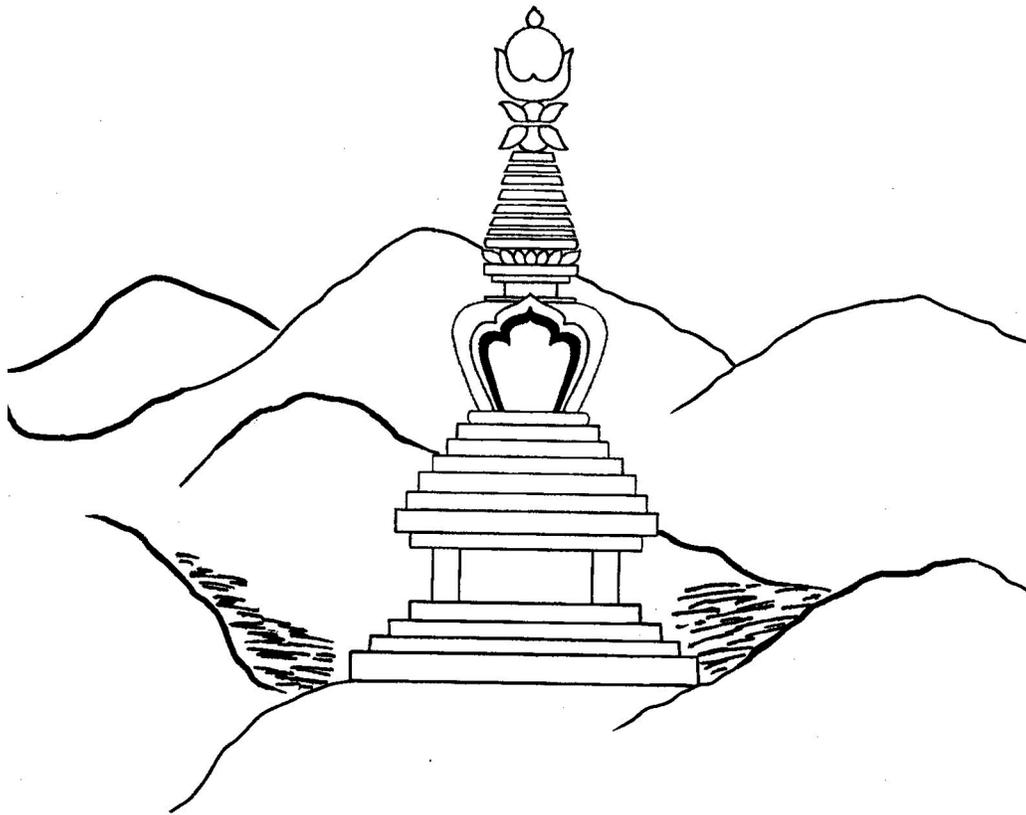


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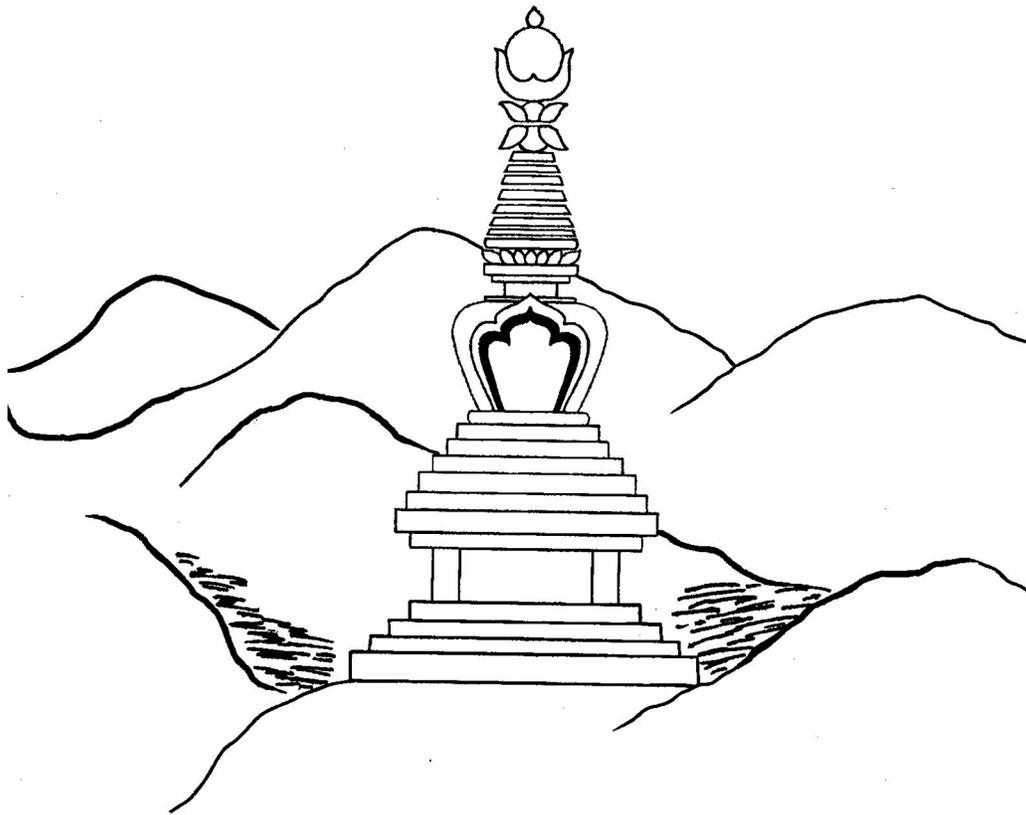
No. 2

NOVEMBER 2005

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

The Bulletin of Tibetology seeks to serve the specialist as well as the general reader with an interest in the field of study. The motif portraying the Stupa on the mountains suggests the dimensions of the field.

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NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
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BULLETIN OF TIBETOLOGY

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TIBETAN LAMAS IN SIKKIM

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA
Research Coordinator
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

THIS ISSUE

In April 2005, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama visited Sikkim and gave rNying ma teachings and initiations in Gangtok. In the course of this visit, Tashi Densapa, director of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, presented the recent issues of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* to His Holiness. The Dalai Lama suggested that future contributions to the Bulletin could document the lives and legacies of those Tibetan lamas who came to Sikkim.

Together with Professor Franz-Karl Ehrhard, we started planning an issue along those lines and a number of scholars came forward with articles that not only documented these religious contributions but also inevitably highlighted the historical relation between Tibet and Sikkim. This issue is the first of two focusing on these religious and historical ties.

The great majority of rNying ma monasteries in Sikkim belong to lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med's lineage of sMin grol gling. Commonly referred to as lHa btsun Chen po, he is considered to have been the chief lama present at the coronation of the first Sikkimese king in the 1640s and has since been revered as the Patron Saint of Sikkim. Consequently, little is known about the contributions of the other two Tibetan lamas present at the first coronation: mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin (1592-1656) and Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin chen po. The first two articles in this issue partially address this lacuna by respectively looking into the life of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, the history of his lineage, and his little known though prominent role in the early history of the Sikkimese kingdom.

In the first article, *The mNga' bdag family and the tradition of Rig 'dzin zhig po gling pa (1524-1583) in Sikkim*, Franz-Karl Ehrhard presents an overview of the mNga' bdag lineage, the mNga' bdag family's activities in Tibet and Sikkim, and how the findings of the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa were introduced in Sikkim. The article recounts mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin's journey from the domain of the kings of gTsang in gZhis ka rtse to the south in order to re-open the hidden land and his role in the installation of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal as the Buddhist

ruler of the country. mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin then went on to build three monasteries in Sikkim, the best known being Tashiding at the very centre of the hidden land.

In the second article, *The 'Tibetan' formation of Sikkim: Religion, politics and the construction of a coronation myth*, Saul Mullard discusses the coronation of the first Sikkimese Chogyal and presents the biographies of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, two of the three lamas present at the coronation at Yoksam. The author then takes a closer look at the respective roles and activities of the two lamas in the early years of the Namgyal dynasty. Contrary to accepted local history, it is suggested that the first coronation actually took place in 1646 instead of the accepted date of 1642, and that mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin was the most prominent lama in Sikkim at the time, the mNga' bdag lineage enjoying state-led religious patronage in the seventeenth century. The article concludes with a brief study of the competing position of the two major rNying ma pa lineages in Sikkim, the declining fortunes of the mNga' bdag lineage following the events of the Bhutanese invasion of c.1700 and the final ascendance of the sMin grol gling branch thanks to the efforts of the third Chogyal Phyag rdor rnam rgyal and 'Jigs med dpa' bo, the third incarnation of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med.

In line with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's suggestion, Professor Franz-Karl Ehrhard thought that this issue of the Bulletin should also address those lamas who made contribution to the establishment of Buddhism in Sikkim in more recent years. The third article *A short biography of four Tibetan lamas and their activities in Sikkim* by Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya presents the lives and activities of four lamas who resided or continue to reside in Sikkim today: the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981), the 4th Dodrup Chen Thubten Thinley Palzangpo (b.1927), Serdup Dungzin Paljor Lhundup Dorje (1917-1980), and the 10th Rigzin Yolmo Tingkyey Gonjang Tulku, Orgyen Jigme Thinley Kunkhyab (b.1961).

It is hoped that this article will be of particular interest to local Sikkimese and students who wish to gain a better understanding of the lives and contributions of these Rinpoches and their monasteries that are in many ways much part of our lives in Gangtok.

This issue is completed by a book review of Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer's *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim: A Photographic Record by John Claude White 1883-1908* and an obituary of Dr Rigzin Ngodup Dokhangpa (1943-2005), Research Officer, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

NEWS AND ACTIVITIES AT THE NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY

Photo exhibition: the Namgyal Dynasty of Sikkim

In July 2006, the Chief Minister of Sikkim Pawan Chamling opened the institute's second exhibition of historic photographs. As stated in a local newspaper "Although the Namgyal dynasty gave Sikkim 12 kings and ruled for 333 years (from 1642 to 1975), the years following the Merger witnessed an almost conscious attempt to deny them their place in Sikkim's history" (Now! 20 July 2006). This exhibition has taken a modest first step in restoring their place in history by presenting 65 photographs carefully documenting the lives, families and successive residences of the recent kings: Sidkeong Namgyal (1819-1874), Thutob Namgyal (1860-1914), Sidkeong Tulku (1879-1914), Tashi Namgyal (1893-1963), and Palden Thondup Namgyal (1923-1982).

The exhibition is part of the institute's long-term project to locate, digitise and document historic photographs of Sikkim from both Sikkim and abroad. The photographs were collected and the exhibition was constructed by Tenzin C. Tashi and Dr Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, and will remain open until the summer of 2007. An illustrated book on the history of the Namgyal dynasty is in the works.

Religious and social history of Sikkimese monasteries

This project was initiated in the summer of 2006 when its multi-disciplinary team went on a reconnaissance tour of western Sikkimese monasteries and initiated field research at Tashiding.

The primary focus of the project is to gather historical information on Sikkimese monasteries, to study the development of the social and religious environment surrounding both the monasteries themselves and their location as a focus for social life. The project is designed to chart the development of such religious and social institutions over the course of history and assess the changes that have taken place from the early seventeenth century up to the present day. The detailed study will concentrate on approximately 12 to 15 monasteries supplemented by a complete list of all Sikkimese monasteries with information regarding the location, year of foundation, religious school/lineage and estates of each institution.

Linguistic Survey of Sikkim

From October 2006, under the leadership of Dr Mark Turin, the institute has been collaborating with the Department of Human Resource Development (HRD), the former Department of Education, to carry out the first phase of a modern linguistic survey of Sikkim.

After a month-long visit by Dr Turin in November 2005, during which the project proposal was refined and submitted to the HRD, it became clear that the most substantial component of this research project would be visiting every Secondary and Senior Secondary School in Sikkim where all students in Classes VIII and above would complete a survey on language use, multilingualism and their competence in different tongues. To date, over 5000 completed questionnaires have been returned and the results are being entered into a database. Once complete, this data set will be returned to the Department of Human Resource Development as a resource for curriculum planning and teacher training.

Dr Turin is working with two assistants affiliated to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, and the project will continue through 2007. Alongside structured surveys in schools, the research team are also assessing language use in public policy and administration, and disaggregating census data from the 2001 Indian Census. The findings will be published in the *Bulletin*.

Sikkim Ritual Video Archive

This visual anthropology project aims to produce a documented video record of Sikkim's vanishing indigenous and Buddhist cultures. Its primary purpose is to record and preserve the meaning and proper performance of Sikkim's rituals within their social and economic context.

The project's second film, *Cham in the Lepcha Village of Lingthem* (2006) has just been completed. These religious dances were beautifully filmed by Dawa Tsering Lepcha in his own village monastery in the Lepcha reserve of Dzongu. In the course of this three day village event, the deities who emerge in the period between death and rebirth make their rhythmic appearances followed by the Lord of Death who judges one's good and bad deeds in the after life.

The project's first film, *Tingvong: A Lepcha Village in Sikkim* (2005) was screened at several ethnographic film festivals around the world. Among these were the Film Festival of the Royal

Anthropological Institute in Oxford, the Bilan du Film Ethnographique in Paris, and Beeld voor Beeld and the Himalayan Film Festival both in Amsterdam. The film won a price at the North-East Documentary Film Festival in Shillong.

The film illustrates the changes that the Lepcha of the Dzongu reserve, North Sikkim, have undergone in recent decades. From the 1940s, the Lepcha of Tingvong village gradually abandoned hunting, gathering and the slash and burn cultivation of dry rice. The introduction of irrigated paddy and the cardamom cash crop not only brought the Lepcha within Sikkim's market economy but helped create a surplus which could be invested in religion among other things. In the 1940s, the Lepcha of Tingvong embraced Buddhism and all its associated complex rituals but they did so without abandoning their strong shamanic traditions. Today, both ritual practices exist side-by-side in the village.

Bulletin of Tibetology

Back issues of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* published between 1964 and 2004 can now be freely viewed and downloaded in PDF format through the website of the institute <http://www.tibetology.net/> or directly from the Digital Himalaya project website <http://www.digitalthimalaya.com/collections/journals/bot/>

The contents of recent issues can be viewed on the institute's website and hard copies may be ordered directly from the institute by contacting the Publication Sales In-charge at nitsikkim@yahoo.co.in

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who, in various way, contributed in putting this issue together: Khenpo Lha Tsering, Nangzey Dorjee, Tashi Tsering, Sonam Thinlay, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Mark Turin, Saul Mullard and Tsewang Paljor.

*Gangtok
October 2006*

THE MNGA' BDAG FAMILY AND THE TRADITION OF
RIG 'DZIN ZHIG PO GLING PA (1524-1583) IN SIKKIM

FRANZ-KARL EHRHARD
University of Munich

[1]

In Tibetan literature dealing with the introduction of the Buddhist doctrine into Sikkim and the definitive opening of dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs as a 'hidden land' (*sbas yul*), one becomes acquainted with a group of 'Four Yogins' (*rnal 'byor bzhi*) or 'Four Yogins [who are] brothers' (*rnal 'byor mched bzhi*). They are said to have entered the fertile region in the eastern Himalayas known for its cultivation of rice through entry points in the four cardinal directions and to have met at Yug bsam Nor bu sgang in 1642 in order to install the first Buddhist king of the realm (who is counted as one of the group of four):

Then [the hidden land] was opened—in an act universally known—by the Four Yogins [who are] brothers: from the north came lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1653), the Master of the Teaching of the Great Treasure [Discoverer] bDud 'dul [rdo rje] (1615-1672); from the west came the teacher known as Kaḥ thog pa Kun tu bzang po; from the south came the Sovereign Lord, the [Great] Being Phun tshogs rig 'dzin (1592-1656); [and] from the east came Dharmarāja Phun tshogs rnam rgyal (1604-1670).¹

¹ Bya bral Rin po che Sangs rgyas rdo rje (b. 1913): *dPal rgyal rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa'i gdan rabs brgyud 'dzin dang bcas pa'i byung ba brjod pa rin po che'i phreng ba lta bu'i gtam*, n.p., n.d., fol. 133b/6-134a/2 (*de nas rnal 'byor mched bzhis yongs grags su phyas pa yin te / de yang gter chen bdud 'dul chos bdag lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med byang nas byon / bla ma kaḥ thog pa kun tu bzang po zhes bya ba nub nas byon / mnga' bdag sems dpa' phun tshogs rig 'dzin lho nas byon / dharmarāja phun tshogs rnam rgyal shar nas byon te*). This section deals with the establishment of the Kaḥ thog tradition in Sikkim and is preceded by a reference to the opening of the hidden land by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 'phru can (1337-1406) and the peregrinations of Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1466-1540) in dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs; concerning the latter person and his activities in Sikkim and Bhutan see Ehrhard (2003: 15-24).

The concept of four brothers, topographically applied to Sikkim as to a maṇḍala with four entry points, is legitimised in the literature on the basis of quotations from the ‘treasure scriptures’ (*gter ma*) of Rig ’dzin Ratna gling pa (1403-1478). The latter is remembered as one of the ‘treasure discoverers’ (*gter ston*) to have propagated the cult of hidden sanctuaries in the Himalayan valleys in the fifteenth century. Such quaternaries form a quite frequently used model in Tibetan culture to structure an assemblage of localities and persons, and even icons. One other instance from the same period groups together four bKa’ gdams pa masters. The most conspicuous example, of course, is the ‘Four Brothers Ārya [Avalokiteśvara]’ (*’phags pa sku mched bzhi*), a set of statues of the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, which has enjoyed great fame in the world of Tibetan Buddhism.²

[2]

If we consider the three Buddhist masters who acted as spiritual preceptors to Sikkim’s first Dharmarāja and the presence of their individual teaching lineages in the country, it seems that the Kaḥ thog tradition—also known under the name lHo mon Kaḥ thog pa or Mon lugs Kaḥ thog pa—was the earliest one to arrive there. These efforts by masters of the rNying ma pa school from Eastern Tibet can be dated to the closing years of the fifteenth century, but they obviously did not lead to the establishment of Buddhist monastic communities in the country. This was only achieved later, by the above-mentioned Kaḥ thog pa Kun tu bzang po, the ‘brother’ associated with the western gate.

lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, who is still regarded today as the great cultural hero who introduced the rDzogs chen doctrine and rituals of Buddhist worship to Sikkim, entered the country from the north. The teaching lineage represented by him exemplifies the phenomenon of treasure discoverers of the rNying ma pa school and their search for sacred lands in regions located to the south of the Tibetan plateau. It is stated in the quotation that he was a ‘master of the teaching’ (*chos*

² For the presentation of hidden lands by Rig ’dzin Ratna gling pa, see *Gu ru ratna’i gling pa’i gter byung chen mo gsal ba’i sgron me* in ‘Collected Works’, vol. 1, Bylakuppe: Pema Norbu Rinpoche, 1984, pp. 64.5-65.3. Concerning the four bKa’ gdams pa masters known, as Khams pa sku mched bzhi, see rTse thang Las chen Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (b. 1440): *bKa’ gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka’ gdams chos ’byung gsal ba’i sgron me*, Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2003, p. 162.5-12; and for the tradition of the four Avalokiteśvara icons, Ehrhard (2004a: 58-59 & 66-67).

bdag) of Rig 'dzin bDud 'dul rdo rje, a native of Khams, who is generally known as one of those seventeenth century Buddhist teachers who undertook travels to gNas Padma bkod in the south-east of Tibet and raised treasure works in one of the old temples dating back to the glorious days of the Yarlung dynasty. He was a close associate of Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po (1615-1672), another treasure discoverer who uncovered literary works and prophecies concerning gNas Padma bkod as a refuge for followers of the Precious Guru Padmasambhava. lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med was not only a direct disciple of Rig 'dzin bDud 'dul rdo rje but of Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po as well, whose treasure cycles he propagated in Sikkim.³

Among the further lineages obtained by the most famous rNying ma pa teacher of the country, one should mention that of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa and the latter's disciple Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552-1624). This was the lineage in whose succession stood the third 'brother', said to have entered the country from the south. His name was mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, and up to now he has not received much attention in studies on Sikkim's Buddhist culture, a fact already reflected in the problem of interpreting the title 'Sovereign Lord' (*mnga' bdag*). One might think that this title links him to the lineage of the first 'treasure discoverer king' mNga' bdag Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer (1124-1192), but it could also imply that his family claimed direct descent from the rulers of the Yarlung dynasty. This latter claim would make sense in the context of the phenomenon of hidden lands, which are known to have been especially eagerly searched for at times of social disintegration and political turmoil in Tibet proper, and in places where it was possible to preserve the authentic line of the early Tibetan kings.

