

The Mother of All Monasteries:
Gönlung Jampa Ling and the Rise of Mega Monasteries in Northeastern Tibet

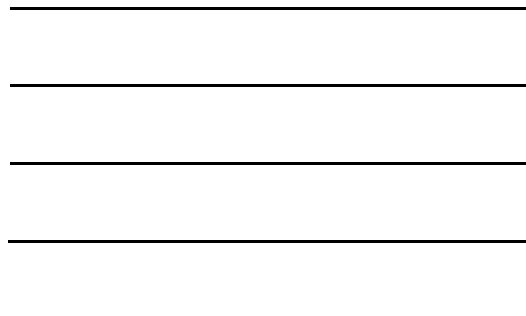
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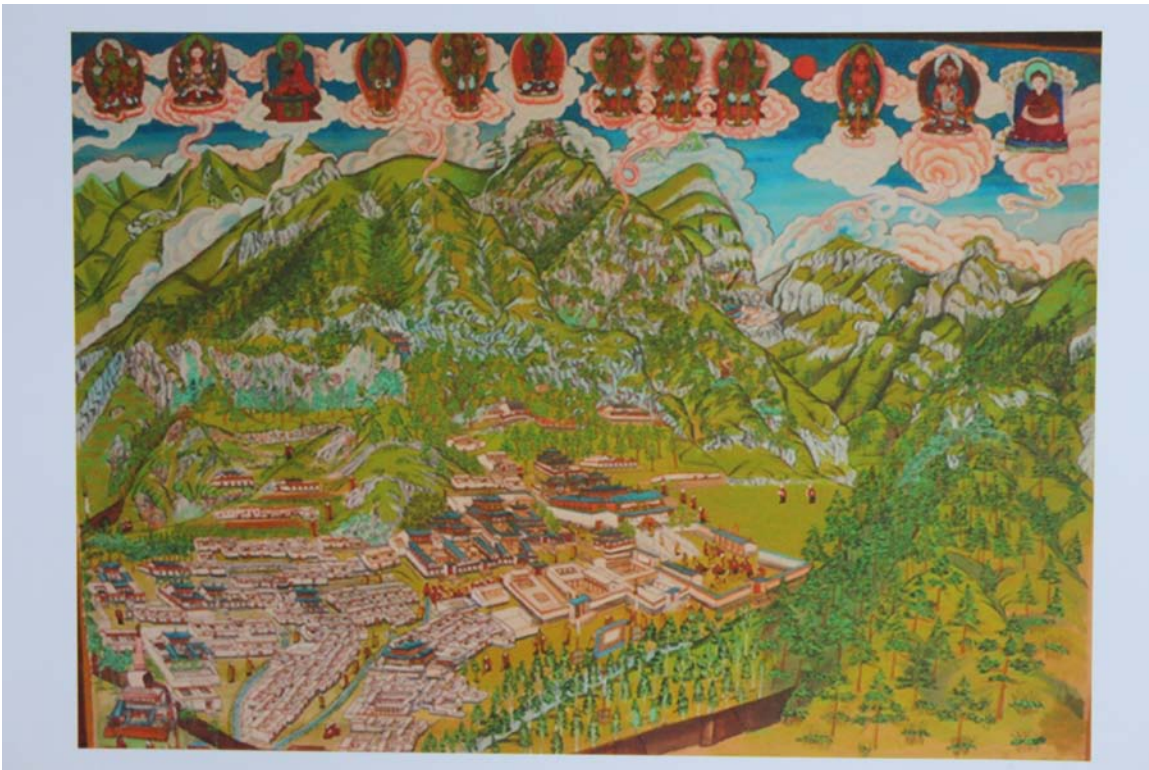
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Qing-period painting of Gönlung. Photo is from the “Huzhu Government Study” (see below).

Abstract

“Mass monasticism,” defined as “an emphasis on recruiting and sustaining very large numbers of celibate monks for their entire lives,” has been called one of “Tibet’s unique contribution[s] to humanity and the world” (Goldstein 1998 and 2009). The number of monks residing in some of the largest institutions swelled into the thousands, making them the largest monasteries in the world. Nonetheless, to date there has been no study that accounts for the origin and development of these monasteries. The current study begins to address this lacuna in our knowledge by looking at the largest monastery in seventeenth-century Northeastern Tibet (or Amdo), Gönlung Jampa Ling (dgon lung byams pa gling). Although Gönlung Monastery was not as early as some of the more famous institutions found in Central Tibet, it did house the first Geluk sect seminary in Northeastern Tibet, an essential feature of most mass or “mega monasteries.” The monastery also boasted a rich and regimented liturgical calendar, a strict and consistent system of governance and discipline, an extensive network of local patrons and subsidiary and allied monasteries, and, finally, political and economic connections with both the Dalai Lama’s government in Lhasa and the newly established Qing Dynasty in Beijing. Gönlung’s size and influence waned beginning in the mid-eighteenth century after it was implicated in a major Mongol rebellion and the monastery was subsumed within the Qing empire’s system of regulating the Buddhist clergy. Nonetheless, it paved the way for the political and religious rise of the Geluk sect in Inner Asia and for the establishment of other mega monasteries. This work’s argument is twofold. First, the history of the rise of these sizeable and complex institutions is more complicated than what others have previously suggested. That is, their origin can be placed before the reign of the renowned and influential “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama, and their development took place apart from his direct influence. Second, and more importantly, these monasteries were characterized by much more than the mere agglomeration of a massive number of monks: the strategic institutionalization of *all* monastic enterprises--scholastic, ritual, administrative--and the development of local and regional monastic networks defined mega monasteries.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments	viii
Introduction.....	1
Mass Monasticism	5
Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Mother of All Monasteries (north of the Huang River)	15
The “White Hidden Land”	20
The Founding.....	23
Population	24
Famous Lamas and Little Lamas	27
Branches	33
Branches: Gönlung’s Own.....	37
Chapter Summaries.....	41
Chapter 1: A Chronological Overview	45
Introduction.....	45
Narratives of Continuity and Destruction	45
Early History	59
Early History: Protector Deities.....	67
Early History: Tusi	70
Early History: Collection Leaders, Domestic Watchmen, and ‘Encampments’	72
Conclusion.....	80
Chapter 2: The Connections of the Monastery, Southbound	85
Patrons	87

Forgotten Histories	91
Dewa Chöjé, the “Governor Dharma King”	93
Flight to Amdo: The Lokeśvara Statue.....	95
Relations with Mongols	98
A Fellow Clergyman	101
Güüshi Khan.....	103
Back at Gönlung.....	110
Conclusion.....	114
Chapter 3: The Connections of the Monastery, Part II: Eastbound.....	116
Changkya's Intellectual Pedigree and Connections with Central Tibet	119
Changkya and the Mongols.....	126
Changkya and the Mongols: The Khüren-Belcheer Conference of 1686.....	130
Changkya and the Mongols: Chaghan Tologhai Conference of 1697.....	133
Building and Wielding Imperial Influence	139
Changkya the Administrator and Local Dignitary.....	145
Conclusion.....	148
Chapter Appendix I: A Timeline of Changkya's Life.....	150
Chapter Appendix II: Sources	151
Chapter 4: The Administration of the Monastery: One for All, and All for One.....	154
Sources	156
Finances: The Triumvirate of Lama, General Managment, and Patrons	165
The Lama Villa, or the Abbatial Villa (<i>bla brang; khri pa bla brang</i>).....	165
The General Management Office (<i>spyi sa/so/ba</i>).....	177
Lay Patrons (<i>sbyin bdag</i>).....	187
The Discipline of Monkhood	192

Socialization	192
Membership	194
Attendance	196
Punishments.....	198
Conclusion.....	201
Chapter 5: The Ritual of the Monastery: From Mouth-to-Ear to Brick-and-Mortar .	203
Unbroken	204
‘Monastic Groups’ (dratsang) and ‘Commentary Classes’ (shedra)	207
Tantric Colleges.....	213
Sé and Wensa secret lineages	215
Gönlung’s Tantric College	224
The Ritual Calendar	228
Exporting Traditions	235
The Ritual Agenda of a Mega Monastery Then and Now: An Anecdote.....	236
Semnyi Monastery	240
Semnyi Trülku, Semnyi Monastery, and Tethung Göñchen.....	243
Conclusion.....	246
Chapter 6: The Scholasticism of the Monastery	251
Scholasticism.....	253
Some History	256
The Author: Wang Khutugtu	257
The Profound and Secret Golden Key of a Hundred Doors to [Buddhist] Treaties	267
II. Preparation for Dharma Classes (<i>chos grwa</i>).....	276
III. Protector Deity Day	277
IV. Memorial for the Founder.....	277

V. First Spring Dharma Session	278
V.A. Days Four Onward: 'Recitation Lessons'	280
VI. Great Spring Dharma Session.....	283
VI.A.1.a. Assembly	283
VI.A.1.b. Dharma Class.....	285
VI.A.2.a. Morning Assembly.....	287
VI.A.2.b. Morning Dharma Class.....	289
VI.A.2.c. Midday Assembly	289
VI.A.2.d. Midday Dharma Class	290
VI.A.2.e. Evening Assembly	291
VI.A.2.f. Evening Dharma Class	294
VI.A.2.g. Miscellaneous	295
VI.B. Days Four Onward.....	296
VI.B.1. Morning Assembly	297
VI.B.2. Morning Recitation Lessons	297
VI.B.3. Midday Assembly	302
VI.B.4. Midday Dharma Class.....	302
VI.B.5. Evening Assembly	305
VI.B.6. Evening Dharma Class.....	305
VI.C. Testing Period.....	306
VI.D. Division of Wealth.....	311
VII. Break	311
VIII. Post-Spring Assembly.....	312
Annual Calendar	312
The Customary of the Mirror That Illuminates [What Should Be] Accepted and Rejected	314
Conclusion.....	318

Chapter 7: The Fall of the Monastery	321
Introduction	321
Suspect Places	323
Destruction	325
A New Order	339
Steles and Imperial Recognition	341
Senggang si: The Office of Clerical Supervision	348
Sumpa Khenpo	353
The Bottom Line	360
Conclusion: “Imperial Monasteries”	379
Conclusion	385
Appendix I: Gönlung Abbots	391
Appendix II: Gönlung Branch Monasteries and Hermitages	407
Bibliography	419
Sources in Chinese and Tibetan Languages	419
Sources in Western Languages	430

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I have just completed a three thousand mile journey from Virginia to British Columbia, accompanied most of the way by my mother. I attribute my interest in history and

insatiable curiosity in all things to growing up and traveling with her. Finally, my wife, Kerri, who has put up with a decade of my graduate studies and extended sojourns overseas, has been my primary support and best friend throughout this time. Likewise, our son, Everett, has patiently awaited the completion of this dissertation. Therefore, it is to them that I dedicate this work.

Introduction

“Why are Geluk monasteries so big?” That was the question I posed to my interlocutor, Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, a teacher and friend. His reply was swift and concise: “Because of the Tibetan government, *pok* [i.e. monastic salaries], and the distribution of tea and noodles [to the monks].” The first part of his answer—“the Tibetan government”—was predictable. The rise of the Geluk sect is often tied to the establishment of Tibet’s central government under the auspices of the Fifth Dalai Lama in the seventeenth century. Moreover, others sects of Tibetan Buddhism were persecuted during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, including the Jonang sect, the tradition to which Khenpo himself belongs. The latter two parts of Khenpo’s answer, however, came rather unexpectedly. They allude to the *institutional* features of the Geluk sect’s massive monasteries that sustain their large numbers of monks. Such internal dimensions of monastic institutions have been largely ignored in scholarship on Tibetan religion.

This work provides a social and institutional history of one of the largest monasteries to have ever existed on the Tibetan Plateau, Gönlung Jampa Ling (dgon lung byams pa gling). It draws primarily on Tibetan- and Chinese-language materials in addressing a large number of events and institutions from the macro-level (such as the Qing Empire and Inner Asian politics) to the micro-level (such as local patrons of Gönlung who commanded no more than a few hundred subjects). In short, however, I argue that "mass monasteries," or "mega monasteries" (see below), are characterized by much more than a mere "mass of monks," and they arose due to a complex of factors extending far beyond the charitable benevolence of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Mass monasteries belong to vast networks of patronage and partner monastic institutions, and they are characterized by developed systems of

governance, scholasticism, ritual, and discipline. They initially arose—at least in northeastern Tibet—through a complex network of local, regional, and supra-regional patrons. The Dalai Lama may have been a most important center of gravity for the unfolding of this historical phenomenon, but the story of mass monasticism is infinitely more complex than this single individual or institution.

Prior to the communist revolutions of Mongolia and China and the other social transformations brought on by the twentieth century, monasteries formed one of two key pillars in societies influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, the other pillar being clans.¹ Rolf Stein deftly outlined the rise of monastic in power in his 1962 *La civilisation tibétaine*.² As he explains,

history is no longer concerned with kings but with monasteries and religious orders. The princes or heads of noble houses are now no more than benefactors and partisans of one ecclesiastical establishment or another. It is the eleventh century. ... [B]y the twelfth century monasteries are everywhere, some of them being particularly powerful. A century later and they are battling for temporal power ...³

Stein and others have also emphasized the importance of the Geluk sect and the impact its appearance had on the religious and political histories of Tibet beginning in the fourteenth century. Particular attention has been drawn to the expansive growth of monasteries and monastics during the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama in the sixteenth century. These monasteries—especially the “Three Seats” of Lhasa,⁴ as well as Trashi Lhünpo Monastery to

¹ R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. J. E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), 92, 138–40ff.

² *La civilisation tibétaine* (Paris: Dunod, 1962); I have relied principally upon the English translation. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*.

³ Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 70 and 75.

⁴ Sera (T. se ra), Drepung (‘bras spungs), and Ganden (dga’ ldan) Monasteries.

the west in Tsang--came to exercise immense power in the religious and political life of Tibet.

The influence of these monasteries is usually attributed to their wealth, their size, and more generally to the close relationship that existed between “church” and state in Tibet. As the redoubtable scholar Giuseppe Tucci has explained, the Fifth Dalai Lama

established firm ties between these monasteries and the central government, he appointed *mk'an po* [i.e. religious teachers] and abbots he could trust; by this time nothing happens without the Dalai Lama's sanction and consent; he deposes at his pleasure the abbots who arouse his suspicious, as was the case with the abbot of Šel dkar. ...

Moreover he neglects no opportunity of keeping this great monastic population attached to himself; in 1655 he restored the usage of reciting sacred texts and with this pretext he caused the monks of the great monasteries to come to Lhasa by turns.⁵

This portrait of the Fifth Dalai Lama presents him as being everywhere at all times. He appoints the officers of monasteries, monitors their conduct, and dismisses them when necessary. He prescribed the rituals the monasteries were to conduct. In addition, Tucci further explains how the income of these monasteries is set by the Dalai Lama, who allotted landed estates to the monasteries. “Thus instituted,” he concludes,

it is the economical consequence of the change which had come about in the political field, when a sect not only had replaced the others, but had finally done away with the old nobility, either getting rid of it or reducing it to servitude.⁶

Thus, this “great monastic population” of the Geluk sect came to exercise a hegemony in Tibet due to the strategic administration of the Fifth Dalai Lama, backed by his wealthy, Mongol patrons.

⁵ Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: SDI Publications, 1999), 69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70a.

Other scholars have approved of this conclusion and given it statistical support by comparing the number of monks and monasteries in Tibet at the beginning of the Dalai Lama's rule with the number some fifty years after his death. "Surveys showed that there were 97,528 monks in Central Tibet and Kham in 1694, and 319,270 monks in 1733."⁷ It is not my intention to question the impact that the Dalai Lama and his government had on the composition of the Tibetan religious landscape. Research continues to show that the Dalai Lama and his government brought about fundamental changes to Tibetan politics, society, as well as religion.⁸ However, it is my intention to argue that the proliferation of Geluk monasteries and the high concentration of monks in those monasteries commenced long

⁷ Melvyn C. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 21; Goldstein is citing a 1983 edition of Dung dkar's political and religious history of Tibet. I have not been able to review this edition of Dung dkar's work, but the 1982 edition (itself a reprint of the 1981 original) does not cite its source for the 1733 figures. *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa* (The Merging of Religious and Secular Rule in Tibet) (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982); Dung dkar appears to be citing the *Shengwu ji* 聖武記 by Weiyuan 魏源. See William Woodville Rockhill, "Tibet. Geographical, Ethnographical, and Historical Sketch, Derived from Chinese Sources," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23, no. 1-2 (1891): 13-14; McCleary and van der Kuijp provide a useful summary of the sources of these census figures. "The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 01 (2010): 149-180; Note that there is also an English translation of Dung dkar's history. Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las, *The Merging of Religious and Secular Rule in Tibet* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991); For an overview and analysis of the Qing census of the Chinese clergy from 1736-1739 see Vincent Goossaert, "Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy," *Late Imperial China* 21, no. 2 (2000): 40-85. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 21; Goldstein is citing a 1983 edition of Dung dkar's political and religious history of Tibet. I have not been able to review this edition of Dung dkar's work, but the 1982 edition (itself a reprint of the 1981 original) does not cite its source for the 1733 figures. *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa*; Dung dkar appears to be citing the *Shengwu ji* 聖武記 by Weiyuan 魏源. See Rockhill, "Tibet. Geographical, Ethnographical, and Historical Sketch, Derived from Chinese Sources," 13-14; McCleary and van der Kuijp provide a useful summary of the sources on these census figures. "The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419?"; Note that there is also an English translation of Dung dkar's history. Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa*; For an overview and analysis of the Qing census of the Chinese clergy from 1736-1739 see Goossaert, "Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy."

⁸ See, for example, Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, eds., *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006); Françoise Pommaret, ed., *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century: The Capital of the Dalai Lamas* (Boston: Brill, 2003).

before the appearance of the Fifth Dalai Lama and developed apart from his direction. In chapters one, two, and three I present a much more complex picture of the origins of one such institution, i.e. Gönlung Monastery. I examine the roles played by local patrons, a secular polity in Central Tibet that was aligned with but separate from the Dalai Lamas, and, especially, the various Mongols based in Kökenuur in the establishment and development of this mega monastery.

Mass Monasticism

Despite the importance accorded monasteries in traditional Tibetan society, there are remarkably few studies focused on them. Our understanding of the internal dimensions of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries derives mostly from early travel accounts, ethnographic observations in peripheral monasteries and temples in the Himalayan region, and oral accounts given by Tibetan exiles.⁹ Many of these are particularly informative. However, their

⁹ Among the latter kinds are the following: Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders* (Calcutta: Oxford Book Co., 1964); C. W. Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969); Hanna Havnevik, *Tibetan Buddhist Nuns: History, Cultural Norms and Social Reality* (London: Norwegian University Press, 1989); Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Kim Gutschow, *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Catherine Mary Cantwell, "An Ethnographic Account of the Religious Practice in a Tibetan Buddhist Refugee Monastery in Northern India" (University of Kent at Canterbury (United Kingdom), 1989); Michael Lempert, *Discipline and Debate: The Language of Violence in a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Jane Caple, "Seeing Beyond the State? The Negotiation of Moral Boundaries in the Revival and Development of Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism in Contemporary China" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Leeds, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, 2011); Nawang L. Nornang, "Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-po Bshad-grub-gling," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne, vol. 12, *Studies in Asian Thought and Religion* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 249–268; Tsering Shakya, Tashi Rabgyas, and John Crook, "Monastic Economies in Zangskar 1980," in *Himalayan Buddhist Villages: Environment, Resources, Society and Religious Life in Zangskar, Ladakh*, ed. John Hurrell Crook and Henry Osmaston (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1994), 601–30; John Crook and Tsering Shakya, "Monastic Communities in Zangskar: Location, Function and Organisation," in *Himalayan Buddhist Villages*, 559–600; Paljor Tsarong, "Economy and Ideology on a Tibetan Monastic Estate in Ladakh: Processes of Production, Reproduction and Transformation" (The

usefulness is limited due to both methodological and political circumstances: few of these reflect any familiarity with the source languages needed to understand the historical relevance of the monasteries and traditions they studied; also, their fieldwork has been largely limited to areas outside the present-day People's Republic of China where the most important monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism have been located.

Studies based on historical sources are much fewer.¹⁰ Two of these are focused on monasteries in Inner Mongolia, which is not unrelated to the present work.¹¹ More recently, Paul Nietupski and Jann Ronis have written monographs on major monasteries located in northeastern Tibet and eastern Tibet, respectively.¹² Nietupski's recent book on Labrang

University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987); Li Anzhe was a western-trained anthropologist who wrote extensively about the conditions at Labrang Monastery as he observed them in the late 1930s. An-che Li, *Labrang: A Study in the Field*, ed. Chie Nakane (Tokyo: Documentation Center for Asian Studies, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 1982); Arjun Sen provides a useful study of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries based on a considerable number of the English-language sources available on the topic. Arjun Lal Sen, "Aspects of the Economic and Social Organization of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries" (University of Oxford, 1984).

¹⁰ In addition to those works mentioned below, Karsten has written a thorough, encyclopedic study of Kumbum Monastery, a neighbor of Gönlung. "A Study on the sku-'bum/T'a-erh Ssu Monastery in Ching-hai" (Thesis, University of Auckland, 1996). Dominique Townshend's "Materials of Buddhist Culture: Aesthetics and Cosmopolitanism at Mindroling Monastery" (Columbia University, 2012) also fits into this category, although I have not yet had the opportunity to thoroughly review it. The following also provide shorter studies of monastic institutions based on historical materials. Krystyna Cech, "The Social and Religious Identity of the Tibetan Bonpos with Special Reference to a North-west Himalayan Settlement" (University of Oxford (United Kingdom), 1987); Krystyna Cech, "A Bonpo Bca' Yig: The Rules of sMan-ri Monastery," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, ed. Helga Uebach and Jampa L. Panglung (Munich: Kommission Für Zentralasiatische Studien, 1988), 69–85; Françoise Pommaret, ed., "The Hours and Days of a Great Monastery: Drepung," in *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century: The Capital of the Dalai Lamas* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 167–78; Georges Dreyfus, "Introduction to Drepung Monastery," *The Drepung Monastery Project*, February 28, 2010, <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/drepung/>; José Ignacio Cabezón, "Introduction to Sera Monastery," *The Sera Monastery Project*, July 28, 2010, <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera/>.

¹¹ Robert James Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia* (Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1959); Isabelle Charleux, *Temples et monastères de Mongolie-Intérieure*, Archéologie et histoire de l'art 23 (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques: Institut national d'histoire de l'art, 2006).

¹² Paul Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community On The Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Jann Ronis, "Celibacy, Revelations, and Reincarnated Lamas:

Monastery is an important study for our knowledge of northeastern Tibet since the eighteenth century, when this monastery was founded. It also provides important details regarding the monastery's management of its lay estates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a subject on which historical sources are usually silent. However, the book's argument is largely concerned with demonstrating Labrang's autonomy apart from central governments in Beijing and Lhasa, and as such it does not address the institutional features of the monastery that help explain the rise and development of mega monasteries. Moreover, Labrang Monastery was founded over a hundred years *after* Gönlung Monastery and after the historical developments that are considered herein.

Ronis' study of Kathok Monastery provides a unique explanation for the rise of large-scale monasteries in eastern Tibet, and as such it has influenced the present study, even though the geographic focus and the sources of this present study have lead me in a different direction. His study considers the advent of important institutional developments at Kathok, including wide-scale celibacy, the establishment of incarnate lamas, and the development of liturgical and scholastic systems. Ronis' study, however, looks at a somewhat later period from the one considered here. Moreover, it is quite likely that the developments in monasticism that he considers were a response to earlier developments promoted by the Geluk sect.¹³

Contestation and Synthesis in the Growth of Monasticism at Katok Monastery from the 17th through 19th Centuries" (University of Virginia, 2009).

¹³ Although Ronis does not elaborate on the possibilities of Geluk-Nyingma influences, he does suggest that Kathok Monastery's most important reformer was aware of and engaged in such polemics. Elsewhere, however, Ronis suggests that the revival of liturgical and exegetical studies at Kathok took place *apart from* Geluk developments. More research is needed. "Celibacy, Revelations, and Reincarnated Lamas," 200 and 252.

Given this paucity of historical studies of monasticism in Tibet, we are often presented with mere caricatures of monks and their practices. One of the most prevalent among these is that of the uneducated and even slovenly monk who congregates *en masse* in order to live off the fruits of others' toil. The eminent anthropologist and historian Melvyn Goldstein has described this form of monasticism as "mass monasticism," which he describes as having "... an emphasis on recruiting and sustaining very large numbers of celibate monks for their entire lives."¹⁴ The sheer number of monks rather than their "quality" became the measure of a successful monastery.¹⁵ Drepung Monastery in Lhasa is often considered the largest monastery, allegedly having 10,000 monks at the time of the Chinese communist revolution. The other two major monastic "seats"¹⁶ in Lhasa, Sera and Ganden, are reported to have had about 7000 and 5000 monks, respectively.¹⁷

The overwhelming majority of monks, the so called "common" monks (*tramang or tragyü*) ... did not pursue this arduous curriculum and were not involved in formal study. Many could not read much more than one or two prayer books, and some, in fact, were functionally illiterate, having memorized only a few basic prayers. These monks had some intermittent monastic work obligations in their early years (as a kind

¹⁴ "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism," *The Center for Research on Tibet*, n.d., <http://www.case.edu/affil/tibet/currentStaff/goldstein.htm>. I have relied principally upon this English version of the paper, which is available for download at the author's website; This has been published in French here: Melvyn C. Goldstein, "Bouddhisme tibétain et monachisme de masse [Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism]," in *Des moines et des moniales dans le monde. La vie monastique dans le miroir de la parenté*, ed. Adeline Herrou and Gisèle Krauskopff (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 409–24; This article is largely a reiteration of material found in Goldstein's earlier article on modern Drepung Monastery in China. "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery," in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Melvyn C Goldstein (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 15–52; He introduced some of these ideas earlier still in *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 21–24.

¹⁵ Goldstein, "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery," 15.

¹⁶ T. *gdan sa*.

¹⁷ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 25. I have never seen any historical sources documenting these numbers, although they are reiterated throughout scholarship on Tibet. I wonder if these figures are not just symbolically large numbers?.

of “new monk tax”), but otherwise were free to do what they liked within the overall framework of monastic (vinaya) rules.¹⁸

What these monks did with their free time varied from making a living to engaging in all manner of deviance, including serving as a fighting and thieving “punk monk” (T. *ldab ldob*).¹⁹

Top 10 Largest Monasteries According to the <i>Vaidūrya ser po</i> (The Yellow Beryl, 1698)²⁰	Population
Drepung	4200
Sera	2850
Trashi Lhünpo	2500
Gönlung	1500
Serkhok	1300
Chamdo Jampa Ling	1200
Ganden	1100

¹⁸ Goldstein, “Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism.”

¹⁹ Ibid.; Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” 19 and 22.

²⁰ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, Sde srid, *Dga’ ldan chos ’byung baiDUrya ser po* (Yellow Beryl History of the Ganden School / *Vaidūrya ser po*), ed. Rdo rje rgyal po ([Beijing]: Krung go’i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1998). Six of the ten monasteries listed here are located in the “peripheral” regions of eastern or northeastern Tibet. Note that I have excluded Ngam ring chos sde from this list despite it being an important site for debate and scholasticism in the seventeenth century. This is because the population for this site is said to be based on the assembly of twenty-five different Sakya and Geluk “monastic groups” (T. *grwa tshang*). This exclusion is admittedly somewhat arbitrary, since we still know very little about the *other* monasteries that I have included on this list and how their congregations were counted. Nonetheless, the *Vaidūrya ser po* explicitly tells us that the population at Ngam ring chos sde is based on the seasonal assembly of numerous groups representing different sects. Therefore, I have treated it differently than these other institutions, the populations of which do not appear to fluctuate to the same degree. A spreadsheet of figures from the *Vaidūrya ser po* compiled by David Germano and Gray Tuttle has helped me in confirming my initial observations based on reading this text.

Kumbum	1000
Tangring	900
Ganden Dargyé Ling	740

It is precisely this laxity and easy lifestyle, Goldstein argues, that explains the large number monks at “mass monasteries.” Monks were expelled “only if they committed murder or major theft or engaged in heterosexual intercourse.”²¹ Moreover, “the karma-grounded ideology of Tibetan Buddhism saw the enforcement of morality and values as an individual rather than an institutional responsibility.”²² Such theological/doctrinal considerations aside, Goldstein identifies the following causes for the phenomenon of “mass monasticism:”

- 1) the recruitment of young, pre-sexual children;
- 2) a decentralized system of monastic households wherein senior monks took charge of young and junior monks, thereby fostering a hospitable environment of attachment and dependence;
- 3) parents seeking to gain merit or otherwise dispose of an extra mouth to feed by offering their son to the monastery;
- 4) a ‘monk tax’ (T. *grwa khral*) that requires the dependencies or estates of a monastery to fulfill a regular quota of monks.²³

Georges Dreyfus has correctly cautioned us against judging practice and behavior in traditional Tibetan monasteries based on our modern sensibilities and our notions of what is considered genuine. Moreover, he writes that

we should not assume that all Tibetan monasteries were equally lax in their discipline. ... Since important aspects of the discipline are regulated by the particular code of each individual monastery or monastic unit [i.e. monastic customaries], the strictness of monastic discipline varies greatly (as one might expect). In general, the large

²¹ Goldstein, “Bouddhisme tibétain et monachisme de masse [Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism]”; Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” 19.

²² Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” 22.

²³ Ibid., 15–19; Goldstein, “Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism.”

central monasteries of a tradition tended to be much stricter than the local smaller monasteries.²⁴

I would go a step further than Dreyfus in responding to Goldstein’s dismal portrait of “mass monasticism.” Mega monasteries attempted to regulate nearly *every aspect* of their monks’ lives, for failure to do so meant a breakdown in order and ultimately the collapse of the institution as a massive center of study and practice. As we shall see in chapter four, the socialization and disciplining of a monk began immediately upon his arrival at the monastery. His ability to attend assembly and partake of the monastery’s resources was contingent upon his memorizing and properly reciting the monastery’s breviary as well as having a comprehensive understanding of the typology of donations that could be made to the monastery (these being used regularly as a form of punishment). Note that this directly refutes a point Goldstein has made regarding the laxity of monastic life at these institutions: “New monks had no exams to pass in order to remain in the monastery, and monks who had no interest in studying or meditating were as welcome as the dedicated scholar monks.”²⁵

Doctrinal issues aside—(is it really the case that Tibetan Buddhism had a “karmic-based ideology” that relegated morality to the shoulders of individuals rather than the group?)²⁶—Goldstein’s explanation of “mass monasticism” does not provide a *causal explanation* for its historical appearance. What makes a monastery a single, identifiable corporate body if it consists primarily of decentralized monastic households? Why would

²⁴ Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2003), 39–40.

²⁵ Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” 17–19.

²⁶ The concept of “collective karma” most certainly exists in other times and places of the Buddhist world. A lively conversation regarding precisely this took place on the H-Buddhism listserv in September 2007. On the related concept of the “transfer of merit” in early Buddhism, see Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997), 23–55.

families give their children to *Geluk* monasteries instead of monasteries belonging to other sects? To say that they gave them because they belong to feuds of *Geluk* monasteries does not satisfactorily answer the question, since it begs the question of how *Geluk* monasteries effectively retained their estates.

Moreover, Goldstein's account of "mass monasticism" does not give us any idea of how these institutions actually *sustained* and *managed* the inordinate number of monks residing there. According to Goldstein, only about ten percent of the congregation at Drepung were "scholar monks" enrolled in classes on Buddhist philosophy,²⁷ although twenty-nine percent of those at Sera were "scholars monks."²⁸ Given that such a low percentage of the congregation had any regular contact with the monastery itself, one is left wondering how monks were socialized and retained as members of that monastery. Goldstein explains that social disdain is directed toward ex-monks and that monks do not regain their rights of inheritance even if they choose to return to lay life.²⁹ However, these are not explanations for why monks *are monks* rather than something else. In short, he completely overlooks the institutional features of these monasteries that socialized and retained monks and that strategically coordinated monastic-lay relations, relations that were crucial to the monastery's prestige and income.

²⁷ Goldstein, "The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery," 21.

²⁸ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 24.

²⁹ Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism." Nicolas Silhé has written a short but provocative article on the existence of "mostly temporary monasticism" among Tibetan boys in the region just south of Gönlung known as Rong bo. As Silhé himself notes, this exemplifies a unique departure from what we have come to assume about monasticism in traditional Tibet. "Quasi-generalized, mostly temporary, monasticism among boys: An uncommon form of Tibetan 'mass monasticism'," *The Himalayas and beyond: The Centre for Himalayan Studies blog*, October 7, 2011, http://himalayas.hypotheses.org/85#identifier_2_85. My thanks to Gray Tuttle for reminding me of this important piece.

One explanation for the chasm that exists between Goldstein’s portrayal of “mass monasticism” and the image I have acquired over the course of completing the present work is that Goldstein is foremost an anthropologist. In his earliest work³⁰ he clearly explains the sources (recently exiled Tibetans) and chronological limits of his research (1931-1951) for his claims. His later work, however, blends ethnographic observation, “tales”³¹ of the days of yore in the monastery, and the history of monasticism in Tibet.³² The literary and archival documents at our disposal present a variegated image of monasteries and monastic life: sometimes they were sites of “the efflorescence of the dharma” and “spiritual inspiration” for many, and at other times they were wrought by incompetence, deceit, or malicious behavior (as we shall see in chapter seven). Just how representative are oral histories of Tibetan monasticism in the early twentieth century? It is possible that Goldstein’s portrayal of monasticism in “traditional society” as a bunch of dithering half-wits derives from a rather specific place and time. In fact, at least some monks from the early twentieth century considered monasticism in Lhasa at that time to have degenerated:

Old lamas naively admitted that in former times a lot of lamas of Huang-chung used to go to Lhasa to complete their studies and to obtain higher titles, but that at present, because the former reputed centers of learning in Tibet had fallen into a state of deterioration, no lamas are traveling to Tibet.³³

³⁰ Melvyn C. Goldstein, “An Anthropological Study of the Tibetan Political System” (Ph.D., University of Washington, 1968).

³¹ Goldstein, “The Revival of Monastic Life in Drepung Monastery,” 22.

³² E.g. “... in the traditional society monasteries like Drepung (and Sera and Ganden) were full of monks who spent a large part of their time engage in moneymaking activities. Periodically, some monastic leaders sought to reform this situation and return the monastery to a more otherworldly orientation, but this was not the dominant point of view.” Although generalizations are a necessary and useful component of any genuine scholarship, this statement makes numerous unqualified assertions about monastic practice as it existed for all time prior to 1951 and provides not a single citation. *Ibid.*

³³ Louis M. J. Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, ed. Charles Kevin Stuart (Xining: Plateau Publications, 2006), 367. Of course, this sentiment, could be nothing more than an instance of nostalgia. Schram, the author of this statement, is skeptical of these monks, considering this sentiment to be an excuse for

Whatever the situation may have been in early twentieth-century Tibet, the fact is that it tells us very little about the complexities of these “mass” or “mega monasteries.”

I prefer the term “mega monastery” to “mass monastery,” since the latter term alludes only to the size of the monastery. “Mega monastery,” on the other hand, may evoke images of “mega churches,” the gigantic Christian institutions that dot the contemporary American landscape. Perhaps the only similarities between these institutions and the mega monasteries of traditional Tibet are their size and organizational complexity, but if that is the case, then the analogy works. Mega monasteries were complex institutions that were successful not by accident but by carefully designed systems of administration, discipline, scholasticism, and ritual.

In a masterful essay, Rachel McCleary and Leonard van der Kuijp contend that the Geluk sect developed a monopoly on Tibet’s religious market *not* due to a centralized political authority but rather due to its unique “club” characteristics and technological innovations.

Several organizational aspects of the Geluk school differentiated it from the other religious schools and sects. These characteristics introduced technological innovation into the Tibetan religion market and monastic system. The characteristics reinforced each other to strengthen the Geluk school: (1) ordained abbots, never lay abbots; (2) an emphasis on monastic discipline, casuistical (vinaya) adherence, and scholastic training; and (3) mass monasticism, which created a competitive advantage in an already crowded and competitive religious market. The primary advantage of these structural features combined is that the Geluk school focused on religious goods, minimizing its organizational involvement in clan politics, particularly conflicts over hereditary leadership.³⁴

their own laziness. In any case, the point is that oral histories should be treated with care, and even more caution should be exercised when they are extended to times before the informants were alive.

³⁴ “The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642,” 163–4.

The present work derives much of its inspiration and theoretical framework from this essay by McCleary and van der Kuijp. One of the fundamental topics of chapter four is precisely that of the institution of the abbot. Discipline is also discussed in chapter four. Chapter six provides an in-depth view of the scholastic system at work at Gönlung Monastery. The only exception I take with the above passage is the authors' inclusion of "mass monasticism" as a technological innovation. I have not found historical evidence that supports the idea that "mass monasticism" was a *technology* employed by any sect, consciously or unconsciously. In my analysis, "mass" or "mega monasticism" was the *outcome* of particular historical and institutional considerations. Moreover, the McCleary and van der Kuijp themselves write that "in theory, all schools were practicing mass monasticism."³⁵ The reason for this discrepancy is that McCleary and van der Kuijp have relied upon Goldstein's definition of "mass monasticism"—i.e. the admittance of as many monks as possible into the monastery—perhaps because Goldstein's essays are some of the only works that have taken monasticism as its object of investigation. It is what the monks *did* in the monasteries that comprised technological innovation.

Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Mother of All Monasteries (north of the Huang River)

The present study focuses on the establishment and early development of the monastery known as Gönlung Jampa Ling. This is not because Gönlung is one of the most central mega monasteries. A monastery located in Lhasa, such as Drepung, would perhaps serve as a more paradigmatic example, since it was founded considerably earlier and is, moreover, closely associated with the founder of the Geluk sect, Tsongkhapa. The present

³⁵ Ibid., 164.

study began as an attempt to understand the significance of a largely unknown but seemingly important monastery located on the frontier between Tibetan, Chinese, and Mongol cultures. Only later did I realize that Gönlung was at one time the fourth largest monastery on the Tibetan Plateau and that it may represent one of the first conscious attempts by the Geluk sect to *institutionalize* its practices.



*Gönlung Monastery (its lower half) in 2010.*³⁶

Gönlung is located in present-day Huzhu County, Qinghai Province, in the People's Republic of China, in the cultural region known in Tibetan as Pari.³⁷ Although it is basically unknown outside of the larger region of Amdo³⁸, those who do know it refer to it by a

³⁶ All photos were taken by me unless otherwise noted.

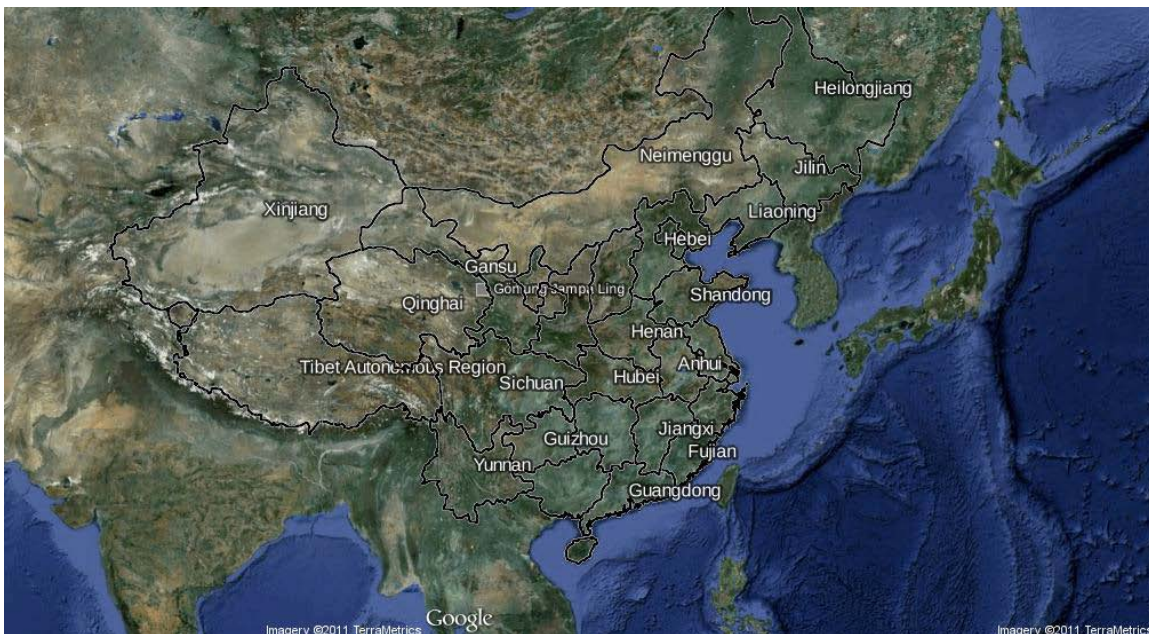
³⁷ T. dpa' ris. Pronounced "Huari" in the local Amdo dialects.

³⁸ T. a mdo. For the sake of this study, Amdo refers generally to southern and western Gansu Province (where one still finds a vibrant presence of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and monks, as well as other religious

number of names, including Gönlung (T. dgon lung; dgon klung), Gelong si 格隆寺, Erh-ku-lung or Rgulang (the local Monguor language pronunciation of the name), and Youning si 佑寧寺 (lit. The Monastery that Protects the Peace). As discussed in chapters five and six, it is also known as “the ancestress of all the ‘commentary schools’ in Domé.” The reason for this grandiose epithet is that it appears to be the first institution in Amdo where formalized instruction on Geluk philosophical texts was taught. Chinese commentators have picked up on this and refer to the monastery as “the mother of all monasteries north of the Huang River.”³⁹ In this case, the epithet refers to common belief that some forty-two to forty-nine different monasteries and hermitages in Pari and beyond are branch monasteries of Gönlung.

specialists), far eastern and southern Qinghai Province, and northern Sichuan Province. At times I have also used it more loosely to refer to all of present-day Qinghai Province, although this is historically inaccurate (those areas in the vicinity of Kōkenuur—Qinghai Lake—and west of the lake are more accurately referred to as Kōkenuur (Mongolian for “Blue Lake”), and the southwestern end of Qinghai Province is considered part of the cultural region known as Kham (T. khams). I have treated “Domé” (T. mdo smad) as largely synonymous with Amdo, although Gray Tuttle has found that, historically, the meaning of the term is actually quite unstable.

³⁹ “*Huang shui beian zhu si zhi mu*” 湟水北岸諸寺之母. Chinese scholarship and popular literature make such attributions. Louis Schram writes that “according to the superiors of the monastery, and the general testimony in the country, forty-two branches proceeded from Erh-ku-lung.” *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 337, 358, *passim*. Today, monks and scholars regularly speak of forty-eight or forty-nine branch monasteries of Gönlung.



Map showing Gönlung Monastery in present-day China. Generated using the THL Place Dictionary, places.thlib.org.

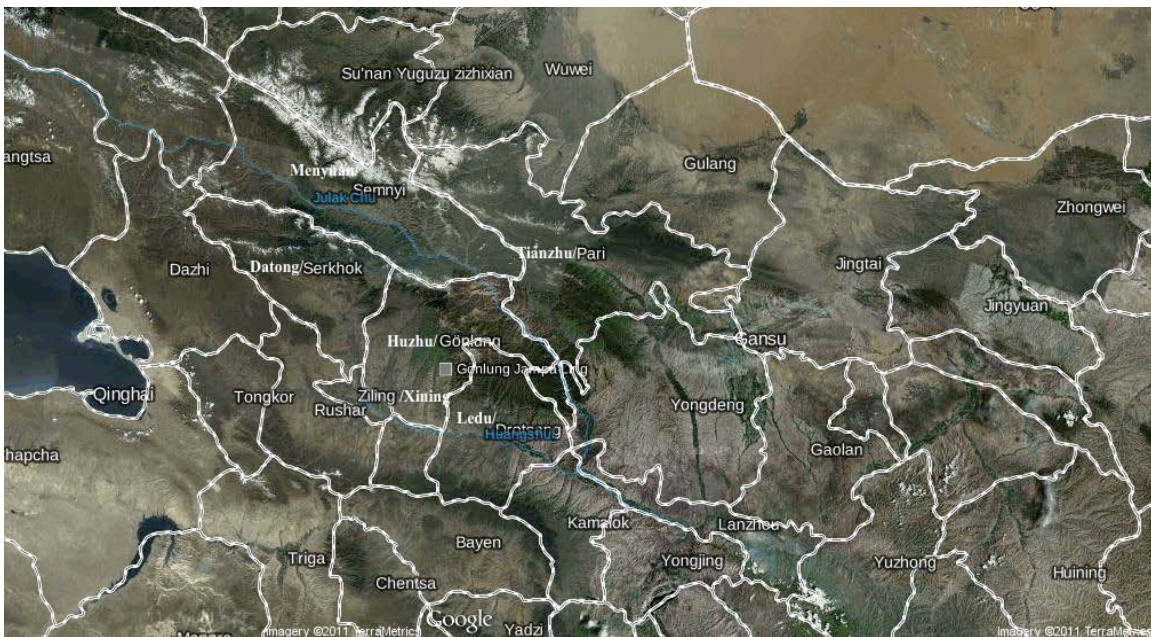
The exact boundaries of Pari are not clear. In the present work, Pari refers generally to all of those areas extending from present-day Datong County in the west, across Huzhu County, to Ledu County in the east and that are circumscribed by the Datong River 大通河⁴⁰ to the north and the Huang River 湟水⁴¹ to the south. Pari also seems to refer to those areas immediately on the Gansu side of the Datong River, although, again, the boundaries between

⁴⁰ Also known as the Haomen he 浩門河. T. 'ju lag chu. The local Monghuls pronounce this as "Jilo."

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春) and Jugui (Lu Wanfang 鲁万芳), "Passions and Colored Sleeves: Mongghul Lives in Eastern Tibet," ed. CK Stuart, G Roche, and R Johnson, *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 7 (2010), ch. 40. Lonbsang Yongdan (personal communication, May 24, 2011) suggests that the Mongolian name for this river is Ulam mori.

⁴¹ This, the Huang shui (T. tsong chu), is not to be confused with the more renowned "Yellow River" (Huang he 黃河) which has its headwaters in Amdo.

Pari and neighboring cultural areas and administrative districts are unclear.⁴² The Monguor term “Duluun Lunkuang” refers to the seven major valleys that historically were estates belonging to Gönlung.⁴³ More recently, these north-south running valleys have served as the basis for the geo-political lines demarking districts, townships, etc. in Huzhu County and surrounding counties.



Map showing the counties in present-day Qinghai and Gansu Provinces that make up the cultural region known as Pari (T. dpa' ris): Menyuan, Tianzhu, Yongdeng, and especially Datong, Huzhu, and the northern half of Ledu. Also note the location of the Datong or Julak River in the north of Pari and the Huang River in the south. Generated using the THL Place Dictionary, places.thlib.org.

Historically, the predominant ethnic group in Pari was the Monguor, referred to as “Hor” in Tibetan and “Tumin” 土民 or “Tuzu” 土族 (lit. “people of the earth,” i.e. aborigines) in Chinese. The origin of the Monguors is still a debated issue, but the most likely

⁴² E.g. Pingfan 平番, Zhuanglang 莊浪 (T. grong lang), Pho rod, Liangzhou 涼州 (T. lang jus, lang gru'i sde gzhi, mkhar tsan, etc.), the territory of the Yu gur mdong nag, etc.

⁴³ Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春) and Jugui (Lu Wanfang 鲁万芳), “Passions and Colored Sleeves”, ch. 10.

explanation is that they are descended from Mongols who settled in the region during the Yuan Dynasty and who intermingled with other ethnic groups in the area such as Tibetans and Chinese.⁴⁴ The languages spoken by Monguors belong to the Mongolic family, and Monguors themselves seem to have retained certain cultural traits of their Mongol ancestors.⁴⁵ One of the shortcomings of the present work is that it does not attempt to identify how the ethnic composition of Gönlung Monastery (mostly Monguor) may have distinguished Gönlung from other Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. One may *presume* its intimate connections with numerous Mongol patrons were due to its own Mongolic background, but there is no direct evidence to support this. Furthermore, such connections could also be explained by Gönlung's *proximity* to various Mongol groups. Nonetheless, for the sake of the present study, what makes Gönlung unique is not its ethnic makeup but rather its claim to be an exemplary Buddhist monastery.

The “White Hidden Land”

As explained above, one of my arguments in the present work is that the origin and early development of Gönlung both precedes and extends beyond the shadows of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Nonetheless, that does not mean that the Dalai Lamas had nothing to do with this mega monastery. On the contrary, in Tibetan histories one finds Gönlung grouped together with an elite corps of monasteries that are said to owe their existence to the Dalai Lamas:

⁴⁴ I will have a little more to say about this subject in the following chapter.

⁴⁵ Keith W. Slater, *A Grammar of Mangghuer: A Mongolic Language of China's Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 9–10. Slater distinguishes between two Monguor *languages* that he calls “Mangghuer” and “Mongghul,” reflecting the local pronunciation of these languages in Minhe and Huzhu Counties, respectively. I will use the more generic term “Monguor” throughout, since that approach seems safer than to apply the more discrete term “Mongghul” to historical figures whose ethnicity is a topic beyond the purview of most historical texts.

... [The First Dalai Lama] Lord Gendün Drup founded Trashi Lhünpo in Tsang. [The Second Dalai Lama] Lord Gendün Gyatso, Gyel Metok Tang of Lhoka. [The Fourth Dalai Lama] Lord Yönten Gyatso, as prophesied [by the Third Dalai Lama], Gönlung Jampa Ling. These three [stem from] the lifetimes of the Victorious Lama Rinpoché. I have heard that there was a prophecy that each of these three great monasteries had both a good [lit. white] serpent deity⁴⁶ and an evil [lit. black] serpent deity residing at it, that each therefore had built a serpent deity cairn⁴⁷ for each, and that each would have to take [the goddess] Lhamo Rematī as its Dharma Protector. ...⁴⁸

The chronicle of Gönlung gives a more expanded list:

The Victor Gendün Drup established Tashi Lhünpo. The Omniscient One Gendün Gyatso established Chökhör Gyel [i.e. Gyel Metok]. The [Third Dalai Lama] Victor Sönam Gyatso established Litang Tupchen Jampa Ling. The Great Fifth established over thirteen monasteries. The [Seventh Dalai Lama] King of Victors Kelzang Gyatso established Garthar Monastery. Apart from these, the fourth King of Victors, Yönten Gyatso, is the one who laid the foundation for this great monastery of Gönlung Jampa Ling.⁴⁹

Among these many monasteries, Gönlung is said to share a particularly close relationship with the monastery founded by the Second Dalai Lama known as Chökhör Gyel, aka Metok Tang.⁵⁰ Both monasteries are located in what is called the Hidden White Land.⁵¹ “Hidden

⁴⁶ T. *klu*.

⁴⁷ T. *klu tho*.

⁴⁸ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len* (Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor), Mtsho sngon bod yig gna' gzhung (Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 2001), 268. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee explains that Lhamo Remati (lha mo re ma ti) is a form of the goddess Makzorma (dmag zor ma), herself a form of the goddess Pelden Lhamo (dpal ldan lha mo). Nebesky-Wojkowitz, on the other hand, suggests that she is a member of the retinues of Makzorma and Pelden Lhamo. Réne Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Tiwari's Pilgrims Book House, 1993), 25, 28, and 36.

⁴⁹ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag dpyod ldan yid dbang 'gugs pa'i pho nya (The Monastic Chronicle of Gönlung Monastery),” in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works), vol. 2 (Lhasa: Zhol New Printery Block, 2000), 638/3b.1. The *Collected Works* of Tuken and others do not include sequential page numbers throughout its volumes. Instead, each work is separately numbered, beginning with page one. In order to facilitate locating individual works within these massive volumes, later editors have added sequential page numbers, although not always consistently or reliably. The first number that I have given, which appears before the forward slash (e.g. “638”), corresponds to the sequential page number given by later editors. The second number, which appears after the forward slash (e.g. “3b.1”), corresponds to the individual work's page number. The letters “a” and “b” indicate *recto* and *verso* sides of a folio, respectively. Line numbers, when given, follow the period (e.g. “1”).

⁵⁰ T. chos 'khor gyal; me tog thang.

⁵¹ T. sbas yul dkar po'i ljongs.

lands”⁵² are often peripheral places that provide security to Buddhist practitioners in times of social strife. The location of Chökhör Gyel had a history of association with “treasure revealers”⁵³—Buddhist adepts who revealed Buddhist texts and teachings that had been buried or otherwise hidden in previous centuries—before it became intimately tied to the Geluk sect and the Dalai lamas in particular.⁵⁴

Gönlung may have become associated with this “Hidden White Land” through the monastery’s founder—Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso (d. *ca.* 1637)⁵⁵—or at least the founder’s successor—Gyelsé Lozang Tendzin (*ca.* 1638-1696).⁵⁶ The former studied at and served as the abbot of one of Chökhör Gyel’s core monastic groups, the peripatetic Dakpo Dratsang.⁵⁷ He traveled from Central Tibet to Pari in 1604 and founded Gönlung.

His rebirth, Gyelsé Lozang Tendzin, visited Gönlung in 1665, and there penned an homage to Gönlung and vicinity, known as *Sbas yul dkar po’i ljongs kyi gnas bstod ka la ping ka’i sgra dbyangs* (Praises of the Place of the Hidden White Land: The Song of the Cuckoo).⁵⁸ In verse, he makes subtle allusions to a prophecy made by the Third Dalai Lama concerning the founding of a monastery at the future site of Gönlung.⁵⁹ It is not clear how old the history of this prophecy is. The biography of the Third Dalai Lama written by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1646 does not mention this prophecy. Instead, it tells us that the Third Dalai

⁵² T. *sbas yul*.

⁵³ T. *gter ston*.

⁵⁴ Franz-Karl Ehrhard, “A ‘Hidden Land’ at the Border of ’Ol-kha and Dvags-po,” ed. Roberto Vitali, *The Earth Ox Papers: Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Dharamsala, 2009* 34–35, no. 3–4 and 1–2 (2009 (Autumn and Winter)-2010 (Spring and Summer)): 493–522.

⁵⁵ T. *rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho*.

⁵⁶ T. *rgyal sras blo bzang bstan ’dzin*.

⁵⁷ T. *dwags po grwa tshang*.

⁵⁸ Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan ’dzin, “Sbas yul dkar po’i ljongs kyi gnas bstod ka la ping ka’i sgra dbyangs (Praises of the Place of the Hidden White Land: The Song of the Cuckoo),” in *Chos sde chen po Dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988), 157–73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 158 and 169.

Lama passed through Pari, giving teachings, and then settled in Semnyi⁶⁰ for a few days, where he prophesied the establishment of Semnyi Monastery, a branch monastery of Gönlung (see chapter five).⁶¹ By the end of the seventeenth century, the story of the Third Dalai Lama's prophecy had become widely accepted. Desi Sanggyé Gyatso (1653-1705)⁶² writes in his *Vaḍūrya ser po* (Yellow Beryl) that “when the Lord Sönam Gyatso went to Drakgya he made a prophecy concerning the place.” It may be the case that the association with the Third Dalai Lama was added to Gönlung's pedigree later, after the Fifth Dalai Lama came to rule in Tibet.

The Founding

Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's *Vaḍūrya ser po* also gives us the description of Gönlung's founding. He writes that the Dalai Lama

had the Baso incarnation Tenpa Gyatso⁶³ tame the earth [spirits] there. Afterwards, the Victorious King Yönten Gyatso gave urgent orders including instructions to Gyelsé Dönyö Chö Gyatso to establish a monastery and encouragement to the group of *nangso*⁶⁴ to act as patrons. Accordingly, in the Wood-Male-Dragon year [i.e. 1604], the foundations for the shrine hall and so forth were successively established.
 ...⁶⁵

⁶⁰ T. sems nyid.

⁶¹ Dalai Lama V Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Rgyal dbang sku phreng rim byon gyi mdzad nam/ Sku phreng dang po nas bzhi pa'i bar gyi nam thar/* (Biographies of the First through the Fourth Dalai Lamas) (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2010), 568.

⁶² T. sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho.

⁶³ T. ba so *sprul sku* bstan pa rgya mtsho. The *Gönlung Chronicle* by Tuken III refers to this figure as Rje drung sprul sku Bstan pa rgya mtsho. Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, Thu'u bkwan III, “Gönlung Chronicle,” 645/7a.3–5.

⁶⁴ T. *nang so*; lit. domestic watchmen. These are the local leaders who requested the Dalai Lama's help in founding a monastery. See chapter one for more details.

⁶⁵ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDurya ser po*, 340.

Tuken III's 1775 chronicle of Gönlung (hereafter, *Gönlung Chronicle*) gives a more detailed account of the process whereby the local demons and gods were tamed. For instance, Tenpa Gyatso is said to have

arrived at this place and erected a statue of the Lord of Secrets, Vajrapani. The dreadful gods and spirits [of this place] were all tamed. In particular, in a black well beneath what [appeared] like the genitals of a Rock Ogress lived a pernicious serpent demon. A lightning bolt actually fell upon that well and caused a fire. Nowadays exorcisms are still performed in the lower part of the valley.⁶⁶

After the local spirits were all dealt with and enlisted as protectors of the site, Gyelsé and other performed the necessary monastic rituals, such as the fortnightly confession,⁶⁷ and the monastery was founded.

Population

Tuken III's *Gönlung Chronicle* suggests that, at first, the only infrastructure the monastery had was the main shrine hall⁶⁸ and Gyelsé's quarters. "More than a hundred" monks gathered there, each living in his own small hut.⁶⁹ When Dewa Chöjé, the subject of chapter two, visited Gönlung in 1638 and presided over the ceremonies of the Great Prayer Festival, there gathered nearly a hundred *geshé*, *kachu*, and *rabjampa* scholars, some seventy to eighty meditators dedicated to spiritual practice, and some four to five hundred philosophy students [all of who] exemplified the congregation of several thousand."⁷⁰ It is unclear how

⁶⁶ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Chronicle," 645/7a.3–5.

⁶⁷ T. *gso sbyong*. Ibid., 644/6b.5–645/7a.1.

⁶⁸ T. *gtsug lag khang*.

⁶⁹ T. *spyil po*. Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Chronicle," 646/7b.4.

⁷⁰ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Sde ba chos rje Bstan 'dzin blo bzang rgya mtsho'i rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed (Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso, 1593-1638)," in *Mdo smad sgrub brgyud bstan pa'i shing rta ba chen po phyag na pad+mo yab rje bla ma Skal ldan rgya mtho'i gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Kelden Gyatso), vol. 1, Gangs can skal bzang dpe tshogs 1 ([Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 248.

representative these figures are, since the Great Prayer Festival and the presence of an eminent lama from Central Tibet presumably would have attracted monks from all over Pari.

In any case, by the end of the seventeenth century we once again have reliable figures. Desi Sanggyé Gyatso reports that Gönlung had 1500 monks.⁷¹ This is notably less than the figures popularly ascribed to Gönlung nowadays. The number 7700 or “more than 7000” is commonly given as the population of the congregation during the Kangxi reign (1661-1722), although there is no historical source for these figures, and it probably represents an oral tradition run amuck.⁷² Gönlung may have reached its greatest size in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, before the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion in 1723-24. A brief note in the *Ocean Annals* recalls how an important lama from Pari gave extensive offerings to the “more than 2400 monks” at Gönlung.⁷³

⁷¹ *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

⁷² Dung dkar blo bzang `phrin las (1927-1997), *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2002), 616b; Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, *Gan Qing Zangchuan Fojiao Siyuan 甘青藏傳佛教寺院* (Xining 西寧: Qinghai renmin chubanshe 青海人民出版社, 1990), 75; Li Xiangde 李向德, “Ming Qing shiqi Tuzu diqu de zongjiao senggang zhidu 明清时期土族地区的宗教僧纲制度,” *Qinghai minzuxueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue Ban) 青海民族学院学报 (社会科学版)* no. 1 (1996): 64; Andreas Gruschke says that there were 6000-7000 monks during the time of Sumpa Khenpo (1704-1788). He does suggest that these inflated numbers may represent the “shares” of alms in the monastery rather than the number of actual monks or that they represent the combined population of Gönlung Monastery together with its satellite monasteries. However, he also does not cite an historical source for his figures. *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Amdo: The Qinghai Part of Amdo* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001).

⁷³ Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung [deb ther rgya mtsho = Ocean Annals]* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 117.8; Schram, who may be relying upon Chinese sources, says that Gönlung had 2500 monks in the lead-up to the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 283 and 323.



Gönlung in 1934. The main assembly hall and Changkya's villa are in the foreground. Photo by Zhuang Xueben.⁷⁴

After the monastery was destroyed during the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, it was gradually rebuilt, and it may have housed around 2000 monks in the latter half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ However, as I show in the following chapter (and chapter seven), by this point in time, Gönlung's influence in the region and

⁷⁴ Photo published in Zhuang Xueben, *Zhuang Xueben quanji 庄学本全集* (Complete Works of Zhuang Xueben), eds. Li Mei, Wang Huangsheng, and Zhuang Weijun (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009).

⁷⁵ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje nam thar* (Biography of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé) (Lan kru'u [Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 533–4; Dbal mang paN+Di ta Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, “Jam dbyangs bla ma rje btsun bstan pa'i sgron me'i rnam par thar pa brjod pa'i gtam dad pa'i pad+mo bzhad pa'i nyin byed,” in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Gung thang III Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me), vol. 8 (Lhasa: Zhol par khang gsar pa, 2000), 702/75b.6–703/76a.2; Turrell V. Wylie and 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las, *The Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas Bshad*, trans. Wylie (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1962), 109.

inter-regionally had waned. This is why size alone is not an indicator of a “mega monastery.”⁷⁶ In particular, the later Gönlung lacked the strict and regulated systems of administration and discipline that both ensured the smooth operation of its other systems (scholastic and ritual) and safeguarded the monastery’s reputation.

Famous Lamas and Little Lamas

One of the ironies of Gönlung’s history is that just as the monastery was plunging into ignominy and anonymity in the eighteenth century, its incarnate lamas were reaching new heights of renown. Among them the best known are the “three thirds,” that is Changkya III, Tuken III, and Sumpa III. Changkya III Rölpe Dorjé (1717-1786)⁷⁷ was raised at the Qing Court and was childhood friends with Prince Hongli 弘曆, the future Qianlong Emperor. His predecessor had been very intimate with the Kangxi Emperor, and the priest-patron relationship that they developed continued in the eighteenth century with Qianlong and Changkya III. There is perhaps more secondary literature written about Changkya III than any other Tibetan figure besides the Dalai Lamas.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Chinese ethnographers in the 1950s and 60s were supposedly told that Gönlung had 3000 monks before the monastery was burned by Muslims in the late nineteenth century. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, ed., *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* 青海土族社会历史调查 (An Investigation of the Social History of the Tu Ethnicity of Qinghai) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1985), 47.

⁷⁷ T. lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje.

⁷⁸ For one list of Western literature on Changkya III see Marina Illich, “Imperial Stooge or Emisary to the Dge Lugs Throne? Rethinking the Biographies of Changkya Rolpe Dorjé,” in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, eds. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 17n2.

Tuken III Lozang Chökyi Nyima (1737-1802)⁷⁹ was also an influential figure at the Qing Court, although he has not attracted the attention of scholars as has Changkya III. Besides writing a history of Gönlung (the *Gönlung Chronicle*), he also composed a famous work known as the *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long* (The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems).⁸⁰ This is a lengthy “historico-philosophical work” that uniquely attempts to explain and compare the religious traditions stretching from India, through Central Asia, to China.⁸¹

Sumpa III (1704-1788), aka Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor,⁸² is perhaps best known for his history of Kökenuur as well as his geography of the world.⁸³ The former provides important details concerning the history of Inner Asian politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whereas the latter is one of the first attempts to bridge traditional, Buddhist notions of the cosmos with what is now considered modern geography. He also participated in and excelled at the monastery-wide debates at Gomang College and Drepung

⁷⁹ T. thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma.

⁸⁰ Translated as Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*, ed. Roger R. Jackson, trans. Geshé Lhundub Sopa, The Library of Tibetan Classics 25 (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 14–15; citing A. I. Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, trans. Harish Chandra Gupta (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1994), 154.

⁸² T. sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal 'byor. He is the third in the lineage of Sumpa the Younger Damchö Gyeltsen (sum pa *slob dpon chung ba* dam chos rgyal mtshan (abbot of Gönlung from 1633-1637).

⁸³ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor [Being a partial translation of the Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa'i tshangs glu gsar snyan zhes bya ba]*, trans. Ho-Chin Yang, Uralic and Altaic Series 106 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Matthew T. Kapstein, “Just Where on Jambudvīpa Are We? New Geographical Knowledge and Old Cosmological Schemes in Eighteenth-century Tibet,” in *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500–1800*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 336–64; J. W. de Jong, “Sum-pa Mkhan-po (1704-1788) and His Works,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 208–216. {Citation}

Monastery, as well as participating in ‘academic circuit’ style of debating with monks from other monasteries in Lhasa during the annual Great Prayer Festival.⁸⁴

Changkya, Tuken, and Sumpa are three of the so-called “five great lamas” at Gönlung.⁸⁵ The other two are Chuzang⁸⁶ and Wang.⁸⁷ The second and third Chuzang lamas⁸⁸ maintained a master-disciple relationship with the seventh and eighth Dalai Lamas. The Seventh Dalai Lama was apparently quite fond of the young Chuzang III, since the latter’s predecessor had served as the Dalai Lama’s own master. When Chuzang III left Central Tibet to return to Amdo, the Seventh Dalai Lama showed deep reverence for him, saying, “everyone should venerate him no differently than me!” The Dalai Lama and Chuzang both cried. The Dalai Lama’s servants also shed tears, remarking

the number of disciples the Precious Victor [i.e. the Dalai Lama] has who possess the three virtues of being learned, disciplined, and good are countless. However, outwardly, the compassion he [shows for Chuzang], and, inwardly, the veneration he [holds for him], are hard to [come by]. Here we have a living example of the story of Marpa presenting himself before Naro[pa].⁸⁹

The Wang lama is the least known of the bunch, although this lineage was quite influential both at Gönlung and beyond in Inner Mongolia. I shall have more to say about the Wang lineage in chapter six.

⁸⁴ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 109–11. Schram and Petech have both cited Das, who says that Sumpa Khenpo served as abbot of Gomang beginning in 1726. This is not true. Moreover, it would be quite incredible for a twenty-two year-old (in Western reckoning) to assume the throne of this prestigious institution.

⁸⁵ T. *bla chen lnga*; Ch. *wu da nang [qian] 五大囊[欠]*. Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Bshad sgrub bstan pa’i ’byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan g.yas ’khyil dung gi sgra dbyangs* (The Place Where Originated Expounding on and Accomplishing the Dharma: An Addition to the [Record of] the Succession of Abbots of the Great Religious Establishment Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Sound of the Clockwise-turning Conch Shell) (n.p.: s.n., n.d.), 19; Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 321.

⁸⁶ T. chu bzang.

⁸⁷ T. wang.

⁸⁸ T. chu bzang blo bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1652-1723); chu bzang ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug (1725-1796).

⁸⁹ Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos ’byung*, 91.

In addition to these five “great lamas,” there are “nine minor lamas” at Gönlung.⁹⁰ Incarnations within these lineages often served in leadership positions at Gönlung and elsewhere in Pari. They are Likya,⁹¹ Degu,⁹² Gomang,⁹³ Wushi,⁹⁴ Kyungtsa,⁹⁵ Gyatik,⁹⁶ Horkyong,⁹⁷ Linkya,⁹⁸ and Serding.⁹⁹

⁹⁰ T. *bla chung dgu*. Schram says there were eleven in his day. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 335.

⁹¹ T. li kyA; Ch. Li jia 李家.

⁹² T. bde rgu; Ch. Dugu 杜固. The Chinese rendering of this lineage (and many of the other “minor” lineages) is not standardized.

⁹³ T. sgo mang; Ch. Guomang 郭莽. This lineage appears to have commenced with the former abbot of Drepung Monastery’s Gomang College (1792-1798), Har chin *tho yon* Mthu stobs nyi ma, who served as Gönlung’s forty-eighth abbot.

⁹⁴ Ch. Wushi 五十 > T. ul shri / ul shi.

⁹⁵ T. khyung tsha; Ch. Qiongcha 琼察.

⁹⁶ T. Rgya tig; Ch. Jiading 加定.

⁹⁷ T. hor skyong; Ch. Huo’erjiang 霍尔姜.

⁹⁸ T. lin kyA; Ch. Lin jia 林家.

⁹⁹ T. ser lding; Ch. Se’erdang 色尔当.



The villa of the Likya lamas.¹⁰⁰ This was the only building in the monastery not destroyed during the political upheaval of 1958 and the Cultural Revolution. It apparently escaped destruction by tried and true methods: it was converted into a school.

¹⁰⁰ The current caretaker of the villa explained to me that *both* the Likya incarnation lineage and the Li kyA zur ba lineage (aka li kyA zhabs drung) resided here, although the last Li kyA zur ba passed away in 1979. Personal communication, June 6, 2011.



Detail of the woodwork of the Likya villa.

Apart from these nine, there were apparently several other incarnate lama lineages that had villas at Gönlung at one time or another, although the histories of these villas are largely unknown.¹⁰¹

The presence of these incarnate lamas came rather late in the history of Gönlung. Gönlung may have been home to one of the first incarnate lama lineages from Amdo.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Nyima Dzin lists fourteen others that reportedly had villas at Gönlung: “Dan ma, Stong kyA, Rdo ba, Bzang skor, Gong ba, Lu”u kyA, Sgom gzhis, Brag rtsa, Sems nyid, Sum b+ha zhabs drung, li kyA zur ba, Pra sti zhab drung, Kyi tshang zhabs drung, and Har chen zhabs drung. *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 124–5.

¹⁰² Louis Schram postulates that the second Lcang skya was in fact the first incarnate lama from the region. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 380. Gray Tuttle has informed me that this was not the case. The second La mo / Zhabs drung dkar po incarnation, Blo gros rgya mtsho (1610-1659) was born in Kökenuur to the Tümed Mongol ruler Kholoche (T. ho lo chi, kho lo chi; Ch. Huoluoqi 霍洛齊, Huolochi 火落赤). In addition, the second Gcan tsha zhabs drung was recognized in the Ming Dynasty. Personal communication, May 29, 2012. See also Tuttle, “An Overview of Amdo (Northeastern Tibet) Historical Polities,” *Tibetan and Himalayan Library* (2011), <http://places.thlib.org/features/24106/descriptions/1228#ixzz1jsMIHAZH>.

Changkya II Ngawang Lozang Chöden was recognized as the rebirth of Changkya Drakpa Özer sometime in the late 1640s, and this recognition appears to have been among the first in a wave of such rebirths that took place at Gönlung and the other major monasteries in Amdo in the late eighteenth century. I shall have more to say about Changkya II and his recognition in chapter three.

This phenomenon had major implications for the administration of Gönlung. In the first century of its existence, Gönlung was a model mega monastery, meaning the proprietary interests of its founder (Gyelsé) and, later, its incarnate lamas did not initially influence the administration and operation of the monastery. As the wealth and influence of these incarnate lamas grew, so did their claim on affairs at Gönlung. The incarnate lama lineage of Gönlung's founder, Gyelsé, became very involved in the politics of Central Tibet (especially in the 1720s and 30s). Later, when Gyelsé's influence in Tibet diminished, so did his influence on Gönlung.¹⁰³ By the end of the eighteenth century, Gönlung's homegrown incarnate lamas were the *de facto* proprietors of the monastery. I shall return to this point in chapter four.

Branches

Gönlung is said to have between forty-two and forty-nine¹⁰⁴ “branch monasteries”¹⁰⁵ or “child monasteries,”¹⁰⁶ most of them located in Pari. For this reason it has garnered the

¹⁰³ Gene Smith makes this point. *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 159.

¹⁰⁴ Schram says forty-two. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 337, 358, *passim*; Nyima Dzin lists forty-nine branch monasteries of Gönlung. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 14–18.

¹⁰⁵ T. *dgon lag*.

¹⁰⁶ T. *bu dgon*.

epithet in Chinese of “the mother of all the monasteries north of the Huang [River].”¹⁰⁷ This is not surprising: one consequence of becoming a mega monastery is that the institution becomes an important node in interlocking networks of monasteries. This means that Gönlung borrows ritual practices from major traditions and institutions in Central Tibet (a topic explored in chapter five), that it both competes and cooperates with neighboring mega monasteries, and that it becomes the “mother” to a host of smaller monasteries and hermitages. However, the precise meaning of “branch monastery” is vague both in the indigenous Tibetan literature and in secondary literature on Tibetan Buddhism.

The types of relationships that existed between Gönlung and its branch monasteries varied greatly from place to place. The closest relationships were those that included administrative and/or financial bonds. For instance, Schram explains that Mati Monastery, located north of Gönlung on the other side of the Qilian Mountains, was required to annually pay interest on the land that it was, in effect, leasing from one of Gönlung incarnate lama lineages (Tuken).¹⁰⁸ Elsewhere Schram has described how the head of a branch monastery as well as its disciplinarian were appointed by the monastery’s founder—usually a lama associated with the mother monastery—and how the entire congregation of a branch monastery was required to travel to the mother monastery to acknowledge these appointments each time they were made.¹⁰⁹ This was most certainly the case for monasteries located close to Gönlung, such as Martsang Drak, which is located just down the valley from

¹⁰⁷ Ch. Huang bei zhu si zhi mu. 湟北諸寺之母 Han Rulin 韓儒林, “Qinghai Youning si ji qi ming seng 青海佑寧寺及其名僧 (Qinghai’s Youning Monastery and Its Famous Monks),” *Bianzheng gonglun 邊政公論* (Frontier Affairs) 3, no. 1, 4, and 5 (May 1944): 45.

¹⁰⁸ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 358.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Gönlung along the Huang/Tsong River: the *Ocean Annals* tells us that Martsang Drak was “administered” (*gnas ‘dzin mdzad*) by Gönlung.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, such financial and administrative details are not often found in the historical record. Monastery archives have been generally destroyed over the centuries or remain off-limits to all but the upper echelons of a monastery’s administration. Monastic customaries, which otherwise provide us with a great deal of detail concerning the administration of a monastery, are silent when it comes to *how* the heads or managers of branch monasteries are to be appointed. This may be because, as Schram has suggested, such appointments were not procedural or based on any consensus but were the outcome of the proprietor’s whim.

In any case, most branch monasteries appear to have exercised quite a bit of financial and administrative freedom. Statements to the effect that Gönlung had four dozen monasteries that were “administered by Gönlung” are incorrect.¹¹¹ The bonds that existed between Gönlung and its branch monasteries are largely based on historical links between the institutions, scholastic ties (with Gönlung being the destination for the study of Buddhist doctrine), and ritual practices.

As for these historical links, they include monasteries founded by the same founder as Gönlung (i.e. Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso), monasteries founded by a former abbot of Gönlung, and monasteries founded by one of Gönlung’s incarnate lamas. In addition, when one of Gönlung’s former abbots or incarnate lamas served as the abbot of a monastery founded by someone else, others could claim that the monastery henceforth became a branch

¹¹⁰ T. dmar gtsang brag. Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos ’byung*, 54.15.

¹¹¹ See, for example, Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet’s Outer Provinces*, 34.

of Gönlung. However, such claims are tenuous and may not be universally accepted. For instance, in 1772, Chuzang lama became the abbot of Jakyung Monastery (where Tsongkhapa began his monastic career) and contributed immensely to the monastery's infrastructure. Some have used this as evidence that the major institution of Jakyung is a branch of Gönlung.¹¹² I have found no historical evidence that supports this conclusion. In addition, such a conclusion suggests that Gönlung Monastery has some sort of claim over Chuzang Lama, and it ignores the fact that Chuzang Lama may have left Gönlung to establish his own monastery (Chuzang Monastery)¹¹³ precisely because he wished to be free of any constraints on his own power.¹¹⁴

In the following chapters I will draw attention to other, important links between Gönlung and its branch monasteries: namely, the export of scholastic and ritual practices from Gönlung to smaller institutions. Such links are extremely vivid at times. For example, the Mongol monks at a hermitage in present-day Xinjiang Region,¹¹⁵ some two thousand kilometers west from Gönlung, recite their daily liturgy¹¹⁶ as prescribed by one of Gönlung's incarnate lamas in 1993.

¹¹² Ibid., 219n91; citing Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan 甘青藏传佛教寺院*, 90; Nyima Dzin considers Jakyung to be a branch of Chuzang lama and, by extension, of Gönlung. *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 18.

¹¹³ T. chu bzang dgon.

¹¹⁴ Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, Thu'u bkwan III, "Gönlung Chronicle," 698/28b.6–699/29a.1.

¹¹⁵ I have refrained from writing the name and exact location of the monastery in order to protect its identity, since such relations may be deemed illegal under a new, 2010 law proscribing trunk-branch relations between monasteries.

¹¹⁶ T. tshogs 'don.



The main shrine hall of a branch monastery of Gönlung located in present-day Xinjiang Region. The framed document on the altar includes hand-written instructions for the performance of the branch's liturgy (T. tshogs 'don) composed by one of Gönlung's incarnate lamas.

Such links are harder to trace historically, although I will present some of the more illustrative example in the ensuing chapters.

Branches: Gönlung's Own

Another reason for exercising caution when confronted with claims concerning the tremendous number of branch monasteries of Gönlung is that Gönlung itself only had a handful of such branches. Most, like Jakyung above, were more properly speaking the branches of a particular incarnate lama who happened to be associated with Gönlung. Those branches that are said to have strong relationships with Gönlung itself are those initiated by

Gönlung's own founder, Gyelsé. Schram identified three such monasteries, although he did not understand the historical explanation for their special status:

In monasteries the “community of the lamas” is a recognized autonomous unit, with its own wealth, properties (herds, fields, subjects, etc.), administration. It has its own right to bring suit in the Chinese courts, and to establish subsidiaries, whose administrators depend upon it and not upon the supreme chief [i.e. the proprietor]. *The community of Erh-ku-lung [i.e. Gönlung] has three such subsidiaries: Ta-ssu, Hsiao-ssu, and Hsiao Erh-ku-lung.*¹¹⁷

Schram nowhere identifies these three subsidiary monasteries of Gönlung, but it is likely that they correspond to Tethung Gönchen,¹¹⁸ Sera Lung,¹¹⁹ and Jangchup Ling,¹²⁰ respectively. Elsewhere in Schram's monographs on the Monguors, Ta-ssu is mentioned in the context of Lu Tusi, the powerful local headman based in Liancheng, not far from Tethung Gönchen and Sera Lung. Moreover, the name “Ta-ssu” (*pinyin*: Da si 大寺), literally “great monastery,” is synonymous with “Gönchen.” “Hsiao-ssu” (*pinyin*: Xiao si 小寺), literally “small monastery,” is synonymous with “Gönchung,” another name for Sera Lung.

Equally compelling evidence supporting the assertion that Tethung Gönchen and Sera Lung correspond to Schram's “Ta-ssu” and “Hsiao-ssu” is found in Venerable Miao Zhou's *Meng Zang fojiao shi* (History of Mongol-Tibetan Buddhism) from the first half of the twentieth century. In the section in which he presents data on the monasteries located in Pingfan County (present-day Yongdeng County), he lists two monasteries that are “under the control of Lu Tusi”: Dong Ergelong si 东耳阁隆 (lit. “East Gönlung”) and Xi Ergelong si 西

¹¹⁷ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 339. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁸ T. te thung dgon chen.

¹¹⁹ T. se ra lung; also sometimes written incorrectly as “ser lung.”

¹²⁰ T. byang chub gling.

耳閣隆寺 (lit. “West Gönlung”).¹²¹ The common Chinese name for Tethung Gönchen is Dong Da si, “Great Monastery East [of the Lu Tusi’s yamen in Liancheng].” The common Chinese name for Sera Lung is Xi Da si, “Great Monastery West [of the Lu Tusi’s yamen in Liancheng].” This reference to Tethung Gönchen as “East Gönlung” and to Sera Lung as “West Gönlung” indicates the close connections that existed between Gönlung and these “child” institutions.

The use of Gönlung’s name (“Ergelong”) is also found for the third of Gönlung’s subsidiary monasteries, “Hsiao Erh-ku-lung” (*pinyin*: Xiao Ergelong), lit. “Little Gönlung.” This refers to Jangchup Ling,¹²² just two kilometers up the valley from Gönlung itself. From its founding onward, it was referred to as the “Gönlung Retreat”¹²³ (among other things), indicating that it was a smaller appendage of Gönlung Monastery.¹²⁴

Tethung Gönchen and Sera Lung are “the two monasteries of Tethung.”¹²⁵ Both of these institutions are said to owe their existence to Gyelsé Rinpoché who founded Gönlung.

¹²¹ Shi 釋 Miaozhou 妙舟, *Meng Zang fojiao shi* 蒙藏佛教史 (History of Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism), (Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling gu ji ke yin she, 1993), 245–6.

¹²² Ch. Tianmen si 天門寺.

¹²³ T. dgon lung ri khrod.

¹²⁴ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 247–9; See also Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Rnam thar bka’ rtsom (Autobiography of the Glorious Ngakwang Lozang Chöden, Peking Edition),” in *Gsung ’bum* (Collected Works), vol. 2 (Peking, 1713), 29b.4; Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs rten dang brten par bcas pa’i dkar chag ched du brjod pa gdangs snyan chos kyi gaNDi* (The Chronicle of the Abbatial Succession of the Great Monastery, Gönlung Jampa Ling, Its Abodes and Its Residents: The Pleasant Melody of the Sounding Board of the Dharma), 1932, 35b.5.

¹²⁵ Of course, there was at least one other major monastery in Tetung, namely Tetung Dorjechang (te thung rdo rje ’chang; Ch. Miaoyin si 妙因寺), which abutts the Lü Tusi’s yamen. Perhaps it was the fact that Tetung Dorjechang was converted to a Geluk monastery only after the other two were established that this author does not count it as one of the “two monasteries of Tetung.” Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan dpal bzang po’i rnam par thar pa mu tig ’phreng ba* (Biography of the Glorious Lord Ngakwang Lozang Chöden: A Rosary of Pearls), 1729, 73a.1; The full name of Sera Lung is Te thung dgon chung ba dga’ ldan

Tethung Gönchen was founded in 1619 by the local Lukya Lama Sherap Nyima¹²⁶ based upon a prophecy made by Gyelsé.¹²⁷ Sera Lung is said to have received the protection of “Gyelsé Rinpoché” and, later, “Sumpa Khenchen,” i.e. Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor, and to have become a child monastery of Gönlung.¹²⁸ Finally, Jangchup Ling is considered to be the site of the “realization group”¹²⁹ of meditators founded by Gyelsé at the same time he founded Gönlung itself.

Later, Jangchup Ling became more closely affiliated with Gönlung’s Sumpa incarnation lineage, and, interestingly, it was eventually converted into Gönlung’s “medical college.”¹³⁰ Such a unit with the monastery system would be an excellent example of the strong, administrative and financial bonds linking certain branch monasteries with the mother monastery. Unfortunately, very little is known about the history of the medical college at Gönlung, although it appears that it was associated with rituals focused on the Medicine

dam chos gling. Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*; see also Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go'i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su'u glegs bam* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 2006), 735–7.

¹²⁶ T. IU kyA bla ma shes rab nyi ma.

¹²⁷ Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go'i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su'u glegs bam*, 734; Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Tianzhu Zangzu zizhi xian weiyuanhui 中国人民政治协商会议天祝藏族自治县委员会 (Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee) and Kong Lingming 孔令明, eds., *Tianzhu Zangchuan fojiao siyuan gaikuang 天祝藏传佛教概况* (Tianzhu: Tianzhu Zangzu zizhi xian minzu yinshuachang, 2000), 122.

¹²⁸ To be precise, it is not clear to which incarnation of Gyelsé this refers. My identification of “Sumpa Khenchen” as Sumpa Khenpo is based upon both the preceding sentence in this source and the fact that Sumpa Khenpo wrote a customary for this monastery. Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go'i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su'u glegs bam*, 736.

¹²⁹ T. *sgrub sde*.

¹³⁰ T. *sman pa grwa tshang*. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 136; Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan*, 78.

Buddha as early as the eighteenth century.¹³¹ Likewise, Gönlung reportedly had a Kālacakra college at a nearby branch, but its location is disputed, and nothing more is known about it.¹³² Gönlung’s medical and Kālacakra colleges will not figure into the present study. However, we will return to Tethung Gönchen in chapter five when examining the export of ritual traditions from Gönlung to its branches.

Chapter Summaries

This study is divided into two parts. Part one comprises chapters one, two, and three, and it presents a chronological history of Gönlung and some of the major actors affiliated with the monastery. Particular attention is given to the issues of patronage and political connections. The first chapter provides a chronological overview of Gönlung, with an emphasis on its early history. There I argue that Gönlung’s founding and early success have as much or more to do with local patrons and powerful descendants of Yuan-period (1279-1368) Mongols as it does with the Dalai Lama.

In chapter two I examine Gönlung’s ties to Central Tibet and show how these help to explain the largess given to Gönlung by the Khoshud Mongols. These western Mongols were the dominant power on the Tibetan Plateau from the mid-seventeenth century through the mid-eighteenth century, and they appear again and again in the history of Gönlung’s rise and

¹³¹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 636; Changkya II’s disciple made donations to a “medical ritual hall” (*sman chog khang*) at Gönlung in 1710. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 31b.5–32a.1.

¹³² Nyima Dzin says the Kālacakra college was located in Sumpa’s branch monastery of Dgon gsar bshad sgrub gling (Ch. Ping’an si 平安寺). Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 18. However, an eight-one year-old informant at Gönlung tells me that the Kālacakra college was located at Tuken’s branch monastery of Mang ’dus (also “man ’du,” “man tho’i ri khrod”). Incidentally, another informant tells me that Mang ’dus used to belong to the common resources of Gönlung itself (*dgon pa’i gzhung*), but later it was given to Tuken.

success. In chapter three we shift our gaze from Central Tibet in the south to the rising power in the east, the Qing Empire. Gönlung's first incarnate lama, the second Changkya, played a major role on behalf of the monastery in acquiring notoriety and patronage at the Qing Court. In addition, he exemplified the process of establishing and maintaining relationships with partner and subsidiary monasteries in the locale and surrounding regions. As we shall see, the events of Changkya's life signal a turning point for Gönlung: incarnate lamas from Gönlung began to exercise a greater role in Inner Asian politics and in the life of the monastery. During this period, Gönlung developed all the institutional facets of a mega monastery, propelling it to new heights of influence in Pari and beyond.

Part two comprises chapters four, five, and six. It presents the fully mature mega monastery, with particular attention given to its essential, institutional features. Governance and discipline are the foci of chapter four. Gönlung possessed a robust and nuanced system for managing its large population of monks. This included protocols and novel mechanisms for financing the regular assemblies of monks and its major ritual occasions. It also maintained a strict system of discipline geared towards normalizing monastic behavior. In chapter five I argue that the Geluk sect succeeded in outperforming other sects of Tibetan Buddhism by creating institutions for the specialization in and replication of tantric rituals. These "tantric colleges" regularized and publicized ritual and contemplative traditions that hitherto had been much more esoteric and exclusive. This facilitated the dissemination of the same ritual practices across the Tibetan Plateau, which contributed to the formation and maintenance of monastic networks. The argument made in chapter six is similar to that of chapter five, only the subject is not ritual and contemplative traditions but scholastic ones. Gönlung had an extensive and exacting calendar and curriculum for the study of Buddhist

doctrine. The program included scheduled memorization, debate practice, recitation lessons, lectures by the abbot, periodic tests, final exams, and degrees. This program was based upon practices found at the major monasteries of Central Tibet, and Gönlung was responsible for exporting it to other monasteries in its locale and beyond. Strong institutional affiliations thereby formed between Gönlung and these various institutions across the Tibetan Plateau and Mongolia.

Chapter seven is an amalgam of the two parts, as it focuses on a particular historical event—the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion of 1723-24—but with an attempt to understand its devastating impact on the monastery’s leadership, morale, and finances. In effect, this chapter describes the undoing of a mega monastery and shows why a mega monastery that loses one or more of its essential, institutional features cannot sustain itself.

Some readers may question the representativeness of such a “peripheral” monastery as Gönlung for understanding mega monasteries as a whole. Moreover, Gönlung was founded in 1604, nearly two hundred years after the more renowned monasteries of Central Tibet, such as Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. However peripheral Gönlung is today, that was not the case in the seventeenth century. Gönlung was located along the main corridor connecting Central Tibet with China as well as that connecting Central Asia with China. By the end of the seventeenth century, it was the largest monastery in the region of Amdo and the fourth largest monastery on the Tibetan Plateau with some 1500 monks. Moreover, although a few monasteries such as Drepung may have been founded earlier than Gönlung, it is likely that they did not fully develop into mega monasteries until much later. In fact, their development was probably contemporaneous with or only slightly earlier than that of Gönlung.

From its inception Gönlung was rooted in a specific locale and established for sustained monastic practice. The monks at Gönlung had to develop *complete systems* for the study of doctrine and ritual as well as the maintenance of daily life. It was not a band of semi-nomadic monks like Dakpo Dratsang in Central Tibet, nor was it a mere stepping stone for itinerant monks seeking out packages of teachings in various corners of Tibet. Gönlung exemplifies the development of large-scale institutions that allowed and actually encouraged the training of an unprecedented number of monks in a single location.

Chapter 1: A Chronological Overview

Introduction

The main purpose of the present chapter is to provide a chronological overview of the entire history of Gönlung, with particular attention given to the “pre-Gönlung” history of the region (i.e. Pari, T. dpa’ ris) and the founding of Gönlung. On the one hand, I would like to provide the reader with a chronological framework that may serve to contextualize the themes and characteristics of mega monasteries discussed in the ensuing chapters. On the other hand, and more particularly, I would like to sustain the argument introduced in the introductory chapter that mega monasteries are more than the result of charitable handouts by the Fifth Dalai Lama. I will do this by drawing particular attention to the unique pool of *local* resources that funded the establishment of Gönlung and that shaped the institution in its early history.

Narratives of Continuity and Destruction

Gönlung’s rise and apogee occurred in the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century, from its founding in 1604 to its destruction in 1724. This corresponds with what other scholars have said.¹³³ The evidence others have offered to support this claim is the proliferation of branch monasteries during this time. As I have discussed in the introductory chapter, the establishment of monasteries by individuals once associated with Gönlung is certainly a phenomenon that reflects the size and wealth of a mega monastery,

¹³³ Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet’s Outer Provinces*, 44; Citing Louis M. J. Schram, “The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border: Part II. Their Religious Life,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 47, no. 1, New Series (1957): 33; Republished in Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 330.

even if the intentions driving this phenomenon are quite diverse (e.g. evangelism, private interests and parochialism, etc.).

