left side of the main river. Nyanang (in Lhasa and on maps usually «Nyalam») — *gñā nani* — is called Kuti in Nepali, meaning cottage or hermitage, referring originally to this hermitage of Milarepa. About half of the population are shaktsa (Tibetan mother, Nepali

(3) In the list of places of meditation, in the *Namthar*, all the names end in the word *rdzon*. All the places were rock caves, high above the valley, and in this respect comparable to a "castle". The use in this sense could be ironic, and it may imply the meaning of a firm place of meditation. The classification of the caves

under different headings is at least partly regional, in that all the *rdzon* of the group "p'yi rdzon" are in Mangyul-Gungthang, the second, "nañ gi rdzon", are in an eastern direction, mainly Chhubar, the rest, secret caves etc., are in different areas. The list of the *Namthar* is not complete.

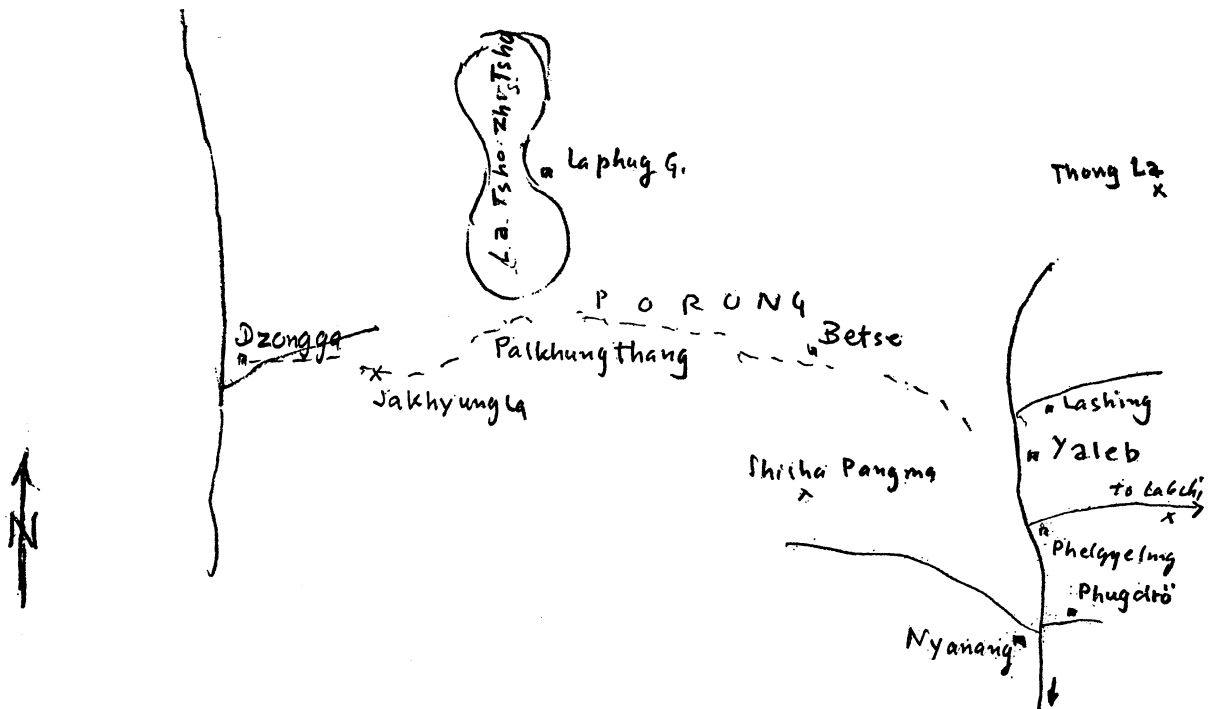


Fig. 3 - Sketch map of Porong and the upper Sun Kosi basin.

father). According to some traditions there are also places to the south, *gñā nan smad*, mentioned in connection with Milarepa, but there seems to be no confirmation of this.