[3]

A closer examination of this specific tradition of rNying ma pa teachings is possible with the help of a family chronicle written by

³ Concerning Rig 'dzin bDud 'dul rdo rje and Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po as representatives of the rNying ma pa school who were active in sPo bo and Kong po in the seventeenth century, and their role in initiating the cult of the hidden land gNas Padma bkod, see Ehrhard (1999: 231-232) and Lazcano (2005: 46-47). A detailed account of the life of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, his activities in Sikkim and data on the three incarnations following him can be found in mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (b. 1960): *mKha' spyod 'bras mo ljongs kyi gtsug nor sprul pa'i rnal 'byor mched bzhi brgyud 'dzin dang bcas pa'i byung ba brjod pa blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' tshal*, Gangtok: Khenpo L. Tsering, 2002, pp. 65.1-195.2.

mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin (b. 1625), the son of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin. Based on this genealogical account, I shall present in what follows an overview of this particular lineage (as represented by three generations of the mNga' bdag family) and their activities in Tibet and Sikkim. This will be supplemented by further materials from the writings of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa, since it was this treasure discoverer's findings which were introduced into Sikkim when the country was being transformed into a Buddhist kingdom.⁴

According to the work of mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin and a modern rendering of it by a contemporary Sikkimese scholar, the mNga' bdag family can be traced back to the Yarlung dynasty through the latter's western branch, and in particular to that line which produced the kings of Ladakh, that is, Mar yul. It is thus through mNga' bdag dPal gyi lde, mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon and mNga' bdag Chos mgon—the latter said to be a contemporary of Lo chen Rin chen bzang po (958-1055)—that they claim the name and status of 'Sovereign Lord'.⁵

Details on the further descendants of mNga' bdag Chos mgon are rather sparse. We are only told their names and that some of these local rulers from Western Tibet were known as great warriors famed for having fought back the armies of Hor yul or sTod hor that had spread down to gTsang in Central Tibet. Only in the twentieth generation after

⁴ The family chronicle has survived as a concluding chapter of a manuscript of the famous *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* of the Sa skya pa scholar Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312-1375), which was published by Sherab Gyaltzen Lama et al., Mandi 1985; see pp. 548.2-594.5. I want to thank Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and mKhan po Lha Tse ring for making a copy of this manuscript available. The work was composed in 1656, in the same year mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin passed away, and supplants the chapter on the lineage of the Yar [k]lung[s] lords in the work of Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan. It thus follows immediately after the genealogical account of the royal house of Ya rtse; see Sørensen (1994: 459-465). Refer to Ehrhard (2004a: 131-133) for details surrounding the fact that the fourteenth century work of the Sa skya pa scholar was used by other authors as a literary source and starting point for local Buddhist historiography.

⁵ In the following, I refer to the chronicle of mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin according to the rendering of it by mKhan po Lha Tshe ring. On the three mentioned rulers, see his text (as in note 3), p. 29.11-13. The author notes that the chronicle refers to mNga' bdag Chos mgon as the son of mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon, while the so-called 'Royal Genealogy of Ladakh' identifies them as brothers; see *La dvags rgyal rabs*, Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1986, p. 43.3 (... *dpal gyi mgon gyi sras 'gro mgon dang chos mgon gnyis*). The line of Ladakh rulers is then presented as descending from [mNga' bdag] 'Gro mgon, while the line from [mNga' bdag] Chos mgon remains blank. This latter line can be reconstructed with the help of the chronicle of the mNga' bdag family.

mNga' bdag Chos mgon does a name turn up of someone remembered not only for his secular powers but also for his spiritual achievements: mNga' bdag sTag sham can (d. 1623). As we shall see, this name links him to the teaching tradition of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa. But before encountering the treasure discoverer, he followed in the steps of his ancestors and ruled their domain from the capital, Shel dkar pho brang. He also fathered a son who later became known as mNga' bdag bKra shis khri btsan (d. 1635).

Upon receiving a prophecy from a *ḍākīṇi*, he abandoned his rulership and left for Central Tibet. The first master he met there, in a place called dGon pa rNam gling, was Byams pa phun tshogs (1503-1581), from whom he received transmissions of the bKa' brgyud pa school, including the Mahāmudrā doctrine and the *Ras chung snyan brgyud* teachings. His initial teacher of the rNying ma pa school was a certain mKhan chen Byams pa bzang po from Gra skor in the gCung valley, who conferred upon his disciple the complete teaching cycles of the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 'phru can, the so-called 'Northern Treasures' (*byang gter*). By that time he must have been conducting his spiritual practices in the region of La stod Byang, since we find among his supporters the 'Lord of [La stod] Byang' (*byang bdag po*) Nam mkha' tsho dbang rdo rje. This local ruler was the father of Chos rgyal dBang po sde or Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550-1607), the representative of the tradition of the Northern Treasures who would ensure the continuity of the teachings in his family line.⁶

In the company of a few servants, the member of the royal line from Western Tibet reached lHa sa and soon afterwards met Gar dbang Zhig po gling pa, also known as the 'treasure discoverer of Khyung tshang brag' in sNang rtse—in the sTod lung valley to the north-east of the Tibetan capital. He obtained the transmission of the complete treasure cycles of this teacher, who was regarded as a reincarnation of

⁶ For the succession of the mNga' bdag family from mNga' bdag Chos mgon down to mNga' bdag sTag sham can, see the text by mKhan po lHa Tsho ring (as in note 3), pp. 29.14-31.15. See also *ibid.*, pp. 32.7-33.6, for the early years of mNga' bdag sTag sham can (an alternative name of whom may have been Chos rgyal Yon tan phun tshogs) and his first two teachers. Some biographical information on Byams pa phun tshogs can be found in Ehrhard (2004b: 584-586); he was a disciple of both lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473-1557) and rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang rol (1494-1559), and thus stood in the teaching lineage of the Ras chung bKa' brgyud pa inaugurated by gTsang smyong Heruka (1452-1507). For Chos rgyal dBang po sde, his political affiliations, and his role in the transmission of the Northern Treasures, see Karmay (2002: 31-33).

the prince Mu rub btsan po, and was especially identified by him as a master of the teachings of a specific cycle titled *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgröl gyi chos skor*. This latter work contained a prophecy legitimating his status and alluding to his name mNga' bdag sTag sham can:

To the king of mNga' ris with the marks of a tiger,
 To the one with the name 'Tshe' who has faith in the Great
 Vehicle—
 If to him the teaching is entrusted, benefit [for all] will arise.⁷

This detail refers to a mark on the lower body of the sovereign, a phenomenon quite well known in the Tibetan cultural sphere to testify to the special status of a 'reincarnation' (*sprul sku*). Among the further accomplishments of mNga' bdag sTag sham can, the genealogical account mentions that he was entrusted with an additional cycle of the master, one devoted to the wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi, and that he composed a ritual manual in this regard. Later, during his spiritual practice, he stayed mainly in the region of La stod Byang, where he continued to cultivate the tradition of the Northern Treasures. He also received many teachings from the Ninth Karmapa dBang phyug rdo rje (1556-1603).

⁷ Concerning the meeting of mNga' bdag sTag sham can with Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa, the wording of the prophecy and further statements relating to his spiritual status, see the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), p. 33.6-17. The quotation can be found in "Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgröl gyi chos skor: A Collection of Lamaist Practices Focussing upon Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara. Recovered from their place of Concealment at the 'Phrul snang Temple at Lhasa", vol. 2, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1976, p. 378.3-4 (*mnga' rigs (=ris) rgyal po rtags kyi (=stag gi) mtshan ma can / theg chen la mos tshe'i ming can la / chos 'di gtad rgya bgyis na phan par byung*). The different works of the treasure cycle are introduced together with a historical account, which includes a list of the previous incarnations of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa; see *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 8.4-20.1. This list is one of the literary sources for the treatment of the treasure discoverer's previous lives in his biography; see Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan: *rDzogs chen pa sprul sku zhig po gling pa gar gyi dbang phyug rtsal gyi skyes rabs rags bsdus dang rnam thar* in "Collected Writings of Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan", vol. 1, New Delhi: Sanji Dorje, 1975, pp. 21.2-34.5. For the family of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa, the powerful sNang rtse sde pa, the location of Khyung tshang brag, where he raised his first treasure, and the rhetoric directed by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) against this particular rNying ma pa tradition, see Akester (2001b: 27-30).

Several local rulers are mentioned who bestowed their services upon mNga' bdag sTag sham can. While undertaking a journey to sacred sites in Southern Tibet, including the old temple of lHo brag mKhar chu, he met Zhabs drung Mi pham chos rgyal (1543-1606), the head of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa school. This hierarch of the rGya family of Ra lung is accorded special mention among his disciples, together with Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, the author of the hagiography of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa. The instructions of the rNying ma pa and bKa' brgyud pa schools received by him were transmitted to his son, who was begotten upon a noble lady from the Zangs dkar valley in Ladakh. This son, mNga' bdag bKra shis khri btsan, is said to have followed his father in spending his time in remote mountain hermitages in Central Tibet.⁸

[4]

Before setting out to lead the life of a Buddhist yogin, mNga' bdag bKra shis khri btsan founded a residence in Western Tibet named Pho brang Sag khri mkhar. It was there that his son Phun tshogs rig 'dzin was born. The young boy received this name from his grandfather mNga' bdag sTag sham can, who was at the time staying in the region of La stod Byang. At the age of nineteen (in 1611), he studied the Mahāmudrā doctrine of the bKa' brgyud pa school under his father and, leaving the administration of his royal domain in the hands of his ministers, started to practise austerities in cemeteries. In the year 1616, he met for the first time mNga' bdag sTag sham can in person at bSam grub rtse, the fortress of the kings of gTsang in gZhis ka rtse, and the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa were passed on to him in their entirety. mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin spent the next years in

⁸ See the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 33.17-35.11, for the second part of the life of mNga' bdag sTag sham can, and *ibid.*, pp. 35.12-36.18, for an overview of the life of mNga' bdag bKra shis khri btsan. Concerning Zhabs drung Mi pham chos rgyal, the hierarch of the rGya family of Ra lung, it should be mentioned that he, too, was a personal disciple of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa and married the treasure discoverer's daughter. From this union sprang Mi pham bsTan pa'i nyi ma (1567-1619), the father of Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1594-1651), the founder of the Buddhist state of Bhutan. See Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775-1837): *dPal ldan gzhung 'brug bka' brgyud gser phreng gi bla ma brgyud pa'i nam thar dang phyag rgya chen po'i spyi don ngo mtshar snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs*, manuscript, NGMPP reel-no. L 380/5-L 381/1, fol. 43a/4-b/1. For the role of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos rgyal in the composition of some of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa's writings, see the Appendix below.

hermitages, completely abandoning worldly concerns, and was therefore praised by his grandfather as a second Mi la ras pa. After being installed by mNga' bdag sTag sham can as his spiritual successor, he is said to have founded 'sites for spiritual practice' (*sgrub sde*) and established a temple in the precincts of the monastery Byams pa gling in the lHo kha area.⁹

With the overall situation deteriorating in Central Tibet and the kings of gTsang leading military campaigns against the Mongol invaders, the 'political rule' (*chab srid*) of Karma bsTan skyong dbang po (1604-1642) began to decline. This was interpreted by the followers of Padmasambhava and the rNying ma pa school that the time had come to move to the hidden lands in the south, as prophesied in the treasure scriptures. In the case of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, he is said to have been foretold in the writings of Rig 'dzin rDo rje gling pa (1346-1405), and even more clearly in those of Rig 'dzin Ratna gling pa, as one of the Four Great Yogins to open dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs. These prophecies also contained details about the erection of Buddhist edifices in order to secure the prosperity of Tibet:

Among the Four Yogin Brothers, who are my incarnations,
 One will arrive in the form of a yogin with matted hair.
 On the way he should undertake agriculture, and the doctrine
 will increase!
 If at this sacred place vihāras, stūpas and sites for spiritual
 practice are erected,
 The realm of Tibet will enjoy happiness for a hundred years!
 If one is not able to penetrate inside [the hidden land],
 One hundred vihāras should be erected in the [mountain] chain
 of the 'Five Glaciers', and then some,

⁹ See the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 37.1-41.3, for the early years of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin. The author takes note of a visit at the age of twenty-one years to Lha sa, where mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin is said to have conducted rites for 'repulsing the Mongols' (*sog bzlog*). The literary source for this event is the biography of Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po (1580-1639), the son of the above-mentioned Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal; see *ibid.*, p. 39.3-8. If one consults this biography, written by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma, the year mentioned in the text is seen to correspond to 1638, when mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin had reached his forty-sixth year; see Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Byang bdag rig 'dzin chen po ngag gi dbang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar bkod pa rgya mtsho* in "The Collected Works of the Vth Dalai Lama", vol. 8, Gangtok: Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1992, p. 806.5.

[And then] the armies at the borders will be repulsed and Tibet will enjoy happiness every year!¹⁰

The place of departure for the journey to the south is given in the genealogical record as the ‘domain’ (*rgyal khab*) of the kings of gTsang in gZhis ka rtse. mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin had already sent three persons in advance to dPal gyi ’bras mo gshongs in order to survey the terrain. It was the third Tibetan month of the year 1642 and the fifty-year-old rNying ma pa master was in the company of his family and servants, including his son Byams pa bstan ’dzin. The journey took around five months. After pacifying and propitiating the local gods and protectors of the territory, he went on to the ‘central spot’ (*sa’i thig le*) of the hidden land, which he reached in the eighth Tibetan month of the year 1642. The point of arrival was called Yug bsam Nor bu sgang.

That same year mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin installed in the very same place a local official named Zhal ngo A pa rdo rje as the first Buddhist king of Sikkim, having invited him from his residence in sGang tog to the Yug bsam area. He conferred upon the chosen secular head of the country the name Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, and they entered into a relationship of ‘ruler’ (*yon bdag*) and ‘preceptor’ (*mchod gnas*), as called for in the political theory of an ideal Buddhist society. It is interesting to note that the instalment of Zhal ngo A pa rdo rje as the new Buddhist ruler of the county is ascribed to mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin alone without mentioning Kaḥ thog pa Kun tu bzang po or lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med.¹¹

In the eleventh month of the year 1643 a first temple, the lHa khang dmar po, was erected at Yug bsam sgang. After its completion mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin identified the site for Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, the monastery to be situated in the very centre of the hidden land. It is said that he perceived the external setting as a palace of the

¹⁰ For these two prophecies from the writings of Rig ’dzin Ratna gling pa, see the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), p. 41.7-9 (*nga yi sprul pa rnal ’byor mched bzhi las / gcig ni rnal ’byor ral pa’i tshul gyis byon / lam bar so nam byed cig bstan pa spel*), and p. 43.2-6 (*gnas der lha khang mchod rten sgrub sde btsugs / bod yul lo brgya’i bar du bde bar ’gyur / gal te nang du tshud par ma ’gyur na / mdzod lnga’i rgyud la lha khang brgya rtsa brtsigs / mtha’ dmag bzlog cing lo re bod yul bde*). The latter prophecy is related to the establishment of the monastery of Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, located at the ‘navel of the sacred site’ (*gnas kyi lte ba*).

¹¹ Concerning the generally accepted view that all three Tibetan religious teachers conducted the enthronement ceremony, with lHa btun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med performing the actual coronation, see Ardussi (2004: 45).

Peaceful and Wrathful Jinas, the inside as if consisting of the *nādis* of the Vajrakāya, and its secret aspect as a maṇḍala of the spiritual dimension of the ‘Great Perfection’ (*rdzogs pa chen po*). The first foundation was a vihāra called bKra shis dge legs, which was furnished with sacred items. In the eleventh Tibetan month of the year 1649 his own residence, known as Zil gnon, was erected to the north of the new monastery.

mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin had an official meeting in that residence with the ruler Phun tshogs rnam rgyal in the first Tibetan month of the year 1651, at which time they discussed his being succeeded in the future by his own son mNga’ bdag Byams pa bstan ’dzin as preceptor in the relationship with the Buddhist king of Sikkim. After a second vihāra (the so-called Byams pa lha khang) had been erected in Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, the whole monastic complex was finally inaugurated under auspicious signs in the second Tibetan month of the year 1652.¹²

[5]

One of the reasons why the fifty-nine year old head of the mNga’ bdag family persuaded the ruler Phun tshogs rnam rgyal to accept his own son as royal preceptor may have to do with an invitation which arrived about that time from another Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas, known as Glo bo (present-day Mustang in northern Nepal). This domain had been ruled since the fifteenth century by the ‘regents of Mustang’ (*glo bo sde pa*), and the royal couple, which had issued the invitation, were A haṃ bSam grub rab brtan and his wife A yum Nyi zla rgyal mo. The rNying ma pa master who had recently opened the hidden land of dPal gyi ’bras mo gshongs spent one year in Glo bo and satisfied the court with his instructions; he left after the foundation ceremony for the Byams pa lha khang and returned just in time for the inauguration of the monastery of Brag dkar bKra shis sdings. A separate mention of mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin’s stay in Glo bo in the year 1651 is found in the biography of the ’Brug pa bKa’ brgyud pa yogin dPag bsam ye shes (1598-1667); it is mentioned there that the master (here called mNga’ bdag Rig ’dzin phun tshogs) was a witness

¹² See the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 41.16-45.5, for the ten-year period between 1642 and 1652 in the life of mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ’dzin, his journey to dPal gyi ’bras mo gshongs and the construction of the monastic complex and residence in the western part of Sikkim.

to dPag bsam ye shes's own activities of delivering teachings to the ruler of Glo bo and his wife.¹³

On his way back from Glo bo to dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs, mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin stayed in the Nepal Valley, where he was honoured by the local rulers, including the ruler of Ghor sa (present-day Gorkha). In the cave of Yang le shod on the south-eastern rim of the valley he performed the sādhana of dPal chen rDo rje phur ba and, like the Precious Guru Padmasambhava before him, had a vision at the sacred site of the deities of the maṇḍala. Another local ruler who performed services for the rNying ma pa master is called in the genealogical account Mang 'khor rgyal po. He provided mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin with a religious endowment said to have consisted of the revenue from the land of a hundred taxpayers. The custom developed from then onwards that members of the mNga' bdag family were allowed to collect taxes in this region located on the southern border of the Nepal Valley.¹⁴

That religious contacts between dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs and Glo bo were quite close at that time can be shown in the case of another traveller who hailed from the southern part of the latter kingdom and was, like lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, a master of the teachings of the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin bDud 'dul rdo rje. His name was O rgyan dpal bzang (1617-1677), and he first met the treasure discoverer

¹³ Concerning the rule of A ham bSam grub rab brtan according to the 'Tsarang Molla', see Jackson (1984: 150 & 155, note 33). It is stated there that mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin (together with his son?) had acted as spiritual preceptor to the king of Glo bo on the same level with the illustrious Sa skya pa teacher [A mes zhabs] Ngag dbang Kun dga' bsod nams (1597-1659) and Chos rnam rgyal, abbot of [rTa nag] Thub bstan monastery in Central Tibet. For the testimony of dPag bsam ye shes, see Bod mkhas pa Mi pham dge legs rnam par rgyal ba (1618-1685): *rJe btsun grub pa'i dbang phyug dam pa dpag bsam ye shes zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa mchog gi spyod tshul rgya mtsho'i snying po* (xylograph), NGMPP, reel.-no. L 13/5, fol. 48b/5-6 (*mnga' bdag rig 'dzin phun tshogs kyi kyang / glo bo sde par / rgyal po rgyal mo'i khengs pa ma byed par khong la chos zhus / nga las khong lhag yin gsung bsngags pa mdzad da lta'ang glo'i bla ma gnyis bar (=par) gyur*).