Tuken III's *Gönlung Chronicle* explains that Gyelsé Rinpoché came from Central Tibet and

directly and indirectly established thirteen monasteries in Domé with Gönlung as the principal one, and he likewise established thirteen places of spiritual practice [*sgrub sde*]. So it says in his biography.

Also, at each of these [he] taught the root of the Teachings—the ‘three bases’ [*gzhi gsum*; i.e. the monastic practices of the fortnightly confession, Summer Retreat, and release from Summer Retreat]. [Also,] the teachings [he] gave on the Five Philosophical Scriptures¹³⁴ have been maintained and continue to flourish today.¹³⁵

This passage tells us both that Gönlung had many branches or at least affiliate monasteries from the outset—i.e. the other 25 monasteries and retreats established by Gyelsé—and that these institutions actually flourished. A similar passage is found in Mindröl Nominqan IV's 1830 geography of Tibet and the world,¹³⁶ where he lists nineteen monasteries in the region founded by either Gyelsé or, not surprisingly, Tsenpo Döndrup Gyatso (1613-1665),¹³⁷ the founder of Mindröl Nominqan's own monastery.¹³⁸

A much earlier source from 1652 corroborates the unprecedented growth of monasteries in Pari at that time:

¹³⁴ T. *mtshan nyid kyi pu ti lnga*; i.e. the scriptures that come to be the basis of Geluk philosophical inquiry and debate.

¹³⁵ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Chronicle,” 657/13a.6–658/13b.2.

¹³⁶ On the dating of this text see Lobsang Yongdan, “Tibet Charts the World: The Bstan po no mon han's *Detailed Description of the World*, An Early Major Scientific Work in Tibet,” in *Mapping the Modern in Tibet*, ed. Gray Tuttle ([Andiast, Switzerland]: IITBS, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2011), 92–3.

¹³⁷ T. *btsan po don grub rgya mtsho*.

¹³⁸ Mindröl Nominqan was the proprietor of Serkhok Monastery (*gser khog*), the erstwhile branch monastery and major rival of Gönlung. See Wylie's translation, *Geography of Tibet*, 110–11.

Although there arose a tradition of teachings at Dzomo khar Monastery,¹³⁹ Beljou Monastery,¹⁴⁰ and Seten Monastery,¹⁴¹ nowadays it is in decline. At Pari's Semnyi and Sera Lung Monasteries and Drunglang's¹⁴² Tedung Monastery¹⁴³ the teachings are growing and expanding, although [I] am unable to trace their lineages of abbots.¹⁴⁴

Dzomo Khar was a major monastery in the Ming that was granted estates by the Ming Court and given an imperial plaque with the name “Honghua si” 鴻化寺 (lit. The Monastery of Great [Cultural] Conversion). The Qing Dynasty inherited the process of entitling and enfeoffing this monastery, and continued these practices well into the eighteenth century despite the fact that the monastery had declined significantly in size and influence.¹⁴⁵ The Qing was apparently slow to recognize the rising power in the region: local gazetteers do not even make mention of Gönlung until *after* it was implicated in the Lubsang Danzin Rebellion of 1723-24.

Gönlung's period of growth and influence was not without its hitches. On the contrary, there are several instances of controversy and “decline” within the monastery that

¹³⁹ T. mdzo mo mkhar; Ch. Honghua si 宏化寺.

¹⁴⁰ T. bal jo'u.

¹⁴¹ T. se tan.

¹⁴² T. drung lang; also “grong lang.” Ch. Zhuanglang 莊浪.

¹⁴³ T. the'i dung.

¹⁴⁴ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Rje skal ldan rgya mtsho'i gsung las mdo smad a mdo'i phyogs su bstan pa dar tshul gi lo rgyus mdor bsdu (A Concise History of the Manner in Which the Teachings Arose in the Land of Domé Amdo),” in *Mdo smad sgrub bryud bstan pa'i shing rta ba chen po phyag na pad+mo yab rje bla ma Skal ldan rgya mtho'i gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Kelden Gyatso), vol. 1, Gangs can skal bzang dpe tshogs 1 ([Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 351.

¹⁴⁵ *Qingdai gebuyuan zeli: Qinding lifanyuan zeli* 清代各部院則例: 欽定理藩院則例, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Fuchi shuyuan 蝠池書院, 2004), 700/juan 56, p. 7; Aixinjueluo Hongli, “Qinding Da Qing huidian zeli 欽定大清會典則例,” in *Siku quanshu (Digital Wenyuange Edition)* (Dizhi wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 1789), 96b.1–97b.6; Yi Tai 伊泰 and Zhang Yanyu 張延玉, eds., *Da Qing huidian (Yongzheng chao)* 大清會典 (雍正朝) (Collected Statutes of the Yongzheng Reign), Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan san bian: di 77-79 ji 761-790 (Taipei xian Yonghe Shi: Wenhai chubanshe, 1995), vol. 774, pt. 2, juan 105, 8a (7041).

are mentioned in our historical sources. When Changkya I served as abbot from 1630-33, slanderous gossip drove him away to other monasteries. He was invited to and well received at Tangring Tarpa Ling,¹⁴⁶ whereupon he taught and cultivated a new crop of philosophy students. These later went to Gönlung to participate in the monastery's 'academic circuit' (T. *grwa skor*, i.e. debates for degree). They so impressed the Gönlung clergy that the Gönlung monks repented and invited Changkya back to Gönlung.¹⁴⁷

Similarly, a few years later when the Great Adept of Denma¹⁴⁸ was the Gönlung abbot, slanderous talk angered and drove Denma away. When members of the guilty faction began to vomit up blood and die terrible deaths, an effort was made to apologize and bring him back. The other members of the guilty faction were later executed under the auspices of the reigning abbot, Tsenpo "the Stern," Döndrup Gyatso.¹⁴⁹ Shortly thereafter, Tsenpo raised funds from Gönlung's estates to found his own monastery, Serkhok, an event that initiated a long series of disputes between these two monasteries.

The fifteenth abbot, the Lukya Dharma King Dönyö Chödrak (r. 1661-65),¹⁵⁰ is said to have "restored" philosophical instruction at the monastery. Similarly, the period before Tuken II served as abbot of Gönlung (i.e. before 1704) was said to have been marked by

¹⁴⁶ T. thang ring thar pa gling. This appears to be the same as the renowned Tangring Ganden Shedrup Ling (thang ring dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling). More research is needed.

¹⁴⁷ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Chronicle," 666/17b.2-6; See also Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 3a.4.

¹⁴⁸ T. 'dan ma grub chen.

¹⁴⁹ See [note above](#). The text says that they were were "executed" (*bsgral tshar*) by "the local guardian, the Powerful and Conquering Lord" (*zhing skyong stobs 'phrog dbang po*), which suggests that they may not have been executed but instead died at the hands of the local protector deity. Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Chronicle," 683/26a.1.

¹⁵⁰ T. lu'u kya chos rje don yod chos grags. Ibid., 706/32b.4-5.

decline. When Gönlung's proprietor, Gyelsé Rinpoché, found out about this, he sent Tuken back to Amdo from Central Tibet to serve as abbot and restore the teachings.¹⁵¹

All of these events indicate that Gönlung's path to success was a bumpy one, but they all might be considered mere contingencies that come with building and operating such a large institution. By 1638, when Dewa Chöjé (1593-1638)¹⁵² presided over the Great Prayer Festival of Magical Displays at Gönlung, there were present in the monastery "nearly a hundred *geshé*, *kachu*, and *rabjampa* scholars, some seventy to eighty meditators dedicated to spiritual practice, and some four to five hundred philosophy students that exemplified the congregation of several thousand."¹⁵³ By the time the Qing Court began to show interest in Gönlung (the 1690s), the monastery had already grown to become the fourth largest monastery on the Tibetan Plateau, with a congregation of 1500 monks.¹⁵⁴ The process whereby Changkya II became the personal friend and lama of the Kangxi Emperor is explored in chapter three. This relationship brought additional wealth and prestige to Gönlung, but it also marked the beginning of a shift in orientation away from Central Tibet in the south and toward Beijing in the east.

By 1705, nine years before the death of Changkya II, Gönlung may have had as many as 2400 monks.¹⁵⁵ Among those eminent monks and lamas who sought out their training at Gönlung during this time was the first Sertri lama (lit. "Golden Throne Holder"), Lozang Tenpé Nyima (1689-1762),¹⁵⁶ who was the rebirth of one of the most eminent Geluk figures

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 728/43b.3–4.

¹⁵² T. sde ba chos rje; also known as Skyid shod sprul sku.

¹⁵³ Rong po grub chen I Skäl ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 248.

¹⁵⁴ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, Sde srid, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.25.

¹⁵⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.8.

¹⁵⁶ T. blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma.

of the seventeenth century (see chapter three).¹⁵⁷ During the abbacy of Chuzang II, from 1712-1723, the priest-patron relationship established between G \ddot{u} üshi Khan and Gönlung was maintained when G \ddot{u} üshi's youngest son and one of his great-grandsons—both major rulers in Kökenuur—made immense offerings to the monastery.¹⁵⁸

When Changkya II died in 1714, his corpse was carried back to Gönlung and interred there against the wishes of Kangxi's councilors (T. *khri ms ra*), demonstrating the attention that Gönlung commanded and the trust that it had earned. Ten years later that trust was forever broken when Gönlung was implicated in the major Mongol rebellion of 1723-24 led by the Kökenuur ruler Lubsang-Danzin (a grandson of G \ddot{u} üshi Khan). Gönlung's involvement in this revolt and the consequences of it are examined in detail in chapter seven. It would be a worthwhile study to figure out which of the monasteries in Amdo were destroyed during this rebellion and which were left standing. For our purposes, however, it is sufficient to recognize that most of the major monasteries in Pari—including Gönlung, Serkhok, Chuzang, and Semnyi, to name the largest ones—were burnt to the ground. As explained in chapter seven, in the decades that followed, Gönlung was racked by a lack of strong governance, discipline, and finances, as well as the presence of new imperial oversight.

Gönlung's ties with its proprietor in Central Tibet, Gyelsé Rinpoché, gradually dissolved, and by the end of the eighteenth century Changkya III was looked upon as the monastery's proprietor (T. *dgon bdag*). This paved the way for Gönlung's own lamas to

¹⁵⁷ Paul Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 198.

¹⁵⁸ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 731/45a.1-2; Cited in Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 166.

exercise greater control. When Schram visited the monastery in the twentieth century he was told that the monastery's "supreme chiefs" were the trio of Tuken, Sumpa, and Changkya lamas, with Tuken serving as the *de facto* head (this is still the case today). Notably, the Fifth Dalai Lama is said to have visited Gönlung in 1653 on his way back to Lhasa from Beijing; however, when the Third Pañchen Lama traveled to Beijing in 1779, he came within a couple dozen kilometers from Gönlung but did not visit there.¹⁵⁹

Just as Gönlung's ascendance was not without hitches, its decline saw periods of rejuvenation and efflorescence. The fame and abilities of its powerful lamas—namely, Sumpa III (i.e. Sumpa Khenpo), Changkya III, and Tuken III—saved the monastery from complete demise. By his third term as abbot of Gönlung (in the 1780s), Sumpa Khenpo managed to resurrect the monastery's administration and practice such that the monastery seemed to "steal the most outstanding famous ones from the other great monasteries and colleges."¹⁶⁰ After that, Tuken III helped raise one thousand ounces of silver for the students enrolled in "dharma classes" (i.e. the Philosophical College), and he helped to reestablish the monastery's property by clearing its boundaries of Chinese and Hui villagers who were tilling the land there and doing other "bad things."¹⁶¹ The monastery even managed to snag

¹⁵⁹ In his chronicle of Gönlung, Tuken III explains that the immense offerings that Gönlung had gathered to offer to the Fifth Dalai Lama when he was en route to Beijing were instead claimed by the Mongol patron of Serkhok Monastery, Sechen Khung-Taiji. This led to considerable animosity between the two monasteries and, of course, a loss of face for Gönlung. As is well known, the Pañchen Lama passed away in Beijing in 1780. Perhaps he would have considered visiting Gönlung on his return journey?

¹⁶⁰ See Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 561.3–561.8.

¹⁶¹ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs rten dang brten par bcas pa'i dkar chag ched du brjod pa gdangs snyan chos kyi gaNDi* (The Chronicle of the Abbatial Succession of the Great Monastery, Gönlung Jampa Ling, Its Abodes and Its Residents: The Pleasant Melody of the Sounding Board of the Dharma), hereafter *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, n.d. [1932], 19b.1–3.

the most recent abbot of Drepung Monastery's Gomang College, Kharachin Toin Tutop Nyima,¹⁶² to serve as its own abbot. However, he left after only a year.

In fact, the decline of this period is also exemplified by the relatively short terms of its abbots. For the first one hundred and twenty years of Gönlung's existence the average term of the abbot lasted four years.¹⁶³ After the monastery was rebuilt, the seven decades that closed out the eighteenth century had an average tenure of only three years.¹⁶⁴ This downward trend continued into the nineteenth century, during which the average tenure was only two years.¹⁶⁵ It is true that the Second Jamyang Zhepa (1728-1791) of Labrang Monastery as well as that monastery's other illustrious lama, Gungtang III (1762-1823), both served as abbots of Gönlung. However, their biographies say remarkably little about their terms in office (one year and two years, respectively).¹⁶⁶

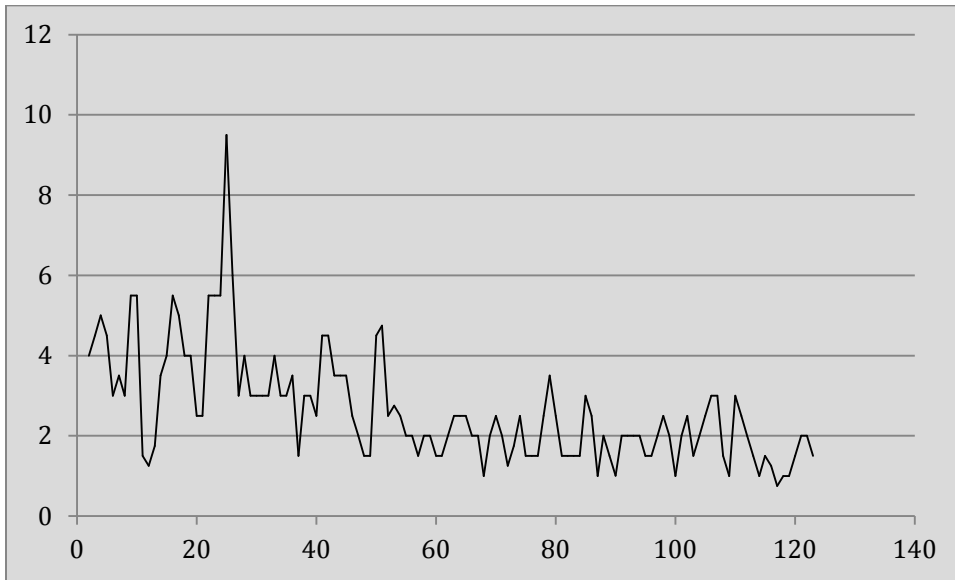
¹⁶² T. har chin tho yon mthu stobs nyi ma.

¹⁶³ This calculation considers the tenures of the first through the twenty-sixth abbots. I am not including the tenure of the founder, Gyelsé Rinpoché, which lasted five years.

¹⁶⁴ This calculation considers the twenty-seventh to the forty-eighth abbots.

¹⁶⁵ This is based on the forty-ninth through the ninety-fourth abbots.

¹⁶⁶ Jamyang Zhepa II served from 1763-64. Gungtang III served from 1797-99, not from 1796-97 as Nietupski has stated. Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community On The Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958*, 133.



This chart illustrates the decline in the average number of years an individual served as abbot at Gönlung for each of the monastery's one hundred twenty-three abbots (corresponding to the years 1609-1958). This reflects the instability within the monastery in later centuries as well as the monastery's general demise.

Labrang Monastery was in the ascendant, and Gungtang III took the office only after the amban's interpreter-clerk¹⁶⁷ and especially the head of Gönlung's Tantric College and a representative of Tuken implored him to do so. He was told that the monastery was in desperate need of "a lama who could restore the teachings and the rules of discipline"¹⁶⁸ at the monastery.¹⁶⁹ In fact, Gungtang was already serving as Labrang Monastery's abbot, and it appears that he spent most of his time at Labrang and the latter's estates, reserving his time

¹⁶⁷ T. *am b+han gyi thong shi* < Ch. *banshi dachen de tongshi* 辦事大臣的通事.

Zhiguanba•Gongquehudanbaraoji 智观巴•贡却乎丹巴绕吉 [Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas] (1800/1-1869), *Anduo zhengjiao shi* 安多政教史 [*mdo smad chos 'byung / deb ther rgya mtsho* = Ocean Annals] (Political and Religious History of Amdo), trans. Wu Jun 吴均, Mao Jizu 毛继祖, and Ma Shilin 马世林, *Gansu sheng shaoshu minzu guji congshu* (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1989), 72.

¹⁶⁸ T. *bsgrig lam*.

¹⁶⁹ Dbal mang paN+Di ta Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, "Gung thang Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me Biography," 690/69b.3-4.

at Gönlung for writing.¹⁷⁰ He did send students from Labrang’s philosophical college to “northern monasteries” such as Gönlung perhaps as a way to both resurrect the teachings there and to spread Labrang’s prestige.¹⁷¹ Some of these encounters bespeak the strength of Labrang and Gönlung’s relative weakness at the time. Tendzin Gyayuma¹⁷² from Labrang is said to have gone to Gönlung to participate in formal debates, whereupon he upstaged a *geshé*—one Paré Khyakho¹⁷³—who had previously excelled beyond all peers even while debating at Lhasa’s major monasteries:

Paré Khyakho stood up and ridiculed [Tendzin Gyayuma], saying, “So!¹⁷⁴ You have three unnecessary things—on your mouth you have an unnecessary beard; in your hands you have an unnecessary rosary;¹⁷⁵ in your mind you have an unnecessary fabrication¹⁷⁶ ...

[Tendzin Gyayuma] stood up, motioned three circles [in the direction of Paré Khyakho],¹⁷⁷ and retorted: As for me, although I have all necessary things, I also have three unnecessary things. As for you, you are missing three necessary things! The meat that your body needs you don’t have! The debate¹⁷⁸ your tongue needs you don’t have! The clap your hands need you don’t have!

[Paré Khyakho] replied, “it is said that this is the kind of baseless talk one makes up at Sera, Drepung, and Ganden Monasteries.”

Someone else [said], “he is fond of verbiage, but his assertion is that there is no omniscience in the individual’s mind-stream!” [Everyone] roared with laughter.

He [i.e. Tendzin Gyayuma] stood up [and stated], “it follows from this that there is omniscience in an individual’s mind-stream.”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 690/69b.3–708/78b.6, esp. 702/75b.3; See also Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community On The Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958*, 132–4.

¹⁷¹ Dbal mang paN+Di ta Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, “Gung thang Dkon mchog bstan pa’i sgron me Biography,” 703/79a.3–4.

¹⁷² T. bstan ‘dzin rgya yu ma. Nietupski writes that he once served as abbot of Gönlung, which is incorrect. *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community On The Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958*, 129.

¹⁷³ T. dpa’ re khya kho. “Dpa’ re” is an alternative spelling for “dpa’ ris,” i.e. Pari.

¹⁷⁴ T. *phyir*. This is my own gloss of the term. For a description of how this taunt is used in actual debate, see Lempert, *Discipline and Debate*, 69–70.

¹⁷⁵ T. *phreng kog*.

¹⁷⁶ T. *stong zob*.

¹⁷⁷ T. *’khor gsum bskor*. See Lempert, *Discipline and Debate*, 69–70 and 179n36.

¹⁷⁸ T. *thal skad*.

"Agreed," [replied Paré Khyakho].

"Well, then it follows that an individual wears monastic robes¹⁷⁹ on his upper body."

"Agreed."

"It follows that an individual wears pants."

"Agreed."

"[Tendzin Gyayuma] retorted and established the implication: "Then it follows that an individual wears monastic robes on his upper body *together with* pants on his lower body!"¹⁸⁰

Around this same time, another monk from Gönlung—one Tsukshul Damchö¹⁸¹—who was an unexcelled *geshé*¹⁸² at Gomang College in Lhasa and who earned the highest scholastic title of *lharampa geshé*,¹⁸³ was stumped on a question related to the *Abhidharmakośa* (Treasury on Metaphysics)¹⁸⁴ while participating in Labrang's formal debates.¹⁸⁵ This no doubt brought great shame to Gönlung.

Population figures from this period are scarce, but Mindröl Nominqan IV's (1789-1839)¹⁸⁶ 1830 geography of Tibet and the world gives the population as "almost two thousand." Likewise, Mindröl Nominqan gives the population of his own monastery of Serkhok¹⁸⁷ as "almost two thousand." Notably, he speaks of the glory of these two monasteries *in the past tense*, mentioning the learning that "used to" excel at Serkhok and the

¹⁷⁹ T. *chos gos*.

¹⁸⁰ The absurdity of this implication of Paré Khyakho's assertions is based on the fact that monks wear robes while laypeople wear pants, but neither wear both. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 382.

¹⁸¹ T. *gsug shul dam chos*.

¹⁸² T. *dge bshes*.

¹⁸³ T. *lha ram pa dge bshes*.

¹⁸⁴ T. *mdzod*.

¹⁸⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 70.24–27.

¹⁸⁶ T. *smin grol no min han 'jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las*.

¹⁸⁷ T. *gser khog*.

“pure beings” such as Changkya II and Changkya III that “used to” be found at Gönlung.¹⁸⁸ Labrang, by contrast, is “the finest in teaching” and is occupied *presently* by “pure ones” such as Jamyang Zhepa and new *sacra*.¹⁸⁹

Gönlung may still have been able to gather a massive body of monks over the course of the nineteenth century, but there is no evidence that it retained the institutional features of a “mega monastery” examined in the present study.¹⁹⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century the monastery was wrought by factionalism, as illustrated by the anecdotes that Louis Schram reports in his monographs.¹⁹¹ In addition, the monastery was again burned to the ground in 1866 during the Muslim rebellions that shook that decade.¹⁹² A lama from Labrang was one of the most important figures in reviving monastic practices at this point in Gönlung’s history.¹⁹³ Gönlung itself must have had a shortage of suitable scholars and

¹⁸⁸ Wylie and ’Jam dpal chos kyi bstan ’dzin ’phrin las, *Geography of Tibet*, 109–10 and 47–8.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 105–6 and 45; This was stated nearly thirty years earlier by none other than Tuken III, who wrote that “nowadays, of all the study centers of Domé, Tashi Khyil is manifestly the best, like the crown of a victory banner.” Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 285.

¹⁹⁰ After giving the incorrect date for the burning of Gönlung by a Muslim army in the late nineteenth century, this source tells us that there were reportedly three thousand monks who lived at the monastery in the years living up to the incident. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 47.

¹⁹¹ See, for example, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 335–336.

¹⁹² Gönlung was destroyed by an army lead by the *imām* from “mo’u nyu ku” (< Ch. Maoniugou 牦牛沟). This is said to be in Hezhou 河州, where Ma Zhan’ao 馬佔鰲 had his base. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 25b.6; Duo Zang 朵藏 and Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, eds., *Youning si zhi: san zhong 佑宁寺志 : 三种* (Three Gazetters of Gönlung Monastery), Qinghai shaoshu minzu guji congshu 青海少數民族古籍丛书 (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe 青海人民出版社, 1990), 200n158; Jonathan Neaman Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 118–38.

¹⁹³ Known as the Tuken Tutor, Tenpa Gyatso (thu’u bkwan yong ’dzin bstan pa rgya mtsho). Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 24b.6, *passim*.

leaders, for we find one lama called back to serve as abbot a total of seven times in the first half of the twentieth century!¹⁹⁴

Tibetan Buddhist authors have made use of prophecies to bridge times of destruction and decline. For instance, when Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso—the eminent lama from Central Tibet—arrived in Amdo, dispatched by the Fourth Dalai Lama to found a monastery there, he also supposedly established a tantric college.¹⁹⁵ However, bad omens led him to prophesize that it would not last long and that someone else would have to come later to reestablish it.¹⁹⁶ This may be a literary tactic to explain the rather late founding of a formal “college” (*grwa tshang*) at Gönlung dedicated to the study and practice of tantra, and it also provides a portentous backdrop to the deeds of the Second Jamyang Zhepa in 1710.

When Jamyang Zhepa with the help of Changkya II and Tuken II established Gönlung’s tantric college, Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya said to the younger Tuken “even though the three of us have here founded this tantric college, it will come to ruin. At that time, you must focus your mind.”¹⁹⁷ This prophecy refers to the complete destruction of Gönlung in 1724 in the wake of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion. More recently, during the abyss of the reforms and violence that shook Gönlung in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Horkyong Reverend Jampel Gyatso¹⁹⁸ told Peko *kachu* Yizang Gyatso¹⁹⁹ from Horkyong that, when the

¹⁹⁴ This was Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (li kyA tshul khriims bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, 1879-1953). See Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*.

¹⁹⁵ T. *rgyud pa grwa tshang*.

¹⁹⁶ See chapter five of this dissertation for details.

¹⁹⁷ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 70. See chapter five of this dissertation for details.

¹⁹⁸ T. hor skyong *tshang* 'jam dpal rgya tsho

¹⁹⁹ T. pad sko *dka' bcu yid bzang* rgya mtsho.

time came to rebuild, he must maintain the monastery's unique ritual traditions.²⁰⁰ Accordingly, in the 1980s and 90s, this *kachu* scholar lead the other elderly monks in teaching the monastic traditions to a new generation of monks.²⁰¹ Recall, too, that Gönlung was founded in response to a “prophecy” that had been made two decades prior to 1604 by the Third Dalai Lama. This rhetorical device creates an image of continuity and of an unwavering unfolding of the Buddha's will.

Modern-day scholars have looked upon Gönlung's major instances of destruction—particularly the big three of 1724, 1866, and 1958—as outcomes of particular social and political events, and they are undaunted by traditional narratives of continuity. Andres Gruschke writes that in the late-nineteenth century, scandals at Gönlung lead to the monastery's renown for philosophy to pass over to Labrang Monastery.²⁰² Louis Schram, for his part, identifies the destruction of Gönlung in 1724 as a most significant event. Prior to that, he believes, Gönlung and other major monasteries in Amdo flourished because of two reasons: 1) social instability everywhere *apart from* those monasteries near China Proper; and, 2) the presence of incarnate lamas from Gönlung at the imperial court in Beijing.²⁰³

Both Gruschke and Schram are right to identify fluctuations in Gönlung's status as the preeminent monastic institution Amdo. Gruschke is wrong about the chronology of these events, however, placing Gönlung's demise about a century too late. Schram, on the other hand, is wrong about the cause of Gönlung rise, giving too much credit to the so-called

²⁰⁰ Note that the Tibetan term often used for “prophecy,” “*lung bstan*,” also has the meaning of “order.” This seems to suggest that a “prophecy” in the Tibetan imagination is more about fulfilling an individual's will than about successfully predicting future events.

²⁰¹ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 133–4. See also chapter five of this dissertation.

²⁰² Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces*, 30.

²⁰³ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 356–7.

“Peking Hutukhtus,” i.e. the incarnate lamas from Gönlung and elsewhere stationed at the imperial capital. As we have seen, Gönlung’s connections with the Qing only came very *late* in the monastery’s rise to power.²⁰⁴ In fact, the foundation for Gönlung’s success in the seventeenth century may have been laid several hundred years earlier.

Early History

In Tuken III’s chronicle we read that “in this place, during the time of the former Mongol [T. hor] king, a great gate [*rgya sgo*] was erected, and in later times it [still] remained. Even today its traces are readily apparent.”²⁰⁵ Then, a couple of pages later: “Formerly, when there was a Sakya Monastery at this site, Vaiśravaṇa Possessing a Red Lance²⁰⁶ was the protector deity. He is still seen roaming here ...” Finally,

In former times, a councilor of the Lord of Earth Chinggis Khan named Kereltu²⁰⁷ along with his subjects came here. Therefore, most of these Monguors [hor] today are descendants of this [group].

Due to Kereltu's karma and the force of his wishes, after he died he was reborn as in a powerful, nonhuman form and resided in the cliffs [around] Gönlung. He showed his true form in Mongolian attire to Gyelsé Rinpoché, and he was sworn to oath and ordered to serve as the [protective] lord of [this] place.

“Kereltu” means Öden²⁰⁸ in Tibetan [i.e. “Radiant”], and part of Gyelsé Rinpoché’s name [i.e. Dönyö Gyatso] was added to his name. Thus he became known as Öden Gyatso.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ The first reason Schram gives for the success of Gönlung and other major Amdo monasteries—social instability—implies that religion functions to assuage the anxieties of people living in turmoil. Schram sees stability and economic development as one facet of Qing imperial control in Amdo, and he sees the decline of monastic power as a consequence of that rule. However, there are other explanations for the rise and fall of monastic power in Amdo, many of which are the same as those explanations for the rise and success of mega monasteries. As such, this question will be addressed indirectly in the following chapters.

²⁰⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 643/6a.5.

²⁰⁶ T. rnam sras mdung dmar can.

²⁰⁷ T. ke rel thu.

²⁰⁸ T. ‘od ldan.

This admittedly scant and circumstantial evidence of the early history of Pari raises some very interesting questions. What is the relationship between Chinggis Khan and the “Monguor” or “Hor” people living there in Tuken’s day? Who is this Kereltu figure? What relationship, if any, was there between the former Sakya monastery and the Geluk monastery established by Gyelsé?



Gönlung’s “local protector deity” (gnas bdag). Note the Mongolian attire. This photo comes from a Huzhu government study of Gönlung, the title of which is not at my disposal (Hereafter “Huzhu Government Study”)

Not all of these questions can be satisfactorily answered. The paucity of sources from this earlier period as well as linguistic hurdles (e.g. Mongolian and Tibetan names transliterated into thirteenth-century Chinese) make it so. Nonetheless, the questions have not

²⁰⁹ T. ’od ldan rgya mtsho. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 645/7a.5–646/7b.2.

gone unnoticed. Several scholars in mainland China have been drawn to this area of research, due particularly to the insatiable quest for identifying the origins of the Monguor peoples. In his book *Tuzu shi* (The History of the Monguors),²¹⁰ Lü Jianfu argues that the origins of the Monguor peoples stretch back to the Tuyuhun, a branch of the (likely) Mongolic Xianbi, who settled in the Kökenuur region as early as the fifth century.²¹¹

Li Shenghua, a former researcher and editor for the Qinghai United Front Ministry, wrote a stinging response to Lü Jianfu and others in an article entitled “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi” (Monguors Are Absolutely Not the Descendants of Tuyuhun).²¹² Among other things, he accuses Lü of fabricating evidence for his argument. For his part, Li Shenghua directs the reader to the work of the scholar Li Keyu and the latter’s daughter, the scholar Li Meiling, particularly their *Hehuang Mengguer ren* (The Monguor People of Hehuang):²¹³

As Li Keyu says, the important historical components of the present-day Monguors [Tuzu ren] are: the minister of the Yongchang Prince Köten²¹⁴ and [the former’s] descendants; the descendants of the imperial son Aoluchi 奥鲁赤, Fumachangji 附马

²¹⁰ Lü Jianfu, *Tuzu shi* 土族史 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2002).

²¹¹ Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 592a; René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford (Rutgers University Press, 1970), 64–5.

²¹² Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi 土族绝非吐谷浑后裔 (Monguors Are Absolutely Not the Descendants of Tuyuhun),” *Qinghai shehui kexue* 青海社会科学 no. 4 (July 2004): 149–60; An earlier version appears in this *later* publication: Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi 土族绝非吐谷浑后裔 (Monguors Are Absolutely Not the Descendants of Tuyuhun),” in *Hehuang Mengguer ren* 河湟蒙古人, by Li Keyu and Li Meiling (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2005), 450–85.

²¹³ Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren* 河湟蒙古人 (The Monguor People of Hehuang) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2005); Li Meiling is currently preparing a Chinese translation of Louis Schram’s three-volume work on the Monguors. See [比] Louis Schram, *Gan Qing Bianjie Mingu’er Ren de Qiyuan, Lishi Ji Shehui Zuzhi* 甘青边界蒙古人的起源、历史及社会组织, ed. Robert Fried and Li Meiling 李美玲, trans. Li Meiling 李美玲, Qinghai Minzu Xueyuan Xueshu Xilie 48 (Xining 西寧: Qinghai renmin chubanshe 青海人民出版社, 2007).

²¹⁴ Ch. Yongchang wang Kuoduan *de dachen* 永昌王阔端的大臣.

昌吉, and Shulaiman速来蛮; the descendants of Tuohuan 脱欢, [who was] the great-great-grandson²¹⁵ of Chinggis Khan's sixth son, Kuoliejian阔列坚; the Mongols who remained in Yongdeng永登 after Qubilai returned from conquering Dali大理; the state farms army in the valleys of the five rivers (Jincheng River, Cizhi River, Huanghe, Datong River, and Zhuanglang River) of Chinggis Khan's great-great-great-grandson,²¹⁶ Prince Nanmuhuli 宗王喃木忽里(i.e.Nanmuge 南木哥, the ancestor of Wang *tusi* who lead his Hehuang area troops to submit to the Ming in fourth year of Hongwu [1371]); the descendants of Zhao Anzhu'er 赵按竺迺 of the Mongol Yonggu 雍古 clan; the multitudes who dispersed [into exile with] the “Peace Establishing Prince” [i.e. Tuohuan]²¹⁷ [,] Buyan²¹⁸ [, and] Tiemu'er²¹⁹. In sum, today's Monguors are a new ethnic group formed principally from Mongol peoples.²²⁰

Here is not the place to weigh in on this debate, although it is clear that the further back in history one attempts to push Monguor origins the weaker one's argument will be. The assertion that present-day Monguors (i.e Tuzu) are the descendants of the fifth-century Tuyuhun appears to be based largely on the vague similarity between the Chinese names of these two groups.

Sources on the Yuan are more plentiful. This is not to say that Li Keyu and Li Meiling and their advocate, Li Shenghua, have themselves made flawless arguments in defense of the Mongol-origin theory. For instance, Li and Li's assertion that Nanmuhuli is none other than Nanmuge, the ancestor of the local Wang *tusi*, is based solely upon the

²¹⁵ Ch. *di wu shi sun* 第五世孙.

²¹⁶ Ch. *di li shi sun* 第六世孙.

²¹⁷ Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 235.

²¹⁸ Perhaps this is a transliteration of the one-time exiled official, Bayan (1281?-1340). See Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 37b.

²¹⁹ “Tiemu'er” may refer to one of the last emperors of the Yuan Dynasty, Tuq-Temür, who was exiled for a period in South China. *ibid.*, 608b; See also Li Keyu and Li Meilin, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 235–6. The Chinese for this rather opaque passage is “安定王卜颜帖木儿散亡之众.”

²²⁰ Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi,” July 2004, 153b.

similarity of the first two syllables of their names.²²¹ Nonetheless, there is no doubt that many of the local headmen in Pari were descended from Yuan-period Mongols. In fact, two of these—the Western Qi *tusi*, which has been studied by Elliot Sperling,²²² and the Lu *tusi*—are descendants of Chinggis Khan himself.²²³

For our purposes, one of the more interesting findings has been made by the scholar Rinchen Trashi (Ch. Renqingzhaxi 仁庆扎西), in his article “Xiping wangfu jindi kao” (Investigation of the Present-day Site of the Palace of the Western Pacification Prince).²²⁴ In it he argues that the location of the “Western Pacification Prince” from Yuan times was located in Sumdo (T. gsum mdo; Ch. Songduo 松多), a half a day’s walk from Gönlung. Aoluchi 奥鲁赤, the seventh son of Qubilai Khan, was made the Western Pacification Prince in 1269. Shortly thereafter he led a Mongol army in conquering Tibet (Ch. Tufan 吐蕃). In 1279, he established the Western Palace of the Protectorate (*zhen xifu* 镇西府) at the “Suanmuduo Fort in the land of Duogemasi.”²²⁵ Rinchen Trashi explains that “Duoge” is

²²¹ Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 222–3.

²²² Elliot Sperling, “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo,” in *Les Habitants Du Toit Du Monde: En Hommage À Alexander W. MacDonald*, ed. Samten Karmay and Philippe Sagant (Nanterre: Société d’ethnologie, 1997), 111–124.

²²³ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 141.

²²⁴ Renqingzhaxi, “Xiping wangfu jindi kao 西平王府今地考 (Investigation of the Present-day Site of the Palace of the Western Pacification Prince),” in *Renqingzhaxi Zangxue yanjiu wenji* 仁庆扎西藏学研究文集 (Collected Writings of Research in Tibetan Studies by Rinchen Trashi) (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1989), 74–80. Originally published in *Qinghai shehui kexue* (1986), no. 6. I would like to sincerely thank Li Shenghua for introducing me to this work and for taking the time to talk with me about these issues.

²²⁵ Ch. “Duogemasi di zhi Suanmuduo cheng” 朵哥麻思地之算木多城. *Ibid.*, 74–5; Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 216.

synonymous with the Chinese term “Duokang 朵康,” both terms being transliterations of the Tibetan term “mdo khams” (lit. lower realm(s)) which he interprets as “all the areas below Central Tibet.”²²⁶ The “ma” in “Duogemasi,” he says, comes from the Tibetan “smad,” meaning “lower.” The “lower lower realm,” then, is Domé (T. mdo smad), or what we tend to call Amdo.²²⁷

As for “Suanmuduo,” Rinchen Trashi identifies two corresponding sites in Amdo: one in present-day Tongde County 同德县, the other in our Huzhu County. According to the fifteenth-century *Rgya Bod kyi yig tshang mkhas pa dga' byed chen mo* (The Great Records of China and Tibet Which Make Scholars Happy),²²⁸ he says, Aoluchi was stationed “near the border of China and Tibet,” thus eliminating the Sumdo of Tongde County from the running.²²⁹ As further evidence for his argument, Rinchen Trashi explains how he went to Sumdo in Huzhu County in 1985. There he discovered massive ruins of an old fort atop the Zhangka Ridge 长卡岭 of the mountain in front of Sumdo (the Tibetan term “sumdo” refers to the intersection of three valleys; Sumdo is said to be situated between an eastern mountain, a western mountain, and a “front mountain,” which probably corresponds to the south), and

²²⁶ This is perhaps the weakest part of Rinchen Trashi’s entire argument. Because he does not use Tibetan script or a phonetic system to explain his terms, one is left confused as to how “Duoge” is a transliteration of “mdo khams” (pronounced “Dokham”), and one must simply take his claims for granted. Note that Sumpa Khenpo uses the term “mdo khams” to refer specifically to what we now call “Amdo.” Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, “Dzam gling spyi bshad ngo mtshar gtam snyan,” in *’Dzam gling rgyas bshad dang ’dzam gling spyi bshad* (The Extensive Geography of the World and The General Geography of the World), by Btsan po no min han’Jam dpal chos kyi bstan ’dzin ’phrin las and Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1986), 13b.4.

²²⁷ Rinchen Trashi does not bother to explain what the “si” in “Duogemasi” means or transliterates.

²²⁸ See TBRC W20848.

²²⁹ Renqingzhaxi, “Xiping wangfu jindi kao,” 75. Rinchen Trashi is citing p. 190 of the Chinese translation of this text, entitled *Han Zang shi ji* 汉藏史集 (n.p.: s.n., n.d.).

he has surmised that these ruins date from the Yuan. Incidentally, in the spring of 2012, I drove to Sumdo from Longgou Monastery 龍溝寺²³⁰ in neighboring Ledu County and may have seen these ruins from a distance (see photo below). Unfortunately, I did not have the time to visit them on that occasion.



An old fort seen from a distance. Located along the border between Huzhu and Ledu Counties, Qinghai Province.

In any case, the significance of this is that the Sakya monastery that is said to have inhabited Gönlung's space was probably located under the auspices of an important Yuan Dynasty ruler.²³¹ The renowned Phakpa Lama (1235-1280),²³² Qubilai Khan's Imperial

²³⁰ The Tibetan name is Drukluṅ Ganden Shedrup Ling ('brug lung dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling).

²³¹ Rinchen Trashi writes that Aoluchi and his descendants were the most powerful military leader in Tibetan areas. Cited in Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 218.

²³² T. 'gro mgon 'phags pa.

Preceptor (*dishi* 帝師), is said to have stayed in Lintao 臨洮 for three years on his way back from China to Tibet. In the eleventh year of the Yuan (1275) he returned to Sakya, whereupon he composed a treatise for Aoluchi entitled *Shifang boro song* 十方般若訟 (Praises to the Perfections of the Ten Directions).²³³ The following year he composed a poem for Aoluchi wishing him a happy Fire-Rat Year. The year after that he composed a treatise entitled *Shou wangzi Tiemuerbuhua jiaoxun: Yueliang zhi guang* (Instructions for the Prince Tiemu'erbuhua: The Radiance of the Moonlight)²³⁴ for Aoluchi's son, Tiemu'erbuhua. Tiemu'erbuhua, too, is said to have maintained a close relationship with Buddhism and, particularly, the Sakya rulers of Central Tibet:

Aoluchi's son, Tiemu'er, also patronized great monasteries and did many great acts that benefited the Buddhist Vinaya [? Ch. *jiaoliu* 教律]. His son Laode 老的 inherited his father's title. He went many times to Central Tibet. The son of Tiemu'er's concubine [*ci fei* 次妃], Shuosiban 搠思班, received the title of "Martial Pacifying Prince" [*wu jing wang* 武靖王]. He went to Central Tibet and at Mount Jiangzi 江孜山²³⁵ defeated the Western Mongol army²³⁶ [and] punished the Drigung sect.²³⁷

Li Keyu has even conjectured that Aoluchi was deified at Gönlung in the form of the monastery's "local lord/protector" (T. *gnas bdag*).²³⁸ Aoluchi's grandson, Gonggexingji 貢

²³³ This is presumably a Chinese translation of the title. I have not had the opportunity to look at Pakpa's *Collected Works* to see if this work is still extant.

²³⁴ See [above note](#).

²³⁵ Probably Gyantse (rgyal rtse).

²³⁶ This is likely a reference to the Il-Khans of Persia. See Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 78–83.

²³⁷ Renqingzhaxi, "Xiping wangfu jindi kao," 79. Rinchen Trashi prefaces this citation by saying that it comes from Tibetan-language historical materials, although the endnote directs the reader to the *Ming shi* 明史.

Fortunately, the original publication of this article in *Qinghai shehui kexue* preserves the correct citation: p. 120 of the Chinese translation of the *Rgya Bod yig tshang chen mo*.

²³⁸ Personal communication May 11 and May 12, 2011.

哥星吉,²³⁹ is the ancestor of the line of Western Qi *tusi* who submitted to the Ming Dynasty.

The Western or Xining Qi *tusi* (as opposed to the Eastern or Nianbai Qi *tusi*) was a powerful political lineage with close ties to Kumbum Monastery.²⁴⁰ Thus, he represents a direct line of descent and political power linking the ruling house of the Yuan Dynasty with the later, local politics that ruled the areas around Xining. In fact, the exact identity of the figure named “Kereltu” enshrined in the Local Protector’s Hall at Gönlung is still a disputed question.²⁴¹ His Mongolian attire and Mongolian name, however, as well as his role as “councilor” to Chinggis Khan all suggest that he was one of the early Yuan Mongol leaders who conquered and settled this area.

Early History: Protector Deities

Other, more speculative theories regarding links between Chinggis Khan and Gönlung involve the monastery’s “dharma protector” deities.²⁴² Gönlung’s protectors are the same as those for the Dalai Lama’s government, namely the “Red and Black Guardians,”²⁴³ Pehar²⁴⁴ and Pelden Lhamo,²⁴⁵ respectively.²⁴⁶ Li Keyu has suggested that Gönlung’s protector deity

²³⁹ Mo. Günge Sengge < T. kun dga' seng ge. This rendering of Gonggexingji into its Mongolian and Tibetan forms is proposed by Sperling in Sperling, “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo.”

²⁴⁰ Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 219; For more on the Western Qi *tusi* see Sperling’s article “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo.”

²⁴¹ Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi,” July 2004, 156b–157a. Incidentally, I asked Li Keyu why it would be that the ancestor of the Western Qi *tusi*, Aoluchi, is apotheosized and installed in Gönlung when Gönlung is associated most closely with the *Eastern Qi tusi*. Unfortunately, he did not have an answer to this, which raises doubts about the identification of Gönlung’s local protector deity with Aoluchi.

²⁴² T. *chos skyong*.

²⁴³ T. *srung ma dmar nag*.

²⁴⁴ T. *pe har*.

²⁴⁵ T. *dpal ldan lha mo*, the “Glorious Goddess.”

²⁴⁶ My thanks to my friend and cohort, Chris Bell, for pointing this out to me and for referring me to the following article by Amy Heller. “Historic and Iconographic Aspects of the Protective Deities Srung-ma Dmar-nag,” in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*,

“Baiha’er,” or “Baihasang,” by which he surely means Pehar, is the apotheosis of Bai Sibü (Buyan-Shiban), the son of one of Chinggis Khan’s most important allies and also the Khan’s son-in-law.²⁴⁷ Bai Sibü, in turn, is a distant relative of the local *Li tuisis* (the three *Li tuisis* are related to one another).

Unfortunately, Li Keyu does not offer a ready explanation for this identification, which appears to be based on a vague similarity in the two names, Pehar and Bai Sibü, and on a story relating the name of Bai Sibü’s father (Ala-Qush, said to mean “five-colored bird”) with a common form of Pehar known as the Gyelpo Ku’nga (T. *rgyal po sku lnga, rgyal gyi sku lnga*)—i.e. the “Five Bodies of the King,” or the “Five Royal Bodies.”²⁴⁸

The Gyelpo Ku’nga are also related to a second speculative theory connecting Gönlung with Yuan-period Mongols. Although laity are excluded from entering the protectors’ hall,²⁴⁹ monks at Gönlung have explained to me that the five deities known as the Gyelpo Ku’nga are situated in the middle of both floors of the hall, with the protector deities

Narita 1989, ed. Ihara Shōren and Yamaguchi Zuihō, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Naritasan Sinshoji, 1992), 497–92. According to my informants at Gönlung, the calendar for the protectors’ hall is as follows: on the second day of each month there are “restoration rites” (*bskang gso*), reciting Tuken III’s “incense offering” text (*bsang mchod*), i.e. his “Rgyal gsol gyi cho ga phrin las lhun grub” in the cycle of deity evocation texts for Hayagrīva (*rta mgrin gsang sgrub kyi chos skor*). See TBRC W21506. On the third day of each month they recite a ritual text by Changkya III for the worship of Damchen Dorjé Lekpa (dam can rdo rje legs pa). My thanks, again, to Chris Bell for information on this deity. On the eighth of each month, an incense offering text by the Fifth Dalai Lama is recited for the worship of the local protector deity (T. *gnas bdag*), Vaiśravaṇa, and Nechung (T. *gnas chung*, i.e. an emanation of Pehar). Finally, on the fifteenth of each month, the ritual text “*bsang rnam dag ma*” composed by Sönam Yeshé Wangpo (bsod nams ye shes dbang po) is recited for the worship of Néchung. My version of the text is a xylograph given to me by a Gönlung monk. It can also be found at TBRC W00KG06. Gönlung also has separate halls for the worship of Pelden Lhamo and the local protector deity (T. *gnas bdag*).

²⁴⁷ Personal communication, May 11, 2011. See also Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi,” July 2004, 158a; Bai Sibü is discussed by Atwood in *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 6b, *passim*.

²⁴⁸ Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi,” July 2004, 158. Li Shenghua is citing Li Keyu’s 1992 book, *Tuzu (Mengguer) yuanliu kao*, which I have not had the opportunity to review. See also Li Keyu and Li Meiling, *Hehuang Mengguer ren*, 211.

²⁴⁹ T. *btsan khang*.

Damchen Dorjé Lekpa²⁵⁰ and Mahākāla²⁵¹ appearing on the right and left, respectively. The Gyelpo Ku'nga is comprised of Pehar and the four members of his retinue, although these four are also understood to be emanations (“bodies”) of Pehar himself.²⁵²

Li Keyu²⁵³ and Li Shenghua²⁵⁴ both suggest that the Gyelpo Ku'nga are a reflection of a legend concerning the birth of the Mongols' ruling Borjigid lineage. Alan Gho'a, the legendary ancestress of Chinggis Khan, gave birth to five children, the last three after she was impregnated by a heavenly light. The youngest of the children became the progenitor of the Borjigid clan, including Chinggis Khan.²⁵⁵ As for the Gyelpo Ku'nga, ritual texts identify the first member of the five as Gyachin²⁵⁶ and locate him in the center, while the second through fifth members of the group occupy the cardinal directions, east, south, west, and north, respectively.²⁵⁷ However, it is the last member of the group, occupying the northern cardinal direction, who is Pehar proper, and it is this “body” who occupies the most prominent position within the monastery's protectors' hall.

Although these theories are quite far-fetched and unlikely to bear the scrutiny of additional historical research, they do give us new material to mull over when considering the enigmatic origins of Pehar, which legends otherwise place not far to the north of Gönlung along the Hexi Corridor.

²⁵⁰ T. dam can rdo rje legs pa.

²⁵¹ T. mgon po.

²⁵² Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, 112–3.

²⁵³ Personal communication (May 11, 2011).

²⁵⁴ Li Shenghua, “Tuzu juefei Tuyuhun houyi,” July 2004, 158a.

²⁵⁵ Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 6b.

²⁵⁶ T. brgya phyin. Nebesky-Wojkowitz argues against identifying “brgya phyin” here as the Indian god “Indra.” Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, 99–100 and 108–9.

²⁵⁷ See, for instance, Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Rta mgrin gsang sgrub kyi chos skor las/ rgyal gsol gyi cho ga phrin las lhun grub,” in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works), vol. 7 (Lhasa: Zhol par ma, 1783), 793/2a.2–794/2b.6; See also Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, 107–11.

Early History: Tusi

We are on more solid historical ground when it comes to identifying the *tusis* 土司 (lit. local headmen) most closely connected with Guonlung. In his chronicle of the monastery, Tuken III tells us that shortly after the monastery's founding, the elderly Qi Tusi 祁土司²⁵⁸ sponsored the expansion of the monastery's assembly hall, which was needed to accommodate the mushrooming population of monks at the monastery.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Louis Schram, the missionary-scholar who resided in the region in the early twentieth-century, reports that there were lingering consequences to the fact that the monastery was originally founded on land donated by this *tusi*.²⁶⁰

This figure probably was Qi Bingzhong 祁秉忠, who succeeded his father Qi Shixuan 祁世勳 in 1591.²⁶¹ He was the eleventh-generation descendant of Duo'erzhishijie 朵爾只失結 (<Mo. Dorji (<T. rdo rje)-šige).²⁶² Unlike its counterpart of the same name, i.e. the “Western” or “Xining” Qi *tusi*, the eastern line is not descended from Chinggis Khan. Nonetheless, Duo'erzhishijie appears to have been a Mongol leader who was awarded handsomely by the Ming Court for submitting to the new dynasty and for his military deeds

²⁵⁸ T. chi kya *dpon rgan*.

²⁵⁹ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 647/8a.5.

²⁶⁰ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 156, 188, 288, *passim*.

²⁶¹ Qinghai sheng zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Qinghai lishi diaocha* 青海历史调查 (Investigation of Qinghai History) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), 287; Cited in Sperling, “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo,” 119–20.

²⁶² I am counting Duo'erzhishijie as the first generation. This back-transliteration is proposed by Sperling. “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo,” 118.

on its behalf. He was given the hereditary post of Assistant Commander of Xining,²⁶³ which he bequeathed to his heirs.²⁶⁴

In the absence of a study on the *tusi* system in northwestern China, John Herman's work on the *tusi* system, or "native chieftain system," in southwestern China is most useful. "The Native Chieftain System (*tusi zhidu*)," he writes,

was a unique subbureaucratic institution created during the early Ming to extend nominal Chinese state control over the non-Han peoples located just beyond Beijing's administrative reach. ... As a general rule, a military native chieftain's area of jurisdiction [as opposed to that of a civilian native chieftain] was located along or just beyond China's recognized political borders, and he was expected to command a sizable military force to assist in the protection of China.²⁶⁵

The sixteen *tusis* of Xining played significant roles in the wars and conflicts within their own borders, and they even responded to conflicts elsewhere across Inner Asia. In addition, they were certainly interested in serving as patrons of Buddhism, even though there is extremely little evidence in the historical record of their deeds in this capacity. Schram writes

²⁶³ Ch. *zhihui qianshi* 指揮簽事.

²⁶⁴ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi* 西寧府新志 (*New Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture*) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1988), 611 (*juan* 24); Qinghai sheng zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Qinghai lishi diaocha*, 287; Sperling, "A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo," 118–9. While in Xining in 2010 and 2011 I came across a Qianlong-era genealogy of a collateral branch of the Qi *tusi* for sale on the private market: *Qi shi san fang jiapu* 祁氏三房家譜 (*Genealogy of the Three Branches of the Qi Family*). This text has helped to correct the inconsistencies in the sequence of names found in the *Qinghai lishi diaocha* and Sperling's article. In particular, the fourth generation *tusi*, Qi Cheng 祁成, did indeed have a son named Chun 純 who inherited his post. (Altogether he had three sons. The latter two were named Gang 剛 and Wu 武.) Chun died without heir, and so his younger brother Gang took over. The latter had a single son, named Jian 鑑, who succeeded his father. Jian, in turn, had three sons: Fuyan 伏彥, Fubao 伏寶, and Fuzhu 伏珠. Unfortunately, the record of the main line of the *tusi* ends here. The Columbia University Library has graciously bought a digital copy of this text to preserve it for future scholars, lest the original disappear into an antiquarian's private collection. I plan to complete a short article on this work and the historical value of such clan genealogies.

²⁶⁵ John E. Herman, "Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (February 1997): 50; See also John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); John E. Herman, "The Cant of Conquest: Tusi Offices and China's Political Incorporation of the Southwest Frontier," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 135–170.

The chiefs of the clans are the real supporters of Lamaism, though some of them claim to be Confucianists. The Lu T'u-ssu built three lamaseries in his territory and granted large property rights to them; the Ch'i T'u-ssu granted territories to the lamaseries of Erh-ku-lung and Ta-yin-ssu. The Li T'u-ssu built the once outstanding lamasery of Ta-fo-ssu in the center of the city of Hsining. The protector-deity of each clan is a deity of Lamaism. In the mansion of some T'u-ssu one or two lamas are on duty throughout the year, worshipping the protector-deity of the clan. The T'u-ssu are the benefactors of the lamaseries at the time of the religious festivals.²⁶⁶

These were generous sponsors of local monasteries. For instance, when Changkya II paid a visit to Gönlung near the end of his life, he was successively greeted and feted by the Lu *tusi* and the Qi *tusi*. Even more numerous on this occasion, however, were the religious and religio-political leaders of Gönlung's surrounding communities known in Tibetan as "nangso" and "garwa," among other things. They, too, have illustrious origins that predate the founding of Gönlung, and it is to them that we shall turn now.

Early History: Collection Leaders, Domestic Watchmen, and 'Encampments'

Tusis were granted titles and seals by the Ming and Qing Courts and often controlled a relatively large number of local households, land, and resources.²⁶⁷ Those known as *bülpön* (T. 'bul dpon, "collection leaders") and *nangso* (T. nang so, lit. "domestic watchmen"), on the other hand, received their titles from Tibetan Buddhist authorities centered in Tibet. Their

²⁶⁶ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 288.

²⁶⁷ Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 8. For a useful overview of the various types of local rulers in Amdo, see Tuttle, "An Overview of Amdo (Northeastern Tibet) Historical Polities," *Tibetan and Himalayan Library* (2011), <http://places.thlib.org/features/24106/descriptions/1228#ixzz1jsMIHAZH>.

status and function ultimately came to be based on patronage of monasteries.²⁶⁸ Except for one possible exception, *tusi* were not *nangso*, and *nangso* were not *tusi*.²⁶⁹

The *nangso* and *bulpön* were the real engines behind the founding and early development of Gönlung:

... the leaders of this area—both the *nangso* of Drati *garwa*, Sherap Drak,²⁷⁰ and the Langkya *kachu* scholar Sönam Gyeltse²⁷¹—made a proposal, following which they conferred with all the patrons²⁷²—the Akya *garwa*,²⁷³ the Hou *bülpön*,²⁷⁴ the Pari *garwa*,²⁷⁵ the Choktsa *garwa*,²⁷⁶ the Dara *bülpön*,²⁷⁷ and the Setsa *bülpön*.²⁷⁸ Out of this, for the purpose of founding a monastery as previously promised by the Omniscience King of Victors, the collection leaders—Drati, Langkya, Hou, and Dara— together with their retinues went to Tibet in the water-tiger year [1602]²⁷⁹ to invite [the Dalai Lama].²⁸⁰

In the final sentence of this passage, “collection leaders” (i.e. “*bülpön*”) is used to refer to all of those local leaders who made the journey to Central Tibet regardless of their specific title. This is justified by the likelihood that many of the local leaders gained their statuses by first serving as collection leaders for monasteries and religious leaders in Central Tibet.²⁸¹

Serving as an “alms collector” (*bul sdud pa*) for the Dalai Lama and currying favor with this rising power in Central Tibet was a way to enhance one’s prestige at home, and it

²⁶⁸ Rin chen sgrol ma, “Lo rgyus dang ’brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba (An Historical Sketch of the Domé *nangso*),” *Mtsho sngon mi rigs slob chen rig theb* no. 1 (2011): 46a–b.

²⁶⁹ The one exception may be the Eastern Qi *tusi*, who Sperling says is referred to as *nangso* in Tibetan sources. I have not seen this in earlier Tibetan documents. More research is needed. Sperling, “A Note on the Chi Kyā Tribe and the Two Qi Clans in Amdo,” 114–5.

²⁷⁰ T. pra sti *sgar pa nang so* shes rab grags.

²⁷¹ T. glang kya *dka’ bcu* bsod nams rgyal mtshan.

²⁷² T. *mchod yon*.

²⁷³ T. a kya *sgar pa*.

²⁷⁴ T. ho’u *’bul dpon*.

²⁷⁵ T. dpa rin *sgar pa*.

²⁷⁶ T. cog tsha *sgar pa*.

²⁷⁷ T. ‘da’ ra *’bul dpon*.

²⁷⁸ T. se tsha *’bul dpon*.

²⁷⁹ The *Ocean Annals* reads “chu yos lo,” i.e. 1603. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 54.28.

²⁸⁰ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 639/4a.3–5.

²⁸¹ Rin chen sgrol ma, “Lo rgyus dang ’brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba,” 41b–42a.

may have been the first rung of the local social ladder.²⁸² Several other monasteries in Pari and nearby regions (e.g. Drigung Monastery and Semnyi Monastery) were founded when such alms collectors returned from a pilgrimage to Central Tibet.²⁸³ The co-founder of Gönlung, Drati *nangso*, or one of his predecessors may have originally been a monk from Suzhou (along the Hexi Corridor) “dispatched” to the area by Central Tibet.²⁸⁴ The nearby Drigung Monastery in Pari was founded by an alms collector of the Drigung Kagyü sect.²⁸⁵

In modern times, at least, Sakya Monastery in Central Tibet would dispatch alms collectors to various corners of the Tibetan Plateau where these individuals no doubt commanded a certain respect:

From the North Monastery of the capital a sizeable number of monks were sent on official assignments to Sa sKya areas outside Sa sKya proper, to other areas of Tibet, and even to Nepal and Bhutan. It was estimated that there were fifty-six offices of this kind ... There were three types of officials: those sent abroad for an indefinite tenure to serve as abbots of Sa sKya sect monasteries and to have only administrative duties; those sent out to a monastery or group of monasteries for a period of six years to supervise the administration of the monastery and also to collect religious donations to be brought back to Sa sKya proper; and those went out for a period of six months each year to districts of Tibet, rather than to specific monasteries, who also were to return with religious donations but who had no administrative responsibilities.²⁸⁶

Although being an “alms collector” or a “collection leader” was prestigious in its own right, some of these may have evolved to acquire the even more prestigious title of *nangso*,

²⁸² Chinese researchers in Huzhu in the 1950s and 60s identified six different types of local leaders (Ch. *tuguan* 土官) apart from the *tusi*. “Collection leaders” (Ch. *bolehun* 博勒混 < T. *'bul dpon*) had the least power and territory. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 7–8.

²⁸³ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 135.20; See also chapter five of this dissertation and Rin chen sgröl ma, “Lo rgyus dang ‘brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba,” 42a.

²⁸⁴ A “Small Drati Clan-Polity” (Ch. Xiao Zha’erdi zu 小札尔的族), located in the “heart” of Hongya[zi] Valley 红崖[子]沟 was founded by this monk. Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 481 (*juan 19*).

²⁸⁵ See the [note above](#).

²⁸⁶ Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya*, 303; Louis Schram makes passing reference to “incense offerings” and “yearly field taxes” that were paid to the Dalai Lama in Lhasa by subjects living in Amdo. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 548 and 612.

literally “domestic watchman.” Rinchen Drölma, a scholar at the China Tibetology Institute in Beijing, has argued that the title of *nangso*—or, at least the general concept—can be traced back to imperial times, when the Tibetan emperor stationed “watchmen” along the frontiers to guard and govern those areas not under direct imperial administration.²⁸⁷ *Nangso* began to appear all over the Tibetan Plateau during the Yuan Dynasty and the Sakya sect’s hegemony in Tibet. Although the nature of *nangso* varied from place to place and over time,²⁸⁸ “in general, the local ruler *nangso*²⁸⁹ is responsible for both the religion and politics of his respective place. He is a major patron of the Teachings and a leader who wields power. ...”²⁹⁰

The Tibetan term “*garwa*,” literally “encampment,” is a general term used to refer to the base of a religious or political leader. A *garwa* might best be thought of as the court of a high-ranking lama, although powerful lay rulers might also rule from a *garwa*.²⁹¹ They could be mobile, as was the case when the body of the late hierarch Sertri Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso (1635-1688)²⁹² was transported from Gönlung to Central Tibet. Or, they could be more permanent installations, comprising a temple and residence built of wood and earthen

²⁸⁷ See her “Lo rgyus dang ‘brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba,” 38a–b. Oddly, she criticizes the early twentieth-century scholar Gendün Chöpel for placing the origin of *nangso* and *chiso* (T. *phyi so*; lit. foreign watchmen) in imperial times: “Aside from the terms “*so blon*” and “*so dpon*,” one rarely [i.e. never?] sees clearly the terms “*nangso*” and “*chiso*” in veritable ancient documents such as the documents from Dunhuang.” Incidentally, I am not aware of a single instance of the use of the term “*chiso*” in historical documents. See also Sonam Tsering, “The Historical Polity of Reppong,” *Tibetan and Himalayan Library* (2011), <http://places.thlib.org/features/23751/descriptions/1225>.

²⁸⁸ For example, a *nangso* could be subject to a monastery’s rule; it could be completely independent of a monastery; and, it could be the patron, founder, or even the proprietor of a monastery. Ibid., 43b–44a.

²⁸⁹ Rinchen Drölma draws a distinction between a *nangso* that serves as a “treasurer” (T. *phyag mdzod*) or general manager of an incarnate lama’s villa and a *nangso* of a locale, who may or may not have any connection with a monastery and a monastery’s lama villas. Ibid., 36b–37a.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 43b; see also p. 46a.

²⁹¹ Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 119; Changkya II visited the Kökenuur Mongol ruler Dalaibaatar at the latter’s “*sgar thog*” in 1689. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 13a.5–6.

²⁹² T. gser khri ngag dbang blo gros rgya mtsho.

walls.²⁹³ Unlike *tusi*, *nangso*, and *bülpön*, the formation of a *garwa* did not require the imprimatur of either Beijing or Lhasa (although these metropolises could and often did recognize and grant additional titles to these institutions). Instead, a lama who acquired enough resources could establish his own *garwa*, as was the case when Tsenpo “The Stern” used his status as abbot of Gönlung to amass enough resources to establish his own *garwa* and thence the monastery known as Serkhok.²⁹⁴

It is not clear *when* the local leaders who founded Gönlung acquired their statuses as *nangsos*, *bülpön*, *garwa*, etc. Shar Kelden Gyatso, writing in 1652, speaks of the “Drati *bülpön*”²⁹⁵ Sherap Drak.²⁹⁶ Similarly, Desi Sangyé Gyatso, writing in the 1690s, speaks of the “group of *nangsos*” present at Gönlung’s founding:

When the Lord Sönam Gyatso [i.e. the Third Dalai Lama] went to Drakgya²⁹⁷ he made a prophecy concerning the place, and [he] had the Baso incarnation Tenpa Gyatso²⁹⁸ tame the earth [spirits] there. Afterwards, the Victorious King Yönten Gyatso gave urgent orders including instructions to Gyelsé Dönyö Chö Gyatso to establish a monastery and exhorted the group of *nangsos* to act as patrons. Accordingly, in the Wood-Male-Dragon year, the foundations for the shrine hall and so forth were successively established. ...²⁹⁹

²⁹³ Chinese sources attempted to distinguish the former from the latter. For instance, the Longben tribe 隆奔族 (< T. *klu ’bum*), on of the “Six Tribes of Sku “bum Monastery,” was a nomadic tribe that lived both within and outside the border mountain passes. Within the passes, it had fortified walls and houses for the people. Those who lived outside the passes, on the other hand, lived in tents (Ch. *zhang* 帐). ”Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 475 (*juan* 19).

²⁹⁴ By at least the twentieth century, however, “*garwa*” was also used to refer to a specific *type* of local leaders, one who was rather low on the social totem pole because he possessed only a very small piece of land and commanded no subjects. See Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 7; See also Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 307–9.

²⁹⁵ T. *bra rti’i dbul dpon*.

²⁹⁶ Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, “A mdo’i chos ’byung,” 350.

²⁹⁷ T. *brag rgya*.

²⁹⁸ T. *ba so sprul sku bstan pa rgya mtsho*.

²⁹⁹ Cited in Rin chen sgrol ma, “Lo rgyus dang ‘brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba,” 42a. Rin chen sgrol ma’s transcription is missing one word, i.e. “*shog*” in “*bka’ shog*.” Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga’ ldan chos ’byung baiDurya ser po*, 340; See also Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, Sde srid, *Vaidūrya-ser-po* (A history of the Dge-lugs-pa monasteries of Tibet), ed. Lokesh Chandra, Śata-piṭaka 5 (1, 2) (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1960), 266.

Going back further in time, the fifteenth-century *Rgya Bod yig tshang chen mo* mentions another local leader, a certain Khachurapkha³⁰⁰ nangso in Amdo.³⁰¹ However, it is not clear whether those leaders specifically associated with the founding of Gönlung were already acting as *nangso*, etc. before Gönlung was founded.

What seems most likely is that local leaders in Pari first sought out formal relations with the Third Dalai Lama when he passed through there in 1584 on his way to Mongolia.³⁰² Others may have established such relations even earlier by traveling to Central Tibet. The Langkya *kachu* scholar who helped bring Gyelsé to Amdo is said to have visited Tibet sometime *before* the group from Pari traveled there together in 1602:

Earlier, when Langkya *kachupa* was in Tibet, he and Gyelsé Rinpoché together circumambulated a stupa, which caused, from the East, a prayer flag to be carried by the wind and land on Langkya *kachupa's* shoulder.

Gyelsé Rinpoché prophecied, "I will [someday] hoist a banner of joy over your land."³⁰³

Thus, by the time these local leaders journeyed to Central Tibet to petition the Dalai Lama to found a monastery, they had already proven their reliability as supporters of the Geluk sect. They were recognized by the Fifth Dalai Lama himself as important patrons of the Geluk sect, referring to them and the *nangso* of Kumbum Monastery as "*nangso* of our side."³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ T. kha chu rab kha.

³⁰¹ Rin chen sgrol ma, "Lo rgyus dang 'brel nas mdo smad nang so'i skor rags tsam gleng ba," 38b–39a.

³⁰² The Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of the Third Dalai Lama reports that the latter passed through "pag ras" (i.e. Pari), where he gave teachings, and that he stayed in Sems nyid for a few days, where he prophecied the establishment of Sems nyid Monastery. Dalai Lama V Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Biographies of the First through the Fourth Dalai Lamas*, 568.

³⁰³ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 640/4b.3–4.

³⁰⁴ T. nang phyogs kyi nang so. Cited in Rin chen sgrol ma, "Lo rgyus dang 'brel nas mdo smad nang so'i skor rags tsam gleng ba," 47a.

The situation at Gönlung appears to be unique *due to the sheer number of nang so and alms collectors / collection leaders present in the vicinity of the monastery*. The passage at the beginning of this section mentions eight leaders:

1. Drati *nangso*,
2. Langkya *kachu*,
3. Akya *garwa*,
4. Hou *bülöpön*,
5. Parin *garwa*,
6. Choktsa *garwa*,
7. Dara *bülöpön*, and
8. Setsa *bülöpön*.

The support of these eight leaders did not end after they brought Gyelsé to Pari from Central Tibet.

With Setsa *bülöpön* acting as patron, a two-story assembly hall as well as a refectory were built. Hou *bülöpön*³⁰⁵ was appointed disciplinarian, and the ‘Corpse-raiser’ *kachu* scholar Hou³⁰⁶ was appointed cantor. Sumpa was the preceptor. The medium Dharma King Trashi Gyeltsen,³⁰⁷ the Headman and *rab[jam]* scholar of Tuken,³⁰⁸ the *bülöpön* of the Offerings of the [Twenty-]fifth Sherap Drak,³⁰⁹ and many other scholars engaged in discussions of the dharma. Teachings on philosophy and practice of the three [monastic] foundations were fully and perfectly implemented. This was the very origin of the flourishing of Genden philosophical commentarial schools here in the land of Amdo.³¹⁰

Here we see these local leaders serving as patrons *and* taking on leadership roles within the monastery. Setsa sponsored the building of the monastery’s central assembly hall and a refectory to help feed the growing congregation. Sherap Drak, i.e. the Drati *nangso*, became the Collection Leader of the Offerings of the Twenty-fifth, the commemoration of the death of the founder of the Geluk sect, Tsongkhapa. He handed this title on to his heirs, for we hear

³⁰⁵ T. ho’u ‘bul dpon.

³⁰⁶ T. ho’u bka’ bcu ro langs pa.

³⁰⁷ T. *lha pa* chos rje bkra shis rgyal mtshan.

³⁰⁸ T. thu’u bkwan dpon *ram pa*.

³⁰⁹ T. Inga mchod ‘bul dpon shes rab grags.

³¹⁰ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 646/7b.5–647/8a.2.

of the Drati Nangso of the Twenty-fifth Offerings, Zöpa Tsönggrü,³¹¹ fending off the forces of the Ming rebel Li Zicheng in 1644 and, on another occasion, forking out money to pay off a Chinese army bent of vengefully destroying Gönlung.³¹²

Later histories write of thirteen local leaders, though there is some disagreement on who makes up the thirteen. The scholar-lama from Gönlung, Nyima dzin, includes seven of the above eight, referring to all by the general term “*garwa*” (lit. “encampment”):

1. Drati (Ch. Zhuashitu 抓什图³¹³)
2. Langkya (Ch. Langjia 浪家),
3. Akya (Ch. Ajia 阿家),
4. Hou (Ch. Huoga 霍嘎),
5. Parin (Ch. Huaren 桦仁),
6. Choktsa (Ch. Juehucha 觉呼查), and
7. Dara (Ch. Dala 达拉).

“These seven,” he writes, “were given their rank³¹⁴ and made *nangso* in former times.”³¹⁵

Missing from this list is Setsa *bülpön*.³¹⁶ To these seven he adds six more:

8. Tsentsa (btsan tsha; Ch. Zanzha 簪扎)
9. Denma (‘dan ma; Ch. 丹麻)
10. Wangchi (wang khyi; Wangqu 王曲)

³¹¹ T. bra sti lnga mchod nang so bzod pa brtson 'grus.

³¹² Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 698/28b.1–6; See also Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 114.1.

³¹³ The Chinese for these names comes from the Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian zhi 互助土族自治县志 (Huzhu Autonomous Tu County Gazetteer)* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), 505. Note that there is little to no consistency in how these names are transliterated into Chinese. I offer these simply as examples of how these names might be transliterated. Moreover, I want to draw attention to this rather useful source.

³¹⁴ T. *cho lo*.

³¹⁵ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 8.

³¹⁶ Perhaps “Setsa” is the “Shenzang zu” 申藏族, a group of people said to have disappeared “long ago.” Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 475 (juan 19).

11. Lende (len bde; Ch. Liande 连德)
12. Lenkya (len kya; Ch. Lanjia 兰家), and
13. Kyitsang (kyi tshang; Ch. Ch. Jisang 吉桑).

“These six,” he writes, “were given their ranks and made *nangso* later on by Gyelsé Rinpoché [i.e. the founder of Gönlung].”³¹⁷

According to Nyima Dzin, the thirteen *garwa* that he lists were located in the immediate vicinity of Gönlung, and all but one were located in present-day Huzhu County.³¹⁸ Nyima Dzin does not cite his sources, and it is impossible to know whether the initial seven did in fact receive their ranks and titles before Gyelsé arrived in Pari while the latter six received theirs from Gyelsé. The historical record suggests that the initial seven were indeed recognized as local rulers by at least the seventeenth-century. In addition, Tsentsa and Lenkya (nos. 8 and 12) show up in Changkya II’s autobiography from the year 1710.³¹⁹ The remaining four are absent from the historical record, although Nyima Dzin, aka Kyitsang Ngawang Lekshé Gyatso,³²⁰ tells us of a *Chronicle of Kyitsang Garwa*, the perusal of which could give us added insight into the historical makeup of these miniature polities.³²¹

Conclusion

³¹⁷ Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 8.

³¹⁸ Dara *garwa* was probably located in present-day Ledu County Dala Township, which is the first valley immediately to the east of Huzhu. Also, the location of Lende *garwa* is unclear, he says. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

³¹⁹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 29b.3.

³²⁰ T. kyi tshang ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho.

³²¹ This note only appears in the Chinese translation of his text. Qie’er Nimazeng Awanglexuejiacuo 尔·尼玛增·阿旺勒雪嘉措 [per nyi ma ’dzin ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho], *Youning Si Xuzhi: Youxuan Faluo Yin 佑寧寺續志：右旋法螺音* (*Continuation of the Gazetteer of Youning Monastery: The Sound of the Clockwise-turning Dharma Conch*), trans. Xie Zuo 谢佐, 2006, 11.

We began this chapter by charting the rise of Gönlung in the seventeenth century and its demise in the following centuries. *Contra* Schram, Qing imperial support was not one of the primary reasons for the monastery's success in its first century of existence. Rather, it was a capstone to century of development. The Dalai Lama's impact on Gönlung's rise was not insignificant. Nonetheless, it was largely symbolic. Since the Dalai Lama represented the rising power in Central Tibet, local leaders in Pari besought him to found a Geluk monastery. He dispatched Gyelsé Rinpoché to do just that, and eventually Gönlung came to be included in the ranks of "Dalai Lama monasteries," or monasteries founded by one of the Dalai Lamas. However, the actual building and management of Gönlung depended instead on *local* leaders. These individuals—who went by various titles that indicated their relationships, however distant, with religious authorities in Central Tibet—were the descendants of powerful Mongols who settled the region in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They provided the monastery with a nearby and long-standing source of financial support and leadership.

By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the religio-political makeup of Pari appears to have undergone some changes. When Tuken VI besought another lama for help finding the rebirth of an important lama, he did so with the help of Gönlung's major and minor lama villas, the monastery's elders and officials, *and the "wise people of the five valleys and six villages."*³²² By the 1950s and 60s when Chinese researchers carried out research at Gönlung,

³²² T. *lung khog lnga dang sde drug gi mi sems shes*. Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig (Profound and Secret Golden Key of a Hundred Doors to [Buddhist] Treatises)" (n.p., n.d 1885), 30a.2–3; See also Duo Zang 朵藏 and Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, *Youning si zhi*, 202n186.

no more than seven remained of the “original” thirteen leaders by that time (indicated in bold-face below):³²³

1. Tuguan *angsuo* 土观昂所 (= Tuken *nangso*)³²⁴
2. Xiawa'er *angsuo* 夏哇尔 (= Shawar *nangso*)³²⁵
3. **Zhuashitu *angsuo* 抓什图 (= Drati *nangso*)³²⁶**
4. **Xi Hualin yangsi 西华林杨司 (= Parin?)³²⁷**
5. Bahong *guaner* 巴洪官尔
6. Shawa *guaner* 沙瓦
7. Mo'ersang *hongbulniriwan* 莫尔桑红布/尼日湾 (= Martsang *pönpolnyerwa?*)³²⁸
8. **Juehasa *ga'erwa* 觉哈撒尔哇 (= Choktsa *garwa*)**
9. **Jisang *ga'erwa* 吉桑 (= Kyitsang *garwa*)**
10. **Langjia *ga'erwa* 浪佳 (= Langkya *garwa*)**
11. Dala *bolehun* 达拉博勒混 (= Dara *bülpon*)
12. **Hu *bolehun* 胡 (= Hou *bülpon?*)³²⁹**
13. Huo'erjun *bolehun* 霍尔郡³³⁰

³²³ Among this list of thirteen “local leaders” (Ch. *tuguan* 土官) are an assortment of different titles, some of which we have seen before and others we have not. The Chinese terms “*angsuo*,” “*ga'erwa*,” and “*bolehun*” clearly correspond to the Tibetan terms “*nangso*,” “*garwa*,” and “*bülpon*.” The Chinese terms “*hongbu*” and “*niriwan*” may correspond to the Tibetan terms “*pönpö*” (*dpon po*, pronounced “hönpo,” lit. “leader”) and “*nyerwa*” (*gnyer ba*; lit. “manager”), although this is just conjecture. The precise meanings of the Chinese terms “*yangsi*” and “*guaner*” elude me. Gray Tuttle has insightfully suggested that “*yangsi*” may be the Tibetan term “*yang srid*” (rebirth). The authors of the *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* have identified a certain hierarchy that exists among these titles. *Nangso*, *yangsi*, *guaner*, and *niriwalhongbu* all oversaw both a particular territory and its subjects. *Garwa* only oversaw a particular territory, not its subjects. *Bülpon* oversaw neither. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 7–8.

³²⁴ T. thu'u bkwan *nang so*.

³²⁵ T. sha bar *nang so*.

³²⁶ This is probably Schram's “Pei-cha-erh-ti.” *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 308.

³²⁷ I do not know whether the “Xi” before the name and title indicates a lateral branch (i.e. a “western branch”) or just a reconfiguration of the old name.

³²⁸ T. dmar gtsang dpon po/gnyer ba?

³²⁹ This or the following may correspond to Schram's “Huo-puo” *garwa*. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 308.

³³⁰ The 1993 Huzhu County gazetteer gives a slightly different list. It excludes Juehasa (Choktsa), Jisang (Kyitsang), Langjia (Langkya), and Hualin (Parin). It also adds Zanzha *bolehun* (= Collection Leader Tsentsa). Schram says that Tsentsa *garwa* was one of the seven extant *garwa* when he was in the area. Huzhu Tuzu zizhi

It is worth pointing out that these seven leaders (in bold face) recorded by researchers in the 1950s and 60s almost entirely overlap with the eight recorded in Tuken's chronicle of Gönlung and the seven that Nyima Dzin asserts received their ranks and titles before Gönlung was founded. From this we can see that these seven miniature polities exhibited quite a bit of longevity.³³¹ Nonetheless, the influence of these local leaders may have waned or been coopted by Gönlung as the monastery grew. The unprecedented growth Gönlung underwent in the seventeenth century demanded a larger web of more powerful patrons. Eventually Gönlung became so large that it entitled and dispatched its own "alms collectors" for the sake of building and enlarging the monastery's endowments.³³²

As we shall see in chapter three, Gönlung eventually came to house its own lama compounds separate from those who founded the monastery and staffed its office in Gönlung's early years. Gönlung's first incarnate lama (and one of Amdo's first homegrown incarnate lama), Changkya II Ngawang Lozang Chöden, was recognized as the enlightened rebirth of Changkya Drakpa Özer in the early 1640s. Gönlung's other major incarnation lineages followed soon after, and their power and wealth grew to overshadow the power and wealth of the local *nangso*, *garwa*, etc. Curiously, at Gönlung these lama villas are referred

xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian zhi*, 505; *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 308.

³³¹ Schram also writes that there were only seven *garwa* remaining in his day. However, in most cases it is difficult to correlate Schram's transliterations with those listed here. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 308.

³³² During the abbacy of Wang II (r. 1785-1788), Wang urged Tuken III to help establish an endowment to fund the dharma classes at Gönlung. Tuken thus sent Rab 'byams pa Ngag dbang blo bzang to collect funds. After a year, the latter had collected over a thousand ounces (T. *srang*) of silver. Two managers (T. *gnyer pa*) were privately appointed to manage the fund. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 19a.1-4.

to as “*nangchen*” (T. *nang chen*), which may be an abbreviation of “*nangso chenmo*” (*nang so chen mo*), literally “great *nangso*,” a title that dates from the Yuan Dynasty.³³³ In other words, as Gönlung grew in size and influence, it adopted the name of a venerable institution—the *nangso*—to describe and legitimize an entirely new (at least in Amdo) institution—the villas of incarnate lamas.³³⁴

³³³ Rin chen sgrol ma, “Lo rgyus dang ‘brel nas mdo smad nang so’i skor rags tsam gleng ba,” 39.

³³⁴ Sonam Tsering has noted the first time that the *nangso* of Repgong was assumed by an incarnate lama (in the eighteenth century). “The Historical Polity of Repkong,” *The Tibetan and Himalayan Library*, July 16, 2011, <http://places.thlib.org/features/23751/descriptions/1225>.

Chapter 2: The Connections of the Monastery, Southbound

The earliest Tibetan history of Amdo that we have—Kelden Gyatso *A mdo'i chos 'byung* (History of the Dharma in Amdo)³³⁵—begins with mention of eminent lamas from Central Tibet and, in particular, the visits to Amdo by the Third and Fifth Dalai Lamas. The history of Buddhism in Amdo, at least according Geluk scholars, is deeply indebted to its spiritual exchanges with Central Tibet. The opening lines of Kelden Gyatso's text give particular attention to the Fourth Dalai Lama's visit there in 1603, after which, the text tells us, Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso came to Amdo and founded Gönlung.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Gönlung's founding is often attributed to the Fourth Dalai Lama who dispatched Gyelsé to Amdo to establish a monastery. It is thereby closely identified with the Dalai Lama in Central Tibet. One present-day scholar has even claimed that Gönlung was designed and built to serve as a “base” for the Dalai Lama in the case that the Geluk sect and its supporters were pushed out of the Ü region of Central Tibet by their rivals in the neighboring Tsang region.³³⁶ Although I have found no evidence to support this claim, it is true is that Gönlung's pedigree includes a background of eminent Central Tibetans who contributed to the monastery's success.

By the time Kelden Gyatso composed his short history of Amdo in the 1644, Gönlung could already present a sizeable population of monks. This tremendous growth, from a fledgling branch monastery of Gyelsé Rinpoché to the largest monastery in Amdo, can

³³⁵ A translation of the verse section of this history has recently been published in Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds. *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 587-91.

³³⁶ Xie Zuo, Ge Sangben, and He Ling, *Qinghai de siyuan 青海的寺院* (Xining 西寧: Qinghai sheng wenwu guanli chu 青海省文物管理處, 1986), 56.

partially be attributed to these connections established between Gönlung and Central Tibet. Eminent monks from Central Tibet came to sit on the monastery's abbatial throne in the early years of its existence, including Chuzang I Namgyel Peljor (1578-1651)³³⁷ and Samgangpa Lozang Ngawang (1591-1663).³³⁸ Meanwhile, many of those born in areas around Gönlung made their way to Central Tibet where they garnered reputations as some of the most outstanding philosophers, debaters, and meditators. Among these are the Great Adept of Denma, Karing *kaju* PüntsoK Namgyel (b. ca. 1566),³³⁹ and Changkya I Drakpa Özer to name just a few.

In this chapter I examine Gönlung's ties to Central Tibet and show how these help to explain the largess given to Gönlung by the Khoshud Mongols. These western Mongols were the dominant power on the Tibetan Plateau from the mid-seventeenth century through the mid-eighteenth century, and they appear again and again in the history of Gönlung's rise and success. I will focus on a particular figure from Central Tibet, i.e. the aforementioned Dewa Chöjé, who came to Gönlung shortly after fleeing the violence of the Earth-Horse Year Warfare (*sa rta'i sde gzar*, i.e. in 1618) and arriving in Amdo.³⁴⁰ Dewa Chöjé was no ordinary monk. He was son of the governor of Kyishö in Central Tibet, Yulgyel Norbu (d. 1607),³⁴¹ and the grandson (or great-nephew) of Governor Trashi Raptan, "the most

³³⁷ T. chu bzang nam rgyal dpal 'byor.

³³⁸ T. bsam sgang pa blo bzang ngag dbang.

³³⁹ T. ka ring dka' bcu phun tshogs nam rgyal.

³⁴⁰ The biography does not give a year for Dewa Chöjé's first visit to Gönlung, although this visit is mentioned *before* the discussion of Dewa Sönam Gyeltsen leading a Mongol army back to Central Tibet in 1621. Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 199–200.

³⁴¹ T. g.yul rgyal nor bu.

influential political figure in the second half of the 16th century in Central Tibet.”³⁴² Dewa Chöjé’s brothers, the Sönam Gyeltsen (1586-1636)³⁴³ and Yizhin Norbu (1589-after 1647),³⁴⁴ travelled regularly to Kökenuur and even settled there for some time. It was this family that, for nearly four decades, courted the Mongol powers that occupied Kökenuur and thereby ensured the survival of the Geluk sect. Their presence in Amdo helped shape the subsequent history of Tibet and simultaneously ensured Gönlung’s prestige and financial stability. A handful of other monks and individuals from Gönlung and the greater Pari region will be discussed, too, in an attempt to uncover their hidden roles in Tibetan history.

Patrons

The starting point for our discussion will be the chapter from the *Gönlung Chronicle* entitled “An Ancillary Section on the Manner in which the Divine Communities and Patrons Arose.” It begins as follows:

Long ago the Oirat Zünghar King Baatur Hongtaiji (d. 1653),³⁴⁵ the Queen Anu,³⁴⁶ and others were the principal patrons of this great monastery. All the estates above Kopusé,³⁴⁷ or Takna Monastery,³⁴⁸ which was below Ejena,³⁴⁹ were donated to Gönlung.³⁵⁰ Up until the Sino-Mongolian conflict of the Water-Hare year [1723], the

³⁴² Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet : A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 54.

³⁴³ T. Bsod nams rgyal mtshan.

³⁴⁴ T. yid bzhin nor bu.

³⁴⁵ T. o rod jun gar gyi rgyal po bA thur hung thas ji.

³⁴⁶ T. dpon mo a nu.

³⁴⁷ T. ko phu se.

³⁴⁸ T. stag rna dgon.

³⁴⁹ T. e je na

³⁵⁰ The *Ocean Annals* gives different spellings for these places, explaining that these Mongol patrons donated "everything above God bu se, also known as Stag rna dgon, which was below E je na." Elsewhere in the *Ocean Annals*, reference is made to a “stag sna dgon,” which is probably the same monastery in question. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 76 and 41.

Zünghar kings repeatedly sent envoys³⁵¹ and made donations of tea, cash disbursements, horses, salaries,³⁵² and so on.³⁵³

Another source tells us that a Takna Monastery³⁵⁴ belonged to “a land at the confluence of the Shuksha Petong River³⁵⁵ along the Upper Julak River,³⁵⁶ which previously had been taken by the Zünghars.”³⁵⁷ Although I have not been able to identify the exact location of this monastery, it was probably located somewhere along the northern border of Qinghai and Gansu Provinces, perhaps near the county-seat of present-day Qilian County, Qinghai.³⁵⁸ In later times, the Yugur people were said to have been particularly devout, and many of the monasteries there came to be devoted to Gönlung or its incarnate lama lineages.³⁵⁹ This donation, then, provided a substantial political and economic basis for Gönlung’s proselytism in the region. In the early twentieth-century the missionary-scholar Louis Schram reported that one monastery in the region that was an affiliate of Gönlung’s Tuken incarnation

³⁵¹ T. *el chi*.

³⁵² T. *phog*.

³⁵³ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 779/69a.5–780/69b.1.

³⁵⁴ T. *stag sna dgon*.

³⁵⁵ T. *shug sha pad stong gi chu*.

³⁵⁶ T. *’ju lag chu*

³⁵⁷ My translation. The Wylie can be found here: Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*; The Tibetan can also be found here: Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa’i tshangs glu gsar snyan* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 18.

³⁵⁸ The Julak River is commonly known in Chinese as the Datong River, a major river fed by various mountain ranges north and west of Pari and one that ultimately meets with the Tsong River, or Huang shui, halfway between Xining and Lanzhou. Sumpa Khenpo visited Takna Monastery on his way to present-day Su’nan County from his hermitage of Lungkar (lung dkar) in present-day Datong County, Qinghai. Along the way, he passed by Lungkya Hermitage (lung skya ri khrod) and a number of other Yugur monasteries. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 330; On Lungkya Hermitage see Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go’i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su’u glegs bam*, 711–12.

³⁵⁹ On the Yugur people’s religiosity, see Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di Ta Sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 332; For an example of Gönlung’s ties to the region, see Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go’i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su’u glegs bam*, 694.

lineage, Mati Monastery,³⁶⁰ was required to annually pay interest amounting to 60 taels (of silver?) or 36 ½ bricks of tea to Tuken for his original investment in the monastery.³⁶¹

The *Gönlung Chronicle* continues:

After Tendzin Chögyel [lit. “Holder of the Teachings Dharma-king”] Gүүishi Khan conquered Khalkha Tsogtu, the King of Beri, and so on, from among the communities he brought together under his control, he donated as estates of Gönlung the Monguor³⁶² nomadic communities of Pari, Tsongka, and the Julak [River area], up to [the lake] of Tongshak³⁶³ and down to the Zhakhok³⁶⁴ River.³⁶⁵ From the Water-Horse year of the eleventh *rabjung* [1642], eight nomadic communities sponsored the Summer Retreat and the Great Prayer Festival of Magical Displays, and the farming communities provided a permanent offering of sweet bread.³⁶⁶ Corveé,³⁶⁷ taxes,³⁶⁸ and any other needs were met [by them].³⁶⁹ In the Fire-Pig year [1647] the Panchen Lama, the Fifth Dalai Lama, and Tendzin Chögyel issued an order making [them] subjects [of the monastery]³⁷⁰ in perpetuity.³⁷¹

The Zhakhok River is likely in present-day Datong County and may be what is now called the Baoku River 宝库河.³⁷² I have not been able to identify a Tongshak Lake, but “Tongshak” may correspond to the area around Tongshak Trashi Chöling,³⁷³ also known as Yangguan si 羊官寺, a major branch monastery of Gönlung’s in Shoule Township 寿乐乡, Ledu County.