Labchi (fig. 4)

A few kilometres upwards again from Nyanang, past the village of Amorog, is Phelgyeling — *ge lug pa* — the largest and most influential monastery of the region of Nyanang. Near this place a road or path branches off to the east, crossing a high snow range, over a snow pass, sometimes called Labchi Kang La, but the people call it Sulumi Kang La. Descending one comes to the region of Labchi, which again is at the head of a river flowing down to Nepal, where it is first called Bhote Kose, and finally Tamba Kosi. In this region there are snow mountains in nearly every direction, hence its name Labchi Kangra — *la p'yi gans keyi ra ba*. To the north the range extends northwards as far as the Thong La, while on the south side is the main Himalayan range with the great Gaurisankar massif rising out of the deep-cut gorge-like valleys. In Tibetan books the whole area is called *'abrog la p'yi* comprising also the large eastern side valley which is now called Rongshar.

The river of Labchi proper has two head branches, at whose confluence is the chief monastery, the full name of which is *la p'yi 'i c'os ra 'ap'el rgyas gliñ*, usually Labchi Gonpa, with several buildings and a large *lhakhang* containing many statues — now removed to a southern place — and wall paintings. There were only a few monks at the time when I saw

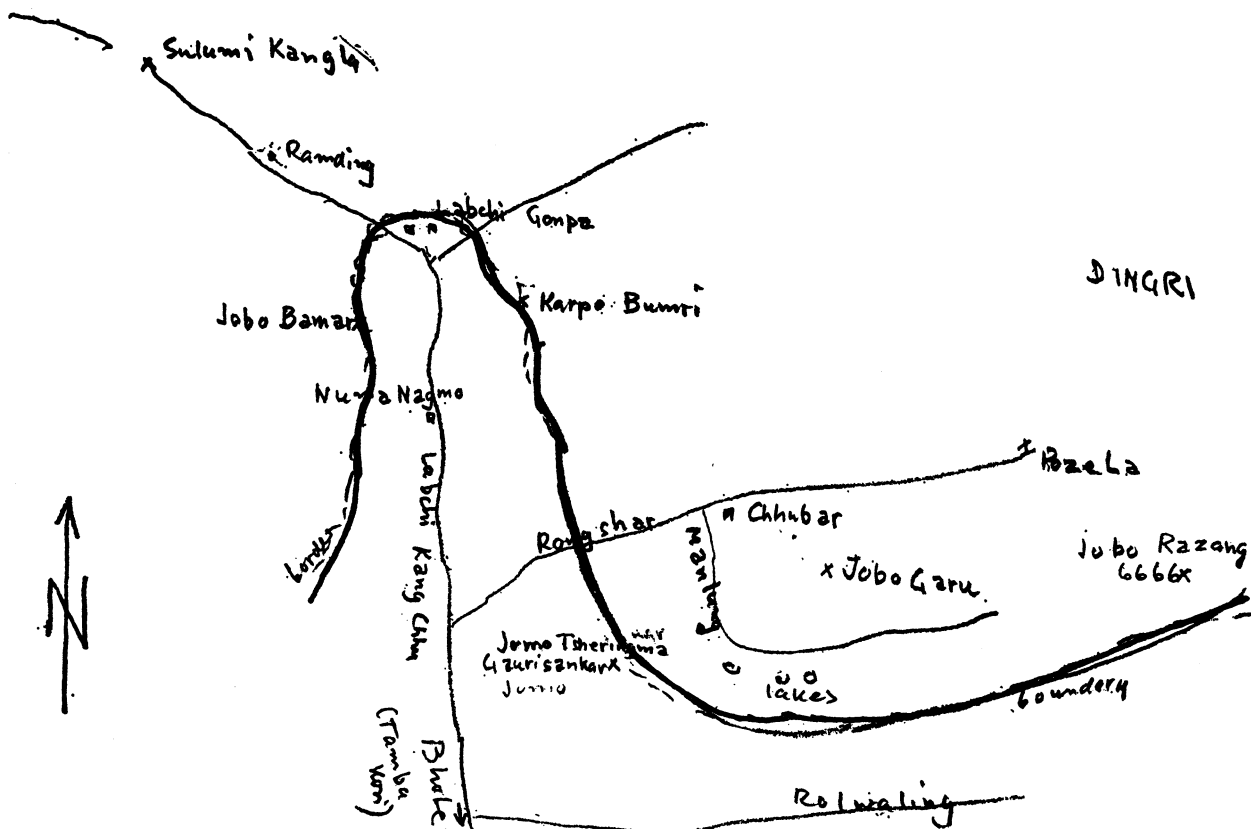


Fig. 4 - Sketch map of Labchi and Rongshar.

it some years ago. A short distance above, at the foot of a rock slope, is the large cave of *bdud 'adul p'ug mo c'e*, with the small *grub p'ug*. There was one lama, who lives there in near-darkness during the summer.

There is a small path leading up the rock slope to a smaller *gonpa*, called *Rechhen — ras c'en* — then higher up a *chorten — thongdrol* — and then finally another temple *Sebug — ze p'ug* — at the foot of a massive rock wall, and a much decorated spring nearby.

Every Tibetan knows the name of Labchi and would think it to be part of Tibet. But Labchi Gonpa is in Nepal, although the new boundary stones are very near the building. Also the summer village near the monastery is in Nepal; it is visited by the people of the village of Numa Nagmo (*nags mo* in the *Gurbum*). Both the upper valleys are in Tibet. In the western valley is the cave of *nam p'ug* of Ramding. Another cave is just below the *gonpa*, *sñan yon*. It will be recalled that it was here where Milarepa spent a whole winter in the cave *Düdulphug*, in one of the most famous stories. It seems to be a place of really heavy snowfalls. A lama who used to stay in the *gonpa* alone over the winter told me that the snow reaches sometimes up to the *darchog*.