¹⁴ See the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 45.6-46.5, for the journey to Glo bo, the stay in the Nepal Valley and the religious endowment offered by the ruler Mang 'khor rgyal po. This ethnonym stands for the people known as Mang kar or Mang gar, who in the twelfth century had served the kings of Nepal as mercenaries, and are called 'Southern Magars' in modern ethnographic literature. A description of their origins and their respect for Tibetan religious teachers can be found in the travel account of the Sixth Zhva dmar pa Chos kyi dbang phyug (1584-1630), who passed through their territories a few years before mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin; see Ehrhard (1997: 134, note 17). The hierarch of the Karma bKa' brgyud pa school takes special note of the generosity of this ethnic group.

after a long and difficult journey to Dar rtse mdo in Khams. On his way back to the Himalayas, he was drawn by the fame of the mNga' bdag family to dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs, in whose newly established monastery of Brag dkar bKra shis sdings he stayed in the year 1646. It was there that he met Phun tshogs tshe ring rnam rgyal (another name of mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin) and obtained from him the transmission of treasure cycles of the rNying ma pa school, including those of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa. In the latter part of his life he spread these teachings in Glo bo and neighbouring areas, after founding a monastery in the region from which he came.¹⁵

[6]

The presence of the teaching lineage of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa in dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs, and in particular that of the spiritual practices and rituals of the cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol gyi chos skor*, can be regarded as the religious legacy of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin. The story goes that during a visit to Lhasa and its sacred shrines (which may be dated to the above-mentioned year 1638) he said his prayers in the Jo khang in front of the statue of the Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara and was blessed on that occasion with a special sign from the icon, regarded as the personal meditation deity of Srong btsan sgam po, the archetype of a Tibetan Buddhist king. This event led to public ceremonies for reciting *oṃ maṇi padma hūṃ*, the mantra of the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, 'one hundred million' (*dung phyur*) times, thereby introducing his cult into the newly opened hidden land. These public rituals—the first one said to have taken place either in Brag dkar bKra shis sdings in the year 1646 or prior to the founding

¹⁵ The life and travels of O rgyan dpal bzang, who was born into the family of the local rulers of dGa' rab rdzong in southern Glo bo, have been sketched in Ehrhard (2001: 236-238). The spiritual contact with mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin and the list of transmissions received by O rgyan dpal bzang from him can be found in the autobiography-cum-*gsan yig* of the teacher from Glo bo; see his *Dad pa'i spu long g.yo byed mthong bas yid 'phrog ngo mtshar 'phreng ba'i gtam rmad du byung ba* (manuscript), NGMPP reel-no. L 83/1, fols. 219/a5-256a/1. The representative of the mNga' bdag family is called in this work "Phun tshogs tshe ring rnam rgyal, who upholds the teaching of the two systems [of secular and spiritual authority] of the immaculate family line of the great Dharmarāja [of Tibet]" (*chos rgyal chen po'i gdung rgyud dri ma med pa lugs gnyis bstan pa'i srol 'dzin phun tshogs tshe ring rnam rgyal*); see *ibid.*, fol. 222a/1-2. At a later point in time (in the year 1668) O rgyan dpal bzang had another meeting with mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin in Glo bo; see *ibid.*, fol. 317b/4-318a/4.

of the monastery at the lHa khang dMar po at Yug bsam sgang—were accompanied by ‘meditation and offering rituals’ (*sgrub mchod*) based on the cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol gyi chos skor*.¹⁶

This treasure had been discovered by Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa in the year 1563 in the Jo khang temple of Lha sa. The introductory text of the cycle provides detailed information on how the sacred scriptures were promulgated there earlier by Padmasambhava, set down in writing by his consort Ye shes mtsho rgyal, and then entrusted to the protective deities. After the ‘treasure discoverer of Khyung tshang brag’ recovered them from their place of concealment, he transmitted them for the first time at 'Bri gung, to the north of Lhasa, in the year 1567; the recipient was 'Bri gung Zhabs drung Yon tan bkra shis (1547-1602), a connection pointing to the role of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa in the 'Bri gung pas' spiritual claim to the Jo khang area in Lhasa. In the year 1575 the cycle was taught one more time in bSam yas, Tibet's first monastic complex, and there Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa manufactured sacred substances which ‘liberate by taste’ (*myong grol*). In dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs these rituals from the *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol gyi chos skor* were reenacted by mNga' bdag Rig 'dzin phun tshogs, and a sacred vase said to have been passed down to him from the treasure discoverer through his grandfather mNga' bdag sTag sham can still occupy a central place in one of the most important events in the religious life of Sikkim.¹⁷

¹⁶ See the text of mKhan po lHa Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 46.6-49.15, for the role of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin in introducing the *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol gyi chos skor* to Sikkim, the history of the cycle, and the public ritual associated with it which is celebrated every year from the eighth up to the fifteenth day of the fourth Tibetan month at Brag dkar bKra shis sdings. In that monastery is also kept the so-called ‘Precious Vase [with Water] Which Liberates by Taste’ (*myong grol bum pa rin po che*). Compare also the accounts of this sacred vessel and the Buddhist festival by Rigzin Ngodub Dokhampa (2003: 25-30) and mKhan po Chos dbang: *sBas yul 'bras mo ljongs kyi chos srid dang 'brel ba'i rgyal rabs lo rgyus bden don kun gsal me long*, Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 2003, pp. 115.9-116.9.

¹⁷ The details of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa's discovery of the Mahākaruṇika cycle in the Jo khang and its propagation at 'Bri gung and bSam yas are described in the treasure discoverer's biography, written by Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan; see his work (as in note 6), pp. 78.1-2, 81.1-82.2 & 91.3-5. Concerning the erection of a temple by Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa—the so-called rDo rje'i lha khang—from 1557 to 1558, with the aim of protecting the sanctuary of the Jo khang in Lhasa against floods, see Akester (2001a: 3-16). The overall political context of this temple-building activity in the mid 1550s, when the 'Bri gung pas challenged the spiritual claims of the dGe lugs pas to the site, and the role of Zhig po gling pa in this regard are analysed by Sørensen (2003: 119-125).

[7]

The last years of mNga' bdag phun tshogs rig 'dzin's life were spent in the monastery of Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, and this was where he passed away in his sixty-fourth year. The last advice to his followers was the request to set the memorial of his own parinirvāṇa on the same date as the 'commemoration ceremony' (*dgongs rdzogs*) of his grandfather mNga' bdag sTag sham can. This can be seen as an act meant to establish his family line firmly in the ritual calendar of his followers in dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs.

His own son, mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin, supervised the cremation. A reliquary with the physical remains of mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin can still be found today in Brag dkar bKra shis sdings. In fulfillment of the final wishes of the deceased teacher, a third vihāra was erected, known as the Thub chen lha khang. These activities started immediately after his passing in the year 1656 and lasted up to the year 1658. Among the five special wishes, it is noted that this one was made "in order to establish all the border people of Mon in the teaching, once the doctrine of the Buddha has been spread in the hidden land of 'Bras mo gshongs." The new vihāra was furnished with a so-called 'Enlightenment Stūpa' (*byang chub mchod rten*), reminding the inhabitants of Sikkim of the central event in the life of Buddha Śākyamuni, and this religious edifice was finally inaugurated in the year 1665.¹⁸

The tradition of the mNga' bdag family was thus firmly established in dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs, and smaller monasteries sprang up out of bKra shis sdings soon afterwards. One might wonder, finally, why mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, the 'brother' who entered the country from the south, was identified in the Buddhist sources with that particular cardinal direction. One of the possible reasons worth considering are his travels, which brought him (and other family members) into contact with the regent of Mustang and the local rulers of Gorkha and Magar origin. As noted by the genealogical account, the road taken by the religious master from Tibet passed through Ilām; this route could be interpreted as a southern approach to the hidden land in

¹⁸ See the text of mKhan po Lha Tshe ring (as in note 3), pp. 49.16-51.11. The details of the erection of the Thub chen lha khang can be found in the chapter of the life of mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin; see *ibid.*, pp. 56.1-62.6; it is made clear that funds for building the stūpa came from the so-called Mang 'khor rgyal po. For the quotation see *ibid.*, p.57.3-5 (... *sbas yul 'bras mo gshongs su sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa dar nas kla klo mon pa thams cad kyang chos la bkod pa'i phyr...*).

the period when the ideal of dPal gyi 'bras mo gshongs being a maṇḍala was made reality by the Four Yogin Brothers who opened it.



A portrait of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa in 'Collected Writings', section Kha, fol. 1b (right side). The caption reads *nam mkha' tshe bstan (=brtan) bsod nams rgyal po la na mo*. This is the first ordination name of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa, received at an early age from sMan chu ba Nam mkha' rin chen; see Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (as in note 6), p. 36.4-5.

APPENDIX

The Writings of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa

A good overview of the various treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa, which were transmitted in Sikkim, can be found in the autobiography-cum-*gsan yig* of O rgyan dpal bzang from southern Gbo. He received these teachings from mNga' bdag Byams pa bstan 'dzin four years after the enthronement of the first Buddhist ruler of the country. The *gsan yig* section opens with the *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgröl ba'i chos skor* and includes such further cycles as the *Zab chos rgyal ba 'dus*, *rDzogs pa chen po gsang ba snying thig*, *Phyag na rdo rje stobs po che'i skor* and *dPal bde mchog 'khor lo*; it closes with the titles of the 'biography' (*rnam thar*) and the 'Collected Writings' (*bka' 'bum*) of the treasure discoverer.

An incomplete set of the latter collection was microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) in the National Archives, Ramshah Path, Kathmandu under reel-nos. AT 99/2-AT 100/16. It is a xylographic print, and the colophons of some of the texts mention Zhabs drung Mi pham chos rgyal from Ra lung as the person who requested that the individual works be written out. The biography of Rig 'dzin Zhig po gling pa actually refers to a sojourn of the master at the residence of the hierarch of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa school and the penning of texts; see Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (as in note 6), p. 90.3-6. With the help of one of the colophons, this visit to Ra lung can be dated to the year 1577.

Ka -----

Kha *rDzogs chen pa sprul sku zhib po (=zhig po) gling pa sku gzhon nu'i dus mdzad pa'i gsung 'bum*, 15 fols.

Ga -----

Nga *rDzogs chen pa sprul sku zhig po gling pa gar gyi dbang phyug rtsal gyi zhal gzigs skor*, 30 fols. Includes the '*Phags pa rang byon mched lnga'i bsgrub thabs bskyed rdzogs zung 'brel du gdams pa*', fols. 24a/5-25b/3. Edited in Ehrhard (2004a: 523-524), translated in Decler (2004: 55-57)

Ca -----

Cha *dPal chen rakṣa'i bshad pa dang bzlas pa'i phan yon dang las sbyor*, 34 fols. Written in the year *chu mo bya* [1573] upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Ja *dPal bsam yas mi 'gyur lhun gyi grub pa'i dkar chag dang bkur sti byas pa'i phan yon dad ldan dga' ba bskyed byed*, 33 fols.

Nya *rDzogs pa chen po gsang ba snying thig yang zab bsdus pa'i snying po'i mdun bskyed dkyil 'khor sgrub pa'i chog (=phyogs) sgrig rdzogs chen pa 'od gsal sgyu mas mdzad pa*, 8 fols.

Ta *Ra sa 'khrul (=sprul) snang gi 'jig skyobs lung bstan rdo rje'i lha khang zhes bya ba'i dkar chag dad ldan dga' ba bskyed byed*. 16 fols. Translated in Akester (2001a: 15-24)

Tha -----

Da -----

Na -----

Pa *A rgam bsgrub pa'i gsol 'debs*, 6 fols.

Pha -----

Ba *Gu ru drag po gtum drag me'i 'khor lo can gyi nyams len brgyun khyer*, 24 fols.
Written upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Ma *Tshe bsgrub 'od zer 'phreng ba'i sgrub thabs*, 8 fols. Written upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Tsa *'Jam dpal 'char ka nag po'i zor 'phen pa'i dmigs rim*, 3 fols. Written upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Tsha -----

Dza *Tshe dpag med rgyal ba 'dus pa'i lag 'khrid gter ston gyi mdazd pa*, 4 fols.

Va *rTsa gsum gyi las byang dgos 'dod kun 'byung*, 11 fols. Written in Ra lung upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal-po

Zha *bKa' srung kun 'dus pa'i las byang 'dod don kun grub*, 11 fols. Written in Ra lung in the year *me mo glang* [1577] upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Za -----

'A -----

Ya *Bla ma'i rnal 'byor mchod sbyin rdzogs rim a ti rgyun khyer nyams su blang bde ba*, 28 fols.

Ra -----

La *dGra gnan gshin rje rlung bsgrub kyi las gzhung lag len zhal shes dang bcas pa'i khrigs chags su sgrigs pa bstan dgra 'joms byed*, 11 fols. Written in Ra lung upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

Sha -----

Sa -----

Ha *Tshe bcu'i mam bshad gtor dbang rig 'dzin zhig po gling pas mdzad pa*, 9 fols.
Written in Ra-lung upon the request of Zhabs drung Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po

A *Bla ma zhi ba'i gtor dbang bskor ba*, 15 fols.

Ki -----

Khi -----

Gi -----

Ngī *sKu gsum khrid gyi gdams pa'i kha byang rin chen gter mdzod*, 23 fols. Written in the year *chu pho stag* [1542]

Ci -----

Chi -----

Nyi -----

Ti -----

Thi -----

Di -----

Ni -----

Pi -----

Phi -----

Bi -----

Mi -----

Tsi -----

Tshi *rDzogs pa chen po brgyud (=rgyud) bcu bdun gyi dbang mchog rdzogs pa rang byung gi rgyud kyi dgongs pa ji lta ba bzhin chos (=phyogs) sgrigs zin bris su bkod pa*, 31 fols.

Dzi *bsNyen gnas gyi sdom pa len chog*, 8 fols.

Vi *Phyag na rdo rje 'byung po 'dul byed kyi mngon rtogs rjes gnang*, 36 fols.

--- *mNga bdag yab sras la / o rgyan rin po ches gdams pa'i / o rgyan thugs bcud kyi sgrub skor / zung mkhar rdo'i mchod rten padma can nas spyang drangs pa'i bsgrubs bskor la rten pa'i (=brten pa'i) las byang*, 8 fols.

--- *rGyal po chen po pe ha ra'i srog dbang mnga' bdag nyang gi phyag len bzhin bkod pa*, 26 fols.

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THE 'TIBETAN' FORMATION OF SIKKIM:
RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE CONSTRUCTION
OF A CORONATION MYTH

SAUL MULLARD
University of Oxford

INTRODUCTION

If one were to look through the tourist information pamphlets given to visitors on their arrival in Sikkim, one would notice (after references to Sikkimese orchids and claims of Sikkim being the Switzerland of the East) a historical section, in which the tourist is told about the formation of the Sikkimese kingdom and State. The commonly accepted popular history, which I will go into detail below, is basically set around the figure of lHa btsun chen po and two other Tibetan lamas who met at Yoksam and decided to crown a man, king of the hidden land. This man was found in the figure of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, a farmer from Gangtok in east Sikkim, who was crowned king in 1642.

In this article, I examine the details of the above story in light of information gathered from mid-seventeenth century documents, written in Sikkim during the formative period of Sikkimese statehood. Based on these sources, I assess the extent to which the tale of coronation is an accurate representation of an historical event and explain how this particular story became popular in both the orthodox and local histories of the Sikkimese State and population.

For the purposes of this paper, I have used three principal mid-seventeenth century documents, which are further supplemented by a number of eighteenth century manuscripts. Two of the main documents come from the collected works of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med: *Kun bzang rnam pa thar par* (hereafter *KZNT*), and '*Bras ljongs lam yig*; and the third document is the Nam rtse (pronounced Namchi in the Sikkimese dialect) edition of the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (hereafter *GlrN*). The final chapter of this text is an account of the mNga' bdag pa tradition of Byang gter in Sikkim.¹ Supplementing

¹ This text, which follows the *rgyal rabs* from folio 548-594, details the genealogy of the mNga' bdag family, who through the figure of Phun tshogs rig 'dzin and his son Byams pa bstan 'dzin became influential during the formative years of the

these documents are: *'Jigs med dpa' bo'i bka' 'bum*, *'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*, *Bla ma ched mtshan gsum 'bras ljongs sbas gnas phebs tshul*, and *PSLG*.² As the basis of historical enquiry, Tibetan literary works are often deeply misleading, in that chronological references are often sacrificed for religious accounts and life stories, so much so in fact, that it appears that Tibetans are adverse to dates. This impedes the student of Tibetan history, since one may discover *what* happened only to be frustrated by the conspicuous lack of sequential references. Moreover, in some cases one finds that particular authors have the habit of recounting events with a disregard for chronological sequence. While the primary sources used for this article do fall prey to some of these characteristics, by and large they follow a reasonable chronological order with important events marked pinpointed to the day, month, and year in which they occurred.

In addition to discussing the story of the coronation of the first Sikkimese Chos rgyal, I look into the role of two Tibetan lamas and their activities in Sikkim during the early years of the Namgyal dynasty. For this reason, a large part of this paper is dedicated to biographical account of these lamas, namely: lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin. Through this discussion of their activities it is hoped that a clearer picture of the religious and political climate of early Sikkim will become apparent including an understanding of state-led religious patronage. The article concludes with a brief study of the competing position of the two major rNying ma pa lineages in Sikkim and the final ascendance of the rDzogs chen / sMin grol gling branch.

THE SIKKIMESE CORONATION STORY

The most popular account of the coronation of the first Sikkimese Chos rgyal Phun tshogs rnam rgyal centres around the main figure of popular Sikkimese folk history: lHa btsun chen po Nam mkha' 'jigs med. Firstly lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med leaves Tibet with his followers and heads south where he first encounters the mountains of the Sikkimese Himalaya. Unable to cross a deep gorge he contemplates the path before miraculously disappearing into the mountains. After

Sikkimese kingdom. The text was written by Byams pa bstan 'dzin in 1656, the year of his father's death.

² See Karma tshang bsam skal bzang blo ldan in the bibliography for the full title of *PSLG* and information on the other Tibetan sources.

two weeks of waiting, his disciples fear the worst and begin to make preparations for the construction of a stupa to honour their master. Just as they are about to give up all hope, they hear the sound of Nam mkha' 'jigs med's thigh bone trumpet in the distance, after which the master himself appears flying over the gorge, having found the secret northern path into the hidden land. The master and his disciples negotiate the last obstacle and begin tracing a southwardly path into the centre of the hidden land, where finally they reach Yog bsam.