³⁶⁰ T. mA this zi < Ch. mati si 马蹄寺.

³⁶¹ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 358.

³⁶² T. hor.

³⁶³ T. stong shags.

³⁶⁴ T. zhwa khog.

³⁶⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 780/69b.1–.

³⁶⁶ T. tsha ra.

³⁶⁷ T. rkang ‘gro.

³⁶⁸ T. lag ‘don gyi khral.

³⁶⁹ The Ch. trans. reads “tsha ru,” “lamb skins,” in place of “tsha ra.”

³⁷⁰ T. mi ser.

³⁷¹ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 779/69b.1–779/69b.4.

³⁷² Tuken III writes of “the three monasteries of Zha Bokhok [zhwa bo khog],” Bokhok no doubt corresponding to area of present-day Baoku Township 宝库乡 and the Baoku River 宝库河 in Datong County. Sumpa Khenpo had several monasteries in “Zha Bokhok,” including “Dul ba bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling of Zhwa khog, Te yan chi dga’ ldan rin chen gling of Bo khog, and Bo khog gi lung dkar gyi bkra shis rtse. Ibid., 734/46b.4.

³⁷³ T. stong shags bkra shis chos gling.

This contribution to Gönlung encompassed the heart of the region known as Pari, stretching from present-day Datong County in the west, across Huzhu County, to Ledu County in the east.³⁷⁴ These details give substance to the claim that Güüshi Khan made “all of Pari” into an estate of Gönlung.³⁷⁵



The main assembly hall and debate courtyard of Tongshak Trashi Chöling, located several valleys to the east from Gönlung in north-central Ledu County.

³⁷⁴ Sumpa Khenpo writes “a great monastic estate (from Lab tshe kha mang downwards as far as Te [Lake]) was granted to Gönlung Jampa Ling, a great monastery in the center of Pari.” The parentheses indicate marginalia in the blockprint. Lab tshe kha mang is said to be the mountain shrine that separates Kökenuur (mtsho sngon) from Amdo (see pp. 590-1). The text is somewhat illegible at this point, so my rendering of “Lake” (mtsho ba) is tentative. Yang renders this similarly as “te’i mtsho,” although he reads the word “above” (yan) as “’yan,” that is, with an *a-chung* in front of it, which is nonsensical. The modern PRC edition renders it as “te’i mtshe ba,” the meaning of which escapes me. In any case, Te Lake could refer to the area around Te thung / Ta’i thung (present-day Liancheng), in Yongdeng County, Gansu Province. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, “Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa’i tshangs glu gsar snyan,” in *Gsung ’bum* (Collected Works), vol. 2, Sata-pitaka (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975), 983/6a.1; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 17 and 38; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa’i tshangs glu gsar snyan*, 14.

³⁷⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 687/28a.3.

Finally, we read in the Gönlung chronicle that

formerly, when the Kyishö Trülku Tendzin Lozang Gyatso came to Kökenuur, the Queen Anu,³⁷⁶ as an offering for having listened to the dharma, gave [him] some five hundred households of communities³⁷⁷ from the Shar drang Ruler³⁷⁸ along the banks of the Yellow River. Kyishöpa made this an estate endowment of Gönlung. Up until the time of unrest [i.e. 1723] [the monastery] would annually collect taxes from these divine communities,³⁷⁹ and they would be offered to the reliquary of Kyishö at Gönlung, and so on.³⁸⁰

As the last sentence here indicates, Gönlung's assets were further enhanced by the fact that Kyishö Trülku passed away at the monastery in 1638 at the age of 46 (in Tibetan reckoning), whereupon he was cremated and his relics interred there in a stupa. Kyishö Trülku is the aforementioned Dewa Chöjé, the son and brother of the governors of Kyishö in the Lhasa valley, and his death released a flood of donations directed toward his funeral and the construction and maintenance of his stupa at Gönlung.

Forgotten Histories

The following pages will explain why Gönlung was the recipient of so much largess and how it came to be associated with these patrons. Central to this question is the rise and fall of some of the most powerful lords in Central Tibet, the governors of Kyishö in the Lhasa valley. The connections that Gönlung shared with the Kyishö polity are occluded by the fact that the Kyishö polity itself has been overlooked in most accounts of Tibetan history. In his

³⁷⁶ T. dpon mo a nu.

³⁷⁷ T. *mi sde*.

³⁷⁸ T. shar drang dpon po.

³⁷⁹ T. *lha sde*.

³⁸⁰ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 770/69b.4–770/69b.6.

essay entitled “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor” (On the Kyishö Governors),³⁸¹ Yönten Gyatso points out that previous scholars, including Shakabpa and Dungkar Lozang Trinlé, have ignored the presence of the Kyishö governors in Tibet’s past:

Even though all of the political histories of Tibet leave the Depa Kyishöpa as a secret, giving them no discussion whatsoever, once one recognizes that the Depa Kyishöpa and the Depa Gandenpa are one and the same, then finding other historical texts [on the topic] is not that difficult. The eminent historian Shakabpa's *Political History of Tibet* and the *Explanations of the Conjunction of Religious Law and Government* by the teacher of Tibetan Studies Dungkar Lozang Trinlé do not provide the slightest insightful discussion of the Depa Kyishöpa or Depa Gandenpa.³⁸²

The significance of this, says Yönten Gyatso, is that

although the history of the Rinpungpa and the Tsang kings has circulated widely like the wind, the political history of those periods is partial and incomplete. Not only that but, because there is no certain clarity regarding the Kyishöpa, there are many guesses regarding the territory and the reigns of the successive Rinpungpa and Tsang rulers.

In other words, our standard, straight-forward narrative of Central Tibet and its principal players is actually incomplete and even misrepresentative. Shortly after Yönten Gyatso’s article appeared, Per Sørensen and Guntram Hazod published their tome, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, in which they document the historical process by which the Lhasa valley became symbolically charged as the ritual and political center of Tibet. They, too, highlight the importance of these later lords of the region, remarking that “they actively patronized the Dge lugs pa in the latter part of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, and to a considerable extent attended the birth of the Dge lugs state.”³⁸³

³⁸¹ I would like to thank my advisor, Kurtis Schaeffer, for bring this article to my attention. Incidentally, in the English abstract of the essay the journal editors incorrectly state that Dewa chöjé is “chief of the Skyid shod region of central Tibet.”

³⁸² Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor (On the Kyishö Governors),” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* no. 2 (August 2006): 1–2.

³⁸³ Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 54.

It is said that the Kyishö Lord (*nang so*) Dondrüp Gyelpo (ca. 1525-68) “was the principal patron of the Dge lugs generally and specifically of the Second Lord of Victors [i.e. the Second Dalai Lama]. Not only that, but he also venerated the Third Lord of Victors [i.e. the Third Dalai Lama] as his root lama.”³⁸⁴ His younger brother, Trashi Rapten (1531-89), was the primary patron for the new Ganden Podrang villa at Drepung Monastery after the Third Dalai Lama had departed for Mongolia.³⁸⁵ Trashi Rabten’s son (or, perhaps, nephew) was Yulgyel Norbu (d. 1607),³⁸⁶ the father of Dewa Chöjé. Altogether, the Kyishö governors are said to have ruled over the “holy land” of Kyishö and its subjects for ninety-four or ninety-five years, from 1518-1612.³⁸⁷ Gönlung’s ties with this family leant it a degree of legitimacy that was recognized by the Mongols of the Kökenuur region. And when the fortunes of the Kyishö governors waned, so faded the history of Gönlung’s ties to the family.

Dewa Chöjé, the “Governor Dharma King”

Dewa Chöjé,³⁸⁸ otherwise known as the Emanation Body of Kyishö,³⁸⁹ Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,³⁹⁰ was born in 1593, the fourth son of the Kyishö Governor Yulgyel Norbu. From an early age he was said to have been the rebirth of Gomdé Namkha Gyeltsen (1532-

³⁸⁴ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 15.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 4 and 18; Sørensen and Hazod give most of the credit instead to the consort of the Phag-gru gongma, Sangs rgyas dpal ’dzom ma (ca. 1485-1555/61?). Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 53.

³⁸⁶ T. g.yul rgyal nor bu.

³⁸⁷ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 5–6; Sørensen and Hazod put the outright hegemony of the Kyishö governors from the 1550s to 1620/25. Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 49.

³⁸⁸ T. T. *sde ba chos rje*.

³⁸⁹ T. skyid shod *sprul sku*.

³⁹⁰ T. bstan ’dzin blo bzang rgya mtsho.

92).³⁹¹ The retainers of the late Namkha Gyeltsen began to send invitations to the young boy, which infuriated his father, the governor. The governor then issued a law prohibiting anyone from proclaiming that his son was the rebirth of Namkha Gyeltsen. Apparently he intended for his second son, Yizhin Norbu, to renounce and not his youngest.³⁹²

Eventually, however, his father relented, and Dewa Chöjé renounced at the Second Dalai Lama's monastery of Chökhör Gyel. This signals a fortuitous connection with the future Gönlung Monastery, since both monasteries are said to be located in the "White Hidden Land" (see the introductory chapter), and also because Gönlung's founder studied at and (at some point) served as the abbot of one of Chökhör Gyel's colleges, Dakpo Dratsang.³⁹³ Having fully embraced his youngest son's renunciation, Dewa Chöjé's father even built a 'seminary' (*chos grwa*) for his son to pursue his monastic studies.³⁹⁴ Dewa Chöjé's primary teacher throughout his lifetime, however, was the First Panchen Lama Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1567-1662), and it was under him that he took his full monastic vows at the age of twenty-three.³⁹⁵ He also received teachings from the Fourth Dalai Lama on numerous occasions. Dewa Chöjé's scholastic abilities were well-regarded, we are told, so much so that he was placed on a throne equal in height to the abbot (*mkhan chen pa*) of the

³⁹¹ T. sgom sde thams cad mkhyen pa nam mkha' rgyal mtshan.

³⁹² Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 181.

³⁹³ T. dwags po grwa tshang. Yon tan rgya mtsho, *Dge ldan chos 'byung gser gyi mchod sdong 'bar ba* (The History of the Dharma of the Virtuous Ones [i.e. the Gelukpa]: The Radiant Golden Stupa) (Paris: Yonten Gyatso, 1994), 639; Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, ed., *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs sgo mang grwa tshang gi chos 'byung dung g.yas su 'khyil ba'i sgra dbyangs* (History of the Dharma at Sgo mang College of 'Bras spungs Monastery, the Rightward-Turning Sound), vol. 1 (Karnataka, India: Dpal ldan 'bras spungs bkra shis sgo mang dpe mdzod khang, 2003), 518 and 519; The Second Dalai Lama is said to have invited the Dakpo College to settle at Chökhör Gyel in 1509. Nornang, "Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-po Bshad-grub-gling," 249.

³⁹⁴ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 38.

³⁹⁵ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 192; 182, 188, 191, 193, 195, *passim*.

important monastic center of Ngamring Monastery.³⁹⁶ He performed in the ‘debate circuit’ (*grwa skor*) at the monastery and further secured his status as an able philosopher and debater.³⁹⁷

Flight to Amdo: The Lokeśvara Statue

The fortunes of the Kyishö governors and the Geluk sect that they supported took a fateful turn in 1618. The various Kagyü subsects led by the Tsang Governor³⁹⁸ attacked and destroyed the monastic centers of Drepung and Sera and sacked Lhasa.³⁹⁹ The violent conflict between Ü and Tsang had already begun to ramp up in 1605 and 1607. In 1607 Dewa Chöjé’s father, Yulgyel Norbu, passed away, and the united Tsang forces seem to have taken advantage of this moment of weakness to attack Geluk monasteries and Kyishö estates. Significantly, Dewa Chöjé’s older brother, Yizhin Norbu was taken hostage.⁴⁰⁰ Dewa Chöjé actually visited him in captivity in 1617 and even took his place for eight months while the latter went back to their homeland to visit their mother and other brothers. By 1618, however,

³⁹⁶ The full name given is “Ngam ring dga’ ldan byams pa gling.” Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee suggested to me that this was a Geluk revisionist description of this otherwise multi-sectarian monastery. Ben Bogin, however, notes how this monastery had long been associated with the Geluk sect. More research is needed. Benjamin E. Bogin, “The *Life* of Yol mo Bstan ‘dzin nor bu: A Critical Edition, Translation, and Study of the Memoirs of a Seventeenth-Century Tibetan Buddhist Lama” (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2005), chap. 2.

³⁹⁷ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 192–3.

³⁹⁸ T. *sde pa* gtsang pa.

³⁹⁹ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 39; Per K. Sørensen, “Restless Relic: The Ārya Lokeśvara Icon in Tibet: Symbol of Power, Legitimacy and pawn for Patronage,” in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ. Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday.*, ed. B. Kellner et al., Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 70.2, 2007, 868–9.

⁴⁰⁰ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 20; Sørensen says that both Yizhin Norbu and the brother Gönpö Raptan (mgon po rab brtan) were taken hostage. He cites both the biography of Dewa Chöjé and that of the Panchen Lama Lozang Chökyi Gyelsten. The biography of Dewa Chöjé says nothing about Gönpö Raptan being taken hostage. I have not had the opportunity to look at the biography of the Panchen Lama. Sørensen, “Restless Relic,” 867.

Dewa Chöjé was compelled to flee north along with his oldest brother, the Governor Sönam Gyelsten.

In their possession on their northward journey was the statue known as the Ārya Lokeśvara (T. ‘phags pa lo ke shwa ra, “Noble Lord of the World”), one of the most important and venerated icons in Tibet.⁴⁰¹ In his article on the statue, Per Sørensen has noted that the statue

was regarded as no less than the *Bod kha ba can kyi lha skal* or “the fated or hereditary icon *par excellence* of Tibet” but also as *lHa mi’i mchod g/sdong gcig pu* [“The Sole Shrine of Gods and Humans”] ... and designated the *thugs dam gyi rten* or the “innermost tutelary icon of spiritual commitment of Srong btsan sgam po.”⁴⁰²

The fate of Tibet itself came to wrapped up in the physical well-being of this important ritual object. The Kyishö Governor Yulgyel Norbu had already removed the statue from its customary home atop Mount Marpo⁴⁰³ in the center of Lhasa to the Kyishö estate of Drakkar (brag dkar) during the Ü-Tsang violence that plagued his reign.⁴⁰⁴ The Fifth Dalai Lama later deemed this move to have been quite inauspicious (*rten ‘brel ‘phyugs*), and it may be one reason why the Kyishöpa later on failed to reclaim their former lands.⁴⁰⁵

Now, the two brothers presented the statue to the Tümed Mongols who controlled Kökenuur, specifically, it would seem, the ruler known by the title of Khutugtai, Kholoche.⁴⁰⁶ By means of this ‘seductive collateral’ (*rngan pa*) the brothers hoped to secure the military backing of the Mongols. Unrest among the various Mongol factions in Kökenuur led to the statue being moved to safety in at the Tongkhor Monastery in Kham. Finally, the

⁴⁰¹ Sørensen, “Restless Relic,” 869 and 871n25.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 863.

⁴⁰³ T. dmar po ri.

⁴⁰⁴ Sørensen, “Restless Relic,” 863–4.

⁴⁰⁵ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 28 and 31; See also Sørensen, “Restless Relic,” 872–3n27.

⁴⁰⁶ T. ho lo che. Sørensen, “Restless Relic,” 870.

statue was later returned to Lhasa thanks to the efforts of Dalai Güngjü, one of the consorts of Güüshi Khan.⁴⁰⁷

Curiously, there is a related statue said to be housed in the vicinity of Gönlung at the *garwa*⁴⁰⁸ (lit. “encampment”) of the Shawar *nangso*,⁴⁰⁹ a local headman and religious leader.⁴¹⁰ The story of the statues, as relayed in the *Gönlung Chronicle*, is as follows:

As for the history of the Amitābha Buddha in the Shawar⁴¹¹ Temple: Formerly, during the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, an arhat brought back from a divine realm seven seeds of white sandalwood⁴¹² and offered five of them to the Buddha. Two he offered to the crown of the head of an image of Noble Khasar^{pa}⁴¹³ along the shore of the ocean. A wind blew, and [they] fell off, lost beneath the earth. Nectar flowed continuously from the finger of the Khasar^{pa} and nourished [the soil]. There a great sandalwood tree grew. When the Great Kāśyapa⁴¹⁴ passed into nirvana, the tree also became dry, and a piece of [it] fell and was buried beneath [the earth].

Then, for the benefit of these Teachings, the Dharma King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo thought of inviting a blessed devotional object to the field of merit of the wandering beings of Tibet. He thus manifested himself as a monk called A Karma.⁴¹⁵ He went to that spot [where the piece of the tree had] formerly [fallen]. [There was a] great king [of that land] who had believed in the inner faith [i.e. Buddhism]; however, [the king] became a convert, believing in a heterodox faith. He was crippled with illness, and all attempts to help him were to no avail. Upon nearing his death, he asked Bhikṣu A Karma about a method for curing the illness. The monk said, "make one hundred eight statues of the Buddha out of white sandalwood, 'snake essence' sandalwood, and the *gorzhosha* [*gor zho sha*] [sandlewood], and take refuge in the inner faith; this will help [you]."

"But 'snake essence' sandalwood is hard to find!" The king replied. "And white sandalwood is particularly hard to get ahold of, it being in a divine realm."

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 874–6; Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa’i skor,” 28.

⁴⁰⁸ T. *sgar ba*.

⁴⁰⁹ T. *sha bar nang so*.

⁴¹⁰ The temple of the Shawar *nangso* is said to also contain “an imperial command and seal honoring the previous [Shawar] *nangso*, Lama Chöpel Zangpo [bla ma chos dpal bzang po], as ‘object of worship’ of China.” Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 77.26–7.

⁴¹¹ The text has “sha par,” though “sha bar” is more common in other sources.

⁴¹² T. *tsan dan sa mchog*.

⁴¹³ T. *jo bo kha sar pa Ni*.

⁴¹⁴ T. Mahākāśyapa; T. ‘od srung chen po.

⁴¹⁵ T. a karma.

"If [you] make the [Buddha] images, I will search for the sandalwood [for you]." He went to the king's door to the corral where the elephants usually lie when the weather is hot and dug into the earth. Part of the sandalwood from before was revealed. Earlier histories write [that] the sandalwood cracked open and inside appeared the five Jowo brother statues.⁴¹⁶ Through miraculous powers of Mount Malaya,⁴¹⁷ 'serpent essence' sandalwood was also gathered. By making one hundred eight statues of the Buddha out of the three [kinds of] sandalwood, the king was liberated from his illness, and he converted to the inner faith.

The self-arising, five related [statues] were brought to Tibet. One is the Holy Wati of Kyidrong.⁴¹⁸ Another is the Lokeśvara of the Potala. Another is this very Amitābha. The whereabouts of the other two are unknown. The Lokeśvara and this [statue] are the same size and have the same expressions.⁴¹⁹

It is not clear how this statue ended up residing adjacent to Gönlung or (as is more likely) how the statute came to be identified as one of the "five Jowo brother statues." Such a legend may have arisen in the aftermath of Güüshi Khan's victory in Central Tibet, a campaign to which the Shawar *nangso* may have contributed (see below). In any case, this statue is just another of the lesser-known characteristics of the Gönlung monastic complex that further link it with Lhasa.⁴²⁰

Relations with Mongols

Dewa Chöjé would spend the last twenty years of his life in Amdo. He dreamed of traveling elsewhere and did in fact spend time in Mongolia, too. However, each time his guru, the Panchen Lama, would exhort him (either in writing or in dreams) to remain in

⁴¹⁶ T. *jo bo mched lnga*.

⁴¹⁷ T. *ri bo ma la ya nas rdzu 'phrul*.

⁴¹⁸ T. *skyid grong gi 'phags pa wa ti*.

⁴¹⁹ T. *sku nyams*. Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 776/67b.3–778/68b.1.

⁴²⁰ The *Ocean Annals* also mentions a "jo bo lo ke shwa ra glang dar khriims phog ma," the Arya Lokeśvara Punished [by] Langdarma"(?). I do not know what the significance of this statue is. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 72.3; Cited in Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 183.

Amdo and spread the dharma.⁴²¹ He thus embarked on a peripatetic journey, visiting many of Amdo's holy sites (e.g. Achung Namdzong)⁴²² and numerous monasteries and hermitages. Chief among the monasteries he visited were Jakyung,⁴²³ Kumbum,⁴²⁴ the Serkhang Hermitage near Kumbum,⁴²⁵ the Yarnang Monastery in Rongwo,⁴²⁶ the region of Drotsang Monastery,⁴²⁷ and of course Gönlung. However, he made frequent trips back west to Kökenuur to attend to the needs of his Mongol benefactors.

Upon first arriving in Kökenuur from Central Tibet, he was well received by the leader of the Tümed Mongols, Kholoche, and his royal retainers, to whom Dewa Chöjé gave numerous teachings. He also exchanged teachings and empowerments with the important Tongkhor Lama Gyelwa Gyatso (1588-1639) from Kham (i.e. eastern Tibet).⁴²⁸ Later, when Kholoche passed away, these two presided together over the funeral.⁴²⁹ Later, in 1632 (or 1634), the Khalkha Mongol Tsogtu Taiji (d. 1637) arrived in Kökenuur with his army and soundly defeated the Tümed. Dewa Chöjé was in Kökenuur at the time, and he fled in fear back east to Jakyung Monastery. It was known that Tsogtu hated “the Teachings and the followers” of the Geluk sect, and Dewa Chöjé and company are said to have escaped the violence thanks to Dewa Chöjé's spiritual powers.

⁴²¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 211.

⁴²² T. a chung gnam rdzong.

⁴²³ T. bya khyung.

⁴²⁴ T. sku 'bum.

⁴²⁵ T. gser khang ri khrod . It is not clear whether this is Serkhang Hall (*lha khang*) in Kumbum or a separate, nearby hermitage, though the latter seems likely.

⁴²⁶ T. rong bo yar nang.

⁴²⁷ T. gro tshang lha khang; Ch. Qutan si.

⁴²⁸ T. stong 'khor rgyal ba rgya mtsho.

⁴²⁹ Most sources talk of the “defeat of Kholoche” in 1632 or 1634. The context of Dewa Chöjé's biography, however, suggests that Kholoche died much earlier, in 1621. Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 200. Dewa Chöjé also officiated at the funeral of Kholoche's son, Lhatsün the Elder, Tenkyong Lozang Gyatso (*lha btsun che ba bstan skyong blo bzang rgya mtsho*), in 1631.

Dewa Chöjé's reputation preceded him, however, and Tsogtu Taiji soon invited Dewa Chöjé to return to Kökenuur.

... When this Great Lord was residing upon the throne [arranged for him by Tsogtu Taiji], he was wearing atop his head a yellow hat. It is said that Tsogtu remarked, "Lama, seeing you my faith grows. However, seeing this hat I am angry [lit. the mind is sick]." Even though he did not ask for a dharma connection,⁴³⁰ he asked numerous religious questions. [Dewa Chöjé] answered them without difficulty. Because [Dewa Chöjé] was without partiality for different religious tenets [*grub mtha'*] and so forth, [Tsogtu's] faith [in him] grew, and he gave [him] immense offerings and service. In addition, the renunciants of the Sa[kya], Druk[pa Kagyü], and Kar[ma Kagyü] also came to have great faith [in Dewa Chöjé]. In particular, the follower of the Karmapa called Zhamar *rapjampa*⁴³¹ discreetly listened to profound teachings from this Lord, and he also presented [Dewa Chöjé] with a Cornucopia of material offerings. He also asked Tsogtu for numerous famous Tibetan and Mongol patrons, which he thoroughly provided. Also, Tsogtu's younger son asked for a dharma connection.⁴³²

As we shall see, when Tsogtu Taiji himself was replaced by another leader, Güüshi Khan of the Khoshud, Dewa Chöjé was once again called into service.

The scholar Zahiruddin Ahmad noticed this succession of relationships that were maintained between Central Tibet and whatever Mongol force occupied the Kökenuur region, although he did not identify Dewa Chöjé and his brothers as the lynchpin to this connection:

From this time onwards [i.e. after 1579, when Kholoche was appointed as ruler of the Kökenuur], a very close connection was maintained between Tibet and the Valley of the Blue Lake (*mtsho kha*). 'Kho lo che's son, Guru Khung-taiji, fought the Ruler of Gtsang at Rkyang thang sgang in 1621. In c. 1634, the Valley was occupied by the Khalkha prince, Chog-thu Taiji. In 1637, Chog-thu was defeated, and his territory seized by Guši Khan (1582-1655), the Khan of a branch of the Western Mongols, coming from the Valley of the Ili river. Neither the removal of 'Kho lo che in c. 1634, nor that of Chog-thu in 1637, seems to have meant the end of their lines in Koko-nor. For, we hear of messengers from Chog-thu Tha'i ji of Kok-nor at the Court of the

⁴³⁰ T. *chos 'brel*.

⁴³¹ T. *zhwa dmar rab 'byams pa*.

⁴³² Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 222. This exchange is retold in the *Ocean Annals*, and my conversations with Max Oidtmann concerning the significance of the exchange prepared me for identifying it in Dewa Chöjé's biography.

Dalai Lama on 24 August 1671; and of one Da'i ching Ko lo che on 15 April 1677 [35]. But their rule over the Valley of the Blue Lake, no doubt, ended in c. 1634 and 1637 respectively. ...⁴³³

Dewa Chöjé's presence in Amdo was constant, and we find him in Kökenuur in 1626 giving empowerments to a gathering of *geshes* and other scholars as well as Mongol royalty.⁴³⁴ He was there again in 1627 or 1628, whereupon he made a vow not to accept that emblem of wealth and gratitude among the Mongols, namely meat, thereby taking part in the "civilizing" project initiated by the Third Dalai Lama just forty years earlier.⁴³⁵ Likewise, Dewa Chöjé's brothers, the exiled Kyishö Governor Sönam Gyeltsen and his brother Yizhin Norbu, both spent a great deal of time in Kökenuur. The relationships established and maintained by this family later proved crucial to the success of the Geluk sect.

A Fellow Clergyman

Significantly, when Dewa Chöjé travelled to Kökenuur in 1626, at the head of the scholars and royal retainers receiving the empowerment was one Chuzang Namgyel Peljor (1578-1651).⁴³⁶ As discussed in the introductory chapter, the Chuzang incarnation lineage is one of the major lama lineages at Gönlung. Namgyel Peljor came to be recognized as the first historical figure in the Chuzang lineage. Like Dewa Chöjé, Chuzang was in a privileged and important position as a spiritual advisor to the slue of Mongols who occupied Kökenuur.

⁴³³ Zahiruddhin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, Serie Orientale Roma XL (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), 65.

⁴³⁴ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 211.

⁴³⁵ Significantly, after Dewa chöjé passed away, all of those influenced by his teachings--including Chinese, Tibetans, Hor Mongols, and Sok Mongols--are said to have forsaken the taking of life (i.e. butchering). Ibid., 215 and 252.

⁴³⁶ T. chu bzang rnam rgyal dpal 'byor.

Chuzang's principal teacher was the same as Dewa Chöjé's, the Panchen Lama.⁴³⁷ Sometime before 1616, a certain Han Abu Lama⁴³⁸ and the leaders of Taklung⁴³⁹ in present-day Linxia County, Gansu Province⁴⁴⁰ went to beseech the Fourth Dalai Lama to send them a suitable lama. The Dalai Lama ordered Lampa *rapjampa* Sönam Drakpa⁴⁴¹ to go, but the latter was retiring and declined. Thus, Chuzang was sent.

Chuzang had attained the rank of *lingsé*⁴⁴² at Drepung Monastery's Gomang College. In addition, when the ruler of Tsang requested Geluk monks to debate against Sakya and Kagyü monks, the Panchen Lama sent Chuzang, who soundly defeated them. For this, the major ruler in the Geluk order, Desi Sönam Chöpel (1595-1657)⁴⁴³ and the Kyishö *zhapdrung* (i.e. Yizhin Norbu) rewarded him.⁴⁴⁴ Chuzang also served as the highest ranking disciplinarian⁴⁴⁵ at Gomang College, and he furthered his studies at Lhasa's Lower Tantric College.⁴⁴⁶

⁴³⁷ This and the following information on Chuzang comes from the *Ocean Annals*, which itself draws significantly from Tuken III's chronicle of Gönlung. See Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 85–6; Zhiguanba•Gongquehudañbaraoji 智观巴•贡却乎丹巴绕吉 [Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas], *Anduo zhengjiao shi* 安多政教史 [mdo smad chos 'byung / deb ther rgya mtsho = Ocean Annals] (Political and Religious History of Amdo), 88–9; Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 684/26b.2–699/29a.1.

⁴³⁸ T. han a bu bla ma.

⁴³⁹ T. stag lung.

⁴⁴⁰ Zhiguanba•Gongquehudañbaraoji, *Anduo zhengjiao shi*, 88n2. I have not been able to corroborate the location of Taklung.

⁴⁴¹ T. lam pa rab 'byams pa bsod nams grags pa. For a brief biography of this figure, see Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 1:566–570.

⁴⁴² T. *gling bsre*; a monastery-wide scholastic rank.

⁴⁴³ T. sde srid bsod nams chos 'phel.

⁴⁴⁴ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 685/27a.3–4.

⁴⁴⁵ T. *dge skos*.

⁴⁴⁶ T. rgyud smad.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find an early biography of Chuzang.⁴⁴⁷ The source for this brief biography of Chuzang is the nineteenth-century *Ocean Annals*, which itself reproduces nearly verbatim the account of Chuzang found in Tuken III's *Gönlung Chronicle*. This source tells us that Chuzang served as the lama to the Tümed ruler Kholoche, staying for a year or so south of Lake Kökenuur (mtsho *srib*) and a few years in a place named Tarkir.⁴⁴⁸ When Tsogtu Khan invaded, defeating Kholoche, Chuzang, like Dewa Chöjé, fled east. He came to serve as the abbot of Kumbum Monastery from (1630 to 1638⁴⁴⁹), and it was during that time that Tsogtu invited him, too, back to Kökenuur.⁴⁵⁰ Curiously, we find a revised account of Dewa Chöjé's encounter with Tsogtu that I depicted above: "Tsogtu invited [Chuzang] to the shore of the Lake [i.e. Kökenuur]. [Tsogtu] was pleased with the answers to [his] questions, and remarked 'aside from [your] hat, both Dewa Chöjé and you are worthy ['os] to be my lamas.'"⁴⁵¹ As we shall see, Chuzang was also venerated by the next Mongol leader to rule in Kökenuur, Güüshi Khan. Like Dewa Chöjé, he thereby served a string of Mongols that ultimately linked together Central Tibet, the Khoshud Mongols of Kökenuur, and the Pari region around Gönlung.

Güüshi Khan

⁴⁴⁷ There is said to be an autobiography of his successor, Chuzang II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen, called *Nyan dga' rol rtsed*. However, it appears to be no longer extant. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 73; Gene Smith gives the title as *Nyams dga'i rol rtsed*. *Among Tibetan Texts*, 164.

⁴⁴⁸ T. thar khir. Unidentified.

⁴⁴⁹ Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces*, 44; Karsten, "A Study on the sku-'bum/T'ar-erh Ssu Monastery in Ching-hai," 309.

⁴⁵⁰ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 86.7–86.8.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 86.10–11.

The story of Güüshi Khan leading the Khoshud Mongols to Kökenuur and from there on to Central Tibet is well known. Likewise, the donor-donee relationship established between Güüshi Khan and the Fifth Dalai Lama, said to be modeled on that formerly established between Qubilai Khan and Phakpa Lama, has been well documented. The Fifth Dalai Lama, who was still quite young at this time, had less to do with the order of events that came to shape the history of Tibet than did his “regent,” the treasurer of Drepung Monastery Sönam Chöpel.⁴⁵² Samten Karmay writes that

In 1641, after a year of fighting in Kham, Gushri Khan defeated the king of Beri, an ally of the king of Tsang and a Bon practitioner. Gushri Khan's prestige as a warrior was now as unequalled among Tibetans as it was among Mongols. During the campaign against Beri, the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Desi [Sönam Chöpel] discussed whether Gushri Khan and his men should return to Kokonor from Kham. They decided to send an emissary to Kham to contact the Mongol chief. In the presence of both the Dalai Lama and the emissary, the Desi pretended to agree with the Dalai Lama that Gushri Khan should return to Kokonor. But just as the emissary was about to leave, the Desi ordered him to tell Gushri Khan to lead his army against the king of Tsang.⁴⁵³

Sönam Chöpel's subterfuge and strategy led to the defeat of the Tsang ruler and a Geluk hegemony throughout most of Tibet. For this, he and the Dalai Lama were handsomely rewarded: “After military control over Tibet was established, Gushri Khan had granted the conquered territories to the regent [Sönam Chöpel] and the Dalai Lama as an offering.”⁴⁵⁴

That which has been missing from this common telling of history is the factionalism among the Geluk allies and, in particular, the role played by figures who later came to be

⁴⁵² Samten Karmay refers to Sönam Chöpel at one point as the treasurer of the Ganden Palace, i.e. the Fifth Dalai Lama's villa within Drepung. I have not yet had the opportunity to corroborate this statement. “The Great Fifth,” *World Tibet Network News* (January 6, 2006).

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Nikolay Tsyrempilov, “Dge Lugs Pa Divided: Some Aspects of the Political Role of Tibetan Buddhism in the Expansion of the Qing Dynasty,” in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 52–3.

overshadowed by Sönam Chöpel and the Fifth Dalai Lama's government. Yönten Gyatso made this point in his article "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor":

In the [Fifth Dalai Lama's] biography, the *du ku la* ... and so forth, one reads that the reasons and circumstances for Gүүishi Khan's army conquering the Beri [King]⁴⁵⁵ and the Tsangpa [King] consisted of the evil intentions of the Tsang Governor. When he established a new monastery, some of those engaged in corvéé labor sought out stones and rolled them down the mountain behind [the Geluk institution of] Tashi Lhünpo, thereby causing damage to Tashi Lhünpo. Gүүishi Khan heard of this, found it intolerable, and lead forth [his] army. Likewise, one reads that these reasons and circumstances consisted of the Proctor Sönam Raptan [i.e. Sönam Chöpel] exhorting Gүүishi Khan to fight. All of this is well known. However, the main reason that Gүүishi Khan's army arrived in Tibet is that the Tsang Governor stole the estates of the Kyishö Governor and removed the uncle and nephew governors of Kyishö from their homeland. One can [see] this clearly from Gүүishi Khan's own words ...⁴⁵⁶

Yönten Gyatso then cites a passage from the *Ocean Annals*, the key line being the following:

[Gүүishi Khan said,] "I thought it would be best if we could succeed in using harmonious words. I sent messengers [to the Tsang ruler] again and again. I sent Rongwa Tadrin⁴⁵⁷ to say 'you and I have like minds, one having conquered the south, the other having conquered the north. On top of Kyishöpa's former lands, [you] must give [back] whatever [lands] I wish. If [you] do not do this, I will come to the gates of your fortress of Samdruptsé.'⁴⁵⁸ However, no 'reward'⁴⁵⁹ came for my words, and he said 'for your sake, I will give [only] Phenyül Khartsé⁴⁶⁰ [to Khyishöpa].' Therefore, [I] had to go to Tsang."⁴⁶¹

In other words, the impetus for Gүүishi Khan's coming to Tibet was the Tsang King's refusal to abide by Gүүishi's demands, specifically his demand that the Kyishö lands be returned. How did it come to pass that Gүүishi Khan was such a staunch advocate of the Kyishö Governor and his family? Also, what role did Gönlung play in all of this?

⁴⁵⁵ T. be ri.

⁴⁵⁶ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 33.

⁴⁵⁷ T. rong ba ta mgrin.

⁴⁵⁸ T. bsam 'grub rtse.

⁴⁵⁹ T. *bdag rkyen*.

⁴⁶⁰ T. 'phan yul mkhar tse.

⁴⁶¹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 35.1–5; Cited in Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 33–4.

According to a well-known eighteenth-century source, a monk from Gönlung and another from the subsidiary monastery of Semnyi⁴⁶² played a key role in bringing Güüshi Khan to Tibet:

At that time, the Tibetan leader [*bod pa dpon*] Sönam Chöpel, along with two bright monks who had gone to Tibet--the monk from the great monastery of Gönlung of Amdo, the Official-Translator Garu,⁴⁶³ and the one called Semnyi Kache⁴⁶⁴--had faith in the Gedenpa [i.e. Gelukpa] but were powerless, and they had to serve as officials to the Tsang King. At that time, they came to an agreement with the patron of Ganden Monastery in Kyishö--the governor of Taktse Fortress [*stag rtse rdzong*], Tsokyé Dorjé⁴⁶⁵--after which they requested a prophecy from the Lamo Oracle. [The oracle] said, "a leader from the North whose sash has an image of a snake on it [will] be able to quell the enemy." Based on this, either Semnyi or Translator Garu was secretly sent to the land of the Zunghar. At that time, he went to his homeland, whereupon he led a few allied troops from Pari and arrived in Zungharia.⁴⁶⁶

The messenger is said to have explained to the Zunghars the dire situation of the Geluk sect in Tibet, after which Güüshi Khan made a pilgrimage to Tibet to scout things out.

Güüshi Khan then returned to his homeland only to return to Kökenuur, this time with an army in tow. In 1637, Güüshi Khan crushed Tsogtu Khan's forces, and the Khoshud Mongols settled the region. As alluded to above, it was at this time that both Dewa Chöjé and Chuzang Rinpoché met with Güüshi Khan. Güüshi Khan and his ally, Baatur Khung-taiji (d.

⁴⁶² T. *sems nyid*.

⁴⁶³ T. 'ga' ru lo tsA ba sna che.

⁴⁶⁴ T. sem nyi kha che.

⁴⁶⁵ T. *mtsho skye rdo rje*. This appears to be the Dharma King Tsokyé Dorjé (*chos rje mtsho skye rdo rje*), the son of the Kyishö Governor Sönam Gyeltsen. Sørensen refers to the "*sde pa mTsho-skyes*" as the nephew of Yizhin Norbu. Sørensen, "Restless Relic," 873n27. Confusingly, elsewhere he and Hazod write of the son of Sönam Gyeltsen (i.e. a nephew of Yizhin Norbu) as having played a major role in Tibetan politics in *the mid-1700s*. Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 245n699. Yang has added to the confusion by misquoting Luciano Petech. Petech mentions a Reverend Dorjé Namgyel (*zhabs drung rdo rje rnam rgyal*), a late-seventeenth-century descendant of the Kyishö governors and the father of the Taktse Governor Lhagyel Raptan (*stag rtse sde pa lha rgyal rab brtan*, d. 1720). Yang, however, misquotes Petech as having said *Tsogyé Dorjé* is Lhagyel Raptan's father. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 69n76 and 88n192.

⁴⁶⁶ Translation is my own. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 33–4; Both Yang and Ahmad have translated this passage. *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, 111–12. Yang mistakenly identifies *both* Translator Garu and Semnyi Kache as being monks of Gönlung proper.

1653) invited Dewa Chöjé to Kökenuur where they gave him a plethora of offerings. He, in turn, gave them empowerments. In particular, we are told that he gave Baatur Khung-taiji and his retainers a Vajra Rosary (*rdo rje'i phreng ba*) empowerment along with an oath to refrain from violence and causing harm to sentient beings. “Countless Chinese and Tibetans were saved from harm,” says Dewa Chöjé’s biographer.⁴⁶⁷ Dewa Chöjé then ordered Baatur Khung-taiji to return to his homeland. He likewise gave instructions to Güüshi Khan not to harm the sentient beings of China and Tibet and to serve as a non-parochial sponsor of Buddhism.

That year, Güüshi Khan set out to Central Tibet along with Dewa Chöjé’s brother, the Governor Yizhin Norbu. (His older brother Sönam Gyeltsen has passed away in Kham in 1636).⁴⁶⁸ Before departing, Güüshi said to Dewa Chöjé, “I am now going to Ü. I will retrieve your estates from the grasp of Tsang, and I will give them to Yizhin [Norbu].”

Dewa Chöjé replied, “If you are able to retrieve my estates with propriety [*gzhung mthun po*], do that. Otherwise, to use military force to retrieve them does not abide by the dharma relationship [I have].” Yizhin Norbu and his retainers are said to have been “a little peeved” by Dewa Chöjé’s comment.⁴⁶⁹ The dharma connection to which Dewa Chöjé refers must be one between him and the object of Güüshi’s ire: the ruler of Tsang. Nothing is spoken of such a relationship in Dewa Chöjé’s biography, although we might surmise that such a relationship emerged during the eight months he spent “in captivity” in Zhigatsé. In any case, this ambivalent attitude of Dewa Chöjé is one of the possible reasons why there

⁴⁶⁷ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 241.

⁴⁶⁸ The text writes that he passed away in “rdza ngam chab mdo” (“Chamdo of Dzangam”? “Dzanga or Chamdo”?). Ibid., 240.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 242.

came to be a break between treasurer of Drepung Monastery, Sönam Chöpel, and the traditional patrons of the Geluk sect, the Kyishö governors.⁴⁷⁰

Curiously, other (later) sources attribute this role of court chaplain or spiritual advisor to Chuzang Rinpoché. The *Ocean Annals* and the chronicle of Gönlung write that when Chuzang met with Güüshi in 1637, he ordered (*bka'*) him to conquer the enemies of the Geluk sect, namely the king of Beri and the Tsang ruler.⁴⁷¹ In any case, Güüshi Khan marched on, taking a number of troops from the “Parik of Amdo”⁴⁷² before attacking the king of Beri.⁴⁷³ “Parik”⁴⁷⁴ appears to refer to the people of Pari where Gönlung is located.⁴⁷⁵ In fact, the name “Pari” is said to derive from “*dpa' bo'i rus*,” i.e. “lineage of heroes.”⁴⁷⁶

Another modern scholar writes that

in the Wood-Male-Dragon Year of the Eleventh *rabjung*, 1664, Güüshi Tendzin Gyelpo led troops against the Tsang Governor Tenkyong Wangpo. He gathered several thousand cavalry troops from Pari in Domé. The Tsang King's army was pounded into dust and [his] estates captured.⁴⁷⁷

The dates given here are mistaken, but the historical incident is the same. Pari appears to have contributed troops to Güüshi's campaigns in Kham and Central Tibet. Perhaps it was this event that led to the Amitābha statue (the “brother” of the Lokeśvara statue of Lhasa mentioned above) being installed in the temple of the Shawar *nangso* in Pari?

⁴⁷⁰ Yon tan rgya mtsho, “Skyid shod sde pa'i skor,” 31–2. Citing the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography.

⁴⁷¹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 86.12–13; Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 687/28a.1–2.

⁴⁷² T. *a mdo'i dpa' rigs*.

⁴⁷³ W. D. Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons: An Advanced Political History of Tibet [Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs]*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, vol. 23 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2010), 340; Shakabpa [zhwa sgab pa], *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs* (Political History of Tibet), vol. 1 (n.p.: Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa Memorial Foundation, 2007), 414.

⁴⁷⁴ T. *dpa' rigs*.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Brug thar, *Mdo smad byang shar gyi nod kyi tsho ba shog pa'i lo rgyus dang rig gnas bcas par dpyad pa* (An Investigation of the Culture and History of the Tibetan “Villages”(tsho Ba) and “Federations” (shog Pa) in Northeastern Amdo) (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khan, 2002), 258.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 258.

When Güüshi arrived in Lhasa, the Kyishö Governor Yizhin Norbu and the latter's nephew, Tsokyé, were with him.⁴⁷⁸ As Yönten Gyatso has deftly shown, the success of the Kyishö rulers was short-lived. The promises Güüshi made to Dewa Chöjé concerning the return of his land were not kept. Yönten Gyatso draws attention to a number of discrepancies in the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama regarding the reasons for this.⁴⁷⁹ In short, however, Yönten Gyatso concludes that either A) Güüshi Khan did not fully understand the weak position of the Kyishöpa in Central Tibet when making his promises and that he was actually unable to do anything about it. The Fifth Dalai Lama even suggests that Güüshi's wish to return Kyishöpa's land to him was like "pouring barley into the palm of a dog." That is, it was something beyond Güüshi's capacity. Or, B) he was beguiled by Sönam Chöpel.⁴⁸⁰ Elsewhere Yönten Gyatso suggests that it may have been that Güüshi lost interest in the Kyishö family following the death of Dewa Chöjé, an event we shall turn to momentarily.⁴⁸¹

Whatever the case was, the government of the Dalai Lama under Sönam Chöpel's stewardship now ruled in Lhasa and Central Tibet. The bonds established between the Kyishö family and the "Dharma King Holder of the Teachings" had been extremely important for the modern history of Tibet. However, the family's place in history was overshadowed by beneficiaries of the family's patronage—the Geluk sect—and the family tapered off ignominiously with the death of the Taktsé Governor Lhagyel Rapten in 1720, "the betrayer of the Qōśot [Khoshud] royal family."⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁸ Sørensen, "Restless Relic," 872–3n27. See [note above](#).

⁴⁷⁹ See especially the last lines of p. 34. Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor."

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31–2.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁸² Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 52; Interestingly, Yönten Gyatso writes that the descendant of the Kyishö governors, Depa Taktsé Lhagyel Rapten (sde pa stag rtse lha

Back at Gönlung

While the fortunes of the Kyishö family went into decline after it secured the help of Güüshi Khan and the Khoshud Mongols, Gönlung's began to flourish. We have already examined the enormous donations made to the monastery by these groups. This donor-donee relationship between the Khoshud Mongols (and other Oriats, too) and Gönlung can best be explained by the role played by Dewa Chöjé. He first went to Gönlung shortly after his arrival in Amdo, sometime between 1618 and 1621,⁴⁸³ when he gave numerous teachings and tantric practices (e.g. *mngon dkyil*) to the congregation of monks there. These monks included Sumpa Damchö Gyatso, the first abbot of Gönlung who was appointed by Gyelsé before the latter returned to Tibet.⁴⁸⁴ Dewa Chöjé also began to get visits from Likya *lopön* Sherap Sengé⁴⁸⁵ in 1621. The Monguor Li clans were some of the more powerful clans in the region and were intimately tied to Gönlung. This Likya Sherap Sengé ultimately became one of Dewa Chöjé's chief disciples.⁴⁸⁶

In 1632, Dewa Chöjé was visited by several great practitioners of meditation coming from Gönlung's nearby hermitage⁴⁸⁷ as well as great philosophers from Gönlung's

rgyal rab brtan), was very close to the descendant of Güüshi Khan, Tendzin Qinwang (mtsho sngon bstan 'dzin ching wang). He surmises that one of the main reasons for the 1723 uprising that Tendzin Qinwang helped lead was the Manchu killing of Depa Taktsé in 1720. Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 37.

⁴⁸³ See [note above](#).

⁴⁸⁴ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 200.

⁴⁸⁵ T. li kya *slob dpon pa* shes rab seng ge.

⁴⁸⁶ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 249–50. Sherap Sengé's monastery is said to be Chankya Drak (lcang skya brag), which I have been unable to identify. Perhaps it is somehow connected with the monastery known as "chang kya zi dgon gsar thar ba gling?"; See Pu Wencheng 蒲文成, *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan*, 63–4.

⁴⁸⁷ T. Dgon lung gi ri khrod chen mo. This is Byang chub gling (Ch. Tianmen si 天門寺).

Philosophical College.⁴⁸⁸ He gave instructions on meditation to the former and empowerments and transmissions to the latter. In 1634, he was invited by Likya *lopön* to visit the latter's monastery of Changkya Drak.⁴⁸⁹ The following year, Dewa Chöjé's nephew⁴⁹⁰ died of smallpox, and so he made offerings of tea, noodles, and cash to the philosophical colleges of numerous monasteries, including Gönlung, Kumbum, Jakyung, Tangring, and others.⁴⁹¹

Finally, in 1638, the meditators of Gönlung's hermitage, the "Fortress of the White Hidden Land" (i.e. Jangchup Ling),⁴⁹² sent the *kachu* scholar Chözang Trashi⁴⁹³ and others many times to invite Dewa Chöjé. The abbots past and present as well as the lay patrons of Gönlung and Pari all had also extended invitations to him "over ten times," and so he finally acquiesced. He passed by the "Red Cliffs" Monastery,⁴⁹⁴ a subsidiary temple of Gönlung, and arrived at Gönlung itself just in time for the Great Prayer Festival. All the monks of Gönlung and the surrounding area acted as if "the Buddha had come to earth," welcoming him with delight and festivity. He presided over the festival and lectured to the thousands of scholars, practitioners, philosophy students, and other monks present, including the Great Practitioner of Denma, Tsültrim Gyatso, a fellow disciple of the Panchen Lama. He lectured

⁴⁸⁸ That the "great philosophers" are coming from Gönlung's Philosophical College rather than other philosophical colleges in general is implied but not definitively stated. Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 224.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 232. [See note above.](#)

⁴⁹⁰ T. mgon po rab brtan. This is the son of the Kyishö Governor Sönam Namgyel and is not to be confused with Sönam Namgyel's brother of the same name. Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 245n699.

⁴⁹¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 239.

⁴⁹² T. byang chub gling.

⁴⁹³ T. dka' bcu chos bzang bkra shis.

⁴⁹⁴ T. brag dmar. Elsewhere the monastery is called "The Red Cliff Cave of the Garuda Where the Great Lama [Gongpo Rapsel] Resided" (bla chen po'i bzhugs gnas brag dmar khyub tshangs), which indicates that this is Martsang Drak Monastery (dmar gtsang brag; Ch. Baima si 白馬寺). Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 248.

on a treatise on Vinaya composed by the First Dalai Lama,⁴⁹⁵ urging all to cherish the vows they had taken.⁴⁹⁶

Following the Great Prayer festivities, Dewa Chöjé told the story to the assembled crowd of the origins of the seven generations of the Karma incarnation lineage. He explained that in some miraculous cases of rebirths, the child does not have to be in the mother's womb for a full term.⁴⁹⁷ This suggests that the phenomenon of recognizing the rebirths of lamas was still rather unfamiliar in Amdo at this time. Interestingly, the first rebirth of Changkya Drakpa Öser—the illustrious Changkya II Ngawang Chöden, about whom we shall read in the following chapter—was recognized only a few years later by none other than the Great Adept of Denma.⁴⁹⁸ Changkya II's recognition helped spur a spate of such recognitions at Gönlung and elsewhere in Amdo.

Dewa Chöjé himself was considered a rebirth of Gomdé Namkha Gyeltsen. The son of the Khalkha Tsogtu Khan, Arslang, once asked a number of lamas known for their supernormal powers whose rebirth Dewa Chöjé was and whether Dewa Chöjé was a suitable lama to follow. To the latter question, their answer was an enthusiastic “yes.” To the former, they explained that Dewa Chöjé was an emanation of the Shambhala King Rikden Pema Karpo,⁴⁹⁹ who himself was an emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. After Rikden Pema Karpo, he emanated as Tsongkhapa's disciple Gyeltsap (1364-1432),⁵⁰⁰ after which he emanated as Namkha Gyeltsen. In case there was any doubt concerning his lineage, Dewa

⁴⁹⁵ The *'Dul ba'i gleng 'bum chen mo*.

⁴⁹⁶ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 247–9.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴⁹⁸ This happened before 1646. See the following chapter for more details.

⁴⁹⁹ T. rigs ldan pad+ma dkar bo.

⁵⁰⁰ T. rgyal tshab.

Chöjé’s biographer informs the reader that Dewa Chöjé himself claimed to be an emanation of Rikden Pema Karpo: “What testimony more pure and wondrous is there than this?”⁵⁰¹

Dewa Chöjé passed away the next month after arriving at Gönlung. Not long thereafter, his brother, the erstwhile Kyishö Governor Yizhin Norbu himself, came from Central Tibet to Gönlung.⁵⁰² He gave immense offerings to the philosopher and practitioner contingents of Gönlung,⁵⁰³ Kumbum, Tangring, Jakyung, and countless other monasteries. In particular, he venerated Gönlung’s congregation of monks by more fully financing the funeral, donating tea and food day after day, night after night. Offerings from elsewhere are also said to have poured in.⁵⁰⁴ Later, Dewa Chöjé’s nephew (*sku'i dbon po*)—Lozang Tenkyong Gyatso⁵⁰⁵—was invited to Gönlung, whereupon he built a shrine hall and a reliquary for Dewa Chöjé’s “precious remains.” He established a fund for making continual offerings to Dewa Chöjé⁵⁰⁶ and gave other precious objects to the monastery.

At Dewa Chöjé’s earlier request, Chuzang had come from Kumbum Monastery to officiate at the funeral. Dewa Chöjé had referred to Chuzang along with Likya *lopön* and Rongwö Lama Chöpa⁵⁰⁷ as his “disciples of pure spiritual commitments, who have definitive knowledge of the essence of the dharma.”⁵⁰⁸ Chuzang must have received an invitation to

⁵⁰¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 253–4.

⁵⁰² That Yizhin Norbu came specifically to Gönlung and not Amdo more generally is implied by the context, although it is not definitively stated. *Ibid.*, 250.

⁵⁰³ T. *dgon lung bshad sgrub kyi sde gnyis ka*.

⁵⁰⁴ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 250.

⁵⁰⁵ T. blo bzang bstan skyong rgya mtsho ba. Sørensen appears to misread this name for Lozang Tendzin Gyatso, the son of the Tümed ruler Kholoche. He thereby concludes that the Kyishö royal family and the Tümed royal family were somehow related. “Restless Relic,” 870–1n25. Then, in the very next paragraph, he discusses a Skyid shod *chos rje* Blo bzang bstan skyong rgya mtsho, who I would think is a much more likely candidate for a family relation of Dewa Chöjé.

⁵⁰⁶ T. *mchod pa'i rgyun btsugs*.

⁵⁰⁷ This is likely Rongpo Chöpa Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (rong po chos pa blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1581-1659).

⁵⁰⁸ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 250.

serve as Gönlung's abbot shortly after the cremation, for we know he served in this position for a decade, from 1639 to 1648.⁵⁰⁹ Significantly, we read in the eighteenth-century chronicle of Gönlung that

Previously, when he received the invitation to assume the throne of Gönlung, Güüshi Khan said to him, "after you go to serve as abbot, do great acts of the dharma. I too will try my best to help." Accordingly, he gave all of Pari as an estate for Gönlung.⁵¹⁰

The chronicle continues, detailing the immense amount of spiritual and material wealth Chuzang brought to the monastery. The land that Güüshi Khan thus granted to Gönlung *because* of Chuzang as well as Dewa Chöjé and their connections with the monastery no doubt helped to solidify Gönlung's place as one of the preeminent Geluk institutions of the seventeenth century.

Conclusion

From a traditional or an "insider's" perspective, Gönlung was fated to become a successful mega monastery. The Third Dalai Lama's prophecy at the future site of Gönlung and the Fourth Dalai Lama's instructions to found the monastery placed it within an elite group of other monasteries affiliated with the Dalai Lamas. From an historical perspective, however, we know that the Dalai Lama's preeminence in Tibet was not guaranteed. It took persistent effort and skillful diplomacy over several decades before the Gelukpa secured the backing of a force powerful enough to wipe out their enemies. Chief among those who advocated for the Geluk control of the Lhasa Valley and of Tibet were the rulers of Kyishö. The Kyishöpa made continual missions to Kökenuur during the first half of the seventeenth

⁵⁰⁹ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 162.

⁵¹⁰ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 687/28a.3–4.

century, and one scion of this family in particular, Dewa Chöjé, played an instrumental role in directing the political and martial ambitions of the succession of Mongols who occupied Kökenuur.

When Dewa Chöjé associated himself with Gönlung—particularly, when he passed away there—Gönlung found itself on the receiving end of the Khoshuud Mongols’ patronage. In addition, monks and local rulers in Pari exerted themselves to become allies with Tibet and Kökenuur’s formidable powers. Gönlung’s founding can be attributed to the local rulers who made their way to the villa of the Fourth Dalai Lama in Lhasa; later, monks from Gönlung and Pari played instrumental roles in bringing Güüshi Khan to Tibet; and, finally, rulers from Pari contributed troops to Güüshi Khan’s military campaigns. Such a concerted effort helped propel the Dalai Lama into power in the seventeenth century, and it ensured substantial financial support for Amdo’s foremost mega monastery. The institutional stability that Gönlung now enjoyed coincided with the rise of a new power in the the East—the Manchu Qing Empire—and it is no coincidence that Gönlung’s first and most powerful incarnate lama found his way to the inner recesses of the Qing Court.

Chapter 3: The Connections of the Monastery, Part II: Eastbound

"Compared with all the sorts [of delicacies found] at a banquet, your milk cream is the best!" So said the Manchu Kangxi Emperor to his companion and lama, Changkya II Ngakwang Lozang Chöden (1642-1714).⁵¹¹ The emperor had come to Dolonnuur in 1713 to inspect the "Great Temple" there,⁵¹² and he left extremely pleased. Not only did he drink the best cream for the four days he visited with Changkya, he also sat through a monastic assembly and was impressed by the quality of the service.⁵¹³

On the day the emperor left Dolonnuur, he asked to see Changkya's personal quarters. There, "the emperor permitted this lord [i.e. Changkya] to sit on the same dais [*bzhugs khri*] with him." They enjoyed tea together while watching Changkya's disciples debate with monks who had arrived in the entourage of the emperor.⁵¹⁴ The emperor was truly delighted, and he spoke with Changkya about all manner of things.

One might wonder if Kangxi was simply being polite in praising the cream. After all, the emperor could no doubt insist upon the most extraordinary culinary delights. Regardless, the more important observation to be made is the candor and intimacy with which the emperor and Changkya interacted. How is it that the emperor would deign even to flatter a lama such as Changkya? Part of the answer is found in Kangxi's farewell address from this occasion:

This temple was built for the sake of all the Mongols. The monks have congregated from all the [Mongol] *zasag* [i.e. rulers], and you have been appointed as its abbot

⁵¹¹ T. *lcang skya ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*.

⁵¹² T. *mtsho bdun gyi lha khang chen mo*.

⁵¹³ *lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 35a.5–35b.2.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33b.3–5; see also *Shes rab dar rgyas, Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 84b.3–85a.1.

[*bla ma*]. Because you have well put in place the *kurim*⁵¹⁵ [protective] rituals here, all the Mongols are happy and prosperous. So that auspicious connections may [be established] so that you might continue to live long here as you have previously, I give you this offering scarf.⁵¹⁶

This particular monastery, known as "The Great Temple of Dolonnuur" and as "The New Monastery of Dolonnuur",⁵¹⁷ was formally consecrated in 1701 to commemorate the submission of the various Mongol groups to the Qing and to establish an imperial center for their religious faith:⁵¹⁸

Previously the emperor had ordered the Pure, Venerable Master [i.e. Changkya] to lead an effort to place the two leaders of the seven Khalkha tribes⁵¹⁹ and the various leaders, great and small, under his [*nyid*; i.e. the emperor's] control. The emperor himself, [therefore, in 1701] came to have audience [with Changkya]. In the place renowned as Dolonnuur was held an assembly where was bestowed a great, unrivalled ocean of rewards, such as titles—Prince,⁵²⁰ Beile,⁵²¹ Beizi,⁵²² Duke,⁵²³ *zasag*,⁵²⁴ etc. appropriate to each set of circumstances--money, silk, and offering scarves. At this assembly, for the sake of the Teachings and wandering beings, a new temple was established.⁵²⁵

This passage, then, refers to Changkya's efforts to compel the martial Mongols to submit to the Qing and to the Dolonnuur monastery, which was consecrated to commemorate

⁵¹⁵ T. *sku rim*.

⁵¹⁶ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 35b.5–36a.2.

⁵¹⁷ T. *mtsho bdun dgon gsar*.

⁵¹⁸ *Subud erike*. "Ein Rosenkranz aus Perlen." *Die Biographie des 1. Pekinger lČaṅ skya Khutukhtu Ṅag dbaṅ blo bzaṅ č'os ldan, verfasst von Ṅag dbaṅ č'os ldan alias Šes rab dar rgyas*. (Subud erike: "A Rosary of Pearls," [Being] the Biography of the First Beijinger Lcang skya Khutukhtu Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, written by Ngag dbang chos ldan, alias Shes rab dar rgyas) (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), 122–4.

⁵¹⁹ T. *tsho ba*.

⁵²⁰ T. *dbang*.

⁵²¹ "Beile" 貝勒 is the Chinese rendering of the Manchu title for a prince of the third rank. > T. *pe'i le*. For more on these titles see Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla [dam chos rgya mtsho dharma tA la], *Rosary of White Lotus: Being the Clear Account of How the Precious Teaching of Buddha Appeared and Spread in the Great Hor Country*, trans. Piotr Klafkowski, Asiatische Forschungen Bd. 95 (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1987), 140–1; See also Owen Lattimore and Fujiko Isono, *The Diluv Khutagt: Memoirs and Autobiography of a Mongol Buddhist: Reincarnation in Religion and Revolution* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), 217–236.

⁵²² T. *pe'i se*.

⁵²³ T. *gung*.

⁵²⁴ T. *ja sag*.

⁵²⁵ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 62a.2–4.

Changkya's achievements. Emperor Kangxi was obviously quite pleased with Changkya's efforts, and the long period of time Changkya spent living in Beijing or nearby Dolonuur—nearly twenty years—gave the two ample time to cultivate a relationship. Not only did they exemplify the "priest-patron" (*mchod yon*) relationship, but they ultimately established "a steadfast friendship of unbreakable mutual confidence."⁵²⁶

The prestige and relations Changkya cultivated at the Qing court were two of the more important factors that contributed to the continuing strength of Gönlung Monastery. Gönlung, after all, was Changkya's unqualified "base" (*gzhi ma*), even though he had residences and estates in numerous other places, too, such as Dolonuur's Great Temple and Beijing's Songzhu Monastery.⁵²⁷ The influence Changkya wielded at court translated into wealth and connections for Gönlung and for the network of monasteries affiliated with Gönlung. Changkya also contributed directly to Gönlung's strength by sharing his intellectual and literary acumen with Gönlung: in the first half of his life, he had spent over twenty years studying in Tibet and there attained the highest degree of scholastic achievement. Finally, Changkya was an able administrator, serving as abbot of Gönlung for two years. In addition to implementing an important reform of the monastery's financial structure, he also exemplified the process of establishing and maintaining relationships with partner and subsidiary monasteries in the locale and surrounding regions.

I will begin with the relationships Changkya formed in Tibet and discuss how these were brought back to and directly benefitted Gönlung. Then, since the success of Changkya and the Qing Empire both depended a great deal upon their connections with Mongols, I shall

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 59a.1–2.

⁵²⁷ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 29b.1, 34a.6–34b.1; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 82a.1–2.

turn to his significant interactions with the Mongols. The imperial honors bestowed upon Changkya increased as he demonstrated his consistent and capable relations with the Mongols. Finally, I will look at Changkya's presence at Gönlung itself. This includes his tenure as abbot but also his ability to build on and reinforce the network of Gönlung's affiliated monasteries and temples.⁵²⁸

Changkya's Intellectual Pedigree and Connections with Central Tibet

Unlike Changkya's illustrious successor, Rolpé Dorjé, who never spent any significant length of time in Tibet, Changkya II Ngawang Lozang Chöden had extensive ties in Tibet. In fact, his career portends Gönlung's gradual shift in orientation away from Lhasa and Güüshi Khan to the Qing emperor in Beijing. Long before Changkya ever traveled through Inner Mongolia and reached the inner recesses of the Qing imperial court, he spent twenty-one years (1662-1683) studying intensely with myriad teachers in Central Tibet.⁵²⁹ The modern scholar-lama Nyima Dzin writes that Changkya II is one of five individuals from Gönlung who attained the rank of *lharampa geshé*.⁵³⁰ "*Lharampa geshé*" refers to the highest scholastic title awarded to a monk in the Geluk tradition. To be precise, Changkya was awarded the title *rapjampa* (*rab 'byams pa*), the highest title then available. As Georges Dreyfus writes

⁵²⁸ I have appended to this chapter two appendices: the first is a timeline of Changkya's life that provides a concise overview of his travels and the major events in his life. The second is a summary of the primary sources consulted for this chapter.

⁵²⁹ See particularly Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 10a.6–11a.3; see also the corresponding pages in Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 24b.2ff.

⁵³⁰ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 137–9.

This looseness [in the granting and use of monastic degrees] started to yield to greater organization during the seventeenth century when the custom of examining scholars during the Great Prayer festival was established. In 1625, the title of Rab-jam-pa [*rab 'byams pa*] was first granted during this festival. This institution was further strengthened in 1648 by the Fifth Dalai Lama, who ordered such an examination to be held yearly. The system of examinations was further codified by the Seventh Dalai Lama ... who allowed the monks from Ga-den (dga' ldan) to join the Great Prayer and established a strict hierarchy of titles. The highest title became Geshe Lha-ram-pa (*dge bshes lha rams pa*) ... while the lower titles such as Tsok-ram-pa (*tshogs rams pa*), Ling-se [*gling bsre*], and Do-ram-pa (*rdo rams pa*) were created, thereby making possible the absorption of older titles such as Rab-jam-pa. ...⁵³¹

In 1670, Changkya took part and excelled in the 'academic circuit'⁵³² during the Great Prayer Festival, thereby earning the title of *rapjampa*.⁵³³ The only other Gönlung figure from the seventeenth century to have accomplished this appears to be Changkya's tonsure master, the Great Adept of Denma.⁵³⁴

Besides earning this reputation as an eminent scholar while in Tibet, Changkya also formed important relationships that served him both in his capacity as an imperial diplomat and in his capacity as administrator and religious teacher back at Gönlung. Shortly after arriving in Lhasa, Changkya received from the Fifth Dalai Lama his novice vows and the name Lozang Chöden. After this initial visit with the Dalai Lama, he went to Ön Ngari College⁵³⁵ to see Gyelsé Lozang Tendzin Gyatso, the incarnation and successor to Gönlung's founder. In 1664 he again visited the Dalai Lama and received from him his full monastic vows.⁵³⁶

⁵³¹ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 144–5.

⁵³² T. *grwa skor*.

⁵³³ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 7b.1; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 20a.5–20b.1.

⁵³⁴ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 137–9.

⁵³⁵ T. 'on mnga' ris grwa tshang.

⁵³⁶ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 6a.2–7a.6.

Early on, he spent three years studying with the first Mindröl *nomuqan* Ngawang Trinlé Lhündrup (1622-1699),⁵³⁷ who was still the abbot of Drepung Monastery's Gomang College. Mindröl *nomuqan* was also the proprietor of Serkhok Monastery,⁵³⁸ a powerful and immediate neighbor of Gönlung. Mindröl would eventually return to Serkhok, where Changkya would seek him out and again receive teachings from him. Despite the bad blood that existed between Gönlung and Serkhok, Changkya referred to his relationship with Mindröl as "a master and disciple that cannot bear to be parted."⁵³⁹ He also received teachings from the Pañchen Lama Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1567-1662)⁵⁴⁰ and especially the latter's "heart-son," Könchok Gyelsten (1612-1687),⁵⁴¹ whom Changkya even refers to as his own "root lama."⁵⁴²

By 1665, however, Trichen Jamgön, had been appointed as the new abbot of Gomang, whereupon Changkya began studying principally under him.⁵⁴³ "Trichen Jamgön,"⁵⁴⁴ literally "the Great Throne-Holder Mañjuśrī Protector," is the title Changkya used to refer to Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso (1635-1688),⁵⁴⁵ better known as the "Ganden

⁵³⁷ T. *smin grol no min han ngag dbang 'phrin las lhun grub*.

⁵³⁸ T. *gser khog*.

⁵³⁹ *Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 21a.4–5.

⁵⁴⁰ T. *blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan*.

⁵⁴¹ T. *dkon mchog rgyal mtshan*.

⁵⁴² I shall return to this relationship in chapter five. Reference to receiving teachings from the Pañchen Lama is found in a colophon of a text in vol. 1 (*ka*) of *Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*, *Gsung 'bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*; This reference to Könchok Gyeltsen is found in the colophon of "dril bu zhabs lugs kyi bcom ldan 'das 'khor lo sdom pa'i lus dkyil gyi mngon par rtogs pa bde chen rab 'phel" in vol. 4 (*nga*) of *ibid.*; For an overview of some of Changkya's principal teachers and teachings, see *Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 10a.6–11.3; see also *Shes rab dar rgyas*, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 24b.2ff.

⁵⁴³ *Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho*, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 357/15b.1–2; *Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan*, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 7a.2–7a.6; Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," 197.

⁵⁴⁴ T. *khri chen 'jam mgon*.

⁵⁴⁵ T. *ngag dbang blo gros rgya mtsho*.

Shiretu.”⁵⁴⁶ His titles reflect his ascent of the throne of Ganden Monastery in 1682, thereby becoming the head of the Geluk sect. When, in 1683, Changkya was compelled to return to Amdo, Trichen Jamgön provided all the supplies needed for Changkya's trip from his own personal estate. Trichen Jamgön even escorted him a short distance of the way.⁵⁴⁷ Sumpa II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen—who later follows Changkya to Beijing—and other monks from Gönlung and Tangring Monasteries were also there to see him off.⁵⁴⁸

Changkya returned to Tibet again in 1697 to deliver the emperor's edict⁵⁴⁹ to the new Dalai Lama. He was thus present for the Sixth Dalai Lama's installment in the Potala Palace, and he conveyed to the Dalai Lama the emperor's edict and numerous other offerings. He saw the Dalai Lama on nearly two dozen occasions, serving the Dalai Lama when the latter toured Lhasa's sacred sites and objects, and he took part in the numerous long-life ceremonies performed on the Dalai Lama's behalf.⁵⁵⁰ He also met several times with the Panchen Lama, made numerous offerings to the major monasteries in Lhasa and Tsang, and paid homage to the remains of Gyelsé, establishing an endowment for 'regular tea'⁵⁵¹ to be provided to the congregation of Gyelsé's monastery.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁶ T. dga' ldan shri re thu; Ch. Gaerdan Xiletu 噶爾丹西勒圖. See Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, 265-68. He is also known as the Khri chen rgya nag pa, “the Great Throne-holder Revered Chinese.” “Shiretu” is most likely a Mongolian transliteration of the Tibetan term “gser khri,” “Golden Throne-holder.” See Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, 56, 58, and 70. Trichen Jamgön's rebirth is the renowned Sertri Lozang Tenpé Nyima (blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1689-1762). For more on Sertri Lozang Tenpé Nyima see Nietupski, “The ‘Reverend Chinese’ (Gyanakapa Tsang),” 197–99.

⁵⁴⁷ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking),” 11b.3–5.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10a.4–5.

⁵⁴⁹ T. *gser yig*.

⁵⁵⁰ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking),” 19b.3–4 and 20b.2–3.

⁵⁵¹ T. *rgyun ja*.

⁵⁵² Gyelsé's monastery, in this case, is probably Ngari Seminary (mnga' ris grwa tshang). Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking),” 19b.4–20b.1.

In 1709, Kangxi organized another delegation to travel to Tibet for the sake of "Tibet's political and religious loyalty."⁵⁵³ At that time the emperor told Changkya and the Jibdzundamba to each send someone in their stead. Changkya thus chose from among his monks Demchi Jinpa Gyatso⁵⁵⁴ and sent 'community tea' and cash offerings to the major Geluk monasteries as well as materials for printing whatever books were available at the Potala and at Drepung Monastery.⁵⁵⁵ Such connections continued even after Changkya's death in 1714. A courier was dispatched carrying offerings for the Three Seats, Trashi Lhünpo,⁵⁵⁶ Gyelsé's monastery of Öñ Chöding,⁵⁵⁷ and other major monasteries so that funerary rites might be performed and so that endowments could be founded for the continual worship of Lhasa's *sacra*.⁵⁵⁸ The authorities in Central Tibet were also consulted in the process of searching for and identifying Changkya II's successor.⁵⁵⁹

All of this time spent in Central Tibet translated into an intellectual and spiritual heritage that Changkya could connect to Gönlung and the other places he resided. For instance, in 1688, when Trichen Jamgön passed away, Changkya attended to his remains and escorted them back to Gönlung Monastery. Changkya thereupon became the abbot of Gönlung. He donated all the horses that he received when he was enthroned to help carry the

⁵⁵³ T. *bod kyi gzhung bstan lar rgya*, < *bod kyi gzhung bstan la rgya*. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 31a.6–31b.3; for another use of this phrase see Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 35b.2; for a discussion of the concept of *gzhung bstan* in seventeenth-century Tibetan though see Yumiko, "Conceptual Framework of the dGa'-ldan's War," 159.

⁵⁵⁴ T. *dem chi sbyin pa rgya mtsho*.

⁵⁵⁵ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 31a.6–31b.3.

⁵⁵⁶ T. *bkra shis lhun po*.

⁵⁵⁷ T. *'on chos sdings nges gsang dar rgyas gling*.

⁵⁵⁸ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 97a.2–4.

⁵⁵⁹ Marina Illich, "Selections from the Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Polymath: Chankya Rolpai Dorje (Lcang Skya Rol Pa'i Rdo Rje), 1717--1786" (Columbia University, 2006), 376–7.

encampment of Trichen Jamgön's procession to Tibet.⁵⁶⁰ Then, as abbot, Changkya gave numerous teachings, empowerments, instructions, and so forth. During the winter dharma classes, he oversaw the 'recitation lessons'⁵⁶¹ and busied himself with the Great Prayer Festival. Likewise, during the autumn, spring, and summer dharma classes he gave sermons and oversaw the recitation lessons.⁵⁶² In 1698, when he returned to Gönlung from his trip to Central Tibet, he gave teachings to the monastery's congregation, including the former abbot⁵⁶³ and the reigning abbot.⁵⁶⁴ During this visit he performed ordinations, and on three occasions he oversaw the debate practice⁵⁶⁵ of the dharma classes.⁵⁶⁶

One of the more important contributions Changkya made to Gönlung was to facilitate the establishment of a tantric college and to introduce various practices at the college (see chapter five for more details). This coincided with Changkya's final visit to the monastery in 1710. Jamyang Zhepa Ngawang Tsöndrü (1648-1721)⁵⁶⁷ had previously told Changkya that "at Gönlung there is [already] a source for the development of the teaching of sutra. You should establish one for the teaching of mantra." Changkya then sent Jamyang Zhepa a letter explaining that he wished to do just that. Changkya, however, was unable to do it himself due to other commitments, so he sent a messenger to invited Jamyang Zhepa to Gönlung to build the tantric college.

⁵⁶⁰ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 12b.6–13a.3.

⁵⁶¹ T. *rtsis bzhag*. See chapter six for more on recitation lessons.

⁵⁶² Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 37b.4–5.

⁵⁶³ I.e. rdo ba dpal ldan rgya mtsho (r. 1690-1693).

⁵⁶⁴ I.e. bde rgu bla ma kun dga' rgya mtsho (r. 1693-1701).

⁵⁶⁵ T. *rigs lung*.

⁵⁶⁶ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 21b.1–3; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 54b.5–55a.2.

⁵⁶⁷ T. 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson 'grus.

Jamyang Zhepa apparently reserved doubts concerning the seriousness of the plan, since he said to the messenger, "if you all can build the tantric college, then I will go. If you [cannot] build it, then I do not have time." Jamyang Zhepa was in fact busy with the construction of his own, new monastery—Labrang, or Ladrang Trashī Khyil. The messenger, thinking of the uniqueness of the connection and the serendipity of the moment, replied "if your lordship were to go, then the tantric college will be built." Jamyang Zhepa was pleased and acquiesced. They met up at Gönlung, where Changkya ordered him to build the college, which he accepted.⁵⁶⁸

Changkya and others at Gönlung requested Jamyang Zhepa to give the scriptural transmission and exegesis of Tsongkhapa's *Four-Part Commentary on Guhyasamāja*⁵⁶⁹ to the abbot (i.e. Tuken III), the former abbot (i.e. Denma II Ngawang Tendzin Trinlé, 1666-1723),⁵⁷⁰ and other elders at the monastery. Denma was appointed as the head of the tantric college, and the *kachen* scholar Lodrö Gyatso⁵⁷¹ was made its cantor.⁵⁷²

The tantric traditions and *cham* ritual dancing that Changkya and Jamyang Zhepa introduced at Gönlung have a long history of captivating local attention in Pari. For instance, we read of a villager traveling to Central Tibet to ask the First Panchen Lama for these same

⁵⁶⁸ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 76b.5–77b.3; Schram suggests that Emperor Kangxi financed the construction. I have not yet been able to corroborate this. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 326–7n299; Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag dpyod ldan yid dbang 'gugs pa'i pho nya* (The Monastic Chronicle of Gönlung Monastery) (Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988), 728/43b.5–6.

⁵⁶⁹ T. 'grel ba bzhi sbrags kyi lung dang zab bshad.

⁵⁷⁰ T. 'dan ma ngag dbang bstan 'dzin phrin las.

⁵⁷¹ T. ka chen blo rgyam bla ma ("ka chen" should be "dka' chen"). Also known as Slob dpon rin po che ka chen blo gros rgya mtsho bla ma. See Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 77b.4.

⁵⁷² Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 31a.6–31b.1.

tantric teachings to introduce at Drugu Monastery,⁵⁷³ Gönlung's neighbor to the north in present-day Menyuan County.⁵⁷⁴ More importantly, the establishment of these traditions at a major center such as Gönlung may have further spurred other institutions in the area to do the same. For instance, twelve years after Gönlung's tantric college was founded, we find the Wensa tradition of the "sixteen-cornered Iron Fortress" ritual and *cham*⁵⁷⁵ being established at Gönlung's important neighbor to the east, Chöten Tang,⁵⁷⁶ by Tongkhor Sönam Gyatso (1684-1752).⁵⁷⁷

Changkya and the Mongols

Changkya II was a "Domépa"—someone from Domé⁵⁷⁸ or "Lower Do," the northeastern region of the Tibetan Plateau—and even referred to himself as such.⁵⁷⁹ When he returned home at the age of sixty-eight after having spent many years away, he visited his hometown and visited with people "like him" (*rigs mthun*), whereupon "I spoke my 'father-tongue' and enjoyed by 'father-cuisine' and so thought, 'have I attained the happiness of the first [meditative] *dhyana*?'"⁵⁸⁰ His hometown was a village by the name of Tachük (rta

⁵⁷³ T. 'bru gu dgon.

⁵⁷⁴ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 121.15.

⁵⁷⁵ T. *dben sa lugs kyi lcags mkhar zur bcu drug pa 'cham bcas*.

⁵⁷⁶ T. mchod rten thang.

⁵⁷⁷ T. stong 'khor bsod nams rgya mtsho. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 124.5 and 71.8–9.

⁵⁷⁸ T. *mdo smad*.

⁵⁷⁹ See the colophon of "Bde mchog dril bu lus dkyil gyi dbang bshad," appearing in volume 4 (nga) of Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya 02, *Gsung 'bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*.

⁵⁸⁰ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 29a.4; One source locates this valley on the north (*srib*) side of the Tsong River (Ch. Huang shui). Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 58.24; note, however, that the modern Chinese translation translates this as the "south" side Zhiguanba•Gongquehudanbaraoji 智观巴•贡却乎丹巴绕吉 [Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas], *Anduo zhengjiao shi* 安多政教史 [mdo smad chos 'byung / deb ther rgya mtsho = Ocean Annals] (Political and Religious History of Amdo), 63–4. For

phyug), located in the Yigé Valley (g.yi dge lung pa) near the Tsongkha Mountains (tsong kha la rgyud).⁵⁸¹

Just what Changkya's "father-tongue" was is unclear. His father was "Merchant Changyehar",⁵⁸² who came from Chang'an to do business.⁵⁸³ He settled down in Tachük and married, his second wife being a certain Tharmotso,⁵⁸⁴ Changkya's mother. Changkya's father, then, appears to have been Chinese,⁵⁸⁵ while his mother was probably a local Monguor, Tibetan, or Mongol. Whatever his *father's* tongue might have been, Changkya ended up spending most of his childhood around Monguor monks, first at Tangring Monastery⁵⁸⁶ and then at Gönlung.⁵⁸⁷

Given Changkya's status as Gönlung's first incarnate lama and one of the earliest incarnate lama from Amdo, it may be worth recounting the story of his recognition. The

a discussion of the ambiguity of the Tibetan geographical terms "nyin" ("sunny side") and "srib" ("shady side") see Anne Chayet, "A propos l'usage des termes 'nyin' et 'srib' dans le *Mdo smad chos 'byung*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* no. 14 (2008): 71–80.

⁵⁸¹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 3b.1–2.

⁵⁸² T. khe ba chang ye har < Ch. Zhang Yeha?

⁵⁸³ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i rol mtsho (Autobiography of the Glorious Ngakwang Lozang Chöden, Zhol Edition)," vol. 5 (ca), 1713, 4b.1; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 8b.5–9a.1.

⁵⁸⁴ T. thar mo mtsho.

⁵⁸⁵ Lobsang Yongdan first brought this fact to my attention. One also wonders if this is the basis for the legend Schram reports of a Changkya incarnation being born in "Shan-hsi" and found in a Chinese inn. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 381.

⁵⁸⁶ T. thang ring dgon.

⁵⁸⁷ It is for this reason as well as the location of Changkya's birth and upbringing that leads me to question the application of the ethnonym "Han" to him. Gray Tuttle, "An Unknown Tradition of Chinese Conversion to Tibetan Buddhism: Chinese Incarnate Lamas and Parishioners of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Amdo," working paper, 19n32; citing Nian Zhihai 年治海 and Bai Gengdeng 白更登, *Qinghai Zangchuan fojiao siyuan mingjian* 青海藏传佛教寺院明鉴 (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1993), 124. Gray Tuttle's paper is scheduled to be published in *Zangxue xuekan* 藏学学刊 (Journal of Tibetology) in June 2013. Many thanks to Gray for sharing this earlier draft (and many other working papers) with me.

young Changkya spoke "nonsense," talking about monks and Buddhist *sacra* and saying such things as "I am a lama." His parents, of course, thought he was possessed by a demon, and thus tried to shut him up. Little Changkya gradually forgot how to talk altogether and went by the name "Dumb." His parents were not satisfied with this state of affairs, however, and so they called in various ritual specialists: diviners,⁵⁸⁸ astrologists,⁵⁸⁹ and mediums.⁵⁹⁰ They prescribed him a dose of rituals, offerings, lay Buddhist vows, and a life of pure behavior. Thus, an old, local Tibetan monk was sought out who performed the necessary restoration rites⁵⁹¹ and so forth, ultimately bestowing on the boy the 'apparel-changing name'⁵⁹² of Gendün Kyap⁵⁹³ ('One Who Takes Refuge in the Sangha). Gradually he began speaking again.⁵⁹⁴

His senseless talk reached as far as Gönlung, whereupon he was called by the eminent Denma Drupchen (the "Great Practitioner of Denma") Tsültrim Gyatso to Tangring Monastery, where Denma Drupchen was serving as abbot. The formal rigmarole whereby the young boy was recognized as the incarnation and successor of Changkya I Drakpa Özer⁵⁹⁵ involved petitioning the Dalai and Pañchen Lamas in Lhasa and the protector deities there, not to mention the steward of the former Changkya. Curiously, when the Pañchen Lama was asked to confirm the recognition of the young boy as the rebirth of Drakpa Özer, the Pañchen replied that he was *not* the rebirth. Nonetheless, he said that the boy had the appearance of

⁵⁸⁸ T. *mo ma*.

⁵⁸⁹ T. *rtsis pa*.

⁵⁹⁰ T. *lha pa*.

⁵⁹¹ T. *bskang gso*.

⁵⁹² T. *lus bsgyur ming*.

⁵⁹³ T. *dge 'dun skyabs*.

⁵⁹⁴ Leang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 3b.5–4a.4.

⁵⁹⁵ T. *grags pa 'od zer*.

one who would make a good lama⁵⁹⁶ and that identifying him as the rebirth of Drakpa Özer would bring great benefit.⁵⁹⁷

Afterwards, the young Changkya was tonsured and his studies commenced.⁵⁹⁸ Then, in 1650, he was brought to "Gaden Jampa Ling, the Origin of Monasteries that Excellently Propagate the Philosophical Teachings in Domé, renowned as Gönlung." He was welcomed by the current abbot Tsenpo "the Stern"⁵⁹⁹ and Gönlung's very first abbot, "the Pure Lord, His Grace, the Preceptor Sumpa Damchö Gyatso, Who Has Accomplished the Excellent Stewardship of the Two Systems of Both the Hermitage of Changchup Ling and of Gönlung."⁶⁰⁰

At Gönlung, Changkya refined his studies and delved into Buddhist philosophy. After eleven years there, in 1661 he departed for Central Tibet, and it was there that he met his principal teacher, Trichen Jamgön.⁶⁰¹ Trichen Jamgön himself was born in a place called Rading⁶⁰² in "the land of Minyak"⁶⁰³ near the place renowned as Tsongkha."⁶⁰⁴ It is not clear

⁵⁹⁶ T. *bla tshug(s) 'dzin pa zhig*.

⁵⁹⁷ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 4b.1–2; Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 5b.1–2; Changkya II's disciple and biographer, on the other hand, does not mention the Pañchen Lama's negative response. Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*.

⁵⁹⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 4a.4–4b.3; see also Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 10a.4–5ff.

⁵⁹⁹ T. bstan po don grub rgya mtsho (1613-1665).

⁶⁰⁰ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 14a.4–14b.2.

⁶⁰¹ See [note above](#).

⁶⁰² T. ra lding.

⁶⁰³ T. mi nyag.

⁶⁰⁴ T. tsong kha. Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa dpyod ldan yid dbang'gugs pa'i pho nya (The Biography of the Incarnation of the Great [Golden] Throne-holder, the Glorious Lozang Tenpé Nyima: The Sagacious Messenger that Allures the Mind)," in *Gsung 'bum of the Seventh Dalai Lama Skal bzang rgya mtsho: Reproduced from a set of prints from the 1945 'Bras spungs blocks from the library of the Ven. Dhardo Rimpoche by Lama Dodrup Sangye*, vol. 10 (Gangtok: Dodrup Sangye and Deorali Chorten, 1977), 335/4b.6–336/5a.1; Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," 197.

whether Jamgön himself was Mongolian; however, he had regular interactions with Mongols throughout his life.

As a young boy, the Trichen Jamgön-to-be accompanied his uncle to live among the Khalkha Mongols and thence to live at his uncle's home in Höhhot. Also, as a young child, he visited Gönlung whereupon he was inspired to become a monk and a scholar. There,

an exceeding faith for the uniqueness of the place and its people was born [inside him]. In particular, from watching the monks debate (*'gro gleng*), he had a vivid (*lhang ba*) aspiration, thinking 'I, too, must do this!' The pure deeds captivated [his] heart. Thenceforth, he did not wear clothes with sleeves. Unable to withstand the cold winter [in short sleeves], he was unable to prevent an "Achu" from escaping from his mouth. A friend scolded him, saying, 'this is simply because you try to be a monk but cannot be a monk!'"⁶⁰⁵

At the age of seventeen Trichen Jamgön went to Central Tibet to study. During his time at places such as Drepung Monastery's Gomang College in Lhasa he no doubt had regular interactions with Mongols. He was abbot of the college from 1665 to 1673,⁶⁰⁶ and it was also during this period that he met Changkya.⁶⁰⁷ I shall turn to Changkya's time in Central Tibet below. First, however, I wish to present his key interactions with Mongols that solidified his status as a capable lama and diplomat.

Changkya and the Mongols: The Khüren-Belcheer Conference of 1686

Not long after Trichen Jamgön was raised to the throne of Ganden Monastery, the Fifth Dalai Lama received a letter from Emperor Kangxi requesting a lama to teach and spread the dharma in his realm. The Dalai Lama, for his part, was "at the 'secret gate' of

⁶⁰⁵ The Tibetan of the last phrase reads "*mi yong ba'i yong mdog byas nas de las 'os ci yod</i>." Skäl bzang rgya mtsho, Ta la'i bla ma VII, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 340/7a.1–6.*

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 356/15a.3–360/17a.5.

⁶⁰⁷ Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 7a.2–7a.6; Skäl bzang rgya mtsho, Ta la'i bla ma VII, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 359/16b.4–360/17a.1.

fixing his mind on passing into nirvana. “So, he ordered Trichen Jamgön, then the highest-ranking Geluk in Tibet, to go to China and Mongolia.⁶⁰⁸ Trichen Jamgön went

with great happiness, ignoring the difficulties of the long journey and so forth, like the tremendously brave bodhisattvas who think only of helping others and who undertake deeds like entering into the realms of hell like swans entering a lotus pond.⁶⁰⁹

Whether Trichen Jamgön himself thought of his journey to China and Mongolia as a trip to hell is unclear. Unfortunately, the main sources for his life do not tell us what became of him in Mongolia and China.⁶¹⁰ It is clear, though, that Kangxi had great expectations of Trichen Jamgön, hoping that he could assist in resolving conflicts among the Mongols.⁶¹¹

Sherap Dargyé, Changkya's biographer, writes that, in 1685, Trichen Jamgön left Tibet to deal with the question of "the political and religious loyalty of the Khalkha and Oriat."⁶¹² Changkya had left Trichen Jamgön's side to return to Amdo two years earlier. When Trichen Jamgön arrived at Lake Kökenuur, he ordered Changkya to serve as his acolyte.⁶¹³ In August of the following year, a conference was held at Kulen-belciger⁶¹⁴ in order to bring about peace between the Western and Eastern wings of the Khalkha Mongols,

⁶⁰⁸ Skäl bzang rgya mtsho, Ta la'i bla ma VII, “Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography,” 368/21a.2–5.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 368/21a.5–6.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., 369/21b.5–370/22a.1; Yumiko Ishihama directs the reader to work by the Japanese scholar Wakamatsu Hiroshi on Trichen Jamgön, although I have not yet had the opportunity to review it. “Conceptual Framework of the dGa'-ldan's War,” 165n1.

⁶¹¹ Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, 264–68.

⁶¹² T. *hal ha dang o rod kyi gzhung bstan la rgya*. Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 35b.2; see also Skäl bzang rgya mtsho, Ta la'i bla ma VII, “Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography,” 368/21a.6–369/21b.1.

⁶¹³ Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking),” 12a.6–12b.1.

⁶¹⁴ T. khu ring pel chi. Ishihama Yumiko, “Conceptual Framework of the dGa'-ldan's War,” 159; Wang Xiangyun transcribes this as “Bilchir of Küriye (Khuren)” “Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing: The Life and Work of ICang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1786)” (Harvard University, 1995), 21.

who had been engaged in disputes for several years. The conference was led by the Jibzundama Lama,⁶¹⁵ and Trichen Jamgön attended as the representative of the Dalai Lama.