In a book *Lhasa and Its Mysteries* (1905), Colonel Waddell, author of the fundamental book on Lamaism, has published a map « drawn by a Tibetan » with an English transcription of the names, to which he gave the title « Tibetan map of Mt Everest ». This map, a free-

hand drawing, which in itself is good and interesting, has become the source of a mistake which has been repeated many times, in that Labchi was taken as being equivalent to or indeed the same as Mount Everest, while it is really a map of Labchi and Rongshar (there are errors of spelling in the map, e.g., *la skyid* instead of *la p'yi*).

Near Labchi Gonpa, to the southeast, is a snow-capped peak called *dkar po 'abum ri*. There is also a yellow peak (southwest), a black one (northwest) and a blue one — *snon po 'abum ri* (northeast). These mountains are represented on the above-mentioned Tibetan picture map.

Rongshar (fig. 4)

Some of the geography of Rongshar-Chhubar can be gleaned from this map. It is to be noted that Rongshar is Chinese territory. A route leads from Labchi to Rongshar over a high pass, or along a valley and over a mountain shoulder, to bypass the gorges of the lower Rongshar valley. Rongshar is the modern name, the old name under which it is mentioned in the *Namthar* and the *Gurbum*, is Drin — *brin*. In the pilgrim's guide it is said that the lowest 'abrog — 'abrog *sma šod* — in Drin is *sman lui*: 'abrog means that there is no field cultivation (as in Labchi). Chhubar is usually called *sman lui c'u dbar*. There is a side valley *sman lui* which comes from the Gaurisankar range to the south, joining the main valley of Rongshar — Drin — near Chhubar. In the *Gurbum* this valley is exceptionally praised for its beauty; there are even the names of some flowers mentioned.

In Chhubar is the cave *k'yuñ sgon p'ug*, which was the main dwelling cave — *gzim p'ug* — of Milarepa in this area. At the same place is *c'u dbar sprul skui p'o bran*, the most important temple, and there is also a *he ru kai p'o bran* which is probably from *gtsan smyon*. Chhubar in particular, but also Labchi, were under the special attention and protection — like many other holy places in "Tö", Western Tibet — of the Drikhungpa, Phagmodruba and others, and also of the *nam mk'a bkod pai dga' ldan p'o bran* (the central government of Lhasa).