It is in Yog bsam that lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med meets with two other lamas; mNga' bdag sems pa chen po Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, who had arrived via the southern entrance of the hidden land; and Kah: thog Rig 'dzin Kun tu bzang po, who had reached Sikkim through the western door of the *sbas yul*. Then mNga' bdag sems pa chen po proclaims that he should be the ruler of the hidden land because he is descended from the lineage of khri srong lde btsan. However, lHa btsun chen po counters this by quoting from the prophetic traditions of the rNying ma pa, in which it is stated that a fourth person should be present having come from an easterly direction. So it is agreed to send out a search party to the east to find the man that should make up the quartet of prophesised people.

In the eastern town of sGang tog, a man named Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was found milking his cows and seeing that he was endowed with the characteristics of a superior being, he was brought back to west Sikkim. In 1642 this farmer from sGang tog was enthroned in Yog bsam, the meeting place of the three Tibetan lamas, and the whole country was filled with celebrations. After this, lHa btsun chen po consolidated Buddhism in Sikkim with the help of his devout disciple and new king Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, building monasteries and *lha khang(s)* such as Grub sde, known as the oldest monastery in Sikkim, gSang sngags chos gling and Padma g.Yang rtse. He spent the rest of his life in Sikkim opening holy places, discovering *gter ma* and meditating in caves and secluded places.

THE 'TIBETAN' LAMAS

Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med

Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med was born in 1597, in sByar yul, and it is suggested in traditional historical accounts of his life that his family was from the nobility of that area. I have found no record of his father's

name but his mother is clearly mentioned as being Yid ‘ong bu dga’.³ It appears that his father died when he was quite young. Like many Tibetan youngsters, Nam mkha’ ’jigs med spent his early childhood raising the family’s yak, sheep, horses and other animals, spending most of his time on the high pastures near his home town. At the young age of eleven he fled from his parental home with the desire to dedicate his life to the study of religion. He spent six years in the hermitage of gSung snyan grwa tshang under the tutelage of one O gyan dpal sbyor, where he learnt how to read and write, but this apparently did not quench his thirst for the Dharma and so, aged seventeen, he left the hermitage for Kong po.⁴

As with many histories of Tibetan religious figures, he does not go directly to Kong po but instead finds himself wandering through central Tibet. His first stop is Dwags po rtse, when he meets with a Tibetan lama named Rig ‘dzin mchog grub rnam rgyal. He stays two months with this lama before he continues his journey.⁵ He reaches the place of sMin grol bskyed rdzogs gling⁶ (not to be confused with the monastery of sMin grol gling, which was established in 1670), where he stays for around five years, pursuing various forms of renunciation and spiritual practices.⁷ Finally, he makes his way to Kong po where he spends twelve months with one of his principal teachers, Grub thob sod rnam dbang po (1547-1625).

After residing with Sod rnam dbang po, he meets with many other lamas and receives teachings and instructions from them. After which he stays with, perhaps his most important teacher, ‘Ja tshon snying po (1615-1672) and receives instruction on many teachings of the treasure tradition, such as the *gter ma* of Sangs rgyas gling pa (*Bla ma dgongs ‘dus*), Ratna gling pa (*Thugs sgrub* and *sNying ‘dus*), O rgyan gling pa, rDo rje gling pa, Chos rgyal Rin chen gling pa’s teachings on rDzogs chen, Padma gling pa, Karma gling pa, bDe chen gling pa, Rig ‘dzin rgod ldem can, etc.⁸ If we can assume that *KZNT* follows a

³ *KZNT* 49 line 1-2: *ma yid ‘ong bu dga’ zhes bya ba’i mngal du zhugs dus*. “At the time of residing in the womb of (his) mother, who is known as yid ‘ong bu dga’”

⁴ Ibid: 55-56

⁵ Ibid: 60

⁶ Presumably this is either a monastery or a hermitage.

⁷ Op. cit: 61-62

⁸ Ibid: 79-86. Full details of the empowerments, oral instructions and textual teachings received by lHa btsun chen po can be found in *Kun bzang rnam par rgyal ba* 79-103.

chronological order⁹ then these events happened prior to the death of Nam mkha' 'jig med's other main teacher Sod rnam dbang po, in 1625.¹⁰

It appears that he spent the remainder of his time in the Kong po region where he practised and 'revealed' treasure texts until the mid-1640s,¹¹ after which he travelled to Sikkim at the request of one of his principal teachers, 'Ja tshon snying po. In '*Bras ljongs lam yig* (hereafter *LTY*) lHa btsun chen po gives some further reasons for his journey to the hidden land of Sikkim:

While travelling from the eastern direction of Kong po [I] was saddened by the meeting of the degeneration period caused by the general impermanent and changing nature of all existing time.

Especially [at this time] there was misunderstanding between dByings pa chen mo and those such as Gong ma chen po¹² [who resides] in the fort of bKra shis rtse¹³ and the brother of the king from the northern direction who is from the clan of rBa.¹⁴ To whomsoever I spoke to I heard only words of suffering and insults. So I have seen many times in many prophesies, by other eminent masters, that it is necessary for sentient beings of the *dus mtha*¹⁵ to proceed towards the hidden land. Here follows a quotation from 'The sutra of the highest prophesy' which is from the very mouth of our teacher the son of king Suddhodana: "Listen Shariputra! After my parinirvana there will be seven times lineage of the king, which is like the light of a saviour. After that there will be a period of 510 years and towards the end of that time my four disciples must go to four places which are the forests, the island of the external ocean, the source of the essence of meaning rivers and the place of the mountain called Dan tig. They must go to the

⁹ Of such things we cannot be certain as in folio 130, Nam mkha' 'jigs med refers to himself aged only twenty-one, then the following eight pages refer to his activities in Sikkim (he reached Sikkim aged 49).

¹⁰ Op. cit: 123.

¹¹ For example, in 1642, the date that traditionally corresponds with the enthronement of the first Sikkimese Chos rgyal, lHa btsun chen po had composed a poetical text in Kong po.

¹² The Dalai Lama.

¹³ A village in the sTod lung district, which is near Lhasa.

¹⁴ It appears that this may refer to the gTsang princes.

¹⁵ Dus mtha refers to the period of time when the Dharma will degenerate.

island of the south-western places and also all the places of the doctrine of the Buddha such as Khotan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, Uddiyana and India. Since at the end of the time the Buddha Dharma will flourish in the northern snowy land [i.e. Tibet]. That is according to the prophesy by Rig gsum mgon po. At the end of 500 years all the people of Tibet must go to the border regions. They should flee to the forest.” Thus it is prophesied! Thus it is explained!

Furthermore prophesies have been uttered from the very mouth of ‘Ja tshon snying po, who is the second Dorje Chang and who is the body of all Buddhas, “Now proceed towards the hidden land and the border of lHo mon [i.e. Bhutan].¹⁶ Although the Buddha taught heaps of teachings of all the Buddhas to each sentient being’s afflicted with bad karma, it is not possible to stop karma, which is without deception. Now the great powerful troops from Mongolia are coming quickly, and since the sentient beings of the *Dus mtha* will sink in the quagmire of suffering, those sons, disciples, benefactors and persons affectionately connected must abandon attachment and must go in the direction of the peaceful hidden land.” Thus, all that has been persistently commanded [by ‘Ja-tshon snying po] has been understood clearly in my own mind.¹⁷

This opening passage of *LTLY* is enlightening in that it clearly documents the religio-political situation of Tibet in the seventeenth century through references to Mongolian armies, the rise of the Dalai Lama (Gong ma) and the degeneration period of Buddhism. Certainly this passage is a nice example of seventeenth century rNying ma pa religio-political rhetoric, perhaps with the intention to inspire other practitioners to flee to the borderlands. However, it is also important to remember that the seventeenth century was a dangerous time in Tibet, with forcible conversions and the eruption of open civil war, which may have appeared to many (on the losing side) as the ‘degeneration time’.

What is curious about lHa btsun chen po’s life is that during the most turbulent time of the Tibetan civil war he remained in Kong po,

¹⁶ Sikkim is classed within the greater territory of lHo mon which has generally been identified as the later state of Bhutan. It therefore seems that before the establishment of the two Himalayan states of Sikkim and Bhutan, the region to the south of Tibet was generally referred to as lHo mon.

¹⁷ *lHa btsun lam yig* 426-429.

leaving Tibet at least three years after the establishment of the central Tibetan state under the Dalai Lama in 1642. Indeed it was not until the 13th day of the fifth month of the Fire Dog, or *Me khyi*, year (1646) that lHa btsun chen po, with fifteen followers, left Kong po for the hidden land.¹⁸ On his way to Sikkim he passes through Kong po to bSam yas and by the seventh month of the same year he reaches a point where he can view the Sikkimese mountains and there he makes the necessary offerings to the deities of Sikkim.¹⁹ After the ninth month of the same year we are told that he meets with mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin before he finally arrives in Sikkim via Phu chu dkar lha (sic).²⁰

mNga' bDag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin

The second important Tibetan figure in Sikkimese religious and political history was mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, who was born in the palace of Sag khri mkhar in western Tibet in 1592, after which he and his father left western Tibet for dBus gtsang. It appears that Phun tshogs rig 'dzin was born into quite a privileged family that ruled a portion of western Tibet, bordering on Mang yul Gung thang. Further it appears that this family had an important connection with the kings of Mustang as A mgon bsam grub rab brtan (the king of Mustang) was married to the second daughter of Phun tshogs rig 'dzin and that this connection would prove important in Phun tshogs rig 'dzin's later life.²¹

He spent most of his early years training with his father, before he embarked upon a period of meditation and seclusion, which lasted for twelve years.²² His entry into Sikkimese history is marked, as it is with

¹⁸ *LTLY*: 438-439. This is probably due to the fact that he was less connected to the enemies of the dGe lugs pa, unlike one of the other Tibetan lama, Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, who remained for some time in the capital of the gTsang rulers. The text actually gives the date of the *me byi* or Fire Rat year (1636), though this is obviously an error for *me khyi* as the rest of the text follows a reasonably chronological order until page 562 where the date of the eleventh month of the *me khyi* year is given. It is clear that the first date of the *me khyi* is a copying error as every time a new year is mentioned the year is stated and then the months in chronological order until the start of a new year.

¹⁹ *Ibid*: 521.

²⁰ *Ibid*: 548-552.

²¹ *GlrN*: 581 and 587.

²² *GlrN*: 565-566.

IHa btsun chen po, by the prophetic tradition of the rNying ma pa school. In the mNga' bdag appendage to the Nam rtse edition of the *rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* the prophesy of rDo rje gling pa is quoted: "there will arise (a situation) which resembles the hawk hunting for prey, and an individual who is a descendent of the lineage of Khri srong lde btsan²³ (will act as) a symbol of the former attachment to the innate ground of the interior of the sacred land of Sikkim".²⁴ So on the 25th day of the third month of the Water Horse year (1642) Phun tshogs rig 'dzin leaves from Zhigatse, the capital of the gTsang princes, with his son in search of sBas yul 'Bras mo ljongs.²⁵

When he reaches the outer door of the hidden land he issues a number of proclamations and promises to the oath bound protectors of the hidden land and entreats them to remember their oaths to protect the Dharma and the hidden land. He then offers *bsang* to the local divinities and proceeds toward Yog bsam, where he arrives on the third day of the eighth Tibetan month (four months and eight days after he left Zhigatse). The mNga' bdag history marks this event as being the final completion of the prophesies from the *Lung bstan bka' rgya* and *The seven profound and secret teachings of Khri srong lde btsan* which relate that an individual who is both a *ras pa*²⁶ and a descendant of the Tibetan kings will open the hidden land and re-establish the dynasty of Khri srong lde btsan.

²³ The mNga' bdag pa family are considered to be a sub-branch of the royal family of Ladakh, who claim descent from the kings of Gu ge, who were considered to be a branch of the Tibetan royal family. It appears, however, that the mNga' bdag pa family only received this title during the period of Yuan Sa skya rule over central Tibet.

²⁴ Ibid: 575-576. *rdo rje gling pa'i lung byang gsal ba'i sgron me las/ 'bras mo gshongs su nang gi gnas gzhi chags pa'i snga rtags su/ khri srong lde btsan gdung brgyud chig byi'u khra'i ded pa bzhin 'byung bar zhes gsung ba.* This passage may be using the metaphor of the hunt of the hawk as an example of the political climate of mid-seventeenth century Tibet; a period of extreme civil and political disorder, caused by the power struggles of the gTsang prince and Mongolian factions of the dGe lugs pa school.

²⁵ Ibid: 576. *Chu pho rta'i hor zla gsum pa'i nyer lnga la rgyal khab chen po gzhi rtse nas 'jig rtan gyi snyan grags kun la phyi phyag mdzad nas yab sras chas cig 'bras gshongs su phebs.*

²⁶ A *ras pa* is a person who has perfected the practice of inner-fire, a meditation practice which, as a by-product, generates internal heat in the practitioner; so much so it is claimed that those who practise this meditation have the ability to melt snow, etc. The most famous adept of this tradition was Milarepa. *Ras pa* refers to the cotton clothes these practitioners wear.

Then, in accordance with the prophesy of Ratna gling pa that “If in this place, monasteries, stupas and temples are built the land of Tibet will experience a hundred years of happiness and bliss,”²⁷ Phun tshogs rig ‘dzin and his son began the construction of the dMar po lha khang²⁸ in Yog bsam during the 11th month of the Water Sheep year (1643). mNga’ bdag Phun tshogs rig ‘dzin and his son also constructed the monastery of Zil gnon, which they began in 1649 and completed in 1651. It was also around this time that the Byams pa lha khang was constructed in bKra shis lding. However, Phun tshogs rig ‘dzin was also involved in the coronation of Sikkim’s first king Chos rgyal Phun tshogs rnam rgyal at some point between 1643 and the construction of Zil gnon in 1649.

THE THRONE IN THE FOREST: THE CORONATION OF PHUN TSHOGS RNAM RGYAL

In a previous article (Mullard 2005: 75) I argued that one often finds inaccurate references to the date of the establishment of the Sikkimese dynasty. The orthodox approach to Sikkimese history contends that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was brought from sGang tog (the current state capital) and enthroned in Yog bsam nor bu sgang in the year 1642. In my previous article I noted that this was highly unlikely due to a number of issues, one of which was based in the translation of *PSLG*, which stated that the ancestors of the first Sikkimese king, Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, had been resident in western Sikkim at least since the mid-thirteenth to early fourteenth century.²⁹ In the mNga’ bdag chronicle we find that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal originally hailed from a place known as sGang tog.³⁰ This however, does not negate the fact that the

²⁷ Ibid: 577. *lHag par radna’i (sic.) gter byang las/ gnas der lha khang mchod rten sgrub sde tshug/ bod yul lo rgya’i bar du bde bar ‘gyur/.*

²⁸ This monastery no longer exists; however, it is believed that this monastery stood on a site near to the coronation throne in Yog bsam.

²⁹ *PSLG* does state that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was made ruler of Sikkim in 1642, though this appears to be an addition inserted by the editor of the text Gung Dorje in 1979.

³⁰ *GlRN: 578. de skabs sgang tog gi zhal do (sic. zhal ngo) a pa (sic a pha) rdo rjer bkra shis rtags brgyad (dang) rgyal srid sna bdun sogs kyi dbang bskur gnas kyi rgyal por bskod (sic. bkod) mtshan yang rgyal po phun tshogs rnam rgyal zhes gnang nas mchod yon du gyur/.* “At that time the eight auspicious symbols and the seven signs of royalty were conferred upon the Lord of sGang tog A pha rDo rje and (he) was enthroned as king of this sacred place. Furthermore he was given the name of

ancestors of the Sikkimese royal family resided in western Sikkim. Indeed we should remember that the current capital of Gangtok was only settled in the late nineteenth century (1888), and that thereafter the palace at Pho brang was abandoned after the earthquake of 1897, an earthquake that also saw the destruction of the palace at Gangtok.³¹ Thus it may be more likely that the sGang tog we find in the mNga' bdag chronicle actually refers to the settlement of Zil gnon, which was also known by the name sGang tog Zil gnon rtse³² and which according to *PSLG* had been settled during the life time of Brag btsan dar, the son of the Khams Mi nyag prince.³³ Furthermore, the old route to Zil gnon begins in an easterly direction from Yog bsam towards the eastern tributary of the Rathang river for around two hours before following the hill of dPa' bo Hung ri, down in a south-easterly direction to reach modern Zil gnon monastery.³⁴

In my previous article in this journal, I put forward the date of 1646 as the date of the enthronement of the first Sikkimese king, and as of

King Phun tshogs rnam rgyal and the 'priest-patron' relationship was established." In the above passage it appears that *zhal ngo a pa* is in fact a title as *a pha* in western Tibetan dialects conveys a similar meaning to that of *sku ngo*, and given that this text was written by a western Tibetan we can deduce that this phrase indicates an honorific title.

³¹ The palace at Gangtok was rebuilt and served as the royal residence until it was gutted by a fire in the 1920s. A few years prior to the earthquake, Gangtok had become the formal capital after the Political Officer J.C. White had the British residency constructed as his official residence and office. It was with the more proactive policy of the British in the Himalaya that led to the construction of Gangtok as the capital of Sikkim. With the exception of the Sikkimese coronation myth, the student of Sikkimese political history will not encounter Gangtok as a key site in the history of Sikkim until the arrival of J.C. White and the subsequent relocation of the Sikkimese capital in 1888.

³² For example in the following text *Bla ma che mtshan gsum 'bras ljongs sbas gnas phebs tshul* (folio 8) it is noted: *de nas sgang tog zil non rtse bzhugs nas sras chos rgyal A phag* (sic. a pha) *'khrungs/*. Then having resided on the top of the peak of Zil gnon (or more: accurately having resided at Gangs tog zil gnon) the son Dharma raja A phag was born. It may also be important to note that after the capital of Sikkim was moved from west Sikkim to the dBang sdus rtse pho brang in Tumlong, many key ministers relocated and with that move came the re-identification of west Sikkimese place names to new sites in eastern Sikkim. For example today there are two places named 'Bar nyag, one in west Sikkim the other, now in the district of South Sikkim, near the modern town of Shingtam. Other examples include, Tadong, Martam, Samdong, etc.

³³ Mullard 2005: 65-66.

³⁴ I walked this route in January 2006 and it took around five hours, though I was told by a local of bKra shis 'dzom that it would take a local between two and three hours to walk.

yet I have not come across any source contradicting that date. Further, even in the mNga' bdag chronicle we do not have a specific date for the coronation, with that key political event happening between the construction of the dMar po lha khang (1643) and the construction of Zil gnon monastery in 1649.³⁵ Thus it appears likely that the information given in '*Bras ljongs lam yig* is correct and since that particular text follows a chronological pattern, as of yet, there is no reason to doubt its accuracy.³⁶

RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE AND THE RNAM RGYAL DYNASTY

Certainly the evidence presented in the mNga' bdag history seems to suggest that mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin and his son held the position of being the main religious instructor of the first Sikkimese king. However we are also told in the works of lHa btsun chen po that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal also received an initiation into the *gter ma* text of the *Rig 'dzin srog grub*. So where does this leave the state of religious patronage in mid-seventeenth century Sikkim, when texts from both the mNga' bdag pa and lHa btsun pa indicate a level of patronage? Perhaps in order to answer this question we should address the physical evidence i.e. the early Sikkimese monasteries.