This conflict is usually described as having been between the Western or Zasagtu Khan Shara and the Eastern or Tūshiyetū Khan Chakhundorji.⁶¹⁶ During the conference, the Jibzundama is said to have sat at the same level as Trichen Jamgön while conversing. The Oirat Galdan Boshogtu Khan used this as a pretense for involving himself in the conflict, claiming an insult to the Dalai Lama.⁶¹⁷ The following year,

the Oirat Galdan Boshogtu Khan intervened on the side of the young [western] Zasagtu Khan Shara. The [eastern] Khalkha Tūshiyetū Khan Chakhundorji (r. 1655-99) then killed Shara and Galdan's brother. In reply Galdan invaded Khalkha in spring 1688, driving Tūshiyetū Khan, his brother the great incarnate lama known as the First Jibzundama Khutugtu, and vast numbers of other Khalkha nobles and commoners into flight to the Inner Mongolian border. ...⁶¹⁸

The Khalkha took refuge in the Qing, and thus began Galdan's war with the Khalkha and the Qing, a war that would not end until Galdan's death in 1697.

Changkya attended the Kulen-belciger conference as Trichen Jamgön's acolyte, and Changkya notes in his autobiography that the conference was between "three sides—the Jibzundama, who lead it, the lamas and leaders of Dolonnuur, and the Oirat [i.e. Galdan]—together with the emperor's lamas and diplomats."⁶¹⁹ As for Changkya, he says humbly that his role at the conference was merely to assist Trichen Jamgön in giving teachings to all the

⁶¹⁵ T. rje btsun dam pa.

⁶¹⁶ Wang, "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing," 271; Ishihama Yumiko, "Conceptual Framework of the dGa'-ldan's War," 159; Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 148a.

⁶¹⁷ Ishihama Yumiko, "Conceptual Framework of the dGa'-ldan's War," 160.

⁶¹⁸ Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 148a.

⁶¹⁹ The Tibetan reads "rje btsun dam pas gtsos/ mtsho bdun bla dpon o rod dpon khag gsum" It is also possible that the "three" means "the three Oirat leaders." Sherap Dargyé seems to suggest such a reading, although I am at a loss as who this would signify. Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 12b.1–2; *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 35b.3–4.

lamas and leaders who requested them. Changkya's disciple and biographer, however, is more forthcoming, explaining that Trichen Jamgön was too busy, and thus Changkya himself gave most of the numerous teachings.⁶²⁰

The peace brought about through this conference was not to last. Nonetheless, this was understood by some to be due to the fact that "the fruition of the karma and afflictions of each of the sentient beings involved was something even all the buddhas of the three times could not reverse."⁶²¹ Trichen Jamgön carried on to Beijing, where Kangxi grew to respect and venerate him more and more.

Changkya and the Mongols: Chaghan Tologhai Conference of 1697

Changkya's second major diplomatic success amongst the Mongols came eleven years later, this time in Kökenuur. Trichen Jamgön had passed away by this point, and Changkya himself had become a permanent fixture at the Qing Court. Such was his change in stature that, when he returned to Gönlung, those welcoming him pulled out all the stops. As the imperial messenger, Dorjé Lama,⁶²² remarks,

Previously, when I came here to invite this lord [to come to Beijing,] you all did not make such preparations. Judging by the recent commotion, you, sir [i.e. Changkya], are [recognized as] the one who is immensely compassionate in terms of the two systems [i.e. the spiritual and the temporal].⁶²³

In 1697, the emperor had ordered Changkya to deliver an imperial edict to the newly installed Sixth Dalai Lama. Along the way he passed through Höhhot and Ordos. In

⁶²⁰ "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 12b.1–2; *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 35b.3–5.

⁶²¹ Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 369/21b.2.

⁶²² T. rdo rje bla ma.

⁶²³ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 48b.3–4.

"Yikheulum"⁶²⁴ he met up with Kangxi, who was returning from Ningxia where he had defeated the last of Galdan's troops. Kangxi wished to discuss both the subject of the Dalai Lama and that of the Kökenuur Mongols' submission to the Qing.⁶²⁵ The same topic—that of the Kökenuur Mongols' submission to the Qing—came up again when Changkya arrived in Xining.⁶²⁶ There, he talked at length about this with Dorjé Lama and other imperial representatives.

From Xining Changkya finally set out for Tibet. His group had already arrived at a point "outside the [imperial] walls"⁶²⁷ when, in the middle of the night, a messenger, sent by Dorjé Lama and the other imperial representatives in Xining, caught up to it. He explained that the Kökenuur Mongols had changed their minds about going before the emperor, even though, previously, Baatur Taiji (1632-1714)⁶²⁸ and the other Mongol rulers had told Dorjé Lama and company that they would indeed go. Changkya was asked to go at once to see the Mongols and convince them to follow through on their word.⁶²⁹

Changkya changed course and arrived in Chaghan Tologhai a little after noon.⁶³⁰ He and the imperial *zasag lama* Lozang Namgyel⁶³¹ went to the assembly, where had gathered

⁶²⁴ T. yi khe u lum.

⁶²⁵ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 17b.4–5.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 18a.3.

⁶²⁷ T. *lcags ri'i phyi ru*.

⁶²⁸ This is Dashibaatar, the youngest son of Güüshi Khan, who became the head of the Kökenuur Mongols when Dalaibaatar died.

⁶²⁹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 18b.2ff.

⁶³⁰ Shes dar rab rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 49b.1; T. cha gan tho la ha'i. This was the central meeting place of the Kökenuur Mongols. Uyunbili Borjigidai, "The Hoshuud Polity in Khökhnuur (Kokonor)," *Inner Asia* 4 (2002): 187; Mi Yizhi 牟一之, *Qinghai difang shilüe (zhengqiu yijian gao) 青海地方史略 (征求意见稿) (A Brief History of Qinghai (Review Draft))* ([Xining]: Zhonggong Qinghai shengwei tongzhanbu minzu chu, 1978), 175; Luciano Petech, "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century," *T'oung Pao* 52, no. 4/5 (1966): 268n7.

all the great Kökenuur Mongols, including Baatur Taiji, otherwise known as Dashibaatar, and Lhazang Khan (the future khan of Tibet).⁶³² It is important to note that, over the years, Changkya had cultivated strong relationships with the Kökenuur Mongols. For instance, when Dashibaatar's older brother Dalaibaatar was on his deathbed in 1689, Changkya heard about his illness and went to see him and bestow on him 'permission-blessings':⁶³³ Dalaibaatar had received from Central Tibet a divination indicating the need for certain rituals to be performed; however, he had not yet found a suitable lama. When Changkya appeared on the scene, the Mongol ruler's dreams indicated that he was indeed the needed lama.⁶³⁴ For a week, Changkya and the Chaghan Nomuqan—Ngawang Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (1660-1728)⁶³⁵—had chanted and performed rituals together in the personal quarters of Dalaibaatar.

Changkya was thus the suitable lama for breaking the stalemate among the Kökenuur Mongols. This was no easy task. Lhazang Khan, who had come to Kökenuur "to build a Dalai-Lama Temple," brought a heightened tension to the summit.⁶³⁶ As Luciano Petech explains,

⁶³¹ T. blo bzang rnam rgyal.

⁶³² Others in attendance include the abbot of Gönlung or possibly Kumbum (i.e. byams pa gling mkhan po), a certain Solpön Ngakrampa (gsol dpon sngags ram pa), and a Mongol leader by the name of Erdeni Baatur (unidentified). Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 18b–5–6; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 49b.1–3.

⁶³³ T. *rjes gnang*. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 13b.2–3.

⁶³⁴ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 34a.4–38b.2.

⁶³⁵ T. ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan.

⁶³⁶ Petech, "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century," 268–9.

The Köke-nör princes had gathered a Ca□an Tolo□ai on 29/1 (20th February), and there the foremost churchman of the territory, the Ca□an Nomun Qān, brought them the greetings of the emperor and his invitation to present themselves to audience. He [i.e. Chaghan Nomuqan] summoned also Gūmbū, the son of Gušri Khan's third son Dalantai. The latter, being also busy "in building a Dalai-Lama's temple," sent in his stead to Ca□an Tolo□ai his elder son Erdeni Erke Toqtonai. On his way he heard that Lajang was going to make a surprise attack on him, took fear and turned back. Gūmbū then sent his second son Pūnsük, and Lajang met him courteously and said: 'Your father is secretly sending envoys to the imperial residence. Will he not double-cross Köke-nör? I am raising troops and shall contend with your father.' Pūnsük rode back and related these words. Gūmbū took up arms and waited.⁶³⁷

This caused such a stir that many of the princes had made up their minds not to go. The excuse they gave Changkya, however, was that they had heard that the (Fifth) Dalai Lama was soon to come out of retreat and that they were going to have an audience with him. "It is very important to us to have audience [with the Dalai Lama]," they explained.

Lcang skya replied "did you not say you would go [to see the emperor] before hearing about [the Dalai Lama] coming [out of retreat] for audience? At that time it was more important [for you] to go before the emperor than to have an audience [with the Dalai Lama]. What is the reason for reversing what came before?"

They said, "although you say [great] rewards [*bdag rkyen*] will be given if we go, because of the mistrustful talk concerning [the manner in which gifts were given to the rulers] Kelden Dorjé⁶³⁸ and Pañjarakṣā,⁶³⁹ we have doubts."

"The mind of the Manjushri Emperor is subtle," Changkya replied. "Others—idiots like us—how can they understand it? If you go now there will be no problem. I can vouch that rewards will come. I speak with the Three Jewels as my witness."

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ T. skal ldan rdo rje.

⁶³⁹ T. panya+tsa raka+Sha.

"As for me, I have faith in your words," the leader conceded. "We will go." They sent a messenger to Xining to relay this.⁶⁴⁰

The competing explanations given for the Mongols' hesitance—an outspoken and menacing Lhazang Khan, a desire to have audience with the Dalai Lama, and questions over benefits of joining the Qing—are not mutually incompatible. It appears that Lhazang Khan was uneasy with the autonomy exercised by his Kökenuur cousins in their relations with the Qing. He ultimately relented, saying to Gümbü "you try to court favour, you alone, with the emperor, and this is not just. I shall accompany the Köke-nör *taiji* to the imperial residence. Therefore draw back your troops."⁶⁴¹ The Kökenuur princes, for their part, were understandably uneasy exercising any autonomy, caught as they were between two growing empires. Although there is no evidence that the Mongols knew about the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama fifteen years before (since this fact had been concealed by his prime-minister Sangyé Gyatso), the shadowy condition of the Dalai Lama no doubt raised concerns about the strength of his government. Any news of his reemergence would have been received with great interest.⁶⁴² In any case, Changkya succeeded in relieving the Mongols of their heaviest doubts, and several Khoshud leaders, led by Dashibaatar, made their way to Beijing where, at

⁶⁴⁰ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 18b.6–19a.5; see also Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 49b.3–50b.1.

⁶⁴¹ Petech, "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century," 269; citing the *Huangchao Fanbu yaolie* 皇朝藩部要略, 1884 edition, ch. 10, ff. 11b-12a.

⁶⁴² Kurtis Schaeffer explains that Sangyé Gyatso began to reveal the secret of the Great Fifth's death in June of 1697, although it was not until November of that year that this was more widely proclaimed. "Salt and the Sovereignty of the Dalai Lama, Circa 1697" (Lecture presented at the Seminar in Honor of Koichi Shinohara, University of British Columbia, October 14, 2004), 14; "Canon and Contemporary Innovation in the Era of the Fifth Dalai Lama" (Lecture presented at the South Asia Seminar, University of Chicago, April 28, 2005), 25. I would like to thank Prof. Schaeffer for discussing this matter with me and stimulating my thoughts on the matter.

the beginning of 1698, they were received by Kangxi.⁶⁴³ Later, Changkya and Dashibaatar met up again in Xining after the latter had returned from Beijing. Dashibaatar confessed that "the emperor gave rewards unlike any other!" Changkya took this as evidence that Kangxi "truly is Mañjuśrī."⁶⁴⁴

Changkya thus played a major role in orienting the political and religious allegiance of the Kōkenuur Mongols toward the Mañjuśrī Emperor in Beijing. However, his influence among the Mongols was not limited to this event and the Khüren-Belcheer Conference discussed above. Changkya's travels and his presence in Beijing and Dolonnuur meant that he had constant interaction with rulers from Inner Mongolia, including those from the Kharachin, Naiman, Aohan, Ongni'ud, and Üjümüchin Banners.⁶⁴⁵ Johan Elverskog has commented on the significance of such relations and, in particular, the ritual texts composed for these Mongol rulers by lamas of the Qing court such as Changkya:

... What is important to note [in a particular ritual text composed by Changkya] is that the power of the Mongol *ulus* as represented by the Mongol nobility does not reside in the ritualization of Chinggis Khan as the protector and propitiator of the Mongol community, as had been the case in the earlier cult of Chinggis Khan. Rather, within the Buddhist Qing, the Chinggisid lineage and in turn the Mongol *ulus* are formed and protected through Buddhist rituals prepared by lamas affiliated with the Qing court.

⁶⁴³ Petech, "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century," 269; Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 574a. Atwood writes that Dashibaatar and company met with Kangxi in Xi'an in 1697. However, Petech, explains that although this was the original decision reached at the Chaghan Tologhai conference, Kangxi preferred for them to come to Beijing later in the year.

⁶⁴⁴ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 21a.4.

⁶⁴⁵ These interactions are referred to in Changkya's autobiography, and they are also attested to in the colophons of his *Collected Works*. For example, Changkya went to the Kharachin banner in 1701 upon the invitation of its prince, Jampa Trashi (har chin gyi kung byams pa bkra shis), where he gave teachings to "ten thousand fortunate ones" and consecrated *rtan* that the Kharachin Prince had made for the long life of the emperor. *Ibid.*, 24a.1–4. Also, in 1712, the emperor ordered Changkya to go to Ongni'ud to consecrate the temple of the banner's ruler (ong nod tshangs byin dbang gi lha khang chen mo). Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 84a.2. See also the colophon to the text entitled "bla ma'i rnal 'byor gyi gsol 'debs sna tshogs" in Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," vol. 7 (*ja*).

Such texts thus facilitated Mongols being able to envision themselves properly located within the Qing empire.

Changkya also met with Mongol rulers from Ordos and Alashan, often on his trips to and from Amdo. His relations with the Kökenuur Mongols were particularly intimate due primarily to the fact that they had long been the primary patrons of Gönlung. The incarnation of Trichen Jamgön was also found there, too. In fact, Changkya took part in the identification process, meeting with and sending letters to Chaghan Nomuqan as well as ritual implements for properly recognizing the incarnation. He travelled himself to Mangra⁶⁴⁶ to pay his respects to the selected boy.⁶⁴⁷ The boy turned out to be none other than the child of the Chaghan Nomuqan's elder brother.

Despite spending many years of his life living and traveling among Mongols in Amdo and Inner Mongolis, he thought of his efforts to spread the dharma there as working in "an isolated land of barbarians" (*dben pa yi mun pa'i gling*). Perhaps such a sentiment was inevitable given the royal and ecclesiastical company he kept in Beijing and Lhasa.

Building and Wielding Imperial Influence

Following the Khüren-Belcheer Conference, Changkya followed Trichen Jamgön to Beijing, where the latter officiated at the Great Prayer Festival assembly. On two occasions when Trichen Jamgön went to have audience with Kangxi, the emperor ordered that he bring his acolytes with him. During Changkya's first audience with Kangxi, the emperor was very beneficent. He took it rather easy on Changkya, asking him questions, and giving gifts of

⁶⁴⁶ T. mang ra.

⁶⁴⁷ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 35b.3–4; Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 21a.1.

offerings scarves and silk. The second audience took place before the Sandlewood Buddha Statue (tsan dan jo bo), and Kangxi ordered Changkya to give a sermon to and debate with a certain Nenyng Zhapdrung.⁶⁴⁸ The emperor was greatly pleased and placed an offering scarf around his neck. The emperor thereupon ordered Changkya and another to stay in Beijing, but Trichen Jamgön helped in getting him excused on that occasion.⁶⁴⁹ Next time, however, Changkya would not get away.

In 1693, the long arm of the law caught up with Changkya. An imperial envoy arrived and presented the emperor's "weighty command":

At this time there has arisen the need for a great lama of superior virtue. Since the Lama Rinpoché [i.e. Dalai Lama] and Pañchen Rinpoché are both advanced in age, they are not being invited. You are a good lama who has great virtue; therefore, [I] have especially sent [these] messengers. You must by all means come.⁶⁵⁰

Changkya had been staying at Gönlung, and the clergy there was saddened by this news. Realizing that there was naught to be done, Changkya and his entourage, lead by Sumpa II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (d. 1702),⁶⁵¹ set out for Beijing.⁶⁵² Sherap Dargyé, Changkya's future biographer, also appears to have been among this group.⁶⁵³ This allotted Changkya the opportunity to cultivate his relationship not only with the emperor but also with several of Kangxi's children. Kangxi's fourth son, for instance, Yinzhen 胤禛 (1678-1735), was particularly generous. He assisted Changkya in purchasing the land and buildings which

⁶⁴⁸ T. gnas rnying zhabs drung.

⁶⁴⁹ For this series of exchanges see Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 12b.2–6; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 36a.1–4.

⁶⁵⁰ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 42a.2–42b.1.

⁶⁵¹ T. sum b+ha zhabs drung blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan.

⁶⁵² Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 35b.1–3.

⁶⁵³ Sagaster, *Subud Erike*, 42.

would become Changkya's Beijing base, Songzhu Monastery.⁶⁵⁴ He also supplied Changkya with camels and other provisions on his 1710 trip to Amdo, and following Changkya's death, the prince had an immaculate golden reliquary sent to Gönlung for the master's remains.⁶⁵⁵ Changkya, for his part, composed ritual texts that Yinzhen had commissioned, and he also composed a long-life prayer (*zhabs brten*) for the prince.⁶⁵⁶

Prince Yinzhen, of course, is none other than the future Yongzheng Emperor. Besides gaining the favor of Kangxi's favorite, Changkya also had numerous interactions with Kangxi's second son Yinreng 胤礽,⁶⁵⁷ eighth son Yinsi 胤禩,⁶⁵⁸ twelfth son Yintao 胤禔, thirteenth son Yinxiang 胤祥, and various daughters of Kangxi.⁶⁵⁹ These relationships could be extremely lucrative. For instance, when the eighteenth son of Kangxi, Yinxie 胤袞 (1701-1708), became seriously ill, the emperor ordered that someone be sent to perform *kurim* (*skurim*) healing rituals, and thus Changkya went with his acolytes. The young prince ultimately succumbed to his illness and died, whereupon Changkya performed prayers (*smon lam*) for him. After the body was cremated, the emperor ordered that all of the young prince's possessions be given to Changkya.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁴ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 82a.1–2.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 82a.1–2 and 97a.1–97b.3.

⁶⁵⁶ See the colophon of “mgon po phyag drug pa’i bsgom bzlas nyams su blang bde ba” in vol. 4 (*nga*) and “rgyal sras bzhi pa’i zhabs brten” in vol. 7 (*ca*) of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, *Gsung ’bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*.

⁶⁵⁷ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 71b.3.

⁶⁵⁸ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 34a.5–6.

⁶⁵⁹ See the colophons in Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, *Gsung ’bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*.

⁶⁶⁰ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 27b.3–4.

Such relationships came with Changkya's enrollment on the list of lamas resident in Beijing.⁶⁶¹ After Changkya committed a blunder by having audience with the imperially maligned Tibetan Prime-Minister Sanggyé Gyatso when in Tibet in 1697,⁶⁶² Changkya was removed from the rolls.⁶⁶³ Later, with Changkya's disciple Sumpa II acting as courier between the two erstwhile friends, the emperor rehabilitated Changkya.⁶⁶⁴ Later still, the emperor would grant him the title of 'National Preceptor' (kAU shrI, < Ch. *guoshi* 國師) in recognition of the practice and order that Changkya instilled at the The Great Temple in Dolonnuur.⁶⁶⁵ This process culminated in 1706 when Changkya received the lengthy and honorable title of "The Great National Preceptor Who Consecrates, Extends Goodness, and Spreads Compassion," complete with the corresponding imperial edict (*gser yig*) and golden seal (*gser dam*).⁶⁶⁶ His hefty seal is said to have been made from gold weighing eight ounces (*srang*), eight *zho* (*zho*), and eight *karma* (*skar ma*).⁶⁶⁷

Changkya's friends in high places resulted in more than just titles and regal paraphernalia. The donations to Gönlung began as early as 1691 when Changkya consecrated

⁶⁶¹ Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*.

⁶⁶² A departure from the rules of the THL Simplified Phonetics rules, I prefer "Sanggyé" over "Sangyé" to alert the uninitiated that the word "sangs" has a nasalized ending.

⁶⁶³ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 23a.2; Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 60.8.

⁶⁶⁴ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 23a.6–23b.2.

⁶⁶⁵ Actually, the emperor first awarded him with the title *chenshi* (T. *chen shi*, < Ch. *chanshi* 禪師). After going back to Beijing, however, his ministers asked him "How could you award him [only] the title of *chenshi*?" And so he was upgraded to Dynastic Preceptor. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 30a.6–30b.1.

⁶⁶⁶ "kwon ting phu'u shan kwong tshi tA kAU shrI" (< Ch. Guanding pushan guangci da guoshi 灌頂普善廣慈大國師). The Tibetan interprets this as "The Great, Omniscient Lama Consecrated by All the Empowerments of Kindness and Compassion" (byams brtses kun gyi spyi po nas dbang bskur ba'i kun mkhyen bla ma chen po). *ibid.*, 30b.1.

⁶⁶⁷ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 69a.5. A *zho* is a tenth of a *srang*, and a *skar ma* is one tenth of a *zho*.

a Vermillion Kanjur⁶⁶⁸ from Litang⁶⁶⁹ and gave it to the monastery's General Management Office.⁶⁷⁰ This edition of the Buddha's sermons was actually commissioned by the Kökenuur ruler Dalaibaatar shortly before his death, and the gift predates Changkya's permanent residence in the imperial capital. As Changkya's status rose and his career progressed, the amount and quality of the gifts also increased. In 1697, while on his way to Tibet, Changkya represented the emperor in offering a litany of gifts. First and foremost, the emperor provided a name⁶⁷¹ for Gönlung's main shrine hall or chapel.⁶⁷² Traditionally, monasteries that received such imperial recognition, particularly those that received a plaque inscribed after the emperor's own calligraphy, would receive special privileges, such as land donations and tax exemption.⁶⁷³ Although Gönlung appears to have been beyond the fray of monasteries subject to imperial oversight, the emperor's gesture is still significant. Moreover, he gave the shrine hall a silk brocade depicting the "seven royal possessions"⁶⁷⁴ and the "eight auspicious signs,"⁶⁷⁵ which was meant to serve as the core (probably and "endowment principal") of the hall's finances. The upper and lower parts of the shrine hall were amply supplied with brocades and banners. Meanwhile, Changkya contributed to his own villa at Gönlung,

⁶⁶⁸ T. *bka' 'gyur mtshal dpar ma*.

⁶⁶⁹ T. *li thang*.

⁶⁷⁰ T. *spyi so*. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 13b.6–14a.1; see also Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 39a.5–b.1.

⁶⁷¹ T. *mtshan*.

⁶⁷² T. *lha khang chen mo*.

⁶⁷³ See chapter seven for more on "imperial monasteries." Michael J. Walsh, *Sacred Economies: Buddhist Monasticism & Territoriality in Medieval China*, The Sheng Yen Series in Chinese Buddhist Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 79; Denis Crispin Twitchett, "Monastic Estates in T'ang China," *Asia Major* 5, no. 2 (1956): 123–146; Kenneth Ch'en, "Economic Background of the Hui-ch'ang Suppression of Buddhism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19, no. 1–2 (1956): 97–8.

⁶⁷⁴ T. *rgyal srid sna bdun*.

⁶⁷⁵ T. *bkra shis rtas brgyad*.

providing the necessary articles for restoration rituals, silk brocades, window dressing,⁶⁷⁶ cups made of fine silver and silver bowls. To the monastery's protector deity he gave garments of fine silk, a vessel for offering drinks to the god, a silver bowl, and so forth. Finally, not forgetting the community of monks at the nearby and affiliated hermitage of Jangchup Ling, he provided 'community tea' and cash disbursements.⁶⁷⁷

Three years later, in 1700, Changkya sent an endowment⁶⁷⁸ to Gönlung for the performance of the Great Prayer Festival.⁶⁷⁹ In 1703, Changkya had been suffering from bad dreams and omens following the death of his close disciple, Sumpa II. It was recommended to him that he go on a retreat, which he did. After coming out of the five-week long retreat and feeling rejuvenated, he made significant offerings to Gönlung. These included golden statues of Maitreya, the Medicine Buddha, and Vairocana to the General Management Office⁶⁸⁰ of Gönlung. For the purpose of building a new shrine hall in his own villa, he donated twenty-seven metal statues, including those of Shakyamuni, the Medicine Buddha, and the seven Blissfully Gone Ones⁶⁸¹. Out of the best gold and other materials, he also constructed eight 'long neck' stupas,⁶⁸² some 'short neck' stupas,⁶⁸³ and nine copper 'stupas of

⁶⁷⁶ T. *sham bu*.

⁶⁷⁷ T. *mang 'gyed*. The relevant passage is quite terse and difficult to parse. See all of the following: Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 18a.3–6; Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 20a.5–20b.2; Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 48b.4–49a.1.

⁶⁷⁸ T. *theb*.

⁶⁷⁹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 23b.2. An earlier instance of Changkya parting with his wealth occurred in 1688 when he donated all the horses he had received upon ascending Gönlung's abbatial throne to the escort and encampment (*sgar chen*) of Trichen Jamgön's corpse traveling to Tibet.

⁶⁸⁰ T. *spyi so*. See chapter four for more on this office.

⁶⁸¹ T. *bder gshegs*. Sherap Dargyé writes "eight." *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 64b.4.

⁶⁸² T. *mgrin ring*.

⁶⁸³ T. *mgrin thung*.

Blissfully Gone Ones',⁶⁸⁴ also providing the craftsmen to complete the job. Finally, he gave relics and mantras and other *sacra* from afar to each of the monks and others present.⁶⁸⁵

In 1710, at the age of sixty-eight, he helped rebuild the monastery's largest building. He contributed money, silk, banners, gold leaf and so forth to the monastery's endowment for rebuilding its assembly hall. The new hall was eight pillars by twelve, its portico had sixteen pillars, it contained eighty-seven rafters (*lcam gling*), and was completely varnished.⁶⁸⁶ He gave 'throne-canopies,'⁶⁸⁷ sachets, ribbons, statues, paintings, carvings, stupas, and other such things to the hall. Before he left to return to Beijing, he also created an endowment for the construction of a new temple on the back side of the assembly hall.⁶⁸⁸ At the same time, he also gave appropriate cymbals, silk brocades, and several ritual implements appropriate to the protectors' hall.⁶⁸⁹ His acolyte and future biographer, Sherap Dargyé, likewise gave numerous offerings to the medical ritual hall.⁶⁹⁰ As I shall discuss above, it was also at this time that Changkya helped establish Gönlung's tantric college. The emperor himself is said to have helped fund this.⁶⁹¹

Changkya the Administrator and Local Dignitary

⁶⁸⁴ T. *bder gshegs mchod rten*.

⁶⁸⁵ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)," 28a.5–28b.1; see also Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 64b.4ff.

⁶⁸⁶ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 31b.3.

⁶⁸⁷ T. *gnam rgyan*.

⁶⁸⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 33a.2.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 32a.5–6.

⁶⁹⁰ T. *sman chog khang*. *Ibid.*, 31b.4–32a.1.

⁶⁹¹ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 326–7n299; citing Heissig 1954, p. 28 [*sic*]. The relevant passage actually appears on p. 27. Heissig is citing a rather late source. More research is needed.

In an earlier section I mentioned some of the intellectual and spiritual traditions Changkya brought with him to Gönlung from Central Tibet. Changkya's rich experience in Tibet, Mongolia, and Beijing also made him a capable administrator and a popular dignitary. During the first three years of his tenure as Gönlung abbot, study at the monastery is said to have flourished. He wished to extend his tenure. However, in 1690 there arose some disputes among the patrons of the 'divine communities,' and as the abbot was customarily responsible for resolving such disputes, this left him no time to attend to his other duties. Thus, he resigned.

As a response to these and other pressures he encountered as abbot, in 1693, shortly before he was called back to Beijing, Changkya resurrected a practice of separating the responsibility for "worldly affairs" from the responsibility for "spiritual affairs." An Office of General Affairs (*spyi so*) was given full oversight of worldly affairs, and separate managers were appointed to this office, thus freeing the abbot to attend to his other duties. In addition, this gave autonomy to an office that was more responsive to the financial and diurnal needs of the monastery's monks rather than the whims of the abbot. Such a system appears to be quintessential to the operation of mega monasteries. I shall have more to say about this in chapter four.

Finally, Changkya's administrative and diplomatic accomplishments were not limited to Gönlung alone. For instance, in 1697, while on his way to Tibet as an emissary of the emperor, he donated tea and cash disbursements to numerous local monasteries and retreats, including Serkhok, Chuzang, Kenchen, Chöten Thang, Semnyi, the two monasteries of Tethung, Trashi Chöling, Drukluṅ, Paju, Tangring, Drotsang, Kumbum, Dokhar (i.e.

Tongkhor), Jakhyung, and Dechen chöling.⁶⁹² These were some of the largest and most influential monasteries in Amdo, and the majority of them were considered Gönlung's branch monasteries. Changkya's prestige and largess therefore helped to reaffirm or establish anew historic ties between these institutions and Gönlung. When such connections were on the friz—as was the case with Serkhok, Gönlung's erstwhile branch monastery and powerful neighbor to the west—Changkya sought to rise above the local fray and warm relations: during Changkya's final visit to Gönlung in 1710, he visited Gönlung's oracle on the eve of his return to Beijing and entrusted the oracle with overseeing the patronage (*mchod yon*) of Gönlung. He further insisted that the oracle do everything in his power to ensure friendly relations between Gönlung and Serkhok.⁶⁹³

The length of the list of monasteries and temples that sought out Changkya's presence is matched by the number of local lords and patrons who paid their respects to Changkya. So great was his prestige that on his final visit to Gönlung in 1710 he was actively sought out and welcomed by local lords such as the Drigung Nangso,⁶⁹⁴ the powerful Monguor rulers, such as Qi Tusi⁶⁹⁵ and Lu Tusi⁶⁹⁶, and imperial officials, such as the emperor's emissary and

⁶⁹² T. Dam chos gling, Chu bzang sprul sku'i dgon, Kan chen dgon, Mchod rten thang gi dgon, Sems nyi dgon, Ta'i thung dgon pa gnyis, Bkra shis chos gling, 'Brug lung dgon, pA ju thang ring gnyis, Gro tshang, Sku 'bum, Mdo mkhar, Bya khyung, Bde chen chos gling. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 18a.6–18b.2.

⁶⁹³ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 79b.5; While Changkya's biographer clearly denotes Serkhok with the name "Gaden Damchö Ling" (dga' ldan dam chos gling), Changkya himself writes "Gaden Dargyé Ling" (dga' ldan dar rgyas gling). Although the latter could possibly be a reference to Semnyi Monastery, another one of Gönlung branch monasteries, I know of no animosity between Gönlung and Semnyi. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 32b.4–33a.1.

⁶⁹⁴ T. 'bri gung nang so. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 22b.2.

⁶⁹⁵ T. khyi kya *dpon*. Ibid., 30a.2–4.

⁶⁹⁶ T. klul *skyabs*. Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 73a.1–2.

the Company Commander based in Xining.⁶⁹⁷ In fact, Changkya's autobiography and biography depict an endless string of receptions and banquets stretching from Beijing, to Ordos, Alashan, Pari, Gönlung, and then back again. This renewal of donor-donee relations reminded the local lords and commoners of their religious and financial obligations to Changkya's root monastery of Gönlung.

Conclusion

There are many similarities between the subject of this chapter—Changkya—and the subject of the previous chapter—Dewa Chöjé (aka Kyishö *trülku*). Both of these figures brought important teachings, practices, and concepts with them from Central Tibet to Gönlung, giving rise to a “peripheral monastic center.” Both also ensured strong and loyal patronage for the monastery. Gönlung's relationship with the Khoshud Mongols of Kökenuur continued to be important. Once again we see a major lama—one who is closely associated with Gönlung—counseling the Mongols on where to focus their political wills. Previously, Dewa Chöjé and Chuzang Lama had served as the lamas to the succession of Mongol leaders in Kökenuur, ultimately advising Güüshi Khan on how to conquer Tibet and strengthen Buddhist institutions. This resulted in lavish donations and land grants being given to Gönlung. Five decades later, Changkya served as the lama to Güüshi Khan's sons in Kökenuur and ultimately convinced them to submit to the growing Qing Empire. Changkya's diplomatic skill helped him rise to the highest eschalons of the Qing Court and the Geluk hierarchy in Amdo, and Gönlung was a direct beneficiary of Changkya's success.

⁶⁹⁷ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking),” 30a.2–4.

Of course, there are notable differences between the subjects of these two chapters, too. Dewa Chöjé came from Central Tibet and may have helped to introduce the idea of incarnate lamas in Gönlung and Amdo. Changkya, by contrast, was a homegrown incarnation lineage at Gönlung. In fact, Changkya appears to be one of the *earliest* incarnation lineages to take root in Amdo. This reflects the growing strength and independence of Gönlung's monastic institutions. Moreover, even though Gönlung remained closely tied to Buddhism in Central Tibet (especially the Gomang College of Drepung Monastery), during Changkya's life, Gönlung sought out new patrons and connections in Inner Mongolia and in Beijing. As we shall see in the next chapter, Gönlung also developed a robust system of governance. The continued development of a mega monastery demanded as much.

Chapter Appendix I: A Timeline of Changkya's Life

- 1642 Birth.
- 1646 Upon recognition as the incarnation of Changkya I, he is brought to Tangring Monastery where he was tonsured and commenced his studies.
- 1650 Brought to Gönlung to continue his studies.
- 1661-1683 Studies abroad in Central Tibet.
- 1683 Returns to Amdo.
- 1686 Participates in the Khüren-Belcheer Conference.
- 1687 First trip to Beijing.
- 1688 Returns to Amdo and serves for two years as abbot of Gönlung.
- 1693 Called back to Beijing.
- 1697 Returns to Amdo and participates in Chaghan Tologhai Conference of Kökenuur Mongols.
- 1697 Travels to Central Tibet for Installation of the Sixth Dalai Lama
- 1698 Returns to Amdo and thence to Beijing.
- 1701 Consecration of Dolonnuur's Great Temple; Changkya ordered to spend the spring and summer months there, the fall and winter months in Beijing
- 1710 Travels to Gönlung and back.
- 1714 Death. Changkya's corpse is carried back to Gönlung.

Chapter Appendix II: Sources

The principal sources for my account of Changkya are his autobiography and his biography by his close disciple, Sherap Dargyé (*ca.* 1660-1730).⁶⁹⁸ I have also examined the colophons of Changkya's *Collected Works* (*gsung 'bum*), and I have consulted Klaus Sagaster's 1967 study of Changkya, which includes a translation (into German) of a version of Sherap Dargyé's biography.⁶⁹⁹ Unfortunately, there are no English-language sources of which I am aware on this important figure, and Sagaster's masterful German work is largely unknown outside of a small group of specialists interested in seventeenth-century Sino-Tibetan-Mongol relations.⁷⁰⁰ By comparison, there are nearly a dozen works in Western languages for Changkya's successor, Changkya III Rolpé Dorjé (1717-1786).⁷⁰¹

There are two versions of Changkya's autobiography. The first appears near the end of volume two (*kha*) in the Peking edition of Changkya's *Collected Works* (*gsung 'bum*).⁷⁰² The second appears at the beginning of volume five (*ca*) of the Lhasa Zhol edition of his *Collected Works*.⁷⁰³ Sagaster does not appear to have had access to this Zhol edition. The

⁶⁹⁸ T. shes rab dar rgyas. For his dates, see Sagaster, *Subud Erike*, 40.

⁶⁹⁹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, *Gsung 'bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*, 7 vols. (Peking, n.d.), TBRC W1KG1321; Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, *Gsung 'bum (Collected Works [of Changkya II Ngakwang Lozang Chöden])*, 5 vols. (Lhasa: Zhol par khang chen mo, n.d.), TBRC W30098.; Sagaster, *Subud erike*. I thank Ben Deitle for graciously sharing his copy of Sagaster's work with me.

⁷⁰⁰ Perhaps C. R. Bawden's early warning was unheeded: "It would be a pity if the high cost of this book, together with its mass of exact and detailed philological apparatus, should scare off historians who are not concerned with the nicer problems of the interpretation of a Mongol text ..." "Review of Subud erike. 'Ein Rosenkranz aus Perlen.' Die Biographie des 1. Pekinger lCañ skya Khutukhtu Ngag dbaṅ blo bzañ č'os ldan, verfasst von Ngag dbaṅ č'os ldan alias Šes rab dar rgyas," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 32, no. 2 (1969): 420.

⁷⁰¹ T. rol pa'i rdo rje. See Illich, "Imperial Stooze or Emisary to the Dge Lugs Throne? Rethinking the Biographies of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé," 17n2.

⁷⁰² Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)"; "Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center," W1KG1321, www.tbrc.org.

⁷⁰³ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol)"; "TBRC," W30098.

Peking edition print is of much better quality and easier to read, although the Zhol edition consistently preserves better spelling. Although I have not systematically compared the two editions, their contents appear to be identical.⁷⁰⁴ Therefore, I usually refer to the Peking edition, citing the Zhol edition at times when spelling is important for identification of a person, place, and so forth.

The last entry in the autobiography is for the year 1713, less than a year before Changkya's death. Sherap Dargyé tells us that Changkya took three weeks that winter to finish writing his autobiography.⁷⁰⁵ Still, Sagaster has argued that Changkya wrote the bulk of his autobiography in 1710 during his final visit at Gönlung.⁷⁰⁶ The Zhol edition of the autobiography contains a colophon that explains that Changkya wrote the text upon orders from Dzaya Paṇḍita Lozang Trinlé (1642-1708/15)⁷⁰⁷ and at the behest of the '[Grand] Lecturer *rapjam* Scholar' Ngakwang Tendzin⁷⁰⁸ and Changkya's acolyte, Sherap Dargyé.

Sherap Dargyé was one of Changkya's most intimate disciples, and thus his biography offers us an expanded, more detailed, and less humble account of Changkya's life. He wrote it in 1729 at the behest of Changkya III Rolpé Dorjé. As Sagaster has pointed out, it closely follows Changkya's autobiography, including and expanding upon nearly everything found in

⁷⁰⁴ The Zhol edition has a colophon, which I will discuss momentarily. There is one other peculiar difference. Near the end of the Peking edition there is a scribal note that does not appear in the Zhol edition. It reads simply "from this point on some sections are cut off. While engraving and printing, I, the disciple and former abbot Ngag rgyam pa, have fill them out." Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 32b.6.

⁷⁰⁵ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 85b.1–2.

⁷⁰⁶ *Subud Erike*, 36.

⁷⁰⁷ T. dza ya paN+Di ta blo bzang 'phrin las.

⁷⁰⁸ T. *rab 'byams smra ba* ngag dbang bstan 'dzin. My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for explaining to me the meaning of "*rab 'byams smra ba*." See also Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy*, 17.

the autobiography.⁷⁰⁹ Sagaster did not know of the existence of this Tibetan text, which currently resides in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing,⁷¹⁰ although—writing in 1967—he correctly hypothesized that such a text did exist. He further argued that such a Tibetan text served as the basis of his Mongolian text.⁷¹¹ I have used Sherap Dargyé's biography to supplement the information gleaned from Changkya's own biography. The two sources provide us not only with a chronological account of this important historical figure, but they also offer rare glimpses of Amdo and Gönlung in the seventeenth-century.

⁷⁰⁹ Sagaster, *Subud erike*, 28; see also Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 101a.3–4).

⁷¹⁰ I am very grateful to Lobsang Yongdan, a Ph.D. candidate at Cambridge, for generously sharing a copy of this text with me.

⁷¹¹ Sagaster, *Subud Erike*, 47–8. I have not examined the Mongolian text and therefore am relying upon Sagaster's argument concerning the relationship between the Tibetan and Mongolian texts.

Chapter 4: The Administration of the Monastery:

One for All, and All for One

When someone is sick, the disciplinarian [*dge skos*] inspects to see that the patient himself has the requisite provisions for [the performance of] a 'healing ritual' [*rim gro*]. If he does not, then [the provisions] are to come from the 'common possessions' [*spyi rdzas*] of the monastic community [*dge 'dun*]. If there still are not [enough], then, do as it is written: even the statues [lit. body] of the Buddha should be used. After the patient's illness has improved, if he has wealth, since he has partaken of the possessions of the [Three] Jewels, he should pay reimbursement. [Nevertheless,] no matter whether he has [wealth] or not, the monks belonging to that place [*sa ris*] are to congregate and exert themselves at reciting as many 'healing rituals' as possible.

In short, this precious vessel of freedoms and favors [i.e. the human body] is very valuable for monks—old, young, and middle-aged—who wish to do well. It is difficult to come by, and the time of death is uncertain. The sufferings of this frightening prison of samsara are fiercely depressing and thereby give rise to revulsion. May [you] give rise to a wholesome mind of enlightenment for the benefit of others and thereby take whatever [you can] into [your] experience of mindfulness, conscientiousness, and shame as expressed by the precepts of the Three Vows [literature]. In particular, protect one another, and through the gate of [having] a nature of bearing [both] 'quiescence' and 'taming,' strive at the three [knowledges] of listening, thinking, and meditating. So doing, I pray you will make a foundation [*gzhir gyur ba*] for benefiting the Teachings and all wandering beings. I offer this prayer with palms pressed together.

So begins the conclusion to the monastic customary (*bca' yig*) of Gönlung Monastery.⁷¹² I like this passage for a variety of reasons. It provides for us readers a description of the ideal monastery: Each member of this community is cared for, and the lack of individual wealth is

⁷¹² Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung byams pa gling gi mtshon dgon ma lag dang bcas pa'i bca' khriims phan bde'i 'dab rgya bzhad pa'i snang byed" (Gönlung Jampa Ling: The Customary of the Mother Monastery and Its Branches: The Sun That Brings Forth the Lotus Blooms of Benefit and Happiness. Manuscript.) (n.p., n.d. [1737]), 17b.2–18a.4; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dpal snar thang dang [rwa sgren / dgon lung byams pa gling dgon ma lag bcas kyi] gi bca' yig 'dul khriims dngos brgya 'bar ba'i gzi 'od" (Customaries of Pelnarthang, Reting, and Gönlung Monasteries and Branches; hereafter, Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)), in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works), vol. 'a (23) (n.p. [Lhasa], n.d. [1737]), 28b.5–29a.4.

no obstacle. Membership in this community carries with it commitment and devotion in the form of caring and praying for every other member when he becomes sick.

This passage also ties together practical issues—health and sickness as well as the need to care for the sick—with a more profound religious discussion that includes the preciousness of human life and the need to act for the benefit of all sentient beings. Similarly, it ties together the establishment of an ideal monastic community with major Buddhist virtues—the Three Vows, mindfulness, conscientiousness, shame, quiescence, and discipline.

Finally, the last line of the passage also indicates to us that it is more than just an author’s reflection on how communities and individuals are to get along. Rather, it’s a prayer that is meant to be intoned and physically performed, “with palms pressed together.” In short, the above passage addresses a very real and common concern in the life of a monastery—sickness—and provides specific instructions and rationale for dealing with it. This chapter will focus on other such sets of instructions, rationales, and practices given for the administration of Gönlung, as these were essential to the operation of an institution that harbored several thousand of celibate boys and men, young and old.

Gönlung possessed a robust and nuanced system for managing its large population of monks. This included protocols and novel mechanisms for financing the regular assemblies of monks and its major ritual occasions. The most important agents who oversaw the monastery’s finances were the triumvirate of the abbot, the general management office, and the patron(s). Gönlung also maintained a strict system of discipline geared towards normalizing monastic behavior. Here the disciplinarians (*dge skos*) and, again, the abbot played the central roles. I will show how complex systems of administration had been developed at Gönlung that left nothing up to chance. The well-being of Gönlung’s clergy was

thoroughly considered, and the responsibility of providing this was specified and codified. Likewise, the rules governing who became a monk and how he was socialized are amply recorded as are the instructions for how the responsible officers are to enforce these rules. From this we can derive an image of Gönlung as it may have existed during its heyday in the late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-centuries. As we shall see, this image better explains its size and renown than does the image of the monastery in the early-twentieth-century left to us by missionaries and anthropologists.

Sources

Gyelsé Rinpoché Jikemé Yeshé Drakpa (1696-1743/50),⁷¹³ the rebirth twice removed from Gönlung's founder, composed a new customary for Gönlung in the wake of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, an historical event that had devastating consequences for the monastery. Hitherto the monastery had been the largest in all of Amdo and one of the largest on the entire Tibetan Plateau. Now it was reduced to ashes, and rebuilding entailed numerous hurdles (discussed in chapter seven). As the 'proprietor' or 'protector' of the monastery, Gyelsé Rinpoché composed this customary to help guide Gönlung toward reclaiming the glory that it once had.

When Gyelsé Ripoché composed Gönlung's customary in 1737, he appears to have had in mind the monastery of old. That is, he describes the administration of a monastery equipped to deal with several hundred if not several thousand monks.⁷¹⁴ This is an

⁷¹³ T. 'jigs med ye shes grags pa.

⁷¹⁴ One passage, for instance, gives instructions on the quantities of tea and other foods that must be prepared for hundreds of monks who may attend assembly: "The quantities of community teas are to be at least [as follows]: Considering that a single *gyama* [*rgya ma*] is twenty-four [bricks of] tea and serves three hundred

administration that has a standardized and clearly delineated set of rules concerning the monastery's finances, disciplinary procedures, ritual program, and scholasticism. As such, this customary is situated in a tradition of Central Tibetan authorities disseminating monastic customaries and thereby standardizing Geluk monastic administration.

For instance, the biographer of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the regent Sanggyé Gyatso, tells us of the use of customaries in the Dalai Lama and the regent's evangelization of the Tibetan Plateau:

In the year Earth Sheep (11 February 1679-31 January 1680), within the jurisdiction of the 13 government districts and estates in the administrative divisions of Mdo-Khams, there were 657 monasteries with monk-pupils, of which those of the Dge lugs pa sect were in a majority, with 31,947 monk-pupils. ... Those Rnying ma pa monasteries which harbored no resentment (towards us) should have (performed), unimpairedly, the special rites and rituals of (our) important acts of worship. But some among them did not take into consideration the establishment of our Dge lugs pa monasteries in their areas. ... An edict was issued to the Sa skya pa and the Rnying ma pa (saying that) they should read (and act according to) what had been decided by the "clear and powerful" sealed edicts of the Lord-Lama, the great crest-ornament of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa. The other (non-Rnying ma pa/non-Sa skya pa) objects of worship should read (and act according to), principally, the Dge lugs pa rules. Together (with the edict), disciplinary rules (*bca' yig*), suited to the country, time, state-of-affairs and individuals were issued (saying) that whatever was not in those (rules) would not be right.⁷¹⁵

And, again,

in the Iron-Ape (1 February 1680-18 February 1681): Ever since 'Phags pa Rin po che, the lord of the world, had drawn a picture of the monastery of Dpal 'bar, it had become like an ancestress for the growth of the Dge lugs pa monasteries in the upper

monks, for six hundred monks [give] two *gyama*, three *kor* [*skor*] of butter, as well as milk." The Tibetan begins "mang ja re'i tshad la/ ma mtha' dge'dun sum brgyar ja nyi shu rtsa bzhi'i rgya ma re'i rtsis kyi dge 'dun drug brgyar ja rgya ma do/ ..." Rgyal sras'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 8b.3-4.

⁷¹⁵ I first stumbled across and analyzed this and the following passage in Kurtis Schaeffer's seminar on the Dalai Lamas in the spring of 2009. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, trans. and ed. Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sata-pitaka Series 392 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1999), 310-11.

southern part of Khams. After that, the Rin chen Byang chub (monastery) in Gung ru converted to the Dge lugs pa. After that, the government, thinking of local usages, gave allowances and awards (to the monks) and regularly appointed the great abbots (of Rin chen Byang chub monastery) ... This situation was backed up by a written document settling the disputes among the monk-pupils. Together with a double set of rules (*bca' yig*) relating to (a) the grain held by the monastery, (b) the realization and worship of the secret Bde mchog, (c) the necessities for the acts of worship to be performed in the temple without interruption and (d) a final settlement of arrangements, (I) made a present to them of whatever large increase would come to them (in future).⁷¹⁶

Certainly other sects of Tibetan Buddhism have had and continue to have monastic customaries. In fact, the earliest known customary was written for a *non-monastic* community and predates the existence of the Geluk sect by several hundred years.⁷¹⁷ Likewise, numerous monastic customaries were composed as part of a monastic revival in Nyingma monasteries in Kham in the mid-eighteenth century.⁷¹⁸ Nonetheless, a brief review of the number of extant customaries suggests that the Geluk sect and, in particular, the Dalai Lamas and other central authorities were some of the most prolific authors of customaries.⁷¹⁹ This technology of customary composition and dissemination had a centralizing effect whereby peripheral monasteries such as Gönlung modeled their cultic and scholastic practices, their administrative and disciplinary structures, and so forth on monasteries in Central Tibet. In chapter six, for instance, I describe how a customary written for a major

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 313.

⁷¹⁷ This is the “sngags pa rnam kyī bca’ yig” by Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (rong zom chos kyī bzang po, 1042-1136). I would like to thank my friend and colleague here at the University of Virginia, Steve Weinberger, for sharing his copy of this text as well as his notes on the text. Another version can be found at TBRC W29622. The claim that this is the earliest extant customary is based on my conversations with Berthe Jansen from the University of Leiden and others at the XVth Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Taiwan in 2011.

⁷¹⁸ Ronis, “Celibacy, Revelations, and Reincarnated Lamas,” 156–61 and 218–21.

⁷¹⁹ Jansen has made the interesting point that the disproportionate number of Geluk customaries that exist may be a consequence of the fact that most customaries available to us are published in the “collected writing” (*gsung ‘bum*) of their authors and that comparatively more Geluk sets of collected writings have been printed and published. Personal communication, September 23, 2011.

Mongol monastery in Alashan was composed by the head of Drepung Monastery's Gomang College and was allegedly *based on* the practices of Gomang itself. Among other things, this centralization and standardization made it possible for monks of one monastery to travel to and take up residence at another monastery in order to pursue further studies. Such 'continuing studies' (*grwa rgyun*), whether it be monks from Gönlung traveling to Gomang College or monks from one of Gönlung's "child monasteries" traveling to the "mother," promoted social mobility and helped create powerful monastic networks that, in turn, contributed to the Geluk sect's overall program of evangelism.

Whereas Gönlung's later customary, composed by Wang IV in 1885, is particularly useful for understanding the liturgical program and scholastic curriculum (see especially chapter six), it is Gyelsé's earlier 1737 customary that provides us with a view of the proper roles of Gönlung's various offices, officers, and its masses of ordinary monks and students. From it we can ascertain what Gönlung's proprietor (*dgon bdag*) intended in terms of the socialization of the resident and visiting monks, the management of the monastery's image and its relations with the laity, and, most importantly, the collection and distribution of the monastery's wealth.

Remarkably, this customary is still revered and in use today at the monastery.⁷²⁰ In fact, the customary is held in such secrecy, that I was able to acquire a copy only after persistent inquiry and years of searching. I had been dismissed on more than one occasion and given a panoply of excuses: the customary was 'sealed'⁷²¹ and for the eyes of the

⁷²⁰ This is based on inquiries I made with monastic officers at Gönlung and about which I have copious field notes.

⁷²¹ T. *bka' rgya*.

disciplinarian only; it was of the ‘uncommon’ variety⁷²² and unfit for a layman’s eyes; and, intriguingly, it prescribed Gönlung’s unique attributes that made it stand out above the fray. None of these reasons pacified my curiosity for learning why the customary was so closely guarded, however. I did not understand why Gönlung’s customary would be “sealed” when the customs of some other monasteries are allegedly hung on the Assembly Hall wall as a reminder to the brethren of their duties. Moreover, the 1737 customary of Gönlung appears in Gyelsé Rinpoché’s *Collected Writings*, a publicly available source (albeit a rare one!). As for the assertion that the customary contains “uncommon” attributes that are unfit for the unordained or that such attributes made up a secret recipe of success, the evidence is unconvincing: review of the contents of the two extant Gönlung customs (one from 1737, the other from 1885) unearths no single vehicle to success.

A more compelling explanation for the secrecy surrounding the customary can be found in the customary for Sera Monastery’s Jé⁷²³ College. The text gives instructions on who exactly must deliver the oral recitation of the college’s customary:

The individuals who should offer it are as follows. Only the master [i.e. the abbot] and the disciplinarian count. No more than these [two] are necessary. No fewer than these [two] can encompass it.

As for the fact that no more than these [two] are necessary, it is as follows. Even though this college has a faculty of administrators and scholars comparable to the collection of the stars in space, if all of them offer the *Great Exhortation*, some would disclaim what others said, while some would affirm positions that others disclaimed. This being an obstacle to discipline, we say "too many are not necessary." Regarding "too few cannot encompass it," the series of rules and regulations of this college is greater than Mount Meru, deeper than the ocean, more subtle than a mustard seed, finer than a horse's tail hair. Hence, it is difficult for a single person to recite the *Great Exhortation*. What the disciplinarian does not recite, the master must offer with

⁷²² T. *thun mong ma yin pa*.

⁷²³ T. byes.

added emphasis, and what the master misses, the disciplinarian must offer with added emphasis. This is what is meant by "too few cannot encompass it." So be it.⁷²⁴

In other words, it is best not to have too many cooks in the kitchen, but the meal requires at least two expert chefs.

There are certainly reasons to doubt the relevance of Gönlung's customaries for understanding what happened *on the ground* at the monastery in the eighteenth century and earlier. First, the monastery was completely razed to the ground in 1724, and it was rebuilt beginning only in 1729. In other words, the customary written in 1737 by the successor twice-removed of Gönlung's founder, Jikmé Yeshé Drakpa (1696-1750),⁷²⁵ was written for a *new* Gönlung, one financed by the Qing government and responding to a new climate of governmental regulation of the sangha (see chapter seven). One may legitimately question how much this customary can tell us about the administration of Gönlung and the proper conduct of its monks during the monastery's heyday.

One may go even farther and question whether customaries as a whole are not more reflective of the wishful thinking of their authors than the life of a monastery in any specific place or time. Tibetan customaries, or *chayik*, or certainly normative texts inasmuch as they depict the way a monastery *should* operate. The 1737 customary of Gönlung adheres quite closely to the model customary as outlined and presented by Ter Ellingson in the classic (and only) overview of Tibetan customaries.⁷²⁶ It begins with quotations that are often recycled in

⁷²⁴ José Ignacio Cabezón, "The Regulations of a Monastery," in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 341.

⁷²⁵ T. rgyal sras 'jigs med ye shes grags pa.

⁷²⁶ "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca' yig," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne, vol. 12, *Studies in Asian Thought and Religion* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 213–15.

customaries. They are from canonical Buddhist literature and lead the reader through a series of steps that ultimately illustrate the primacy of discipline for liberation from suffering.

The Preceptor Śāntideva says,
 "The sole medicine for the suffering of wandering beings;
 The source that gives rise to all happiness;
 Are the Teachings."⁷²⁷

Having established that the Buddhist Teachings are the sole door to salvation, the next quote distinguishes between two types of teachings:

The Omniscient Vasubandhu writes: "There are two aspects to the Teacher's pure dharma," and so forth.⁷²⁸

Our author, Gyelsé, paraphrases the rest of the quote and adds his own analysis:

Among the two—scripture and realization—there are the Teachings of scripture, which are laid down in the Three Baskets [i.e. Tripiṭaka]. As for the Teachings of practice [i.e. realization], they are laid down in the Precious Three Trainings [of discipline, meditation, and wisdom]. Moreover, [the Buddha] said on more than one occasion that, the Training of discipline makes the other two [Trainings] grow, abide, and proliferate.. Therefore, here, the Training of discipline is the most important thing, and [I shall] begin the discussion with it.⁷²⁹

The Gönlung customary proceeds from this rather formulaic beginning and discusses the qualifications for entering the monastery, the education and socialization of the monk, a breakdown of how alms are to be distributed, the schedule of ritual assemblies as well as the

⁷²⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 3a.2; This corresponds to verse 57 in chapter 10 of Wallace and Wallace's translation of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, trans. Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1997), 144; See also Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, trans. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷²⁸ This corresponds to Louis de La Vallée Poussin's translation of the Chinese version of this text. Vasubandhu, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, trans. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, 2nd ed. (Bruxelles: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1971), 218 (ch. 8, v. 39a–b).

⁷²⁹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 3a.4–3b.1.

examination system, what accounts for proper comportment, and how to properly maintain relations with laity, all of these being subjects commonly discussed by other *chayik*. Nonetheless, there are clues that suggest that Gönlung's customaries are attentive to the practices "on the ground" and that we should not mistake compositional formulas for "empty letters."

In the section of the 1737 customary that discusses scholasticism at the monastery, the author has written:

*Even though we did not have this tradition before, during the Second Autumn Dharma Session the Types of Mind, Types of Reasoning, and Collected Topics students are to alternate each year [studying] the Ornament and the Entrance. ...*⁷³⁰

This is not the place to enter into the details of Gönlung's system of scholasticism and debate. Rather, I wish to merely draw attention to the first sentence where the author explicitly indicates a departure from convention. Similarly, in Wang IV's 1885 customary, the reader is explicitly told about practices that "used to be practiced." Such clauses alert the reader to the fact that customaries are living documents that are adapted to current circumstances.

Even more significant for evaluating the reliability of Gönlung's customary is the amount of detail found in the "uncommon" part of the text. The "uncommon" customary immediately follows the "general" or "common" customary and is meant to supplement the common customary. In the introduction to the uncommon customary there first is an homage to four individuals: Lozang Tendzin Gyatso, who is likely the author's predecessor, Gyelsé Lozang Tendzin Gyatso; Changkya II Ngawang Lozang Chöden; Changkya III Yeshé Tenpé

⁷³⁰ Italics added. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 24b.5–6; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 11b.2–4.

Drönmé,⁷³¹ aka Rölpe Dorjé; and Tuken III Lozang Chökyi Gyatso. Shortly thereafter, the author describes how the text came into being:

The upholding of the teachings depends upon the scholastic and spiritual training of the monks as well as their comportment. That being the case, the preceptor, former abbots, incarnate lamas, *garwa* and ‘hermitages’,⁷³² [*sgom sde*], *karam* and *rapjam* scholars,⁷³³ and monks of this great monastery of Gönlung Jampa Ling brought their minds together, arranged [together] all the earlier and later customaries [of the monastery] and said, "as long as this monastery exists, there is a need for a customary that accords with its time and place." After thorough conferral, [they] composed the seed of the customary. The precious incarnation of the Reverend Changkya and the Reverend Tuken Khutugtu Rinpoché both thoroughly reviewed [these customaries] and made the necessary additions and subtractions. In addition, [I] added some good parts that accorded with earlier times and ... threw out some ... [from] former customaries. Below, these Uncommon Rules of Conduct of Gönlung⁷³⁴ are clearly elucidated like a supplement⁷³⁵ to the former customaries. This supplements the former, unclear general and common [rules of conduct and customaries] of the monastery and colleges.⁷³⁶

This is a clear indication that Gyelsé Rinpoché consulted with the Gönlung officials responsible for crafting the monastery’s customary, or, that he was familiar with their work. Degu III Ngawang Gelek Gyatso,⁷³⁷ abbot of Gönlung from 1740-43, visited Gyelsé Rinpoché in 1737 to try to persuade Gyelsé to visit Gönlung.⁷³⁸ The ruler of Tibet at that time, Polhané,⁷³⁹ did not grant Gyelsé permission to leave. Nonetheless, it is quite possible that this mission is what motivated Gyelsé Rinpoché to compose the customary.

⁷³¹ T. ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me.

⁷³² T. *sgom sde*.

⁷³³ T. *dka' rab 'byams*.

⁷³⁴ T. *dgon lung gi mthun mong ma yin pa'i sgrigs lam rnams*.

⁷³⁵ T. *lhan thabs*.

⁷³⁶ The Tibetan reads “dir mi gsal ba’i grwa sa grwa tshang spyi dang mthun [mong gi sgrigs lam bca’] yig snga ma nas kha bskang ste shes par bya dgos rgyur,” the bracketed section being rather unclear in the xylograph print. Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 30b.5–6.

⁷³⁷ T. bde rgu ngag dbang dge legs rgya mtsho.

⁷³⁸ Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 743/51a.1.

⁷³⁹ T. pho lha nas

We also have some clues regarding the public presentation of Gyelsé's customary. The text itself tells us that the abbot and disciplinarians were required to give three disciplinary sermons (*tshogs gdam*) during each month-long dharma session and two during shorter dharma sessions.⁷⁴⁰ These were occasions to recite the monastery's customary or to at least demonstrate one's familiarity with it.⁷⁴¹ Because Wang IV's 1885 customary quotes a passage from the 1737 customary, referring to it as the "great customary" (*bca' yig chen mo*), we also know that it was still in circulation a century and a half after its composition. Finally, Wang V (d. 1963) records in his supplement to the *Gönlung Chronicle* that on the sixth day of the new year of 1929, while serving as abbot, he delivered a "detailed and extensive disciplinary sermon combined with [a recitation of] the monastic customary" in conjunction with the New Year festivities.⁷⁴²

Finances: The Triumvirate of Lama, General Management, and Patrons

The Lama Villa, or the Abbatial Villa (*bla brang*; *khri pa bla brang*)

I first came across the phrase "*khri pa bla brang*" in Wang IV's 1885 customary:

As for [preliminary] testing [of degree candidates],⁷⁴³ on one [day] at the end of the four[th] month a request is made to the venerable abbot [*khri ba tshang*], the college lama [*grwa tshang bla ma*], the disciplinarian of the great assembly [*tshogs chen dge dkos*], the college disciplinarian [*grwa tshang dge dkos*], and the overseer of studies

⁷⁴⁰ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 9a.4.

⁷⁴¹ Ellingson, "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca' yig," 217; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 387. Note, too, that the "Great Exhortation" mentioned in an above passage is a translation of "*tshogs gtam chen mo*."

⁷⁴² Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 45a.2–3.

⁷⁴³ The manuscript has "*rgyug*." I have corrected this to "*rgyugs*."

[*gzhung las pa*], these five. On the following day, [the examinee] is invited to the *khri ba bla brang*, and two servings of tea must be given.⁷⁴⁴

My translation here hides the difficulty I had when first encountering the phrase. Is the “*khri ba*” (i.e. *khri pa*), or abbot, being invited to the “villa” of an incarnate lama (*bla brang*)? Or, is the abbot inviting the examiner to such a lama villa? Whose lama villa?

I had similar confusion when I read the modern-day scholar-monk Nyima Dzin’s account of ritual sponsorship at Gönlung:

There was permanently established the custom of, apart from patrons, the *khri pa bla brang* and General Management Office [*spyi so*] having to annually provide for the clergy in assembly during the various times and stages [of the festival], [including] flour, butter, “community tea,” cash disbursements, bread, rice, and soup.⁷⁴⁵

Are the patrons, the abbot (*khri pa*), the lama palaces (*bla brang*), and the General Management Office *all* responsible for bearing this burden? I will argue that, in fact, there is no “and” nor a comma that is implied between “*khri pa*” and “*bla brang*,” but that it refers to a single entity, the “villa” (*brang*) of the abbot (*khri pa* or *bla ma*).

A separate *abbatial* villa does not appear to have been a common entity within Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.⁷⁴⁶ A quick search through the *Ocean Annals*, for instance, reveals only two passing references to a “*khri pa bla brang*,” one at Rongwo Monastery and another at Ganden Shedrup Pekar Drölwé Ling⁷⁴⁷ (one of the monastic complexes of Taktsang Lhamo).⁷⁴⁸ There is also a possible parallel in the customary of Kenchen

⁷⁴⁴ Wang IV Blo bzang ’jam pa’i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya ’byed pa’i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 2a.2.

⁷⁴⁵ Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 136.

⁷⁴⁶ Or, if it is, I have not seen a discussion of it in any scholarly literature.

⁷⁴⁷ T. dga’ ldan bshad sgrub pad dkar grol ba’i gling.

⁷⁴⁸ T. stag tshang lha mo. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 312.17–18 and 727.22–23. I would like to thank Gray Tuttle for sharing his digitally input version of this text, making such keyword searches incredibly fast and easy.

Monastery⁷⁴⁹—once one of Gönlung’s own branch temples. The customary, written by the third Mindröl Nominqan (1737-1785)⁷⁵⁰ in 1758 refers to a “*bla brang khri pa*” (“the enthroned one of the lama villa”) in contrast to the villa of the resident incarnate lama, Denma Lama⁷⁵¹:

As for cash disbursements, the Denma Villa [‘dan ma bla brang] is to receive five shares. [As for] offerings, it gets an extra share of wheat allowance⁷⁵² and three shares of barley allowance.⁷⁵³ The ‘abbot’s villa’ [*bla brang khri pa*] get five shares of cash disbursements. [It] gets an extra share of wheat allowance and three shares of barley allowance. ...⁷⁵⁴

I also contend that “*bla brang*,” too, is used in the earlier, 1737 customary of Gönlung to refer to the “abbatial lama villa”. Incarnate lamas and their villas—what we normally think of when we hear of a *ladrang* (*bla brang*)—are barely mentioned in the customary. There is passing reference to “rebirths” (*sku skye*) and an oblique reference to “lamas” in the plural (*bla ma rnams*).⁷⁵⁵ Otherwise, the villas of the important incarnate lamas at Gönlung, such as Changkya, Tuken, Sumpa, etc., have no explicit place in the text. In Wang IV’s 1885 customary there is a single passage where the incarnate lamas of Gönlung are discussed:

⁷⁴⁹ T. kan chen dgon.

⁷⁵⁰ I.e. ngag dbang ‘phrin las rgya mtsho. By the time Mindröl Nominqan composed this customary, Kenchen had probably already become a branch monastery of Serkhok.

⁷⁵¹ I.e. the lineage of The Great Adept Denma (‘dan ma grub chen).

⁷⁵² T. rgya phog. I would like to thank Berthe Jansen for this gloss and a stimulating conversation on the possible meanings of “*rgya*.” Personal communication, Feb. 29, 2012.

⁷⁵³ T. nas phog.

⁷⁵⁴ Smin grol III Ngag dbang ‘phrin las rgya mtsho, “Theg chen thar pa gling gi bca’ yig mu tig gi phreng mdzes (The Customary of [Kanchen. Manuscript.] Thekchen Tharpa Ling: the Beautiful Pearl Necklace)” (n.p. [Serkhok Monastery, Qinghai Province, China], n.d. [1758]), 1.45–48. “l” = line. Of course, my attempt to equate “*bla brang khri pa*” with “*khri pa bla brang*” is complicated by the fact that the abbot of Kenchen Monastery (the *bla ma khri sa ba*) at the time of this customary’s composition was none other than the monastery’s other incarnate lama, Baza or Wasa (ba za). In other words, *bla brang khri pa* could indicate the “villa” of Baza, who only incidentally happens to be abbot, without actually designating an independent “abbatial villa.”

⁷⁵⁵ Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 35b.5.

The community tea at this time [i.e. the First Spring Dharma Session] [is provided] by each of the four components of the ‘lama-management council’ and so forth,⁷⁵⁶ by each of the major incarnation villas [*bla brang che kha rnams*], by each pair of ‘alms-collectors,’⁷⁵⁷ and, moreover, by each grouping of three minor incarnation villas [*bla brang chung kha gsum res re*]. The community of the monks [*dge 'dun mang*] must also make a contribution.⁷⁵⁸

This enhanced role of Gönlung’s incarnate lamas expressed in this passage is noteworthy, and I shall have more to say about it below. Apart from this, however, the role of the incarnate lamas is not addressed in the customary, overshadowed by the prominent ceremonial role of the abbot (*bla ma*).

If the villas of Gönlung’s incarnate lamas were what were intended by the term “*bla brang*,” then one would expect the text to further specify *which* lama or to include a plural marker or some other grammatical marker indicating a group or a plurality of villas. Instead, we find the “*bla brang*” as a one member of the triumvirate of offices and individuals responsible for sponsoring the monastery’s major rituals. For example,

When there is a ‘*namshak* offering,’⁷⁵⁹ the lama villa [*bla brang*] must, from the third to the seventh, provide good service to the three: the lama in charge of sacrificial cake offering rituals⁷⁶⁰ and his [two] assistants ... From the 3rd to the 15th, the general anagement office [*spyi so*] makes a ‘select tea’ offering⁷⁶¹ ... On the 8th and 12th, the patron gathers as many feast offerings as he can, and the general management office, lama villa, and patron each receives a silk scarf.⁷⁶²

Apparently it is not completely unusual to find the term “*bla brang*” used to refer to the abbot’s residence, since that is what we find in the customary of the central Bön institution of

⁷⁵⁶ T. *bla spyi sogs khag bzhi*.

⁷⁵⁷ T. *'bul pa thob*.

⁷⁵⁸ Wang IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,”

3a.2.

⁷⁵⁹ T. *nam gzhang*.

⁷⁶⁰ T. *gtor sgrub bla ma*.

⁷⁶¹ T. *nyung ja*.

⁷⁶² 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33a.2.

Menri.⁷⁶³ There, we are told, “the monks cells are arranged with the *bla-bran* like a chief and his servants.”⁷⁶⁴

Since “*bla brang*” refers to Gönlung’s “abbatial lama villa,” one should not be surprised to learn that Gyelsé Rinpoché’s 1737 customary refers to the monastery’s abbot as “lama” (*bla ma*). For instance, the section on “appointing the abbot” (*bla ma bsgo bzha*) writes

He is appointed by the old abbot [*bla ma rnying ba*], the cantor and disciplinarians,⁷⁶⁵ the general manager [*spyi ba*], the *garwa* and hermitages,⁷⁶⁶ and the Monastic Elders.⁷⁶⁷ He's not to bring personal interests to this public post.⁷⁶⁸

The more standard term (if there is such a thing), “*khri pa*” (pronounced “*tripa*” or “*triwa*”) is never used to refer to the abbot in this earlier customary.⁷⁶⁹ This is likely because our author would have considered Gönlung to be a branch monastery of his own monastic seat in Central Tibet. As Gene Smith writes, “throughout the history of the institution, the abbot (*mkhan po*) [of Gönlung] was, in theory, the representative of the Rgyal sras Sprul sku [Gyelsé *trülku*]...”⁷⁷⁰ Likewise, based on my reading of historical texts from the period, it appears common for the temporary heads of branch monasteries and temples to be referred to as “lama” (*bla ma*), “*khenpo*” (*mhan po*), or “*lopön*” (*slob dpon*), “*tripa*” (*khri pa*) being reserved for the head of the “mother monastery.”

⁷⁶³ T. sman ri.

⁷⁶⁴ Cech, “A Bonpo Bca’ Yig: The Rules of sMan-ri Monastery,” 73. Cech has included a transcription of the text, which allows us to ascertain that “*bla ma*” is used to refer to the abbot and “*bla brang*” to his residence.

⁷⁶⁵ T. *dbu chos*.

⁷⁶⁶ T. *sgar sgom sde*.

⁷⁶⁷ T. *dge ’dun bgres ba rnams*.

⁷⁶⁸ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca’ yig chen mo Manuscript,” 17a.4.

⁷⁶⁹ The phrase “*khri ldan zur*” (“retired throne-holder”) is used to refer to *former* abbots, but “*khri*” or “*khri pa*” is never used to refer to the acting abbot.

⁷⁷⁰ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 159.

The later, 1885 customary is quite different. It is written by one of Gönlung's own incarnate lamas (Wang Khutugtu IV), and the Gyelsé incarnation lineage had long since lost influence in the affairs of Central Tibet and beyond.

Although Dgon lung was not a branch monastery of 'On Chos sding, the Rgyal sras incarnations' chief monastery, it did owe personal allegiance to the chief lama. With the progressive involvement of the Rgyal sras lamas in Central Tibetan affairs, the bonds between Dgon lung and 'On Chos sding gradually loosened. With the support of Manchu patronage, several of these abbatial incarnations, such as Lcang skya and Thu'u bkwan, eventually came to overshadow the Rgyal sras line, which had begun to decline after the middle of the eighteenth century.⁷⁷¹

This change in Gönlung's orientation—away from Gyelsé Rinpoché in Central Tibet and toward Changkya and other lamas situated at Gönlung itself or farther to the east in Beijing—is further substantiated by the fact that Changkya is referred to in late-eighteenth-century texts as the “proprietor” or “protector”⁷⁷² of Gönlung.⁷⁷³ In Wang IV's customary, then, the words “*khri pa*” (lit. the enthroned one), “*khri pa tshang*” (“honorable enthroned one”), and, “*bla ma khri pa tshang*” (“honorable enthroned lama”) are used freely to refer to Gönlung's abbot. “*Bla ma*” is most often reserved for referring to the heads of the monastery's colleges (*grwa tshang bla ma*) and other generally respected figures.⁷⁷⁴

This change in Gönlung's orientation and the concomitant change in its internal hierarchy and administration helps explain the makeup of the monastery presented by Louis Schram. The Belgian missionary spent approximately a decade (1911/12-1922) in Xining and

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷⁷² T. *dgon pa'i bdag po; dgon bdag*.

⁷⁷³ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 566.

⁷⁷⁴ There are at least two occasions, however, where Wang IV's customary uses “*bla ma*” to refer to a figure who plays a leadership role during assembly. This could be the abbot, although it might also be a reference to the college head.

surrounding areas studying the Monguor people.⁷⁷⁵ His depiction of the typical monastery in the region demotes the abbot (Ch. *fatai*; T. *slob dpon, mkhan po*) of the monastery to the position of mere pawn in the hands of the monastery's proprietor, which he calls the "supreme chief of the lamasery." The abbot is the "supreme chief" of the "community of lamas" and indeed has real financial obligations toward the monks; however, his powers are "reduced to theoretical and honorary dimensions."⁷⁷⁶ The real power-holder is the "intendant" of the monastery's proprietor, which he calls "*Tsuordzi*" in Tibetan and "*Hsiang tso*" in Chinese [*xiangzuo* 襄佐⁷⁷⁷]. Both of these terms are probably based on the Tibetan term *chakdzö* (*phyag mdzod*), "treasurer" or "steward." The intendant, Schram writes, is appointed by the "supreme chief of the lamasery," which in Schram's day was said to be Tuken, Changkya and Sumpa, although Tuken was the *de facto* supreme chief, since the other two were forced to reside elsewhere.⁷⁷⁸ The intendants were often appointed for a lifetime and are said to have wielded immense power: "It is not easy to handle intendants, and it is more difficult to dismiss them, according to the sayings of experienced old lamas."⁷⁷⁹ In fact, the intendant became so powerful that, in collusion with his second-in-command, the "procurator,"⁷⁸⁰ "they can easily dupe the supreme chief for a long time."⁷⁸¹ In contrast,

⁷⁷⁵ Owen Lattimore, "Introduction," in *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, ed. Charles Kevin Stuart (Xining: Plateau Publications, 2006), 86; Jeroom Hendrickx, "Louis J. M. Schram, CICM: Missionary and Ethnologist," in *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 54–55.

⁷⁷⁶ Hendrickx, "Louis J. M. Schram, CICM: Missionary and Ethnologist," 372–4.

⁷⁷⁷ Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 48. This source does not mention a "supreme chief of the lamasery," and it does not place the power of the "intendant" above all others. Instead, it places the abbot (Ch. *fatai*) at the top of the hierarchy, after which comes the power of the major incarnate lamas. In either case, the power of the major incarnate lamas is great when compared to their complete absence in the 1737 customary of Gönlung.

⁷⁷⁸ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 339.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁷⁸⁰ T. "*nirwa*" < *gnyer ba?*; Ch. "*Takuan-chia*" < *da guanjia* 大管家?

when Gyelsé was still considered Gönlung's proprietor, he only visited (or attempted to visit) the monastery once or twice a century. His power resided in the office of the abbot, which changed hands every three to four years.

As for the responsibilities of the intendant, Schram writes

The intendant of the monastery alone disposes of all the wealth of the monastery (not of the wealth of the community of the lamas or of the colleges), its revenues, investment of capital, loans, gifts, and alms received (but not of alms given to the community of lamas or to the colleges). He has to cope with all the expenses of the monastery, and to try to increase the collection of gifts and alms. He is in charge of the provisioning of the monastery, and must see that the procurator secures the colossal amounts of butter that a monastery requires. In the temples of Erh-ku-lung [i.e. Gönlung] eight butter lamps burn before the statues day and night. Each lamp consumes 180 pounds of butter every year, making 1,440 pounds for the eight lamps. The intendant told me that every year he had to provide a total of more than 3,000 pounds of butter for lamps, kitchen, and tea, and had to send lamas to Kukuror and Mongolia in order to collect this enormous amount. The intendant, in short, is the biggest cog in the wheel of administration. ...

As this passage illustrates, the intendant of the monastery—selected by the “supreme chief of the lamasery,” i.e. Tuken—had enormous financial responsibilities. “When the communities or colleges meet with financial troubles, they know that the supreme chief [of the lamasery] uses his own wealth to make donations to them—‘help provided makes sympathy wax.’”⁷⁸²

As we shall see, this description sounds remarkably similar to the list of responsibilities of the *abbot (bla ma)* found in the 1737 customary.

The monastery that Schram encountered in the early twentieth century had been racked by several decades and even centuries of violence and internecine feuds. Thus, Gönlung had ceased to be the outstanding beacon of scholasticism and social mobility that it

⁷⁸¹ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 341.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 339.

was prior to the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion. Formerly, the position of abbot had changed regularly and was to remain a “public” (*spyi*) post free from favoritism (*nye dga'*), partisanship (*phyogs skyor*), sycophancy (*ngo dga'*) and private interests (*sger don*).⁷⁸³ By Schram's day the monastery had slid back into an institution run by its most powerful incarnate lama.

The responsibilities of the abbot prior to Gönlung's demise were already alluded to in the abridged passage above that pertains to the annual Great Prayer Festival:

When there is a 'namshak offering' [*rnam gzhas*], the lama villa [*bla brang*] must, from the third to the seventh, provide good service to the three: the lama in charge of sacrificial cake offering rituals and his [two] assistants. It must [also] provide [to them] twelve[-colored paper] for drawing *linga* [effigies],⁷⁸⁴ whatever colored sand is needed, and three arm-spans of black cloth for a cushion for the *linga*. It must [also] provide a silk offering scarf to the painting of [the deity] Yama and thirteen extra [scarves] [?].⁷⁸⁵ On the thirteenth, [he] gives a block of tea and two ... [illegible] to the Courtyard *Cham* [Ritual Dance]⁷⁸⁶⁷⁸⁷

Although the last line of this passage is illegible in the xylograph, another passage in the text gives us an idea of the extent of the financial support the abbot gave these ritual dancers:

Practice for the Courtyard *Cham* [Ritual Dance] [*thang 'chams*] is from the first of the seventh month to the twenty-first. During that time the lama villa [*bla brang*] must

⁷⁸³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 17a.4–5.

⁷⁸⁴ T. *ling ga*.

⁷⁸⁵ T. *kha yol bcu gsum*.

⁷⁸⁶ T. *thang 'chams pa*. There are two groups of 'chams dancers at Gönlung: those of the protector deities' hall (*btsan khang*), and those of the main assembly (*tshogs chen*). The latter can be divided into the “masked dancers” (*'bag 'cham pa*) and the “courtyard cham ritual dancers.” The latter are required to carry out a five-day retreat to build the Great Sacrificial Cake Offering for Mahākāla (*mgon po'i gtor chen*) of the 29th day (during the Great Prayer Festival of the first month and that of the sixth month). Likewise, they are required to go to a seven-day retreat for the Great Sacrificial Cake Offering of Vajrabhairava (*'jigs byed kyi gtor chen*) that is on the 14th of the Great Prayer Festival of the first month. My translation of “*thang 'cham pa*” as “courtyard *cham* dancers” is somewhat tentative. Based on my personal observation of the *cham* ritual dance performed at Gönlung in 2011, I presume that the “masked dancers” are those that went into the assembly hall between each “act” of the dance in order to change masks and costumes. The “*thang 'cham pa*,” by contrast, may have been those that sat on the sidelines of the courtyard between acts, since they did not have to change masks or costumes. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 129.8–130.5.

⁷⁸⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33a.2.

provide a 'community tea' to the leader and his assistants, all seventeen of them, as well as five [bricks of] tea for each of them, a morning tea [?],⁷⁸⁸ and lunch.⁷⁸⁹

In between the ritual dancers' practice in the late summer and the Great Prayer Festival in the late winter, the lama villa was also responsible for the provisions of the 'New Year Eve's Eve Sacrificial Cake Offering.'⁷⁹⁰ These included seven 'select teas' during assembly, a serving of soup and three servings of *tsampa* (?)⁷⁹¹ for the clergy, and the flour and other food offerings for the sacrificial cake,⁷⁹² to name just some of the provisions.⁷⁹³ The lama villa is equally financially responsible for the Long-life Sacrificial Cake Offering,⁷⁹⁴ an important ritual event to which are invited all the incarnate lama (*sku skye*), hermitages, and eminent scholars affiliated with the monastery.⁷⁹⁵

Apart from these ritual events, the abbot along with the disciplinarians were also responsible on a regular basis for ensuring that there was enough for the servings of 'monks' teas,' "lest the students grow weary of attending the dharma sessions."⁷⁹⁶ Similarly, the abbot's representative⁷⁹⁷ along with the disciplinarians were responsible for regularly ensuring the quality of the 'community tea' offerings (at least those made during the Great Prayer Festival).⁷⁹⁸ In addition, when there were no communal funds available to pay for the

⁷⁸⁸ T. *tsha bzhes*.

⁷⁸⁹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 31b.5.

⁷⁹⁰ T. *dgu gtor*.

⁷⁹¹ T. *tsha grwa < tsha gra*.

⁷⁹² T. *gtor ma*.

⁷⁹³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 33b.3–4.

⁷⁹⁴ T. *tshé gtor*.

⁷⁹⁵ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 33b.4–34a.1.

⁷⁹⁶ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 8b.1.

⁷⁹⁷ T. *bla brang sku tshab*.

⁷⁹⁸ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 8b.4–5.

monastery's expenses, as was the case in the aftermath of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, the abbot would be the one to pick up the tab.⁷⁹⁹

The abbot was able to pay for these expenses at least in part due to the greater number of shares of alms accorded him. Along with the cantor, the disciplinarians, and the general manager,⁸⁰⁰ the abbot receives an extra share of cash disbursements and bread⁸⁰¹ donated at assemblies.⁸⁰² Likewise, the lama villa (as well as the general management office) was entitled to a 'pail'⁸⁰³ of tea from assembly, which likely went to help feed his own acolytes and attendants.⁸⁰⁴ To be sure, two shares instead of a single share is not a sizeable difference when compared with other monasteries in its vicinity (let alone the income gap that exists between modern C.E.O.s and their lowest paid employees!). For instance, at Tuken's nearby branch monastery of Chözang Hermitage,⁸⁰⁵ we read

As for the shares of cash disbursements and bread, the lama villa gets ten. The 'tea manager,'⁸⁰⁶ the manager of deity evocation offering rituals,⁸⁰⁷ the cantor, the temple caretaker,⁸⁰⁸ cook,⁸⁰⁹ and water-bearers⁸¹⁰ all get an extra share.

⁷⁹⁹ The abbot on this occasion was Sumpa Dharma King Phuntsok Namgyel (sum pa *chos rjes* phun tshogs rnam rgyal, r. 1729-1734). Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 149–50.

⁸⁰⁰ T. *gnyer ba*.

⁸⁰¹ T. *'tshab ra*.

⁸⁰² T. "'tshab ra," "tshab ra," "'tshabs ra," etc. appear in several customaries I have read from Gönlung and surrounding monasteries. A Gönlung informant explained to me that it means "bread." A passage from the *Ocean Annals* similarly indicates that it is a type of cake: "In the Water-Monkey year [1752], at the age of twenty-eight, [Chu bzang III] took the throne of Kumbum Monastery. ... He built a new, great lama villa [*bla brang chen mo*]. In the Wood-Dog year [1754], he abolished [the custom] of distributing donations of meat during the New Year's and Nirvana of Tsongkhapa rituals, and he established the custom of offering bread [*khur ba*] and sweet cakes [*thur kyi tshab ra*]." Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 92.3–8; Zhiguanba•Gongquehudanbaraoji, *Anduo zhengjiao shi*, 93–4.

⁸⁰³ T. *zom*.

⁸⁰⁴ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 8b.5.

⁸⁰⁵ T. *chos bzang ri khrod*.

⁸⁰⁶ T. *ja tshul gnyer pa*.

⁸⁰⁷ T. *sgrub mchod gnyer pa*.

⁸⁰⁸ T. *sku gnyer*.

⁸⁰⁹ T. *chab skad pa*.

⁸¹⁰ T. *chu len*.

During ‘community tea’ the lama villa is given one full pot of tea⁸¹¹ and one full, small pail.⁸¹² If [one] is truly sick, then appropriate offerings should be made [to him].⁸¹³

However, it is important to remember that, unlike Chözang Hermitage and other small temples established and/or directed by eminent lamas, Gönlung’s “proprietor” played practically no role in the daily operations of the monastery. Its founder and proprietor, Gyelsé Rinpoché was far off in Central Tibet, and as already noted, the last visit he made to Gönlung in pre-modern times was in the seventeenth century.⁸¹⁴ As a major institution of learning that housed hundreds and even thousands of monks, it would have been more difficult to justify giving an extremely disproportionate number of alms to the monastery leaders.

In addition, it is likely that Gönlung and thus the abbot received numerous types of alms besides just “cash disbursements” and “bread.” Take, for example, Kenchen Monastery, which was mentioned above. Apart from bread (of which the treasurer of the lama villa at Kenchen is said to receive an extra share) and cash disbursements, the abbot there also received a substantial allowance of grains. Although the Gönlung customary does not specify these allowances, the monastery likely received an ample amount of grain donations from its estates and, after 1729, from the Qing imperial treasury⁸¹⁵. Finally, the abbot, who was often an eminent lama in his own right, would have been the regular recipient of offerings that were completely separate from the monastery’s distribution of alms.

⁸¹¹ T. *dem gang*.

⁸¹² T. *zo chung gang*.

⁸¹³ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dben gnas bde chen chos gling gi bsam gtan pa rnam kyi bca’ khrims bstan pa’i pad tshal rgyas pa’i nyin byed sogs bca’ yig gi rim pa phyogs gcig tu bkod pa bzugs so (The Monastic Constitution that Clearly Elucidates the Processes of Ethical Decision Making for the Monks Residing at the Great Place of Accomplishment, Dechen Chöling. Also known as the Sun that Makes Grow the Lotus Garden of the Teachings),” in *Gsung ’bum* (Collected Works) (New Zhol Par-khang, n.d.), 9a/691.1–2.

⁸¹⁴ The most recent incarnation of Gyelsé was brought to the monastery in 1985. Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 161.

⁸¹⁵ On these imperial allowances, see chapter seven.

The abbot's administrative and spiritual responsibilities include approving eligibility for membership in the monastery, observing and grading debates and exams, delivering disciplinary sermons, giving recitation lessons and sermons on the dharma, approving leaves of absence, and consulting with other monastery officials for making appointments (e.g. the appointment of an individual who monitors the conduct of the monastery's oracle). He was also expected to officiate on certain ritual occasions, such as the 'New Year's Eve's Eve Offering' as well as the 'invocation and visualization'⁸¹⁶ of the deities on the Commemoration Day of Tsongkhapa's Nirvana,⁸¹⁷ and, of course, he would also be called regularly to neighboring villages to officiate at rituals and give teachings there.

The abbot (*bla ma*) in Gönlung's early history thus was much more than a mere figurehead. He, rather than one of the monastery's incarnate lamas, wielded major power and executed many of the monastery's operations. This makes sense when we remember that Gönlung's first series of incarnations did not begin until the mid-seventeenth-century, with Changkya II. As Changkya II's prestige grew, so did his influence at Gönlung and that of the growing corps of incarnate lamas at Gönlung. By the late eighteenth-century, Gönlung had witnessed at least two generations of important lamas pass away and reincarnate, and some of these became extremely renowned regionally and inter-regionally (e.g. Sumpa Khenpo, Changkya III, Chuzang III, and Tuken III). As Gyelsé's interest in Gönlung waned, so did the power of his putative representative at the monastery, the abbot (*bla ma* or *mkhan po*).

The General Management Office (*spyi sa/so/ba*)

⁸¹⁶ T. *bsnyen bsgrub*.

⁸¹⁷ T. *lnga mchod*.

The abbot's duties early on were quite onerous. Eventually, however, the financial and administrative needs of the monastic community exceeded the abilities of the abbot alone. Tuken III's chronicle of Gönlung, for instance, tell us of a major reform that took place in 1665 when the rebirth of the monastery's founder visited.⁸¹⁸

The sixteenth abbot was the Expounder of Scripture and Reasoning, Pelden Gyatso.⁸¹⁹ He was born in a nomadic community called Degu.⁸²⁰ He studied exoteric and esoteric [teachings] in Amdo and Ü [mdo dbus]. In the Wood-Snake year [1665], through the command of the Omniscient Gyelsé, he was installed as the abbot of Gönlung. Previously, abbots [*mkhan po rnams*] combined [the duties] of [religious] lama and [administrative] manager [*bla gnyer*]. This venerable separately established [the positions of] lama for religious affairs and manager for worldly affairs.⁸²¹

Changkya II, in his autobiography, remarks on this event, although he attributes the reform to Gyelsé himself rather than the abbot who had been appointed by Gyelsé. Regardless, it is perhaps significant that this reform was implemented on the heels of a time during which “the teachings had deteriorated.”⁸²² Three decades later, when Desi Sangyé Gyatso compiled his overview of Geluk monasteries in Tibet, *The Yellow Beryl*, Gönlung was noted as the largest monastery in Amdo. Moreover, by that time one of its principal lamas, Changkya Rinpoché, had worked his way into serving as the Kangxi Emperor's court chaplain. It is difficult to assess the influence this reform might have had on the monastery's success; however, we do know that later leaders continued to recognize the importance of separating the domains of abbot and general management.

⁸¹⁸ On this incarnation's visit to Gönlung see Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, 219n636; Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 706/32b.5.

⁸¹⁹ T. dpal ldan rgya mtsho.

⁸²⁰ T. bde rgu.

⁸²¹ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 707/33a.4.

⁸²² *Ibid.*, 706/32b.4.