In Chhubar the landscape is dominated by the high mountains on its south side rising directly above, foremost Gaurisankar, which by Tibetan-speaking people on both sides of the border is called Jomo Tsheringma. In books this mountain is called *gañs mt'on mt'in rgyal mo* 'a snow triangle reaching up to the sky', where on its left side (*gyon mgul*), is the palace of Tsheringma — *p'o bran* — described as a sort of tent with golden curtains, etc.

There is another mountain there, to the east of and a little higher even than Gaurisankar, which on maps is called Menlungtse. It is called Jobo Garu — *jo bo sga ru* — by the people and known under this name also in some villages in Nepal, while the mountain itself stands in Tibet.

The author of *'dzam gliñ rgyas bšad*, a monk from Amdo, has reported this area from hearsay. It seems that he introduced the name *jo mo gañs dkar* for a mountain in this area, the mountain, as he says, of the goddesses of *ts'e riñ mced lña*. Jomo Gangkar is a mountain

known in all Tibet, even the author of the book himself puts it second in a list after Ti se (Kailas). As far as I know there is only one mountain of this name in Tibet and this is near the southern end of the Nyanchhen-Thanglha range in Central Tibet, about 7000 m. high. This name was shown on Survey of India maps, but in a wrong position, while on the latest American maps it has — temporarily we can assume — disappeared. This is another mistake repeated many times, even in Tibetan books.

In this sector of the Himalaya there are four mountains ranking as “jo bo”, according to the count of local people: in the order from east to west: Jobo Uyog (Cho Oyu), Jobo Razang (seen by Milarepa from the Puse La), both these mountains are to the south of the plain of Dingri near the border of Khumbu (jobo Ra bzañ is in Tibet), Jobo Garu, and Jobo Bamare. Jobo Bamare is the holy mountain of Labchi; it is a snowy peak (5927 m.) to the south of Labchi Gonpa. This name has been shown on maps already, but for a wrong mountain. The Nepali name for Jobo Bamare is said to be Kukuraja.

Also in Chhubar there are many more caves connected with the name of Milarepa, although not all may be authentically so. The most famous one of these is that of *'abri lce p'ug*, where Milarepa died. The name is said to come from a rocky outcrop inside this cave, resembling a yak cow's tongue (if one would leave it at that). Other places near Chhubar are *'om c'un dben pai rdzoñ*, *rkañ t'il rdzoñ*, and others.

In the side valley of Manlung is *dom p'ug*, where Milarepa lived for some time transformed into (*dom du sprul ba*) a bear; near this cave is another one, *sga ru p'ug*, which is the same name as that of the mountain. At a short distance from Dompug — three distances of call, *rgyañ srag* — is one of the four or five holy lakes, *lba mo tad kar bla mts'o* which is the colour of melted butter (*mar gad*), higher up are more of these lakes, *mt'in gi žal bzañ ma* (also one of the five sisters of long life) which is filled with a « fluid as of turquoise or lapis lazuli blue » (*mt'in bžun gi k'u ba ltar*). This lake and other *bla mts'o* in Tibet and Nepal are glacial tarns and mostly at heights around 4000 - 4500 m. Some of these lakes can be seen from a pass, Manlung La, 5616 m., on the border near Rolwaling in Nepal (*).

To the west of Chhubar there is a mountain stream called *ts'e riñ mai gul c'u bo bzañ po*; near this stream is the cave *šel p'ug c'u šiñ rdzoñ*. There is a *jo moi gul c'u* (Gunchhu) also in Rolwaling (Nepal) on the south side of Gaurisankar, where the water disappears for some distance in a vertical rock gully, which is considered to be the “throat” of the “Jomo”.