According to the mNga' bdag history we are told that during the life time of Phun tshogs rig 'dzin three principal monasteries were built in the name of the mNga' bdag lineage: bKra shis lding (in the centre of the *sbas yul* and thus the most sacred site in Sikkim), Zil gnon (the former ancestral home of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal) and the dMar po lha khang (built close to the site of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal's coronation). lHa btsun chen po, on the other hand, was responsible for the construction of sGrub sde and bKra shis 'dzom, to the west of Zil gnon and in the region of his principal *sbyin bdag*³⁷ lHa dbang bKra shis. Certainly the locations of the mNga' bdag monasteries seem to indicate that this tradition may have had a more prominent position in the early

³⁵ *GlrN*: 578-580.

³⁶ The particular text has the following chronological pattern: every event that has a different year is introduced with the year, the month and the day; an event which shares the same year as the previous event notes only the month and day. Thus we have the pattern year, month-day, 2nd month-day, 3rd month-day, 4th month-day, etc. until the next new year, after which the system is restarted.

³⁷ The role of the *sbyin bdag* in Tibetan Buddhism is quite a complex relationship which can, amongst other things, be identified with the role of a benefactor of religion.

religious politics of Sikkim. Though it should be noted as well that IHa btsun chen po also had a number of royal disciples such as Princess Ye shes dbang mo and her daughter mKha' spyod tshe ring IHa mdzes, whom he instructs on the nature of impermanence.³⁸ Furthermore, it is also mentioned in the *lam yig* that IHa btsun chen po is the Bodhisattva vow holder of the first Sikkimese king: *some fortunate being such as the powerful king Phun tsoq rnam rgyal were given the eight religious vows and the Bodhisattva vows and hence from that time onwards, they came to be known as Bodhisattvas.*³⁹

It appears that the issue of early state-led religious patronage is characterised by competing assertions from the two contenders: IHa btsun Nam 'kha 'jigs med and mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin. However this may be possible to clear up if we take into consideration the role of early Sikkimese politics and its impact upon the development of religious institutions in Sikkim. As I noted in a previous article (Mullard 2005: 75-77), early Sikkim was most likely characterised by a small patchwork of autonomous regions headed by a local chief or lord, one such lord being IHa dbang bKra shis. His territory included the area around bKra shis 'dzom, which later merged with the realm of Phun tshogs rnam rgyal after a private audience, which led to an alliance being forged between the two men. Later this figure was involved in the subjugation of the Lepcha king of Yug mthing, in the upper Yog bsam valley, and this territory was subsumed under the early Sikkimese kingdom. IHa dbang bkra shis is often mentioned in *LTY* under the title of Jo bo, or lord, and it is also clear that the first monastery constructed by IHa btsun chen po was in the territory of bKra shis 'dzom and it appears that IHa dbang bKra shis was in fact one of the principal *sbyin bdag* of IHa btsun chen po.⁴⁰ Thus it appears that, whilst, mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin was perhaps the more influential of the two, IHa btsun chen po also had a number of important patrons amongst the leading families of seventeenth century Sikkim.

It also appears that there was no conflict between the two Lamas as it is noted that the most sacred stupa in bKra shis lding was in fact

³⁸ *LTY*: 578.

³⁹ *LTY*: 583.

⁴⁰ The monastery can still be seen today, and according to the local Lepcha inhabitants, they claim to be the direct descendents of those Lepchas that were settled there during the life of IHa dbang bKra shis. They also mentioned that the site of the current monastery was in fact part of a complex, which included a *rdzong* or residence of IHa dbang bKra shis. They remain followers of IHa btsun chen po.

constructed by IHa btsun chen po as is attested to by the *dkar chag* of the stupa, composed by IHa btsun chen po (for details of this text see Mullard: 2003a). Throughout the collected works of IHa btsun chen po, there are repeated references to many meetings between the lama and the first Sikkimese Chos rgyal, which may indicate at least a lack of hostility between the two, despite the fact that mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin, running contrary to popular opinion and local sentiment, was probably the most prominent lama in Sikkim at that time.

As of yet there is nothing in the contemporary sources to indicate any degree of hostility between the two major religious personalities of early Sikkim which, given the propensity of Tibetans to sectarian differences, is quite remarkable.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORONATION MYTH

If the mNga' bdag lineage dominated early Sikkimese religious life, why is it that in most orthodox historical accounts we find IHa btsun chen po in the central role of royal preceptor? In short, the development of this historical account was based on the later political and religious developments that surrounded the Bhutanese invasion of Sikkim c.1700. As is well known, the Bhutanese invasion led to two significant events in Sikkimese history. The first one was the intervention of the central Tibetan government through the Brag dkar pa minister (Mullard 2003b). The second event was the arrival of IHa btsun 'Jigs med dpa' bo, who was retrospectively recognised as the third incarnation of IHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and who studied in sMin grol gling, the monastery founded by the fifth Dalai Lama's rNying ma pa student gTer bdag gling pa.⁴¹ This figure was to have an important role in the development of Sikkimese political history and filled the religious vacuum left by the declining fortunes of the mNga' bdag lineage in Sikkim. In short, prior to and during the struggle for the throne and the subsequent Bhutanese invasion, the mNga' bdag school sided with the third Chos rgyal's half-sister, Phan bde dbang mo, and her claim to the Sikkimese throne,⁴² and after the defeat of the Bhutanese by the

⁴¹ *'Jigs med dpa' bo'i bka' 'bum*: 125-136. In these pages is a list of all the initiations 'Jigs med dpa' bo received from gTer bdag gling pa and his son, Padma 'gyur med rgya mtsho, whilst he was residing in sMin gling.

⁴² *BGR* notes that the principal mNga' bdag lama of Sikkim at that time was involved in a secret love affair with the Sikkimese princess and half-sister of Phyag rdor rnam rgyal.

Tibetan general Karma dar rgyas and the execution of Phan bde dbang mo after the assassination of the third Sikkimese king in 1717, the mNga' bdag school was left without an important patron.

Furthermore, after the return of the third Chos rgyal Phyag rdor rnam rgyal from Tibet, around 1708, he and 'Jigs med dpa' bo jointly administered Sikkim and set about the reorganisation of the Sikkimese land-holding system. They also built Padma g.yang rtse monastery. With these events the position of the sMin grol gling lineage was firmly established in Sikkim and became the dominant religious tradition in terms of royal patronage, with the lamas of Padma g.yang rtse becoming the most important in Sikkim on account of their role in the coronation of Sikkim's kings. Such later events may account for the inflated role of lHa btsun chen po in subsequent Sikkimese historical writings. Indeed this is suggested by the first documented account of lHa btsun chen po's role in the coronation of the first Sikkimese king being found in 'Jigs med dpa' bo's *bKa' 'bum*.⁴³

CONCLUSION AND HISTORICAL EPILOGUE

In the study of Tibetan history one is often metaphorically torn between sources of historical information and the strong local beliefs in semi-historical legends, which incorporate a number of key religious themes. The coronation story of the first Sikkimese Chos rgyal certainly falls within this category of localised historical belief, which is articulated through the development of the central figure of lHa btsun chen po and the importance of his *gter ma* tradition in later Sikkimese religious history. Or put another way, this local account serves to illustrate the importance of lHa btsun chen po's religious tradition, not only in relation to the mNga' bdag tradition but also in relation to the establishment of political power through the process of searching for a figure who corresponds with the prophetic tradition of the rNying ma pa. This local historical tradition implies that the rNying ma pa, or to be more specific, the tradition of Sikkimese rDzogs chen through the figure of lHa btsun chen po, holds a far more important position than that of Sikkimese royalty, whose dynasty would not have been established without the injunction of lHa btsun chen po.

⁴³ 'Jigs med dpa' bo'i bka' 'bum: 243 line 2. *Kun bzang rnam rgyal gyis* (lHa btsun chen po) *sbas gnas chen po'i sgo phyel rgyal po phun tshogs rnam rgyal sar mnga' gsol*.

In the literary sources, however, we find an altogether different story. What we are told is that the religio-political position of IHa btsun's tradition was less influential, indeed often playing a secondary role to the mNga' bdag tradition. Yet while the mNga' bdag tradition was important in the mid-seventeenth century, it ultimately became embroiled in the politics of the Sikkimese succession and the resulting Sikkim-Bhutan war. Meanwhile in Tibet, the position of selected rNying ma pa traditions improved in both political and religious ways after the Fifth Dalai Lama gained greater control of the Tibetan government's organisation. The rNying ma pa were enjoying a renaissance of sorts, supported by a rNying ma friendly Dalai Lama who, much to the disapproval of the dGe lugs pa authorities, began practicing and revealing texts associated with the rNying ma teachings.⁴⁴

It was by gTer bdag gling pa, a gifted rNying ma student of the Dalai Lama, that sMin sgrol gling was established. gTer bdag gling pa was also a holder of IHa btsun's *gter ma* tradition, which he passed on to his disciple and the third incarnation of IHa btsun chen po, 'Jigs med dpa' bo. With the eruption of the Sikkim-Bhutan war, the flight of the third Sikkimese king to Tibet and the subsequent arrival of Tibetan military aid in Sikkim, Sikkim was being transformed from an independent Buddhist kingdom on the fringe of the Tibetan world to an integrated part of it. Furthermore, with the third Sikkimese king's exile to Tibet he became heavily influenced by figures such as gTer bdag gling pa. After his return to Sikkim, the third Chos rgyal repeatedly invited gTer bdag gling pa's student and third incarnation of IHa btsun Chen po, IHa btsun 'Jigs med dpa' bo, to Sikkim.⁴⁵ By the time 'Jigs med dpa' bo had arrived in Sikkim, the religious and political situation had dramatically changed. New laws and land grants were introduced which changed the way religious and political institutions were to be managed. Perhaps with these changes came the adoption of a new history of the formation of the Sikkimese kingdom, a history which not only highlighted the position of the lineage of IHa btsun chen po, but also the prophesised nature of the first Sikkimese king.

Furthermore after the death of the third Sikkimese king Phyag rdor rnam rgyal in 1717,⁴⁶ the involvement of the Tibetan state (through sMin gling) in Sikkimese politics, an involvement that had been

⁴⁴ For further details of these teachings see Karmay, 1988.

⁴⁵ 'Jigs med dpa' bo bka' 'bum: folio 8.

⁴⁶ mKhan po chos dbang 2003: 136. *Chos rgyal mchog gi phyi lo 1717 lor zhi bar gshegs so.*

growing steadily after Phyag rdor's sojourn in Tibet, further increased with 'Jigs med dpa' bo arranging a marriage between the fourth Chos rgyal, 'Gyur med rnam rgyal, aged only thirteen at the time, and the youngest daughter of gTer bdag gling pa, 'Gyur med sgrol ma.⁴⁷ Ultimately this marriage of convenience failed and the fourth Chos rgyal, seeking a religious life, embarked on a pilgrimage to Tibet, a pilgrimage which ultimately saw the introduction of the bKa' brgyud in Sikkim. However, by the time of the construction of the first Karma bka' brgyud monastery in Sikkim (c.1730s), the ascendancy of sMin sgrol gling had been firmly established and perhaps with that as well the coronation story of Sikkim.

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⁴⁸ The following Tibetan references have been ordered in chronological order of the years of birth of the authors, where known, or the year in which the document was compiled.

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A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF FOUR TIBETAN LAMAS
AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN SIKKIM

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Summarised English translation by
Saul Mullard and Tsewang Paljor

Translators' note

It is hoped that this summarised translation of Lama Tsultsem's biography will shed some light on the lives and activities of some of the Tibetan lamas who resided or continue to reside in Sikkim. This summary is not a direct translation of the original but rather an interpretation aimed at providing the student, who cannot read Tibetan, with an insight into the lives of a few inspirational lamas who dedicated themselves to various activities of the Dharma both in Sikkim and around the world. For the benefit of the reader, we have been compelled to present this work in a clear and straightforward manner; thus we have excluded many literary techniques and expressions which are commonly found in Tibetan but do not translate easily into the English language. We apologize for this and hope the reader will understand that this is not an 'academic' translation, but rather a 'representation' of the Tibetan original which is to be published at a later date.

It should be noted that some of the footnotes in this piece have been added by the translators in order to clarify certain issues and aspects of the text and are not always a rendition of the footnotes in the original text¹. As this English summary will be mainly read by those who are unfamiliar with the Tibetan language, we have refrained from using transliteration systems (Wylie) for the spelling of personal names, except in translated footnotes that refer to recent works in Tibetan and in the bibliography.

¹ Those footnotes added by the translators are followed by the initials [SM].

*Introduction*²

According to the earliest traditions relating the blessing of Tibet by Avalokiteshvara³, Sikkim (also known as Beyul Demojong or ‘the sacred hidden land of the rice valley’)⁴ was blessed by a host of supreme beings and Bodhisattva such as Avalokiteshvara. With their blessings, this place was sanctified as a hidden land for future generations. Many thousands of years later, in the eighth century of our current era, the great master of Uddiyana, the one who emerged from a lotus flower, Padmasambhava and his disciples set foot in this land. For three months, the twenty-five Siddha disciples performed meditations and recitations.⁵ Blessings were bestowed upon the four supreme caves of the four cardinal directions⁶ as well as upon Drakar Tashiding, considered the centre of this rice valley,⁷ the supreme of all hidden lands of Tibet. The gods, demons and local deities of the upper, lower and middle regions⁸ of this great hidden land were bound by oath (to protect the Dharma).

² This work is based on sources found in the library of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, oral sources, and documents listed in the bibliography. Although it is not within my reach to write an inner, outer and secret biography of the great masters, it is hoped that this may provide some information for those who are interested. Whilst many Tibetan lamas have visited, worked, and practised in Sikkim, in this present work, I have only touched at the lives of four recent lamas.

I would like to thank both Dr Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Mr Saul Mullard for their support and help during the time of this research. Furthermore, I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, the great scholar Tashi Tsering, advisor to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and Director of the Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala, for his essential instructions and advice. I deeply apologise for any mistakes that may be present and despite the help from the above people, all errors remain my own.

³ There is a belief amongst Tibetans that in their pre-history, Tibet was a dark land until it was blessed by Avalokiteshvara in a number of different ways such as the bestial origins of the Tibetan peoples. This is a common literary trend found in many historical works such as *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* [SM].

⁴ According to ‘*Bras ljongs gnas yig*, the hidden land of Sikkim is not just a ‘rice’ valley as has been misreported in numerous works but actually a valley of ‘fruit’, the latter having numerous meanings.

⁵ *Pad gling bka' thang*: 321-327, as referred to in bKra shis tshe ring, 2003: 26.

⁶ For more details see Rig 'dzin dngos grub, 1998: 5-8.

⁷ From the earliest writings on the hidden land of Sikkim by Rigzin Goedemchen, Tashiding is considered to be the centre of the hidden land, whereas the political region of Sikkim is much larger.

⁸ *Phu mda' bar gsum*. Generally this means the geographical division of territory into the upper valleys, lower valleys, and all in between [SM].

Later, when the five poisons arose in Tibet at a time of Mongolian invasions and political instability, thanks to the revelation of various treasures previously hidden by Guru Rinpoche regarding the direction and paths into this hidden land, many fortunate people were able to seek refuge there. A prophecy revealed that the guardian deities would protect such texts until the right time for these to be revealed had come.

From the eighth until the end of the thirteenth century, during the time of the three Dharmarajas of Tibet, this land of Sikkim became familiar with the teachings and traditions of Tibetan Buddhism thanks to the blessing of Guru Rinpoche. In accordance with the hidden land's prophecies, a mind-incarnation of Guru Rinpoche, Rigzin Goedemchen (1337-1408) visited Sikkim in the fourteenth century. He was the first to open the doors to the hidden land.⁹ Later, his Tulku Ngari Rigzin Legdenje¹⁰ also visited this hidden paradise.

In the thirteenth century, Gye Bumsa,¹¹ a descendent of the kings of Minyak, arrived in Sikkim. He was the first to extend his political authority and implement rules in the land. Gradually, between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Buddhist religion of Tibet firmly established itself in Sikkim.

Then during the seventeenth century, the three incarnate yogis of Tibet arrived in Sikkim¹² and re-opened all the hidden doors to the land. Furthermore, Phuntsog Namgyal, who was a descendent of the lineage of the kings of Khams Minyak, was enthroned Dharmaraja of Sikkim.

During the reign of this lineage of Dharmarajas (mid-seventeenth to the twentieth century), which was characterised by the protection and authority of the Dharma, many great lamas of various religious traditions and lineages arrived in this blessed land. Among these was the reincarnated Nyingma lineage of Lhatsun Kunzang Namgyal¹³ as well as Kagyud and Sakya lamas. Similarly, the lineage of Ngadag Sempa Chenpo Phutsog Rigzin¹⁴ gradually established itself in Sikkim

⁹ For further details 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs: 18, and mKhan po lha tshe ring, 2002: 12-18 and 1997: 20-21. mKhan po chos dbang, 2003: 12 and 61 and Rig 'dzin dngos grub, 1998: 8, and 1999: 1-13.

¹⁰ 'Bras ljongs rgyal rab: 18, mKhan po lha tshe ring, 2002: 23-26; mKhan po chos dbang, 2003: 61.

¹¹ For more information see 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs: 20-36; mKhan po lha tshe ring, 1997: 21 and 2002: 196-206; mKhan po chos dbang, 2003: 48 and 61.

¹² For more information see the relevant sections of the above sources.

¹³ Another name for Lhatsun Namkha Jigme, one of the founding saints of Buddhism in Sikkim. See mKhan po lha tshe ring, 2002.

¹⁴ Ibid.

along with many great lamas who were followers of Guru Padmasambhava. By the grace of these many great lamas, there spread in Sikkim a number of Buddhist traditions such as Dzogchen and Mahamudra.¹⁵

Due to the disturbances in Tibet caused by the Chinese occupation of the mid-twentieth century, a number of Tibetan lamas from the various Buddhist traditions came to Sikkim where many became active and contributed to the practice of Buddhism. In this article, I will be looking into the lives and contributions of the following four Tibetan lamas who became active in Sikkim. This choice has been determined by the availability of sources and documents, which have been roughly compiled into the brief biographies of:

1. The 16th Gyalwang Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje (1924-1981)
2. The 4th Dodrup Chen Thubten Thinley Palzangpo (b.1927)
3. Serdup Dungzin Paljor Lhundup Dorje (1917-1980)
4. The 10th Rigzin Yolmo Tingkyey Gonjang Tulku, Orgyen Jigme Thinley Kunkhyab (b.1961)

Below is a list of other major Tibetan lamas who came to Sikkim after 1959.

1. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama (b.1935)
2. Sakya Trizin Dolma Phodrang (b.1945)
3. Sakya Phuntsog Phodrang Dagchen Rinpoche (previous and present)
4. The 13th Shamar Rinpoche (b.1952)
5. Drigung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche (b.1946)
6. Gyalwang Drugchen Rinpoche (b.1963)
7. The 12th Palpung Tai Situ Rinpoche (b.1954)
8. The 12th Tshurphu Goshri Drungpa Gyaltshab Rinpoche (b.1954)
9. The 3rd Jamgon Kontrul Rinpoche (1954-1991/92?)
10. Taglung Zhabdrung Chokyi Nyima (1915-1994)
11. Taglung Zhabdrung Tenzin Gurmed Chokyi Wangchug
12. Minling Trichen Rinpoche (b.1930)
13. The 7th Dzogchen Rinpoche (b.1964)

¹⁵ Dzogchen is one of the principle doctrines of the Nyingma tradition; Mahamudra is a key doctrine of the Kagyud tradition.