I translate the compound term “*bla spyi*” as “lama *and* general management office.” This is to highlight that we are dealing with *separate entities*, each of which managed distinct aspects of the monastery. Other scholarly works on monasticism in Tibet—all of them based on ethnography or interviews with informants—typically define “*bla spyi*” as a “monastic council” usually made up of various officers, including the abbot, retired abbots, the disciplinarian, the cantor, and so forth.⁸²³ At Sera Monastery one finds a parallel council known as the “*bla kha bcu*” (“Council of Ten Lamas”).⁸²⁴ These works discuss the “council” as a cohesive unit that works in concert to run the monastery, and none have discussed the fact that the administrative unit, like its name, is a compound. The term is often followed by the word “*so so*” (“each,” “one’s own”), like in the above passages, which should caution us from interpreting the term to mean a cohesive unit in *all* cases.

I have not found conclusive evidence for the existence at Gönlung of a cohesive “*bla spyi*” monastic council that included both the abbot and other monastic officials such as members of the general management office. In the 1940s and 50s, the monastery did have some sort of governing council, but it does not appear to have included the abbot. It comprised twelve individuals:

- the ‘general steward’ (*spyi phyag mdzod*);
- two disciplinarians (*dge skos*);
- two ‘senior elders’ (Ch. *laoye* 老爺); and,

⁸²³ Georges Dreyfus, “An Introduction to Drepung’s Colleges,” *The Drepung Monastery Project*, 2006, <http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/drepung/essays/#!essay=/dreyfus/drepung/colleges/s/b1>.

⁸²⁴ Cabezón, “Introduction to Sera Monastery.” The “*lhan rgyas*” council at Dakpo Dratsang does *not* include the abbot and thus bears some resemblance to the general management office at Gönlung. Nornang, “Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-po Bshad-grub-gling,” 253.

- seven elders (Ch. *laozhe* 老者).⁸²⁵

They were also known as the 'Those Twelve'.⁸²⁶ Chinese ethnographers, who visited Gönlug in the 1950s, recorded that the committee's name was none other than the "General Management Office",⁸²⁷ a body that owned some 160 to 170 *mu* of land.⁸²⁸ According to them, the committee was made up of eleven individuals, including

- the 'steward' (Ch. *xiangzuo* 襄佐 < T. *phyag mdzod*) of the monastic community (i.e. separate from that of an incarnate lama's villa);⁸²⁹
- two disciplinarians (*sengguan* 僧官);
- two 'clerical supervisors' (*senggang* 僧岗); and,
- six elders (*laomin* 老民).⁸³⁰

The "steward" was the abbot's steward, and so his presence on the council might be taken as representative of the abbot's presence. Nonetheless, there was a concerted effort over the course of Gönlung's history to keep separate the powers and wealth of the abbot from those of the general management office. Obviously, this would have been more important in earlier

⁸²⁵ Per Nyima Dzin, personal communication. Nyima Dzin gave me this list in response to my asking whether Gönlung had a "*bla spyi*." Although he did not object to my use of the term "*bla spyi*," his own name for the council was the 'Those Twelve.' The mixture of Tibetan and Chinese terms reflects our conversation, which switched regularly between the two languages when confusion arose. Schram writes of four elderly "councilors" at the monastery. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 375.

⁸²⁶ T. *khong mam pa bcu gnyis*.

⁸²⁷ Ch. *jiwa ang* 吉哇昂 < T. *spyi ba nang* [*chen*]?

⁸²⁸ Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 52.

⁸²⁹ This appears to correspond to the "intendant" of the "community of lamas," about which Schram makes a few remarks. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 342.

⁸³⁰ Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 48.

times, *before* the power and wealth of the abbot were overshadowed by that of the monastery's incarnate lamas.

Despite Gyelsé's reform of 1665, by 1693, the monastery had slipped back into its old ways. Changkya II, who was staying at Gönlung at the time, recounts the situation he encountered and his reestablishment of the reform:

When Gyelsé Rinpoché [previously, in 1665] went [to Gönlung], he made separate the lama [*bla*, i.e. abbot] and 'general management office' [*spyi*]. However, not long thereafter they were merged into one [administration]. When lamas [*bla ma*, i.e. abbots] are responsible for all worldly affairs such as resolving disputes, it is difficult for them to do such things as teach [the dharma]. Therefore, [in 1693,] all the lamas [*bla ma*] and monks discussed this and came to an agreement that the managers of the general management office⁸³¹ will take responsibility for all worldly affairs, and [these] managers will be separately appointed. A customary was created clearly elaborating on all of the tasks of the two traditions [of spiritual and temporal administration].

The abbot thereby became responsible for giving spiritual teachings and presiding over important rituals. The actual administration of the monastery was handed over to the new general management office. This was not merely meant to make the abbot's job easier. On the contrary, the primary beneficiaries of this change were the monks themselves. Changkya's biographer clearly explains Changkya's motivation behind reestablishing such a system at his other major monastery, Khökhe süme⁸³² in Dolonnuur:

... thinking of the benefit of the monastery, [Changkya] separately established the general management office, and he appointed two general managers [*spyi gnyer*]. From his own villa he gave to the public coffers⁸³³ 120 stallions and a family to care

⁸³¹ T. *spyi so'i gnyer pa*. The biography of Changkya II, on the other hand, clearly gives the plural: “*spyi so'i gnyer pa tsho*.” Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 42a.1.

⁸³² T. mtsho bdun dgon gsar. Also known as “mtsho bdun gyi lha khang chen mo,” it is later given the names Khökhe süme (“Blue Temple”) and Huizong si 彙宗寺 (“Monastery that Convenes the Clans”).

⁸³³ T. *spyi 'jog*.

for the livestock. This he did as an endowment for the estate⁸³⁴ of the temple and all [its] clergy.⁸³⁵

In other words, the creation of a general management office ensured that pedagogical, ritual, administrative and, most importantly, financial obligations were met for a growing number of monks. Incidentally, such generous contributions by the villas of incarnate lamas to the public resources of monasteries may have been one of the causes for the greater role of incarnate lamas in the life of these monasteries.

Besides Gyelsé Rinpoché, Changkya II may have had other models in mind when he reestablished this reform in 1693. In particular, he likely was emulating his guru, Trichen Jamgön.⁸³⁶ Before Trichen Jamgön became the Golden Throne Holder (of Ganden Monastery and, thus, the Geluk sect), he served as abbot of the renowned Gomang College of Drepung Monastery.⁸³⁷ One of his biographers, the Seventh Dalai Lama, describes his influential presence there as a teacher and the substantial changes he made to scholasticism at the college. In addition, Trichen Jamgön also seems to have made a remarkable *administrative* change to the college:

Formerly, the lama [*bla*, i.e. abbot] and general management office [*spyi*] did not exist separately [*so sor med pa*], and thus there were no tea meals apart from those of the four major dharma sessions. For many—monks who had come from far away to study and so forth—this was very grueling. [Trichen Jamgön] found this unbearable, and so consulted with the *nachen*,⁸³⁸ teachers, and other decision-makers [of the college], whereupon they established additional 'public goods' [*spyi pa'i dngos chas*] [and] established the custom of continuously providing two 'monks' teas' [*gra ja*] in

⁸³⁴ T. *mchod theb*.

⁸³⁵ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 68a.5–68b.2.

⁸³⁶ See [note above](#).

⁸³⁷ Ngakwang Lodrö Gyatso was the abbot of Gomang from 1665-1673. Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 357–360 / 15b.1–17a.3.

⁸³⁸ T. *sna chen*. A type of officer.

the mid-morning. Therefore, he is known as a most compassionate [contributor] to this college in terms of the two systems [i.e. spiritual and worldly].⁸³⁹

It may be necessary at this point to try to distinguish 'communal tea' (T. *mang ja*) from 'monks' tea' (*grwa ja*). 'Communal tea' is the better known of the two terms and refers to the distribution of tea (and often such food as bread or noodle stew) to *all* of the monastery's monks regardless of whether they are in attendance during the service. Moreover, communal tea is donated by a patron. The meaning of 'monks' tea,' on the other hand, is less clear. Unlike communal tea, it is given only to those monks actually present at the assembly.⁸⁴⁰ Another gloss that has been suggested to me is that it is 'the monastery's own tea' (*grwa [sa rang gi] ja*).⁸⁴¹ In other words, there is no immediate patron for the tea.⁸⁴² Instead, a monastery office, such as the general management office, would provide these meals from a fund it managed.⁸⁴³

This signifies a key turning point in the history of one of Tibet's foremost monastic institutions. Georges Dreyfus estimates that in the twentieth century Gomang College may have housed as many as twenty to thirty percent of Drepung's ten thousand monks.⁸⁴⁴ If we assume that ratio was the same in the seventeenth century, then Gomang College might have

⁸³⁹ Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 360/17a.1–3.

⁸⁴⁰ Gönlung informant, personal communication.

⁸⁴¹ Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, personal communication, December 2011.

⁸⁴² Yet another meaning of the term – one that does not seem to apply here – is tea paid out to monks who attend prayers for a recently deceased monk, the tea being purchased with funds raised by the sale of the deceased monk's possessions. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, personal communication, December 2011.

⁸⁴³ For an example of such a fund being established for the explicit purpose of providing "monks' tea," see Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 19a.1; See another example pertaining to the nearby monastery of Yarlung, aka Shimen si 石門寺. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 132.18.

⁸⁴⁴ Dreyfus, "An Introduction to Drepung's Colleges"; accessed on Sept. 11, 2012. Goldstein gives an even higher number: 3,500-4,000 of Drepung's 10,000 monks. *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 30n41; Cited in Gray Tuttle, "Local History in A mdo: The Tsong Kha Range (Ri rgyud)," *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 6 (2010): 56n41.

housed as many as 1260 monks, making it one of the top ten largest monastic institutions on the Tibetan Plateau at that time. In order to attract and sustain such a mass of monks, the availability of 'monks' tea' and other sources of sustenance were essential. Changkya, who ultimately followed Trichen Jamgön to Beijing whereupon he was introduced to the Kangxi Emperor, was no doubt influenced by Trichen Jamgön's largess as well as his administrative innovations, and this may have been the model for his reforms at Gönlung.

During Gönlung's ascendance, the administrative duties and powers of the general management office included helping to appoint the abbot, which it did in consultation with the former abbots, the cantor and disciplinarians, the *garwa* and branch hermitages, and the monastery's Elders.⁸⁴⁵ It also regularly extended invitations to important lamas to visit Gönlung or to serve as its abbot. These responsibilities are significant insofar as they indicate that the general management office had certain executive powers in addition to its financial ones. This expands the definition of this institution given by the Mongolist Robert Miller, who says that the "Jisa" (< T. *spyi sa*, here translated as "general management office") may refer to 1) a storehouse, or the place where the goods or capital funds donated are stored; 2) the goods or funds so donated which are liquidated in carrying out the purpose of the donor; and, 3) a fund from which the interest is used to pay for a specific recurring monastic function.⁸⁴⁶ Miller explains that the "jisa" is also called "tsang" (*pinyin* "zang" 藏),⁸⁴⁷ a term

⁸⁴⁵ T. *bgres pa*. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 17a.4–5; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 28b.2–3.

⁸⁴⁶ Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, 427–8.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

that likewise means “treasury” in the Chinese Buddhist context.”⁸⁴⁸ In a review of Miller’s work, another scholar refers to “*jisa*” as “primitive banks” and “decentralized treasuries.”⁸⁴⁹ This institution may have been characterized by predominantly financial responsibilities; however, at least at Gönlung, the general management office was more than that.

The above comments notwithstanding, the general management office’s financial responsibilities were much more extensive. It was responsible for providing a share of alms to the elderly monks who were unable to attend assembly (?)⁸⁵⁰ and all other associated expenditures. It was also responsible for finding a patron for the Great Prayer Festival and all the dharma sessions. If it failed to find one, then it was expected to annually provide fifty ounces⁸⁵¹ of silver from the ‘common wealth.’⁸⁵² If for some reason it was unable to cover the expenses of the dharma sessions, then it was expected to come up with a suitable alternative. These dharma session expenses are said to include morning tea (?)⁸⁵³ and lunches for both disciplinarians, lunches for the disciplinarian’s assistant,⁸⁵⁴ the cook,⁸⁵⁵ and the ‘shrine caretakers.’⁸⁵⁶ It was also regularly required to give some support to the two *kurimpa*,⁸⁵⁷ monks who regularly chant on behalf of the monastery’s well-being, the assistant

⁸⁴⁸ For example, see Walsh’s discussion of “*wujinzang*” 無盡藏, “Inexhaustible Treasuries” of Chinese monasteries from which high-interest loans were made. Walsh, *Sacred Economies*, 62 and 65.

⁸⁴⁹ George Murphy, “[Buddhist Monastic Economy: The *Jisa* Mechanism]: Comment,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, no. 4 (July 1961): 439.

⁸⁵⁰ T. *nang zan*.

⁸⁵¹ T. *srang*.

⁸⁵² T. *spyi rdzas*.

⁸⁵³ T. *tsha bzhes*.

⁸⁵⁴ T. *chab hril* < *chab ril*.

⁸⁵⁵ T. *chab skad* [pa].

⁸⁵⁶ T. *sku gnyer*.

⁸⁵⁷ T. *sku rim pa*.

cook (?),⁸⁵⁸ and the water-bearers. In addition, during the annual Great Prayer Festival, when numerous alms are distributed to the clergy, the general management office in particular was responsible for an ‘Ocean of Listeners select tea’⁸⁵⁹ from the third day to the fifteenth, as well as, on the eighth day, a serving of tea for the ‘assembly feast,’⁸⁶⁰ two pieces of cloth, and a platter of assorted foods.⁸⁶¹ Finally, it sponsored a large new year’s feast.⁸⁶²

For the Anniversary of Tsongkhapa’s Nirvana, the office was required to provide five community teas if there was no patron. And, if there was a patron, then the office became responsible for providing community teas for the commemoration of the two previous Gyelsé lamas, an event that all the representatives from the branch temples were to attend.⁸⁶³ The general management office was also responsible for the ‘regular sacrificial cake offerings,’⁸⁶⁴ of which there were five scheduled each month. During these periodic rituals, if there was no community tea provided (by a patron), then it was incumbent upon the general management office to at least provide a ‘select tea’ offering at a minimum.⁸⁶⁵

Of course, the general management office and its staff were also on the receiving end of a great deal of wealth. We read of the office at a monastery in Ladakh,

Once he [the monk] becomes a Chiso Chanzoe [*spyi so phyag mdzod*, i.e. steward of the general management office], he is free from all the work obligations in the monastery. He wears a red scarf and holds one of the highest and most respectable

⁸⁵⁸ T. *ja ma*. I have not yet been able to delineate the roles of the “*ja ma*” and the “*chab ska pa*.” I have been told that the two terms are synonymous, but here the terms obviously refer to separate positions within the monastery.

⁸⁵⁹ T. *thos pa rgya mtsho’i nyung ja*.

⁸⁶⁰ T. *tshogs rdzas*.

⁸⁶¹ T. *zas sna sgo gang*. Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33a.4.

⁸⁶² Ibid., 35b.

⁸⁶³ Ibid., 33b.1–2.

⁸⁶⁴ T. *dus gtor*.

⁸⁶⁵ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 35b.4.

positions and sits high up in the seating order ... He also receives a double share of the food-money distribution, compared to an ordinary monk's single share.⁸⁶⁶

At Gönlung, when a lama (*bla ma*) was invited to the monastery (perhaps to serve as abbot or to give teachings), half of the donations that were given to him were shared by the general management office. At the same time, if the invited lama himself gave to the monastery, part of it was given back to him and the other half was shared by this office.⁸⁶⁷ But with such wealth came great responsibility. It was expected that it spend the monastery's wealth on building and refurbishing monastery buildings, such as the main shrine hall and its own hall and storehouse,⁸⁶⁸ or on the purchasing and repairs of ritual instruments and other necessary articles.⁸⁶⁹ As was the case with the abbot, when the overseer⁸⁷⁰ of the general management office changes office, his record was scrutinized to ensure the common wealth had not been misspent.⁸⁷¹

Lay Patrons (*sbyin bdag*)

The lay patron is the third leg of Gönlung's financial triumvirate. The customary devotes quite a bit of attention to the laity. In general, discussion of the laity can be divided into three types: laity as sponsor; rules for regarding laity at the monastery; and, rules for how to interact with the laity outside of the monastery. The three types of discussion are

⁸⁶⁶ Tsarong, "Economy and Ideology on a Tibetan Monastic Estate in Ladakh," 162.

⁸⁶⁷ My interpretation of this passage is somewhat tentative. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 35b.7–36a.1.

⁸⁶⁸ T. *spyi khang*.

⁸⁶⁹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 36a.1.

⁸⁷⁰ T. *gnyer ba*.

⁸⁷¹ My xylograph print is unclear here, and so I am unable to read some of the details of this passage. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 36a.2–3.

intimately related. The reason for this is that pleasing comportment among the clergy and friendly relations with the laity ensured timely donations. As Ellington remarks,

the principle underlying such requirements [of aesthetics in religions practice] is that the life of the monastic community should embody a *spyod-lam mdzes-pa*, or “beautiful path of practice,” a concept cited in *bca’-yig* for at least five hundred years ... It provides an unusual and potentially instructive example of one way in which a soteriological concept (the religious community as an object of refuge and field of merit) can give rise to a normative concept (“beautiful” practice as a source of religious inspiration), which in turn generate a set of specific laws governing many practical aspects of daily life in the monastic community.⁸⁷²

Of course, the *practical* need for patronage could have given rise to both the normative concept of aesthetically-pleasing practice and the soteriological concept of the sangha as a field of merit (i.e. an ideal place to donate one’s wealth). The point here, however, is that monastic administrations are keenly aware of how to manipulate lay-cleric relations. The rules regarding laity at the monastery and the proper comportment of the clergy are also related to the discipline and socialization of the clergy, subjects we shall turn to at the end of the chapter.

It was hoped that lay patrons would sponsor all of the major ritual occasions at Gönlung, such as the annual Great Prayer Festival as well as all the dharma sessions. Given that Gönlung’s six dharma sessions alone required nearly six months to complete, this obviously amounted to a major commitment amongst the monastery’s laity. Part of the lay patron’s role during the Great Prayer Festival has already been mentioned above: “On the 8th and 12th, the patron gathers as many feast offerings as he can ...”⁸⁷³ These “feast offerings” may be similar to the opulent display of meat and bread offerings that the laity present in the center of the courtyard during the festival’s *cham* ritual dance (see photo below). If a patron

⁸⁷² Ellington, “Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca’ yig,” 212–13.

⁸⁷³ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33a.4.

was procured for the Commemoration of Tsongkhapa's Nirvana, then the monastery would invite clergy from all of its subsidiary temples to attend, which no doubt added considerably to the patron's financial burden.⁸⁷⁴ The perks of being a major patron seem paltry by comparison, although one must keep in mind the immense esteem and social capital s/he would acquire: silk offering scarves, blessing cords (?),⁸⁷⁵ and other emblems of protection (?)⁸⁷⁶ would be given to them, and they were also allowed to enter certain precincts normally off-limits to laity, such as the kitchen.⁸⁷⁷



⁸⁷⁴ It may be the case that the local 'clans' (*mtsho pa* < *tsho ba*?) are required to finance these events (i.e. the Great Prayer Festival and the Commemoration of Tsongkhapa's Nirvana) if a patron does not appear. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 8b.3; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 22b.4.

⁸⁷⁵ T. *srung mdud*.

⁸⁷⁶ T. *srung rtags*. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 33b.4–34a.1.

⁸⁷⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 9a.2–4.

This photo shows the immense amount of foodstuffs, particularly bread, offered to Gönlung during the cham ritual dance associated with the New Year festivities. February, 2011.

There is an obvious drive that is expressed in the customary to limit clerical-lay relations to these financial exchanges. Numerous, redundant rules forbid the clergy from getting involved in extra-monastic affairs that could tarnish their reputations or engender animosity. One of the more interesting sections of the customary pertains to the monastery's oracle (*sku rten*), a figure of particular concern to the author:

As regards the protectors' hall, within the monastery, outside the monastery, or anywhere in between, one is not to "hoist up his dharma protector" and exert violence [against others]. Whenever the oracle goes near or far, he must ask permission from the disciplinarian, and he must never stay in a female household.⁸⁷⁸ ... When [the oracle] goes [elsewhere] and stays overnight, he should never do inappropriate things that will ruin his reputation. When he does, he is to be punished in accordance with the seriousness of the infraction. ...⁸⁷⁹

Such concern for the oracle probably derives from his powers of prophecy—which even Changkya II besought before returning to Beijing to serve the Kangxi Emperor—as well as the oracle's popularity and frequent trips outside the monastery.⁸⁸⁰

Other monks would also travel regularly to the villages either to perform 'village rituals',⁸⁸¹ or to visit with family, and they are expressly warned not to engage in ritual practices for which they had not received proper training. They were also forbidden to get involved in village suits and feuds at all costs:

if⁸⁸² one is a monk [prone to getting involved in extra-monastic affairs], and a villager were to kill someone close to him or even his parents or siblings, and then he does

⁸⁷⁸ T. *nag tshang*.

⁸⁷⁹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 34a.2.

⁸⁸⁰ Sumpa Khenpo obliquely refers to the power and popularity of oracles by occasionally criticizing the practices of spirit-mediumship, prophecy, etc. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len, passim*.

⁸⁸¹ T. *grong chog*.

⁸⁸² T. *phyin*.

some sort of violent action [in retaliation], then he is not [allowed] to [re-]enter the monastery.⁸⁸³

The customary also warns against abusing one's status as a monk for personal gain: "One must never [use] power, smuggle, plunder, or greedily snatch up [land or valuables] except for that which this monastery's estate has truly acquired [*thob nges*]." ⁸⁸⁴ Similarly, "the general management office must make sure to ascertain that there are no other claimants to an estate that has come to an end [*gzhi stong*]" before it takes possession of it. ⁸⁸⁵

All of these rules (and many more like them) were meant to ensure that the monastery remained a religious institution rather than a site for local ambitions and grievances to run their course. This was the only way to ensure that Gönlung maintain a reputation as a "public" space where individuals from all over can study and advance their spiritual careers. Successful monasteries had to maintain a "beautiful path of practice" in order to become a "field of merit" for its donors. Note, however, that we are not merely talking about abstract notions of "proper comportment" or "good conduct." Rather, the customary prescribes the details for all manner of life, including how one is to dress, sit, talk, and sing. It provides the boundaries of Gönlung's pastures and provides specific punishments for the monks and laymen who steal wood or grass from those pastures. It explains the conditions under which women are allowed to visit the monastery. ⁸⁸⁶ It is this comprehensive set of norms—codified, disseminated, and reissued year after year over the centuries—that help to distinguish a mega monastery from one that is subject to the whims of its proprietor.

⁸⁸³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 36b.3.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., 36b.5.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., 36b.6.

⁸⁸⁶ According to Schram, these conditions were the same when he was there in the early twentieth century. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 374–5.

The Discipline of Monkhood

In chapter seven we shall see an image of a monastery ruined. In the aftermath of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, resources were scarce, and monks fawned over and chased after wealth and power “like flowers to the sun.” This was also the period of “many heads” in the leadership of Gönlung, which is another way of saying it lacked order. Sumpa Khenpo, who served as abbot for three terms during this period of spiritual malaise, was specifically sought out in order to “rehabilitate teaching, study, exegesis, practice, rules of discipline, and wealth which have declined somewhat.” All of these features of a mega monastery—teaching, study, exegesis of scripture, spiritual practices, discipline, and wealth—grow and decline in tandem. Thus, when discipline breaks down so do the other defining characteristics of a mega monastery.

Socialization

A new monk’s socialization would take place immediately upon arriving at the monastery. Some of the requirements for becoming a monk that we find listed in the customary are taken directly from the Vinaya, and as such it is difficult to assess the extent to which they were actualized. Other requirements, on the other hand, appear unique to the customary and therefore represent a conscious attempt to shape the minds and bodies of the newcomer:

Before entering this monastery, one must thoroughly know the rules of discipline⁸⁸⁷ [and] the types of *namshak* offerings⁸⁸⁸ [that are found here]. Also, one must find a teacher⁸⁸⁹ who is endowed with the ability to teach virtue, and he must rely upon [this

⁸⁸⁷ T. *sgrigs lam*.

⁸⁸⁸ T. *rnam gzhaḡ rnam grang* < *rnam gzhaḡ rnam grang*.

⁸⁸⁹ T. *dge rgan*.

teacher] until he has at least completed the Beginning Madhyamaka class.⁸⁹⁰ Moreover, he certainly must thoroughly study all manner of accepting [what is right] and rejecting [what is wrong], including how to eat, travel, and reside [in a place]. [Then] he can ask permission from the abbot⁸⁹¹ and disciplinarian⁸⁹² to enter the monastery.⁸⁹³

After the novitiate was thoroughly saturated with knowledge concerning the monastery's rhythm and its intricacies, he was then expected to work on committing the necessary hymns to memory:

In addition, if he is not a *Collected Topics* level student, he must memorize the Refuges, Giving Rise [to the Mind of Enlightenment], the *Tara*, and the *Heart Sutra*. Once he can read and has truly internalized [these],⁸⁹⁴ not long thereafter he can [study] the [properties of things and their attributes such as] the colors white and red [found in] the *Collected Topics*. ...⁸⁹⁵

He may then progress through the stages of study as described in chapter six.

The novitiate was also introduced to the hierarchy in place at the monastery. In particular, he had to learn proper respect for his elders. Citing the *Vinaya*,⁸⁹⁶ the text instructs the reader that fully ordained monks were not to be called by their names or surnames. An elder was only to be called "Venerable"⁸⁹⁷ and "Worthy."⁸⁹⁸ In addition, we read that "it is of utmost importance that [elders] be shown respect by removing one's hat [in their presence], covering up with [one's] shawl,⁸⁹⁹ using honorific language, and so on."⁹⁰⁰ As explained in chapter six, such signs of respects (such as removing one's hat) are actually programed into

⁸⁹⁰ T. *dbu ma gsar ba*.

⁸⁹¹ T. *bla ma*.

⁸⁹² T. *chos khriims pa*.

⁸⁹³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 4a.1–4b.2.

⁸⁹⁴ T. *dpe glog tshig len*.

⁸⁹⁵ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 4b.2–3.

⁸⁹⁶ T. *phran tshogs*.

⁸⁹⁷ T. *btsun pa*.

⁸⁹⁸ T. *tshe dang ldan pa*.

⁸⁹⁹ T. *gzan*.

⁹⁰⁰ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 5b.1–5.

different parts of the assembly, which suggest that these maxims are more than empty words. The novitiate further had to learn how to chant with the rest of the assembly, starting and stopping with the others, and where to sit according to his rank.⁹⁰¹

Upon dispersing, one had to exit in an orderly fashion. The long arm of the law even attempted to reach into the recesses of the monk's quarters: "Upon dispersing, be constantly alert. Undistracted, return to your quarters, shut the door, and do nothing but recite hymns alone. Do not chatter, laugh, and so on [with others] either gathered in [your] quarters or in [your] courtyard."⁹⁰² Wang IV's 1885 customary explains how the disciplinarians were to even make nightly rounds around the monastery during the 'dharma breaks' to make sure the young monks, seated on their rooftops, were focused on their studies. They struck a wooden block or some other instrument to alert the young monks to their approach.⁹⁰³ Schram suggests that they cracked whips during their rounds:

At night, the disciplinarian with some of his lictors, armed with rawhide whips, makes a tour of the lamasery. Lamas found brawling, quarrelling, or fighting are brought to the court of the intendant, where penalties are meted out in various brutal forms.⁹⁰⁴

Membership

Permission to reside at or affiliate with the monastery was tightly controlled, as that entitled individuals to its resources. It also may have been a way of controlling its image abroad. Hermits, for instance, were required to return to the monastery when the monastery

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., 5b.6–6b.3. In addition, a failure to stand at the right time may result in smack on the head by the disciplinarian, as I witnessed during one service.

⁹⁰² Ibid., 7b.1–3.

⁹⁰³ I regularly heard such a sound during my stays at Gönlung, but I never got the chance to ask about its significance.

⁹⁰⁴ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 374.

roster was drawn up.⁹⁰⁵ Doing so gave them access to salaries and cash disbursements. Hermits were also required to ask permission before leaving their hermitages for more distant places not associated with Gönlung.⁹⁰⁶

The roster of ‘permanent’ and ‘visiting’ monks at the monastery was drafted annually,⁹⁰⁷ although the ‘payroll’ was tabulated more regularly so as to better control expenditures:

Every year the accounting done for each salary list⁹⁰⁸ is tremendous. When the salary list has been completed, [people leave] to travel and to do what they wish, and people do not return except during the twelfth month. Thus there is limitless variation [in attendance]. Therefore, the salary list is [instead] to be drawn up at [each of] the four month-long dharma sessions, and the salary list is to accord with the number of attendees.⁹⁰⁹

This passage also alludes to another dimension of monastic life that the customary and monastic authorities attempted to control: travel and study abroad. Travel to Central Tibet was limited to monks who had already studied the first chapter of the *Ornament of Realization*.⁹¹⁰ Once there, they were of course to abide by the rules of the monastery, college, and regional house⁹¹¹ with which they affiliated. Were they to transgress these rules, it is said that “they will be severely punished and their future paths blocked.”⁹¹²

⁹⁰⁵ T. *mtshan tho sgrigs*.

⁹⁰⁶ Rgyals sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 37a.6–37b.1.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 30b.6.

⁹⁰⁸ T. *phogs yig*.

⁹⁰⁹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 8a.5–8b.1; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 22b.1–2.

⁹¹⁰ T. *phar phyin skabs dang po*.

⁹¹¹ T. *mi tshan*.

⁹¹² T. *rjes gnon phyi [sic] lam 'khebs par byed*. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 13a.2–3; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 25b.5–6. Another possible reading that was suggested to me gives the opposite meaning: “they will be helped [*rjes gnon*] and their transgressions covered up [*phyi lam 'khebs pa*].” However, I do not think “past transgressions” is a possible translation of “*phyi lam*.””

Attendance

For those who remained at Gönlung, attendance at most assemblies was compulsory, especially for new monks.⁹¹³ In the section of the customary that discusses the schedule of dharma sessions⁹¹⁴ we read that:

Except for some particular cases of some *karam* and *rapjam* scholars over the age of fifty, *everyone* else [must go] to dharma class. When there are those over [the age of fifty] who go, this is a great service to the Teachings. Those over the age of fifty and those over the age of fifteen who are able to go⁹¹⁵ must go to dharma classes.⁹¹⁶

Permission for leave was granted on a case by case basis: “dharma class students [wanting] more than three days of excused absence [must ask] the abbot [*bla ma*] and disciplinarians. [(Illegible) If less than three days,] it is sufficient to ask the disciplinarians [only].⁹¹⁷ Of course, these rules pertaining to such strict attendance likely pertained only to those monks enrolled in the Philosophical College.⁹¹⁸ So, how many would have been enrolled in the college at Gönlung? The drafting of the college’s roster was not a formal affair (i.e. it was a ‘private’ or ‘extemporaneous’ affair⁹¹⁹). So even if the monastery’s archives were complete, such records would be unlikely to exist.⁹²⁰ Schram says that his informants at Kumbum Monastery in the 1910s told him that roughly two-thirds of all the monks at the monastery were enrolled in one of its colleges,⁹²¹ the overwhelming majority of these choosing the

⁹¹³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 34b.2–4.

⁹¹⁴ T. *chos thog*.

⁹¹⁵ T. *'grim 'os*.

⁹¹⁶ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31b.1–2. Emphasis added.

⁹¹⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31b.4–5.

⁹¹⁸ Even though this customary was composed for the monastery as a whole rather than for the Philosophical College (such as that reportedly composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama), most of its subject matter is directed toward students enrolled in the Philosophical College. For a reference to the Dalai Lama’s composition, see Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 70.27.

⁹¹⁹ T. *sger sgrig*.

⁹²⁰ A future project might involved culling through the monastery’s archives, which are reportedly in disarray.

⁹²¹ T. *grwa tshang*.

Philosophical College. Schram presumes this ratio to be true for other monasteries in the region.⁹²² Thus, if we apply this reasoning, then we are still talking about a sizeable contingent of the monastery showing up regularly for ritual and scholastic duty. In addition, during important ritual occasions, attendance was even more important. For instance, a passage that appears to pertain to the annual Great Prayer Festival explains that “aside from those ... [(Illegible)] performing the propitiation ritual [to the protector deities],⁹²³ the sacrificial cake offering ritual,⁹²⁴ and the Medicine Buddha ritual,⁹²⁵ everyone had to go to the great assemblies.”⁹²⁶

As an incentive to regularly attend assembly, cash disbursements and bread were distributed only to those actually in attendance, with the exception of the former abbots, esteemed hierarchs,⁹²⁷ *garwa*, branch temples (*sgom sde*), other high-level monastic officials, and those furthering their studies in Central Tibet, who could still receive their shares without actually being present.⁹²⁸ Schram gives particular attention to this fact: “The reason for the unusual attendance at the colleges is not that these institutions are centers of higher education, but rather that they provide meals for their members. The richest colleges, able to give the greatest number and the choicest meals, are the best attended, such as the College of Philosophy. ...”⁹²⁹ Although the “quest for bread” may have been the primary factor explaining attendance in Schram’s time, it does not follow from this that these institutions

⁹²² Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 32a.6. Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 376–77.

⁹²³ T. *bskang so*.

⁹²⁴ T. *gtor sgrub*.

⁹²⁵ T. *sman bla*.

⁹²⁶ T. *tshogs chen*. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 32b.4.

⁹²⁷ T. *zhabs drung*.

⁹²⁸ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 8a.3–5.

⁹²⁹ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 377.

were not “centers of higher education.” In earlier times, membership in Gönlung’s monastic community entailed years of training and study. If nearly two-thirds of Gönlung’s monks were enrolled in the Philosophical College, then we are still talking about a sizeable majority of the monastic community attending dharma sessions for nearly half of the year. During each session, the monks would be engaged in ritual services, recitation lessons, debate practice, and tests each morning, noon, and night. Its ritual calendar was equally full, requiring attendance of everyone in the community for the annual Great Prayer Festival and demanding considerable attendance for the Long-life Sacrificial Cake Offering Ritual.⁹³⁰ There were five “regular sacrificial cake offerings”⁹³¹ each month,⁹³² a ritual commemoration of the monastery’s founder/proprietor, propitiations made to the local gods and protector deities, rehearsal for *cham* ritual dancing, and so forth.

Punishments

Although failure to attend services might result in a public chiding or even a slap from the disciplinarian, more serious infractions carried more onerous punishments. Infractions that are explicitly mentioned in Gyelsé’s customary include arguing and fighting, harming others, insulting or physically harming a monastic officer, breaking the vow of chastity, and stealing from the monastery’s pastures. Punishments would vary depending on the severity of the infraction, ranging from required recitations and prostrations to

⁹³⁰ T. *tshe gtor*. Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33b.4–34a.1.

⁹³¹ T. *dus gtor*.

⁹³² Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 34a.1–2.

banishment.⁹³³ Schram describes a scene at Kumbum Monastery involving a monk accused by a layman of having an affair with his wife. He writes that the monk was

beaten unconscious before the main temple, while the community read imprecations. Half his face was blackened with soot; a paper hat, half black, half white, was put on his head; and the traditional oval was impressed on both his cheeks with a burning ram's horn. He was carried outside the monastery wall by lamas. Ashes were spread all the way along in order to prevent his "spirit" from finding the way back to harm the lamasery. A large group of lamas followed. He was thrown on the ground, stripped of all his garments, amid the shouts of the lamas and the long blare of trumpets, and the group returned to the monastery without looking back.⁹³⁴

Gyelse's customary appears to legitimize some of these measures, mentioning "banishment with paper [on] the forehead [while] the sounding board [is struck]."⁹³⁵ Extreme cases involving capital punishment were to be referred to the Chinese or Mongol arbiters for adjudication.⁹³⁶ Nonetheless, most cases appear to have been less sensational. As Schram explains, the monastery's administrators tried to avoid scandal.

In earlier times, punishments would have been meted out by the disciplinarians, most often as offerings (as fines paid) to the monastery.⁹³⁷ The customary's section on punishments includes a detailed description of the typology of offerings used at the monastery—the very typology that new monks at the monastery were required to memorize. The customary speaks of "*namshaks*,"⁹³⁸ literally "offerings," that are "great,"⁹³⁹

⁹³³ Unfortunately, specific punishments are not correlated to specific infractions in the customary.

⁹³⁴ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 388. Schram also writes that "... all intendants [i.e. the treasurers or stewards of the "supreme chief of the lamasery"] still dispense justice to their subjects, expose at the gate of their intendency the instruments of torture, and have their own jails" (p. 353).

⁹³⁵ T. <i>gaNDi shog thod kyi rgyang "pud gtong </i>. "'pud</i> should be spelled properly as "'bud" in the *xylograph edition*. "'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 15b.1; *ibid.*, 27a.6–b.1.

⁹³⁶ T. *rgya sog gi khirms bdag nams*. It seems that Gyelse, writing in 1737 or earlier, still considers the Mongols (i.e. the Kökenuur Mongols) as viable arbiters of power. 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 32a.2.

⁹³⁷ Sumpa Khenpo speaks against such common practices. Ye shes dpal 'byor, Sum pa mkhan po, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 339.

⁹³⁸ T. *nam gzhang*.

“normal,”⁹⁴⁰ “extensive,”⁹⁴¹ “abridged,”⁹⁴² and “very abridged.”⁹⁴³ The Great *Namshak* Offering and Normal *Namshak* Offering appear to refer to the *amount* given, for we read in one passage “... if these two [aforementioned] cantors are *karam* scholars, then each is given a Great *Namshak*. If not, each is given a Normal *Namshak*.”⁹⁴⁴ The Extensive, Abridged, and Very Abridged *Namshak*, on the other hand, are offerings given to predetermined sets of people:

... when there are Extensive *Namshak*, they are given to the abbot, the former abbots, the *karam* scholars scholars of the dharma classes, the 'monks' tea' cantor, the disciplinarians, the 'ritual water vessel' assistant,⁹⁴⁵ the water bearers, the cook,⁹⁴⁶ and any other 'monks' tea' officer. When there are Abridged *Namshak*, they are given to the 'monks' tea' cantor and the two disciplinarians. When there are leftovers, they are added to the firewood account. ...⁹⁴⁷

The Very Abridged *Namshak* may just be another name for Abridged *Namshak*, since the customary explains that “for the Very Abridged *Namshak*, just give to the three: the [two] disciplinarians and the cantor.”⁹⁴⁸

These punishments applied to every individual, be s/he a layperson collecting firewood on monastic land or a high-ranking officer. The proper comportment of the latter

⁹³⁹ T. *che kha*.

⁹⁴⁰ T. *rang ga ba*.

⁹⁴¹ T. *rgyas pa*.

⁹⁴² T. *bsdus pa*.

⁹⁴³ T. *shin tu bsdus pa*.

⁹⁴⁴ 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 33a.1.

⁹⁴⁵ T. *chab ril*.

⁹⁴⁶ T. *chab skad*.

⁹⁴⁷ Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, Wang Khutugtu IV, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 7a.3–6; Citing the 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 32a.6–32b.4.

⁹⁴⁸ 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 37a.4.

was considered especially important, since officers were role models for the rest of the community.

If the abbot,⁹⁴⁹ disciplinarians, managers,⁹⁵⁰ and so forth later on cause bad arguments; or if the major and minor law officers of the general [monastery] or of private [institutions]⁹⁵¹ as well as the abbot, disciplinarians, and the general manager are to disregard the laws of karma and, in a biased manner, cause bad fights about the grievances of each individual and so forth; then the abbot, managers, law officers, and so on are not to reside there long.⁹⁵²

The fact that such an effort was made to regulate the behavior of monks was one reason that mega monasteries such as Gönlung were so successful. There are several strict rules against favoritism and any whimsical behavior that departs from convention. Take the following passage regarding the appointment of new disciplinarians in the monastery:

If the later disciplinarian does not enforce whatever rules of discipline⁹⁵³ that are beneficial to the monastery and that the earlier [disciplinarian] made, then he condescends toward the earlier one. Each one is not to take turns establishing⁹⁵⁴ the monastery's rules or to go his own spontaneous [way so as] to be known as a good [guy].⁹⁵⁵

Such a system, open to manipulation though it may be, was necessary for institutions that harbored hundreds or thousands of boys and men, young and old.

Conclusion

⁹⁴⁹ T. *bla ma*.

⁹⁵⁰ T. *gnyer ba*.

⁹⁵¹ T. *khriṃs bdag che chung spyi dang / dgos [sic]*... It is not clear whether the “*khriṃs bdag*” at Gönlung refers to a specific office or is a general term for monastic officers who wielded judicial powers such as the disciplinarians and the abbot.

⁹⁵² 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 38a.1.

⁹⁵³ T. *sgrigs gang bsdams*.

⁹⁵⁴ T. *chugs pa*.

⁹⁵⁵ 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 37b.6–38a.1.

We should not be so quick to belittle a “quest for bread” among monastics. As we have seen, the ability to feed and provide financial support to such a large number of monks required terrific organization and amounts to an unprecedented institutional feat. The discussion in this chapter both corroborates and expands upon the arguments made by McCleary and Van der Kuijp in their essay on the “club” characteristic of the Geluk sect. In particular, the separately defined role of the abbot had religious, administrative, and even economic advantages for the mega monastery. McCleary and Van der Kuijp write that “the Gelukpa institutional feature of ecclesiastical abbot tended to reinforce an institutional focus on religious activities and the development of the monastic community.” The institutional innovations and reforms introduced at Gomang College and Gönlung Monastery discussed above bear this out. In addition, Gönlung’s later customary makes reference to an “abbatial villa” (*khri pa bla brang*), which helps explain the enormous financial contributions incumbent upon the abbot. I have also argued that the separate administration of the monastery’s “common resources” by a general management office as well as the introduction of “monks’ teas” and other allowances for monks helped make it possible to sustain and train massive number of boys and men. In short, it is the explicit attention to administrative procedures and organization as expressed in monastic customaries that make a monastery like Gönlung possible. It is this governance, financial foundation, and discipline that allow an institution of this size to be recognized as single, corporate body capable of issuing titles, levying taxes, and so on, rather than an unwieldy collection of hermitages and meditators in some remote valley.

Chapter 5: The Ritual of the Monastery:

From Mouth-to-Ear to Brick-and-Mortar

In a customary he penned for three of his satellite monasteries, Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor bemoaned the handicaps of monastic practice in peripheral lands:

As for the 'regular liturgy,' the philosophical monasteries and colleges [*grwa tshang*] of Central Tibet take the sutra side of things as most important. To this end they never go beyond the practice of "Sitātapatra,"⁹⁵⁶ the "Praises of Tārā,"⁹⁵⁷ and the generation stage of the Lion-faced One.⁹⁵⁸ Otherwise, they do not recite anything from the mantra side. They recite liturgical collections of praises, aspiration prayers, the *Entrance [to Madhyamaka]*, and the *Ornament [of Realization]*, and take the study of the five scriptures as the foundation.

The philosophical colleges [*mtshad nyid grwa tshang*] of Amdo, Kham, China, and Mongolia, in order to have the combination of sutra and mantra practice, must also recite esoteric rituals. Because of this, if they have the [exoteric] collections of prayers, numerous great exoteric and esoteric rituals, and a great deal of restoration rituals, the study of philosophy is inhibited.⁹⁵⁹

What Sumpa Khenpo is drawing attention to is the Geluk sect's ability (albeit an uneven one) to establish *institutions that specialize in one or another facet of Buddhist practice, specifically the study of doctrine and the practice of rituals*. One gathers from the above passage that Sumpa Khenpo was most concerned with creating proper spaces for the study of Buddhist doctrine. (In the following lines he discusses the misguided tendency for some in Amdo and other peripheral places to practice the esoteric dimensions of Buddhism before they have a grasp on the formative, exoteric doctrines). What he does not explicitly mention is that establishing separate institutions that specialize in ritual practice also has great benefits. They are centers for efficiently training whole cadres of monks knowledgeable in

⁹⁵⁶ T. gtugs dkar. See the following chapter.

⁹⁵⁷ T. *sgrol bstod*.

⁹⁵⁸ T. seng gdong ma. See the following chapter.

⁹⁵⁹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Dgon sde 'ga' zhig gi bca' yig*, n.d., 131/14a.3–5.

the unique traditions of those places, and as such they can outperform those systems of ritual transmission based on a single individual and his (or her) disciples. The story of the Geluk sect's rise to power and the concomitant rise of mega monasteries is also one about institutionalizing, making public, and exporting those ritual traditions unique to the sect and its monasteries. This facilitated the dissemination of the same ritual practices across the Tibetan Plateau, which contributed to the formation and maintenance of monastic networks.

Unbroken

In chapter one, I showed how Tibetan Buddhist authors at Gönlung have made use of prophecy as a means to bridge periods of decline or turmoil and to establish and maintain connections with the monastery's honorary founder, the Dalai Lama. Such attention to continuity and the maintenance of tradition is especially conspicuous in the performance of liturgy and ritual. Ritual traditions are to be maintained and perpetuated without whimsical alterations or personal fabrications. The term "*bcos med*" ("unaltered") and its opposite, "*rang bzos*" ("fabricated," "personal creation"), are just two examples of the language employed in Tibetan texts when speaking about what constitutes a genuine tradition (T. *lugs*) and practice (T. *srol*) of Buddhist ritual.

Take, for instance, Tuken's branch monastery of Chözang Hermitage.⁹⁶⁰ The ritual focus of this monastery is the tantric goddess known as Vajrayoginī. In his customary for the hermitage, Tuken III gives stern warnings against changing the unique features of its ritual traditions, particular its manner of recitation:

⁹⁶⁰ T. chos bzang ri khrod; bde chen chos gling; Ch. Huayan si 花園寺.

One must perform the uncommon ‘chants’ [*gsung*] and ‘songs’ [*gdang*]⁹⁶¹ of our sect, such as the “Song of the Queen of Spring”⁹⁶² and the “Prayer.”⁹⁶³ Moreover, this melody [*gdangs*] of the “Spring Song” is slightly different from the melody [*dbyangs*] of today’s Upper and Lower Tantric Colleges. [I] studied the authentic [teachings] directly from the Vajra-holder, the Manifest Lord of Kings, the Precious Changkya of this [incarnation, Rölpe Dorjé], in accordance with the way it was regularly done by the previous Venerable Changkya [i.e. Ngawang Lozang Chöden]. [I] heard the melody of the “Prayer” directly [from] Venerable Jampel Gyatso⁹⁶⁴, who received it from a Sky-goer’s song. *Due to the blessing that comes from performing according to this form, it is most important that not there not be the slightest corruption through altering these [melodies].*⁹⁶⁵

As this passage illustrates, the author is keenly aware of the minute differences in the melody as sung at Lhasa’s major tantric colleges compared with his own monastery in Pari. The proper singing of the song ensures the continuity of the tradition stretching back through Changkya III, Changkya II, and ultimately Tsongkhapa himself. Whether these traditions and practices are in fact flawlessly transmitted from one place to another or one time to another is

⁹⁶¹ These Tibetan terms seem here to have the general meaning of “chanting” (*gsung*, lit. “speaking”) certain types of prayers/hymns and “singing” or “intoning” (*gdang* < *gdangs*) other, more complex prayers/hymns. Together, then, they refer to all manner of recitations performed at the monastery. See Ter Ellingson, “’Don rta dbyangs gsum: Tibetan Chant and Melodic Categories,” *Asian Music* 10, no. 2 (January 1, 1979): 124, 128, 144, and 117.

⁹⁶² T. *Dpyid kyi rgyal mo’i glu*.

⁹⁶³ T. *smon lam*. My Gönlung informant tells me that this was composed by Tuken III for Vajrayoginī. I have not yet had the chance to corroborate this.

⁹⁶⁴ T. ’jam dpal rgya mtsho. This may be Tsongkhapa’s disciple of the same name. However, if the “Prayer” referred to in this passage was indeed written out by Tuken III as my Gönlung informant tells me, then it seems that Tuken heard the prayer’s melody “directly” from Jampel Gyatso in a dream or vision. Alternatively, this could be the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso. More research is needed.

⁹⁶⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dben gnas bde chen chos gling gi bsam gtan pa rnam kyi bca’ khriims,” 696/11b.2–5. Italics added. The “Song of the Queen of Spring” is one of the celestial songs sung by Sky-goers (S. *dākinī*) to Tsongkhapa as he constructed mandalas to Cakrasaṃvara and other deities in the Lhasa cathedral (T. *gtsug lag khang*). The song is sung up to this day as part of a ritual cycle dedicated to Cakrasaṃvara and his consort, Vajrayoginī. See Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 245; ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa I Ngag dbang brtson ’grus, “Rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po’i nram thar ras bris kyi tshul bryad gsum pa tsin+ta ma Ni phreng ba thub bstan rgyas byed phan bde’i rol mtsho chen po,” in *Gsung ’bum* (Collected Works), vol. 4 (nga) (n.p. [Bsang chu]: s.n. [Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil par khang], n.d.), 21a.2–21.6. I would like to thank my cohort Eva Rolf for directing me to this section of the biography of Tsongkhapa and for explaining to me the significance of the “Song of the Queen of Spring” to the Geluk worship of Cakrasaṃvara.

beside the point. The narratives describing ritual traditions emphasize continuity, and rituals that lack a distinguished pedigree are forsaken or reformed by an esteemed authority.

Thus, one obvious implication of such discourse of continuity is the creation of *connections* between the subject giving or establishing a ritual tradition and the subject receiving that ritual tradition. Such is the case in the story of Lord Tsongkhapa—the founder of the Geluk sect—bequeathing to Tokden Jampel Gyatso (1356-1428)⁹⁶⁶ the “Great Miraculous Scripture,”⁹⁶⁷ a secret and invisible book given by the bodhisattva Mañju exclusively to Tsongkhapa and which is said to contain all the most quintessential teachings of both the sutras and the tantras.⁹⁶⁸ This transmission was the first⁹⁶⁹ in an exclusive lineage of Buddhist masters who make up what is called the Ganden (or Geluk) Oral Lineage.⁹⁷⁰ This lineage was so exclusive that only one or two major master-to-disciple streams are recognized within the lineage.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁶⁶ T. rtogs ldan ‘jam dpal rgya mtsho.

⁹⁶⁷ T. *sprul pa’i glegs bam chen mo*.

⁹⁶⁸ Janice D. Willis, *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 36, 161–2, *passim*.

⁹⁶⁹ That is, the first *human-to-human* transmission. Tsongkhapa himself received it from the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The “distant lineage” (*ring brgyud*) includes some human predecessors to Tsongkhapa. See Roger R. Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā: How Much dGe ldan? How Much bKa’ Brgyud?,” in *Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, ed. Guy Newland (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), 158–60.

⁹⁷⁰ The “Miraculous Scripture” itself was not transmitted to the later generations of this lineage. The teachings of the lineage were transmitted in a variety of ways, however, such as through oral teachings from one’s guru or visionary revelations. Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 161–2n114; See Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā,” 158–9.

⁹⁷¹ The two streams were reunited in the early twentieth century by Pha bong kha Rin po che (1871-1941), such that one might now speak of a single stream. As we shall see, there are others who claim to have received the esoteric teachings of this lineage but who do not appear to belong to this major stream. Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā,” 158–9; Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 99–100.

Such exclusivity and wrangling over who should be considered the legitimate heir and successor to an important master has a long and venerable tradition in Tibet.⁹⁷² Tibetan literature is replete with expressions like “heart son”⁹⁷³ and “filling a vase [i.e. a disciple] to the brim [with teachings],”⁹⁷⁴ expressions that emphasize a unique relationship between a master and disciple. A unique development in the religious history of Tibet was the establishment of institutions for the formalized study, practice, and performance of ritual (and scholastic) traditions. What was the form this institution took at Gönlung?

‘Monastic Groups’ (dratsang) and ‘Commentary Classes’ (shedra)

The 1644 *A mdo’i chos ’byung* (History of Amdo) tells us that

... The Collection Leader of Drati, Sherap Drak,⁹⁷⁵ invited [Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso], and he came to Pari. In 1604, he founded Gönlung Monastery and established a new ‘monastic group [*grwa tshang*] [for the study of philosophy]. He established the practices [*srol*] of a ‘realization’ group [*sgrub sde*] at the Fortress of the Hidden White Land.⁹⁷⁶

Thus, from the very beginning of Gönlung’s history, the monastery had specialized groups focused on the study of philosophy and contemplation, respectively, or so it seems. The actual form of these groups is a little unclear. At first, Gönlung comprised only a main shrine hall,⁹⁷⁷ the quarters of the founder, Gyelsé, and small ‘huts’ for a hundred or so monks.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷² See, for instance, Davidson’s explanation of the successors to Sa chen Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan in the wake of the latter’s death. Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 335–38.

⁹⁷³ T. *thugs zin gyi slob sras*. Lit. a disciple whose mind has been grasped.

⁹⁷⁴ T. *bum pa gang byo ba*.

⁹⁷⁵ T. bra rti’i ‘bul dpon shes rab grags

⁹⁷⁶ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “A mdo’i chos ’byung,” 350; see also 341–2.

⁹⁷⁷ T. *gtsug lag khang*.

⁹⁷⁸ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 646/7b.4–5.

Slightly later, the Collection Leader of Setsa—one of the original patrons of the monastery—built an assembly hall, which is the structure that, nowadays, is most associated with the practice of scholasticism and debate in Geluk monasteries. It was expanded a few years later to accommodate the growing number of monks.

The “realization group” was situated two or three kilometers up the valley at the Fortress of the Hidden White Land,⁹⁷⁹ which was also known as Jangchup Ling⁹⁸⁰ or just “The Gönlung Hermitage.”⁹⁸¹ Although this hermitage was obviously tied to Gönlung proper, there is no indication that it carried out the functions of a so-called “tantric college” (T. *rgyud pa grwa tshang, sngags pa grwa tshang*) that nowadays one finds as an integral component of all major Geluk monasteries. When the important lama Dewa Chöjé (see chapter two) was sought out by monks from Gönlung in 1632 or 1633 they comprised “meditators”⁹⁸² from the Gönlung Hermitage and numerous “great lamas” from Gönlung’s ‘philosophical commentary school’ (T. *mtshad nyid kyi bshad grwa*). To the former he gave “meditative instructions,”⁹⁸³ and to the latter he gave empowerments, ritual transmissions, and ritual authorizations / permission-blessings.⁹⁸⁴ The hermitage, it would seem, was just that—a secluded place where hermits could individually focus on meditative practices. We

⁹⁷⁹ T. *sbas yul dkar bo rdzong*.

⁹⁸⁰ T. *byangs chub gling*. The hermitage went by this name by at least 1665, when Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan 'dzin, the rebirth of Gönlung's founder, visited Gönlung and composed his “Praises of the Place of the Hidden White Land.” Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan 'dzin, “Sbas yul dkar po'i ljongs kyi gnas bstod ka la ping ka'i sgra dbyangs,” 171. The edition of the text at my disposal incorrectly gives the year as “*sna tshogs zhes pa chu mo sbrul lo*.” It should read “*sna tshogs dbyig zhes pa shing sbrul lo*.”; See also Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature*, 219.

⁹⁸¹ T. *dgon lung gi ri khrod, dgon lung gi ri khrod chen mo*. Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 224 and 247.

⁹⁸² T. *sgom chen pa rnams*.

⁹⁸³ T. *sgom khrid*.

⁹⁸⁴ T. *dbang lung rjes gnang*. Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 224.

do not find mention of the regular performance of institution-wide rituals performed for the monastery's tutelary/patron deities or its protector deities. Also noticeably absent from Dewa Chöjé's interaction with Gönlung monks is any mention of debate or "recitation lessons," those features of Geluk philosophical colleges (T. *mtshan nyid grwa tshang*) most conspicuous today.

The full development of these scholastic practices (i.e. debate, recitation lessons, curriculums, formalized exams) into an integrated system within a monastery and housed within a "philosophical college" appears to be a development of seventeenth century. I shall have more to say about this topic in the next chapter. Likewise, the formation of "tantric colleges" dedicated to the study and performance of monastery-specific rituals occurred around the same time. At Gönlung, it was not until 1710 that a formal "tantric college" was established.

Part of the confusion that surrounds the history of these institutions stems from our rendering of Tibetan terms into English. "*Dratsang*" (T. *grwa tshang*) is usually translated as "college," as in Oxford University's Exeter College. This conjures up notions of a relatively independent institution complete with housing, a refectory, chapels, and so forth. Although it is beyond the purview of this work to attempt to reveal the development of *dratsang* in Central Tibet, it may be worthwhile to make a few comments on the topic, since developments in Amdo followed those of Central Tibet. As for *dratsang*, it seems that the sixteenth-century use of the term referred more simply to a "group of monks" who followed specific teachers. For instance, Sönam Drakpa, writing in 1529, uses "*dratsang*" in referring to the "monastic groups of philosophical studies" (T. *mtshad nyid grwa tshang*) at Ganden

Monastery.⁹⁸⁵ These four groups are named after the teachers⁹⁸⁶ who either founded or maintained lineages of teachings.⁹⁸⁷ These later merged and became the well-known *dratsang* of Jangtsé⁹⁸⁸ and Shartsé⁹⁸⁹. During this time, when the *dratsang* of Ganden Monastery were in flux and still forming, they were not so much identified with particular places as they were with particular traditions of teachings.⁹⁹⁰

This semi-uprooted nature of *dratsang* at that time may be the result of their relative independence from local patrons and clans. Karl-Heinz Everding has suggested that this start, as exemplified by Sangpu Monastery,⁹⁹¹ may have given the Geluk sect the flexibility needed to navigate the social and political turmoil of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹⁹² Thus, when Tsongkhapa's disciple Khedrup had a disagreement with a patron in Gyantsé⁹⁹³ over the

⁹⁸⁵ Lit. "wise ones" (*mkhas pa*).

⁹⁸⁶ Lit. "wise ones" (*mkhas pa*).

⁹⁸⁷ Their names are paN chen pa, Snon pa, Yar 'brog pa, and Grags pa dpal pa. See paN chen Bsod nams grags pa, *Bka' gdams gsar rnying gi chos 'byung* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2001 [1529]), 98; see also, Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 101–2. Another possible etymology for "grwa tshang" is "pure monks" (*grwa gtsang*). This would indicate an establishment that upholds celibacy, and it may even be a marker of a specifically sectarian identity. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 102, *passim*.

⁹⁸⁸ T. byang rtse (lit. northern peak). Also known simply as "rtse" (lit. the peak).

⁹⁸⁹ T. shar rtse (lit. eastern peak).

⁹⁹⁰ See the (terse) histories of how Nyag rong grwa tshang and Cha dkar grag tshang moved about due to social unrest and ultimately came to be affiliated with Ganden Monastery. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 102–3. Dreyfus, Everding and others have also made the related point that there were no strict sectarian obstacles separating monasteries or *dratsang* in the early history of the Gelukpa. Monks could and did travel from teacher to teacher, from *dratsang* to *dratsang* to acquire the instruction they needed. Georges Dreyfus, "Where Do Commentarial Schools Come from? Reflections on the History of Tibetan Scholasticism," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005): 293–6; Karl-Heinz Everding, "gSang Phu Ne'u Thog, Tibet's Earliest Monastic School (1073). Reflections on the Rise of Its Grwa Tshang Bcu Gsum and Bla Khag Bcu," *Zentralasiatische Studien (Festschrift Für Prof. Dr. Veronika Veit)* 38 (2009): 140–1.

⁹⁹¹ T. gsang phu.

⁹⁹² Everding, "gSang Phu Ne'u Thog, Tibet's Earliest Monastic School (1073). Reflections on the Rise of Its Grwa Tshang Bcu Gsum and Bla Khag Bcu," 145–6.

⁹⁹³ The patron's name is Rgyal rtse *bdag po* rab brtan kun bzang 'phags.

settlement⁹⁹⁴ of several *dratsang*, he could simply depart for a hermitage, where he freed himself to work on his compositions.⁹⁹⁵

This is not to say that there were *no* fixed abodes for the *dratsang* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Kün'ga Gyeltsen's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (History of the Kadam Dharma) from 1494⁹⁹⁶ we read of "six philosophical *dratsang* and one mantric *dratsang*"⁹⁹⁷ connected with the Drepung Seat⁹⁹⁸ at the time of the founder's death. When the Drepung founder passed away, his disciples inherited⁹⁹⁹ the leadership posts of these groups.¹⁰⁰⁰ However, there is no indication that the *dratsang* offered anything resembling a regular system of practice. Drepung itself had "teaching halls,"¹⁰⁰¹ but there is no indication that the *dratsang* themselves had such infrastructure.

Occasionally, the early heads of these *dratsang* would establish "commentary classes" or "commentary schools," called *shedra* in Tibetan,¹⁰⁰² which incidentally is the same term found in one of the earliest epithets of Gönlung: "the chief of all the *shedra* in Domé." Most likely these were short, irregular classes similar to the *shedra* of non-Geluk monasteries in Eastern Tibet of the early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰³ A *dratsang* would have such classes *if* a qualified teacher was able to establish and maintain them. This is a far cry from

⁹⁹⁴ T. *gzhi bting*.

⁹⁹⁵ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 75.

⁹⁹⁶ Regarding the date of composition, see Dan Martin, "Tibetan Histories: Addenda & Corrigenda," January 15, 2011, no. 148.

⁹⁹⁷ T. *sngags pa'i grwa tshang*.

⁹⁹⁸ T. *gdan sa*.

⁹⁹⁹ T. *zung*.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Bka' gdams kyi rnam par thar pa bka' gdams chos 'byung gsal ba'i sgron me* ([n.p. Lhasa]: s.n., 1494), 375.3–376.1. Hereafter, *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*.

¹⁰⁰¹ T. 'chad nyan khang. Bsod nams grags pa, paN chen (1478-1554), *Bka' gdams gsar rnying gi chos 'byung*, 110.

¹⁰⁰² T. *bshad grwa*.

¹⁰⁰³ Ronis, "Celibacy, Revelations, and Reincarnated Lamas," 206.

the fully formed curriculum of later “philosophical colleges,” a curriculum that includes upwards of ten hours of debate practice each day. Georges Dreyfus has pointed out the significance of the use of the term “*shedra*” in the context of monastic education at the most renowned Geluk institution in Lhasa during the fifteenth century:

... in describing the monastery of Gaden, the text [i.e. Kün’ga Gyeltsen’s *Bka’ gdams chos ’byung*] makes it clear that it was not originally founded by Tsong Khapa as a scholastic center but that it was only transformed into one by [his disciple] Kaydrub. The text then adds that Kaydrub “established a philosophical commentarial school at Gaden” (*dga’ ldan du mtshan nyid ki bshad grwa btsugs*).

This description of Gaden as a commentarial school is quite revealing, for it shows that there was no division at that time between commentarial and debating institutions. An institution such as Gaden did not understand itself to be very different from other scholastic institutions, despite its allegiance to Tsong Khapa. Even in the second half of the fifteenth century, there was a fluid and informal scholastic tradition present in various monasteries where monks would come to study particular texts with teachers who were renowned for their mastery of these texts. ...¹⁰⁰⁴

In other words, there was no formalized institution for monastic training, and there was not the emphasis on debate as compared with Geluk monasteries today, hence the name “commentary schools.”

Thus, what we have at Gönlung in the early seventeenth century, a *shedra*, was likely more akin to these early Central Tibetan *shedra* than to the “philosophical colleges” of later times. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, debate at Gönlung’s neighbor, Kumbum Monastery, inspired Trichen Jamgön (see chapter three) to go on to become a philosopher of the highest standing. Likewise, near the end of the seventeenth century at Gönlung, Changkya II gave recitation lessons to the monks there during the “winter dharma session.”

¹⁰⁰⁴ “Where Do Commentarial Schools Come from? Reflections on the History of Tibetan Scholasticism,” 295–6; Citing Las chen Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, *Bka’ gdams chos ’byung*, 370b.1. See also p. 375b.4–5.

Thus, by century's end, scholastic training at Gönlung was fully institutionalized. But what of its tantric practices?

Tantric Colleges

As mentioned above, the “realization group” established early on at Gönlung does not appear to be similar in any way to the institutionalized systems of tantric practice epitomized by the so-called “tantric college” or “mantric college” of later times. During the first half-century of Gönlung's existence, there existed a contingent of monks thirsty for meditative experiences and spiritual accomplishments. This phenomenon is perhaps best exemplified by the Great Adept of Denma, to whom we shall turn momentarily. Despite claims to the contrary, tantric colleges appear to be a rather late development. Dreyfus writes that the tantric college of Drepung Monastery dates back to the monastery's founding in 1416.¹⁰⁰⁵ “Hence,” he writes “contrary to the other colleges, which were created later, the Tantric Monastic College [sngags khang] was part of the original plan, though it may at first not have been conceived as a separate college.”¹⁰⁰⁶

Kün'ga Gyeltsen's 1492 history does indeed make reference to Drepung's “*ngakpé dratsang*,” a term commonly translated as “mantric college” or “tantric college.”¹⁰⁰⁷ However, the points I made above regarding the danger of translating “*dratsang*” as “college” apply equally well here. Again, “tantric monastic group” is probably a more fitting translation (and a more literal one). There is no indication that the earliest *ngakpé dratsang* of Drepung had anything like the rich, ritual calendar found at today's tantric colleges, nor do

¹⁰⁰⁵ Dreyfus, “An Introduction to Drepung's Colleges.”

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Las chen, *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, 375b.6–376a.1.

we know whether it had any infrastructure or formalized classes. Instead, it is likely that Drepung's *ngakpé dratsang* was like its philosophical ones. That is, the monks there would have focused on studying and practicing the texts and teachings that a particular teacher thought important.

The Lower Tantric College in Lhasa, founded by Sherap Senggé¹⁰⁰⁸ in 1433, may have had more structure to it. It is said that he “established¹⁰⁰⁹ the exegesis of the [*Four-Part*] *Commentary on the [Guhyasamāja] Tantra* during the summer retreat¹⁰¹⁰ and, in the autumn, direct instructions on the Five Stages [of Guhyasamāja],¹⁰¹¹ instructions on the Six Limbs of Practice,¹⁰¹² instructions on the Six Yogas of Nāropa, instructions on [the traditions of] Lūipa and Gañṭāpa,¹⁰¹³ and instructions on the tutelary deities¹⁰¹⁴.”¹⁰¹⁵ However, even this calendar of teachings appears to have been largely dependent on the presence of Sherap Senggé and not a system carried on by his successors. More importantly, there is no indication that these tantric traditions were actually practiced or performed in a ritual setting as is done by tantric colleges today.

If one is looking for models in Central Tibet, Sera Monastery's tantric college best matches what is found at Gönlung. As José Cabezón has written, the tantric college at Sera is the youngest of Sera's three *dratsang*, being founded in the early eighteenth century as the

¹⁰⁰⁸ T. shes rab seng ge.

¹⁰⁰⁹ T. *gdab par mdzad*.

¹⁰¹⁰ T. *rgyud 'grel gyi bshad pa*.

¹⁰¹¹ T. *rim lnga dmar khrid*.

¹⁰¹² T. *sbyor ba yan lag drug gi khrid*.

¹⁰¹³ T. *lU dril gnyis kyi khrid*.

¹⁰¹⁴ T. *yi dam gyi khrid*.

¹⁰¹⁵ Bsod nams grags pa, paN chen (1478-1554), *Bka' gdams gsar rnying gi chos 'byung*, 99; Cf. Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, Thu'u bkwan III, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 288.

“personal ritual college” of the then ruler of Tibet, Lhazang Khan.¹⁰¹⁶ This temple was established with the explicit purpose of performing protective rites on behalf of the ruler. The establishment of Gönlung’s tantric college in 1710 had the support of none other than the Qing emperor,¹⁰¹⁷ although it is not clear whether the institution performed prayers on his behalf. In any case, both were created as *institutions explicitly dedicated to the regular practice of ritual*, and so they represent the mature formation of the Geluk tendency toward specialization.

Sé and Wensa secret lineages

The ritual practices that came to be enshrined in Gönlung’s tantric college had a long history of a thoroughly *non-institutionalized* transmission before they ever wound their way to Gönlung. In addition to a panoply of practices said to be modeled on the Lower Tantric College in Lhasa, two tantric traditions in particular make up the practices of Gönlung’s tantric college: Sé¹⁰¹⁸ and Wensa.¹⁰¹⁹ These two tantric traditions are the two major Geluk Oral or Mouth-to-Ear traditions,¹⁰²⁰ meaning that their most esoteric and complete instructions are not written down and often are transmitted only to a single disciple.¹⁰²¹

Both of these traditions are said to stretch back to the founder of the Geluk sect, Tsongkhapa. The teachings of the Sé tradition are said to consist of the tantric generation and

¹⁰¹⁶ José Ignacio Cabezón, “An Introduction to Sera’s Colleges,” *The Tibetan and Himalayan Library*, 2006, Accessed July 28, 2010,

<http://www.thlib.org/places/monasteries/sera/essays/#!essay=/cabezon/sera/colleges/intro/s/b24>.

¹⁰¹⁷ See [note above](#).

¹⁰¹⁸ T. srad.

¹⁰¹⁹ T. dben sa.

¹⁰²⁰ T. *snyan brgyud*.

¹⁰²¹ Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:,” 183n4.

completion stages of the deity Guhyasmāja. It is named after the region in Tsang¹⁰²² where Sherap Senggé (the same one who later founded the Lower Tantric College in Lhasa) established a monastic community focused on the study of Tsongkhapa's *Four-Part Commentary on Guhyasamāja*.¹⁰²³ Sherap Senggé had been among those present when Tsongkhapa asked if anyone was fit to master his commentary. The question was posed two or three times with no reply, at which point Sherap Senggé held up his hand and volunteered. Later, remembering a vow he had made to Tsongkhapa to propagate the tantric teachings, he went to Sé and established a *shedra* there.¹⁰²⁴ This became known as the Sé tantric tradition or the “Tsang tradition.”¹⁰²⁵

The Sé tradition found its way to Gönlung through Changkya II and his disciple Jamyang Zhepa I. Both received initiation into the Sé tradition in Tsang from Könchok Yarpel (b. 1602)¹⁰²⁶, whom Changkya calls the “The Preceptor of the Sé Lineage, the All-Pervasive Lord, Unshakeable Vajra, He Who Reveals Himself Gloriously in the Form of the Vajra Preceptor ...”¹⁰²⁷ Apparently Könchok Yarpel had not found a suitable disciple to whom he was willing to transmit these teachings until Jamyang Zhepa visited him 1681 and

¹⁰²² T. gtsang. Western Central Tibet.

¹⁰²³ Sönam Drakpa says that Sherap Senggé established the community and then handed it over to his disciple, 'Dul nag pa, although later tradition holds that 'Dul nag pa himself founded it. *Bka' gdam chos 'byung*, 99. Alexander Berzin also made this point earlier: “A Brief History of Gyumay and Gyuto Lower and Upper Tantric Colleges,” *The Berzin Archives*, 2003, <http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/index.html>.

¹⁰²⁴ Tuken III gives an elaborate portrayal of this history. Sönam Drakpa's older account is much more bare-bones, and there exist some differences in the details. Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 286–88.

¹⁰²⁵ T. gtsang *rgyud*. The Mé (smad) tradition of the Lower Tantric College in Lhasa became known as the Ü tradition (dbus *rgyud*). Bsod nams grags pa, *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, 99–100.

¹⁰²⁶ T. dkon mchog yar 'phel.

¹⁰²⁷ T. srad rgyud pa'i dpon slob khyab bdag mi bskyod rdo rje nyid/ /rdo rje slob dpon gzugs su legs bstan pa/ /rje btsun dam pa dkon mchog yar 'phel. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Zhol),” 10b.4–5.

Chankgya did so in 1682.¹⁰²⁸ As founder of the Gönlung’s tantric college, it is Jamyang Zhepa who is credited with introducing its teachings at Gönlung.

The Wensa tradition has a more subline origin. Tsongkhapa is said to have received it directly from the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī via revelation. This, anyway, is the “short lineage.”¹⁰²⁹ The “long lineage” includes a whole host of legendary and historical figures who are said to have preceded Tsongkhapa in the transmission.¹⁰³⁰ The most important teaching in this tradition consists of Geluk Mahāmudrā practices, which entail a specialized *guru yoga* and advanced tantric techniques centered on the three deities of Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajrabairava.¹⁰³¹ The tradition was transmitted through oral teachings, divine revelation, and sometimes through the transmission of the “Great Miraculous Scripture,” as was the case when Tsongkhapa gave the teachings to Tokden Jampel Gyatso (see above). The Miraculous Scripture is said to be invisible and of the nature of light, and, according to one tradition, its last recipient was the Paṅchen Lama Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1567-1662), who returned it to the patron deities of the Geluk sect for safekeeping.¹⁰³² The Paṅchen Lama is said to have transmitted the tradition to two of his major disciples, Druchen Gendün Gyeltsen¹⁰³³ and Lozang Tsöndrū Gyeltsen¹⁰³⁴, and from that point the tradition

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid., 10b.4–11a.5; Tuken III mentions a third individual who received these teachings at the same time as Changkya II: Thang sag pa Dngos grub rgya mtsho. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 289; Derek Frank Maher, “Knowledge and Authority in Tibetan Middle Way Schools of Buddhism: A Study of the Gelukba (dge lugs pa) Epistemology of Jamyang Shayba (’jam dbyangs bzhad pa) in Its Historical Context” (University of Virginia, 2003), 107.

¹⁰²⁹ T. *nye brgyud*.

¹⁰³⁰ Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:,” 158–9.

¹⁰³¹ Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, xiv–xv; Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:,” 156.

¹⁰³² Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 161–2n114.

¹⁰³³ T. grub chen dge ’dun rgyal mtshan.

¹⁰³⁴ T. blo bzang brtson ’grus rgyal mtshan.

continued in two streams up until the twentieth century when they were once again united.¹⁰³⁵

That, at least, is one idealized portrait of this lineage that survives today. The Wensa tradition arrived at Gönlung by means of Changkya II. In 1674, Changkya traveled to Tsang and met the young Pañchen Lama (i.e. the Second). From the First Pañchen Lama's disciple Drungwa Rinpoché Lozang Gyeltsen¹⁰³⁶ (i.e. most likely the aforementioned disciple named Lozang Tsöndrü Gyeltsen) he received a collection of writings comprising the “uncommon”¹⁰³⁷ instructions on the Path and the View of the Wensa tradition.¹⁰³⁸ The Seventh Dalai Lama further notes how Changkya passed these teachings on to his own master, Trichen Jamgön Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso (i.e. Ganden Shiretu), who in turn passed them on to “numerous, fortunate disciples.”¹⁰³⁹ Jamyang Zhepa, too, is said to have received teachings of the Wensa Tradition from Changkya:

In the biography of the former Omniscient One [i.e. Jamyang Zhepa], it says: “In Jukgo Tsel¹⁰⁴⁰ and Lhodruk Ralungpa¹⁰⁴¹ the master himself¹⁰⁴² received from the feet of the Veritable Varja-holder Lodrö Gyatso [i.e. Trigön Jamgön] all the ‘pith instructions’ on the Sixty Great Torma [Sacrificial Cake Offering] to [the deity] Bhairava.¹⁰⁴³ From the feet of him and the *heruka* incarnation of the Supreme Changkya, Lozang Chöden, he received all the ‘pith instructions’ on drawing the

¹⁰³⁵ Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:,” 158–9.

¹⁰³⁶ T. *drung ba rin po che blo bzang rgyal mtshan* (1567-1650).

¹⁰³⁷ T. *thun mong min pa*.

¹⁰³⁸ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 8a.1–2.

¹⁰³⁹ Ta la’i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, “Khri chen sprul pa’i sku blo bzang stan pa’i nyi ma’s Biography,” 361/17b.2–3.

¹⁰⁴⁰ T. *jug sgo tshal*.

¹⁰⁴¹ T. lho ’brug ra long ba. One informant suggested this was along the border between Nepal and Tibet. A more likely possibility, I think, is Ralung Monastery and vicinity in present-day Gyantsé County (rgyal rtse; Ch. Jiangzi 江孜), Tibetan Autonomous Region. Ralung Monastery is the principal seat of the Drukpa Kagyü sect. Gyurme Dorje, *Footprint Tibet Handbook*, 4th ed. (Footprint Handbooks Ltd, 2009), 305. TBRC and THL both were also helpful in searching this (and many other) place name(s).

¹⁰⁴² T. *mkhan bdag*.

¹⁰⁴³ T. *jigs byed grags po’i gtor chen drug cu ba*.

mandala, the liturgical singing, the drumming pattern, both the sky- and -earth-mandalas¹⁰⁴⁴, and the [making of] *tsampa* effigies¹⁰⁴⁵ and paper effigies." Thus, [one can see that] from this point in time [Changkya] was the accomplished lord of the 'pith instructions' of the [Wensa] Oral Tradition. ...¹⁰⁴⁶

Note that the 'pith instructions' also include recipes for constructing *tormas* and practicing the material arts in addition to the more abstract teachings on "correct view" and so forth.

Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya were now happily loaded with new tantric teachings, teachings that had compelled previous lineage holders to take flight and undertake serious spiritual practice in remote places.¹⁰⁴⁷ As such, these two along with another lineage holder¹⁰⁴⁸ all decided to go to a completely isolated spot somewhere between Tibet and Nepal to practice. They presented their plan to another one of the Pañchen Lama's disciples,¹⁰⁴⁹ who ridiculed them: "Are you going to throw away the teachings of the Victor Tsongkhapa? Are you able to independently go your own way? This is not fitting for great scholars who desire to maintain the correct [philosophical] viewpoint such as yourselves."¹⁰⁵⁰ They thus abandoned their flighty dreams and instead became institution men (at Gönlung, Labrang, and Yershong Monasteries¹⁰⁵¹, respectively).

¹⁰⁴⁴ T. *gnam dang sa'i 'khor lo*.

¹⁰⁴⁵ T. *zan ling*; lit. "tsampa enemy."

¹⁰⁴⁶ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 59.3–8. I am particularly indebted to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for help interpreting parts of this passage. Cited in Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 128–9.

¹⁰⁴⁷ For example, after Wensapa Lozang Dönyö (dben sa pa blo bzang don yod)--after whom the tradition is named--received the Miraculous Scripture from his master, he went to numerous solitary places to practice. Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 65.

¹⁰⁴⁸ I.e. G.yer gshong sngags rams pa 'Jam dbyangs blo gros (1651-1733), who received transmission of the "Lineage of Zhalu" (zhwa lu phyogs brgyud). See 'Brug thar and Sangs rgyas tshe ring, *Mdo smad rma khug tsha 'gram rong 'brog yul gru'i sngon byung mes po'i ngag gi lo rgyus deb ther chen mo zhes bya ba bzhus so* (Beijing: Mi rig dpe skrun khang, 2005), 593–4.

¹⁰⁴⁹ I.e. Rta phug pa Dam chos rgyal mtshan.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 59.

¹⁰⁵¹ T. g.yer gshong bsam gtan chos gling.

We shall look momentarily at how these arcane and exclusive traditions came to be institutionalized and accessible to all. First, however, I want to introduce one final layer related to the Wensa tradition. As we have seen, the Pañchen Lama Lozang Chokyi Gyeltsen is said to have transmitted the Wensa tradition to only one¹⁰⁵² or two disciples, and he may have returned the Miraculous Scripture to the Geluk sect's patron deities. However, other sources indicate that the Great Adept from Denma Tsültrim Gyatso, a most influential figure from Pari, also received *both* the Wensa tradition and the related Miraculous Scripture from the Pañchen Lama.¹⁰⁵³

Denma was the principal teacher to a number of important lamas in Amdo, including the Great Adept of Rongwo Kelden Gyatso (1607-1677, aka Shar Kelden Gyatso, the author of the 1652 *A mdo'i chos 'byung*,¹⁰⁵⁴ and the Great Adept of Meditative Pacification Gendün Zangpo,¹⁰⁵⁵ the founder of an important branch monastery of Gönlung.¹⁰⁵⁶ Later in his career, he served as abbot of Gönlung, and he founded both Chöten Tang¹⁰⁵⁷ and Kenchen Monasteries,¹⁰⁵⁸ both important branches of Gönlung. The majority of his life, however, was dedicated to the pursuit of scholastic and especially contemplative instruction. Kelden Gyatso writes that “nowadays, here in this land of Amdo there are many who engage in spiritual

¹⁰⁵² In the lineage studied by Willis, there is only a single heir to the tradition. *Enlightened Beings*.

¹⁰⁵³ The following biographical information comes from the *Ocean Annals* unless otherwise noted. I have acquired a copy of a manuscript biography of Denma from his monastery of Kan chen. The colophon page is damaged making it impossible to identify its author or its date of composition. However, for a future project I will be comparing the contents of this biography with the information found in the *Ocean Annals* to see if this rare source provides additional information of historical and/or religious importance.

¹⁰⁵⁴ T. rong bo grub chen skal ldan rgya mtsho, shar skal ldan rgya mtsho.

¹⁰⁵⁵ T. sgom zhis grub chen dge 'dun bzang po. Also known as Dge 'dun blo gros.

¹⁰⁵⁶ I.e. Stong shags bkra shis chos gling. Ch. Yangguan si 羊官寺.

¹⁰⁵⁷ T. mchod rten thang. Ch. Tiantang si 天堂寺.

¹⁰⁵⁸ T. kan chen dgon.

practice.¹⁰⁵⁹ However, among them are the sun and moon: the Dharma King Without Peers Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (1581-1659)¹⁰⁶⁰ and the Dharma King Ascetic of Gönlung Denma Tsültrim Gyatso.”¹⁰⁶¹

While in Central Tibet, Denma studied philosophy at some of the most respected monastic centers and earned acclaim when he was selected to participate in the newly established ‘academic circuit’ debates of the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa. He is said to have arisen as “the debater without peer.”¹⁰⁶² As his epithet suggests, he was equally accomplished in the realm of spiritual attainment. Gönlung’s founder, Gyelsé, had been especially pleased to see a monk from his monastery participate in the first ever Lhasa debates, and he imparted to Denma tantric teachings of the Chö¹⁰⁶³ tradition. However, most of Denma’s contemplative training and practice took place further west, in Tsang.¹⁰⁶⁴ In particular, Denma is considered one of the “four heart-sons” of the Pañchen Lama.¹⁰⁶⁵ Once, while he was visiting the Pañchen, one of the latter’s disciples¹⁰⁶⁶ asked the Pañchen about and received instructions on the Ganden Mahāmudrā, i.e. the Wensa Oral Tradition. Denma

¹⁰⁵⁹ T. *sgrub pa mdzad mkhan*.

¹⁰⁶⁰ T. blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan.

¹⁰⁶¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “A mdo'i chos 'byung,” 343.

¹⁰⁶² Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 670/19b.5–671/20a.5. It is not clear whether Tuken III means that the academic circuit of the Great Prayer Festival was established for the first time ever or established after a hiatus of nearly twenty years. The language seems to suggest the former. This would be a surprisingly late addition to the famous festival. Unfortunately, I know of no study of the history of this festival, which is a desideratum for our field.

¹⁰⁶³ T. *gcod*.

¹⁰⁶⁴ One possible explanation for his migration to Tsang is that he involved himself in a dispute between the Har sdong and Bsam lo regional houses (*mi tshan*) of Drepung Monastery by bringing it to the attention of the Tsang King. As a consequence, the chief steward of the Dalai Lama, Bsod nams chos “phel, was punished. This ignited the wrath of the deity Rdo rje dregs ldan, the chief minister of the Dalai Lama’s protector deity Gnas chung. Denma was plagued by “demonic machinations” for years until he finally conquered them through the practice of Chö (*gcod*). Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 671/20a.6–24b.1, esp. 671/20a.6–672/20b.2.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 108.4.

¹⁰⁶⁶ I.e. Gendün Gyeltsen, who was mentioned above.

heard about this and went to inquire. The Paṅchen then gave him transmission of “the root text and commentary of the Mahāmudrā.”¹⁰⁶⁷ Denma also expressed his wish to learn the actual practices of this tradition, to which the Paṅchen responded “you don’t have a need for this. There is nothing here that surpasses the view of the Middle Way [i.e. Madhyamaka].”¹⁰⁶⁸ Later, however, two volumes of the Miraculous Scripture are said to have rained down from the sky, and the Paṅchen Lama place them on Denma’s head, thereby blessing him and consummating the transmission of the tradition.¹⁰⁶⁹

We have seen that Gönlung’s most important tantric practices originated in Tsang, west of Lhasa and the center of Geluk power in Central Tibet. In addition, many of the early, powerful abbots and lamas associated with Gönlung had strong ties to the Paṅchen Lama and Tsang, and on occasion they even had trouble getting along with the Dalai Lama’s establishment in Lhasa.¹⁰⁷⁰ This bespeaks both the great influence of the Paṅchen Lama¹⁰⁷¹

¹⁰⁶⁷ T. *phyag chen rtsa grel gyi lung*.

¹⁰⁶⁸ The Paṅchen Lama argued that Mahāmudrā could be found within *both* exoteric (i.e. Madhyamaka) and tantric levels of practice, although he did maintain that the tantric system was separate and superior. It is not clear why the Paṅchen Lama may have withheld the tantric Mahāmudrā teachings from Denma. Jackson, “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:” 172–4.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 24b.3–25a.1 (The editor’s page number is not available here. Here, only the original, blockprint page number is given). As an interesting aside, I should mention that the Paṅchen Lama is said to have sent to Shambhala an individual from Lhasa known as the Indian Guru (Rgya gar gu ru), renowned for the supernatural ability of swiftly moving. The Paṅchen had Denma address a letter to the king of Shambhala, which this figure carried with him. The modern scholar Nyima Dzin has suggested that Gönlung’s Wensa Tradition of *cham* ritual dance came from Shambhala upon the Paṅchen’s request. One thus wonders if this reference to the Indian Guru has to do with the possible divine origins of some of the Paṅchen’s teachings (pp. 25a.1-6). See also Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 109.27–110.2; Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 128.

¹⁰⁷⁰ See the [note above](#). The First Chu bzang Rnam rgyal dpal ‘byor (1578-1651) took his monastic vows from the Paṅchen Lama. As mentioned in chapter two, Dewa Chöjé appears to have had a priest-patron relationship with the Tsang King, and he was a close disciple of the Paṅchen Lama. Finally, Tuken III’s *Chronicle of Gönlung* explains that Tsenpo “the Stern,” the founder of Serkhok Monastery, may have had a falling out with the Dalai Lama’s establishment.

¹⁰⁷¹ Roger Jackson has argued that the Mahāmudrā teachings of the Geluk Oral Tradition were largely composed by the Paṅchen Lama despite the tradition’s claim that the teachings derive *in toto* from Mañjuśrī and Tsongkhapa. “The dGe ldan-bKa’ Brgyud Tradition of Mahāmudrā:”.

and the social and political turmoil of Central Tibet in the early seventeenth century. Whatever the cause may have been, the Geluk tantric traditions such as the Sé and Wensa traditions were not the uncontested, supreme practices of seventeenth-century Tsang. There were numerous other traditions, particularly Kagyü ones, that competed with these Geluk traditions. Thus, when Denma later spoke of the “short lineage” of the Wensa tradition (i.e. the lineage that originated with the Buddha, Mañju, and Tsongkhapa), there were people who expressed skepticism: How could a genuine lineage not have human forebears? To this Denma had a witty reply: “the origin of [this] dharma is Tsongkhapa, Mañju and Vajradhāra. In contrast, those who find purer [those teachings] whose origin is in the earth, rocks, or cliffs are merely parochial.”¹⁰⁷²

The reference to those who dig their teachings out of the earth, rocks, etc. refers to Nyingmapas and other who made use of “hidden treasures,”¹⁰⁷³ religious teachings embedded in physical objects (as well as the minds of certain individuals) and revealed at a later time. On another occasion, Denma taught a certain Kagyüpa, whose body was depleted from his own spiritual practice, the methods for retaining the proper tantric visualizations. The Kagyüpa exclaimed, “I did not know that the Geluk [sect] had spiritual advice of this sort!” He and others like him were thus converted to the Geluk sect.¹⁰⁷⁴ This may remind the reader of Dewa Chöjé giving teachings in Kökenuur in the presence of Tsogtu Khan, whereupon he impressed and converted practitioners of other sects (see chapter two).

Despite these testimonials of Geluk success in the realm of tantric practice, these stories were written by self-avowed Gelukpas a hundred years or more after the events in

¹⁰⁷² Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 108.24–28.

¹⁰⁷³ T. *gter ma*.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 109.9–11.

question. As such, they can tell us very little about the development of the Geluk sect's technologies of ritual power. The Gelukpa's real success appears to have come later, after Denma returned to Amdo and became, like Changkya II and Jamyang Zhepa I, an institution man. Moreover, it was the institutionalization of these contemplative traditions that helped give rise to mega monasteries.

Gönlung's Tantric College

In chapter three, we saw how Changkya II and Jamyang Zhepa I, master and disciple, established the Tantric College in 1710. The *Ocean Annals* recapitulates this event:

As for the Tantric College [of Gönlung], previously, Gyelsé Rinpoché wished to establish [one]. However, from the start someone gave him a book of the completion stage of Guhyasamāja, and so [Gyelsé] prophesied, "it is established, but it will not last long. Later, someone will come to establish it." Accordingly, the Omniscient Jamyang Zhepa, who was residing in Ü, sent a letter to the previous Changkya [i.e. the second], saying "there are philosophical teachings at Gönlung, but there are no esoteric¹⁰⁷⁵ teachings. Therefore, a tantric college must be established." Later, in 1710, when the Father and Son met face to face at this monastery, the Supreme Changkya ordered the Omniscient Lama [i.e. Jamyang Zhepa]: "previously, you said there is a need to establish esoteric teachings. The time has now arrived, you must establish them." In accordance with [his] lama's order, he succeeded in doing this.

He gave the textual transmission¹⁰⁷⁶ of the *Four-Part Commentary* [on *Guhyasamāja*]¹⁰⁷⁷ as well as a black protection cord¹⁰⁷⁸ of the Sé lineage Vajra-holder¹⁰⁷⁹ to the abbot of this monastery [Tuken II], Denma Zhapdrung [II], etc. [Also,] he established a 'support' of [the deity] Damchen,¹⁰⁸⁰ [who is] very intimidating;¹⁰⁸¹ now there is also a statue there.

¹⁰⁷⁵ T. *sngags*.

¹⁰⁷⁶ T. *bshad lung*.

¹⁰⁷⁷ T. *'grel ba bzhi sbregs*.

¹⁰⁷⁸ T. *'phyag mdud nag po*.

¹⁰⁷⁹ T. *srad rgyud rdo rje 'chang*. Here this likely refers to Könchok Yarphel (see above).