In chapter 31 of the *Gurbum* five goddesses are mentioned as the nightly visitors of Milarepa in the sprul skui p'o brañ of Chhubar: *bkra šiš ts'e riñ ma*, *la p'yi gañs keyi 'abrog sman zul le ma*, *liñ ba brag gi sman mo*, *bal po lam pai mts'o sman ma*, *yol mo gañs rai gži bdag mo*. Of these all are linked with some place, which we can locate, except the fourth, Tshomanma of Nepal, which belongs to a lake called Bhairav Kund or Tshoman by Tibetans. There is the frontier post of Kodari on the Kathmandu-Lhasa highway, at 1500 m.; above

(*) Part of this area appears, marginally, on a new map, a continuation of the Everest map, by Erwin Schneider.

this place, at over 4000 m., is this lake, with many *darchog* flags, and a stone relief set in the lake (when I saw it some years ago; *lam pa*, 'a frontier post', may in this case indicate the border). Zul le ma was met by Milarepa on the above-mentioned pass of this name. These goddesses are different from the usual retinue of Tsheringma.

Milarepa sometimes went to the « Far North » — the land where the 'abrog pa live in black tents. Of his father it is said that he carried his trading business regularly « in the winter to Nepal in the south — *lho bal*, in the summer to the highland steppe in the north — *byn 'abrog* ». In another passage it is said that he went to *byn stag rtse p'yogs*, which has been translated as « North Chang-Taktshi mountains », while GB says that Milarepa went to the « North Horse Gate snow mountain » for *byan rta sgo gans*. In these two names the word "north" is incorrect. Even to use the word *byan* itself would then sometimes miss the point that a mountain, region, or a place one is going up to is situated in the vast region of the ban byan. In Central Tibet this word is used as a proper name in the same sense as Jangthang in western Tibet for the highland. The above two names would then be « Zagtse region in the Jang », and « Targo Kang in the Jang ». The word "north" would require a south as counterpart, as in the first example, but there is nothing like it for Tagtse and Targo. The word « Jang » has been used on maps sometimes in this sense, but mostly « Changthang » is spaced out over much of the length of northern Tibet. The word Changthang is also used in Himalayan valleys for the Tibetan highland, which looks very flat to the inhabitants of this area.

The traders of Dzongga (Gungthang) went mainly to two regions in the Jang for their salt in exchange for cereals, in a northerly direction to Drabye Tshakha, and to Largyab, an extensive region to the northeast, near the lake Fangra Tsho. Any such journey involved many weeks' or months' absence from home.

The Indian explorer Nain Singh on the map of his journey in 1872-74 in « Great Tibet » has shown « Targot La snowy peaks » on the southwest side of the lake Dangra Tsho, and to the south-west of this range the region « Targot Lhageb ». Sven Hedin has published photographs of Targo Kangri, and gives information about Largyab. Nain Singh has put a monastery, Sashik Gonpa, on his map to the east of the mountains and south of the lake (Sven Hedin: « Särshik ») a Bonpo monastery. The name *rta sgo* is probably only phonetic, there are different forms of spelling. It is certainly of Bonpo origin, like most, if not all, the names in the Jang referring to striking landmarks, such as mountains, as well as lakes, big rivers, etc.

On his journeys in order to find teachers, first of black magic and then of religion, Milarepa came to Tsang and Ü before proceeding to Lhobrag. One of the places mentioned on his way is *gtsan ron nubs k'u lun*; there is a monastery Nub Chhölung on the left side of the Tsangpo at the entrance to the side valley of Nub, between Uyug and Nyemo. Tsang Rong is the Tsangpo valley downstream from about Tag Drukha ferry (Uyug) where the river flows through a gorge and becomes innavigable, as well as the side valley where Rimpung lies. From there he once went to *myan stod ri nan*. In the upper part of Rinang, some distance off the Gyantse - Rong route, is a patch of ruins and caves which could be this place. The

next place below Nub where he crossed the Tsangpo, which is mentioned, is 'at'on lug ra k'a, near the high peaks of Kharag.