14. Rongchen Kirti Rinpoche
15. Zhechen Rabjam Rinpoche (b.1966)
16. Dzogchen Ponlob (previous and present)
17. Zurmang Garwang Rinpoche (b.1964)
18. The 8th Khamgar Dongyud Nyima
19. Taglung Matul Rinpoche (previous and present)
20. Dzongsar Khyentse Choekyi Lodroe (1893-1959)
21. Dzongsar Kyentse Yangsi Rinpoche (b.1961)
22. Sogyal Rinpoche (b. circa 1950)
23. Dudjom Rinpoche (1904-1987)
24. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991)
25. Zurmang Drungpa Rinpoche (previous)
26. Khenchen Khragu Rinpoche (b.1933)
27. Khraleq Kyabgon Rinpoche (b.1955)
28. Ga A khro Rinpoche
29. Palyul Drubwang Penor Rinpoche (b.1932)
30. Benchen Sangye Nyenpa Rinpoche (previous and present)
31. Palyul Dzongnang Rinpoche
32. Ripa Bagyod Rinpoche (b.1942)
33. Derge Chedrog Yonggi Migyur Rinpoche (previous and present)
34. Neten Chogling Rinpoche (1928-1972)
35. Zhadeu Dzarong Trulzhig Rinpoche (previous and present b.1923)
36. The 9th Tingkye Gonjang Rinpoche (1907-1959)
37. Dzongsar Ngari Choeje Tulku
38. Gojo Dordzong Rinpoche
39. Grugu Chogyal Rinpoche
40. Palpung Ongen Rinpoche (1926-1987)
41. Benchen Tenga Rinpoche (b.1932)
42. Yardrog Taglung Tsetrul Rinpoche (b.1927)
43. The 8th Dodrag Chuzang Rinpoche (b.1933)
44. Drigun Lho Oentrul Rinpoche (b.1958)
45. Beu Ri Gyalsay (previous)
46. The 3rd Trijang Rinpoche (1900-1981)
47. Nyangtod Kyibug Rinpoche (b.1924)
48. Rechung Rinpoche (1927-2001)
49. Kham Draggo Domang Terchen Yangthang Rinpoche (b.1929)
50. A Pho Yeshe Rangdrol (a nephew of Togdan Sakya Sri)
51. Tshurphu Garchen Choje Karma Thinlay Rinpoche
52. Bongsar Kyentse Rinpoche

53. Drongpa Lamkhyen Gyalpo Rinpoche (b.1939)
54. Ngor Luding Khen Rinpoche (b.1931)
55. Ga Tharlam Dezhung Lungrig Tulku (1906-1987)
56. Thartse Zhabdrung
57. Luding Zhabdrung
58. Gaje Kham U Rinpoche (b.1927)
59. Derge Pekar Rinpoche
60. The 8th Khyungpo Gyaton Rinpoche (1908-1970)
61. The 2nd Dromo Geshe Rinpoche (1937-2001)
62. Dromo Kagyu Tulku
63. Lingtshang Ringu Tulku (b.1952)
64. Zurmang Bardo Tulku
65. Drubla Kalu Rinpoche (1905-1989)
66. Chadral Rinpoche (b.1913)
67. Drugpa Thugsay Rinpoche (1917-1984)
68. Kham Minyag Changchub Dorjee Rinpoche
69. Trulzhig Pawo Dorjee Rinpoche (1897-1962)
70. Khamgar Togden Choleg
71. Dilyag Drubpon Tenzin Rinpoche (previous and present)
72. Drubpon Bokar Rinpoche (1940-2004)
73. Terton Tulzhug Lingpa (c.1916- c.1965)
74. Gangri Lopon Kunzang Dorjee
75. Dzogchen Khenpo Dazer (1922-1990)
76. Dzogchen Khenpo Thubten Tsondu Phuntsog (1920-1978)
77. Dzogchen Khenpo Mewa Thubten Odzer (1928-2002)
78. Sakya Khenpo Rinchen
79. Sakya Khenpo Lodro Zangpo (1925-1986)
80. Dzongsar Khenpo Dosib Kunga Wangchug
81. Dzongsar Khenpo A Pad
82. Khenpo Lodro Donyod
83. Dragyab Kyabgon Rinpoche
84. Chogyam Trung pa Rinpoche (1939-1987)
85. Akong Rinpoche
86. Tharthang Rinpoche
87. Chogyal Rinpoche (Italy)
88. Gyakhar Khenpo Chodrag Tenphel
89. Khadro Chemo Ogyen Tshomo
90. Dzongsar Khyentse Khadro Tsering Chodon
91. Trulzhig Pawo Dorjee Khadro Pema Dechen

In addition to these rinpoches, many Tibetan doctors (amji), ngagpas (tantric practitioners), nuns as well as venerable and learned laymen came to Sikkim.

If the appropriate sources become available, it is my hope to compile the biographies of those lamas who made spiritual contributions to the development of Dharma in Sikkim.

THE 16TH GYALWANG KARMAPA RANGJUNG RIGPE DORJE¹⁶

The brief biography of the 16th Karmapa Rangjung Rigpai Dorje, the supreme head of the Kargyudpa lineage, is as follows.

Among the four major and four minor Kargyud lineages which originated from the teachings of Pal Dorje Chang, Drupchen Telopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, Namey Darpo Lhaje, etc., the Karmapa Rangjung Rigpai Dorje is the throne holder of one of the major Kagyud lineages, namely the 'Kamtsang Kargyud'. He was born at Singe Namzong in Dhenkhok in the Derge province of Khams, on the 15th of June 1924. His father's name was Ah thup Tsewang Phuntsog and mother was Gyalkar Kalsang Choedon.

With clear instructions and the will of the previous Karmapa, he was recognized as the reincarnation of the 15th Karmapa. On 5th August 1931, at the age of eight, the reincarnated boy was enthroned as the 16th Karmapa. A huge gathering of leaders, lamas, rinpoches, the general Tibetan public as well as representatives from the governments of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh attended the enthronement ceremony which was performed by 11th Jamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche (1868-1952).

The young incarnated Karmapa received his religious education from Tai Situ Rinpoche, Bho Gangkar Rinpoche (1903-1957), Jangon Kongtrul Palden Khyentse Worser (1904-1953) and many other eminent teachers and became the master of all forms of Buddhist teachings. From 1940, at the age of seventeen, the Karmapa predicted that he would have to leave his homeland due to problems in Tibet. Later, following the invasion of his country, he reached Sikkim via India.

The relation between the Karmapa and Sikkim dates back to the eighteenth century when the 4th Chogyal or king of Sikkim, Gyurmed Namgyal (1703-1732), visited Tibet on a pilgrimage. Following an

¹⁶ Sources used for each biography are separately listed in the bibliography.

audience with the 12th Karmapa Jangchub Dorje (1703-1732), he became his disciple and founded the relationship of ‘mchod yon’.¹⁷ Upon his return, the Chogyal built three Kagyud monasteries in Sikkim. They were Karma Rabtenling at Ralang (South Sikkim), Karma Thubten Choekhorling at Rumtek (East Sikkim) and Karma Tashi Choekhorling at Phodong (North Sikkim). It is said that the Karmapa offered prayers and blessed the three Kagyud monasteries directly from his seat at Tshurphu in Tibet. In some of the documents of those times it is mentioned that it was the 9th Karmapa Wangchuk Dorje who was involved with the meeting and consecration of the Sikkimese Chogyal and monasteries. However, this is incorrect as the 9th Karmapa lived during the sixteenth century and at that time the dynasty of the Sikkimese kings had yet to be established.

The 8th Chogyal of Sikkim Sidkeong Namgyal (1819-1874) was recognized as the reincarnation of Situ Panchen’s uncle, Tulku Karma Rinchen Naiton Tenzin of Khams Dege Palpung Gompa by 14th Karmapa Thakchog Dorje (1798-1868). The Karmapa ordained him as a monk and gave him the name Kyabgon Sidkeong Karma Dupgyud Tenzin Dhargay Lhundup Nedhon Wangpo. He was appointed as the head of all the Kargyud monasteries in Sikkim and on account of which developed a very close and cordial relationship between the Karmapa lineage and Sikkim. The 15th Karmapa recognised the 9th Chogyal Thutob Namgyal’s son as the incarnation of Sidkeong Namgyal and gave him the name Sidkeong Tulku (1879-1914).

The 16th Karmapa has given many religious teachings in Sikkim and at the request of the three Sikkimese Kargyud monasteries, he was invited at the age of 25 to Gangtok. He reached Sikkim in 1948 via India. The Karmapa met with the Sikkimese Chogyal Sir Tashi Namgyal (1893-1963) and gave many religious initiations to him, the council of ministers, lamas, and the general public and displayed the ‘Back Hat’ to the crowd. In 1954, he returned to Lhasa and gave an audience to the then Prince of Sikkim, Lama Palden Thundup (1923-1982) who was then staying in Lhasa.

In 1956, at the age of 33, the Karmapa attended the Buddha Jayanti, which marked the 2500th anniversary of the death of the Buddha. He was invited by the Government of India and the Mahabodhi Society of India. The Karmapa was well received in Sikkim by the Chogyal, the

¹⁷ ‘mChod yon’ is a Tibetan religious concept which defines the relationship between a religious practitioner and his lay sponsors. In short, the religious figure becomes the principle teacher of the layman and he in turn makes regular offerings to support the activities of the teacher [SM].

ministers, and the general public and performed the 'Black Hat' ceremony for all the devotees on that occasion.

In 1957, the Karmapa again returned to Gangtok where he was met by the Chogyal and ministers. He was invited to Phodong monastery where he performed rituals and blessings for all who had gathered and displayed the 'Black Hat' for the people of that area. Though Rumtek Samten Choeling requested the Karmapa to visit that monastery, the Karmapa had to decline due to lack of time but vowed to return in the near future.

In 1959, the Karmapa left Tibet on account of the Chinese occupation and arrived in India via Bhutan in the same year. The Royal Government of Bhutan opened a dialogue with India regarding the residence of the Karmapa and the Government of India agreed to make the town of Dharamsala, in Himachal Pradesh, the permanent residence of the Karmapa. However, just as the Karmapa left Bhutan and arrived in India, a representative of the Government of Sikkim, Barmiok Athing Tashi Dadul Densapa (1902-1989) and a representative of the Government of India, Atuk Babu, had a private audience with the Karmapa at Buxa in the Dooars. They reminded the Karmapa of the close connection between the Karmapa and Sikkim which dates to the times of the 4th Chogyal of Sikkim Gyurme Namgyal (1707-1733) and the 12th Karmapa (1703-1732), a relation which had continued up to the then king of Sikkim Sir Tashi Namgyal. The Karmapa, the Governments of Sikkim and India agreed that the entire entourage of the Karmapa should be relocated to Sikkim and thus, in accordance with the earlier prediction, the Karmapa moved to Sikkim. On the 5th day of the 5th month of the Tibetan calendar (1959), the Karmapa, aged 36, arrived in Gangtok. The traditional Tibetan welcome was extended to the Karmapa and his entourage by the three Kagyud monasteries of Sikkim and the entire public of the kingdom. Members of the royal family and the ministers of Sikkim had an audience with the Karmapa and made the necessary arrangements for his temporary residence at the site of the old Rumtek monastery.

According to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, 150 incarnated lamas and monks offered daily prayers in the morning and evening on different subjects of Buddhism. The Crown Prince Palden Thundup visited Rumtek and had an audience with the Karmapa. He informed him of the plans to construct a new monastery for the Karmapa's permanent residence and it was agreed that the new monastery should be built near the site of the original Rumtek monastery.

According to the astrologer's auspicious predictions, the foundation of the monastery was laid with prayers and rituals in accordance with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. During the ceremonies, the Karmapa presented a statue of Guru Rinpoche to the Crown Prince of Sikkim.

At the request and invitation of Ralang Kargon Rabtenling, the Karmapa led the special 29th day ritual performance of 'Gu Tor'.¹⁸ At that time, the Bon system of animal sacrifice prevailed in some areas of Sikkim so the Karmapa initiated special ritual performances and composed appropriate ritual prayers. The Karmapa asked the people to follow his instructions and perform the new rituals in lieu of animal sacrifices. From that point, the ritual sacrifice of animals was stopped in Sikkim. He returned to Rumtek after his visit to Ralang. From the 11th day of the 6th month of the Tibetan calendar, the Karmapa gave teachings on the eight main teachings of the Kagyud lineage and gave initiations. Around that time, he ordered the carving of 20,000 wood blocks of the non-sectarian movement and printed many Tibetan texts including some from the 'Kamtshang Kagyud' lineage.

On the 3rd day of the 5th month of the Tibetan calendar (1960), the Karmapa, aged 37, began giving teachings on the 'Kargyud Ngakzod Chenmo' to four of his principle disciples, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991), fifteen rinpoches, hundreds of monks and thousands of Sikkimese devotees. He concluded the teachings on the 4th day of the 6th month of the Tibetan calendar (the same day the Buddha gave his first teaching after attaining enlightenment). The teachings were finally concluded with special offerings and prayers.

In 1961, the Karmapa recruited monks and instructed them on the original form of the 'Vinaya Pitaka' (rules of monastic conduct). The monks were to follow all the monastic rules and regulations contained within the Vinaya and the three months 'yarnay' monsoon meditation which included making special offerings, prayers and strict religious activities was initiated. During 'yarney', the monks could not travel long distances or eat meat and had to devote their time to religious activities. This was probably the first time that the tradition of the summer retreat was followed in Sikkim.

On account of the long and close relationship of teacher and disciple that existed between Sir Tashi Namgyal, his son the Crown Prince and the Karmapa, the Chogyal offered 74 acres of land to the Karmapa on 22 November 1962 and started the construction of the

¹⁸ This is a ritual of offering 'torma' or sacrificial cakes on the last day of the Tibetan year. The reason for doing this is to expel the previous year's inauspicious forces and to prevent negative forces proceeding into the New Year [SM].

main chapel or Tsuglakhang, as well as quarters for monks above the location of the old Rumtek monastery.

By 1966, the newly built monastery and exile seat of the Karmapa, Shedup Choekhorling, was completed and all the statues, religious texts, relics and blessed articles which were brought from Tibet were placed in the main temple of the monastery. The monastery became a site for worship and benefit for all sentient beings.

Finally on the first day of the first month of the Tibetan calendar i.e. Losar, the Karmapa, his closest disciples and the entire population of monks moved to the new monastery. Since that day the rules and regulations of the Vinaya have governed the monastery. Further, the monthly ritual of forgiveness known as 'Soljong' was initiated, regular religious activities such as prayers on the 10th and 25th day of the Tibetan calendar, monastic dances and other rituals were all learnt and practised on time.

Everyday, all the young incarnate lamas, rinpoches and monks devoted their time to the learning of Buddhism, meditation and practice of tantric and non-tantric aspects of Buddhism such as debate, reading and writing and the recitation of religious scriptures. They also learnt how to make 'torma' (ritual cakes), perform religious dances and to play religious instruments. 'Tormas' are made of 'tsampa' or flour dough and come in various shapes and sizes according to the ritual that is to be performed. After all these ritual aspects were introduced, a strong foundation for learning and spiritual training in Buddhism was firmly laid. As symbols of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddha, 500 copies of the real and authentic teachings of the Buddha, known as Kanjur Rinpoche, were re-printed according to the edition of the Derge Printing press.¹⁹ Those copies were distributed to many monasteries, regardless of their sect, and many of the damaged religious texts and artefacts were either replaced or repaired.

In 1968, when the Karmapa was 45 years old, Yarpa Sonam Gyatso Trateng and his wife Princess Sonam Padeun of Sikkim had an audience with the Karmapa. Princess Sonam Padeun was pregnant at that time and the Karmapa predicted that the child would be the reincarnation of Zurmang Gharwang.²⁰

Despite the Karmapa's previous attempt to prevent the sacrifice of animals in Sikkim, many villagers still followed the old tradition. So

¹⁹ The Derge printing press in Eastern Tibet was one of the most famous publishing houses in Tibet [SM].

²⁰ Zurmang Gharwang Rinpoche's current monastery, Pal Karmae Zurmang Shedup Choekhorling, is located at Lingdum in East Sikkim.

again in 1970, the Karmapa advised the villagers to stop the sacrificial offerings of animals. Many people took the oath to refrain from performing blood offerings and replace these with a special prayer and ritual composed by the Karmapa.

In 1978, at the age of 55, the construction of the meditation cells for those monks who wished to undertake the 'three year three month' meditation were completed and the first monks took up residence for their retreat. By this time, all aspects of the monastery, both physical and spiritual were completed and this can be credited to the Karmapa's wish to promote Buddhism and increase the wellbeing of all sentient beings.

On the 24th of February 1981, the Karmapa presented the 103 volumes of the 'Derge Kanjur' to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. He also presented a large number of tantric texts before a large crowd of dignitaries and officers, including the Governor of Sikkim, Shri Homi Taleyarkhan, Chief Minister N.B. Bhandari, Tibetology Director A.C. Banerjee and state ministers.

In order to reveal the mortality of all beings and the impermanent nature of all phenomena, the 16th Karmapa resigned his earthly body and passed into the clear heavenly light on Friday 6 November 1981 at the age of 59 in John High Hospital, Chicago, USA. His body was brought back to Rumtek and cremated, after which the remains were entombed in a stupa, with various relics, and precious stones. The stupa is known as Kudung Chorten Rinpoche and can be seen today at Rumtek's Dharma Chakra Centre as a relic for devotees and religious practitioners.

THE 4TH DODRUP CHEN THUBTEN THINLEY PALZANGPO

Herein follows a brief biography of the life of the 4th incarnation of Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, the lineage holder of Jigme Lingpa's Dzogchen treasure text. As predicted by the 5th Dzogchen Rinpoche, Thubten Choekyi Dorje (1872-1935), Dodrup Chen Rinpoche was born in 1927 in the village of Tse, on the bank of the Serchu River, in the region of Serkhog in the Amdo province of Tibet. His father was called Drala and his mother Kali Kyi. When Dodrup Chen Rinpoche was a child, Dzogchen Rinpoche gave him the name of Thubten Thinley Palzangpo. In 1930, at the age of four, he was enthroned amongst a great crowd of lamas, laymen, and women in the monastery of Sangchen Ngodrup Palwarling. He studied how to read and write from

the age of five. From 1936 to 1951, he studied Buddhist teachings with many great scholars, including the sutras, tantras, commentaries, and Jigme Lingpa's Dzogchen treasure text. Since he dedicated himself to the understanding of these teachings, he became profoundly accomplished in the realisation of the essence of all phenomena.

In 1941, he gave a thorough and perfect initiation in his monastery on the 'Longchen Nyingthig' to a vast gathering of the monastic community. From 1946 onwards, he held the position of Master of his monastery and was invested with spiritual and administrative authority. In 1956, he built a new temple for the monastic college where he gave initiations and teachings on the 'Rigzin Terdzoe', the 'Lama Gongdu' and the oral tradition of the Nyingma school.

He nurtured and preserved the Buddha-Dharma in Sikkim in some of the following ways. By 1956, it was clear that the political situation was changing in Tibet and it was believed that these changes were in accordance with the prophetic tradition of Sangyay Lingpa, Aphanq Terton, and the writings of the 3rd Dodrup Chen Rinpoche (which included a number of prophesies regarding events in the life of his next incarnation). In these prophetic texts, it is stated that such changes indicate that this Lama should flee to the holy land of India. So it was that on the 12th of October 1957, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche arrived in Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. The Dodrul Stupa's area in Deorali was selected as a suitable site for the Lama, and Trulzhig Rinpoche (1897-1962)²¹ advised Crown Prince of Sikkim Palden Thondup Namgyal to become a personal supporter of Dodrup Chen Rinpoche.