¹⁰⁸⁰ T. *dam can*. Damchen is the protector deity Damchen Dorjé Lekpa (*dam can rdo rje legs pa*), a Tibetan deity said to have been subdued by Padmasambhava and turned into a protector of Buddhism. The "support" that Jamyang Zhepa established for Gönlung may have been a rock in which the deity is said to reside (i.e. a "*bla rdo*," or "soul rock," often worn by Tibetans for protection). Today at Gönlung, Damchen is worshipped in the protectors' hall (*btsan khang*) on the third day of every month, although he is by no means the monastery's most

Denma Zhapdrung Ngawang Tendzin Trinlé was installed as the Tantric College’s Preceptor [i.e. head],¹⁰⁸² and Kenchen Lodrö Gyatso¹⁰⁸³ as the ‘ritual head.’¹⁰⁸⁴ The manner in which the Tantric College was founded is as in the autobiography of Changkya [II]

At that time, the Father and Son [i.e. Changkya and Jamyang Zhepa] prophesied to Lord [Tuken II] Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso, "even though the three of us have here founded this tantric college, it will come to ruin. At that time, you must focus your mind." Accordingly, due to the Kökenuur Warfare [of 1723], the monastery was uninhabitable. When the time came to rebuild, the former Tuken reestablished it [i.e. the Tantric College]. ...¹⁰⁸⁵

It is not clear exactly why Gyelsé prophesied the early demise of Gönlung’s tantric college. Perhaps he considered the bestowal of the book on the tantric completion stage of Guhyasmāja to be presumptuous and indicative of a congregation that would not take seriously the necessary preliminary practices of tantra.¹⁰⁸⁶ More likely there *was no tantric college* in the early years of the monastery, and this story of its initial founding and later demise is an attempt to connect the later institution with the monastery’s founder. As we have seen, the earliest records make no mention of a “tantric college” or “tantra monastic group.” Rather, Gyelsé established a *shedra* (“commentary class”) for the study of philosophy and, further up the valley, a “realization group” focused on contemplative

important protector. My thanks to my friend and colleague Chris Bell for first explaining to me the background to Damchen. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee first explained to me the significance of a “*bla rdo*” (personal communication, March 2013). For more on the contemporary calendar of Gönlung’s protectors’ hall, see the [note above](#).

¹⁰⁸¹ T. *gnyan cha che*.

¹⁰⁸² T. *slob dpon*.

¹⁰⁸³ T. kan chen blo gros rgya mtsho.

¹⁰⁸⁴ T. *bla ma dbu mdzad*.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 70.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Tuken III’s *Chronicle of Gönlung* also relates this story. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 647/8a.6–648/8b.2.

practices. Neither of these bears any resemblance to the institution founded by Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya.

It is also not clear why the college was not founded earlier. Denma I had received transmission of a *chö* tradition from Gyelsé and the Wensa tradition from the Pañchen Lama. However, there is no indication that he was part of any effort to institutionalize the practices at Gönlung. He gave “direct instructions” on contemplation to numerous disciples, who went out to have great meditative achievements. However, their histories are basically unknown. At one point Denma was driven away from Gönlung by gossip and slander, after which he founded the monastery of Chöten Tang. However, he did not wish to lead that congregation for long, and so he bequeathed the institution to another lama,¹⁰⁸⁷ traveled a short distance to the northwest, and established Kenchen Monastery.¹⁰⁸⁸ There he enshrined the skull of Gönlung’s founder, Gyelsé, which he had acquired while in Central Tibet.

Perhaps Denma was not an “institution man” after all, preferring to retire in more remote places, unfettered by the prattle of mega monasteries. Or, perhaps the general impetus and conditions for the establishment of a tantric college had not yet arisen. After all, the tantric college at Sera Monastery was not founded until the early eighteenth century when Lhazang Khan donated funds to construct an institution that would perform rituals on his behalf. When Changkya made his final trip to Gönlung in 1710, he came loaded with riches that he donated to the construction of a new main assembly hall and an adjacent shrine

¹⁰⁸⁷ I.e. Stong ’khor Mdo rgyud rgya mtsho (1621-1683)

¹⁰⁸⁸ Other traditions hold that Stong ’khor himself established the monastery. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 682/25b.4–5; Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 123.11–24.

hall,¹⁰⁸⁹ to the protectors' hall, to purchasing ritual implements for the performance of the Great Prayer Festival, to the Medicine Buddha Ritual Hall¹⁰⁹⁰, to the courtyard of his own villa, and, it would seem, to the construction of a tantric college.¹⁰⁹¹

In the early eighteenth century, the population of the congregation at Gönlung had likely grown to its largest size ever, hovering around two thousand monks. Moreover, the scholastic practices of debate and exams had already been institutionalized, meaning many of these monks spent their whole lives or at least several years at Gönlung completing their training. Under those circumstances, the piecemeal transmission of contemplative traditions to a select corps of individuals (who traveled around from monastic group to monastic group, seeking out instruction) was inadequate to the needs of the congregation. Thus, a system for imparting these traditions to a large, qualified cadre of monks arose. Also, such a sizeable and permanently-fixed monastery required protection of all kinds, since it could not simply pick up and move when faced with social and political turmoil as some monastic groups in the past had done. A regular system of ritual protection was needed to protect the institution from demonic machinations, thieves, Chinese armies, and Muslim raiders. Finally, a monastery of such proportions demanded a hearty supply of donations. The establishment of an institution for the regular performance of rituals—be they part of the monastic calendar or be they ‘private’¹⁰⁹² rituals performed upon the request of a patron—resulted in a more specialized system for the performance of rituals and the exchange of wealth:

¹⁰⁸⁹ T. *lha khang*.

¹⁰⁹⁰ T. *sman chog khang*.

¹⁰⁹¹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 31b.2–33a.2. See [note above](#).

¹⁰⁹² T. *sger*.

... whether in the case of an occasional rite sponsored by a household, or more regular annual ones, the financial provision of differing rites could not be pooled for convenience's sake. ...

The general emphasis here is on the sponsorship of specific, named ritual acts as sacred centres and focuses of economic exchange. ... In this sense, gompas [i.e. monasteries] (rather than monks) appeared to act, in ritual terms at least, much like households: they were seen as the legitimate focus of wealth accumulation, most particularly through systems of sacrificial exchange centred on ritual performances ... Wealth, in other words, moved towards Buddhas and deities in the form of offering.¹⁰⁹³

In 1710 the time was ripe for the establishment of a tantric college. Incidentally, Denma's rebirth was the one appointed to serve as the institution's first head. Even if the first Denma had not wanted to establish or be a part of such an institution, the institution appears to have wanted him.

The Ritual Calendar

The Tantric College at Gönlung is said to have its own customary¹⁰⁹⁴ that explains in detail the rules and procedures for the administration and operation of the college. Unfortunately, like many other things deemed "tantric," it is guarded from the curious eyes of the uninitiated. Nonetheless, the *Ocean Annals* provides us with a general overview of the college's ritual calendar:¹⁰⁹⁵

At the end of the year, [there are] the Great *Torma* [Ritual Cake Offering] to Mahākāla¹⁰⁹⁶ along with *cham* ritual dancing,¹⁰⁹⁷ the New Year Long-life *Torma*,¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹³ Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism*, 64–5.

¹⁰⁹⁴ T. *bca' yig*.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Note that this passage follows immediately on the heels of a description of the "academic" calendar at Gönlung. This is evidence of the fact that "scholasticism" and "ritual" at mega monasteries, although relegated to separate institutions, are still intimately connected and intertwined. I will draw attention to this fact again in the following chapter.

¹⁰⁹⁶ T. *mgon po'i gtor chen*.

¹⁰⁹⁷ T. '*cham*.

¹⁰⁹⁸ T. *lo sar tshes gtor*.

and fifteen days of the Great Prayer Festival of Magical Displays.¹⁰⁹⁹ Afterwards, there is also the Iron-Fortress *cham* Ritual Dance of the Wensa Tradition,¹¹⁰⁰ although it is said to be the *cham* of Chamdo.¹¹⁰¹ The Vajra-preceptor always recites the root mantra¹¹⁰² ten million [times], and the successive tradition of mouth[-to-ear instructions on] visualizations¹¹⁰³ flourishes there. Also, during the main stage [of the ritual], the water-bearers must watch over their speech, and other such actions must be punctilious. Also, the schedule and order of the liturgical calendar of the seven days of the Great Prayer Festival of the [Turning of] the Dharma Wheel¹¹⁰⁴ are permanently established.

At Gönlung's Tantric College, the [study of the *Four-Part*] *Commentary* must be completed [at least] one time. As for 'Deity Evocation and Offering Rituals,'¹¹⁰⁵ there is a Great *Torma*, the quarterly throwing of *torma*, an 'Alms Bowl Offering,'¹¹⁰⁶ tantric offerings¹¹⁰⁷ and so forth like at the Lower Tantric College [in Lhasa]. [The monks of Gönlung's Tantric College] must memorize the disciplinary sermon¹¹⁰⁸ said to be composed by the former Omniscient One [i.e. Jamyang Zhepa].¹¹⁰⁹ There is also a commemoration day¹¹¹⁰ for this lord. The 'ritual head' must be one who has spent a long time in the Tantric College, and [he] must have unbroken [attendance] at assemblies and dharma sessions.¹¹¹¹

The performance of 'private assemblies'¹¹¹² is to be strictly monitored [i.e. kept to a minimum]¹¹¹³ [at all times] except during the Long-life *Torma* and the Twenty-Ninth *Torma*.¹¹¹⁴ The *yang* and *ta* [chants] and techniques¹¹¹⁵ of [the following] are pure [and] pleasing to the mind: The Four Hundred [Offerings],¹¹¹⁶ the Flaming Mouth

¹⁰⁹⁹ T. *cho 'phrul smon lam*.

¹¹⁰⁰ T. *dben sa lugs kyi lcags mkhar 'cham*.

¹¹⁰¹ T. *chab mdo*. I do know for sure why this tradition may have been called "the *cham* of Chamdo." One possibility is that it came to be associated with the Iron Fortress *cham* tradition established at nearby Chöten Tang by Tongkhor V Sönam Gyatso (stong 'khor bsod nams rgya mtsho, 1684-1752), who was active in Kham. However, this is just conjecture.

¹¹⁰² T. *rtsa sngags*.

¹¹⁰³ T. *zhal shes dmigs nam*.

¹¹⁰⁴ T. *chos 'khor smon lam*.

¹¹⁰⁵ T. *sgrub mchod*. Also called "main ceremonies." Dreyfus, "An Introduction to Drepung's Colleges."

¹¹⁰⁶ T. *lhung bzed mchod pa*.

¹¹⁰⁷ T. *rgyud mchod*.

¹¹⁰⁸ T. *tshogs gtam*.

¹¹⁰⁹ Lempert has translated "*tshogs gtam*" as "public reprimand." See Lempert, *Discipline and Debate*, 107–26 and 143–50.

¹¹¹⁰ T. *'das mchod*.

¹¹¹¹ T. *tshogs chos*.

¹¹¹² T. *sger 'tshogs*.

¹¹¹³ T. *'grig khrims dam*.

¹¹¹⁴ T. *dgu gtor*.

¹¹¹⁵ T. *dbyangs rta phyag len*.

¹¹¹⁶ T. *brgya bzhi*.

Queen,¹¹¹⁷ the *Torma* for Repelling [Obstacles] by Lord [Tuken III] Chökyi Nyima, and whatever other exorcistic type rituals¹¹¹⁸ there are, as well as the Fire Offering of the Four Activities.¹¹¹⁹

Despite being a “general overview,” there is quite a bit of detail in this passage regarding the ritual calendar at Gönlung. Note that the passage comes from a source composed one and a half centuries and one major war after the founding of the Tantra College, so it is likely to represent changes to the original calendar. For instance, this passage speaks of the “quarterly throwing of a *torma*,” whereas an earlier source indicates that there were to be five “periodic *tormas*” thrown each month.¹¹²⁰ In any case, I wish to draw the reader’s attention to only four lines from the above passage:

1. “... the [study of the *Four-Part*] *Commentary* must be completed [at least] one time.”
2. “... and so forth like at the Lower Tantric College [in Lhasa].”
3. “... there is also the Iron-Fortress *cham* ritual dance of the Wensa Tradition ...”
4. “The performance of ‘private assemblies’¹¹²¹ is to be strictly monitored [i.e. kept to a minimum]¹¹²² [at all times] ...”

First, the explicit mention of the annual study of Tsongkhapa’s *Four-Part Commentary*, as well as the references to the Lower Tantric College¹¹²³ and Jamyang Zhepa, indicate that the Gönlung Tantric College was seen as embodying the tantric traditions initiated by Tsongkhapa’s disciple Sherap Senggé and which, much later, were transmitted to

¹¹¹⁷ T. ‘*bar ma < kha ‘bar ma*.

¹¹¹⁸ T. *mdos rigs*.

¹¹¹⁹ T. *las bzhi’i sbyin sreg*. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 71.

¹¹²⁰ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 34a.1–2.

¹¹²¹ T. *sger ‘tshogs*.

¹¹²² T. ‘*grig khrims dam*.

¹¹²³ That the practices of Gönlung’s Tantric College were modeled on those of the Lower Tantric College in Lhasa is corroborated in perhaps the earliest available source for information on the college, the biography of Changkya II. Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 77b.4–5.

Könchok Yarpel and, through him, to Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya II. Those traditions—namely the Sé tradition and its eastern counterpart, the Mé tradition¹¹²⁴—link Gönlung across time with the renowned, esoteric traditions discussed above and across space with one of Central Tibet’s major monasteries. These connections are essential to the Tantric College’s own legitimacy and to its ability to export its practices to villages and other monasteries in Pari.

The line regarding the Wensa Tradition of *cham* is particularly interesting, because it refers to one of the college’s most visible practices. The Iron Fortress *cham* ritual dance takes place on the second-to-last day (i.e. the twenty-ninth) of the last month of the year, as does the “Great *Torma*” offered to Mahākākala—also known as the Twenty-Ninth *Torma*.¹¹²⁵ In lead-up up to this event, an elite corps among the *cham* dancers known as the ‘assembly hall courtyard dancers’¹¹²⁶ undertake a five-day, “uncommon” retreat in a Deity Evocation *Torma* Hall,¹¹²⁷ during which they presumably prepared the *torma* and evoked Mahākāla’s presence in it, thereby creating an immanent vessel for blessings.

¹¹²⁴ See the [note above](#). Tuken III asserts that Jamyang Zhepa and Changkya II (as well as a third, fellow lineage-holder) both had received teachings coming from the Sé, Mé, and Wensa traditions and that they “combined all three streams together into a single river of teachings.” *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, 289.

¹¹²⁵ Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 133.

¹¹²⁶ *ishogs chen thang ‘cham pa*. The entire line reads “*btsan khang ‘cham pa dang tshogs chen ‘bag ‘cham pa dang / thang ‘cham pa khag gnyis yod de*, which I have interpreted to mean “there are two groups: the ‘protectors’ hall dancers’ and the ‘assembly hall masked dancers’ and ‘courtyard dancers.’ While staying at Gönlung in 2010 and 2011 I saw that there were principally two groups of dancers, one from the protectors’ hall and one from the main assembly hall. A prerequisite for being a courtyard dancer, writes the present-day lama-scholar of Gönlung, Nyima Dzin, was that one had to have earned the scholastic title of *kachu*. *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹²⁷ T. *gtor sgrub khang*.

This *Torma* Offering to Mahākāla may be a Geluk innovation for honoring this important protector deity of the sect.¹¹²⁸ When Changkya II¹¹²⁹ was at Gönlung at some point in the final years of the seventeenth-century, he reported that the ritual techniques of the Mahākāla Evocation *Torma* as practiced there were incorrect. The specialist in charge of the ritual¹¹³⁰ and others ignored Changkya and continued doing things as before. The abbot at that time¹¹³¹ told them “you must reform [the practices].” Accordingly, they were corrected, and upon its subsequent performance, auspicious connections are said to have been established.¹¹³² This story illustrates the particular attention given to the details of ritual procedures. Changkya had recently completed more than twenty years of training in Central Tibet, and it is likely that he was especially attentive to practices in Amdo that depart from the “orthodoxy” with which he was familiar.¹¹³³

The most spectacular *cham* dancing for public display takes place on the fourteenth day of the new year, when the “Sixty Great Evocation *Tormas* to (Vajra)bhairava” are

¹¹²⁸ The Six-Armed, Wisdom Mahākāla was the protective deity of the Second Dalai Lama’s family. Amy Heller, “The Protective Deities of the Dalai Lamas,” in Martin Brauen, ed., *The Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2005), 216a.

¹¹²⁹ The text does not specify which incarnation of Changkya. The context would suggest this is the second Changkya.

¹¹³⁰ T. *gtor sgrub bla ma*. He specialist’s name was Phar skyang bzod pa.

¹¹³¹ I.e. Degu Zhapdrung. This is likely Degu Zhapdrung Kün’ga Gyelsten (bde rgu zhabs drung pa kun dga’ rgyal mtshan), abbot from 1693-1701.

¹¹³² Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 130.

¹¹³³ Changkya exhibits this concern with “correct practice” on other occasions, too. For instance, colophons to two texts in his *Collected Works* indicate that he was troubled by ritual manuals being published by the Phüntshok Ling printer (phun tshogs gling), since it was apparently producing mass quantities of certain texts that were inaccurate or that gave inadequate attention to the actual practices that are to accompany ritual recitations. See the colophons to the texts entitled “Jigs byed kyi sgrub thabs za ma tog ngag ’don bya tshul go bde bar bsgrigs pa ’jam dpal dgongs rgyan,” “Jigs byed chen po’i sgrub thabs ngag ’don gyi chog khrigs ’khrul spongs mkhas pa dgyes byed,” and “Khor lo sdom pa’i sgrub thabs bde chen gsal ba ngag ’don du bsgrigs pa bde chen rab rgyas” in Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, *Gsung ’bum [of Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan]*, vol. 4 (nga).

made.¹¹³⁴ The preparation of these *tormas* and other offerings prepared for on this occasion are said to accord with the practices of “the Wensa Tradition of Chökhör Gyel,”¹¹³⁵ Chökhör Gyel being the Second Dalai Lama’s monastery.¹¹³⁶ This claim is ostensibly based on the fact that Jamyang Zhepa received training in the making of these *tormas* and other ritual paraphernalia from Changkya II and from Trichen Jamgön¹¹³⁷ (see above). Again, whether these practices at Gönlung are actually in accord with any tradition—past or present—at Chökhör Gyel in Central Tibet is beside the point. The point is that the claim is believable and that it establishes perceived connections between across time and space between Gönlung and these sources of tantric power.

Finally, the above passage taken from the *Ocean Annals* makes a peculiar remark: “The performance of ‘private assemblies’ is to be strictly monitored [i.e. kept to a minimum] [at all times] except during the Long-life *Torma* and the Twenty-Ninth *Torma*.” This is immediately followed by a reference to the “pure and pleasing” recitation of the monastery’s tradition of *yang* and *ta* [chants] and ritual techniques. As discussed in chapter four, such attention to the aesthetics of ritual performance bears on the monastery’s reputation among potential patrons. The Twenty-Ninth *Torma*—performed at the end of the year to drive out

¹¹³⁴ T. *rdo rje ‘jigs byed gtor sgrub chen mo drug cu ba*. Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 130 and 133. This corresponds to my own experience there in February of 2011. If memory serves me correctly, *cham* dancing also took place on the eighth day of the new year, although I was not present to observe this.

¹¹³⁵ T. chos ’khor rgyal gyi dben sa lugs.

¹¹³⁶ See the introduction to this dissertation for a discussion of Gönlung’s connection to this monastery. Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 133.

¹¹³⁷ Trichen Jamgön received extensive instruction in tantric traditions while at Chökhör Gyel, although it is not clear whether the teachings he received there and the ones he later imparted to Jamyang Zhepa overlap. An informant proposed an alternative explanation for this claim, namely that Rgyal ba Dben sa pa--after whom the Wensa Oral Tradition is named--spent many years living and practicing at Chökhör Gyel. Hence, the “Wensa Oral Tradition of Chökhör Gyel.” I have not been able to corroborate the suggestion that Dben sa pa actually spent any time at Chökhro Gyel. Ta la’i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, “Khri chen sprul pa’i sku blo bzang stan pa’i nyi ma’s Biography,” 352.4–353.1.

the past, evil influences—and the Long-life *Torma*—performed during the New Year ceremonies to celebrate and promote new life—¹¹³⁸ were particularly lucrative occasions for the monastery, which explains why the monastery allowed any donor who wished to sponsor a private ritual to do so.¹¹³⁹ Attendance was mandatory for the entire congregation at the Long-life *Torma* (even high-ranking scholars, incarnate lamas, and branch monasteries), and as an added incentive, the alms that were collected were distributed only to those in attendance. Blessing cords and other protective amulets were given to the laity who sponsored rituals.¹¹⁴⁰ The abbatial villa was responsible for providing numerous meals and ritual implements (including a cover for the effigy used in the ritual) for the Twenty-Ninth *Torma*.¹¹⁴¹ All of these steps would be taken to ensure that high turnout among lay parishioners was matched by an equally high turnout among the resident monks.

The *yang* and *ta* melodies are what Ellingson has glossed “tone-counter chants” and “melodic chants,” respectively.¹¹⁴² Each refers to a general manner of reciting prayers and hymns, the former more complex than the latter. The following illustration is of a section of a score for a particular *yang* “tone-counter chant” recited at Gönlung.

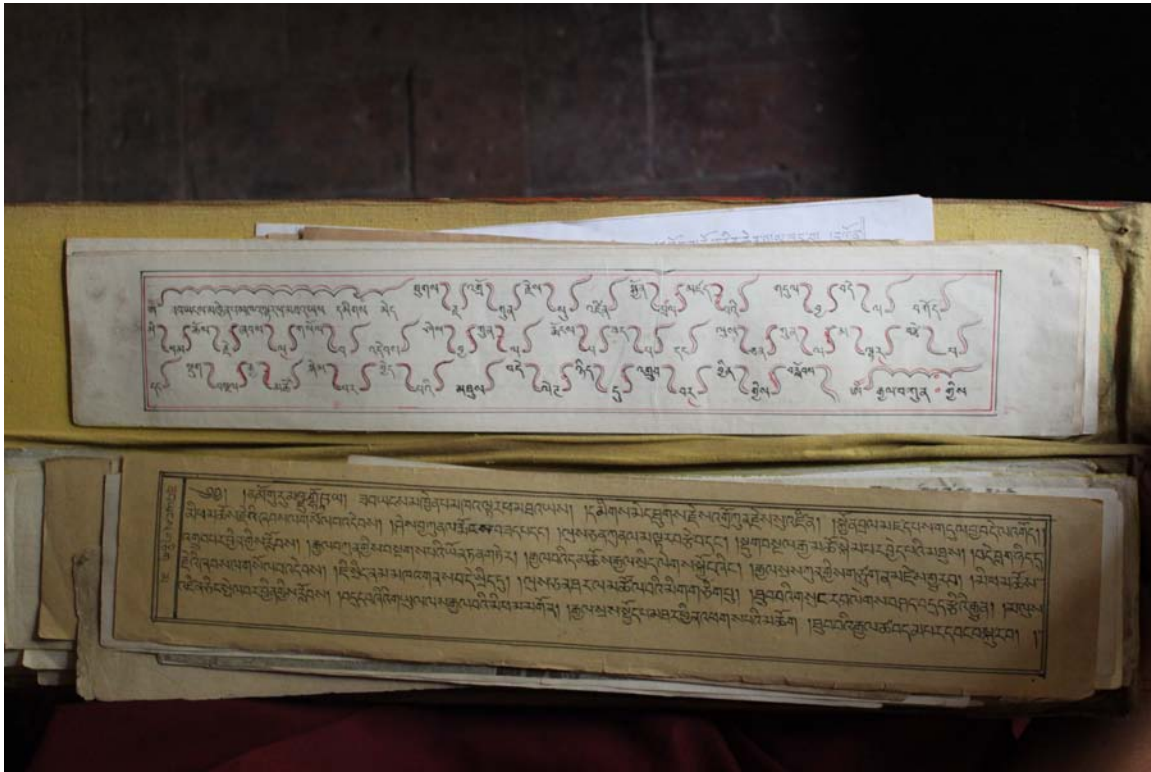
¹¹³⁸ Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 128.

¹¹³⁹ This policy of the monastery is corroborated in the monastery’s eighteenth-century customary. Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 35b.6.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 33b.4–34a.1, 35b.5.

¹¹⁴¹ See chapter four.

¹¹⁴² Ellingson, “’Don rta dbyangs gsum,” 143 and 144.



Such visual records serve as general aides to the cantor or apprentice. The exact pitch and style of the recitation, however, is only conveyed orally from teacher to student and memorized. Thus, a “pure and pleasing” performance entails lots of practice and attention to tradition.

Exporting Traditions

In the same way that ritual and contemplative traditions originating in Central Tibet formed relationships between Gönlung and the sources of the Geluk sect’s most important ritual traditions, smaller monasteries and hermitages in Pari and other regions would borrow the ritual traditions of Gönlung, thereby joining a close-knit monastic network that often posited Gönlung as its “mother.” Unfortunately, the history of these smaller institutions is not as well documented as the history of Gönlung, and so we do not have any record of their ritual

systems that compares with the detail we have for Gönlung. Nonetheless, there are some clues from the historical record that suggest a regular exchange of ritual practices and personnel between Gönlung and its branch monasteries, especially in the form of systems of chanting and recitation.

The Ritual Agenda of a Mega Monastery Then and Now: An Anecdote

In the spring of 2011, I made a trip north from the city of Xining, past Gönlung and north across the Qilian Mountains towards the Hexi Corridor of the ancient Silk Road. Approximately 60 kilometers south of the city of Zhangye—historically known as Ganzhou and an important stop along the Hexi Corridor—one finds the monastery known as Mati si 馬蹄寺¹¹⁴³, literally "Horse Hoof Monastery." It is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery named after an impression found on the ceiling of one of its many cliff-side grottoes and formed, so the saying goes, by the steed of the epic Tibetan hero Gesar.

¹¹⁴³ T. mA this zi. Also, Dga' ldan dam chos gling.



The rock-grotto monastery of Mati. The indentation of the divine steed can be found inside these grottoes.

I made this long drive because Mati si is said to have been a "child" or "branch" monastery of Gönlung. One of Gönlung's principal incarnate lamas was the proprietor of Mati si until at least the early twentieth-century. One missionary to the region in the early twentieth-century writes that Mati si would annually pay to this lama the interest on the land that the lama had bought for the branch monastery.

On my visit I asked the resident monks if they possessed a monastic customary (T. *bca' yig*, pronounced "*chayik*"). I hoped to compare it to the customaries of Gönlung and thereby find similarities and relationships between the liturgical calendars and internal administration of the two monasteries. Unfortunately, as is often the case in China today, particularly in this region, whatever documents had managed to survived into the twentieth-century were burnt or otherwise destroyed during the 'Democratic Reforms' of 1958 and the

Cultural Revolution. Upon pressing further, however, one monk lead me to his room where he revealed to me the monastery's *driklam* ('*grig lam*) together with its *döndrik* ('*don bsgrigs*), that is its 'path of discipline' and 'procedures for arranging the liturgy,' texts that are nearly identical to the *chayik* genre of literature: the compilation of the two begins with quotations from canonical literature regarding the importance of proper conduct for the achievement of salvation; rules defining what kind of clothes can be worn, when one can leave the monastery, and so on; fines and punishments for breaking these rules; the calendar for rituals to be performed and texts and prayers to be recited, including an indication of which are to be specially sung rather than simply chanted; the procedures for installing new monastic officials; and so on.¹¹⁴⁴

This, however, was not an old text. It was written in 1999 by an incarnate lama from the renowned and influential monastery of Labrang Trashi Khyil (*bla brang bkra shis 'khyil*), several hours south and east from Mati si. This lama's master was one of the most renowned *geshés*, or scholar-monks, at Labrang, and most of the monks at Mati si are also reportedly disciples of this *geshé*. Finally, a third individual from Labrang, the cantor (*dbu mdzad*) of one of Labrang's colleges, is said to have taught the monks of Mati si the manner in which to actually chant and sing the liturgy.¹¹⁴⁵ It seems, then, that even though a new Chinese law from 2010 forbids monasteries from having "parent" or "child" monasteries, Labrang has, nonetheless, in many ways subsumed Mati si under its supervision.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Dga' ldan dam chos gling gi 'grig lam dang 'don bsgrigs* [The Path of Discipline and Procedures for Arranging the Liturgy of Mati Monastery], 1999, 1.

¹¹⁴⁵ I have removed certain identifying details to protect the anonymity of the individuals being discussed here. These facts were reported to me by a monk at Mati si.

I begin with this anecdote because it can provide a clear, present-day example of how a mega monastery—in this case Labrang—exports its ritual practices, thereby joining monasteries in a network of shared traditions. Although there is a real danger in using the modern situation as a model for interpreting historical situations, this process whereby a mega monastery exports its ritual traditions is common across a vast landscape, suggesting that it is a phenomenon that has had a long time to develop and spread across the Tibetan Plateau.¹¹⁴⁶ In addition, the various components of this phenomenon as illustrated in the above anecdote are also found throughout the historical record. First, master-disciple relationships based on renunciation, ordination, or teachings link smaller, more remote monasteries and temples to the root monastery of the master. Second, eminent monks and lamas belonging to a mega monastery might compose manuals and liturgical texts for monasteries under their auspices. Third, we see functionaries from the mega monastery, such as the cantor from Labrang, being dispatched (or requested) to go to a smaller, more remote monastery in order to give instruction in the various components of the liturgical program. In the examples that follow I will be emphasizing the latter two components, since they bear most directly on the formation of *ritual* networks.

¹¹⁴⁶ One Mongol temple in present-day Xinjiang Region, two thousand kilometers west from Gönlung, follows the ‘Assembly Liturgy’ (*tshogs 'don*) written by the previous Chuzang incarnation. The simple, hand-written text sits on the main altar and reminds the monks of what they are to recite each day. Similarly, the abbot from Chuzang Monastery explained to me that other monasteries—including Gönlung in 2010, Chöten Thang in 2010, and a monastery two thousand kilometers to the east in Liaoning Province—all learned and employed the liturgy and chanting style of Chuzang Monastery for certain ‘eye-opening’ (i.e. consecration) ceremonies at their respective monasteries. A monastery cannot casually modify its unique chanting style, he informed me, and when such a tradition is lost, one must try to restore it as best as possible. Hence, this instance of Gönlung and these other monasteries turning to their close relative, Chuzang Monastery, to reclaim their lost traditions. Finally, the aforementioned Chinese law forbidding such monastic networks attests to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon.

Semnyi Monastery

Semnyi Monastery was a branch monastery of Gönlung located to the north, along the Datong River in present-day Menyuan County. The history of its founding parallels precisely that of Gönlung, though on a smaller scale. The Third Dalai Lama prophesied the founding of a monastery in Semnyi. A local leader traveled to Tibet, became a ‘Collection Leader’ for the Dalai Lama’s government, and then returned with a lama¹¹⁴⁷ from Central Tibet to help establish the monastery. Later, when that lama was on his deathbed (*ca.* 1626), he took Sumpa *lopön* Damchö Gyeltsen¹¹⁴⁸ by the hand and told him that the future success of Semnyi depended on him. He thus became the second abbot of Semnyi. Sumpa *lopön* was the younger brother of Sumpa Damchö Gyatso (d. 1651), the figure who Gyelsé Rinpoché installed as Gönlung’s abbot before returning to Central Tibet.¹¹⁴⁹

Sumpa *lopön* studied at Gönlung,¹¹⁵⁰ and he, too, later served as its abbot from 1633 to 1637.¹¹⁵¹ Altogether, Sumpa *lopön* is said to have served as Semnyi’s abbot for twenty years, which suggests that this abbacy overlapped with his abbacy at Gönlung. In 1626 he established a main shrine hall¹¹⁵² for Semnyi, and the number of renunciators grew to the point that there were around a hundred monks there. He established a philosophical college and introduced scholastic debate. Significantly, in 1632 he built a sixteen-pillared assembly hall for the monastery, and then the cantor of Gönlung¹¹⁵³ arrived and taught the Semnyi monks

¹¹⁴⁷ I.e. Yer ba/pa lha ri’i gdan sa pa tshe brtan don grub.

¹¹⁴⁸ T. sum pa slob dpon dam chos rgyal mtshan. This is the previous incarnation twice removed of the illustrious Sumpa Khenpo.

¹¹⁴⁹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 57.27–8.

¹¹⁵⁰ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 667/18a.4.

¹¹⁵¹ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 161.

¹¹⁵² T. *gtsug lag khang*.

¹¹⁵³ His name was bang kyA, suggesting he may have been related to the Wang Tusi.

the *yang*, *ta*, and *dur*¹¹⁵⁴ melodies of the liturgy, the manner in which to play music that accompanies the liturgy,¹¹⁵⁵ *cham* ritual dancing, and so on. Thus we see the same process playing out between Gönlung and its branch, Semnyi, that we see playing out three and a half centuries later between Labrang and Mati Monastery: the unique liturgical and ritual components of the larger monastery are exported to a smaller institution, thereby bringing it within its sphere of influence.¹¹⁵⁶

Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, the author of the *Ocean Annals* presents Semnyi's liturgical calendar as follows:

... The Spring Dharma Session was two months long, and there was a one-month Dharma Session each in summer, fall, and winter. There are seven 'holy days'¹¹⁵⁷ during the *Saga* [i.e. fourth] Month. There is a dharma session during the Summer Retreat. On the eighth day of the ninth month there is a Prayer Festival during which the Wensa tradition of *cham* [ritual dance] and Iron-Fortress ritual are performed. On the sixteenth day [of that month] there is a seven-day Prayer Festival and offering to Śākyamuni.¹¹⁵⁸ The Offerings of the [Twenty-]fifth lasts for seven days, and at the end the *torma* [ritual cake] is thrown. During the twelfth month there is the 'approach and realization' of Mahākāla.¹¹⁵⁹ During the New Year, there is a *Torma* Offering [to Mahākāla] and a Long-life *Torma* Offering.¹¹⁶⁰

Particularly noteworthy in this passage is the reference to the Wensa tradition of *cham* and Iron Fortress ritual. Although there is no way of knowing whether Gönlung monks were

¹¹⁵⁴ On these terms, see Ellingson, "'Don rta dbyangs gsum."

¹¹⁵⁵ T. *rol mo 'bud dkrol*.

¹¹⁵⁶ The next abbot of Semnyi was an eminent figure from Central Tibet, Tsenpo Nominqan Döndrup Gyatso (1613-1665). He later came to serve as abbot of Gönlung, although this was cut brief when he decided to use resources from Gönlung's estates to build his own monastery. This marked the start of a long-lasting, antagonistic relationship between Gönlung and Tsenpo Nominqan's monastery of Serkhok. He came to be abbot of Semnyi Monastery when the local leader, following Sumpa Lopön's instructions, wrote to Dewa Chöjé (on whom see chapter two), asking him to serve as abbot. He replied that he was unable to do so but recommended Tsenpo Nominqan who came from "his estate." Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 113.20–26; Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 700/29b.2–5.

¹¹⁵⁷ T. *dus bzang*.

¹¹⁵⁸ T. *jo mchod smon lam*.

¹¹⁵⁹ T. *mgon po bsnyen sgrub*.

¹¹⁶⁰ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 121.1–6.

responsible for introducing this tradition at Semnyi, it is very likely, especially given the fact that Sumpa *lopön* had previously established a *cham* tradition there. Similarly, it is possible that the chanting and music techniques introduced by Gönlung's cantor informed the performance at Semnyi of several universal Geluk rituals, including the Mahākāla *Torma*, Long-life *Torma*, and the Offerings of the Twenty-fifth¹¹⁶¹.

The Gönlung customaries do not make reference to a “prayer festival” in the ninth month, which corresponds to the descent of Śākyamuni from Tuṣita Heaven. However, it appears that there *was* such a tradition at Gönlung at one point in time. The biography¹¹⁶² of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor explains how, during his third tenure as Gönlung abbot, at the time of the New Year festivities in 1783, there appeared numerous Mongol patrons,

who everyday for *the three* prayer festivals [*smon lam*] gave ten servings of tea, fruit, and soup. Each one gave great cash disbursements [to the monks,] and the field of merit [i.e. the sangha] flourished. At that time the Dharma King Sumpa¹¹⁶³ returned from Mount Wutai whither he had gone the year before, and he also gave ‘gifts’ of the famous rosaries blessed by Mañjuśrī.¹¹⁶⁴

On this occasion, Sumpa Khenpo delivered sermons on the past lives and deeds of the Buddha Śākyamuni, a custom at Gönlung. The Great Prayer Festival of Miraculous Displays in the first month and the Great Prayer Festival of the Turning of the Dharma Wheel in the sixth month are the two best known prayer festivals. The third prayer festival to which Sumpa Khenpo makes reference probably corresponds to the prayer festival of the ninth month that was also celebrated at Semnyi.

¹¹⁶¹ A commemoration of the death of Tsongkhapa.

¹¹⁶² J. W. De Jong explains that Sumpa Khenpo finished his autobiography in 1776, after which his disciples continued writing their master's biography, which they later appended to the autobiography. Jong, “Sum-pa Mkhan-po (1704-1788) and His Works,” 209–10.

¹¹⁶³ T. *sum pa chos rje*, fl. 1729-1734.

¹¹⁶⁴ T. *'jam dbyangs grub shing du grags pa'i 'phreng 'gyed kyang phul*.

Semnyi Trülku, Semnyi Monastery, and Tethung Gönchen

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, an important lama from Semnyi, known as Semnyi Tendzin Trinlé Gyatso (b. 1655),¹¹⁶⁵ assumed the throne of Tetung Gönchen, another branch monastery of Gönlung (see introduction to this work). Semnyi Trülku took his novice vows from the rebirth of Gönlung’s founder, Gyelsé Lozang Tendzin, in 1666, when the latter was visiting the area. From Gyelsé he also “memorized all the rituals of the tantric class as well as the restoration rituals¹¹⁶⁶ for the protector deities, and he completed most of the ‘approach’ [rituals needed for commencing tantric practice].”¹¹⁶⁷ Then, beginning in 1670, he entered the dharma classes of Gönlung and studied hard for eight years, at the end of which he attained Gönlung’s highest rank of *lingsé kaju* scholar.¹¹⁶⁸ Later on, he also took his full monastic vows from the reigning abbot of Gönlung.¹¹⁶⁹

Having received ample training from Gönlung’s proprietor and at the monastery itself, Semnyi made known his wishes to travel to Central Tibet to further his studies. However, his home monastery was in a state of disrepair, and in 1678 he was asked to serve as its abbot. He accepted and quickly went to work restoring Semnyi Monastery to its former

¹¹⁶⁵ T. *sems nyid bstan ‘dzin ‘phrin las rgya mtsho*. Semnyi is an interesting lama not only because he is one of the earliest indigenous incarnation lineages in Tibet, but also because he appears to have been Chinese: He was born as the son to a certain Chöpa of the Sun family [sun kya gcod pa] in Zhuanglang City [grong lang mkhar] in the Wood-Sheep year of the eleventh rapjung [1655]. After a few months he said “I am Tibetan. There are ‘such and such’ a monk, monastery, and holy objects.” Several Chinese said, “such talk is an evil omen!” He washed his body with impure things, made [? *byin*] offerings of dog meat and blood, [and said] “May molten metal be poured on your gossipy tongues!” The local lord, however, must have read these signs differently, because sometime thereafter he recognized the boy as the incarnation of the previous Semnyi! His rebirth was born in 1762. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 115 and 119. The following highlights from Semnyi’s life come from the *Ocean Annals* unless otherwise noted.

¹¹⁶⁶ T. *bskang gso*.

¹¹⁶⁷ T. *bsnyen pa*. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 115.24.

¹¹⁶⁸ T. *gling bsre'i dka' bcu*.

¹¹⁶⁹ It is unclear who this was. The *Ocean Annals* simply say “the Great Scholar Lozang Gyatso.” This may have been Likya Pönlop Lozang Gyeltsen (li kya dpon slob blo bzang rgyal mtshan, r. 1675-1680) or Chuzang II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (r. 1680-1688), although this is only my conjecture.

glory. This included restoring the practice of the “Three Foundations” of a monastery.¹¹⁷⁰ In addition, the tradition of the *Torma* [Sacrificial Cake Offering] for Mahākāla had been broken, and so he acted as the Vajra Preceptor and reestablished it. At the end of the year he performed an extensive restoration ritual¹¹⁷¹ and the throwing of the *torma*, thereby attracting the presence of numerous patrons. He built an assembly hall for the monastery and had made a large Maitreya tapestry. In 1684, he undertook the prestigious role of leading the Great Prayer Festival at Gönlung, furthering strengthen the ties between his home monastery of Semnyi and Gönlung.

In 1696, at the age of forty-two, he approached the Lu Tusi, asking him for a copy of the *Kanjur* [i.e. the canon of Buddhist sutras and tantras] for his home monastery. Perhaps Lu Tusi wished to secure some of Semnyi’s institution-building skills for his “own” monasteries, for Semnyi was summarily made abbot of Tethung Gönchen.¹¹⁷² As he had done at his own monastery of Semnyi, at Tethung Gönlung he promoted the ritual practices he had acquired at Gönlung. Shortly after becoming Tethung Gönchen’s abbot, he “there established the Long-life *Torma* of Lhamo like at Gönlung.”¹¹⁷³ In 1701 he attempted to resign from his abbatial post (at Tethung Gönchen?),¹¹⁷⁴ but the monastery’s dharma protector would not let him. When, in 1705, he prepared to resign, the local monks and laity successfully petitioned

¹¹⁷⁰ T. *gzhi gsum*. I.e. the monastic practices of the fortnightly confession, Summer Retreat, and release from Summer Retreat.

¹¹⁷¹ T. *bskang gso rgyas pa*.

¹¹⁷² It is not clear how long Semnyi served as abbot of this monastery. He was certainly still Tetung Gönchen’s abbot in 1698 when Changkya II passed through there. He is there in 1710, too, when Changkya II was again passing through there, although it is unclear whether he was in fact acting as abbot at that time. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Peking),” 22a.6 adn 33b.4–5.

¹¹⁷³ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mehog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.4. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷⁴ His biography in the *Ocean Annals* does not specify whether the location of his actions is Tetung Gönchen or his home monastery of Semnyi. The *immediate* context is his abbacy at Tetung Gönchen, but the *larger* context is his abbacy at Semnyi Monastery.

him to stay on to serve in a teaching capacity. He thereupon installed a statue of Maitreya in the assembly hall and built a stupa on the north side of the monastery in accordance with instructions given to him by Gönlung's proprietor, Gyelsé Rinpoché.¹¹⁷⁵ In short, he is said to have “taught and restored” Tethung Gönchen's¹¹⁷⁶

debate, its *yang, ta,* and *dur*¹¹⁷⁷ melodies that accompany rituals, the recitation of the breviary, consecrations, burnt offerings, and restoration rituals, its [manner of] making of *tormas*, and its [manner of] playing of music all in accordance with the practices at Gönlung and the [manner in which they were] recited by the Omniscient Changkya.¹¹⁷⁸

His institution-building at his home monastery of Semnyi seems to have resumed again after 1707, for we read “at his own monastery ... from 1707 onward the liturgical schedule¹¹⁷⁹ was made to expand year after year.”¹¹⁸⁰ In 1724 he built a “fifteen-room, three-story mantric college,” among other things. Unfortunately, all of the institutions and practices that Semnyi Trülku had helped establish there were lost later that year. In the third month (*nag zla*) of 1724, “hundreds of thousands” of Qing troops are said to have descended on the monastery.¹¹⁸¹

¹¹⁷⁵ It was also around this time that he made numerous offerings to Changkya II, and Mindröl Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen, tea and cash offerings to monasteries such as Kumbum, and, specifically, he offered “a plate of fruit [and] delectables as well as tea and silk ‘disbursements’ to each member of the more than 2,400 assembled monks at Gönlung.” The Tibetan reads “dgon lung du tshogs pa nyis stong bzhi brgya lhag la bzhes can se'u thog gis gang ba re dang jar as kyi 'gyed phul.” The Lokesh Chandra version gives slightly different spellings. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.12–13; Lokesh Chandra, *Yul mdo smad kyi ljongs su thub bstan rin po che ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa: Deb ther rgya mtsho (The Ocean Annals of Amdo)*, 1977, 279/140a.2.

¹¹⁷⁶ Again, this could instead be referring to Semnyi Monastery. See the [note above](#).

¹¹⁷⁷ T. *dbyangs rta 'dur*. See [note above](#).

¹¹⁷⁸ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.14–17.

¹¹⁷⁹ T. *dus chos*.

¹¹⁸⁰ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.19–20.

¹¹⁸¹ The *Ocean Annals* explain that the general Nian Gengyao ordered that only two of the monastery's temples be destroyed. (“Legal custom” (*khriims srol*) demanded that at least two be burned!). So, on the fourth day of the fifth month two temples were burned. Then, on the fifteenth day, the rest of the monastery was burned to the ground. No explanation is given for this total act of destruction except for the impermanent “nature of compounded phenomena.”

Semnyi Trülku continued to play an instrumental role in resurrecting Buddhism in Pari after the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, although his role in this process is beyond the scope of our current subject. I should point out, however, that after the rebellion we find him leading his congregation of monks at the nearby Gyadok Monastery (rgya rdog; rgya ldog), itself a branch monastery of Semnyi.¹¹⁸² There he established an assembly hall, the Offerings of the [Twenty-]Fifth, the Great Prayer Festival, and the Spring Dharma Session, some of the nuts and bolts of a successful Geluk monastery. And when permission came from the Qing officials in Xining to reestablish Semnyi Monastery, Semnyi Trülku was there to rebuild.

Conclusion

The above examples all date from a relatively early period in the development of Gönlung and its monastic network. However, the same phenomenon appears later, too. For example, at the beginning of this chapter we saw how Tuken III, writing in the late eighteenth century, demanded punctilious attention to the melodies used in its tantric rituals dedicated to his monastery's patron deity, Vajrayoginī. In addition, Sumpa Khenpo played an important role in reviving the ritual traditions through Pari in the wake of the Lubsang Danzin Rebellion. The colophon to one ritual manual he composed explains the reason for the manual: "On the occasion of reforming and reviving the practices of the great *torma* rituals at Geluk Jampa Ling¹¹⁸³ and newly establishing [them] at at Trashi Chöling¹¹⁸⁴, [the following individuals] said 'there is a need for [instructions] that are easy to understand on

¹¹⁸² On Gyadok being a branch of Semnyi see Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 112.11–13. Citing the *Yellow Beryl* of Sanggyé Gyatso.

¹¹⁸³ T. dge lugs byams pa gling. This is probably an alias for Gönlung itself, although it may be Gönlung's branch Yar lung thur chen dgon dga' ldan byams pa gling.

¹¹⁸⁴ This is Stong shags bkra shis chos gling.

the practices along with the recitations to be performed ...'¹¹⁸⁵ Those requesting the manual included, among others, the abbot of Gönlung, the 'Deity Evocation ritual lama'¹¹⁸⁶ at Gönlung, the retired abbot of Trashi Chöling, the current abbot of Trashi Chöling, the steward of Trashi Chöling's proprietor/incarnate lama, and numerous others.¹¹⁸⁷

The significance of these connections based on ritual traditions is that monks from one institution could easily reside at and participate in the routines of other monasteries. In effect, the normalization of ritual practices by mega monasteries such as Gönlung provided social mobility for monks at satellite temples and monasteries. Monastic customaries from Gönlung and other Geluk monasteries make it very clear that monks who wished to reside at those institutions must first commit to memory the respective breviary and ritual techniques. Chanting out of turn or according to the melody of another institution was not tolerated. Monks coming from satellite institutions that practiced the same ritual traditions were at an advantage when moving to Gönlung and attending its daily assemblies and dharma classes.

This was also advantageous for Gönlung, because it meant that it could expect monks from its branch monasteries to participate in its rituals, particularly during major festivals. Prior to the communist revolution in China, the caretakers¹¹⁸⁸ of Gönlung's branch monasteries were required to travel to the monastery for major ritual festivals and, if they

¹¹⁸⁵ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 131.

¹¹⁸⁶ T. *gtor sgrub bla ma*.

¹¹⁸⁷ I have not yet had the opportunity to thoroughly search through Sumpa Khenpo's *Collected Works* to see if this text is available there, although the colophon to one text in the fourth volume of his *Collected Works* contains some similar language ("mgon po'i lha bzhi dril sgrub kyi man ngag 'dod dgu'i re skong dang / bsnyen sgrub las gsum sogs kyi rnam bzhag"). TBRC W29227. Sumpa Khenpo's autobiography (with biographical addendum) also contain examples of this. For instance, see Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 579–89.

¹¹⁸⁸ T. *gnyer ba*.

belonged to a particular incarnate lama, for the birthday celebration of that lama.¹¹⁸⁹ In addition, many of these smaller institutions would not have had separate colleges for the study of doctrine and ritual. On the contrary, they would fit the description given by Sumpa Khenpo at the start of this chapter of monasteries on the periphery. If a monk at such an institution wished to advance his career, he would inevitably have to travel to Gönlung or another mega monastery to complete his studies, since his home institution likely would not provide the necessary institutional framework.

In this chapter I have attempted to introduce the history of the specialization (or “professionalization”) and institutionalization of ritual traditions in the Geluk sect and how these processes contributed to the development of mega monasteries. I have tried to show how the transmission of these ritual traditions as well as the narratives of these transmissions have given rise to *connections*. These ritual and monastic networks linked Gönlung to Central Tibet, and the smaller monasteries in Pari to Gönlung.

One type of “connection” or “network” that I have not directly discussed is that of sect. The care and attention given to the unique details of one’s own liturgical tradition under some circumstances would act as an immediate sectarian identifier for the monastery. Stephan Beyer writes in his important work on ritual practice in Tibetan Buddhism that, “... the famous Gelug reformation in Tibet was basically cultic rather than doctrinal, and it was perhaps more a canonical fundamentalism than a reformation.”¹¹⁹⁰ His contention that cultic

¹¹⁸⁹ This fact is based on a conversation I had in 2012 with an eighty-eight year old monk from Chos bzang Hermitage (aka Bde chen chos gling).

¹¹⁹⁰ *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 53–54; Similarly, Catherine Cantwell argues that ritual is at the heart of sectarian identity for the Nyingma Monastery of Rewalsar, which is the focus of her PhD thesis. “An Ethnographic Account of the Religious Practice in a Tibetan Buddhist Refugee Monastery in Northern India,” 314.

identity was more important than doctrine for the reformation is equally applicable to later periods of the Geluk tradition. For instance, most entries for the monasteries in Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's (1653-1705) history of the Gelukpa conclude with something resembling the following, indicating the continuing importance of ritual for a monastery's identity: "[This place] resembles most small, Geluk monasteries with its ritual practices and recitations [*'don chos spyod*] such as those for Guhyasamāja, Saṃvara, and the *Trilogy of Kṛṣṇācārya* [*nag po (spyod pa) skor gsum*] ..."¹¹⁹¹

Thus, *who* was worshipped was very important to sectarian identity. In addition, *when* one worships was equally important. The eminent historian of religions and theoretician, Jonathan Z. Smith, has written on the power of liturgy to enable Christian traditions to replicate and export themselves across space:

The structured temporality of the liturgy accomplished for Christianity in its relationship to the *loca sancta* what the Jewish hierarchical distinctions accomplished with respect to Jerusalem and its Temple. Both structures--being structures and, hence, replicable--could become independent of place. They could become independent of structures of thought, creativity, and human action for which events in Jerusalem of 70 or 135, of 614 or 1244, were, strictly speaking, irrelevant. ...¹¹⁹²

The significance of this is that *time* is utilized to unite people from many different places. Smith writes, "it is through structures of temporality, as ritualized, that the divisiveness and particularity of space are overcome."¹¹⁹³ The same appears to hold true for the Geluk sect: Gönlung's ritual calendar mimicked those found in Central Tibet's largest monasteries, and Gönlung, in turn, helped set the rhythm for ritual performances in Pari and beyond.

¹¹⁹¹ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 311. "*Nag po skor gsum*" refers to three treatises by the Mahāsiddha Kṛṣṇācārya. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, personal communication, 7 March 2012.

¹¹⁹² Jonathan Z Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 95.

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 94–5.

As we shall see in the next chapter, scholasticism in a mega monastery is also intensely scheduled. The counterpart of the tantric college—the philosophical college—is perhaps the most well-known feature of a mega monastery. However, very little is actually known about how they operated in pre-modern times. The historical success of mega monasteries entails the formalization of scholastic training and the replication of its practices, a process very similar to the development of the tantric college.

Chapter 6: The Scholasticism of the Monastery¹¹⁹⁴

Dreyfus' nuanced account of education in Tibetan Buddhist monasticism notes:

The history of the gradual eclipse of these local centers [of Geluk scholasticism], some of which had been great centers of learning, and their increasing dependence on the three seats remain to be explored.¹¹⁹⁵

The 'three seats' refer to the three largest Geluk monasteries in Central Tibet, namely Drepung, Sera, and Ganden, which reportedly housed about 10,000 monks, 7,000 monks, and 5,000 monks respectively, before the Communist period.¹¹⁹⁶ The 'local centers' to which Dreyfus refers include monasteries that offered scholastic training in such outlying regions as Denchö Khorling in Kham. Another monastery that would qualify as such a local center would be Gönlung. The title of the 1775 chronicle of the monastery refers to it as, "the Source of the Exegetical and Practical Teachings [of the Dharma]."¹¹⁹⁷ In the previous chapter, I explained that Gönlung is considered the site of the first philosophical *shedra*, or 'commentary school,' in Amdo. The *Ocean Annals* presents a long list of the *shedra* and philosophical colleges established in Amdo, all of them later than Gönlung. "Thus," we read,

this great monastery [i.e. Gönlung] became the ancestress of all the commentarial schools of philosophy [*mtshan nyid kyi bshad grwa*] here in Domé. In the same way that the great, long river of the Teachings advances in a hundred directions due to the natural accomplishment of the beneficent aspirations and enlightened deeds of the Victors and [their] Sons, utterly pure believers and reverent ones were produced.¹¹⁹⁸

¹¹⁹⁴ An earlier version of this chapter was prepared for the journal *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, 2013.

¹¹⁹⁵ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 347n42.

¹¹⁹⁶ Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet, 1913-1951: The Demise of the Lamaist State*, 25.

¹¹⁹⁷ T. *bshad sgrub bstan pa'i byung gnas*. A text written almost 150 years earlier, in 1713, offers a similar epithet: "Gaden Jampa Ling, the Origin of Monasteries that Excellently Propogates the Philosophical Teachings in Mdo smad, renowned as Dgon lung" (dgon lung zhes grags pa mdo smad phyogs su mtshan nyid kyi 'chad nyan legs par dar ba'i chos sde yi thog ma dga' ldan byams pa gling). Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, Lcang skya II, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 5a.1..

¹¹⁹⁸ Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 76.6–76.11; Zhiguanba•Gongquehudanbaraoji, *Anduo zhengjiao shi*, 79–80.

This account is based on an even earlier “history of Domé” composed in 1652, not even fifty years after Gönlung’s founding. Here, too, we find Gönlung at the head of a long list of “schools where philosophy is expounded.”¹¹⁹⁹

In this chapter I will detail Gönlung Monastery's role in the promotion of Geluk scholasticism in Amdo and Mongolia. Gönlung had an extensive and exacting calendar and curriculum for the study of Buddhist doctrine. The program included scheduled memorization, debate practice, recitation lessons, lectures by the abbot, periodic tests, final exams, and degrees. This program was based upon practices found at the major monasteries of Central Tibet, and Gönlung was responsible for exporting it to other monasteries in its locale and beyond. Strong institutional affiliations thereby formed between Gönlung and these various institutions across the Tibetan Plateau and Mongolia.

Gönlung’s role as a promoter of Geluk scholastic practices was persistent, even during the time of the monastery's demise in later centuries. Certain historical ties between Gönlung and Inner Mongolia via the Wang Khutugtu incarnate lama lineage are examined to illustrate this role. Both the second (1739-1804) and fourth Wang Khutugtu (1846-1906) made numerous trips to Inner Mongolia to evangelize and garner patronage. It was during one of these trips that the fourth Wang Khutugtu penned a monastic customary¹²⁰⁰ prescribing the manner for scholastic examinations at Eren Monastery. This same Wang Khutugtu also composed a customary for Gönlung prescribing the liturgy, scholastic curriculum, and debate schedule for the monastery. Although I will not directly assess

¹¹⁹⁹ T. *mtshan nyid bshad pa'i grwa*. Skal Idan rgya mtsho, Rong po grub chen I, “A mdo'i chos 'byung,” 342; See also Kelden Gyatso’s biography of Dewa Chöjé, aka Kyishö *trülku*, where he calls Gönlung “the center of all the commentarial schools of Domé” (*mdo smad kyi bshad grwa yongs kyi gtso bo dgon lung gi chos sde chen po*). “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 248.

¹²⁰⁰ T. *bca' yig*.

Dreyfus' claim that local centers of Geluk scholasticism became increasingly dependent on the Three Seats, by means of a close reading of Wang's customaries, I will contribute to the discussion about the role that these local centers played in the proliferation and maintenance of Geluk scholasticism and orthodoxy along and beyond the boundaries of the Tibetan Plateau.

Scholasticism

The term “scholasticism” has seldom been employed outside of a Christian context, in which it is often associated with the early medieval education of clerics, focused on the liberal arts and scholastic theology.¹²⁰¹ In his book on Indo-Tibetan scholasticism, José Cabezón has persuasively argued that the term has an analytical value for cross-cultural and comparative studies. One of the first scholars to make this suggestion, Cabezón explains, is P. Masson-Oursel, who writes

If scholasticism is a teaching that bases its authority in the words of a sacred text, interpreted by a corps of professionals dedicated both to establishing and defending a religious truth, and to that end rely on formal and discursive reasoning, it is exemplary of a stage in civilization of which our own Middle Ages cannot be considered the only example.¹²⁰²

Although Cabezón critiques and improves upon Masson-Oursel's own definitions of scholasticism, he extols Masson-Oursel's perspicacious advocacy for the comparative study of scholasticism.

¹²⁰¹ José Ignacio Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 13 and 17.

¹²⁰² Quoted in *ibid.*, 15.

Among the various characteristics of scholasticism identified by Cabezón,¹²⁰³ there are two in particular that I would like to emphasize here. First, “scholastic movements are highly tradition oriented,” he writes.

They have a strong sense of history and lineage and are committed to the preservation of tradition. ... [T]here is no better way to ensure that what an adept experiences is particularly Christian or Buddhist, or that the way in which an adept behaves is particularly Confucian or Jewish, than to ensure that the 'experiencer' has had a strong foundation in his or her respective intellectual tradition. ...¹²⁰⁴

In the previous chapter I discussed the great concern with maintaining ritual traditions that stretch back to Central Tibet. Such continuity enhances the monastery’s prestige, and it has the practical benefit of boosting the mobility of the monks and lamas trained in those traditions. Similarly, a mega monastery like Gönlung shows great respect for the customs (*T. srol*) of scriptural study and debate that were established by the monastery’s eminent forebears. The scriptures used at Gönlung are ones used in the halls of Central Tibet’s major monasteries. In fact, Gönlung had formal ties with Drepung Monastery’s Gomang College, such that ‘continuing students’¹²⁰⁵ of Gönlung monks could easily travel to Central Tibet and find a residence there.¹²⁰⁶

A second point that Cabezón makes about scholasticism that I wish to emphasize here is the following:

¹²⁰³ Ibid., 19–21 and 190–193; See also José Ignacio Cabezón, ed., *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 4–6.

¹²⁰⁴ Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language*, 20.

¹²⁰⁵ *T. grwa rgyun*.

¹²⁰⁶ Gönlung monks may have stayed at the “affiliated houses” (*mi tshan*) of its namesake, one at the Samlo Regional House (*bsam blo khang tshan*), for monks from farming communities, and another at the Hardong Regional House (*har gdong khang tshan*), for monks from nomadic communities. Nothing is known about these affiliated houses. Tuttle, “Tsong Kha Range,” 2010, 57 and 57n43. Citing Dreyfus’ essay on Drepung Monastery on THL. Dreyfus, for his part, does not cite his source, which is likely the following: Bod ljongs spyi tshogs tshan rig khang chos lugs zhib ’jug tshan pa’i ’bras spungs dgon dkar chag rtsom sgrig tshogs chung (Drepung Monastery Catalog Editorial Team of the Religious Studies Department of the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences), ed., *’Bras spungs dgon gyi dkar chag* (Catalog of Drepung Monastery) (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2009), 237.

Not only was rational inquiry perceived as essential to the preservation of the tradition's self-identity, it was also considered essential to *distinguishing* that tradition from others, to *defending* it against the intellectual assaults of others, and to *demonstrating* its relative superiority to others.¹²⁰⁷

Sectarian polemics seem to surface the most in monastic customaries and histories when discussing ritual or the more material and conspicuous aspects of monastic practice. For example, even though Tongkhor V (1684-1752)¹²⁰⁸ himself listened to teachings from all sects and is said to have held a non-sectarian view, in the customary of his own monastery of Chöten Thang (a branch monastery of Gönlung) he explicitly disallowed the practice of healing rituals or rituals associated with the Nyingma and Bön sects.¹²⁰⁹ Among the preconditions for admittance into one of Sumpa Khenpo's monasteries are the following: "... if he is of a different sect [*grub mtha'*], or if he has any other flaws; if his limbs or sense organs are extremely unsightly, then he [can] not reside [here]."¹²¹⁰ Here belonging to another sect is an outright "flaw!"

The customaries and histories do not mention such polemics in the context of scholasticism, perhaps because the study and debate of Geluk texts is *taken for granted*. Gönlung, after all, is recognized by later Gelukpas as the first school for the study of Buddhist philosophy in Amdo, suggesting that there were no viable, non-Geluk contenders for philosophical preeminence. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Geluk sect developed a formal system of doctrine and a closed canon, two related developments that

¹²⁰⁷ Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language*, 21.

¹²⁰⁸ T. stong 'khor bsod nams rgya mtsho.

¹²⁰⁹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 124.9–10.

¹²¹⁰ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Dgon sde 'ga' zhig gi bca' yig*, 129/13a.7; Here is another example taken from the customary of another of Gönlung's branch monasteries: "... hats without the *zhadro* [*zhwa skro*] and *zhalak* [*zhwa lag*] [i.e. the feather-like part on top and 'tail' that characterize the hat worn by Gelukpas during services], worn out clothes, etc. are not to be worn." Smin grol III Ngag dbang 'phrin las rgya mtsho, "Kanchen Monastery Customary," l. 50.

shielded them from prophetic assault among other things.¹²¹¹ These developments were institutionalized and enforced at large and resourceful monasteries through the development of curriculums and systems of examination that measured individual monks' acquisition and knowledge of doctrine. Gönlung boasted such a curriculum and system of examination and even exported these to other monasteries. Monks who wanted any sort of scholastic education traveled here rather than stay at the smaller temple or monastery where they may have renounced and begun their monastic life. They did this because Gönlung, like other mega monasteries, had the best teachers as part of its overall system of education, and also because an education at Gönlung gave them social mobility.

As discussed in the last chapter, the ties between “ritual” and “scholasticism” are tight. Much attention will be given to the litany of prayers and hymns that are recited—a more ritualistic activity—in lead-up to the formal study of scripture and debate, which tests one's knowledge of scripture. This is unavoidable: to study the place of study and debate apart from the liturgy would misrepresent scholasticism's place in the monastery as a whole.

Some History

In 1866 Gönlung was again burned to the ground, this time by a Muslim army, purportedly that of Ma Zhan'ao, a religious teacher¹²¹² and military commander at Hezhou in Gansu

¹²¹¹ As Gorski points out, Weber made this point about religions in general. Philip S. Gorski, “The Return of the Repressed: Religion and the Political Unconscious of Historical Sociology,” in *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*, ed. Adams, Julia, Elisabeth S. Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 179; See also Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 68–9.

¹²¹² Ch. *ahong*

Province.¹²¹³ The 1870s likewise saw the monastery plundered. Gönlung's main assembly hall was not reconstructed until 1878, under the stewardship of the sixth Tuken lama. Then, in 1890, another series of events perpetuated the monastery's decline, the most significant event being a falling out between Tuken and Sumpa over the latter's decision to cohabitate with a "Mongol girl." Louis Schram, a Belgian missionary who spent several years (1911-22) in the vicinity of Gönlung, writes that "Erh-ku-lung had become a place of unrelieved misery. The year 1890 was one of the most fateful in the history of Erh-ku-lung."¹²¹⁴ Finally, in 1895 more Muslim rebellions arose, damaging many monasteries in the region and threatening, but eventually sparing, Gönlung. This is the point at which we find the fourth Wang Khutugtu, the protagonist of what follows, in his prime at Gönlung. It is precisely because of the ruin of the monastery during Wang's time that his actions are so important and illustrative.

The Author: Wang Khutugtu

The author of the customary examined here is the fourth Wang Rinpoché, Lozang Tsültrim Dargyé Gyatso (1846-1906). The Wang Rinpoché incarnation lineage is perhaps the least renowned of Gönlung's five major incarnation lineages and villas. The lineage is said to be named after the village in which the first Wang Rinpoché was born, Wang chen khri.¹²¹⁵ The scholar-lama Per Nyi ma 'dzin writes that Wang I was born into a *Hor* family with the

¹²¹³ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 25b.6. See [note above](#).

¹²¹⁴ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 336.

¹²¹⁵ According to the editors of the *Youning si zhi*, Wang I's birthplace is present-day Xiaosi ('Little Monastery') Village in Weiyuan Township, Huzhu County. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho's history, on the other hand, gives "tA si" (< Ch. Dasi Village, 'Big Monastery' Village), which he writes is part of one of Gönlung's former western estates. Duo Zang and Pu Wencheng, *Youning si zhi*, 121n247; Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 99..

surname Wang.¹²¹⁶ Despite the Chinese-sounding name of the lineage, four of the incarnations were likely *Hor*, and one, the third, may have been Tibetan.¹²¹⁷

The name 'Wang' likely derives ultimately from the Wang Tusi.¹²¹⁸ The ancestor of the Wang Tusi, Nanmuge, submitted to the Ming in the fourth year of the Hongwu reign (1371). He was made an Assistant Commander¹²¹⁹ and was promoted to 'Vice Battalion Commandant of Ningbo.'¹²²⁰ The area that the Wang Tusi ultimately came to rule appears to be in the vicinity of Wang I's birthplace.¹²²¹ Since families that were ruled by the Wang Tusi took the Wang name regardless of their ancestral descent lines, it is impossible to know whether Wang I was born into the *tusi's* own family, the family of one of the noble households, or one of the many commoner households. According to Scharm, the great

¹²¹⁶ "Wang skyA" could also refer to a village name, although here it is clear that Per Nyi ma 'dzin is identifying tA si as the place name and Wang as the family name. The Tibetan term *Hor* is used in present-day Amdo to refer to the officially recognized "ethnic group" known as *Tu* in Chinese and "Monguor" in English. Keith Slater distinguishes between Minhe County Monguors that he calls "Mangghuers" and Huzhu County Monguors, which he calls "Mongghuls" Slater, *A Grammar of Mangghuer*, 9–10. It is not clear that we can safely use these ethnonyms to refer to those people and places our historical texts refer to as *Hor*. However, I do consider the historical term *Hor* to refer to a Mongolic people and culture, a people and culture that finds their way into an encyclopedia of Mongolia. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 551–2.. Zahiruddin Ahmad calls the *Hor* in the historical context 'Eastern Mongols' as opposed to *Sog*, 'Western Mongols'. Tucci does the same. My thanks to Gerald Roche for bringing this latter point to my attention. Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, 110; Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 256n128.

¹²¹⁷ Nyi ma 'dzin tells us that the first, second, and fifth were Monguor, but does not specify the ethnicity of the fourth (although we know that the latter was born near Sems nyid Monastery). It is not clear what Nyi ma 'dzin's sources are for identifying the ethnicities of the various Wang incarnations, particularly the earlier incarnations. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 99–114.

¹²¹⁸ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 609.

¹²¹⁹ Ch. *zhihui qianshi* 指挥僉事.

¹²²⁰ Ch. *Ningbo fu qianhu shouyu* 寧波千戶守禦.

¹²²¹ Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian zhi*, 625; Qinghai sheng zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Qinghai lishi jiyao* 青海歷史紀要 (Summary of the History of Qinghai) (Xining 西寧: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1987), 280; Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 2; Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 127. Schram is citing the *Gansu xin tongzhi*, juan 42, pp. 40b, 41a-b. Based on the scanned version I have at the moment, the section describing the domain of the Wang Tusi is actually on p. 42a. See also Sheng Yun 升允, ed., *Gansu xin tongzhi* 甘肅新通志 (New Comprehensive Gazetteer of Gansu), 20 vols. (100 *juan*) (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling gu ji ke yin she, 1989).

majority of these were "of Monguor extraction."¹²²² In any case, the ethnicity of the Wang incarnation lineage is not nearly as significant as the proximity of each of the incarnations had to the "Great Mongol Realm."

Louis Schram writes that Wang I's predecessor was a lama from a Kharachin banner.¹²²³ The Kharachin banners straddle what is today the border of Liaoning Province and Inner Mongolia (see Map 1 below). Schram's source, which is not cited, was probably an informant from the time he spent in the vicinity of Gönlung Monastery.¹²²⁴ Therefore, we have no way of corroborating this curious suggestion. However, we do know that Wang II Kelzang Yeshé Dargyé (1739-1804)¹²²⁵ and Wang IV, our author, both spent many years traveling to and living in Kharachin. Some time after returning from his studies in Central Tibet and ascending the throne of Gönlung's tantric college (in 1764), Wang II was told by Chankya III Rölpé Dorjé to go spread the dharma in the realm of the Kharachin Prince Ratna Siddhi.¹²²⁶ This is probably the same prince whose son, the *lharampa* scholar Lhatsün Thutop Nyima (lha btsun mthu stobs nyi ma), began his monastic career at Gönlung before later serving as abbot at both Drepung Gomang and Gönlung itself.¹²²⁷ For several years Wang II satisfied the religious needs of the people, both high and low, of the "Great Mongol

¹²²² Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 127. Schram is citing the Qing *Gansu xin tongzhi* where it states that the Wang Tusi oversees "eighteen Fan [Tibetan] households and 130 Tumin [Monguor] households" (juan 42, p. 42a). The eighteenth-century *Huang Qing zhigong tu* likewise speaks of Tumin under the rule of the Wang Tusi. Fu Heng 傅恒, ed., "Huang Qing zhigong tu 皇清職貢圖 (Qing Imperial Illustrations of Tributaries)," in *Siku quan shu (Digital Wenyuange Edition)* 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (Dizhi wenhua chubanshe, 2007), juan 5, pp. 52–3.

¹²²³ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 321.

¹²²⁴ I.e. 1911-22; Lattimore, "Introduction," 86.

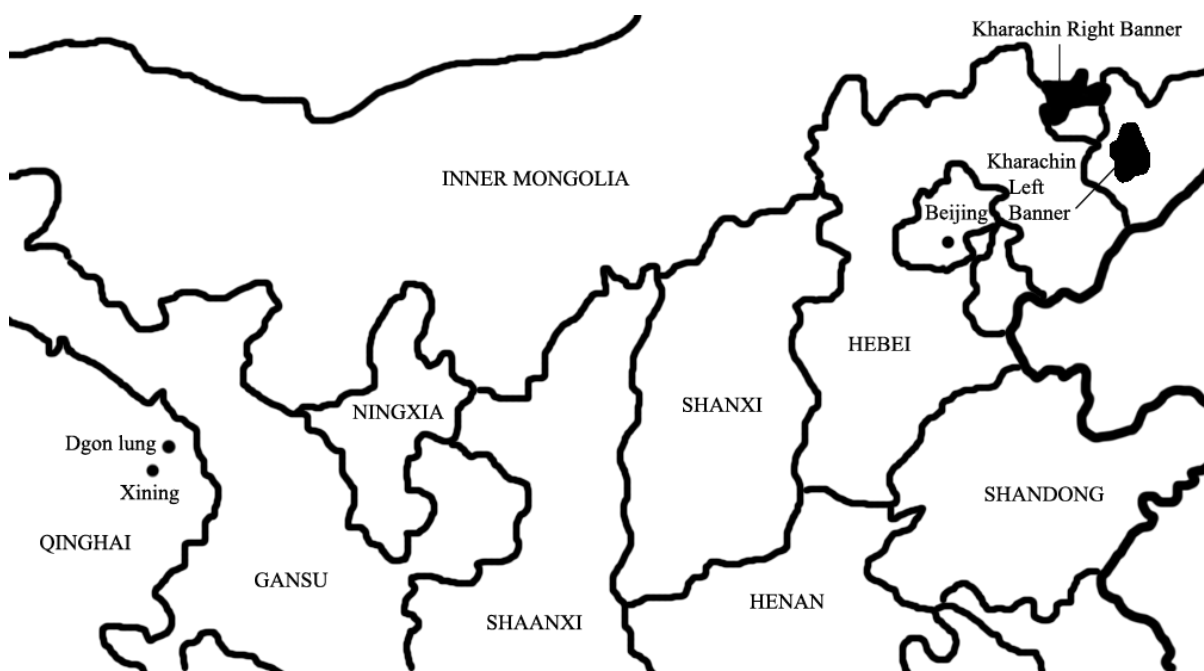
¹²²⁵ T. wang skal bzang ye shes dar rgyas.

¹²²⁶ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 18a.3.

¹²²⁷ He was the forty-fourth abbot of Gomang College, taking the throne in 1792. Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, 'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung, 2003, 1:114; He served as abbot of Gönlung from 1799-1800. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 69.8; See also Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 20a.4.

Realm" including both the Kharachin banners and the neighboring Aohan banner.¹²²⁸ When Emperor Qianlong was invited to "the famous temple of Erpü"¹²²⁹ in the realm of the Kharachin Prince," we are told:

the emperor heard of the virtue of Wang II's greatness. The emperor looked kindly upon him, paid him reverence, and bestowed on him both a superior golden offering scarf¹²³⁰ and a golden brocade. He also awarded him with the title of Khutugtu¹²³¹.



Map 1. This map shows the location of Gönlung Monastery in the west and the approximate location¹²³² of two of the three Kharachin banners that existed during Wang II's time. The Kharachin Center banner is located approximately between the Right and Left banners. Generated using the THL Place Dictionary, places.thlib.org. This map was revised and improved by Dr. Gerald Roche.

¹²²⁸ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 66.15; Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 18a.3.

¹²²⁹ Unidentified. "Erpü" could be a transliteration of "Efü," meaning "emperor's son-in-law." Isabelle Charleux, personal communication, February 17, 2012..

¹²³⁰ T. *mdzod thag* < *mdzod btags*.

¹²³¹ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 18a.4.

¹²³² For more precise maps showing the location of these banners see Lattimore and Isono, *The Diluv Khutagt*; Owen Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria: Their Tribal Divisions, Geographical Distribution, Historical Relations with Manchus and Chinese, and Present Political Problems* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969); Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*; Charleux, *Temples et monastères de Mongolie-Intérieure*.

Eventually, Wang II returned to Gönlung, where he served as abbot for three years (1785-1788). He is said to have donated many items to an endowment of Gönlung, including a large statue of the 'Lion's Roar of Shakyamuni,' a large Maitreya tapestry worth over ten thousand ounces¹²³³ of silver, and pillar pendants made of the finest silk. He also pressed Tuken to establish an endowment¹²³⁴ for the 'monks' tea' and cash disbursements necessary for the 'dharma class' students. A trip to Inner Mongolia could obviously be extremely lucrative,¹²³⁵ and so, when he received an invitation from the Aohan Prince, he returned to the latter's realm, preaching there and in the territories of the Kharachin, Tümed, Ongni'ud, Naiman, Khorchin, Darkhan,¹²³⁶ and other banners (see Map 2 below).¹²³⁷ On one of his journeys through Aohan, he printed the 'Four Interwoven Annotations on [Tsongkhapa's] Stages of the Path to Enlightenment.'¹²³⁸ Altogether, Wang II is said to have visited the Great Mongol Realm five or six times.

¹²³³ T. *srang*.

¹²³⁴ T. *theb*.

¹²³⁵ Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 349-50; Sum pa mkhan po's autobiography also relates how he received extensive offerings among the Yugur laity north and northwest from Gönlung.

¹²³⁶ This appears to refer to the banner of the "Khorchin Khoshuu of Jasag Khøshø Darhan Jinwang," also known as "Darqan wang" of the Jerim League. Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla [dam chos rgya mtsho dharma tA la], *Rosary of White Lotuses*, 428; Isabelle Charleux, "Buddhist Monasteries in Southern Mongolia," in *The Buddhist Monastery: A Cross-cultural Survey*, ed. Pierre Pichard and François Lagirarde (Paris: École française d'extrême-orient, 2003), 364.. My thanks to Prof. Isabelle Charleux for confirming this identification. Charleux, personal communication.

¹²³⁷ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 19a.5.

¹²³⁸ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 66.15. T. *lam rim mchan bzhi sbrags ma*; the entire title of this text is *mnyam med rje btsun tsong kha pa chen pos mdzad pa'i byang chub lam rim chen mo'i dka' ba'i gnad rnams mchan bu bzhi'i sgo nas legs par bshad pa theg chen lam gyi gsal sgron*. "TBRC," W29037.



Map 2. This map shows the approximate location of the various banners in the "Great Mongol Realm" visited by Wang II and his successor, Wang IV. Generated using the THL Place Dictionary. Map was revised and improved by Dr. Gerald Roche.

His successor twice removed, Wang IV, likewise spent many years preaching and living in these parts. Although we do not know anything about the ethnicity of this incarnation, we do know that he was born in place called Khulung near Semnyi Monastery, in present-day Menyuan County, Qinghai Province. Semnyi Monastery sits along the Julak River, situated between the Qilian Mountains to the north and the Daban Mountains to the south, the latter being the steep precipices dividing Menyuan County from Huzhu County where Gönlung is located. As we saw in the previous chapter, from very early in its history, Semnyi Monastery had close ties with Gönlung.

Wang IV's father was a certain 'Mantra-holder' Könchok Kyap,¹²³⁹ suggesting that he was already born into a family with some sort of religious occupation. His older brother was the fifth Mindröl Nomuqan, otherwise known as the Tsenpo Nomuqan, Kelzang Tupten Triné Gyatso (b. 1839).¹²⁴⁰ In 1853, the young Wang IV was invited to Gönlung where he was enthroned with much ceremony at his villa known as Trashi Bumkhyil.¹²⁴¹ Eleven years later, at the age of nineteen (eighteen in Western reckoning), Wang's fame is said to have spread far and wide, and he thus received a special invitation from the Aohan Prince to preach the dharma in his land. And so, in the Wood-Rat year (1864), he left for the prince's "great palace that promotes glory and wealth in this world and beyond," where he spent twelve years.¹²⁴² There:

in that realm, with the help of the prince, [Wang IV] nourished the individual, religious longings of countless wandering beings, providing the kind [teachings] of the dharma, such as great tantric empowerments for the Sole Hero, Tutelary Deity of Mount Genden [i.e. one of the principal Geluk deities, Vajrabhairava, a form of Yamāntaka], and of the Thirteen Deities [i.e. another manifestation of Vajrabhairava along with his twelve-member retinue]. As all the hopeful wandering beings were benefited and pleased, he breathed life into all.

¹²³⁹ T. *sngags 'chang* dkon mchog skyabs. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 28a.2.

¹²⁴⁰ Ibid., 28.4; T. btsan po no min han skal bzang thub bstan 'phrin las rgya mtsho. Duo Zang and Pu Wencheng, *Youning si zhi*, 201n175. The Mindröl Nomuqan lineage was based at Serkhok Monastery. Though Serkhok was founded by a former abbot of Gönlung, it soon began to compete aggressively with Gönlung for power and influence. The Mindröl Lineage, which was also possibly made up of ethnic *Hor*, is yet another example of Mongols at this time who found themselves in powerful positions. As Wang Xiangyun writes, citing the Jiaqing-era *Da Qing huidian*, "In the 51st year of Qianlong (1786), the emperor ranked the "lama hierarchy" when they came to pay homage at the court (*lama banci*). The first of the left wing (*zuoyi touban*) was the lCang skya Khutugtu, and the second the sMin grol Khutuytu ..." "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing," 160. I would like to thank Lobsang Yongdan for answering questions pertaining to this lineage and its relationship to Serkhok.

¹²⁴¹ T. bkra shis 'bum 'khyil.

¹²⁴² Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 28b.5.

Here, in the words of Wang IV's biographer,¹²⁴³ we see an explicit reference to Wang IV's Geluk evangelism.

Wang IV exhibited this desire to promote Geluk practice again when he returned to Gönlung in 1876. Gönlung had been burnt to the ground in 1866, and it continued to struggle through many years of strife in the 1870s. One important turning event in the monastery's modern history appears to be when the Precious Tutor of Tuken, Tenpa Gyatso (1825-97), was invited to Gönlung in 1878. He was welcomed by Tuken, Sumpa, and Wang himself, and was moved to tears by the pleas of all the Gönlung monks and lamas. They pointed out how the monastery had been ravaged by warfare and called him 'He Who Incites the Flame of the Genden' (i.e. Gelukpa).¹²⁴⁴ He thereupon gave numerous permission-blessings, transmissions, empowerments, and so forth. The next year, in 1879, Wang IV took the abbatial throne of Gönlung.

Among the major events that Wang oversaw as abbot of Gönlung was the search for and identification of the reincarnation of Changkya V.¹²⁴⁵ Wang IV was requested to take charge of this task, which he did, we are told, "in accordance with the prophecies from Central Tibet, the name roster of the 'great yellow edict' [of the emperor],¹²⁴⁶ and so forth," a curious inclusion that highlights the political position Gönlung held between the Qing court and the Ganden Palace government in Lhasa.¹²⁴⁷ Moreover, as abbot, Wang IV is said to

¹²⁴³ His successor Wang V Ngawang Khyenrap Gyatso (ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, 1906-63).

¹²⁴⁴ T. *dge ldan bstan 'bar ma'i dbu bskul ba*. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 27a.4.

¹²⁴⁵ Duo Zang and Pu Wencheng, *Youning si zhi*, 203n199 and 228.

¹²⁴⁶ T. *gser yig chen mo'i mtshan byang*.

¹²⁴⁷ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 30a.2; The Dalai Lama is also known to have issued decrees on yellow brocades. Nornang, "Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-po Bshad-grub-gling," 261–2. However, a "gser yig" seems to refer more directly to the Manchu emperor's decree.

have promoted the debate classes to the best of his ability and to have overseen all the activities of the exoteric and esoteric Teachings, such as the monastery's liturgy.¹²⁴⁸

In 1882, Wang IV tried to resign. However, the monastery's major lamas, the 'dharma kings' from the surrounding communities,¹²⁴⁹ and all the monks pleaded for him to continue on as abbot. Thus, he served yet another year, resigning in 1883.

Wang continued serving Gönlung Monastery in a variety of ways. Two years later, in 1885, he composed the Gönlung customary "The Profound and Secret Golden Key of a Hundred Doors to [Buddhist] Treatises," to which we will turn momentarily. In 1895, "the evil, barbarian/Mohammedan forces"¹²⁵⁰ were on the rise and threatening the safety of Gönlung. Due to Wang's hard work and prayers, "the monastery's protector, the Chinese army, came from Xining." Thus, "the emperor and altruistic councilors used power, strength, [and] vajra weapons to utterly vanquish without remainder the demonic army from the dark side,"¹²⁵¹ and Gönlung was saved from harm.¹²⁵² In 1896, Wang IV received an invitation from the Aohan prince explaining that he was needed again in the 'lower regions.'¹²⁵³ And so, once again, he set out for and arrived in Mongolia.¹²⁵⁴ In the realm of the prince of

¹²⁴⁸ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 29b.4.

¹²⁴⁹ The text names the Sha bar chos rje, Ba bOng chos rje, and Phyug rtse chos rje. All of these refer to places in the vicinity of Gönlung. It is likely that Sha bar chos rje was also the "Sha bar nang so." Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 77.25. For a discussion of the title "nang so," see chapter one. Some of these local *chos rje* ("religious kings") may have been non-monastic figures. We see, for instance, some *chos rje* referred to as "lha pa," or "spirit mediums", which are typically non-monastic figures in other times and places. Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 646/7b.5 and 650/9b.3.

¹²⁵⁰ T. *kla glo < kla klo*.

¹²⁵¹ T. *pha rol bdud sde'i dpung tshogs*.

¹²⁵² Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 32a.1.

¹²⁵³ T. *smad phyogs*.

¹²⁵⁴ Note that here the author writes "sog yul" rather than "chen po hor kyi yul." I do not yet have an explanation for this change in nomenclature.

Baarin,¹²⁵⁵ he performed many empowerments, such as that of the Sole Hero (i.e. Vajrabhairava) and that of the Thirteen Deities. For about four years he travelled progressively to Naiman, 'Jitir',¹²⁵⁶ Darkhan, the Josotu League,¹²⁵⁷ and so on.

This was only a few years after the 1891 Jindan dao 金丹道 ('Way of the Golden Elixir') uprising that killed tens of thousands of Mongols and otherwise devastated Mongol society in precisely the regions where Wang IV was traveling.¹²⁵⁸ Thus, it is quite plausible that the customary he wrote for a certain Eren¹²⁵⁹ Monastery in 1898, "The Customary of the Mirror that Illuminates [What Should Be] Accepted and Rejected," was part of an effort to help resurrect monasticism and Geluk scholasticism in the region. The following year, in 1899, he returned to Gönlung, whereupon, like his predecessor Wang II, he contributed significantly to the monastery's endowment¹²⁶⁰ and gave goods, tea, noodles, and cash to each of the monastery's monks. In 1900, the 'monastic council'¹²⁶¹ asked him to serve again as abbot, to which he consented, serving for one year. He passed away in 1906.

¹²⁵⁵ T. pa ren. This probably refers to one of the Baarin banners in the Juu Uda League. Charleux, personal communication. Moreover, given that the Tibetan refers to this figure as a "wang" (< Ch. wang , 'prince'), it is likely the text is referring to the banner of Jasag Tōri Junwang of Pārin. Damchö Gyatsho Dharmatāla [dam chos rgya mtsho dharma tA la], *Rosary of White Lotuses*, 42.

¹²⁵⁶ Unidentified. Pu, in the Chinese translation, writes "Zhalute," which is Chinese for the Jarud 'tribe' (Mo. aimag). Duo Zang and Pu Wencheng, *Youning si zhi*, 159; Lattimore, *The Mongols of Manchuria: Their Tribal Divisions, Geographical Distribution, Historical Relations with Manchus and Chinese, and Present Political Problems*, 194.

¹²⁵⁷ The Josotu League comprised five banners, including the Kharachin banners and the two Tümed banners indicated above in Map 1.

¹²⁵⁸ Burensain Borjigin, "The Complex Structure of Ethnic Conflict in the Frontier: Through the Debates Around the 'Jindandao Incident' in 1891," *Inner Asia* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 41–60.

¹²⁵⁹ T. 'e ren. The monastery's name is spelled differently in the colophon, as e'u rin Monastery.

¹²⁶⁰ T. spyi 'jog.

¹²⁶¹ T. dgon pa spyi.

The Profound and Secret Golden Key of a Hundred Doors to [Buddhist] Treatises

This chapter is based primarily on the latter of Gönlung's two extant customaries, known as the "Profound and Secret Golden Key of a Hundred Doors to [Buddhist] Treatises."¹²⁶² It was composed in 1885, just two years after Wang Khutugtu had retired from the abbacy of Gönlung and one year before he left to go again to his patron in Mongolia, the Aohan *zasag wang*.¹²⁶³ The manuscript is a mere fifteen folio faces, and is conjoined on the front end with "The Customary of the Mirror that Illuminates [What Should Be] Accepted and Rejected,"¹²⁶⁴ another of Wang's compositions that will be discussed below. The end of the text is conjoined with a litany of praises to the buddhas, various deities, and lamas written in *khyuk*¹²⁶⁵ cursive script.

As discussed in earlier chapters, there is certainly doubt as to how much monastic customaries corresponded to reality "on the ground." For instance, much of the language found in Wang's customaries is very similar to (and sometimes identical to) the language found in a customary composed by the head of the Gomang College of Drepung Monastery (discussed below). Therefore, throughout this essay, I treat Wang's customaries as prescriptive rather than descriptive. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that there is some correspondence between what Wang wrote and what actually happened at Gönlung in the late-nineteenth century. Often in the texts, Wang makes passing reference to the way things were 'formerly' and to practices that 'used to be performed.' This suggests an attempt to write a text corresponding to actual practices rather than idealized ones.

¹²⁶² T. *bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig*.

¹²⁶³ 'Zasag,' often written as 'jasag' or 'jasagh,' were the rulers of banners or local districts in Qing Mongolia. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, 617–8..

¹²⁶⁴ T. *bca' yig blong dor gsal ba'i me long*.

¹²⁶⁵ T. *khyug*.

The general and perhaps formulaic purpose for composing this customary is given in the opening lines of the text:

The lord of the Teaching, the Master of the Sages Vajra-holder and condensation of the wisdom of the three [buddha] families, in order for the great, untarnished tradition of exoteric and esoteric [teachings] to flourish again here in the Land of Snowy Mountains, took on the appearance of the saffron-robed monk known as Tsongkhapa. Given the truth of the aspiration¹²⁶⁶ of this renowned one, may [many] auspicious things come about and, at the same time, may the development and growth of this monastic site be blessed!¹²⁶⁷

"Moreover," Wang continues,

this is the great dharma center¹²⁶⁸ prophesied by the Victor [i.e. the Dalai Lama], the Source of the Exegetical and Practical Teachings of the Dharma, the universally renowned Gönlung Gaden Jampa Ling.¹²⁶⁹ The rules and customary procedures established by past sages are still well preserved today and have not degenerated.¹²⁷⁰

Why is Wang writing this customary if the 'rules and customary procedures'¹²⁷¹ of Gönlung are still intact? Wang explains:

The three practices [of fortnightly confession, Summer Retreat, release from Summer Retreat] and so on are explained in the extensive customary.¹²⁷² Those parts that were not deeply [explained] therein [I] will here more thoroughly elucidate in [these] notes.¹²⁷³

In fact, Gyelse's extensive customary says very little about the practices of confession, Summer Retreat, and the release of the summer retreat other than to say that *they must be done properly*. It is true, though, that the content of the extensive customary and Wang IV's "supplementary customary" are very different. As we have seen in chapter four,

¹²⁶⁶ T. *thugs bskyed*.

¹²⁶⁷ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khrim, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 1.1.

¹²⁶⁸ T. *chos grwa chen po*.

¹²⁶⁹ T. *dgon klungs dga' ldan byams pa gling*.

¹²⁷⁰ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khrim, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 2a.2.

¹²⁷¹ T. *bsgrigs lam phyag srol gyi rim pa*.

¹²⁷² Or, "great customary." T. *bca' yig chen mo*.