About Milarepa's ancestors he says that they came from *dbu ru byañ p'yogs kyi 'abrog sde c'en po žig gi k'rod nas*. This is probably a region in the upper catchment area of the Kyi Chhu to the north of Lhasa, in any case it was a drogpa region. One of this clan emigrated to gtsañ la stod byañ gcuñ ba spyi, which is a region on the Tsangpo; also in the region of Chung (gcuñ or gcuñ pa) is a northern side valley near the entrance of which there is a large mass of ruins. Also in Chung is gad k'a Le gsum which is mentioned in the *Gur-bum*. La stod has a northern and a southern region, and *byañ* and *lho* are sometimes almost an inseparable part of the name as e.g. in *byañ nam rin* or *lho šel dkar*. Milarepa in his later years used to introduce himself to strangers as *guñ t'an mi la ras pa*, but once he said that he had come from *ñi ma la stod* 'the country of la stod'. It may be that in Lhasa and elsewhere the use of the word *Tö* (*stod*) for nearly everything west of Shigatse, has come from *la stod*; there is even Tö-Ngari, Tö-Gar. In Latö-lho is rgyal, a region near Shekar, with rgyal kyi šri ri which is also written as *rtsib-ri*).

In the next region to the west of Latö, the chief place is usually marked as Tingri Dzong on maps. This, however, is Gangkar of Dingri. Dingri is not a *dzong*, Gangkar is a village at the foot of a small hill which rises out of the plain of Dingri, at 4300 m. altitude. The extensive plain is studded with many villages and fields. Dingri is at the crossroads of many traffic routes, that to the west leading to Pelgu Tsho and Dzungga, another to the southwest via Langkor and the Thong La to Nyanang. To the south, in the main range, is the Nangpa La, in Dingri called Khumbui La; the Sherpas there are called Khumpa (Khumbupa). From this route a branch leads westwards over the Puse La (*brin spo ze la*) to Rongshar-Chhubar. From the *spo ze la* (5200 m.) Milarepa saw the snowy mountain *jo bo ra bzai* (6666 m.), in a sort of halo of rainbow colours. It was in Dingri where Milarepa's sister, Peta saw from a distance the Bari Lotsaba, one of the few historical personalities mentioned, a contemporary lama who hailed from Kham and became abbot of Sakya.

On his way to Purang (Manasarovar, Kailas) Milarepa travelled via *glo bo* (Mustang region) where he met one of his disciples *mk'ar c'un ras pa* on or near the height of the pass *glo bo ko re la* (DS has *Lowo Kara La*) which is the pass entered on maps near Mustang. On this journey, before crossing this pass, he stayed for a few days in *glo bo mts'o*. There is no lake in this area, which in the same context is stated to be in *glo bo stod* — upper Lobo. It is the area of Tsoshar. There is a string of villages in this valley, to the east of Mustang, with many ruins as remains and reminders of the past.

It is perhaps as well, before concluding this note, to cast a glance at what Milarepa's land looks like in our own days. Outwardly the most significant change is in transport: where he walked leisurely, sometimes for many days, now motor cars ply along some of his routes. Dzungga and Shekar are on such motor roads, with branch roads down through the gorges to Kyirong and other places. Nyanang is on the Kathmandu-Lhasa highway. The small-scale barter trade across the Nepal-Tibet border is still going on. People go up from Nepal, the Trisuli district, to Kyirong, or from Khumbu to Dingri and further. But Mila-

repa's father in Tsalung would have to make a different plan, for few people there cross the border from the north. Milarepa himself would certainly find the places where he used to stay, the many *rdzoni* which were all in rock, while his own home was already in ruins anyway in his early life. Also the monuments, temples and monasteries might still be there, as buildings. Still, something of his memory must linger on over those valleys and places, where the extraordinary intensity of his mind has caused others to see a new light along the way of their existence.

Editor's note. The death of Dr Aufschnaiter occurred before this article could be published, and the proofs were not able to be revised by him. Any errors are therefore our responsibility. The four sketch maps given as an aid to the description were drawn from memory by the author and are not to scale.