Around this time, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology was being established. Sir Tashi Namgyal along with the Crown Prince and N.C. Sinha, the director of the Institute, offered Dodrup Chen Rinpoche the opportunity to conduct research on the religions of Tibet. So it was that he took up the responsibility of working diligently for the benefit, and in the service, of all sentient beings and the Dharma. From the 26th of April 1960, he worked at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology where his main area of research was concerned with the vast range of mandalas found in the oral and treasure teachings of the Nyingmapa school. In addition, he gave teachings on 'The Seven Treasure Stores of

²¹ Trulzhig Pawo Dorje Rinpoche was originally from Khams Minyak in eastern Tibet. He arrived in Sikkim at the age of fifty around 1946 via Chorten Nyinma and Lachung. Trulzhig Rinpoche built the Dodrul Chorten in 1948 according to the wishes of Chogyal Tashi Namgyal and Crown Prince Palden Thondup Namgyal. Later, Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal's third son, Prince Palden Gyurmed Namgyal (b.1964), was recognised as the reincarnation of Trulzhig Rinpoche.

Philosophical Treatises of the Quintessential Instructions of the Profound and Visionary Revealed Teachings of the Venerable Longchen Rabjam'. He also re-published 'The Seven Treasures of Longchen Rabjam', including 'The Trilogy of Natural Ease', and 'The Trilogy of Natural Freedom'. He also re-published Rigzin Jigme Lingpa's 'Heart Essence of the Great Expanse' as well as the teaching of Jigme Lingpa's 'Sky Treasury of Visionary Revealed Teachings'. Furthermore, he gave transmissions and empowerments on such texts as the 'The Great Assembly of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities' which is from 'The Garland of Temporary Illusions, the King of the Tantras', 'The Wrathful and Peaceful Deities as an Assemblage', and the oral transmissions of the tantra class. In brief, for a period of 15 years, the master conducted research at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology until 1975 on the scriptures of Buddhism, the early transmissions of the Nyingma School as well as on the general teachings of Buddhism. His contribution towards the service of the Dharma and sentient beings was thus extensive and he dedicated himself and his spiritual activities towards the benefit of others.

In 1961, Trulzhig Rinpoche decided to establish an institute for the two traditions of academic study and meditation. The construction of the Institute for Higher Nyingma Studies (Thubten Do ngag Choeling) began and a large number of monks joined the institute upon its completion four years later. Then, Trulzhig Rinpoche discussed the need to establish a meditation college in the area of Lukshyama, around four kilometres above Gangtok, and asked Dodrup Chen Rinpoche to establish it. However, it was never built in that location and eventually, the centre was built near the Dodrul Stupa in Deorali.

In 1978, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche began the initial construction of the meditation college called Pema Urling (the sanctuary of the light of the lotus) according to the wishes of Trulzhig Rinpoche, the Chogyal of Sikkim, the Queen Mother, the ministers, the clergy, the laity, and the various donors. On 31st May 1979, the meditation college was successfully completed, a celebration was held and later that year, the first intensive retreat began. On that occasion many people—Tibetans, Bhutanese, Sikkimese, Nepalese, Tamangs, Sherpas, etc.—assembled and the Sikkimese abbot of Phensang monastery (North Sikkim) was enthroned as Khenpo by Dodrup Chen Rinpoche and was given the name Dechen Dorje. He had studied in the Sikkim Government Shedra under Khenpo Rinchen and Khenpo Daser for 16 years. This may have been the first Sikkimese khenpo.

Following this, the main assembly hall, the monks' quarters, and the Ngondro temple of what is known today as the Chorten monastery were built. A new storeroom for housing the scriptures and books was also added.

In 1975, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche gave the oral transmission and initiation of the 'Nyingma Kama' text at Namnang. In 1978, he gave the oral transmission of 'The Seven Treasures of Longchen Rabjam' at Phensang monastery.

In 1983, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche identified the son of the Private Secretary to the Sikkimese Palace, Tashi Gyaltzen Lachungpa—commonly known as Tashi Babu—and Tsering Yoden as the genuine incarnation of Rongnye Gomchen Changchup Dorje of Khams Minyak. The present incarnate is known as Kunzang Tenpai Gyatsen (Lachung Tulku).

In 1985, Rinpoche gave the oral transmission and initiation of the 'Longchen Nyingthig Yashe' at the Chorten monastery. Then in 1987, Prince Wangchuk Namgyal of Sikkim offered to be the benefactor of Buddhism and teachings on the 'Rinchen Terdzoe', which were given in Tashiding over a period of two months. Then in 1991, for the sake of maintaining the teachings and restoring them from defilement, Rinpoche gave initiations and instructions in his own monastery on the 'Lama Gongdu' and the oral transmissions of the early Nyingmapa. Thus he set hundreds of people, such as lamas, tulkus, students and masters who had come from all directions of India, Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal on to the path of maturation and liberation.

Dodrup Chen Rinpoche conducted research into the early translations of the Nyingmapa, the treasure texts and the oral transmissions, the 'Rigzin Sogdrup', the six volumes of Jatshon Nyingpo, the 'Treasure Scriptures' of Pema Lingpa, the mandalas of all the upper and lower teachings of the 'Longchen', and all the 'tsakli'.²² In his Chorten monastery, he gave teachings on the general and specific doctrines of Buddhism and the traditions of the old translations. In 1995, for a period of five days, he gave initiations and instructions on the 'Longchen Nyingthig' and then again in the same year, in the western Sikkimese monastery of Pemayangtse, he gave teachings on 'The Six Volumes of the Pure Treasures of Jatshon Nying po'. Furthermore, he gave teachings at the Chorten monastery on 'The Seven Treasures of Longchen' and the 'Collected Works' of Jigme Lingpa and established the summer retreat system known as 'yarney'.

²² 'Tsakli' are small images of deities used by rinpoches when giving initiations.

He also initiated a yearly ‘Drupchen’ on ‘Phurba gyug lug’ held at the end of the twelfth month at his own monastery. Then in 1997, he met with Sikkim’s Chief Minister Shri Pawan Kumar Chamling who had expressed the wish to build a statue of Guru Rinpoche in Namchi. The construction of the statue was initiated in 2001 and was consecrated three years later.

Dodrup Chen Rinpoche visited several monasteries in Sikkim, and led the practices of rituals and empowerments. He maintained the lineage of Jigme Lingpa’s teachings of ‘Longchen Nyingthig’ in the territory of Sikkim, and made those particular teachings widespread and popular. Today he is regarded as one of the greatest masters of the Nyingmapa tradition.

Dodrup Chen Rinpoche is currently revered as the most senior Rinpoche in Sikkim; it was thanks to Trulzhig Rinpoche’s insistence that he settled in this land. A very serious practitioner, Rinpoche prefers to lead a peaceful life within the retirement of his monastery. He is however accessible and a large number of Sikkimese seek his advice and blessing on a daily basis.

SERDUP DUNGZIN PALJOR LHUNDUP DORJE²³

Serdup Dungzin Paljor Lhundup Dorje Jigme Wangchuk Rinpoche was born as the son of Khyentse Rigpai Dorje at Nyang Shung Serdrak Dupde, in the Tsang province of Tibet on the 1st day of the 10th month of Fire Snake year of the 15th Rabjung (according to the lunar calendar), which corresponds to the year of 1917. His father, Khyentse Rigpai Dorje (1880-1938) was the 10th incarnate of Lama Shakyai Gyaltsen and the pure descendent of Chimton Shakya Badra. Lama Shakyai Gyaltsen was the root Guru of Nangsa Hodboom. He had been born out of a bamboo tree in Sikkim and therefore was also known as Nyukdong Sangay (Bamboo tree Buddha).

Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche was educated under the spiritual guidance of his own father and his father’s root guru, Tertön Shakdeu Trulshig Dongak Lingpa, one of the greatest Dharma masters of the nineteenth century. At the age of eleven, he completed the basic course ‘Chyakbum’ according to the Dharma text ‘Sabcheos Yangti Nagpo Sergyi Dru Chig’. At the age of twelve, he received the empowerment

²³ Nangzey Dorjee, former Secretary to the Government of Sikkim and eldest son of Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche, provided much of the following information.

of the yogic practice known as ‘Tummo Padmai Druzing’ and maintained the life of a yogi with minimum clothing as a ‘ray kyang’ (single cloth). At the age of thirteen, he studied, with great effort and hardship, the advanced courses of yoga known as ‘Tsalung Dechen Tyingyi Lahdrei Trhulkhor’ according to the Dharma text ‘Or sal Dorje Nyingpo’. He was thus, from the very young age, respected by all as an accomplished and spiritually attained person.

At the age of 22, Rinpoche’s father attained Parinirvana and from then on until the age of 37, he dutifully shouldered the responsibility of holding his late-father’s lineage as ‘dungzin’ (hereditary lineage holder). One of the important responsibilities was to perform ‘Tshedup’ (longevity prayer) for H.H. the Dalai Lama. This demanded a yearly six months retreat followed by offerings on the occasion of the Tibetan New Year. This had been performed by his late-father since the reign of H.H. the 13th Dalai Lama (1876-1933).

Rinpoche’s father, Khyentse Rigpai Dorje, had visited Sikkim at the age of 27 with his root guru, the treasure discoverer, Trulshig Dongak Lingpa. The latter had been assigned by the Government of H.H. the Dalai Lama to perform a number of prayers in the blessed hidden land of Sikkim for universal peace and prosperity in the New Year of the Horse (1906). In the course of this visit, the treasure discoverer Trulshig Dongak Lingpa, in a mere instant, revealed from the treasure store the hidden treasure text of ‘Kunzang Thugthig’ from Tashiding, the central place of the holy land of Sikkim.

During this 1906 visit, Rinpoche’s father met the 8th Khachod Rinpoche, Drupwang Lungtok Tenzin Palzangpo of Khachodpalri monastery in West Sikkim, and from him Khyentse Rigpai Dorje received all the teachings of Lhatsun Chenpo including the tantric skill of stopping hailstorms known as the ‘zabbel zubtrid’ method. Lungtok Tenzin Rinpoche was 85 years old at that time and willed that his incarnate would be born as the son of Khyentse Rigpai Dorje. Accordingly, the 9th Khachod Rinpoche (1920-1981), Dudjom Dorje Rinpoche—second brother of Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche—was born in 1920. He later became the Dorje Lopen or abbot of Pemayangtse monastery.²⁴

Again, at the age of 34, in the year of the Mouse (1912), Khyentse Rigpai Dorje Rinpoche visited Sikkim. He performed ‘Thamsi Nenpa’

²⁴ The 10th Khachod Rinpoche was born on the 1st of November 1989 at Gangtok as the youngest son of Taming Dorjee and Sonam Doma (daughter of Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche). Although the 10th Khachod Rinpoche is Sikkimese, his lineage is Tibetan.

(subduing the evil spirits by tantric power) and built a ‘dodrul chorten’ (stupa) in each in four sacred caves of Sikkim as per the wishes and instructions of the Government of His Holiness. Those numerous Dharma deeds indicated his connection with Sikkim, the land blessed and protected by Guru Rinpoche, over countless life times.

His son, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche, strongly intended to remain in the secluded places of the hidden land of Sikkim in the later part of his life which was in accordance with the prophesies of Guru Rinpoche. His younger brother, Dudjom Dorje Rinpoche was already in Sikkim since he was the reincarnation of Khachod Drupwang Lungtok Tenzin Rinpoche of Sikkim’s Khachodpalri monastery.

Thus, at the age of 38, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche left Tibet and arrived in Gangtok via Dromo on the 29th day of 8th month of the Wood Horse year (1954). The brothers re-met at the hermitage of Rabdentse Palace in West Sikkim, visited Pemayangtse, the premier monastery of Sikkim and attended the Tashiding Bumchu ritual the following year. In 1956, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche then met with Dorje Chang Jamyang Khyentse Choekyi Lodroe and received many teachings from him. In the same year, he went with his brother Khachod Rinpoche on pilgrimage to Tolung monastery in North Sikkim and received blessings from the precious objects and books held there. In the first month of the new Tibetan year, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche and the lamas of Pemayangste monastery went to Tashiding and performed the rituals of the death anniversary of Chagtha Rinpoche, for a period of one week.

In 1957, the two brothers visited Sakyong Tsenkhar Gon in West Sikkim where their father Khyentse Rigpai Dorje Rinpoche had stayed and meditated. The Sakyong Jomo Yudon offered Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche all of his father’s belongings and household objects along with his dwelling place.

During his years in Sikkim, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche visited a number of monasteries and remote sacred places, performed rituals and gave teachings, notably to the Pemayangtse lamas.²⁵ Rinpoche spent a number of years in meditation at his residence in Sakyong.²⁶ He remained in ‘mun tsham’ (dark meditation), one of the highest stages of

²⁵ In Pemayangtse, he gave a number of teachings such as the Dzogchen practice of cutting through the resistance to primordial purity, the oral transmission of inner-fire and the instruction on the primary practice of ‘Ngondol’.

²⁶ For example, in 1959, at the age of 43, Rinpoche stayed in retreat for two years at his residence in Sakyong named Sakyong Deden Pema Urling, meditating and practicing in realization of Vajra Kilaya.

meditation. He mentioned that he felt confidence spiritually by reading the 'Longchen Dzoedun' and the 'Dorje Nyingpo' and a number of Lhatsun Chenpo's teachings.

Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche is well known in Sikkim for having build the Sangdopalri structure of Pemayangtse monastery mentioned below. Never trained as a wood carver or statue maker, it is generally not known that through his inborn skills, he built, renovated and consecrated a large number of statues in the monasteries of West Sikkim which are hereby listed in this footnote.²⁷

²⁷ In Pemayangtse monastery:

He constructed two new large statues of Guru Dragmar and Vajrakumara in Pemayangtse and consecrated them with ritual prayers. He made and inaugurated eight statues of 'Guru tshen gyey' (eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche) and in 1958, along with his younger brother, Serdup Rinpoche performed the consecration of the three statues of Guru Rinpoche with two consorts made of gold gilt and copper installed in the same monastery.

The original box frame in which the body of Khyentse Dorje Chang Chokyi Lodey Rinpoche was enshrined before cremation was brought to Pemayangtse monastery before the cremation at Tashiding. Rinpoche made a replica clay statue of Khyentse Rinpoche with his own hands, which is now kept in the Lhatsun Lhakhang in Pemayangtse.

On the request of his younger brother Khachod Rinpoche, he prepared and made the complete 'thang gor' (scroll row) of all lineage masters and related deities to be displayed and hang on the ceiling beams of Pemayangtse monastery with the assistance of thangka painters.

Other monasteries and locations:

Rinpoche built the statue of Guru Nangsid Silnon for each of the four holy caves of Sikkim.

He rebuilt and consecrated a life-sized statue of Guru Rinpoche and repaired all other statues of Khachodpalri monastery that had been damaged by an earthquake.

In Chyang Lhari Nying Phug (one of the four holy caves of Sikkim), he repaired and re-consecrated the old statues as well as installed a new one.

In Silnon, over ten statues of various sizes including a human-size statue of Guru Rinpoche and a statue of Avalokiteshvara inside the cremation ground hermitage near that monastery were repaired and consecrated by him.

In accordance with the Government of Sikkim's order, he performed the re-consecration of the refurbished images of Hayagriva and Vajravarahi in Dubdi monastery, the first monastic seat of Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo where he also repaired the four life-sized statues of Rigzin Guru Tshokye Dorje, Karma Guru Lhatsun Chenpo, Khenchen Rolpai Dorje and others.

His last major statues were those of Sangachoeling, which was rebuilt after being gutted by fire. These are the statues of Dorje Sempa, Buddha with his two disciples, and Guru Rinpoche with his two consorts.

In 1965, during the coronation of Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal of Sikkim (1923-1982), one 'Tshangpai sokkhor' (Brahma's life wheel) in golden written mantra was required to be offered to the Chogyal by Khachod Tulku, the head lama

At Tashiding, he received the complete empowerment of the treasure text ‘Lama Gondu’, from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991). The practice of observing the monthly ‘Tshechu’, according to the ‘Lama Gondu’, was then introduced along with the publication of the required textbooks. At Tashiding, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche had the vision of Gyalwa Lhatsun Chenpo and composed the Guru Yoga prayer ‘Dorje Nyingpo Dongyi Thol lu’ which was then given to Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche and the Dorje Lopen of that monastery with the necessary empowerments.

In 1971, in the 3rd month of Iron Pig year, Rinpoche performed ‘Mani Dungdrup’ prayers according to ‘Chyenray Zig Dhug Ngäl Rangdrol’ text along with Khachoed Rinpoche and monks of many monasteries and lay devotees at Namchi Dechen Hermitage. These prayers were dedicated for the well being of the Chogyal of Sikkim as that particular year was one of obstacles according to the latter’s personal astrological calculations.

In 1967, at the age of 51, on the request of the Government and the monk body, he took the responsibility of rebuilding the wooden structure of the Sangdopalri (mandala of Guru Rinpoche’s abode) of Pemayangtse monastery. The original old wooden structure was in a decayed condition and did not fit in the newly renovated monastery. He had no knowledge or experience of such handicrafts and had never done such work in the past. Yet he could not decline the request. By the blessings of his prayers to his Dharma Gurus, a number of spiritual indications enabled him to take up the task. With his great effort and dedication, the entire wooden structure of Sangdopalri was completed within five years and remains to this day as his masterpiece.

On the request of Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche and his brother Khachoed Rinpoche—the Dorje Lopen of Pemayangtse—Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (1904-1987) came to Pemayangtse monastery on the 8th of the 3rd month of the Water Mouse year, 1972. The main consecration ceremony of the Sangdopalri mandala and the refurbished monastery was held on the 15th of that month. The great mandala rituals according to the ‘Rigzin Sogdup’ text with ‘Dud tsi Mendrup’ preparation prayers were performed. On this auspicious day, many high incarnates led by Dzongsar Khyentse Choktrul Rinpoche, along with monks from all regions of Sikkim, the Chogyal of Sikkim Palden Thondup Namgyal, the Gyalmo, the ministers and members of

of Pemayangtse monastery, as part of the enthronement rituals according to Ngawang Rinpoche Barwa text. This very detailed golden mantra wheel was prepared and written by Rinpoche.

the public assembled at Pemayangtse monastery. Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche submitted the written catalogue of the Sangdopalri structure to the Chogyal.

In 1978, as prayed for by the two Rinpoche brothers, Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje again visited Pemayangtse monastery. The great prayer mandala according to the 'Rigzin Sogdup' with 'Dud tsi Mendrup' preparations and 'Tshog Bum' (one hundred thousands feast offering prayer) were performed on that auspicious occasion. Dudjom Rinpoche advised that the statue of Guru Nang Sid Silnon must be built and installed in the four directions of Sikkim for the welfare and benefit of the world in general and the Himalayan region of Tibet in particular. Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche volunteered and made the clay statues with his own hands and placed them in the four directions of Sikkim. This was how he devoted himself to the service of the Dharma and sentient beings in all parts of Sikkim. He thereafter stayed in seclusion at Namchi Serdup Choeling²⁸ practicing the precious Dharma according to 'Yangtig Nagpo' and the 'Rigzin Sogdup', Sikkim's principle text.