¹²⁷³ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khrim, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 2a.4.

the former is focused primarily on such issues as governance, responsibility for ritual sponsorship, and discipline. In contrast, Wang IV's customary deals strictly with Gönlung's scholastic curriculum, its manner of debate, and its liturgical schedule during the spring dharma sessions.¹²⁷⁴

In what follows I present a detailed account of the contents of Wang IV's customary, although I occasionally make reference to Gyelsé's earlier customary when it can help illuminate a practice described in the later customary. I have relegated most details about the hymns and texts found in the customary, Geluk or otherwise, to footnotes so as to privilege the contents of the text itself and the routines and practices prescribed in the text. Since my argument is that Wang IV and, through him, Gönlung Monastery, served as outlying centers for and promoters of Geluk scholasticism, it is important to give a thorough presentation of the debate curriculum and the accompanying liturgy. Monastic liturgy, monastic debate, and Geluk scholasticism are still very understudied topics. The details set forth below should contribute to the scholarly conversation about monastic education and monastic life. Readers less interested in the names of specific ritual texts and their position in the overall liturgy might safely skip over the numbered and bullet-point lists below.

To aid comparison, I have referred to another customary from the epicenter of Geluk monastic education and life. This customary was written by the fifty-ninth¹²⁷⁵ throne-holder,

¹²⁷⁴ T. *chos thog*. Also translated as 'study session' and 'debate session.' Ngawang Dakpa, "The Hours and Days of a Great Monastery: Drepung," 174–5; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 44..

¹²⁷⁵ This is taken from what is presumably the author's own colophon as it appears in both of the following: Mkhyen rab Bstan pa chos 'phel, *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Mkhyen rab Bstan pa chos 'phel), vol. 2 (New Delhi: D. Gyaltsan and K. Legshay, 1972), 475; Mkhyen rab Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, ed., *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs sgo mang grwa tshang gi chos 'byung dung g.yas su 'khyil ba'i sgra dbyangs* (History of the Dharma at Sgo mang College of 'Bras spungs Monastery, the Rightward-Turning Sound), vol. 2 (Karnataka, India: Dpal ldan 'bras spungs bkra shis sgo mang dpe mdzod khang, 2003), 695.15. However, Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, the editor of the *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, has him listed as the sixtieth.

or 'preceptor,'¹²⁷⁶ of Drepung Monastery's renowned and influential Gomang College, Khyenrap Tenpa Chöpel (1840-1907/8). Based on this text's colophon, we can surmise that the customary was written sometime between Tenpa Chöpel's ascent of the Gomang throne in 1894 and his death in 1907/8—in other words, only a few years after Wang IV penned Gönlung's customary. Tenpa Chöpel wrote it for the philosophy college¹²⁷⁷ of one of the most important monasteries in Alashan (a 700-kilometer drive northeast from Gönlung), known as Baruun Heid in Mongolian.¹²⁷⁸ Significantly, the customary is said to be "based on the tradition of practice at Pelden Trashi Gomang College," that is, Drepung Gomang.¹²⁷⁹

To my knowledge, there is no extant customary for Drepung Gomang.¹²⁸⁰ Tenpa Chöpel's customary is thus a useful resource for understanding scholasticism and debate at Drepung Gomang. It is, moreover, serendipitously written in the same time-frame as Wang IV's customaries (i.e. for both Gönlung and Eren Monastery) and for a Mongolian monastery not far from Gönlung. Finally, Tenpa Chöpel's customary is quite extensive and detailed, and focuses particularly on the liturgy and debate practice at Baruun Heid.¹²⁸¹ The text is thus (at the very least) useful for understanding the formula by which Geluk customaries were

¹²⁷⁶ T. *slob dpon*.

¹²⁷⁷ The name of the college was Sgra dbyangs legs bshad gling.

¹²⁷⁸ He wrote it upon request of the principal lama of Baruun Heid, A lag sha V Ngo mtshar phul byung sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1871-1944). A lag sha V was none other than the fifth reincarnation of Desi Sangyé Gyatso (1653-1705), the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's regent.

¹²⁷⁹ Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:677.18–19 and 695.17–696.

¹²⁸⁰ I have recently come across a 'breviary' (*tshogs 'don chos spyod kyi rim pa*) of Drepung and Gomang written by Labrang's Gung thang III Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me (1762-1823), although I have not yet had a chance to review it. Gung thang III Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, *Dbus 'gyur chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs tshogs chen dang dpal ldan bkra shis sgo mang grwa tshang bcas kyi tshogs 'don chos spyod kyi rim pa bskal bzang mgrin rgyan* (New Delhi: Chos 'phel legs ldan, 1974); "TBRC," W00EGS1016242..

¹²⁸¹ Ter Ellingson was the first Western scholar to recognize the customary's focus on philosophical studies. Ellingson, "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca' yig," 214.

written. I also argue that it provides evidence for common practices occurring in Geluk institutions across the Tibetan Plateau and beyond.

As with the opening lines of Wang IV's customary, the opening lines of Tenpa Chöpel's customary also begins with unabashed Geluk triumphalism:

May the Teachings of the Yellow Hat Wearers – the glorious tradition of the Second Omniscient One who, [here] on earth, [stands] apart from all rivals, the Dharma king of the Three Realms, Tsongkhapa Lozang Drakapa of the East – develop and grow in all corners of the realms of the expansive world, such as China, Mongolia, and Tibet. A great drum beats throughout the three realms of existence summoning all to the new feast of the complete benefits and happiness deriving from these Teachings.

The inclusion of such sectarian language is not merely a formality. The closing of the liturgy during 'holy days,' according to Tenpa Chöpel, is to go as follows:

You yourself, in an instant, bless the *torma* by means of the "Glorious Adamantine Terrific One" [i.e. Vajrabhairava] and so forth. The *tormas* are offered up with prostrations while reciting "Om. His Mind Rests in Peace"¹²⁸² and so forth. Doing so, recite the outer, inner, and secret [evocation rituals] to the Quick Acting Mahākāla¹²⁸³ and the Death [Lord] of *Karma*.¹²⁸⁴ [Recite] from, "Buddha Vipaśyin" [to] "may all the favorable circumstances without remainder come about!"¹²⁸⁵ Then, intone¹²⁸⁶ both the 'Dharma King'¹²⁸⁷ and the 'Self and Others.'¹²⁸⁸ Having initiated the 'Non-conceptual Loving One,'¹²⁸⁹ intone¹²⁹⁰ the 'Recalling the Kindness of the Omniscient, Great Tsongkhapa'¹²⁹¹ and, with intense longing, as if making a supplication, disperse. All the way back to one's quarters, each should intone in sweet 'contour-tones' the 'Non-conceptual Loving One', which is the supplication superior to all other profound secret mantras.¹²⁹²

¹²⁸² T. *hUM gang thugs zhi ba*. The *huM gang thugs zhi ba* is part of the *Dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed* ritual. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, personal communication, 7 March 2012.

¹²⁸³ T. *myur mdzad mgon po*.

¹²⁸⁴ T. *las gzhin*.

¹²⁸⁵ This refers to verses of the 'Lamp of the Teachings' (*bstan 'bar ma*) Sangs rgyas, ed., *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1993), 310.8–313.9.

¹²⁸⁶ T. *dbyangs 'then*.

¹²⁸⁷ T. *chos rgyal ma*. Here, "*chos rgyal ma*" has the same meaning as "*chos kyi rgyal po*." See [note below](#).

¹²⁸⁸ T. *bdag gzhan*.

¹²⁸⁹ T. *dmigs brtse ma*.

¹²⁹⁰ T. *skad rgyangs*.

¹²⁹¹ T. *kun mkhyen tso* [sic] *kha pa chen po'i bka' drin dran*.

¹²⁹² Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:683.8.

The Glorious Adamantine Terrific One is a form of Yamāntaka who is one of the principal patron deities (*yi dam*) of the Geluk sect, and the Quick Acting Mahākala is the principal protector deity of the Gelukpa. The 'Dharma King' and the 'Self and Others'¹²⁹³ are short Geluk additions to the otherwise non-sectarian hymn known as the 'Flame of the Lamp' (*bstan 'bar ma*).¹²⁹⁴ The former opens with the words "as for the practices of the Dharma King, Tsongkhapa ...". The latter reads as follows:

In dependence on the two accumulations [of wisdom and merit] of oneself and others, from past, present, and future, may the teachings of the victor Lozang Drakpa flourish forever after!

Finally, the well-known 'Non-conceptual Loving One,' or Miktsema, is a prayer to Tsongkhapa, here described as superior to all other such recitations. Such explicitly sectarian language is also found in Wang IV's customary. These and other similarities will become apparent as we proceed.

I have divided Wang IV's customary into the following sections and sub-sections, the first section being the introduction that gives the aforementioned reasons for composing the customary. The boldface indicates the most extensive section of the text – that dedicated to a presentation of the liturgy and debate curriculum for the Great Spring Dharma Session. Although I give a summary of the entire customary, this section is the focus of my description.

- I. Title and Introduction (pp. 1-2b.1)
- II. Preparation for Dharma Classes (*chos grwa*) (2b.1-2b.3)
- III. Protector Deity Day (2b.3-2b.5)
- IV. Memorial for the Founder (p. 2b.5)

¹²⁹³ Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 313.6–9 and 313.9–12 respectively.

¹²⁹⁴ My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for explaining this to me.

- V. First Spring Dharma Session (2b.5-3a.5)
 - A. Days Four Onward: 'Recitation Lessons' (3a.3-3a.5)
- VI. Great Spring Dharma Session (3a.5-7a.6)**
 - A. Initial Three Days (3a.5-4b.6)**
 - 1. Opening Day (3a.5- 3b.5)**
 - a. Assembly (3a.5-3b.1)
 - b. Dharma Class (3b.1-3b.5)
 - 2. Following Days¹²⁹⁵ (3b.5-4b.6)**
 - a. Morning Assembly (3b.5-4a.2)
 - b. Morning Dharma Class (4a.2-4a.5)
 - c. Midday Assembly (4a.5)
 - d. Midday Dharma Class (4a.5-4b.2)
 - e. Evening Assembly (4b.2-4b.3)
 - f. Evening Dharma Class (4b.3-4b.5)
 - g. Miscellaneous (4b.5-4b.6)
 - B. Days Four Onward (4b.6-6b.4)**
 - 1. Morning Assembly (4b.6-5a.1)**
 - 2. Morning Recitation Lessons (5a.1-5b.2)**
 - 3. Midday Assembly (5b.2-5b.3)**
 - 4. Midday Dharma Class (5b.3-6a.4)**
 - 5. Evening Assembly (6a.4-6a.5)**
 - 6. Evening Dharma Class (6a.5-6b.2)**
 - a. Miscellaneous (6b.2-6b.4)
 - C. Exam Period (6b.4-6b.6)**
 - D. Division of Wealth (6b.6-7a.6)
- VII. Break (7a.6)
- VIII. Post-Spring Assembly (7a.6-7b.3)
 - A. Dharma Classes (7b.1-)
 - B. Formal Debates (7b.1-7b.3)
- IX. Colophon (7b.3-7b.4)

Similarities are immediately obvious when this breakdown of the text is compared with that for Tenpa Chöpel's Baruun Heid customary. The boldface indicates Baruun Heid's Great Winter Dharma Session, which I shall say more about.

- I. Introduction (pp. 674-678.4)
 - A. Purpose of the text (677.13-677.21)
 - B. Contents of the text (678.3)
- II. "How one Enters this Virtuous Place" (678.4-679.10)

¹²⁹⁵ It is not entirely clear whether the 'opening day' is counted among the initial three days of this dharma session or whether it is, for instance, a special evening assembly and dharma class that *precedes* the 'first three days.'

- III. "The Rules to Obey While Residing Here" (679.11-694.6)
 - A. "The Rules (*sgrig lam*) for the Assembly (*tshogs*)" (679.12-683.15)
 - 1. Normal Daily Liturgy (680.5-682.8)
 - a. Distribution of Shares and so forth (681.14-682.8)
 - 2. Holy Day Liturgy (*dus bzang 'tshogs skabs zhal 'don gyi rim pa*) (682.8-683.15)
 - B. "The Rules of Conduct for Dharma Class" (683.16-693.7)**
 - 1. Great Winter Dharma Session (683.16-690.20)**
 - a. Initial Three Days (684.11-689.18)**
 - i. Morning (684.11-685.16 and 688.2-688.9)**
 - ii. Midday (685.16-688.2 and 688.9-688.14)**
 - iii. Evening (688.15-689.18)**
 - b. Post-Initial Three Days and Miscellaneous (689.18-690.11; see also 689.1-689.3)**
 - c. 'Prayers for the Dharma Breaks' that end dharma sessions and, presumably, make up the liturgy of the 'dharma breaks' (690.11-690.20)**
 - 2. First Spring Dharma Session (690.20-691.1)
 - 3. Great Spring Dharma Session (691.1-691.7)
 - 4. First Summer Dharma Session (691.8-691.10)
 - 5. Great Summer Dharma Session (691.10-691.16)
 - 6. Summer Retreat (691.16-691.18)
 - 7. Great Fall Dharma Session (691.18-691.20)
 - 8. Second Autumn Dharma Session (691.20-692.13)
 - 9. Miscellaneous (692.13-693.7)
 - C. "The Rules Not Included Above" (693.7-694.6)
- IV. Conclusion, "The Fruits of Virtuosity" (694.6-696)
 - A. "The Immediate Fruits" (694.7-694.14)
 - B. "The Ultimate Fruits" (694.14-695.5)
 - C. Colophon (695.12-695.16)
 - D. Additional colophon (not in 1972 edition) (695.17-696)

It is clear from this outline that Tenpa Chöpel's customary provides a much more comprehensive liturgical and scholastic calendar for Baruun Heid than Wang IV's customary for Gönlung. This is perhaps due to the fact that Gönlung already had an 'extensive' customary that preceded Wang IV's supplementary customary, whereas Baruun Heid had, "no precious customary for [its] college up this point".¹²⁹⁶ After all, we know that Gönlung,

¹²⁹⁶ Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:695.17. This comes from an additional colophon that does not appear in the 1972 block print edition of the customary. Also, the current Alak Sha of

too, had several dharma sessions during the year: “there are four month-long Dharma Sessions [*zla chos*] and two Intermediary Dharma Sessions [*bar chos*].”¹²⁹⁷ Despite this difference, the similarities between Baruun Heid's Great Winter Dharma Session and Gönlung's Great Spring Dharma Session are obvious.

Although Tenpa Chöpel's customary addresses the regular 'assemblies' (*tshogs*) apart from the 'dharma classes,' the actual routine that is prescribed is identical to that found in the Gönlung customary. In both cases there are three 'assemblies' each day: one each in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. As we shall see, at both Gönlung and Baruun Heid, the morning and evening 'assemblies' are to be served with 'communal tea' (*mang ja*), whereas the midday 'assembly' is to be served with 'monks' tea' (*grwa ja*). Likewise, immediately upon dispersing, the monks are to gather in the debate courtyard for debate practice and, on certain occasions, 'recitation lessons' (*brtsi bzhag*). Finally, it is also obvious that the first three days of the month-long dharma sessions at both monasteries – Spring and Winter, respectively – are treated separately from the remaining twenty-seven days of the session. I shall say more about all this below.

Baruun Heid writes that Changkya Rolpé Dorjé wrote a customary for the monastery sometime around 1757. Jalsan, “The Reincarnations of Desi Sangye Gyatso in Alasha and the Secret History of the Sixth Dalai Lama,” *Inner Asia* 4, no. 2 (2002): 352 and 358n2; Jialasen 贾拉森 (Jalsan), ed., *Zaixian huihuang de Guangzong si: qingzhu Alashan Guangzong si jian si 250 zhou nian ji liu shi Dalai Lama Zhuan cheng shu 250 zhou nian (1757-2005)* 再现辉煌的广宗寺：庆祝阿拉善广宗寺建寺 250 周年暨《六世达赖喇嘛传》成书 250 周年 (1757 - 2005) (The Revived and Glorious Guangzong Monastery: Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of Alashan's Guangzong Monastery and the 250th Anniversary of the Composition of The Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama (1757-2005)) (Alashan Guangzong si: Alashan Guangzong si, 2005). It is possible that Changkya's customary was for the monastery as a whole, whereas Tenpa Chöpel's is the first for the philosophical college. It is also possible, of course, that Tenpa Chöpel simply did not know about Changkya's customary.

¹²⁹⁷ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 71.

II. Preparation for Dharma Classes (*chos grwa*)

The second section of Wang IV's customary for Gönlung treats the necessary preparatory steps for the dharma classes of the new year. On the seventeenth day of the first lunar month, Gönlung's two disciplinarians (*dge skos*; Regional: *dge skul*) are to offer to the abbot 'merit scarves'¹²⁹⁸ along with the list of names of the dharma class students¹²⁹⁹. "The 'petitioning scarf' (*zhu dar*) and the 'last offering scarf'¹³⁰⁰ for the abbot," which presumably are the aforementioned meritorious scarves, "are both taken from the [monastery's] common property (*spyi rdzas*)."¹³⁰¹ The prepared list of dharma class students is to be presented by the twenty-third day.

Gyelsé Rinpoché's 1737 customary also makes passing reference to the dharma class roster: "The roster of the dharma class students is compiled 'privately.'"¹³⁰² His customary then proceeds to discuss the proper distribution of monastic wealth based on rank and function. Wang IV actually cites this portion of the earlier customary, explaining

... when there are cash disbursements [*grwa 'gyed*] and allowances [*grwa phogs*] [to be distributed], the precious abbot is given two shares. Moreover, a single share [lit. no extra shares] is given only to those 'revered ones,'¹³⁰³ former abbots, and dharma class students on the 'privately compiled' roster who show their faces.¹³⁰⁴

¹²⁹⁸ T. *bsod btags legs pa*.

¹²⁹⁹ T. *chos grwa ba*.

¹³⁰⁰ T. *mjug gi 'bul dar*.

¹³⁰¹ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 2b.2.

¹³⁰² Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 32a.6.

¹³⁰³ Retired officers?

¹³⁰⁴ T. de nas/ grwa 'gyed dang grwa phogs yod tshe/ khri rin po che la gnyis skal 'phul/ gzhan sku zhabs rnam pa/ khri zur rnam dang / chos grwa pa'i mtshan tho sger bsgrig sha stag [*sic*] la ngo tsam la skal lhag mi 'bul/ The most difficult part of this terse passage is the phrase being translated here as "those present." One of my informants suggested that this means "about one [share]." I am not familiar with "ngo" being used in this sense. Another suggestion given to me was that this means "only a piece of paper," i.e. the roster is only a piece of paper, and therefore the individuals listed on it are not given special treatment in the shape of extra shares. The reading I have here settled on, however, seems to make the most sense given what we know about the incentives and requirements given for attendance (see chapter four).

The fact that the roster is ‘privately compiled’ (*sger (b)sgrig*) seems to mean that the disciplinarians do it themselves without consulting with the general management office. This would give quite a bit of power to the disciplinarians, something I have discussed in chapter four. As we shall see below, the disciplinarians play an active role during the entire dharma session. More importantly, this passage indicates that the roster is important mainly for rationing and distributing monastic wealth. In chapter four we saw that this was also the main purpose of the monastery-wide roster that was compiled.

III. Protector Deity Day

The third section deals with the protector deity's day (*lha tshes*), the second day of the second month. Today, this is still the day on which, each month, 'restoration rituals' (*bskang gso*) are performed in the protectors' hall (*btsan khang*) on behalf of the monastery's protector deities.¹³⁰⁵ The two disciplinarians are responsible for properly petitioning the gods for assistance (*'phrin bcol*). In addition, they must begin making their nightly rounds to monitor the recitations and study of the young monks (*skyor brda*), who sit outside, often on their roofs, rehearsing their daily lessons.

IV. Memorial for the Founder

The fourth section describes the memorial to the former Gyelsé incarnations, including the monastery's founder, Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso. This is scheduled for the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the second month. The account keeper of the assembly hall's offerings (*tshong dpon*) is to offer a silk scarf to the patron who provides the 'communal tea.' As

¹³⁰⁵ Gönlung informant, personal communication, 31 March 2011 and 15 May 2012.

mentioned in chapter four, according to Gyelsé’s customary, representatives from all of Gönlung’s branch monasteries were required to attend this commemoration of the monastery’s founder and his successors.

V. First Spring Dharma Session

After that is the First Spring Dharma [Session]¹³⁰⁶. At Dakpo College in Central Tibet, a Geluk institution that may have served as a model for Gönlung, we read that:

the monks returned to Bshad grub gling [i.e. Dakpo College] [after the Snang Dharma Session, which itself followed the New Year's Dharma Break, or *chos mtshams*] ... After several day's interval [*chos mtshams*], the first spring term (*dpyid chos dang po*), lasting more than ten days, began. The term following the next interval was called Ka rab *chos thog* ... This was the term during which debates were held.¹³⁰⁷

“Ka rab” is an abbreviation for *karapjam*¹³⁰⁸ The scholastic titles of *kachu* and *rapjam* were awarded to successful participants in debate exams. And so it was at Gönlung: the First Spring Dharma Session was one of its “intermediary half-month sessions,”¹³⁰⁹ because it lasted for approximately two weeks.¹³¹⁰ It was followed by the Great Spring Dharma Session, which was the period when debate between scholars reached a fervent high point.

The daily schedule for this two-week First Spring Dharma Session is as follows:

¹³⁰⁶ T. *dpyid chos dang po*.

¹³⁰⁷ Nornang, “Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-po Bshad-grub-gling,” 260. As noted in the introductory chapter, Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso had an intimate relationship with Dakpo College, which may explain why Gönlung’s ritual practices during the time of the Great Prayer Festival are said to be based on Chökhör Ling where Dakpo College is located. In addition, at least one modern secondary source suggests a unique relationship between Dakpo College and the Gyelsé Lineage. On the other hand, the lineage seems to have an even stronger link with Ön Chöding Ngesang Dargyé Ling, of which the Gyelsé lineage is said to be its proprietor (*zhal bdag*). Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Tianzhu Zangzu zizhi xian weiyuanhui (Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee) and Kong Lingming, *Tianzhu Zangchuan fojiao siyuan gaikuang* 天祝藏传佛教概况, 124; Bstan pa bstan ’dzin, *’Bras spungs sgo mang chos ’byung*, 2003, 1:522..

¹³⁰⁸ T. *dka’ rab ’byams*.

¹³⁰⁹ T. *zla phyed par chos*.

¹³¹⁰ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang ’jam pa’i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya ’byed pa’i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 3a.4. An informant at Gönlung stated that this session lasted from 2/16 to 3/1.

Morning	Midday	Evening
'Communal tea' is served.	'Monks' tea' is served.	'Communal tea' is served.
The principal recitation is the <i>Sixteen Arhats</i> . ¹³¹¹	Recitation of the <i>Praises to Dependent Origination</i> ¹³¹² and <i>Meaningful Praises to Lord [Tsong kha pa]</i> . ¹³¹³	
Debate with a partner (<i>zla bo</i>).	Recitation of the <i>Ornament of Realization</i> and the <i>Entrance to Madhyamaka</i> (<i>rgyan 'jug</i>), and the mantra of the Goddess of Yaks (<i>nor rgyun ma</i>) ¹³¹⁴ .	Debate with a partner.
Performance of the Three Kurim (<i>sku rim</i>) Healing Ceremonies [recitations for longevity]. ¹³¹⁵	Recitation of 'Completely Purifying Aspirational Prayer'. ¹³¹⁶	Performance of the Three Kurim Healing Ceremonies [recitations for longevity].
	Complete recitation of the <i>Ornament</i> and the <i>Entrance</i> before dispersing.	

We are told that the communal tea during the morning and evening assemblies is to be provided by

each of the four components of the 'lama-management council' and so forth,¹³¹⁷ by each of the major incarnation villas,¹³¹⁸ by each pair of 'alms-collectors,'¹³¹⁹ and,

¹³¹¹ T. *gnas bcu < gnas brtan bcu drug gi stod pa/phyag mchod*. Nor brang o rgyan, ed., *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don phyogs sgrig dgos pa kun tshang* (Collected Liturgy of the Gelukpas) ([Lhasa]: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1997), 136–45.

¹³¹² T. *rtan 'brel bstod pa*. This by Tsong kha pa and can be found in *ibid.*, 82–88.

¹³¹³ T. *rje'i bstod pa don ldan*. This is found in Gung thang III Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, "'Jam mgon rgyal ba gnyis pa la bstan pa'i snying bo gsal bar mdzad pa'i tshul las brtsams te bstod pa don dang ldan pa (Meaningful Praises to Tsongkhapa)," in *Blo sbyong nyer mkho phyogs bsgrigs*, ed. Cha ris skal bzang thogs med and Ngag dbang sbyin pa (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 507–512.

¹³¹⁴ 'Brug rgyal mkhar, ed., *Mtshan gzungs rgyun khyer phyogs bsgrigs* (Lan kru'u [Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1996), 127, 201, and 202.

¹³¹⁵ These three are the *Praises to White Tārā* (*sgrol dkar bstod pa*), *Praises to Twenty-One Tārās* (*rje btsun 'phags ma sgrol ma la bstod pa*), and the *Heart Sutra* (*shes rab snying bo*). Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 209–11, 200–205 and 166–170.

¹³¹⁶ T. *rnam dag smon lam*. This is probably the '*rnam dag smon lam*' by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:680.17.

¹³¹⁷ T. *bla spyi sogs khag bzhi*.

¹³¹⁸ T. *bla brang che kha rnams*.

¹³¹⁹ T. *'bul pa thob*. The meaning of this term is unclear. Perhaps it is akin to the position of "collection leader" (*'bul dpon*), who is a monk selected to travel to other places beyond the immediate vicinity of the monastery and

moreover, by each grouping of three minor incarnation villas.¹³²⁰ The community of the monks¹³²¹ must also make a contribution.¹³²²

Meanwhile, ‘monks’ tea’ was given once a day, which is a schedule found also at Baruun Heid. Tenpa Chöpel specifies that there must be twelve monks’ teas provided for the fifteen-day dharma session there (as well as two days for *shing slong*, or rest and recreation), unless a ‘communal tea’ was provided by a patron, in which case the latter could substitute for the former. A similar schedule was likely in place at Gönlung.

V.A. Days Four Onward: ‘Recitation Lessons’

After the first three days, the two disciplinarians present a ‘merit scarf’ to the precious abbot, and they request him to give the first ‘lecture’ (or ‘sermon,’ T. *gsung chos*) and the ‘recitation lessons’ (*brtsi bzhang*). During recitation lessons, the abbot recites the relevant section from the text being learned to the class rehearsal leader (*skyor dpon*), who repeats, in turn, what the abbot recites.¹³²³ The class rehearsal leader subsequently goes through the text with the rest of his class. The abbot and the two disciplinarians give a preliminary exam (*rgyugs*)¹³²⁴ to test students’ proficiency,¹³²⁵ presumably in order to place them in the proper dharma classes during the upcoming Great Spring Dharma [Session].¹³²⁶

its estates with the task of collecting donations for the monastery. For more on “collection leaders” and “alms collectors” see chapter one.

¹³²⁰ T. *bla brang chung kha gsum res re*.

¹³²¹ T. *dge ’dun mang*.

¹³²² Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang ’jam pa’i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya ’byed pa’i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 3a.2.

¹³²³ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 251 and 388n50.

¹³²⁴ The manuscript has ‘*rgyug*’.

¹³²⁵ Cf. ‘*rgyugs sprod*’ in Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 257..

¹³²⁶ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang ’jam pa’i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya ’byed pa’i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 3a.4–7a.6.

Gyelsé Rinpoché's customary makes it clear that recitation lessons are a standard, nonnegotiable component of monastic education. "If one does not understand these things and forsakes [such] listening and thinking," Gyelsé writes,

If he seeks out piecemeal *sadhanas* [T. *lha'i sgrub thabs*], [ritual explanatory] 'individualized teachings' [*khrid*], and 'pith instructions' [*man ngag*], then he should know that he is turning his back on the intention of great scholar-practitioners such as the Second Victor, the Great Tsong kha pa. During dharma classes one is not to go elsewhere to listen to the dharma. ...¹³²⁷

Recitation lessons are not to be interrupted for any reason except especially important village rituals at which the abbot is needed to officiate.¹³²⁸ This older customary also instructs the monks to practice their recitations for as long as possible and to carry out 'book retreats' (*dpe mtshams*) in between dharma sessions.¹³²⁹

There are also tests associated with the recitation lessons (*rtsis bzhag gi rgyugs*) that determined whether one stays at their current level and, for those nearing the completion of their studies, whether they were fit to stand for degree exams in the summer. All but the *karam* scholars and those who had been attending dharma class for several years were required to take these tests at every dharma session.¹³³⁰

¹³²⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 10a.5–10b.2.

¹³²⁸ Ibid., 12a.3–4.

¹³²⁹ Ibid., 11a.4–5.

¹³³⁰ Ibid., 12b.5–13a.1; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 31b.3. The "common" customary that Gyelsé composed for Gönlung speaks of "*rgyugs*" (i.e. tests) administered at every dharma session for all but the long-term students. A few lines later he writes that only those who have taken the (dharma session) tests (*rgyugs*) on Madhyamaka and Perfection of Wisdom are qualified to examine for the monastery's *gling bsres* degree. In the "uncommon" customary that he wrote for Gönlung, he writes of "*rtsis bzhag gi rgyugs*" (recitation-lesson tests) of the "early dharma session[s]" being administered at the "later dharma sessions" for all but the the *karam* scholars.* (The precise meaning of this is unclear. It could mean that the First Spring Dharma Session goes without such tests, whereas the following dharma sessions have them.) A few lines later he writes about the qualifications for the monastery's degree exams, which include "testing" (*rgyugs*) in front of the abbot, disciplinarians, and director of studies. It is obvious that these two sections are talking about the same practice. *T. *chos thog snga ma'i rtsis bzhag gi rgyugs chos thog rjes mar dka' ram ma gtog pa thams cad la len zhing ...*"

Gyelsé gives us some indication of the topics covered during recitation lessons. For instance, he writes that

Even though we did not have this tradition before, during the Second Autumn Dharma Session the Types of Mind, Types of Reasoning, and Collected Topics students are to alternate each year [studying] the *Ornament* and the *Entrance*. The Perfection of Wisdom students are to alternate each year [studying] the Fifth Section and the Eighth Section [of the *Ornament of Realization*]. The Madhyamaka students are [to study] “The Classification of the Three Times” and whatever other lessons are appropriate to their stage. The Vinaya and Abhidharmakoṣa students are [to study] both the “divisions of time”¹³³¹ and general explanations of the Vinaya.¹³³²

On those occasions when there are no required recitation lessons, the monks are instructed to alternate practicing singing ‘contour-tones’ (*dbyangs*) from the monastery’s breviary, practicing ‘formal debate’ (*dam bca*’), and reciting the *Ornament of Realization* and the *Entrance to Madhyamaka*.¹³³³ The singing of ‘countour-tone’ hymns from the breviary and the ritual recitation of these two fundamental scriptures are interesting substitutions for the scholastic practice of recitation lessons, because this once again demonstrates the close relationship that exists between ritual and scholasticism in the monastery.

In the older customary we also find recitation lessons paired with lectures (*gsung chos*) given by the abbot. It specifies that the abbot (*bla ma, slob dpon*) is to give lectures on the Stages of the Path (T. *lam rim gyi bshad pa*) from the First Spring Dharma Session through the First Autumn Dharma Session. This happens at the midday assembly

¹³³¹ “Classifications of the Three times” (*dus gsum rnam gzhas*) may refer to a section and topic entitled “*Dus gsum gyi rnam gzhas*” found in the “Lamp that Elucidates the General and Deep Meanings of Madhyamaka” by Pañchen Sönam Drakpa (paN chen bsod nam grags pa, 1478-1554). In volume 7 (*ja*) of his *Collected Works*. TBRC W23828. As for “divisions of time” (*dus tshig < dus tshigs*),” it appears to be a topic common to Vinaya literature. I would like to thank my friend and colleague Jongbok Yi for helping me to identify these topics and associated texts.

¹³³² T. *'dul ba'i spyir bstan*. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 11b.2–4.

¹³³³ *Ibid.*, 12a.4; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31a.6.

immediately before the monks break up into their respective classes and have recitation lessons with the lama.¹³³⁴

Finally, recitation lessons are also intimately tied to debate, about which we shall have more to say.

VI. Great Spring Dharma Session

The Great Spring Dharma Session begins on the fifteenth of the third month and runs through the fifteenth of the fourth month. Before debate classes there is always an assembly (*tshogs*), at which monks exclusively focus on reciting prayers and hymns.

VI.A.1.a. Assembly

On the opening day the monks assemble and:

- intone (*'then*¹³³⁵) ‘Tsong kha pa, Victor Through all Lifetimes’¹³³⁶ and
- chant slowly (*rta ring*) the (four)) refuges.

The monks are to recite (*rta 'don*):¹³³⁷

- ‘Supreme Site of Potala,’¹³³⁸

¹³³⁴ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 11b.2; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31a.5.

¹³³⁵ *'Then* means 'to stretch' or 'to extend' and thus these are to be 'sung' like *dbyangs* chants. My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for explaining this to me.

¹³³⁶ T. *tshé rabs kun du ma*. Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 17.12–18. This is a set of verses sometimes found appended to “One Hundred Ganden Gods” (*dga' ldan lha brgya ma*), a guru yoga of Tsongkhapa.

¹³³⁷ For a discussion of the distinction between *'don*, *rta*, and *dbyangs*, see Ellingson, “ ‘Don rta dbyangs gsum.’”

¹³³⁸ T. *po ta la yi [gnas mchog]*. The entire hymn is two stanzas long, the first being the invitation and the last being said while prostrating. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee recited it for me: *po ta la yi gnas mchog nas// taM yig ljang khu las 'khrungs shing// taM yig 'od kyis 'gro ba sgröl// sgröl ma 'khor bcas gshes su gsöl// lha dang lha min cod paN gyis// zhabs kyi pad+mo gtugs shing// phongs ba kun las sgröl mdzad ma// sgröl ma yul la phyag 'tshal lo//*

- 'Tārā' (*sgrol ma*) twenty-one times,¹³³⁹
- 'Liberation from Samsara,'¹³⁴⁰ and
- 'Reverence to the Goddess,'¹³⁴¹
- and, they alternate between
- the 'Elegantly Written'¹³⁴² and
- the 'Venerable Lord Exalted One.'¹³⁴³

"Formerly," we are told "His Pair of Feet" (*gang gi zhabs zung ma*) was also likely recited."¹³⁴⁴ It is unclear whether Wang IV means that an older customary mentions this hymn (it does not appear in Gyelsé's *Great Customary* of Gönlung) or whether he learned this fact aurally. In any case, it does illustrate an attempt to compose a customary that reflects the way practices are done now (i.e. in the historical present).

Although this liturgy is made of very common hymns, some of which are obviously Geluk, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between it and the section of the Baruun Heid customary (III.A.1.) that deals with the "regular [assembly] liturgy."¹³⁴⁵ However, based on my reading and translation of both of these customaries, I would venture to say that

¹³³⁹ The "sgrol ma" without introductory verses can be found in Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 200–205; Stephan Beyer translates this as "Homage to Twenty-one Tārās." *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, 211–14.

¹³⁴⁰ T. *khor ba las sgrol ma*. Rin chin tshe ring, *Zhal 'don phyogs bsgrigs (Collected Liturgy)* (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 2006), 250–1.

¹³⁴¹ T. *lha mo la gus ma*. Ibid., 245.13–246.12 The "lha mo la gus ma" is the recitation of the "benefits" (*phan yon*) procured from reciting the "Tārā."

¹³⁴² T. *legs bris ma*. Composed by Dge 'dun grub; in Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 304–308.

¹³⁴³ T. *rje btsun 'phags ma*. Rin chin tshe ring, *Zhal 'don phyogs bsgrigs*, 246.13–249.

¹³⁴⁴ My Gönlung informant states that this is a praise to Tārā (*sgrol ma stod pa*) and that it is nowadays recited in the monastery's Tantric College. I have not seen the actual text. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee, on the other hand, suggests that this may be a prayer to Chos rgyal (Yama).

¹³⁴⁵ I.e. the liturgy "apart from the special circumstances of the private, 'healing ceremonies' (*rim gro*) performed for patrons." Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:680.5.

nearly all of these hymns found in the Gönlung customary surface in one section or another of the Baruun Heid customary.

VI.A.1.b. Dharma Class

Assembly is followed by dharma class, where debate practice takes place. In order to set the stage, several more prayers and hymns are recited first:

1. Entrance to Madhyamaka,
2. the *Heart Sutra*, and
3. 'Lion-faced One'¹³⁴⁶ are intoned, after which,
4. the apotropaic recitation (*bzlog pa*) of 'Lion-faced One'¹³⁴⁷ is performed.

After that, the monks:

5. chant one stanza (*sho lo ka*) of the Precious Glorious Root Lama.¹³⁴⁸

Again, we are told how things “used to be:” “Formerly, devotional prayers to the lineage of abbots would be recited.” These prayers are stipulated in Gyelsé’s customary.¹³⁴⁹

After that, monks are to:

6. recite 'Non-conceptual Loving One'¹³⁵⁰ as many times as possible,
7. recite the mantras of the Lords of the Three Families,¹³⁵¹

¹³⁴⁶ T. *seng gdong ma*. The text of the 'Lion-faced One' reads as follows: *mkha' la spyod pa'i gnas mchog dam pa nal/ mngon shes rdzun 'phrul mnga' ba'i mthu stobs can// sgrub pa po la ma yis bu bzhin gzig// gnas gsum mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la phyag mtshal lo//* My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for providing me with this.

¹³⁴⁷ Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 499–501.

¹³⁴⁸ T. *dpal ldan rtsa ba'i bla ma*. This is found at the beginning of the "Glory of the Three Realms" (*dpal ldan sa gsum ma*) Ibid., 187.. My thanks to my Gönlung informant for explaining this.

¹³⁴⁹ See [below](#).

¹³⁵⁰ 'Brug rgyal mkhar, *Mtshan gzungs rgyun khyer phyogs bsgrigs*, 1–2.

8. recite the dhāraṇī of [the Buddha of Infinite] Life (*tshe gzungs*),¹³⁵² and
9. recite the verses and mantras (*snying bo*)¹³⁵³ of each of the following:
 - the Buddha Unshakeable;¹³⁵⁴
 - [Goddess] Adorned in Leaves;¹³⁵⁵ and,
 - the Buddha Lord of Serpents.¹³⁵⁶
10. After reciting 'The Flame of the Teachings,'¹³⁵⁷ they
11. recite the 'Equal with the Sky'¹³⁵⁸

Finally, the monks say, "May all be auspicious!" together, as well as the seed syllable of Mañjuśrī (*thal skad*).¹³⁵⁹ They then go to their respective classes.

Debates may now ensue. Monks pair up with a partner (*zla po byed*). The disciplinarian is responsible for ensuring that each monk is properly matched, and thus makes three rounds around the debate yard to inspect the various classes, beginning with the class

¹³⁵¹ T. *rigs gsum mgon po*. The Lords of the Three Families are Spyan ras gzigs (S. Avalokiteśvara), 'Jam pa'i dbyangs (S. Mañjuśrī), and Gsang bdag (S. Guhyapati) or Phyang na rdo rje (S. Vajrapāni) Ibid., 28–9..

¹³⁵² Ibid., 27.

¹³⁵³ 'Verses' refers to the verses immediately preceding the deities' mantras. For example, see the verses beginning with "*chos dbyings skye med ngag las chos skur bzhangs*" for Klu dbang rgyal po.

¹³⁵⁴ T. *mi 'khrugs pa*; S. Akṣobhya. 'Brug rgyal mkhar, *Mtshan gzungs rgyun khyer phyogs bsgrigs*, 31–2.

¹³⁵⁵ T. *lo gyon ma*. Ibid., 140–1 and 142–4.

¹³⁵⁶ T. *klu dbang rgyal po*. Ibid., 53.

¹³⁵⁷ T. *bstan 'bar ma*. The manuscript has '*bstan par ma*,' which I have changed to '*bstan 'bar ma*.' To the dismay of non-Geluk sects, Gelukpas often use '*bstan 'bar ma*' ('The Light of the [Buddha's] Teachings) to refer to the 'Dge ldan lugs bzang rgyas pa'i smon lam' ('Prayer for Flourishing of the Well-being of the Geluk Sect'), found in Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 314–16..

¹³⁵⁸ T. *mkha' mnyam ma*. Ibid., 101–3.

¹³⁵⁹ "The debate starts with a ritual invocation of Mañjuśrī, the celestial bodhisattva patron of wisdom: *Dhīḥ ji ltar chos can* (pronounced 'di ji tar chö cen'). This invocation can be translated as '*Dhīḥ* [the seed syllable of Mañjuśrī]; in just the way the subject.' Obviously, this statement is rather unclear and hence offers ample scope for various creative interpretations, as is often the case with ritual." Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 211.

on the fourth section of the *Ornament of Realization* (*skabs bzhi pa*) and working his way down to the class of the *Lesser Collected Topics* (*bsdus chung*). A monk who cannot find a partner must ask the disciplinarian for permission to be excused. These monks then debate with each other (*bsgro gleng*) while those testing on reading and writing (*yig rgyugs pa*)¹³⁶⁰ are separated from the rest. (This latter group is presumably composed of younger monks and novices just beginning their education, although this is not explained in the text.)

VI.A.2.a. Morning Assembly

The morning of the following day of the Great Spring Dharma Session begins with an assembly. The monks recite:

- the "Tsong kha pa, Victor through all Lifetimes,"
- the "Confession of Downfalls" (*ltung bshags*),¹³⁶¹ and
- the "Expansive White Umbrella" and its accompanying apotropaic rite.¹³⁶²

At the beginning of the "Ten Million Victors,"¹³⁶³ the 'tea servers' (*phyag bde*) get up to fetch the tea. "Formerly, there was the tradition of reciting the 'benefits' [section of the 'White Umbrella']."¹³⁶⁴

'Communal tea' is distributed, after which the monks recite:

- the *Heart Sutra*, and then

¹³⁶⁰ The manuscript has 'yig rgyug pa.'

¹³⁶¹ A confession to thirty-five buddhas; in Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 5–13.

¹³⁶² T. *gdugs dkar rgyas pa bzlog pa*. Ibid., 171–195 and 198–99; the *zlog pa* begins with the line "bcom ldan gdugs dkar."

¹³⁶³ T. *rgyal ba bye ba*. Said to be composed by Tsong kha pa; in *ibid.*, 195–98.

¹³⁶⁴ For one example, see Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 291–3, beginning with the word "sus."

- two stanzas of the 'Effortless Acquisition of the Three Bodies'¹³⁶⁵ are recited three times.
- The monks recite the mantra and apotropaic rite of the "Thirteen Chakras,"¹³⁶⁶
- the "Lion-faced One," and
- and such parts of the four-section supplication prayer (*gsol 'debs*) as the 'Glorious Compassionate One.'¹³⁶⁷
- They recite the long *dhāraṇī* of the Completely Victorious One.¹³⁶⁸

The 'water-bearer' (*chab ril pa*) then sets out the one hundred *torma* offerings, and the monks offer up:

- the "One Hundred *Tormas*"¹³⁶⁹ and
- the "Glorious Goddess *Torma*."¹³⁷⁰
- They recite the the "Naturally, Utterly Pure,"¹³⁷¹
- the "May it be Accomplished!"¹³⁷² and so forth.

At the end of the "Shakya Lion,"¹³⁷³ they recite the "Self and Others"¹³⁷⁴ and then disperse.

¹³⁶⁵ T. *sku gsum lhun grub ma*. A Gönlung informant states that this is a 'long-life prayer' (*zhabs brten gsol 'debs*) for the founder of Gönlung, Rgyal sras Rin po che.

¹³⁶⁶ T. *tsakra bcu gsum gyi sngags bzlog*. The mantra can be found in 'Brug rgyal mkhar, *Mtshan gzungs rgyun khyer phyogs bsgrigs*, 223.10–224.3.

¹³⁶⁷ T. *dpal ldan snying rje ma*.

¹³⁶⁸ T. *rnam rgyal [ma]*. Dpal ldan rgya mtsho, ed., *Jo nang pa'i zhal 'don rin chen phreng ba* (The Jeweled Garland of Jonang Hymns) (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004), 211.4–213.6.

¹³⁶⁹ T. *gtor ma brgya rtsa*. Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 426–435.

¹³⁷⁰ T. *lha mo'i gtor*. There are many different versions of the hymn recited during the *torma* offerings.

¹³⁷¹ T. *rang bzhin rnam dag ma*. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee suggests that this is probably a prayer for offering incense (*bsang*) to protector deities.

¹³⁷² T. *grub par gyur cig*. Unidentified. Perhaps the final verse of the "*rang bzhin rnam dag ma*."

¹³⁷³ T. *shAkya seng+ge*. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee informs me that the "*shAkya seng+ge*" is likely another name for the "*Bstan 'bar ma*," found in Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 310–13.

¹³⁷⁴ T. *bdag dang gzhan ma*. This is the last four lines of the *bstan 'bar ma*; in *ibid.*, 313.

VI.A.2.b. Morning Dharma Class

After assembly has finished, the monks go to dharma class where, before debating, they again complete the necessary liturgy, by:

- ‘reading through the canon’ (*chos klog*) and
- reciting the *Heart Sutra* three times. At the end of the accompanying apotropaic rite, they:
- intone the "Dharma King"¹³⁷⁵ and
- recite the "Self and Others."

The reading through the canon, we are told, happens only during the mornings of the first three days.

The monks then pair up and debate like on the opening day. After the disciplinarian has completed his first circle around the yard, the Stages of the Path (*lam rim*)¹³⁷⁶ students are released. The next highest grade classes, meanwhile – the Vinaya (*'dul*), *Abhidharmakoṣa* (*mdzod*), and *Commentary on Valid Cognition* (*rnam 'grel*) students – go to their respective classes and engage in 'reason- and scripture-based debate' (*rigs lung*).

VI.A.2.c. Midday Assembly

The midday assembly is provided with a 'monks' tea' (as with the two-week First Spring Dharma Session) unless a patron provides a 'communal tea' for all. The midday dharma class is held after the assembly.

¹³⁷⁵ T. *chos kyi rgyal po*. A Geluk addition to the “Flame of the Teachings” (*bstan 'bar ma*) *ibid*.

¹³⁷⁶ The *lam rim* class at Gönlung appears to be the highest level scholastic class for the monastery. Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 5a.4..

VI.A.2.d. Midday Dharma Class

Once again, the actual debate is preceded by recitations, including:

- three recitations of the "Tārā," followed by
- "Praises to You" (*khyod la bstod cing*).¹³⁷⁷

The customary explicitly excludes the "Reverence to the Goddess," which was part the liturgy of the assembly on the opening day of this dharma session. The monks recite the *Heart Sutra* and accompanying apotropaic rite, the "Self and Others," and other hymns. They then recite the seed syllable of Mañjārī and begin the actual class (*'dzin grwa*), where they initiate 'formal debate' (*dam bca'*). The disciplinarian is not required to make rounds, which makes sense given the fact that 'formal debates' consists of all monks focusing on a single debate rather than pairing off and practicing debating in isolated pockets across the yard.¹³⁷⁸

Dreyfus¹³⁷⁹ illustrates the intensity of a formal debate, in this case the most prestigious of formal debates, i.e. that for a *lharampa geshé* (T. *lha ram pa dge bshes*) candidate:

... [Candidates] defend their view in front of the whole monastery in a formal debate. One cannot fail but one can be humiliated in this difficult trial, which requires the candidate to spend up to ten hours answering questions on any topic related to the curriculum. This examination also involves a strong psychological element, since the defender stands against the entire audience (numbering several hundred to several thousand), which is expected to support and help the questioner. When the defender hesitates in answering, the audience joins the questioner in pressuring him by loudly

¹³⁷⁷ The "khyed/khyod la bstod cing" is a small addition to the "Tārā" and other prayers to deities; in Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 303.11.

¹³⁷⁸ Dreyfus distinguishes between 'formal debate' (*dam bca'*), during which the entire group of monks focuses on a single debate and 'individual debate' (*risod zla*; lit. "debate with a partner"), where, as we saw above, monks pair off and practice debating with each other. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 250–1. See also Liu Shengqi's article, "The Education System of Three Major Monasteries in Lhasa," *China Tibetology*, Qin Lili, trans., <http://zt.tibet.cn/english/zt/TibetologyMagazine/200312007421135337.htm>, accessed 5 September 2012 (this is said to be a translation of an article that appeared in the Chinese version of *China Tibetology*, no. 4 (2005)).

¹³⁷⁹ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 257–8. Lempert gives a very lively presentation and intriguing analysis of such a debate in the second chapter of his book. *Discipline and Debate*.

intoning “cir, cir, cir.” If the answer is still not forthcoming, the questioner may start to make fun of the defender with the vocal support of the audience. Conversely, if the questioner falters, members of the audience may jump in and pick up the debate. At times, several questioners bombard the defender with a variety of questions. Sometimes they may join in unison as they forcefully press their points. When the defender loses, the whole audience joins the questioner in loudly slapping their hands and pointedly proclaiming, “Oh, it's finished.”

This formal debate goes on for a long time. Then, the three highest classes are dismissed first, the disciplinarian giving them a signal using both of his hands. The Madhyamaka students follow when the disciplinarian gives them a signal using only his right hand. Finally, the Perfection of Wisdom students are let go when the disciplinarian signals to them using his 'discipline stick' (*khriims dbyugs*). It is worth noting that the Baruun Heid customary, in the section discussing the morning dharma class during the first three days (III.B.1.a.i.), prescribes a similar process for dismissing the students:

... After that, [the disciplinarian] is to remove his hat and 'offer up' a sign to the reverend elders [*gnas brtan rnams*] for them to disperse. All others are to disregard fatigue and so forth and to fulfill their obligations to the best of their ability. The disciplinarian is to inspect closely everything going on, and then, removing his hat, he 'offers up' the signal for the Karam scholars [*bka' rams pa*] to disperse. Then, to the class above Madhyamaka he offers a hand signal, and to the classes below Perfection of Wisdom he offers a signal with his cape [*zla gam*]. The classes disperse in proper order beginning with the upper ones. ...¹³⁸⁰

VI.A.2.e. Evening Assembly

At the evening assembly the "Tārā" is to be recited, "more and more, and when an important occasion arises, it is most important to recite it eighty or fifty times."¹³⁸¹ An explanation for these terse instructions can be found in the Baruun Heid customary. The customary explains,

¹³⁸⁰ Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 2003, 2:685.9.

¹³⁸¹ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 4b.2.

whereas the "Tārā" is normally to be recited two times during a particular service,¹³⁸² on special occasions its recitation is to increase daily by fours. So, during Baruun Heid's evening "kurim" healing rituals, held during the evening dharma class throughout the initial three days of the winter session (III.B.1.a.iii.), we read:

"... Recite the "Tārā" like during assembly. The recitation of the "Tārā" is initially done thirty-one times. From the third day on the recitation of the "Tārā" is to grow by fours up to the middle of the month-long dharma session [*zla chos dkyil*], [when] the "Tārā" is recited seventy-five times. Then, [the recitations are to be gradually reduced by fours until thirty-one recitations are [again] arrived at, and from there reduce the recitations down [by twos?] to twenty-one. This is said to be like [a grain of] barley [i.e. fat in the middle and skinny on the ends].¹³⁸³

Likewise, the apogee of recitations for a half-month, fifteen-day dharma session at Baruun Heid is to be fifty-one, and the apogee for a twenty-day session is fifty-nine.¹³⁸⁴ Wang IV's customary does not give such a detailed explanation for how the cantor and the monks are to arrive at 'fifty' or 'eighty' recitations of the "Tārā," but the general pattern seems clear. As for the rest of the liturgy for Gönlung's evening assembly, it is to be, "like the First Spring Dharma Session."

The reader will recall that the evening services of the First Spring Dharma Session (see section V. above) included tea, debate, and the performance of "the Three *Kurim*" Healing Rituals (*sku rim rnam gsum*).¹³⁸⁵ These are the common elements to Gönlung's evening services, particularly its "dharma classes."¹³⁸⁶ first, tea may be served; second, a *kurim* healing ritual is performed (though not necessarily the "Three *Kurim*"); finally, debate

¹³⁸² Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, 'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung, 2003, 2:686.7.

¹³⁸³ Ibid., 2:688.20.

¹³⁸⁴ Ibid., 2:692.13.

¹³⁸⁵ See [above](#).

¹³⁸⁶ In his customary, Gyelsé writes of "the dharma classes' *ku rim* ritual." Here, however, Wang IV has the *sku rim* grouped with the evening "assembly" (*tshogs*) that precedes the dharma classes. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 31a.3.

(*bgro gleng, zla bo 'dzugs*) commences and continues until it is a class's time for its recitation lesson.

The *kurim* ritual is fundamental to the evening dharma classes. Even when tea is not served the *kurim* ritual is to be performed,¹³⁸⁷ and even when one cannot make it to the tea assembly he is supposed to try to make it to the *kurim*.¹³⁸⁸ It is performed for the long life (T. *zhabs rten*) of the monastery's congregation.¹³⁸⁹ The common element to *kurim*, at least at Gönlung, is the recitation of the "Tārā," otherwise known as the "Homage to Twenty-One Tārās."¹³⁹⁰

Gyelsé Rinpoché writes in the extensive customary that for *kurim* rituals the "Tārā" is to be recited thirty to fifty times, and the following hymns are to accompany it:

- the "Praises to White Tārā" (*sgrol dkar*),
- the "Supplication to Tārā" (*sgrol gsol*),¹³⁹¹
- the "Elegantly Written",
- the *Heart Sutra* (seven times),
- the "Lion-faced One,"

¹³⁸⁷ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 4b.5 and 6a.4.

¹³⁸⁸ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 31a.3. In addition, when there is no *kurim* ritual, the monks are instructed to "at least recite the *Heart Sutra* seven times ..."

¹³⁸⁹ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig," 3a.2. This reference to *kurim* actually mentions *morning* as well as evening services. Most references to *kurim*, however, are associated with evening services. One other exception is found in the following, where "normal *kurim*" (T. *sku rim dkyus ma*) are said to be performed immediately before the *morning* debate practice. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 9a.5. One final note: It has been suggested to me that the term "*sku rim*" is equivalent to "*sku rim 'gro*" and hence "*rim 'gro*." The latter term, however, appears to be used most often with reference to "healing rituals" performed upon request by patrons."

¹³⁹⁰ See [note](#) above.

¹³⁹¹ Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgrigs*, 205–8.

- the “Non-Conceptual Loving One”
- the *dhāraṇī* of the Lords of the Three Families and the Thus Come One Lord of Serpents,
- the *dhāraṇī* of the Buddha of Infinite Life,
- the *dhāraṇī* of the Buddha Unshakeable and the Goddess Adorned in Leaves,
- the “Praises to the Expansive White Umbrella,”¹³⁹²
- the “Flame of the Lamp.”¹³⁹³

VI.A.2.f. Evening Dharma Class

The *kurim* ritual is understood to be part of the dharma class itself. Here, Wang IV has instead considered the *kurim* ritual something to be performed when “assembling” (*tshogs*) for evening tea. Afterwards, the monks go to “dharma class,” where there are still more hymns to be recited, particularly during the first three days of the Great Spring Dharma Session. The monks are to recite hymns (*'don chos*) “like during the Opening Assembly” (*yar tshogs*). The liturgy consists of intoning (*'then*) the “Self and Others” every day.

Note that there is considerable overlap between these hymns and the hymns recited during the *kurim* ritual, on the one hand, and the list of hymns recited during the dharma class of the opening day (VI.A.1.b. above). However, here the monks are explicitly instructed not to perform the “long melodic chants (*rta ring*) of the “Lion-faced One” and the “Equal with the Sky.” In place of the “Equal with the Sky,” the monks recite such prayers as:

¹³⁹² T. *gdugs dkar gyi bstod pa*. Ibid., 195–9.

¹³⁹³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 11b.4–12a.2.

- the "Omniscient Translator Who Knows All the Sciences" (*rig gnas kun la kun mkhyen lo tsa ba*)¹³⁹⁴ and then,
- recite the seed syllable of Mañjuśrī.

Class (*'dzin grwa*) then begins in earnest, and debate (*rtsod pa*) ensues like on the opening day.

As mentioned above, the *kurim* is fundamental to the monastery's evening services; so, even when no patron appears to sponsor an evening tea the *kurim* ritual is still performed. The monks are instructed to go to the debate yard, and the recitations, we are told, are like those of the evening tea assembly—in other words, the crescendo of recitations of the "Tārā" that we discussed just above. The liturgy for Gönlung's evening healing ceremony is precisely that found at Baruun Heid (plus or minus a few recitations of the "Tārā"). In addition, the monks are to recite both the "Quick Acting Mahākāla"¹³⁹⁵ and the "Completely Purifying Aspirational Prayer."

VI.A.2.g. Miscellaneous

¹³⁹⁴ The manuscript has "rig gnas kun la kun chen..." which is an orthographic mistake. This text is said to have been composed by Spo 'bor pa 'Jam dbyangs kha che. See Klong rdol bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang, "Bka' gdams pa dang dge lugs pa'i bla ma rags rim gyi gsung 'bum mtshan tho (Sketch of the Collected Works of Kadam and Geluk Lamas)," in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Longdöl Lama Ngawang Lozang) ([Chengdu]: s.n., n.d. [199-]), 1385/51a.3. The first number refers to the page number written in by a later, modern editor. The second number refers to the block print's original page number.

¹³⁹⁵ The entire hymn reads as follows: *hUM/ myur mdzad spyan ras gzigs la phyag 'tshal lo/ /zhabs gdub dang bcas bi nA ya ka mnan/ /nag po chen po stag gi sham thabs can/ /phyag drug sbrul gyi rgyan gyis nam par brgyan/ /g.yas pas gri gug bar bas phreng ba 'dzin/ /tha mas DA ma ru ni drag tu 'khröl/ /g.yon pas thod pa dang ni mdung rtse gsum/ /de bzhin zhags pas bzung nas 'ching bar byed/ /drag po'i zhal nas mche ba nam par gtsigs/ /spyan gsum drag po'i dbu skra gyen du 'bar/ /dpral bar sin+D+hU ray is legs par byugs/ /spyi bor mi bskyod rgyal po'i rgyas btab brtan/ /khrag 'dzag mi mgo lnga bcu'i do shal can/ /rin chen hod skam lnga yis dbu la brgyan/ /shing las byon nas gtor ma len mdzad pa'i/ /dpal ldan phyag drug pa la phyag 'tshal bstod/* Taken from <http://gdamsngagmdzod.tsadra.org/> (accessed 10 June 2012) and revised by Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee stated that the "myur mdzad ma" is attributed to the Indian master to Sha ba ri pa (S. Shavaripa).

During both the evening and morning services (presumably the dharma classes), the monks are to focus on the "String of Consequences" (*thal 'phreng*), and at the midday dharma class they are to focus on the "Special Topics" (*zur bkol*).

"*Thal 'phreng*," or "*thal phreng*," is a style of argumentation by exploring chains of consequences. The form it takes is, "this follows" (*thal*), "because of that" (*phyir*). The innovation of this technique has traditionally been attributed to Chawa Chökyi Senggé (1109-1169),¹³⁹⁶ although there is some skepticism regarding this claim. This technique characterizes the Collected Topics (*bsdus grwa*) and Debate Manuals/Textbooks (*yig cha*) literature. Thus, it is possible that the term "*thal phreng*" may, by extension, refer also to particular sections of the Collected Topics and/or debate textbooks.¹³⁹⁷

"Special Topics," on the other hand, likely refers to specialized texts. Dreyfus writes that,

some monasteries consider topics deemed central – such as tranquility, or the distinction between interpretable and definitive teachings – to be 'separate' [i.e. *zur bskol*]. They have special texts devoted to them, and in the case of Se-ra Jay they are also studied apart.¹³⁹⁸

VI.B. Days Four Onward

Following the initial three days of the Great Spring Assembly, a request is made to the abbot for recitation lessons. This is similar to what is prescribed for the two-week First Spring Dharma Session.

¹³⁹⁶ T. phywa pa chos kyī seng+ge.

¹³⁹⁷ Pascale Hugon, "Arguments by Parallels in the Epistemological Works of Phywa Pa Chos Kyi Seng Ge," *Argumentation* 22, no. 1 (February 6, 2008): 94 and 94n2. Shunzo Onoda, "bsDus Grwa Literature," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson, 1st ed. USA. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 190. See also David Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section III): Sa-skyā Paṇḍita on Indian and Tibetan Traditions of Pramāṇa and Philosophical Debate* (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1987), 130.

¹³⁹⁸ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 373n22..

VI.B.1. Morning Assembly

This is done during the morning communal tea. The abbot is brought to his 'throne room' (*khri khang*), whereupon the assembly ends, and the monks go sit before the abbot.

VI.B.2. Morning Recitation Lessons

The cantor leads three recitations of the *Heart Sutra* and its apotropaic rite. At the end, the "Self and Others" and other hymns are recited. The seed syllable of *Mañju* is not recited, and monks go to their respective classes wearing their hats. The abbot then proceeds to give recitation lessons to the class rehearsal leader of each class in succession. The rehearsal leader then leads his class, which gathers in a circle, through three recitations of the relevant section of the text.

Wang IV's customary also tells us the names of the textbooks the student monks are to use:¹³⁹⁹

- the Stages of the Path class uses the first Pañchen Lama Lozang Chögyen's (1567-1662)¹⁴⁰⁰ "Blissful Path" (*bde lam*).¹⁴⁰¹
- the Vināya and Abhidharmakośa classes both use the "new textbooks" by the first Jamyang Zhepa (1648-1721/2).¹⁴⁰²

¹³⁹⁹ My thanks to Jongbok Yi for reviewing this list of textbooks and responding to my many questions.

¹⁴⁰⁰ T. paN chen blo bzang chos rkyan.

¹⁴⁰¹ The full name is *byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i dmar khrid thams cad mkhyen par bgrod pa'i bde lam* "TBRC," W9810 and W4CZ7933..

¹⁴⁰² T. *yig cha gsar ba*. I.e. the newer Gomang College (*sgo mang grwa tshang*) textbooks by 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa Ngag dbang brtson 'grus. For discussion on dating the death of the Jamyang Zhepa, see Maher, "Knowledge and Authority in Tibetan Middle Way Schools of Buddhism," 164n298. My colleague at Virginia, Jongbok Yi, explains that the 'old *yig cha*' is by Gung ru chos kyi 'byung gnas. It is said that it was buried, burned, and banned by Karma Tenkyong Wangpo (karma bstan skyong dbang po, 1606-1642). Jongbok Yi, personal communication, March 7, 2012.. In fact, the older textbook was already being disregarded (or at least supplemented) in the 1660s and 1670s when Trichen Jamgön Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso was abbot of the college.

- the Pramāṇavārttika¹⁴⁰³ class uses the "Venerable's textbook."¹⁴⁰⁴
- The Madhyamaka class uses the "Lamp of Scripture and Reasoning."¹⁴⁰⁵
- From the class of the fourth chapter/subject (*skabs bzhi pa*) of the Ornament of Realization¹⁴⁰⁶ through the "Beginning Treatises" class (*gzhung gsar ba*),¹⁴⁰⁷ [students] are to use the "new textbook."
- The Seventy Points [class] (*don bdun cu*), Types of Mind class (*blo [rigs]*), and Types of Evidence class (*rtags [rigs]*) also use Jamyang Zhepa's textbook.
- The Intermediate Collected Topics (*bsdus 'bring*) and Beginning Collected Topics (*bsdus chung*) study from the "Tsenpo Ngag dbang 'phrin las lhun grub's Collected Topics."¹⁴⁰⁸

Ta la'i bla ma VII Skal bzang rgya mtsho, "Khri chen sprul pa'i sku blo bzang stan pa'i nyi ma's Biography," 359/16b.4–360/17a.1. See also Jongbok Yi's University of Virginia dissertation (2013).

¹⁴⁰³ T. *rnam 'grel < tshad ma rnam 'grel*; i.e. epistemology.

¹⁴⁰⁴ T. *rje btsun pa'i yig cha*. This may refer to a textbook composed by Se ra rje chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1469-1544/46).

¹⁴⁰⁵ T. *lung rigs sgron me*. This is likely the *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i mtha' dpyod lung rigs sgron me* composed by 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa II Dkon mchog 'jig med dbang po (1728-1791).

¹⁴⁰⁶ The *Ornament of Realization* is divided into eight chapters or subjects Edward Conze, *Abhisamayāṅkāra* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1954); Ārya Vimuktiṣeṇa (vṛtti), Haribhadra (ālokā), and Maitreya, *Abhisamayāṅkāra with Vṛtti and Ālokā*, trans. Gareth Sparham, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Fremont, CA: Jain Pub., 2006).. "Skabs bzhi" could also possibly mean "the fourth class" of five: the Perfection of Wisdom topic (of which the *Ornament of Realization* serves as the core text) is said to comprise five classes. Daniel Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1992), 22. However, it seems that Perdue may be speaking of the situation as it exists in contemporary exile rather than traditional Tibet. Cf. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 251..

¹⁴⁰⁷ Dreyfus writes, "the four classes on the *Ornament* are beginning and advanced treatises (*gzhung gsar snying*), and beginning and advanced separate topics (*zur bkod [sic] gsar snying*)." *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 251 and 388n49. Dreyfus counts these as classes four through eight of a fifteen-class curriculum. Four through eight would be five classes, not four. He must mean classes four through seven of a fourteen-class curriculum. Also, "*zur bkod*" should be written "*zur bkol*." It is not entirely clear whether Dreyfus is talking about the curriculum in pre-1959 Tibet or in contemporary exile.

¹⁴⁰⁸ T. *btsan po'i bsdus grwa*. There are three parts to the Collected Topics which gradually introduced students to the terminology, techniques, and topics employed in monastic debate. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 112; Onoda, "bsDus Grwa Literature," 189. As for Tsenpo's debate manual, it "was written at the Ra

The order of this list also gives us an idea of what constituted the different class levels at Gönlung. The highest-level class is listed first, and each lower-level class is listed sequentially. Apart from the Stages of the Path class, this is a standard Geluk curriculum, one that could be found at the monastic colleges of the three seats. The Stages of the Path class is perhaps the review class for the Karam scholars prior to their *geshé* exams.¹⁴⁰⁹

The monks are to practice debating with their partners until it is their turn for the recitation lesson. The disciplinarian keeps on his cape down through the completion of the Madhyamaka recitation lesson, no doubt as a sign of respect for the more advanced classes. During the Lesser Collected Topics recitation lesson and rehearsal, even the students of reading and writing are to join in. The disciplinarian then escorts the abbot back to his residence. All the classes stand and the Lesser Collected Topics students see him off by continuously rehearsing their recitations. Thus ends the morning recitation lessons.

Note that there are discrepancies between the curriculum given here and that found elsewhere. For instance, the *Ocean Annals*, completed just twenty years before Wang IV's customary, explains that

The customary of the philosophical college was written by the Great Fifth, and it [has] thirteen classes [*'dzin grwa*]: Beginning and Advanced Collected Topics,¹⁴¹⁰ both Types of Mind and Types of Evidence classes,¹⁴¹¹ the Seventy Points,¹⁴¹²

bstod College of Gsang phu by Gser khang pa Dam chos rnam rgyal, who served as the twenty-first abbot of the Ra bstod College ... in response to a request from Ngag dbang 'phrin las lhun grub (1622-1699). The word "btsan po" stands for "btsan po no mon han," which was the honorific title of Ngag dbang 'phrin las lhun grub ..." Ibid., 192–3. Incidentally, Btsan po no mon/min han, more commonly known as Smin grol no min han, was the individual who developed Gönlung's powerful neighbor, Serkhok (gser khog) Monastery, which is also known as Tsenpo Monastery (btsan po dgon). This lineage is not to be confused with the *founder* of Serkhok/Tsenpo Monastery, Bstan po Don grub rgya mtsho (1613-1665).

¹⁴⁰⁹ Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 256.

¹⁴¹⁰ T. *bsdus grwa che chung*.

¹⁴¹¹ T. *blo rtags gnyis*.

Beginning Treatises, the Mind of Enlightenment [*sems bskyed*], the Dharma Wheel [*chos 'khor*], the Fourth Section [of the *Ornament of Realization*], Madyamaka, Abhidharmakoṣa, Pramāṇavārttika, and Vinaya. Their studies of the Five Scriptures are unmatched, as they follow the old textbook of Gomang for both Madyamaka and Perfection of Wisdom, Kyilkhangpa[’s textbook]¹⁴¹³ for Vinaya, [the Fifth Dalai Lama’s] *Jewel of Metaphysics: The Chariot of the Guide*¹⁴¹⁴ for Abhidharmakoṣa, and Changkya Rölpé Dorjé’s writings [*gsung*] for Pramāṇavārttika.¹⁴¹⁵

Part of this passage comes from Desi Sanggyé Gyatso’s *Yellow Beryl* (completed in 1698), where he writes

Now, the abbot is Kün’ga Gyatso,¹⁴¹⁶ who teaches Madhyamaka and an Perfection of Wisdom in accordance with the textbook of Drepung Monastery’s Gomang College, and Vinaya based on Kyilkhangpa’s textbook, and who teaches [Abhidharmakoṣa] [*'chad nyan*] based on the Lord Lama’s composition of the *Jewel of Metaphysics: The Chariot of the Guide*.¹⁴¹⁷

Aside from the “Stages of the Path” class listed in Wang IV’s, the number and types of classes found in these different passages are more or less the same. Whereas the *Ocean Annals* spells out the names of the various classes that are based on the study of particular sections of the *Ornament of Realization*—Beginning Treatises, Mind of Enlightenment, Dharma Wheel, and Fourth Section—Wang IV slightly abbreviates this list by writing “from the class of the Fourth Section [of the *Ornament of Realization*] through the Beginning Treatises.”

The textbooks that are assigned, however, are different. For the Vinaya and Abhidharmakoṣa classes, Wang IV assigns the “new textbooks” (*yig cha gzar ba*). This likely refers to the Jamyang Zhepa’s textbooks, which came to replace the older textbooks at

¹⁴¹² T. *don bdun bcu*.

¹⁴¹³ T. *dkyil khang pa*.

¹⁴¹⁴ T. *chos mngon rin chen 'dren pa'i shing rta*.

¹⁴¹⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 70–1.

¹⁴¹⁶ T. *kun dga' rgya mtsho*.

¹⁴¹⁷ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

Gomang.¹⁴¹⁸ The *Ocean Annals* and the *Yellow Beryl*, on the other hand, list Kyilkhanga's textbook and the Fifth Dalai Lama's commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa*. Kyilkhanga refers to one of Trashi Lhünpo Monastery's three exoteric colleges, and the textbook was composed by Trashi Lhünpo's sixteenth-century abbot, Sanggyé Gyatso.¹⁴¹⁹ Both this and the Fifth Dalai Lama's treatise represent very old texts for the Geluk tradition, which perhaps were replaced at Gönlung following the growth of Jamyang Zhepa's influence in the eighteenth century.

A textbook by Sera Chökyi Gyeltsen on *Pramāṇavārttika* would likewise be a very old text by Geluk standards, and a new text by one of Gönlung's most illustrious lamas—Changkya III—may have been considered a better fit as the monastery became more established.

Finally, Wang IV writes that the *Madhyamaka* and *Perfection of Wisdom* classes are to depend on the “new textbooks” composed by Jamyang Zhepa, whereas the *Ocean Annals* asserts that the Gönlung monks use the older textbooks that pre-date Jamyang Zhepa. It is possible that Drakgön Zhabdrung, the author of the *Ocean Annals*, has drawn on dated sources in the same way that he draws on Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's *Yellow Beryl*.¹⁴²⁰

As for debate practice, Gyelsé actually specifies in his customary the topics of debate, although it is not clear whether he means this as an example or as a rule:

At noon, [the monks] go and debate both the “Twenty Bhikṣus” [*dge 'dun nyi shu*] and “Dependent Origination” [*rten 'brel*] up until the time of the First Section

¹⁴¹⁸ Maher, “Knowledge and Authority in Tibetan Middle Way Schools of Buddhism,” 94n155.

¹⁴¹⁹ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 241–2. The (abbreviated) title of this textbook is *The Lamp of the View* (*lta ba'i sgron me*). TBRC places Sanggyé Gyatso's birth in the sixteenth century. “TBRC,” P1553.

¹⁴²⁰ Another explanation for this discrepancy might be that Wang IV and others introduced the new textbooks to Gönlung in the aftermath of the monastery's destruction by Muslims in 1866.

[class]’s [recitation lesson] test [*rgyugs len pa*], and [they] debate “Distinguishing Conventional and Ultimate [Reality]” [*drangs [sic] nges rnam ‘byed*] and “Thought and Form” [*bsam gzugs*] up until the turns of the classes on advanced sections.¹⁴²¹

VI.B.3. Midday Assembly

At the midday assembly, at which 'monks' tea' or, if available, 'communal tea' is served, the monks again request the abbot to give recitation lessons.

VI.B.4. Midday Dharma Class

Then, dharma classes begin, and the liturgy proceeds as follows:

- The cantor leads three recitations of the "Tārā" and a recitation of "Praises to You."¹⁴²²
- The abbot leads a recitation of the "Sky-Goer."¹⁴²³
- While mantras are being lead, the monks are supposed to take up their prayer beads and count them while turning them in the reverse order (*phyir 'dren*).¹⁴²⁴
- The monks recite the "Like This"¹⁴²⁵ and the demon-repelling rite (*bdud bzlog*).¹⁴²⁶
- The cantor offers an extended "Maṇḍala."¹⁴²⁷
- The bursar (*tshong dpon*) prostrates during the "request [of the buddhas] to turn the wheel of the dharma."¹⁴²⁸ [He] offers a large silk scarf¹⁴²⁹ to the abbot.

¹⁴²¹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca’ yig chen mo Manuscript,” 11a.1–2. Jongbok Yi has included an appendix in his dissertation (Univ. of Virginia, 2013) that lists the various topics covered in Drepung Gomang’s curriculum along with the corresponding textbooks used for studying them.

¹⁴²² Written in cursive script (*khyug yig*) beneath the main line with a line indicating it is to be inserted here is the following: "Recite the *Heart Sutra* one or three times."

¹⁴²³ T. *mkha' la skyod pa*. This refers to the first line of the "Lion-faced One." See [note above](#).

¹⁴²⁴ My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for explaining to me the meaning of *phyir 'dren*.

¹⁴²⁵ T. *datya thA*; S. *tadyathā*.

¹⁴²⁶ "*datha thA*" is the first three syllables of the *dhāraṇī* at the end of the *Heart Sutra* and thus serve as a metonym for the *dhāraṇī*. Donald S. Lopez, *The Heart Sūtra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 109–20.

¹⁴²⁷ For an overview of the maṇḍala offering and of the prayers recited see Nor brang o rgyan, *Dge lugs pa'i zhal 'don*, 51–2; Beyer, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*, 167–70.

- The abbot¹⁴³⁰ leads the recitation of the "Producing Auspiciousness and Virtue"¹⁴³¹ up to the prostration verses.¹⁴³²
- The two disciplinarians make prostrations and sit on the two sides of the assembly.
- Refuge in the three jewels is taken three times.
- The abbot, wearing his hat, gives teachings on the Path.
- The two stanzas of "From the Dharma Sermon"¹⁴³³ are recited.
- If a speech on discipline (*tshogs gtam*) is to be given, it is to be done here.
- The cantor leads the "Self and Others."

Finally, everyone goes to class (*'dzin grwa*) and practices as during the morning recitation lessons.

This initiates the recitation lessons, and meanwhile the lower classmen are to go to the advanced classes to participate in 'formal debate' in order to stimulate their learning. Thus, there is no pairing off like during the morning class. Rather, like during the midday dharma class of the initial three days (i.e. VI.A.2.d. above), the students all focus their energy on listening and sometimes even adding to a single, model debate between two individuals. In particular, all the students above the Beginning Treatises class carry out such debates with

¹⁴²⁸ T. *chos 'khor bskor ba*.

¹⁴²⁹ T. *chos 'don*; lit. 'dharma recital. Gönlung informant, personal communication, spring 2011.

¹⁴³⁰ T. *bla ma*. Elsewhere in Wang IV's customary the abbot is referred to as the "*khri rin po che*" or the "*khri ba tshang*."

¹⁴³¹ T. *phun tshogs dge legs*.

¹⁴³² "*Phun tshogs dge legs*" opens the verses of praise found at the beginning of the "Lam rim bsdus don." Sangs rgyas, *Bstod smon phyogs bsgribs*, 73–74.6..

¹⁴³³ T. *chos bshad pa las*. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee informs me that the first stanza reads "*chos bshad pa las byung ba yis// dge ba gang des skye bo kun// des ni skye bot hams cas kun// bde gshegs shes rab thob par shog*" This is a dedication of the merit garnered from the preaching of the dharma.

the classes up to Vinaya. The Types of Mind and Types of Evidence classes do so with the classes up to Madyamaka, and the Collected Topics students do so up to the Seventy Points class. These lower classmen are to remove their hats and sit beneath the upper-classmen, facing outwards, so as to show respect¹⁴³⁴ for the superiority of the advanced classes. The mixing of classes might be considered a technique for acculturation, whereby the younger or lower-level monks are exposed to and, perhaps, lured into the higher levels of the monastic education system. The entertainment value of formal debates should not be underestimated.

Despite the energy evoked during formal debates, as challengers (or questioners) chide and taunt the defendant in an attempt to unseat his poise and undermine his reason, Gyelsé gives explicit instructions regarding the proper etiquette that is to be on display:

Whenever there is a formal debate, great or small, being attached to the desire for own's own victory, having anger that wishes the debasement of own's opponent, as well as the defendant focusing primarily on [proposing] deceptive arguments; engaging a smiling appearance while speaking quickly, arguing in factions, having surreptitious talk¹⁴³⁵ of one's own contempt for debate; in short, an intention marked by the wrongful behavior of degrading [others], ridiculing, [saying] hurtful words, [speaking] quarrelous words, speaking of others' faults, revealing others' weaknesses, and so forth—[all of this] should not to be done. Meanwhile, one should have a reverence that desires the realization of truth. One should have a compassion that desires to dispel the misconceptions of others. One should have a kindness that desires to make one's opponents understand truth. While having such an intention and emphasizing scripture and reason, to analyze and refute [one's opponent] in the proper fashion based on such things as the Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition¹⁴³⁶ is a delight.¹⁴³⁷ This is pure happiness.¹⁴³⁸

As we shall see, in the customary he composed for Eren Monastery, Wang IV makes some of the same points regarding etiquette during exam debates.

¹⁴³⁴ T. *'don pa*; lit. to install or enthrone.

¹⁴³⁵ T. *phug tshangs kyi gam*.

¹⁴³⁶ T. *tsad ma sde bdun*.

¹⁴³⁷ T. *tsha gad?* The text is not entirely legible at this point.

¹⁴³⁸ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 10b.4–11a.3; Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 24a.4–24b.1.

VI.B.5. Evening Assembly

As was the case during the evening assemblies of the initial three days of this dharma session, there is to be an assembly for the *kurim* healing ritual on the debate yard whether or not 'communal tea' is provided.

VI.B.6. Evening Dharma Class

During dharma class, the students pair off and practice debating like during the morning class. In addition, the upper-classmen are to go down to the lower classes and initiate formal debate so as to stimulate the lower-classmen's learning, just as at the midday dharma class. When the upper-classmen go to debate at the lower classes, they go wearing their hats. The lower-classmen are to stand and, again, allow the upper-classmen to sit in the high position for debating. The lower-classmen remove their hats. These deferential motions establish a "seat of knowledgeable" that the defendant will occupy in the debate.¹⁴³⁹

Depending on the amount of time available, when the classes below chapter four of the *Ornament* are released to review (*gshar sbyangs*) the recitations on their own, the entire dharma class may disperse.¹⁴⁴⁰ All the classes are to gather together in one place and, in the middle of the debate courtyard, make prostrations. When this is over, while looking up to the Great Assembly Hall, they recite one long seed syllable of Mañjuśrī and then disassemble. Wang IV specifies that such review of recitations was not to take place during the initial three days of the dharma session nor during its concluding three days. Presumably, this also

¹⁴³⁹ Lempert, *Discipline and Debate*, 59–61.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Wang adds that, "formerly, the [classes] below the Beginning Madhyamaka (*dbu ma gsar pa*) also had to practice reviewing (*gshar sbyangs*) whether during assembly or during breaks."

gives the disciplinarians a break from having to make nightly rounds to monitor the students' review.

This, says Wang, is how a proper 'dharma session' is carried out. In addition to all of the above, 'tone-contour chants' are to be performed (*'then*), beginning with the "Glorious Compassionate One" and then alternating with other hymns. "Formerly," Wang writes, "the 'Eighty Praises to Tsong kha [pa]' (*tsong kha brgyad cu*) and so forth were recited."¹⁴⁴¹

VI.C. Testing Period

Finally, all of the participants in the Great Spring Dharma Session (minus the *karam* scholars and long-term students) are formally tested on their progress. As mentioned above, these tests were given at every dharma session¹⁴⁴² to determine whether the students can stay with their class¹⁴⁴³ and, more importantly, whether they are fit to stand for degree exams in the summer. Wang IV explains the protocol of the testing: First, the 'director of studies' (*bla ma gzhung las pa*) asks permission from the two disciplinarians (*zhal ngo*),¹⁴⁴⁴ and then he begins by posing questions to the examinee (*tshogs lang*)¹⁴⁴⁵ pertaining to the Turnings of the

¹⁴⁴¹ The editors of *The Life of Shabkar* say, without citing their source, that the eighty verses in praise of Tsong kha pa were composed by the Kashmiri *pandita* Punya Shri Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781-1851). *The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogi*, ed. Constance Wilkinson and Michal Abrams, trans. Matthieu Ricard, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 239n35..

¹⁴⁴² Except perhaps the First Spring Dharma Session. See [note above](#).

¹⁴⁴³ Gyelsé even seems to suggest that those who do not pass muster are given menial jobs that include carrying water for assembly and sweeping, although these might be interpreted as temporary punishments only. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript," 12b.5–13a.1.

¹⁴⁴⁴ The manuscript has 'zha ngo'.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee informs me that those who 'stand before the assembly' (*tshogs langs*) usually act as the questioner (*rigs lung pa*) in debate, although here we see such an examinee can also be put on the defensive (like a *dam bca' ba*) when the Director of Studies poses questions.

Wheel (of the Dharma).¹⁴⁴⁶ The abbot and disciplinarians also directly question the examinee, and they are expected to give "the strictest and most exhortative attention to [those who may qualify for] new [degree exams]."¹⁴⁴⁷

Lest the novices be forgotten, Wang IV closes this section by adding that students who are studying reading and writing must be scrupulously supervised to ensure that they memorize their texts and learn to write the 'Short-shaped printed script' and 'Short-shaped calligraphic script' (*gzab gshar gi yi ge tshugs thung*).¹⁴⁴⁸

According to Gyelsé's customary, the "testing" even extended to scholars who had journeyed to Central Tibet to further their studies: "All of the *karam* scholars returning from Ü-Tsang without exception must participate in formal debate for a few days as soon as they arrive." Of course, this last requirement no doubt had more to do with sharing the benefits of studying abroad with the rest of the congregation than it did with quizzing the newly minted scholars.¹⁴⁴⁹

Gyelsé's customary corroborates this presentation of the dharma session testing, although his description appears to blend into the summer degree exams:

¹⁴⁴⁶ This is a reference to the first chapter of the *Ornament* and its corresponding commentaries. The theme of this chapter is the Buddha's wisdom of knowing all modes, and commentaries spin off of the phrase 'this all-aspected variety' (*sna tshogs 'di*). My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for first explaining this to me. See also Ārya Vimuktiṣeṇa (vṛtti), Haribhadra (ālokā), and Maitreya, *Abhisamayālamkāra with Vṛtti and Ālokā*, 1:3.

¹⁴⁴⁷ The Tibetan here is quite terse: *bla ma dge skos rnams nyis [sic] thad ka thad ka'i rgyug len pa dang / gsar du 'jog pa sogs bcing bskul gyi do dam gang drag byed*. Liu Shengqi writes that "the result of these Tshogs-langs was not an official assessment for the monks' academic degree. However, it provided the heads and all monks of this monastery with a clear view of a monk's academic performance and based on this decided whether a monk could have a degree or not, though it was a long time before he took formal graduation examinations." "The Education System of Three Major Monasteries in Lhasa," accessed September 5, 2012.

¹⁴⁴⁸ My thanks to Tsetan Chonjore at Virginia for helping to explain these different scripts. According to Gyelsé's customary, it was the "resident and visiting monks over the age of twenty ... [illegible]" who were required to take these written exams. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, "Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph)," 31b.3–4.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Of course, it is possible this also represents an attempt to ensure that the recent arrival had indeed spent his time doing what he said he had done.

Those who wish to participate in the ‘academic circuit’ [*grwa skor*] of this place must test on the “Chain of Consequences”¹⁴⁵⁰ of both Madhyamaka and Perfection of Wisdom in front of the abbot, disciplinarians, the director of studies, etc. who have gathered together. Afterwards, no matter what [they] question him on—be it all of the Special Topics of both Madhyamaka and Perfection of Wisdom, Vinaya, Abhidharmakoṣa, etc.—he must never refuse, saying “I’ve not gone there!” [*ma song*].¹⁴⁵¹

The degree exams did not take place at Gönlung until the summer term (*dbyar chos*). This topic is covered in Gyelsé’s customary, which is probably why Wang IV does not mention it. A candidate was referred to as *lingsewa* (T. *gling bsres ba*, lit. examinee among mixed communities¹⁴⁵²), as one who completes the “academic circuit” (T. *grwa skor*), and simply as “degree candidate” (T. *ming btags pa*, lit. title-holder, or one [seeking a] title). From very early on in its history Gönlung awarded the title/degree of *kaju* (T. *dka’ bcu*), or *lingsé kaju* (*gling bsres dka’ bcu*), literally “the one [having mastered] ten texts,” or “ten difficulties.”¹⁴⁵³ According to the nineteenth-century *Ocean Annals*, Gönlung’s branch monastery of Semnyi petitioned the “government” of Lhasa¹⁴⁵⁴ through Gyelsé Rinpoché (Jikemé Yeshé Drakpa, the author of Gönlung’s extensive customary), requesting to establish the system of awarding the *kaju* degree at Semnyi Monastery “like Gönlung.”¹⁴⁵⁵ Perhaps it was this predecessor of Gyelsé (Lozang Tendzin) or Gönlung’s founder (Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso) who likewise established the system of awarding degrees at Gönlung.

¹⁴⁵⁰ T. *thal ’phreng*. See [above](#).

¹⁴⁵¹ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31b.6–32a.1.

¹⁴⁵² Dreyfus writes that this title may have been created at Sangphu Monastery (gsang phu). Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 366n74. See also Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy*, 17.

¹⁴⁵³ Semnyi Trülku Tendzin Trinlé Gyatso earned the latter in 1677. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos ’byung*, 115.25; See also Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Chronicle,” 739/49a.5; Sagaster, *Subud erike*, 43; Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 49; Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 144.

¹⁴⁵⁴ This probably refers to the Dalai Lama’s villa at Drepung Monastery.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 117.21–23.

In any case, in his customary, Gyelsé provides detailed instructions for how the degree exams are to be carried out¹⁴⁵⁶: “Those who have not already taken [lit. given]¹⁴⁵⁷ the [dharma session] tests [*rgyugs*] in Madhyamaka and Perfection of Wisdom are not given the *lingsé* [degree exam].”¹⁴⁵⁸ We have already seen this prerequisite above. Gyelsé continues,

In addition, only one monk [is examined] at a time, and the formal debate is to last up to three days. As for those doing the questioning,¹⁴⁵⁹ except for a few particular [cases of] elders who are in poor health, every single one of the *Ka[ju]* and *Rapjam* scholars [*dka' rab 'byams*] on the monastery's roster¹⁴⁶⁰ are to inspire intelligent debate. Moreover, they are not to employ any covert deceit, any misleading strategies, or spurious topics in their questioning. Even if they do employ these, they are not to do improper acts that destroy the Teachings. The disciplinarians are to distinguish the good from the bad [debate]. After the *ka[ju]* and *rapjam* scholars have finished, the classes go each in turn.

Next year's *lingsewa* are to begin [practicing] formal debating at the dharma sessions beginning at this year's Great Prayer Festival [*smon lam*]. All candidates for titles are as described above. [The monastery] must not depart from the [practice of] wise ones leading debate and so forth, whereby only a little talk would take place [and one would earn a degree]. [Such] bad customs of awarding degrees must not be established. ...¹⁴⁶¹

Despite his warning against collusion as a means to earning a degree, it seems that Gyelsé recognizes the reality that some monks and lamas will desire a shortcut. Thus, he describes the process for awarding ‘honorary degrees’ (*ming btags zur pa*). Only monks from other monasteries who are suddenly required to leave the monastery (to attend to some other business) are permitted to request such a degree. Gönlung’s own resident monks are not. This

¹⁴⁵⁶ Gyelsé’s customary also includes an interesting note proscribing the holding of “meat banquets” (*sha'i dga' ston*) by degree candidates and others. Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31b.5.

¹⁴⁵⁷ In Tibetan, the proctor “receives” the exam that is “offered” by the examinee.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 13a.3.

¹⁴⁵⁹ T. *rigs lung byed mkhan*. This term is synonymous with “*rigs lam pa*.” Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 211.

¹⁴⁶⁰ T. *dgon pa'i sgrigs 'og tu yod do cog*.

¹⁴⁶¹ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Dgon lung bca' yig chen mo Manuscript,” 13a.3–13b.4.

may have been a way to attract renowned lamas and scholars from elsewhere (those with fame and money) while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of its education system.

“As for the process of [awarding] honorary degrees,” he writes

[they] do not need to engage in formal debate. On top of giving five 'community teas,' they must 'speak from between the pillars' [in the assembly hall]¹⁴⁶² *as if* they were standing and debating (*tshogs langs lugs bzhin*).¹⁴⁶³

The petition for honorary degree comes at a price, of course:

[Honorary] degree [seekers] must offer a minimum of one horse to the abbot. To the congregation of monks [they must give] two community teas and a mid-morning meal.¹⁴⁶⁴ They must give an 'extensive *namshak*' offering. [Finally they should give] to [the monastery's] 'beneficial endowment' [*phan theb*] an ounce [*srang*] of silver.

Although the arrival of an individual seeking an honorary degree meant instant wealth for the monastery and would surely help line the robes of its officials,¹⁴⁶⁵ there was a trade-off. The congregation would not have the opportunity to witness and participate in the grilling of a degree candidate. Therefore, Gyelsé concludes his section on degree examinations as follows:

If there are no individuals seeking a normal¹⁴⁶⁶ [i.e. not an honorary] degree, then the *kaju* and *rapjam* scholars and so forth are to engage in a great debate [*dam bca' chen mo*] as is traditionally done.¹⁴⁶⁷

¹⁴⁶² My translation is tenuous. The idea seems to be that the petitioners for honorary degrees are required to give a lecture in the assembly hall. The Tibetan is “*ka par nas bshad pa*.”