During the Iron Monkey year (1980), all of a sudden and without any illness, Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche past into emptiness and attained Parinirvana. The cremation took place at Serdup Choeling and Kyabje Dodrup Chen Rinpoche was kind enough to perform the funeral prayer rituals. The funeral ceremonies were performed by Dodrup Chen Rinpoche at Namchi Sedrup Choeling. Chatral Rinpoche, without any concern for the potential difficulties, did everything that was needed to bring about the construction of a stupa to contain the funeral relics of the deceased lama. During the preparation of the bones (breaking them into powder) one hidden yogi named Wag Tsag Sherpa who was doing the job noticed 'naturally emerged' images on Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche's bones. One bone bearing an image had already been crushed into powder but another two images appeared on the bones, one being a blue relic. These were shown to Chatral Rinpoche who praised both the images as signs of high Dharma attainment. The blue relic was identified as a relic of Buddhahood. Those bones and relics were enshrined inside the 'Kudung Chorten' (body remains stupa) built at Serdup Choeling, Namchi, in South Sikkim.²⁹

²⁸ The land on which Serdup Choeling was built was given to Khachoeed Rinpoche by the Chogyal of Sikkim.

²⁹ His son, Serdup Dungzin Ngawang Loday Chophel Rinpoche, born on the 21st of March 1959 at Sakyong in West Sikkim, is the current seat holder of the Serdup lineage. He first studied with his father Serdup Dungzin Rinpoche and his uncle

THE 10TH INCARNATION OF THE RIGZIN YOLMO TINGKYEY GONJANG TULKU, ORGYEN JIGME THINLEY³⁰

By the power of his previous intention to gain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings he, in accordance with that wish, was reborn in human form in this very hidden land of Sikkim. During the time of his 3rd incarnation known as Yolmo Tulku Tenzin Norbu (1598-1645), the latter went to the supreme mountain of Riwo Trazang in Mang yul³¹ where Lama Rigzin Trazangpa paid him great respect and honours, and requested him with a degree of urgency in the following way: “Since you are the one who is prophesized in the oral transmissions of the place holders of the hidden land of Demojong, it is imperative that you should go to that hidden land”. Thus, the 5th incarnation Rigzin Thuthob Dorje (1725-1773), in ‘the foothills of the sunrise’ (in the hills of the eastern direction) established the monastery of Wen Nay Reoding. During the lifetime of the 6th incarnation, Rigzin Pema Choepel, the Dzogchen Rinpoche of Sikkim was born into the family lineage of Guru Chowang (1212-1271) whose lineage was close to the root guru (Rigzin Kunzang Dorje 1736-1805) of the 6th Gonjang Tulku and on account of this the two traditions became integrated.

During the time of the 5th Chogyal of Sikkim Namgyal Phuntsog (1733-1779), a capable messenger by the name of Throgyal was sent by the Sikkimese General Yug Chogthup to receive blessings and protection wheel for safeguard from the barbarous acts of the Gorkhas. In return, Rigzin Pema Choepel advised them to stay united and send the protection wheels.

Khachoe Rinpoche (Dudjum Dorje) and later at the Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies under Khenpo Tsondu. He received Dharma empowerments and transmissions from Dudjom Rinpoche, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, Trulzhig Rinpoche and most Venerable Suktse Rinpoche.

³⁰ Gonjang Rinpoche is commonly referred to by the Sikkimese as Sangmo Rinpoche because his family lives in the village of Sangmo near the eastern hidden cave of Shar chok be phuk.

³¹ Mang yul was an old principality in Tibet, which played an important role in the establishment of the ‘Northern Treasure’ tradition of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism. It was amongst the kings of this principality that Rigzin Goedemchen found his first patron. This region is now located to the north of Kathmandu with half of its traditional territory inside the modern borders of Nepal and half in the Tibetan regions of Kyirong, Latoe, etc. For more details on this region see Everding, Karl-Heinz. 2004. ‘rNying ma pa Lamas at the court of Mang yul Gung thang - The meeting of the gter ston bsTan gnyis gling pa with King Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa’. In Cueppers (ed.) *The relationship between religion and State in traditional Tibet*. Lumbini International Research Institute, Lumbini: Nepal [SM].

The 7th Chogyal of Sikkim, Tsuphud Namgyal (1785-1863) said to the 6th incarnation Rigzin Pema Chopel (1773-1836): “Since you are the true follower of Guru Rinpoche you should come, if only for a short time, to his blessed hidden land, anything else would be disrespectful and insufficient.” However, due to his old age he was unable to travel to Sikkim.

However, the 9th incarnation of Gonjang Tulku Rigzin Ngawang Yonten Gyatso (1905-1959) paid homage to Lama Khyentse Rigpai Dorje (1880-1938), the 10th incarnation of Lama Nyugdong Sangay who had been born in the hidden land of Sikkim. From Khyentse Rigpai Dorje, he received the ‘Wishing Vase’ initiations, the ‘Single Golden Syllable of the Black Quintessence’ (which was revealed by Duntso Repa) and the father doctrine of Sikkim the ‘Rigzin Sogdup’. Since the understanding of prior omens regarding a change of circumstances in Tibet had been recognized, he escaped from Tibet to India. On the 7th day of the 2nd month of the Earth Female Pig year of the 16th Rabjung,³² (1959), at the age of 53, he lay down in the lion pose and passed from this body into emptiness.

The 4th Kyabje Dodrup Chen Rinpoche (born in 1927) carried out the funeral rites and offerings of the relics of this incarnation and there emerged many symbols of enlightenment such as the appearance of a rainbow in the clear sky, which shone towards the direction of Sikkim. Furthermore, in the mind of Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdrel Yeshe Dorje there arose the understanding of the birthplace and region as well as the names of the parents of the next incarnation. And so, in the place of Yangang near to the eastern hidden cave, which is one of the four principle caves of the four directions of Sikkim, a son which showed all the signs of being the reincarnation was born to the father Tsering Norbu and the mother Ah kyi on the 19th day of the 12th month of the Iron Ox year of the 16th Rabjung (1961).

In order to conduct a proper examination of the reincarnation, the treasurers and direct disciples of the previous incarnation, such as Thadrol Dorje, went to this remote region of Sikkim where they were received by the mother of the new incarnation and had an audience with the young Tulku. Dudjom Rinpoche gave the name Orgyen Jigme Thinley Kungyab Palzangpo to the young boy. Then both the 14th Dalai Lama and the 16th Karmapa agreed and confirmed that Orgyan Jigme Thinley was indeed the incarnation of the 9th Gonjang Tulku.

³² A ‘rabjung’ is the cycle of sixty years of the Tibetan calendar [SM].

Rinpoche was enthroned at the age of four by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991) amongst a crowd of rinpoches and monks in the monastery of Dortsug Sang ngag Choeling³³ in Darjeeling in 1964 (Wood Dragon year). In 1969, when the young Tulku was nine years old he received the entire teachings of the oral transmission from Dodrup Chen Rinpoche. In the Chorten monastery, the residence of Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, he learnt how to read and write and received many teachings on Buddhism. After which he studied the Tantras, Sutras and philosophy of Buddhism for five years at the Sikkimese government Nyingmapa Shedra (college) under the guidance of two great scholars: Khenpo Thubten Tsondu Phuntsog³⁴ and Khenpo Dazer. At the age of 19, he practised for three years in the retreat centre Dupde Pema Orling at the residence of the 4th Dodrup Chen Rinpoche and completed the practice of 'The Three Roots' according to the 'Longchen Nyingthig' tradition. In 1980, he received the teaching of the 'Rigzin Sogdup' from Chadral Rinpoche (b.1913) in Pemayangtse. In the 1980s, he purchased some land six kilometres from the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok, and built the present monastery of Orgyen Dongag Choekhorling at Penlong. In 1981, the Dalai Lama was invited and on account of His Holiness's involvement, the essence of the area was nourished by his great benevolence and blessings. In this way Gonjang Rinpoche received the complete Nyingma teachings from his extraordinary root guru, the 4th Dodrup Chen Rinpoche, and great beings such as Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Penor Rinpoche and Taglung Tsetul Rinpoche, etc. Thus he accomplished beyond excess the common and extraordinary transmissions and initiations of both the scriptures and revealed texts of the early transmission of Buddhism.

In some of the secluded meditation sites of the hidden land, such as Khechoepalri in West Sikkim, he gave instructions and carried out an intensive retreat for a number of months. There he meditated on the methods of ensuring happiness in Sikkim and maintaining peace and happiness for the whole world. Further he refurbished every stupas in the eastern cave of the hidden land and the stupas in the very centre of the hidden land in the place of Tashiding. In Rabongla, South Sikkim and at Phensang monastery, North Sikkim, Gonjang Rinpoche gave oral transmissions of the sixteen volumes of the Prajnaparamita.

³³ This monastery was constructed in 1878 as a branch of the Phodong monastery in North Sikkim. It is under the administrative control of Ecclesiastical Affairs Department, Government of sikkim.

³⁴ He was also known as Dzogchen Khenpo (1920-1979) [SM].

In 1987, in Tashiding, Dodrup Chen Rinpoche gave the empowerment and Gonjang Rinpoche gave a direct transmission of the 'Rinchen Terdzoe'. In the year 2004, in his own monastery of Orgyen Dongag Choekhorling, he gave the teaching of 'Kunkyen Longchen's Treatise on Dzogchen' to a large gathering of the Sangha as well as giving the scriptural transmission of the 'Kunsang Lama Shelung' of Orgyen Jigme Choekyi Wangpo (1808-1887). During the 9th month of the lunar calendar, he holds a yearly 'Drubchod' in his monastery on the 'Northern Treasure' of the Yolmo tradition known as the 'Phurba Lhanag'. He was also presented with the supervision of the Taktse retreat centre and the chairmanship of the Tsuglakhang Trust³⁵. When the Dalai Lama visited Sikkim in 2005, he was given the responsibility of being the head of all Sikkimese religious lineages for the preservation of the Buddha-Dharma in the region.

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BOOK REVIEW

MARK TURIN

Namgyal Institute of Tibetology & University of Cambridge

In the Shadow of the Himalayas: Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim: A Photographic Record by John Claude White 1883-1908 by Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer. Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, India, 2005, 190 pp., Hardcover, 11x10 inches, 113 four colour photographs, 6 maps, ISBN 8188204250.

In this beautifully produced and very affordable book, Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer turn their attention to John Claude White (1853-1918), the first British Political Officer in Sikkim, and his photographic record of the Himalayas that he loved.

The authors of this book have previously worked with the Tharu communities of Nepal, in the course of which they wrote three important books on aspects of this indigenous South Asian cultural complex. In all of these, they combine their strong aesthetic sensibilities with an engaging narrative style, and in *In the Shadow of the Himalayas*, Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer have once again created a meticulous portrait, this time of an interesting man at an important time.

Although not part of the political elite, White's background was firmly colonial: he was born in Calcutta in 1853 to a German mother and English surgeon father. Having attended secondary school in Bonn, White trained as a civil engineer at the Royal Indian Civil Engineering College in Surrey which trained professionals for the Indian Public Works department, into whose service he went. It was fortunate circumstance and a sign of the meritocracy of the times that White should be appointed as the first resident Political Officer of Sikkim less than twelve years after entering government service. White and his wife Nina oversaw the construction of the British Residence in Gangtok, which would later become Raj Bhawan, the official residence of the Governor of Sikkim.

In the Shadow of the Himalayas is comprised of six sections. The first, entitled simply 'The Setting', is an excellent overview of the British colonial enterprise in South Asia and the political alliances and

fears of the time. Pithy and clear, these few pages would be suitable for wider dissemination online or in an introductory publication on Himalayan nations. The second section focuses on Jean Claude White's family background and professional career, and helps contextualise his choices and interests. He emerges as a gentle man, even a gentleman, committed to his work and passionate about his photography. As an obituary written by the great schemer Francis Younghusband in the *Geographical Journal* of 1918 put it, "he [White] was a man of great simplicity of character, kindness of nature, and solidity of purpose: a lover of nature and a lover of simple peoples" (Volume 51, Number 6, June 1918, p. 407).

The remaining four sections are organised chronologically according to White's tours of duty: Nepal (1883-1884), Sikkim (1889-1908), Tibet (1903-1904) and Bhutan (1905-1908). The authors provide a brief introduction to each location as well as detailed captions for each plate. Interestingly, each set is quite distinct. The Nepal collection offers a diverse collection of temples, nature and people; while the Sikkim set, the location of his longest posting, is a little underwhelming. White's photographic focus in Sikkim was almost exclusively on nature: passes, mountains and gorges, and while his photos are technically impressive, for those interested in local history or culture, there is little to feast on. His brief foray into Tibet, in the company of Younghusband, is interesting for what is left out. Although an impressive close up of a Maxim gun detachment (plate 48) gives the reader the sense of a militarised campaign, in none of White's photos does one get the sense of war. The images are respectful and noble, showcasing Tibetan architecture and religious learning in well-lit frames.

The images from Bhutan are the most compelling. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Bhutan is also where White made his closest relationship, namely with Ugyen Wangchuk who would later be crowned king of this Himalayan nation. The photos are varied and intimate, with more close ups and fewer overtly staged scenes. There is also more movement in the images from this time, although perhaps this was unintentional.

The Meyers state that despite being an engineer by 'education' and a colonial administrator by profession, Jean Claude White was a 'photographer by vocation'. I would venture to suggest that White's training as a civil engineer shows through in his photos. The images are well framed, carefully centred, unwasteful, and at times even austere. There is a structural quality to many of his images, an appreciation of

the architectural skeleton that lies behind a *gompa*, a *dzong* or even a mountain. White's photos are neither flashy nor melodramatic, which in part may be put down to the constraints of the medium at the time and the effort it took to compose a photograph, but is also has to do with his pragmatic documentary eye.

In this lovely book, comprised of their insightful text together with White's photographs, Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer have succeeded in rehabilitating the legacy of Jean Claude White. While White's contribution to conservation and forestry planning efforts continues to be acknowledged by many in the region, not all would agree with the authors' suggestion that in "Sikkim and Bhutan he is remembered and respected to this day" (page 27). The colonial presence in Sikkim was neither unchallenged nor unproblematic, and as the first political incumbent, White essentially oversaw the integration of an independent Sikkim into British India. In spite of this political mandate, however, Jean Claude White appears to have been widely liked and trusted by many of those whom he came into contact with. It is thanks to Kurt Meyer and Pamela Deuel Meyer that almost 100 years after the publication of his memoirs (*Sikkim and Bhutan: Twenty-One Years on the North-East Border*, 1909), this magnificent collection of White's photographs is finally in circulation.

DR RIGZIN NGODUP DOKHANGPA (1943-2005)
Research Officer, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

SONAM THINLAY
Namgyal Institute of Tibetology

Dr Rigzin Ngodup Dokhangpa was born in 1943 (Water Female Sheep year) in the village of Tshothang, Tashiding, in West Sikkim. His parents, Pasang and Laydon Bhutia, had three daughters and two sons who both became lamas of the Tashiding monastery. Dr R.N. Dokhampa joined the monastery at the age five when the Ven. Dorje Lopon Ajo Chugli of Tashiding performed his first hair cutting offering ritual. He received his early monastic education from his uncle Pema Tshering.

Already at the age of nineteen, along with other Tashiding lamas, he practiced the *kLong chen snying thig 'pho ba* under H.E. brTul zhugs gling pa Rinpoche. At the age of twenty, he received instructions from Mi nyag Khenpo on the *dKon mchog spyi 'dus* and completed the preliminary retreat at Tashiding. In 1968, he joined the Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda) at Deorali, Gangtok, where for five years he studied Nyingma philosophies under Khenpo Rinchen, Khenpo Dazer and Khenpo Tsundue. In 1968, he received the initiation and oral transmission of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* from H.E. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at Enchey monastery, Gangtok. Again in 1968, he received the initiation of the *Bla ma dgongs pa 'dus pa* from H.E. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at Tashiding monastery.

In 1972, he joined the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology as a 'scholarship holder'. During this initial two-year period he read Buddhist Philosophy and received teachings from Ven. Khenpo Lodoy Zangpo, a learned scholar of the Institute. He was appointed in 1974 to the post of Assistant in the Tibetan Library. In 1975, he received *bka' ma* teaching and initiation from H.E. Dodrup Chen Rinpoche. In 1978, he received the oral transmission of the *kLong chen mdzod bdun* from H.E. Dodrup Chen Rinpoche at Phensang monastery, North Sikkim. In 1978, he was transferred to the post of Museum Assistant. In 1985, he received the initiation of the *kLong chen snying thig ya bzhi* from Dodrup Chen Rinpoche. Again in 1985, he received the *sGrub skor rnam gsum* initiation and oral transmission from H.E. Taglung Tsetul Rinpoche at Tashiding. In 1988, he obtained the Acharya degree in

Buddhist Philosophy from the Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies, Gangtok and was promoted to Research Officer in 1992.

Dr R.N. Dokhangpa wrote a book on Buddhist ritual objects and obtained his Ph.D. degree from the International Indo-Tibetan Nyingmapa Buddhist Cultural Preservation Society, University of Shantineketan, West Bengal. In 2003, he received further initiations and oral transmissions from H.E. Taglung Tsetul Rinpoche at Namchi, South Sikkim. And again in 2004, he received teachings on the *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung* and *'pho ba* instructions from H.E. Domang Terchen Yangthang Rinpoche at the Gangtok Tsuglagkhang along with a number of lamas from various Sikkimese monasteries.

Dr R.N. Dokhangpa has published numerous articles in the *Bulletin of Tibetology* including 'Origin of Bumchu of Brag dkar bkra shis sdings' (1992, 2003), 'A Brief Account of the Life of Nga' bdag Sems dpa' chenpo (1591-1656)' (1996), 'Sbas yul 'bras mo ljongs' (1998), 'Biography of Gter ston Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem phrul can' (1999) and 'A Short Biography of rNal 'byor mched bzhi' (2000). His latest book on the life of Padmasambhava remains unpublished.

At the age of 63, following a prolonged illness, he told his family "a girl has come to receive me, so I will go early tomorrow morning". And thus he passed away in the morning of the 7th March 2005.

Dr R.N. Dokhangpa was the Namgyal Institute's most learned scholar. A man of great kindness and humility, he openly shared his knowledge with a large number of students and scholars of Sikkimese history, religion and culture. He will be missed by many, including a generation of young Sikkimese scholars who still had much to gain from his knowledge and guidance. He is survived by his widow and five children.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FRANZ-KARL EHRHARD is Professor of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Munich, Germany. His research work centres on religious and literary traditions in Tibet and the Himalayas. His latest publications include *Early Buddhist Block Prints from Mang-yul Gung-thang* (Lumbini International Research Institute 2000), and *Life and Travels of Lo-chen bSod-nams rgya-mtsho* (Lumbini International Research Institute 2002).

SAUL MULLARD is a D.Phil candidate at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, where he is currently working on his doctoral thesis on the formation of religio-political and state institutions in seventeenth century Sikkim. He is Director of the Sikkimese Manuscript Project, a project that aims to make a large quantity of rare Sikkimese manuscripts and legal documents available to the wider academic population through the use of digital technology. He has authored three previous articles on Sikkimese history and religion in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 39, Issues 1 and 2, and Vol. 40 Issue 1.

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA was born in Gangtok in 1969. He first studied at Enchey School before joining the Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (Sheda) where he obtained his Acharya degree in 1992. He then joined the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology where he works as Cataloguer in the Tibetan Library. He currently carries out research on Tibetan and Sikkimese history and religious culture.