¹⁴⁶³ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 32a.3. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶⁴ T. *tshab grwa*. The *Tshigs mdzod chen mo* (Great Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary) defines “*tsha gra*” as “the *tsampa* allotted to monks during the Great Prayer Festival by the Tsampa Office of the former regional government of Tibet.” However, here, at least, I surmise that the term is related to the term “*tsha rting*,” meaning “mid-morning.” I would like to thank Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for first pointing me in this direction. Zhang Yisun 张怡菘, ed., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (The Great Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary) (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2008), 2242. See the possibly related “*tsha bzhed*” in Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31b.5.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Gyelsé adds here that “if there is an ‘extensive *namshak*’ offering, the abbot and former abbots are all to receive ‘great *namshak*’ offerings each. See chapter four on ‘extensive’ and ‘great *namshak*’ offerings.

¹⁴⁶⁶ T. *kyus* < *dkyus*.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 32a.4.

To a certain extent, the examination was a formality, since the exam candidates first had to be nominated by monastic officials and then evaluated, including by the abbot himself, to ensure their fitness for exams. On the other hand, we have already seen the intensity of the formal debates at the monastery, with the examinee facing off against a coordinated attack by the monastery's upperclassmen and resident scholars. In any case, actually earning the degree was indeed a major event. It meant extra shares for the recipient during the distribution of monastic offerings.¹⁴⁶⁸ More important, however, was the renown that came with the degree. The degree title of *Kaju* is often seen affixed to the names of eminent monks and lamas in Tibetan histories, and the title would have a certain cachet in other parts of the Tibetan Buddhist world, especially in the first century of Gönlung's history before the Gelukpas had fully systematized and centralized scholarly titles.¹⁴⁶⁹

VI.D. Division of Wealth

The section of Wang IV's customary draws principally on and quotes from Gyelsé's customary. I have discussed it in chapter four with regard to *namshak* offerings, and it is not directly related to the current questions of Gönlung's scholasticism.

VII. Break

On the fifteenth day of the fourth month, the 'best tea' (*yag ja*) is served, and the Great Spring Dharma [Session] concludes. During the two-week break that ensues, the disciplinarians

¹⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 33a.1.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Dreyfus has some interesting thoughts on this subject. *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*. A complete study of the history of Tibetan monastic degrees has yet to be written. See also Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy*.

make their nightly rounds, playing the 'recitation drums' (*skyor brnga 'bud pa*) in order to remind monks to continue practicing their recitations.

VIII. Post-Spring Assembly

On the first day of the fifth month, the 'Post-Spring Dharma Session' (*dpyid chos rjes ma*) commences. The monks are to have dharma classes three times each day, and they request recitation lessons as before. At the midday assembly of the seventeenth, there is that called 'friendly' formal debates (*nye log dam bca'*) – or, the 'meeting of classes' (*'dzin grwa gtug*). After the recitations of the dharma class have been completed, the seed syllable of Mañśū is recited. Those students below the Chapter Four class go to their respective classes (*'dzin grwa*) to rehearse. Those above the level of Madhyamaka stay seated. Then, the Vinaya, Abhidharmakośa, and Pramāṇavārttika classes serve as witnesses, and the Beginner and Advanced Madhyamaka classes take sides in having 'friendly' and 'hostile' style debates. It is not entirely clear what is meant by 'friendly' and 'hostile' debates, but it perhaps denotes formal debates during which monks support the defender if he happens to be their classmate ('friendly') and thereby face off against the other classes, and the collective engagement of the monks in the philosophical and rhetorical attack on the defender regardless of their affiliation with him ('hostile').

Annual Calendar

Wang IV's customary discusses only the dharma sessions of the spring months, beginning with the First Spring Dharma Session and including the Great Spring Dharma Session and the Post Spring Assembly. Gyelsé's customary as well as later sources (such as the *Ocean*

Annals) tell us that Gönlung was to have “six dharma sessions in a year, or at least four.”¹⁴⁷⁰

Four of them are month-long sessions, and the two of them are ‘intermediary sessions’ (*bar chos*).¹⁴⁷¹ Gyelsé gives us the dates for these, although he adds that “if this [schedule] is not possible, [do them] when appropriate [i.e. when possible]:”¹⁴⁷²

- (First Spring, 2/15-3/15 or 2/16-3/1¹⁴⁷³)
- Great Spring Dharma Session, 3/15-4/15
- Post-Spring Assembly, 5/1-5/20
- Summer Session, 6/15-8/1¹⁴⁷⁴
- Great Autumn Dharma Session, 8/15-9/15¹⁴⁷⁵
- Second Autumn Dharma Session, 10/1-10/15
- Great Winter Dharma Session, 11/8-12/8¹⁴⁷⁶

The First Spring Dharma Session appears to be the oddball, i.e. the “seventh” dharma session, since it is not mentioned in Gyelsé’s customary. However, a modern-day publication

¹⁴⁷⁰ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 30b.6.

¹⁴⁷¹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 71.

¹⁴⁷² Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 30b.6–31a.2.

¹⁴⁷³ As I will explain momentarily, the First Spring Dharma Session does not seem to be one of the “six” standard dharma sessions, and identifying its dates is difficult. Wang IV only says, without clearly identifying the month, that “through the fifteenth, during tea time, there is the First Spring Dharma Session” (*dbye chos dang po*) [*sic*]. Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang ’jam pa’i tshul khriims, “Bstan bcos sgo brgya ’byed pa’i zab zing gser gyi sde mig,” 2b.5. In addition, one of my Gönlung informants tells me that there is a ‘long-life dharma session’ (*zhabs brtan chos thog*) that lasts for two weeks from 2/16 to 3/1.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Rgyal sras ’Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 31a.1; Gyelsé merely gives the date on which the session begins (6/15) and says how long it lasts (1.5 months). The following present-day publication gives the exact date that it ends (8/1). Youning si guanli weiyuanhui, ed., “Youning si 佑宁寺: Youning si da jingtang kaiguang jinian 佑宁寺大经堂开光纪念 (Souvenir of the Ritual Opening of the Great Assembly Hall of Youning si),” n.d [2009], hereafter “Youning si Souvenir.”

¹⁴⁷⁵ See the above [note](#).

¹⁴⁷⁶ The exact day on which this session begins is illegible. We know that it is the eighth, however, from this modern-day source: Youning si guanli weiyuanhui, “Youning si Souvenir,” 4.

that Gönlung produced,¹⁴⁷⁷ which mentions only “the four seasonal dharma sessions” (Ch. *siji fahui* 四季法会), says that the “spring dharma session” lasts from 2/15 to 4/15. Either is the result of a careless typist, since we have seen that the Great Spring Dharma Session lasts from 3/15 to 4/15, or it actually represents a combination of the First Spring Dharma Session with the Great Spring Dharma Session.

In any case, when we add up all the time Gönlung monks spent carrying out dharma sessions, complete with dhama classes, debate, and a rich liturgical calendar, then we find that they spent *more than half of every year* actively engaged in these scholastic and ritual exercises. When we add in the other occasions when scholastic practices such as debate and sermons/lectures would be expected, such as the Great Prayer Festival in the first month and that of the sixth month, then we realize how untenable it is to suggest that a great majority of the monks enrolled at mega monasteries had an easy, lascivious, and undisciplined life.¹⁴⁷⁸

The Customary of the Mirror That Illuminates [What Should Be] Accepted and Rejected

Eleven years after Wang IV composed this detailed description of how Gönlung's liturgy and scholastic practice were to be performed, he received an invitation from the Aohan banner prince asking him to return to Mongolia. For approximately four years, he traveled around the realm of the prince of Baarin and to Naiman, 'Jitir',¹⁴⁷⁹ Darkhan, the Josotu League, and other Mongolian places. It was during this time, in 1898, that Wang composed a short customary for Eren Monastery. "At the time of the establishment of the new degree of

¹⁴⁷⁷ On the occasion of consecrating its new assembly hall in 2009.

¹⁴⁷⁸ For instance, see Goldstein's rather lurid description of “mass monasticism.” Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 17–18. See also the introduction to this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷⁹ See [note above](#).

dorampa [*rdo ram pa*]," Wang writes, "I wrote down some notes on the steps of the system of granting degrees, of carrying out formal debates, of tests [*rgyugs*], and so on."¹⁴⁸⁰ This text gives us an idea of what Wang expected of this Mongol monastery and, presumably, of tests and degrees at Gönlung itself. I here include my translation of the body of the text in its entirety:

First, on an auspicious day [of] the first [month],¹⁴⁸¹ either the 'head of the college,'¹⁴⁸² the disciplinarians of the great assembly, or the disciplinarians of the colleges – whoever is appropriate – consults with the abbot¹⁴⁸³ and [they] confer together, whereupon they are to nominate [the candidate for the degree] while [offering him] ceremonial scarves. At that time, [the candidate] is given an 'evaluation' [*rdung rgyugs*]¹⁴⁸⁴ of the Perfection of Wisdom up to the topic of "lineage" [*rigs*] in the first chapter [of the *Ornament of Realization*]¹⁴⁸⁵ and an evaluation of the Madhyamaka up through "Establishment and Refutation" [*thal zlog*].¹⁴⁸⁶ On the third day of the first month, [the disciplinarian] must proclaim the need to have a formal debate.

As for the testing [*rgyugs*],¹⁴⁸⁷ on one [day] at the end of the fourth month, a request is made to the venerable abbot, the college lama, the disciplinarian of the great assembly, the college disciplinarian, and the director of studies. On the following day, [the examinee] is invited to the abbatial villa,¹⁴⁸⁸ and two servings of tea must be given. After that, each is given a ceremonial scarf.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Wang Khutugtu IV Blo bzang 'jam pa'i tshul khriims, "Bstan bcos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i zab zing gser gyi sde mig."

¹⁴⁸¹ T. *thog mar/ dang po gza' skar bzong zhig la ...*

¹⁴⁸² T. *grwa tshang bla ma.*

¹⁴⁸³ T. *bla ma khri pa.*

¹⁴⁸⁴ The manuscript reads "*rdung rgyug*."

¹⁴⁸⁵ My thanks to Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee for first explaining this to me. Personal communication, Feb. 2012. Jongbok Yi, after consulting with Jefferey Hopkins, explains that this is known as the 'naturally abiding lineage' (*rang bzhin gnas rigs*). Personal correspondence, March 11, 2012..

¹⁴⁸⁶ Skyabs rje Gling Rin po che Thub bstan lung rtogs rnam rgyal 'phrin las, "The Autobiography of Kyabje Ling Rinpoche [skyabs rje gling rin po che thub bstan lung rtogs rnam rgyal 'phrin las, 1903-83]," trans. Losang Norbu Tsonawa, *The Tibet Journal* 8, no. 3 (Autumn) (1983): 48 and 60n22. The manuscript reads '*thal srog*'. Jongbok Yi, after consulting with Jeffrey Hopkins, informed me this is likely a misspelling of '*thal zlog*'. Personal communication.

¹⁴⁸⁷ The manuscript reads '*rgyug*'.

¹⁴⁸⁸ T. *khri ba bla brang*.

As for debating [for degree examination], for periods of three days in both the first and sixth months,¹⁴⁸⁹ debate from the colors¹⁴⁹⁰ of red and white [i.e. from the beginning Collected Topics material] to Vinaya [i.e. the most advanced material]. While this is being done, it is permissible for the upper-classmen to drill [*skyor*] [the examinee]. During the Great Debate,¹⁴⁹¹ custom is that the upper-classmen lead [in questioning the examiners].¹⁴⁹² No matter which of the five treatises one is reasoning over [*thal 'phen*],¹⁴⁹³ other than the words "the reasoning is [or is not] connected,"¹⁴⁹⁴ when debating, no other interruptions to the assembly are allowed. The questioners team up [*tshogs*]; however, other than establishing points of scripture and reason, other responses are not to be made at any time. [The examinees] must debate [lit. "say 'there is' [or 'there is not] any connection"] on each of the five treatises. At each assembly, the director of studies asks questions regarding the Vinaya ...¹⁴⁹⁵ In addition, if spare time [*long*] is needed to ask any [other] question, it should be asked.¹⁴⁹⁶ As the assembly ends, [the exam] is complete.¹⁴⁹⁷ After the director of studies presents an extensive recitation,¹⁴⁹⁸ the two [i.e. the director and the examinee¹⁴⁹⁹] recite the seed syllable of Mañjuśrī and then disperse.

There is a great consistency between the system of debate, evaluation, and awarding degrees that is prescribed here and that set down for Gönlung. Of course, this is not surprising, given that Wang IV is the author of the customary at Eren and of one of Gönlung's two extant customaries. The point is that Gönlung lamas—in this case Wang IV—

¹⁴⁸⁹ T. *zla ba dang po'i [sic] drug ba gnyis kyi nyin gsum gyi ring la*. The genitive particle connecting "dang po" "drug ba" appears to be a mistake.

¹⁴⁹⁰ A parenthetical remark in small, cursive script is found here. The first part of the line is illegible. The latter part reads "...do this at night. As for the method of taking the test, it is like in the past."

¹⁴⁹¹ T. *dam bca' chen mo*.

¹⁴⁹² T. *'dzin grwa gong nas bzhed srol yod*. The meaning of this line is somewhat obscure. It could be that an elderly monk from Gönlung would be able to recall the 'custom' of examination that Wang IV is here writing about, but I have not yet had the occasion to ask.

¹⁴⁹³ 'Thal 'phen' means to point out the absurd consequences of an opponent's assertion or thesis. I surmise that it is also a misspelling of "thal 'phreng" (on which see above). Here, I believe it refers to the general act of debate.

¹⁴⁹⁴ T. *rtaḡ gsal khyab*.

¹⁴⁹⁵ The actual meaning of the text here – *'dul ba'i bkod gzhung rgyas pa* – is unclear. It is likely not the *'Dul ba'i mdo tsa ba* by Guṇaprabha (T. *yon tan 'od*), since it does not appear to go by this title.

¹⁴⁹⁶ T. *de'i phror gang len zhig tu long dgos babs la ltas nas longs*.

¹⁴⁹⁷ T. *tshogs tha mis 'gru nyen < tshogs tha ma 'gro nyin?* The meaning of this phrase is obscure.

¹⁴⁹⁸ T. *tshig sgra rgyas pa*.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Another possibility is that "the two" refers to two examinees. Dreyfus mentions some occasions during which two defenders would face an entire assembly of interrogators. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 235.

penned such customaries and traveled to such monasteries and thereby *exported a standardized scholastic system* to places sometimes situated over a thousand miles away.

The most conspicuous difference between the two systems is that Eren Monastery is inaugurating the conferment of *Dorampa* degrees rather than *Kaju* degrees as at Gönlung. This is simply the result of time: when Gönlung established its system of conferring *Kaju* degrees, the *Dorampa* degree had not yet been established.¹⁵⁰⁰ Degree candidates at both places must first pass tests proving their abilities in the Perfection of Wisdom and Madhyamaka philosophies. The date of this testing appears to be the same (“one at the end of the fourth month” corresponds to the end of the Great Spring Dharma Session), although the Eren customary provides some details not found in the Gönlung customaries. What is the ‘evaluation’ (*rdung rgyugs*) carried out in the first month at Eren? As for the actual debating for the degree exam, why does the Eren customary require three days of debate in *both* the first month and the sixth month, when the Gönlung customary appears to relegate the degree exam debates to the summer months alone? There appears to be some correspondence between these details found in the Eren customary and other passages in the Gönlung customaries (e.g. Gönlung’s degree exam debates are to last “up to three days”; and, Gönlung’s degree candidates (*lingsewa*) for the following year “are to begin formal debating at the dharma sessions beginning at this year’s Great Prayer Festival [*smon lam*].”) However, an exact comparison is difficult, because the traditions that actually informed and explained the terse instructions found in the customaries have no doubt changed or, in some cases, ceased.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 144–5; Tarab Tulku, *A Brief History of Tibetan Degrees in Buddhist Philosophy* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2000), 19.

Other similarities between the scholastic systems of the two monasteries include the fact that all the monks enrolled in dharma classes regardless of their level are allowed to participate in the degree exam debate.¹⁵⁰¹ In addition, rules of etiquette dictate what the defendant and questioners can and cannot say.

Conclusion

I have introduced considerable detail over the course of this chapter with the hope of introducing the life of a so-called 'local center' of Geluk scholasticism and practice in pre-twentieth century Tibetan Buddhism. Gönlung was a site of unparalleled influence during the first hundred years of its existence. By the end of the nineteenth century, the monastery was literally in ruins, and other monasteries in Amdo, such as Labrang, had long since taken over the principal role of 'local center' of Geluk scholasticism. Nonetheless, there were persistent efforts to renew scholasticism there, and the monastery even continued to offer guidance to other monasteries, including of course its own branch monasteries in Pari and institutions far off in eastern Mongolia.

There exists a remarkable continuity in scholastic practices stretching from Gomang College in Central Tibet, to Gönlung in far northeastern Tibet, and even to Eren Monastery. The Wang incarnation lineage, one of the five major incarnation lineages at Gönlung, maintained ties with patrons and religious adherents over several lifetimes. The fourth Wang Khutugtu, the protagonist in this particular essay, visited various banners in eastern Mongolia on a number of occasions and spent over a quarter of his life living there. He composed at

¹⁵⁰¹ At modern-day Sera Mé, however, “junior members seated in the back would never [actually] get up to do anything other than fetch and serve tea to participants, since they have not yet begun studying the material covered in these debates.” Lempert, *Discipline and Debate*, 57.

least two customaries in his later years, one for Eren Monastery in eastern Mongolia, and another, lengthier customary for Gönlung. These texts explain the necessary steps for maintaining a Geluk monastery complete with a system of examinations for *geshé* candidates. The sectarian identity of these monasteries is implicit throughout these texts, which describe the hymns that are to be recited and the treatises about which students are to discuss, debate, and be examined. Thus, I contend that Gönlung Monastery functioned as an outpost of Geluk evangelism even in its time of decline.

One implication of this study has been to further challenge the reification of the boundaries separating Mongolia from Tibet. Historians have certainly witnessed and analyzed the role of Mongols in the history of both China and Tibet. However, as Hieldegard Diemberger and Uradyn Bulag have recently pointed out, the great majority of these works have fallen, "in the school of evidential scholarship, examining the religious and literary influences of the Tibetans upon the Mongols."¹⁵⁰² A closer look at the regular, historic action between such places as Inner Mongolia and its immediate neighbor to the west and southwest, Amdo, has been stifled by what Diemberger and Bulag call a, "conceptual segregation ... aided as much by historical communist hostility to religion as by the use of the nation-state as the major reference of scholarship and research."¹⁵⁰³ Wang Khutugtu was not the only connection Gönlung had with Mongolia. On the contrary, it appears that *all five* of the major incarnation lineages at Gönlung had extensive ties throughout Inner Mongolia. Our review of this Geluk scholastic network thus serves as a minor contribution to the recent

¹⁵⁰² Uradyn E. Bulag and Hildegard Diemberger, "Towards Critical Studies of the Mongolian-Tibetan Interface," in *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface: Opening New Research Terrains in Inner Asia: PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Uradyn E. Bulag and Hildegard Diemberger, vol. 10/9 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 1–2.

¹⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.

renewal of scholarly interest in Tibetan-Mongolian exchanges. Finally, I hope that the attention I give to the details of the scholastic curriculum (and liturgical calendar) at Gönlung may facilitate future research on the consistency and divergence of monastic practice that took place over the centuries and across the vast Tibetan Plateau and beyond. For the first time, it seems, we can glimpse the annual rhythm of religious life at an important, regional monastery in Tibet's past.

Chapter 7: The Fall of the Monastery

Introduction

When I was young, Kangxi was installed as ruler in China. In Radza [ra dza] and Central Tibet, [the ruler] was the grandson of the Holder of the Teachings Dharmaking G \ddot{u} ushi Khan, Lhazang Khan,¹⁵⁰⁴ as well as the King of K \ddot{o} kenuur, G \ddot{u} ushi's youngest son, the Noble Reverend Prince Dashibaatar.¹⁵⁰⁵ In Zungharia [the ruler] was the Mongol King Tsewang Rabtan.¹⁵⁰⁶ And, in Torghud country, Ayuuki [Khan].¹⁵⁰⁷ During their lifetimes, the philosophy and practice within the establishments of lamas and monks in all places were like the waxing moon, and the desired virtues and wealth of house-holders like a summer lake. Therefore, regarding the happiness [caused by] the benefits of religion and state, it was an auspicious time that rivaled the lands and inhabitants of the gods' pure realms. –Sumpa Khenpo Yesh \acute{e} Peljor (1704-1788)

This idyllic image of the religious, social, and political landscape in Sumpa Khenpo's youth was shattered in the first decades of the eighteenth century by a number of different events. These include, in particular, the Zunghar Mongol invasion of Central Tibet in 1717 and the concomitant death of Lhazang Khan, the erstwhile ruler of Tibet.

Just as significant was the related 1723-1724 Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion in K \ddot{o} kenuur. After the Qing imperial forces along with their Khoshud Mongol allies from K \ddot{o} kenuur defeated the Zunghars in Tibet, the K \ddot{o} kenuur Mongols expected that they would be allowed to choose the next *khan* to rule over Tibet as the Kangxi Emperor had promised. The new Yongzheng Emperor, however, did not honor this promise. This, together with Qing

¹⁵⁰⁴ T. lha bzang ching gis han.

¹⁵⁰⁵ T. *a khu chin wang* bkra shis pA thur tha'i ji.

¹⁵⁰⁶ T. tshe dbang rab brtan.

¹⁵⁰⁷ T. a yu Shi.

interference in the affairs of the Kōkenuur Mongols, led the latter, headed by Lubsang-Danzin (1692-1755)¹⁵⁰⁸ and Tsewang Danzin (d. 1735),¹⁵⁰⁹ to revolt.¹⁵¹⁰

The Qing forces, lead by the Sichuan-Shaanxi governor-general cum General-in-Chief for the Pacification of Distant Lands, Nian Gengyao 年羹堯 (d. 1726), and the Sichuan Provincial Military Commander Yue Zhongqi 岳鍾琪 (1686-1754), quickly mobilized to crush the rebellion with several thousand troops. Most of the major monasteries in Pari were implicated in the rebellion, including Trati Monastery (pra sti dgon), Semnyi Monastery, and of course Serkhok and Gönlung Monasteries. The famed Kumbum Monastery, too, which was then headed by the nephew of Lubsang-Danzin,¹⁵¹¹ suffered the loss of several monks, although the monastery itself was left largely undamaged.¹⁵¹² Gönlung was recognized as one of the epicenters of the rebellion and was quickly and utterly razed to the ground.

In this chapter we shall examine the unmaking of a mega monastery. Gönlung's decline was characterized by both a breakdown of its systems of governance and discipline and a major loss of wealth, and it resulted in an increase in the presence of imperial oversight and regulation. More importantly, this imperial oversight and regulation was modeled directly on practices that had long been established in China Proper. Gönlung and the other

¹⁵⁰⁸ T. blo bzang bstan 'dzin.

¹⁵⁰⁹ T. tshe dbang bstan 'dzin.

¹⁵¹⁰ Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," 185; KATO Naoto, "Accession to the Throne of Yung-cheng and Lobdzang Danjin's Rebellion," in *Proceedings of the 35th Permanent International Altaistic Conference, September 12-17, 1992, Taipei, China (Di 35 jie shijie A'ertai xuehui huiyi jilu)*, ed. Ch'ieh Hsien Ch'en (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies Materials, United Daily News Cultural Foundation, 1993), 192.

¹⁵¹¹ Karsten, "A Study on the sku-'bum/T'a-erh Ssu Monastery in Ching-hai," 396; Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 319.

¹⁵¹² Schram says that as many as 300 monks were "beheaded, fled, or were killed." *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 332-3. See also pp. 24, and 317n259. Tuken III says that "some thirty guilty monks ..." were killed. "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 734/46b.4.

monasteries of the Xining region had hitherto been largely off the radar of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. It is not even mentioned in the 1656 *Gazetteer of Xining* (*Xining zhi*). After the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, however, Qing officials began to think about and propose regulations for Gönlung in the same way they thought about and regulated any monastery in China. In particular, this meant that Gönlung was subjected to the same sort of suspicion that officials reserved for Chinese Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples.

Suspect Places

Such suspicion, which grew and faded in cycles over the course of the Qing,¹⁵¹³ is exemplified by this 1711 imperial edict:

The construction of monasteries in the provinces depend largely upon the fields and households [*tianlu* 田廬] of the commoners. Then, after they are constructed, ignorant folks let the monks and Daoists use them [i.e. the fields and households]. They scrape together money and buy land to give [to the monastics] to the point that the land of common folks becomes less and less. Moreover, travelers pretend to be monks and Daoists. [Monasteries and temples] harbor fleeing criminals, [and] they conduct themselves illicitly. They truly are a nuisance to society. Previously prohibitions were put in place. Because time has elapsed [these prohibitions] have gradually become lax. Let it be that every governor-general and governor [*dufu* 督撫] and every local official forever prohibit the construction and proliferation of monasteries except for where there were monasteries before.¹⁵¹⁴

In other words, monasteries and temples siphoned wealth and prosperity from society and, even worse, served as havens for corrupt and criminal sorts. Other decrees and statues during the first several decades of the Qing indicate that court officials did not necessarily think of Tibetan Buddhists as categorically different from other religious adherents, such as

¹⁵¹³ “Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy,” Vincent Goossaert provides an excellent overview of this.

¹⁵¹⁴ Yi Tai 伊泰 and Zhang Yanyu 張延玉, *Yongzheng huidian*, vols. 774, pt.1, *juan* 102, p. 15a–b (6793–4).

Chinese Buddhists and Daoists temples.¹⁵¹⁵ This became explicit in the years following the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, after which the same sort of rhetoric and expectations found in China Proper are extended to those Tibetan Buddhist monasteries now under imperial regulation:

The emperor decreed [*feng shangyu* 奉上諭] that Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and lamas [i.e. Tibetan Buddhist monks] [*seng dao lama*] [should be] issued ordination certificates [*dudie*]. These Buddhist monks and Daoist priests must [*suo* 索] maintain the Pure Codes [*qinggui*], and they are only permitted to recruit one disciple. [This must] henceforth be obeyed. All official guardians of the territory [must] capably and sincerely undertake this task. They themselves [must] audit [the process], and they [must] not delegate it to a petty official or servant. They [must] not look upon this as ordinary [business]. [This] is the death of the [over-]proliferation of the two religions [*ershi* 二氏], and they can gradually be eliminated [?? *yi ke jian chu* 亦可減除].¹⁵¹⁶

The “good old days” during which the Buddhist clergy in Xining operated under a different social order were gone, and they now found themselves beholden to a patchwork of regulations that dates back to at least the Song Dynasty in China. Although Gönlung’s participation in the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion may have stirred the anger of the Yongzheng and Qianlong Emperors, it probably did not surprise them. The Qing scholar Vincent Goossaert writes that religious clergy in general were “prominent among those [Qianlong] saw as enemies of an orderly society, since some leaders of sectarian movements were monks.”¹⁵¹⁷

¹⁵¹⁵ For example, see the passage below regarding roaving, medical charlatans in Gansu’s Taozhou and Minzhou. See also a similar statute from 1640 regarding “exorcists” who falsely claim the ability to cure illnesses. J. J. M. de (Jan Jakob Maria) Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China: A Page in the History of Religions* (Taipei: Chen Wen, 1970), 115.

¹⁵¹⁶ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 386 (*juan* 15).

¹⁵¹⁷ Goossaert, “Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy,” 45. Goossaert, whose focus is Chinese Buddhists and Daoists, writes that Tibetan Buddhists were not subject to the policies set out in the thirteenth year of the Yongzheng reign (1735), although the above passage and other facts show that in fact they were.

As we shall see, the destruction at Gönlung and neighboring monasteries was so complete that it allowed for the wholesale reordering of these monasteries' place in the empire. This destruction also allowed for the “many heads” of insolence and greed to crop up within the monastery, an issue we shall turn to momentarily.

Destruction

The Belgian missionary Louis Schram has already given us an overview of the destruction meted out by the Chinese general Nian Gengyao,¹⁵¹⁸ but the confirmation and vivid details found in Tibetan sources and in a memorial sent by General Nian to the Yongzheng Emperor at the beginning of 1724¹⁵¹⁹ make them worthy of consideration.

Gönlung authors typically place blame for the uprising on its erstwhile branch monastery and occasional nemesis, Serkhok Monastery:

slightly before the conflict occurred, monasteries vied for and attained Mongol strength, after which there was much condescending toward the Chinese. There were a few monastic officials whose hearts were possessed by demons and who waged battles against each other. When thieves among the villages were apprehended [their] hands were cut off, and [these demon-possessed monks] did other inappropriate things such as drip wax on renunciants. The lama of Gyeldok Monastery,¹⁵²⁰ Lang Dalai Chöjé¹⁵²¹ of Serkhok Monastery became a military commander, and some Tibetan troops attacked a Chinese city. When Zenching [zen ching] City was destroyed, the Mongol monk of Tsenpo Monastery [btsan po, i.e. Serkhok] Monastery, Sechen *rabjampa*,¹⁵²² led many monks that belonged to his faction to join the army. Many covetous monks went off to steal valuables and were captured by the Chinese army. Instances like this were part of the cause of the fear [that arose] of

¹⁵¹⁸ *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 332–34 and 605–07.

¹⁵¹⁹ Gengyao Nian, *Nian Gengyao Man Han zouzhe yi bian* 年羹尧满汉奏折译编 (Collected and Translated Manchu and Chinese Memorials of Nian Gengyao), trans. Yonghai Ji, Pansheng Li, and Zhining Xie (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1995). My friend and colleague Ulan at the University of Columbia first brought this book to my attention and shared a copy of it with me, for which I am very grateful.

¹⁵²⁰ T. rgyal ldog, or rgya rdog.

¹⁵²¹ T. glang dA la'i chos rje.

¹⁵²² T. se chen rab 'byams pa.

there being many monasteries and hermitages that housed some bad individuals who were guilty of committing treacherous acts.¹⁵²³

When fighting finally broke out at Gönlung itself, the Gönlung authors attempt to further lay the blame at the feet of a small minority possessed by demonic powers:

... [S]ome *samaya*-breaking demons in human form, such as Manager Dowa,¹⁵²⁴ Manager Gyatse,¹⁵²⁵ and Cantor Aben,¹⁵²⁶ along with some people possessed by disaster-causing demons said "the time has come, heroes, to grab hold of [and protect] the Teachings!"

Hearing this, armies came together in farming and nomadic villages, and they pretended to fight with the Chinese army. The blind and beggars attacked the Wheel-turning [Emperor's] troops as if it were an [actual] battle. They could not be [proper] rivals for even a morning and were defeated.¹⁵²⁷

By all accounts, the monks and others engaged in the fighting were summarily defeated.

Sumpa Khenpo, whose idyllic portrait of former times we started with above, describes the decimation that occurred at the time:

... at the end of the Rat Year [1723], some bad people from Tsenpo Monastery did immoral things. They thus summoned a base for those who enjoyed conflict. The seeds of ignorance from long ago ripened, and inauspicious, matured fruits that were intolerable became too much. With the thought of utterly destroying the deep forest of happiness of the land of Amdo as well as the spacious garden for the medicine of the Teachings by means of the ax of partiansanship among Chinese, Tibetans, and Mongols, they took birth as evil people in the guise of monks. They disparaged the ultimate purpose, looking only for their daily food and not thinking about the fragrance of the subtleties [lit. divisions] of karma and the pure dharma. Not only that, but their minds were possessed by an evil, impudent emanation of a demon, and leading an army, they stole possessions from the Chinese city of Senching [Sen ching]. Later, when the Chinese generals Nian Gengyao, Provincial Military Commander Yue, and so forth found out, they fiercely punished several householders and monks, and they burned temples, monasteries, and so forth. Monasteries became like crops hit by hail, and monks left their residences, becoming like the moon dancing on the water [i.e. they vanished like an illusion]. Chuzang

¹⁵²³ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 733/46a.6–734/46b.4.

¹⁵²⁴ T. rdo ba *gnyer ba*.

¹⁵²⁵ T. rgya rtse.

¹⁵²⁶ T. a ban *dbu mdzad*.

¹⁵²⁷ Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, Thu'u bkwan III, "Gönlung Chronicle," 736/47b.4.

Rinpoché¹⁵²⁸ and some twenty other dharma-kings and elderly monks were also offered to the fires.¹⁵²⁹

So heard Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor, who was already an adult when the event occurred. Although he was studying in Central Tibet at the time of his root monastery's destruction, he returned to Gönlung shortly after it was reestablished and later served as its abbot during Gönlung's crucial years of rebuilding.¹⁵³⁰ We shall return to Sumpa Khenpo's reflections on the monastery's situation during these years.

The Chinese general Nian Gengyao's memorial to Yongzheng is quite detailed and captivating, and it is worth translating in its entirety:¹⁵³¹

The General-in-Chief for the Pacification of Distant Lands, the Grand Guardian, Prince-cum-Sichuan-Shaanxi Governor-General Nian Gengyao humbly memorializes, reporting on affairs:

¹⁵²⁸ The 2001 reprint of Sumpa Khenpo's long autobiography has "chos bzang rin po che." The older, blockprint edition, on the other hand, has "chus bzang rin po che." Both seem to be typos for "chu bzang rin po che." Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 93; "Mkhan po e rte ni paN+Di tar grags pa'i spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len," in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works) (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975), vol. 8 (*nya*), p. 443/36a.6.

¹⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92–3. "*Mes bzhud phul*" appears to be a misspelling of "*mes zhugs phul*," meaning "to cremate." Here, however, the expression may have the more sinister meaning of "to kill and burn" or "to burn alive." Tuken III, in his chronicle of Gönlung, writes "*g.yo sgyus yA ming grong tser gdan drangs nas me zhugs phul*," i.e. they "were tricked, having been invited to the yamen city and 'burned alive.'"

¹⁵³⁰ Gönlung was reestablished with imperial permission on the eighth day of the third month of 1729, although the imperial plaque with the monastery's new name—Youning si—was not given until 1732. Sumpa Khenpo returned to Gönlung from Central Tibet in 1731 (eighth month, eighth day). Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 737/48a.5; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 148–9 and 155; Shen Yunlong 沈雲龍 and Xu Rong 許容, "Gansu tong zhi 甘肅通志," in *Siku quan shu* (*Digital Wenyuange Edition*) 文淵閣四庫全書電子版 (n.p.: Dizhi wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, n.d. [1736]), *juan*12.

¹⁵³¹ Due to the length of this memorial, I have broken convention and typed the citation double-spaced in order to aid reading.

Since last year when Lubsang-Danzin rebelled, the lamas [Ch. *lama*, i.e. monks] of every land have led multitudes of barbarians [*fanzi* 番子] to assist Lubsang-Danzin. I have already repeatedly dispatched troops to exterminate [and] pacify the subjects who caused the disturbance. I have already memorialized about this [as well as] the lamas of Qijia Monastery [= T. *chi kyA dgon*] and Guomang Monastery [Serkhok] who attacked me.

I have not located and read the memorial to which Nian is here referring. Nonetheless, this statement does support the Gönlung authors' contention that this conflict was brought on by the monks of Serkhok, the second largest monastery in Amdo at that time after Gönlung.¹⁵³²

Nian's memorial continues:

We note that the incarnation¹⁵³³ of Changkya Khutugtu lives at Gönlung Monastery¹⁵³⁴ in the Shatang Valley 沙塘沟 northeast of Xining. There were a lot of lamas and barbarians [*fanzi*]. Previously [the monastery] had established good relations with Lubsang-Danzin[,] Alabudanemubu 阿拉布坦 俄木布,¹⁵³⁵ and so forth. The corpse of Lubsang-Danzin's father, Dashibaatar,¹⁵³⁶ was placed inside the monastery. This minister [i.e. Nian, the

¹⁵³² The population of Serkhok monastery is based on the figures given to us in Desi Sangyé Gyatso's 1698 *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po* (Yellow Beryl).

¹⁵³³ Ch. *hubierhan* 呼毕尔汗.

¹⁵³⁴ Ch. Guolong si 郭隆寺.

¹⁵³⁵ “Arabten Ngombu”?

¹⁵³⁶ Ch. Zhaxibatu'er 扎西巴图尔.

author] called up the head lama [*lama*] of the monastery, Denma Khutugtu.¹⁵³⁷ [I] pretended to call him to recite scriptures in order to keep him in Xining. Denma Khutugtu continually wished to return [to Gönlung], but this minister would not permit him.

According to Thuken III's chronicle of Gönlung, Denma Khutugtu, aka Denma II, went to Xining in 1723 in the aftermath of Serkhok Monastery's uprising in order to demonstrate Gönlung's innocence. Nian continues,

I sent people ahead [to Gönlung] to inquire about the situation. The monks in the monastery had been extremely peaceful these past few months. On the second and third of the first month of this year, reports continuously came in that the Gönlung lamas had suddenly erected four great shelters [*liangpeng* 凉棚] and organized soldiers. ([Emperor's] vermilion rescript: What is this about? This is offensive to the point [*zui zhi* 罪至] that [even] the Buddha cannot tolerate it. It would be a most happy and comforting affair were you in that distant land to oblige us by slaying them and properly managing this affair). This minister wrote and proclaimed, and on the fourth I sent people to halt [this insubordination]. The monastery's lamas seized the people this minister had sent and meant to immediately kill them. Only after the people who had previously gone there admonished them to the best of their ability

¹⁵³⁷ Ch. Dakema 达克玛 *hutuketu*.

were they released and [allowed to] return. With regard to this, this minister further investigated and made inquiries: the Gönlung lamas relayed an order that all the lamas and barbarians in the areas around the Eastern Mountain [Dong shan] were to congregate at Gönlung on the eleventh of the first month. They wished to attack us, and within the fortified villages such as Fort [*bao* 堡] Weiyuan¹⁵³⁸ they forced the levying of dry foodstuffs.

In this minister's humble opinion, if I did not punish and kill these people, the bandits would never know fear. (Vermillion rescript: Indeed! This most certainly is the case!) However, if I were to dispatch troops immediately before the bandits had congregated, the bandits would retreat and scatter like birds and beasts. They would scatter to every land, and then it would be impossible to ascertain when another incident might emerge. (Vermillion rescript: Well done! This is most beloved!) Therefore, on the day the bandits congregated, which was the eleventh, I ordered the Provincial Military Commander Yue Zhongqi to lead the Green Banner and *tusi* [i.e. local, indigenous ruler] troops, which amounted to 1150, and I ordered the Vice Commander-in-Chief Yi Libu 伊礼布 to lead 470 Manchurian troops. They were sent by way of the Fort Weiyuan Road. Because this was an important matter, I also ordered the Vanguard Commander-general Su Dan 苏丹 to

¹⁵³⁸ Present-day Weiyuan Town 威远镇 is where one finds the seat of Huzhu County.

consult with Provincial Military Commander Yue Zhongqi and proceed. The barbarians with whom the Gönlung Monastery lamas had coordinated all marched to Shuimo Valley 水磨沟. This is an important pass; so, I ordered the Regional Commanders Wu Zheng'an 吴正安, Huang Xilin 黄喜林, and so forth to lead Green Banner and *tusi* troops, amounting to 2400, to go to Shuimo Valley along the Nianbai Road. I ordered the Vice General Song Kejin 宋可进 to lead 1700 Green Banner and *tusi* troops to go along the road at the northern mouth of the valley [? *kou wai bei lu* 口外北路].¹⁵³⁹ The Vanguard Commander-general Su Dan, Provincial Military Commander Yue Zhongqi, and so forth arrived before Gönlung Monastery on the morning of the twelfth.¹⁵⁴⁰

The mass of lama-bandits [*lama zei*] came out as far as 40 *li* to meet them and had prepared camp in the Haliqi Valley [Halazhi gou 哈拉直沟]. [When] our army arrived, the mass of bandits were all waiting, having taking up positions on the mountain ridges. (Vermillion rescript: How detestable! They must be killed!) The mountain ridges were 56 *li* long, and [they] were all occupied by the bandits. It looked as if they had more than 10,000 people. In front of this mountain the bandits also had five mountain strongholds [i.e. fortified

¹⁵³⁹ I wonder if this location, “*kou wai bei lu*,” refers to the same road that currently connects the Huzhu County seat and Gönlung Monastery.

¹⁵⁴⁰ I have added paragraph breaks not found in the published memorial.

villages], around which they had made wagons [*che*] into [their] camps. On top of the wagons they piled rocks. (Vermillion rescript: Seeing this, it appears that they have long harbored ill intentions and made preparations.) The bandit masses were concealed in hidden places and fired from crevices [in the cliffs]. [We] did not know how many bandits these five mountain strongholds had. After our army [began to] advance, fire first came [from] within the mountain strongholds. Two or three of our men were lost. Our troops were incensed. They shouted out and charged, firing guns and cannons.

First [we] exterminated every last one of the bandits in the five mountain strongholds and burned the strongholds to the ground. Seeing the mass of lama-bandits on top of the mountain attack, our troops all took courage and killed the enemy. First the guns and cannons were fired. After that they pressed close, using knives and guns and clashing in battle. Between the *chen* hour [7:00-9:00 a.m.] and the *shen* hour [3:00-5:00 p.m.] several thousand bandits were killed. Three of the cliff ridges occupied by the bandits were seized, and fifteen mountain strongholds of the bandits were destroyed. (Vermillion rescript: Truly remarkable!) The bandits fought to the death and did not flee. Only after killing all the lamas in the battle formation did the bandits retreat. (Vermillion rescript: How strange! One does not [usually] hear of such heroic lamas!) There were several hundred among the retreating bandits. They fled along the road at the northern mouth of the valley [*kou wai bei lu*], and they encountered our Vice General Song Kejin. At night we

invaded the camps and fired [our] guns and cannons, whereupon we killed another forty or more bandits. All of the remaining bandits fled in disorder. (Vermillion rescript: [After] a brief delay, these must be swept away [and] pacified.)

On this day, the Regional Commanders Wu Zheng'an and Huang Xilin lead troops to attack Numuzhi Valley 奴母直沟. They killed more than twenty sentries that had been set up by the bandit-barbarians [*zei fan*]. In the valley there was also a group of barbarian-bandits [*fan zei*] that suddenly appeared from the flank, killing one of the troops of our Aba 阿坝 Tusi and injuring another. Our troops were enraged. They encircled the mass of bandits, killing all of them, and they captured alive fourteen men, women, and children. (Vermillion rescript: Well indeed! All of this is the sin committed by Lubsang-Danzin; this group of people should be and deserve to be killed). After leaving the valley, a group of the troops burned seven bandit mountain strongholds. Reaching Dier Valley 迭儿沟, they burned over seventy households of bandit-barbarians, killed over fifty bandit-barbarians, and captured alive forty-seven men, women, and children. [The troops] again attacked [*xuanjin* 旋进] Maying Valley 马营沟,¹⁵⁴¹ burning over sixty households of barbarians in the major stronghold of Zhongsi Village 钟寺庄.

¹⁵⁴¹ See pictures of Mayang Monastery (mA yang dgon bkra shis chos gling) in the Maying Valley.

At this time over fifty bandit-barbarians attacked. Our army climbed the mountain [slopes], killing over ten bandits. The remaining bandits all fled into the forest. Fourteen women and children were captured alive.

On the next day, the thirteenth, Wu Zheng'an and company combined troops with those of Su Dan. They went to Gönlung and searched the mountains [around] the monastery. There was no [one] to detain, the corpse of Dashibaatar had been carried off, and the people had all long before scattered pell-mell. The mountains were searched [and] in the valley were two caves. The bandits guarding the caves attacked us. Our troops charged forth and heroically defeated the enemy. The bandits were in a predicament, and over a thousand of them entered the caves. Our troops fired guns and cannons inside. They surrounded the mouths of the caves, piled up grass, and lit fires. First the wind blew toward us, then it redirected toward the inside of the caves. The fire was kindled, and the bandits were all killed by the fire [and] smoke. (Vermillion rescript: From this one can see the Buddha manifest [*fo tian xianling* 佛天顯靈]). All told over six thousand bandits were killed. Gönlung is very large, and since former times it harbored the bandit masses. Moreover, the corpse of Dashibaatar had previously been carried away. Seeing this it is clear that from early on [it] shared intentions with the rebelling bandit Lubsang-Danzin. (Vermillion rescript: This is most clear! They attacked us. What more is there to say?) Therefore, fire was set to Gönlung, and it burned to the ground. (Vermillion rescript: Most reasonable! There still could be evil,

disorderly people who take shelter there in the future. Just kill the monks and burn down the temples. Eliminate [any] talk of the Mongols that resides in the minds [of the people]. If something needs to be rectified then rectify it.)

[I] inquired about news regarding the incarnation of Changkya Khutugtu. It is said that bandit-monks previously took him across the Datong River to the place [called] Zalong [< T. zab lung].¹⁵⁴² The remaining bandits all fled pell-mell like lost souls. [These] people, moreover, were few, and so this minister [i.e. I] called back the army. [I] brought forth [*lachu* 拉出] Denma Khutugtu who had been kept in Xining and enforced the rule of law [*zhengfa* 正法, i.e. had him publically executed].¹⁵⁴³ (Vermillion rescript: Most reasonable! As for enforcing the rule of law, of what is there to speak? How is Aqi Nomuqan 阿齐诺门汗? [You] still have not memorialized. This is also one detestable person. In addition, where is Chuizhong 吹忠 Khutugtu nowadays? Seeing as how there are so many matters, [I] do not know where to begin.)

Thuken III gives a somewhat different chronology of events surrounding Denma II's death. In his telling, *before* the Gönlung monks had risen up and fought, Denma and some elder

¹⁵⁴² “Zalong” here refers to the area around Zaplung Hermitage (T. zab lung ri khrod) in present-day Jiading Township (T. rgya tig), Huzhu County, along the Datong/Julak River separating Qinghai from Gansu. This corresponds to the story monks of the nearby Chöten thang (mchod rten thang) Monastery told me. Drakgön Zhapdrung, the author of the *Ocean Annals*, writes that the young Changkya Lama was taken to hiding in a forest across the Julak River called Khyazi (khyazi). Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 124.28; Zhiguanba•Gongquehudaanbaraoji, *Anduo zhengjiao shi*, 123.

¹⁵⁴³ I owe a special thanks to Ulan for helping me make sense of the words “*lachu*” and “*zhengfa*.”

monks had visited General Nian in Xining and successfully demonstrated that Gönlung was not involved in the uprising led by Serkhok monks. However, on their return trip to Gönlung they came across the main culprit, the Mongolian monk from Serkhok Sechen Rapjampa, who had been captured by the Chinese troops and was being lead to Xining. Sechen Rapjampa

cried out that he was in need of saving. The elder monks did not listen, but Denma Trülku, whose compassion could not stand it, returned [to Xining]. Before the general and others he [plead to] clear Sechen[*'s name*] by [arguing] that his crimes were not that great. Therefore, [the general] said, "You have [argued to] to exonerate a culprit who is so obviously guilty. "Lama [Denma], you too are party to this [guilty] faction!" Not only were Sechen's obstacles not successfully removed, but he [i.e. Denma] himself was grouped with the culprits. He, too, was killed with weapons outside the main gates of Xining City.¹⁵⁴⁴

In any case, Nian's memorial continues:

[During] this battle, our troops all thought about the nurturing benevolence they have received over generations from the Highest Sage [i.e. the emperor]. Each [soldier] took courage, entered the battle, and from the *chen* hour to the *shen* hour killed over 6000 bandit-lamas and barbarians. The fallen among our troops [include] 25 soldiers of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Green Banner and two soldiers of the Sichuan *tusi*. The wounded [include] one adjutant--the Xining Platoon Commander [? Xining *fangyu xian zhangjing* 西宁防御衙章京], one Sichuan chiliarch, 41 soldiers of the Sichuan-Shaanxi Green Banner, 24

¹⁵⁴⁴ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Gönlung Monastic Chronicle," 735/47a.3–736/47b.1.

soldiers of the Sichuan *tusi*, and four Baitaer¹⁵⁴⁵ militiamen [*minbing* 民兵].

(Vermillion rescript: This truly is [a result of] the benevolence and protection of the gods). This minister will give awards to these fallen and wounded people in accordance with convention. In addition, in this battle the meritorious deeds of [the following] were remarkable: Brigade Commanders Ma Zhongxiao 马忠孝, Jiang Jinlu 姜进禄, and Zhou Kaijie 周开节; Assistant Brigade Commander Dou Dong 窦洞; Company Commanders Nian Yue 年岳, Meng Jixian 孟继先, and Liu Guozuo 刘国佐; and, Squad Leader Song Zongzhang 宋宗彰. After the various places have compiled and sent [to me] the names of the meritorious, fallen, and wounded soldiers, [I] will send them on to the Board. (Vermillion rescript: After successfully managing [this], beyond making requests for promotions, think about how [these] advancements are to be made and memorialize. [These] soldiers are most pitiable and laudatory. All these deeds have left me inspired.)

Also, previously, the former Assistant Brigade Commander Wang Yunyi 王运逸 was demoted from his rank of Asst. Brigade Commander due to his poor

¹⁵⁴⁵ This may be the same as Baita City 白塔城, which Joseph Rock identifies as present-day Datong County adjacent to Huzhu. *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Regions; a Monographic Study* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956), 11.

performance. During this battle he performed well: during the destruction of the bandits' caves, he went alone on a horse to drag the cannons to the caves' mouths, and he alone charged. He performed many meritorious deeds. Therefore, this minister rehabilitates Wang Yunyi's rank of Asst. Brigade Commander. (Vermillion rescript: Most reasonable! Who is without faults? If [he] is able to reform that is great!)

Regarding these [matters I] humbly memorialize.

The nineteenth day of the first month of the second year of the Yongzheng reign [i.e. 1724]

Vermillion rescript: Seeing this [I] rejoice in happiness. You and the other generals, the amban, and the soldiers are all to be congratulated. Every time I hear happy news from you all [I] am cheerful and elated!



Mayang Monastery (Ledu County), a one-time branch of Gönlung. June 2011.

One might rightfully be suspect of the statistics Nian sends to his emperor: death toll of the “bandits” and “barbarians,” 6000; death toll of imperial troops, 27. Nonetheless, the Tibetan and Chinese sources agree that the bloodshed was more or less one-sided. As Sumpa Khenpo writes, "... the monastics were like mice killed by a hawk [and] forced to scatter like a small hair carried by the wind." In the aftermath of this violence, the Qing implemented major social, political, and economic reforms in the Xining region, to which Gönlung suffered to adapt.

A New Order

The suppression of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion marked the end of an era for Gönlung and the rest of the region. Previously, Gönlung could confidently rely upon two

principal sources for its income: local parishioners and Mongol patrons. “Formerly, each ‘barbarian clan’ [*fan zu*] belonged on the surface [lit. externally] to the Qinghai Mongols and practically [lit. internally] to the lamas of each of the monasteries. Annually they gave a grain tax [*tianba* 添巴]¹⁵⁴⁶ [to the Mongols] and incense-grain [donations to the monasteries].”¹⁵⁴⁷

Now, the military power of the Mongols was sharply curtailed, and Xining was gradually more fully incorporated into the empire, whereby it ceased being a significant military and political frontier of the Qing.¹⁵⁴⁸

Numbers of ‘barbarian’ households in the newly created Xining Prefecture were entered on the imperial tax rolls. Annually the government was supposed to collect some 10,542 *dan* (over one million liters) of grain from these new subjects, although the Yongzheng and Qianlong Emperors both granted them regular and frequent tax breaks.¹⁵⁴⁹ The emperors also encouraged the opening up and development of uncultivated lands in the regions around Gönlung.¹⁵⁵⁰ Schram writes about the immense changes unleashed by the influx of Chinese into the region: “only after 1723 did agriculture begin to develop and the region to flourish. From then on it may be assumed that many Chinese immigrated and settled in the country, engaging in both farming and commerce. ...”¹⁵⁵¹

¹⁵⁴⁶ See Li Wenjun 李文君, “Mingdai Xihai Mengu Shouling Buerhai shiji kaobian 明代西海蒙古首领卜儿孩事迹考辨 (An Analysis of the Ming Dynasty Ruler of the Xihai Mongols Buerhai),” *Neimenggu shehui kexue* 内蒙古社会科学 (2010), http://www.xjass.com/lis/content/2010-12/12/content_180300.htm, accessed 16 January 2013.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 816–7 (*juan* 31).

¹⁵⁴⁸ Petech, “Notes on Tibetan History of the 18th Century,” 289.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, *juan* 32.

¹⁵⁵⁰ See, for instance, *ibid.*, 838–39 (*juan* 32) and 531 (*juan* 20).

¹⁵⁵¹ *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 163-4.

Still more changes took place in conjunction with this immigration. Civil service exam centers (*gongyuan* 貢院) were set up in Xining, Nianbai, and other nearby places so as to facilitate the young men who wished to study for the exam but who hitherto had to travel to Lintao or Liangzhou, an arduous journey.¹⁵⁵² Schools (*fuxue* 府學, *shexue* 社學, and *yixue* 義學) were established to educate the children of the elite, and a public granary system (*shecang* 社倉) was instituted in places such as Xining and Nianbai.¹⁵⁵³ Additional forts were built and garrisoned to maintain the new order. It was on this new stage that Gönlung rebuilt.

Steles and Imperial Recognition

The loss of Gönlung was apparently felt everywhere, for shortly after its destruction, the Panchen Lama sent a letter and numerous gifts to the Yongzheng emperor: "Gönlung and so forth are the foundation of the Teachings in Amdo, and so it is necessary to rebuild them." The Dalai Lama also sent messengers. When they arrived in Beijing, Gönlung's major lama and, ultimately, its proprietor, Changkya Rinpoché, who had been hitherto too timid to speak up, was inspired with courage, and he and the other Gönlung lamas who had been stationed in Beijing composed a letter to the emperor. Thus in 1729, the emperor sent edicts to Gönlung, whereupon the monastery was reestablished, beginning with just three cloth tents.¹⁵⁵⁴

¹⁵⁵² Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 817–18 (*juan* 31).

¹⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 818–19 (*juan* 31).

¹⁵⁵⁴ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 148–9.

A bilingual stele was erected in both Chinese and Tibetan, and in it we read the emperor's command that

... funds are to be sent [for reconstruction], workers are to be assembled, and an official is to be dispatched to direct this task. The structure of the monastery gate¹⁵⁵⁵ and chapels are to be rectified [*guizhi zhiran* 規制秩然],¹⁵⁵⁶ and the monks residences, and assembly halls are to be exactly as before. It is ordered that up to two hundred monks may reside permanently to practice and promote the miraculous dharma. In the future it will also be an abode for the myriad Buddhists. The task [of reestablishing the monastery] is proclaimed accomplished, and because its old name was not elegant, a good name is decreed and established [*chiding* 敕定]: the plaque that is bestowed [*ci'e* 賜額] reads "Youning si" 佑寧寺 [lit. Monastery that Protects the Peace; > T. *yig nyin zi*]. Also, this record is to be carved in stone so that it may known in perpetuity.¹⁵⁵⁷

Although the language of this stele dates from the tenth year of the Yongzheng reign (1732), the monastery name plaque to which it makes reference may have actually been given as late as 1748, when Changkya III made his first trip back to the monastery from his residence in Beijing. "At that time," Changkya's biographer writes,

the large and small monasteries of Domé were harassed by bad Chinese rulers and their several inappropriate attendants who sought blame in the monasteries and so forth. [Changkya] therefore thought of immediately bringing benefit to [the monasteries] and *thought that it would bring everlasting good to them were they to enter into the ranks of [places that] have received the emperor's gift of his mandate.* Once, when he saw the emperor in person, [Changkya] strategically asked about the compassionate protection of an imperially mandated plaque [*glegs bu*], known as a

¹⁵⁵⁵ Ch. "shanmen" 山門. The *Xining fu xin zhi* has *shankai* 山開, which is probably a typo, although it could perhaps mean "the establishment of the monastery." Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, ch./juan 32, p. 845.

¹⁵⁵⁶ The Tibetan translates this as "*chos 'dul khrim sngar ltar bcos*," i.e. "the dharma[s] Vinaya rules are to be made as before." This makes sense if one translates the Chinese term "*guizhi*" as "discipline system" instead of translating it as "[physical] structure [of the monastery]."

¹⁵⁵⁷ This translation is based on the Chinese, although the Tibetan is nearly identical. For the Tibetan, see Chab 'gag rta mgrin, *Bod yig rdo ring zhib 'jug: Zangwen beiwen yanjiu* 藏文碑文研究 (Research on Tibetan-language Steles) (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2012), 297–8. I have never seen the original stele, nor have I ever seen the Tibetan printed in a pre-modern source. Dungkar Lozang Trinlé also gives the Tibetan transliteration of the new name bestowed upon Gönlung, although, oddly, he spells it differently: *dbyig ngyen dgon* (Ch. Youning si). *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 216b–217a.

“*tsipen*” [T. *tsi pen* < Ch. *zibian* 字匾] in Chinese, for Kumbum, Gönlung, and Tsenpo [Serkhok] Monsateries. The emperor was pleased and said, “I have been thinking about that,” and gave the imperial mandate of approval.¹⁵⁵⁸

The significance of the issuing of an imperial plaque for the monastery should not be underestimated. This system was fully implemented and institutionalized under the Song Dynasty.¹⁵⁵⁹ As scholars of Chinese religions know well, the bestowal of plaques was one of the ways in which court authorities controlled Buddhist clergy and institutions, along with the issuance of ordination certificates (Ch. *dudie* 度牒), the maintenance of national rosters for monasteries (*xizhang*, *xitie*) and for clergy and, finally, taxation.¹⁵⁶⁰ Moreover, the bestowal of imperial plaques was a way of converting private institutions into public ones so that they might be “civilized” to serve the social order rather than threaten it. As Song scholar Daniel Stevenson writes,

‘Private’ (*si*) in this sense does not imply a strict opposition between institutions constructed at ‘personal’ initiative as opposed to ‘public’ *qua* ‘imperial’ initiative. Historically speaking, the majority of monasteries originated as local or private projects, with state favors accruing secondarily as their reputations grew. Applied retrospectively to existing establishments, ‘privately erected’ speaks more properly to institutions that lacked historical and social pedigree, meaning that they could not be

¹⁵⁵⁸ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Lcang skya rol pa’i rdo rje rnam thar*, 312. Emphasis added. Tuguan Luosang Queji Nima 土观·洛桑却吉尼玛 (Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma), *Zhangjia Guoshi Ruobiduoji zhuan* 章嘉國師若必多吉傳 (Biography of the Dynastic Preceptor Changkya Rölpe Dorjé), trans.

Chen Qingying 陈庆英 and Ma Lianlong 马连龙 (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2007), 139; Gene Smith mistranslates this crucial term--*tsi pen*--as “imperial authority.” *Among Tibetan Texts*, 139–40.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Daniel B., “Sanctioned and Forbidden Zones: Monasteries with Imperially Bestowed Plaques (*chi’e*) and Official Registration (*xichan*) versus Privately Erected Hermitage (*sijian anshe*),” working paper (2004?). A revised version of this paper appears in chapter one of Stevenson’s forthcoming book on Buddhism in the Song (Cambridge University Press).

¹⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3; Walsh, *Sacred Economies*, 78–82; Timothy Brook writes that the institutionalization of “universal registers” for clergy [*zhouzhi wence* 周治文冊] was an innovation of the Ming Hongwu Emperor. “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” in *Culture and State in Chinese Society: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques*, ed. Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong, and Pauline Yu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 164–5; See also Twitchett, “Monastic Estates in T’ang China,” 130; Ch’en, “Economic Background of the Hui-ch’ang Suppression of Buddhism,” 97–8.

effectively identified as a traditional mainstay of local community, preferably with links to persons (clergy, officials, etc.) and events of recognized historical eminence. Applied to new institutions, it simply meant monasteries that were built without due state approval and oversight. Thus from the outset we find an elemental distinction between institutions that were perceived to gravitate respectively toward private/local or state-appointed spheres, the dividing line itself devolving around certain normative—albeit not wholly transparent—notions of how Buddhist institutions should operate in the imperial enterprise and its civil society. The criterion that warranted unconditional acceptance and protection was possession of an imperially bestowed name plaque (*chi'e*), a token of imperial largesse that even the most virulently anti-Buddhist sovereign was obligated to respect.¹⁵⁶¹

Thus, by seeking imperial recognition for Gönlung, Changkya was situating himself and his monastery within a long, Chinese tradition of providing protection to imperial monasteries. Gönlung had sunk to a new low, as it was now subject to the whims of the local Qing officials in Xining. It was this immunity from such a state of affairs that Changkya sought for Gönlung when he asked the Qianlong Emperor for an imperial plaque. In addition, as Stevenson has pointed out for the Song, such imperial recognition appears to have always come, at least in earlier periods, at the request of the clergy rather than being the decision of court officials.¹⁵⁶² This is precisely what we see here with Changkya's request.

This system of granting imperial plaques to eligible monasteries and otherwise regulating the sangha was reinvigorated under the Ming.¹⁵⁶³ What happened under the Qing is less clear.¹⁵⁶⁴ The Ming scholar Timothy Brook suggests that

The Qing was content to repeat the paper regulations for monks and monasteries laid down in the Ming and take no further action. It did not revive the registry system, or

¹⁵⁶¹ Stevenson, "Sanctioned and Forbidden Zones: Monasteries with Imperially Bestowed Plaques (*chi'e*) and Official Registration (*xichan*) versus Privately Erected Hermitage (*sijian anshe*)," 3–4.

¹⁵⁶² Ibid., 19–20; Morten Schlütter, "Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism Under the Northern Song (960–1127)," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya: Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein*, ed. William M. Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 139.

¹⁵⁶³ Brook, "At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism," 168–9.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Vincent Goosaert directs us to the forthcoming dissertation of Natacha Stupar. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate this dissertation or Natacha Stupar, and Prof. Goosaert also informs me that he does not know about her current whereabouts. "Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy," 41n4.

impose quotas on monks, or limit monastic property. Considering the internal organizational weakness of Buddhism that the Ming zealously fostered, the Qing did not see a need to police the clergy as closely as Hongwu did. ...¹⁵⁶⁵

Although this laissez-fair tendency may have been true for the Qing as a whole, there were periods marked by a concerted effort to document “genuine” members of the Buddhist and Daoist clergies and to weed out any undesirable elements.¹⁵⁶⁶ This is precisely what happened during the Yongzheng reign and especially the early Qianlong reign, as Vincent Goossaert has shown in his article on the 1736-39 census of the Chinese clergy.¹⁵⁶⁷ This census coincided with the increased imperial supervision of monastic affairs at Gönlung and surrounding monasteries in the aftermath of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion. Thus, in 1725 the Yongzheng Emperor approved a memorial (*tizhun* 題准) that complained of Amdowa lamas in Taozhou and Minzhou touring about and making names for themselves as ones who can cure illness and prevent disasters. These lamas are said to have cheated the local Mongol populations, and the emperor agrees that these individuals should be thoroughly scrutinized: if they are actually able to cure the sick, then they are to be left alone. All others are to be round up and sent home, and if they are later caught doing this then their banner rulers are to be punished.¹⁵⁶⁸

¹⁵⁶⁵ “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” 180.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Goossaert also points out the frequent reversals made to Qing policy that are reflected in the *Da Qing huidian shili*. Goossaert, “Counting the Monks. The 1736-1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy,” 45.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Goossaert does not see any evidence that this census, enacted at the end of the Yongzheng reign and the beginning of the Qianlong one, affected Tibetan Buddhists in any way. However, there apparently *was* a census of Tibetan Buddhists done at the same time (i.e. in 1737). *Ibid.*, 46 and 46n15; see Rockhill, “Tibet. Geographical, Ethnographical, and Historical Sketch, Derived from Chinese Sources,” 13–14.

¹⁵⁶⁸ The term I have translated as “Amdowa lamas,” *amudao lama*, might instead be read as referring to a lama/monk named “Amudao” who is from Taozhou and Minzhou. Yi Tai 伊泰 and Zhang Yanyu 張延玉, *Yongzheng huidian*, vol. 787, pt. 3, juan 222, p. 5a (14411).

To be sure, it is difficult to measure the effect that the placement of the Yongzheng stele and plaque at Gönlung had on the operation of and life within the monastery. Still, from reading Qing rhetoric and interpreting the administrative changes it attempted to impose at Gönlung it becomes clear that the Qing thought of and treated Gönlung as if it were part of its traditional system for regulating Chinese Buddhism rather than as part of a separate system for dealing with Tibetan Buddhism or Mongolian institutions. Gönlung's neighbor, Serkhok Monastery, was also given a new, proper name on an imperial plaque: "Guanghui si" 廣惠寺, literally "the monastery promoting benevolence."¹⁵⁶⁹ Also like Gönlung, a stele was erected there to remind the monastics of their civic and religious duties. Significantly, the stele refers to Serkhok as "that which Buddhists call a Ten Directions Monastery [*shifang yuan* 十方院]."¹⁵⁷⁰ A "Ten Directions Monastery" (also "*shifang conglin* 十方叢林) is a term found in Chinese Buddhism to refer to those aforementioned "public" monasteries, where monastic leadership theoretically was open to any qualified candidate and where the formation of new tonsure relationships was strictly prohibited.¹⁵⁷¹ Abbots at these institutions were to be chosen in consensus with the abbots of other major monasteries in the region and were to be approved by government officials (in some rare cases even the emperor himself).¹⁵⁷² "The 'public abbacy,'" writes Stevenson,

¹⁵⁶⁹ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 103.18; Wang, "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing," 178.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 846.

¹⁵⁷¹ Stevenson, "Sanctioned and Forbidden Zones: Monasteries with Imperially Bestowed Plaques (*chi'e*) and Official Registration (*xichan*) versus Privately Erected Hermitage (*sijian anshe*)," 17–28. My discussion of Ten Directions Monasteries derives from Stevenson's excellent overview unless otherwise noted.

¹⁵⁷² See also Schlütter, "Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism Under the Northern Song (960–1127)."

as a fully *institutionalized system*, came as a deliberate initiative of the Northern Song court, albeit on the basis of precedents that were already taking shape during the Tang and Five Dynasties. Its appeal to the Song authorities is not difficult to understand, insofar as it offered a corrective to the privatizing and centripetal tendencies of the ‘hereditary’ cloister, while at the same time extending the reach of the imperial bureaucracy right into the abbot’s chamber.¹⁵⁷³

There is no evidence that abbots from neighboring monasteries played any role in the selection of Gönlung’s abbots during this period, nor is there any evidence that Qing officials in Xining or Beijing gave any sort of approval to the selection of abbots. It is clear, however, that the major Gönlung lamas who were stationed in Beijing—specifically Tuken and Changkya—were regularly consulted and did attempt to make their wishes known. For instance, the first abbot in the post-Lubsang-Danzin period, Sumpa the Dharma King, Phuntsok Namgyel (sum pa chos rje phun tshogs rnam rgyal), was chosen by the former steward of Changkya’s estate, Bayen *nangso* (ba yan nang so), *against* the wishes of Tuken II and, allegedly, Changkya himself.¹⁵⁷⁴ We shall see this situation play out again later with the other Sumpa, Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor.

In the case of Serkhok, the term “*shifang yuan*” does not necessarily imply that Serkhok was actually added to official roles as a “Ten Directions Monastery.” Nonetheless, the use of the term bespeaks the attitude Qing officials had toward Serkhok and other monasteries such as Gönlung. After the Qianlong emperor agreed to Changkya’s request to bestow imperial plaques on Serkhok, Gönlung, and Kumbum Monasteries, Qianlong had the plaques sent ahead to the governor (T. *zhun phu* < Ch. *xunfu* 巡撫) in Lanzhou. Changkya

¹⁵⁷³ Stevenson, “Sanctioned and Forbidden Zones: Monasteries with Imperially Bestowed Plaques (*chi’e*) and Official Registration (*xichan*) versus Privately Erected Hermitage (*sijian anshe*),” 19.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Chronicle,” 738/48b.4; Cited in Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 168. Note that Changkya III was still only a child at this time, and so Bayen may have been spiting only Tuken and not his own charge. On Bayen see Illich, “Selections from the Life of a Tibetan Buddhist Polymath,” 423.

later arrived at Gönlung, and then “on an auspicious day,” the Lanzhou governor went to the monastery as ordered, whereupon the plaque was installed above the entrance to the main assembly hall (? *‘du khang chen mo’i rgya mthongs phug mthongs mtshams su*) and a precious rosary was offered to the main image in the monastery’s Shrine Hall. “The Lord Lama [Changkya] was seated in the center, and the *jarghuchi* [i.e. a Mongolian title] sent by the emperor and the governor sat on left and right. I [the author, Tuken III] led lamas in prostrating nine times ... [? *phyag dgu phrug btsal ba*] before the emperor’s gifts in accordance with Chinese customs.”¹⁵⁷⁵ The presence of the Qing officials at the installment of the imperial plaque as well as the “Chinese” method of venerating the emperor’s gifts show that these were much more than decorative knick-knacks for the monastery’s corridors. Gönlung was henceforth part of an expanding system of regulation that had its origin in China Proper to the east.

Senggang si: The Office of Clerical Supervision

In the year 1747, the Qianlong Emperor issued a decree in which he warned of the laxity that may occur when the positions of authority in Gansu monasteries were inherited positions. He thus ordered the establishment of government offices in twenty-one monasteries in Gansu, including the office of Clerical Supervision (*senggang si* 僧綱司) at Kumbum Monastery, Jakyung Monastery, Qutan Monastery, Serkhok Monastery (Guanghua si < Guanghui si), Gönlung Monastery, and some of Gönlung’s satellite monasteries. The decree reads as follows:

¹⁵⁷⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Lcang skya rol pa’i rdo rje rnam thar*, 318–19.

Each of the monasteries [and] lamas in Gansu which has received the seals [of] National Preceptor and Meditation Master has since diligently maintained spiritual practice. Under them are all the monks, for whom each [congregation] is appointed an abbot [*fatai* 法臺]. Nonetheless, their control [of the congregation] is not without laxity. Therefore, positions should be created based on the size of the area and the number of Tibetan Buddhist monks in order to bolster supervision. In Hezhou, Pugang si 普綱寺, Lingqing si 靈慶寺, and Honghua si 宏化寺¹⁵⁷⁶ are each to have a ‘supervisor’ [*dugang* 都綱] installed. An ‘Office of Clerical Supervision’ [*senggang*] is to be installed [for each of the following]:¹⁵⁷⁷ Xining County's Xina si 西那寺,¹⁵⁷⁸ Ta'er si 塔爾寺,¹⁵⁷⁹ Zhacang si 扎藏寺,¹⁵⁸⁰ Yuanjue si 元覺寺, Shachong si 沙衝寺,¹⁵⁸¹ Xianmi si 仙密寺,¹⁵⁸² and Youning si 佑寧寺;¹⁵⁸³ Nianbai County's Qutan si 瞿曇寺,¹⁵⁸⁴ Hongtong si 宏通寺, Yangerguan si 羊爾貫寺, Puhua si 普化寺; Fort Datong's Guanghua si 廣化寺;¹⁵⁸⁵ Guide Sub-Prefecture's Erdiechan si 二疊闡寺, Chuiba si 垂巴寺, and Mani si 馬尼寺. In Taozhou, a ‘rectifier’ [*sengzheng*] is to be installed for each [of the following]: Yanjia si 閻家寺; Longyuan si 龍元寺; Yuancheng si 圓成寺. Orders for all of these come through the [Lifan]yuan.

This system of monastic officials, composed of *dugang*, *senggang*, and *sengzheng*, has been well documented and studied for earlier centuries of Chinese history. Their duties were to supervise the Buddhist monks under their jurisdiction, to propagate the correct Buddhist teachings, to report crimes committed by monks to civil officials, and to conduct public

¹⁵⁷⁶ T. mdzo mo mkhar.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Timothy Brook explains that a “supervisor” (*dugang*) is the registrar meant to staff the “Office of Clerical Supervision” (*senggang si*) at the prefectural level. Likewise, the “rectifier” (*sengzheng*) staffs the “Office of Clerical Rectification” (*sengzheng si*) at the sub-prefectural level, and the “convener” (*senghui*) staffs the “Office of Clerical Convocation” (*senghui si*) at the county level. This is precisely what we find, too, in the Qing-period *Collected Statutes*. In Gansu, however, we read of monastic officials called *dugang* as well as those called *senggang*. “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” 165–66; Yi Tai 伊泰 and Zhang Yanyu 張延玉, *Yongzheng huidian, juan 3* (vol. 1 (761), pp. 194–203).

¹⁵⁷⁸ T. zi na bsam ‘grub gling.

¹⁵⁷⁹ T. skum ‘bum

¹⁵⁸⁰ T. grwa tshang dgon.

¹⁵⁸¹ T. bya khyung.

¹⁵⁸² T. sems nyid.

¹⁵⁸³ T. dgon lung.

¹⁵⁸⁴ T. gro tshang lha khang gau tam sde.

¹⁵⁸⁵ This may be an alternate spelling for Guanghui Monastery 廣惠寺, i.e. Gser khog.

rites.¹⁵⁸⁶ Timothy Brook, writing about the system in the Ming, says that these and other tasks “indicate that the registrar’s function was to administer Buddhism on the state’s rather than on Buddhism’s behalf and, where the state’s presence was weak, to embody public authority.”¹⁵⁸⁷

Its actual implementation varies in different times and places. In the Ming, the system became defunct shortly after its implementation largely due to the fact that the individuals who staffed the positions were locals, not disinterested outsiders, and were considered “functionaries” (*yuan* 員) rather than “officials” (*guan* 官).¹⁵⁸⁸ In the case of Gansu, there is a long history of the system for those monasteries east of Xining in the areas of Hezhou, Taozhou, Minzhou, and Zhuanglang.¹⁵⁸⁹ It is clear that in some cases during the Qing these titles were used to replace older, *inherited* titles such as “national preceptor,” “meditation master,” and “indigenous headman” (*tusi*) and thereby rein in some of the titles disseminated by previous emperors.¹⁵⁹⁰ My reading and searching through those histories and archives

¹⁵⁸⁶ Brook, “At the Margin of Public Authority: The Ming State and Buddhism,” 166, citing a sixteenth-century county gazetteer from Zhejiang.

¹⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 171–72.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Cai Rang has an interesting article on the subject. “Ming Hongwu dui Zangchuan fojiao de zhengce ji qixiangguan shishi kaoshu 明洪武朝对藏传佛教的政策及其相关史实考述 (An Investigation of the Ming Hongwu Reign Policies Toward Tibetan Buddhism and Their Related Historical Events),” in *Xizang yangjiu* 西藏研究, no. 2 (91) (May 2004): 40–46.

¹⁵⁹⁰ *Qingdai gebuyuan zeli: Qinding lifanyuan zeli* 清代各部院則例: 欽定理藩院則例, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Fuchi shuyuan 蝠池書院, 2004), 700 (*juan* 56, p. 7); *Xunhua ting zhi* 馴化廳志 (Gazetteer of Xunhua Subprefecture), n.d., *juan* 5, “*Tusi*”; The case of a certain Minzhou lama seems to have pushed the Kangxi Emperor to rule in 1710 that the title of “Dynastic Preceptor” should no longer be allowed to be inherited. This Minzhou lama’s disciple was instead given the title this lama lineage had before it received that of Dynastic Preceptor, namely *senggang si*. See [note below](#). Tuo Jin 托津 and Cao Zhenyong 曹振鏞, eds., *Qinding Da Qing huidian shili* (Jiaqing chao) 欽定大清會典事例 (嘉慶朝) (Precedents of the Collected Statutes of the Jiaqing Reign),

more directly related to Xining, however, have yielded hardly any evidence that this system was actually implemented at the major monasteries of Gönlung, Jakhyung, Kumbum, and so forth. Actually, this is not particularly surprising. As Goossaert writes,

Clerics chosen for such offices were symbolically assimilated to the civilian bureaucracy, but normally were not paid for this office. They were responsible for any violation of the law committed by the clerics within their jurisdiction, but had little leverage, especially under the Qing. This may be the reason why one actually rarely finds them mentioned in official documents. It is possible that the Senglu si and Daolu si kept extensive information about the clerics and the various institutions that housed them, but they did not publish documents, nor is there any evidence of their archives. In any case, for the most important affairs, members of the clergy dealt directly with the field bureaucracy.

Incidentally, the Senglu si and Daolu si were the national Offices for Registering Buddhists and Daoists, respectively. In the Qing they were theoretically in charge of all the temples, monks, and Daoists in China. They were responsible for ensuring that the monks and Daoists all understand the meaning of their respective scriptures and that they all observed 'pure codes.' If such a monk or Daoist could pass muster, then each would be given a registration certificate (Ch. *dudie*). These certificates were ultimately handed down to the local *senggang si* for distribution.¹⁵⁹¹

[Series:] Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan san bian: vols. 65-70 and 641-700 (Taibei shi: Wenhai chubanshe, 1991), vol. 691 (69), *juan* 738, pp. 5a–b (373–4).

¹⁵⁹¹ Yi Tai 伊泰 and Zhang Yanyu 張延玉, *Yongzheng huidian*, vols. 774, pt.1, *juan* 102, p. 11a (6785). The Senglu si and Daolu si were subsumed under the Board of Rites sometime during the first half of the Qianlong reign. This policy apparently applied to Tibetan Buddhists, too. However, in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743) some significant changes were made regarding the duties of the Board of Rites (Li bu) and those of the Board of Colonial Affairs (Lifan yuan). In particular, prior to 1743 the two entities shared responsibility for overseeing the inheritance (*chengxi*) of titles such as “Dynastic Preceptor,” “meditation master,” and “supervisor” (*dugang*). After 1743 this was to become the duty of the Board of Colonial Affairs alone. This shift may also have affected the issuance of *dudie*. Groot, *Sectarianism and Religious Persecution in China*, 119; Kun Gang 崑岡 and Xu Tong 徐桐, eds., *Da Qing huidian shili* 大清會典事例 (Precedents of the Collected Statutes of the Guangxu Reign), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), vol. 1, p. 5 (“yingyin shuoming”);

Whether or not the system actually ever played out at Gönlung is unclear. We do know that the major monasteries of Jakyung and Trotsang Tashi Lhünpo¹⁵⁹² received registration certificates and vestments in 1738 in exchange for allowing the construction of a road to cross their territory, but it is unclear what role the offices of *senggang* or some other registrar may have had in this process.¹⁵⁹³ The *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* (Research on the Social History of Qinghai Monguors) reports that Gönlung indeed had two *senggang* 僧崗 when researchers visited there in the 1950s.¹⁵⁹⁴ They are listed in the monastery's hierarchy after the abbot's steward¹⁵⁹⁵ and the two disciplinarians (*sengguan* 僧官; Ch. *dge skos*). These two *senggang* are said to have been responsible for spending the donations the monastery receives and for taking care of all of the monastery's external relations. If "external relations" means official relations with the state, then it would seem that this position created in the immediate aftermath of the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion persisted well into the twentieth century, with the local twist being the creation of an additional *senggang* above and beyond the one stipulated in the 1747 decree.

Gönlung's *senggang* are also said to have sat on the monastery's "eleven-member general council,"¹⁵⁹⁶ comprising the abbot's steward, the two disciplinarians, the two

Aixinjueluo Hongli [Qianlong], "Qinding Da Qing huidian zeli," in *Siku quanshu* (*Digital Wenyuange Edition*) (Dizhi wenhua chubanshe youxian gongsi, n.d. [1789?]), *juan* 142, p. 95..

¹⁵⁹² T. gro tshang dgon bkra shis lhun po; Ch. Yaocaotai si 藥草台寺.

¹⁵⁹³ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 905 (*juan* 34).

¹⁵⁹⁴ Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 48; See also Pu Wencheng, *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan*, 76.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Ch. *xiangzuo* 襄佐 (< T. *phyag mdzod*).

¹⁵⁹⁶ Ch. *jiwaang* [< T. *spyi ba nang [chen]*].

senggang, and the six “elders” (*laomin* 老民). Only one who has first served as a disciplinarian or *senggang* is eligible to become an “elder.” One of my informants who studied at Gönlung in the 1940s recalls there being a twelve-member ruling council that consisted of a “general/public steward,”¹⁵⁹⁷ two disciplinarians, two *laoye* (‘Elders’ or ‘Sirs’), and seven elders¹⁵⁹⁸. It is tempting to equate these “*laoye*” with the *senggang*, but I have not yet been able to resolve this incongruity.

Sumpa Khenpo

The presence of an imperial plaque and an officer of clerical supervision may have served to protect Gönlung from treacherous Chinese officials, but it did nothing to protect it from itself. In 1775, not long before his third term as abbot of Gönlung, Sumpa Khenpo traveled to Mount Wutai, where he met up with Changkya III. At that time the tenure of the current abbot of Gönlung had come to an end, and the elders of the monastery wrote to Changkya to inquire about what should be done. Sumpa Khenpo recalls Changkya’s response:

His lordship [Changkya] gave me a blessing scarf and ordered “I have heard that at this time that great monastery is as if it has many heads and that the rules of discipline [*sgrig lam*] and teachings are in decline. You serve as abbot for about a year. If you rehabilitate [things there], this will be a benefit to the Teachings and wandering beings of the realm of Amdo.”¹⁵⁹⁹

¹⁵⁹⁷ T. *spyi phyag mdzod*.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Ch. *laozhe* 老者.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 556. Sumpa’s meeting with Changkya is corroborated in the biography of Changkya written by his brother, Chuzang III Ngawang Thubten Wangchuk, although the details of their conversations are not. Chu bzang III Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug, *Ñi Ma’i ’od Zer / Naran-u Gerel: Die Biographie Des 2. Pekinger Lan skya-Qutuqtu Rol Pa’i Rdo Rje (1717-1786)*, trans. and ed. Hans-Rainer Kämpfe, *Monumenta Tibetica Historica* 2 (1) (Sankt Augustin: Wissenschaftsverlag, 1976), 96a.4–5.

Changkya's assessment of things back at Gönlung was not amiss. Word of Changkya's order that Sumpa Khenpo was to serve as abbot was also sent to the important lama Chaghan Nomuqan IV (1729-1796), who presumably would act as a witness to Changkya's wishes. Nonetheless, "those who took responsibility for the general affairs of Gönlung took this order as being the same as a Nyingma 'dharma treasure' [rnying ma'i *gter chos*] [i.e. a fake]," and Sumpa Khenpo "became a long-term vagabond along the outskirts of the village among the wild animals."¹⁶⁰⁰ Instead, the Degu Lama Dargyé Gyatso (r. 1776-1781)¹⁶⁰¹ was beckoned from Gönlung's child monastery of Chöten Tang and installed on the abbatial throne.¹⁶⁰²

This was not the first time Sumpa Khenpo had to confront such disorder and contention within the monastery. In his long autobiography Sumpa Khenpo regularly decries the position of abbot, which he considers a thankless job. Reflecting on the first time he was asked to serve as abbot of Gönlung, Sumpa Khenpo remarks with an equal mix of modesty and acrimony that doing so would be like the metaphor of "a bat who shows its teeth and wings yet is never admitted to the ranks¹⁶⁰³ of mice or birds."¹⁶⁰⁴ That is, no matter what he was to do as abbot, he would never garner the respect properly accorded an abbot.

Despite his bitter attitude toward the post, Sumpa Khenpo served as abbot of Gönlung for three full (four-year) terms, which is more than any other abbot prior to the twentieth

¹⁶⁰⁰ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 556–57.

¹⁶⁰¹ T. bde rgu dar rgyas rgya mtsho.

¹⁶⁰² Interestingly, this account of Sumpa Khenpo's contradicts that found in the later *Ocean Annals* or *History of the Dharma in Domé*, wherein Degu Lama is said to have been Changkya's pick for abbot. I do not have a good explanation for this discrepancy. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 66.5–8.

¹⁶⁰³ T. *khyur*; more lit. "herd" or "flock."

¹⁶⁰⁴ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 269.

century.¹⁶⁰⁵ Equally important is the fact that he served during Gönlung's time of rebuilding, and he was therefore an important witness to the monastery's struggles during this period. In 1746, while Sumpa Khenpo was residing in the nearby hermitage of Zhakhok,¹⁶⁰⁶ Gönlung sent a messenger inviting him to serve as abbot. Sumpa Khenpo replied:

When I was in Central Tibet [dbus], my cook took ill and so I was unable to go to the Glorious Lower Tantric College. Nonetheless, the previous incarnation of the Precious Tuken sent a command from Beijing to the abbot [and] management office [*bla spyi*] saying that “it would be good were Sumpa Khenpo to be installed as the head of [Gönlung's] tantric college”.¹⁶⁰⁷

On that occasion, Sumpa Khenpo had been delighted, thinking he would finally have the opportunity to study Esoterica. His wishes were thwarted, however, when the abbot and elders responded that because he had not previously resided at the tantric college it would not be proper for him to be appointed its head. Instead, others were successively installed as the college's head, which had both hurt and infuriated Sumpa Khenpo.

One sees in this some politics at work. It was no doubt the same faction lead by Bayen Nangso that had rejected Tuken's pick for abbot that also rejected Tuken's wish to see Sumpa Khenpo as head of its tantric college. The rest of Sumpa Khenpo's response to the request that he serve as abbot was anything but “cheerful,” as a later Gönlung history would have one believe:¹⁶⁰⁸

Formerly, in Ü and Tsang in Upper [Tibet, i.e. Central Tibet], I was made to sit upon a throne studded with stars [lit. the back of which was rimmed with stars] before the Precious Panchen and the Precious Lama [i.e. the Dalai Lama], whereupon boundless

¹⁶⁰⁵ Likya Khenpo (li kyA mkhan po), aka Gomzhi (sgom zhis) Lama, Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (tshul khrim bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan), served as abbot on four occasions between 1906 and the 1930s.

¹⁶⁰⁶ T. zhwa khog. The exact location of Zhakhok is unclear, although it seems to be in the vicinity of Bokhok (bo khog) in present-day Datong County.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 267. The following account of Sumpa Khenpo's denial of this initial request to serve as abbot derives from pp. 267-70.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 14b.1.

care was given to me. Later I was placed upon a great abbatial throne [*mkhan sa chen po*]. In the lower regions [*smad*, i.e. China], the ruler [*rgyal po*] showed me great reverence and cared for me with great compassion as I have explained above. In addition, I have expounded the dharma in Mongolian lands as well as Tibetan lands in other regions, acting on behalf of wandering beings, acquiring an abundance of goods. I have served as abbot [*khri bdag*] of several monasteries and meditation hermitages hermitages in Amdo, thus protecting the Teachings. Therefore, as for serving in the position of abbot [*bla ma*] of Gönlung, there is absolutely no comparison between it[, on the one hand,] and[, on the other hand,] the above [experiences] and the deeds [thereby] performed in behalf of the Teachings and politics [*bstan srid*] as well as the influence thereby exerted.¹⁶⁰⁹

So much for Gönlung the “the pure, supreme place of worship, the root of the Teachings in the land of Amdo.”¹⁶¹⁰ Sumpa Khenpo goes on to add that there were dark forces at Gönlung that make it difficult to serve as abbot and not succumb to the crookedness and animosity prevalent at the monastery. “In particular,” he writes

as for the position of Lama Abbot [*bla ma khri pa*], pleasant words [about him] are as [forthcoming as] the moon on a new moon day. As for this monastery, it [is like] a boat of [mere] material wealth on the sea [lit. the mother of the moon] of accumulated merit: one dreads being swallowed by a 'sea monster' [? *lan kra*]. Moreover, like the saying of the golden bird on the golden mountain [?], the valley here is deep and narrow, the cliffs craggy, and the boulders many. In the narrow hearts of some of the people around here are harsh words. [Others have] adamant minds [i.e. minds unmoved by the sufferings of others], mouths like new petals of a lotus flower, and words like the notes of a lute; the actions and behavior of these types are crooked and bending. Were [I] to accord with them, my deeds would become like the course of a river [i.e. crooked], and I fear I would transgress [the law of] karma.”¹⁶¹¹

Besides being dismayed by the bickering and animosity that prevailed in Gönlung at the time, one of his largest concerns was the breakdown in monastic discipline:

... externally, the rules of discipline [*sgrig lam*] of the monasteries and hermitages have declined; internally, virtuous roots, listening, and learning have been reduced to a 'grass-wool flower'¹⁶¹² in the topsy-turvy wind: it is unknown whether it will gust

¹⁶⁰⁹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 268.

¹⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁶¹² The Tibetan is "*rtswa bal*." I have been unable to find this in any dictionary. Khenpo Ngawang Dorjee speculates that this is flower known in Golok as "*ashokgolo*", which, upon dying, falls into the grass and

[and blow it away]. In addition, by residing [in a place of] attachment [and other] dubious actions and behavior, no benefit will come to the monastery. In addition, nothing but the afflictions will arise—each will take a turn fomenting disputes; right and left there will be fighting and resentment.

Such decline in monastic discipline as well as the utter lack of respect for meritorious and qualified individuals is attributed to a breakdown in authority.

... perhaps because these times, in general, are a greatly degenerate age and because I find myself in a [remote] border country. In any case, nowadays, like sun and flowers, wherever the sun is positioned [in the sky the people] show their faces [i.e. people fawn over the rich and powerful]; meanwhile, they turn their backs to great kindness. Specifically, whether due to faults in place or faults in people, before one has served as an official of any kind, high or low, in some of the monasteries and hermitages of my country, he will be called "great" and "wise." As soon as he serves, failing to please the monastics [there], all will slander him. Not only will he be cast out of the ranks of monastic officials, he will also be cast out of the ranks of men in that locale, whereupon he will have to resort to an existence that is neither dying nor living. My one wish for residing at this monastery [*dgon sgrub*] is that, at the time of my death, the congregation will compassionately make pure prayers of aspiration [on my behalf]. However, because I have my doubts [about this actually happening], I do not wish [to be] abbot [*bla ma*] of Gönlung. These are my reasons.

Sumpa Khenpo thereupon sent the messenger back to Gönlung with his answer.

As we shall see, Sumpa Khenpo will harangue his solicitors each and every time they beseech him to serve as abbot. Then, just when he thinks they have heard enough, he reluctantly takes up the post. In the second month of that year (1746), Sumpa Khenpo went to Gönlung, whereupon he was finally convinced to take up the post of abbot. After the inauguration banquet, he immediately set to work cleaning house:

[As for] monastic officials [*las sne mo ba*], they shall not partially support their friends and acquaintances. [I] only appoint those who were truly worthy, no matter their age, training, tribe, or village, whose minds are sharp and upright with regard to

appears like wool. Personal communication, December 2012. I wonder if this is not the same seed found blowing around the streets of Xining each May, accumulating in large white piles that children ignite with lighters while playing?

the task that befalls them, who follow tradition and who are not greedy or partial. This is done so as to uphold the longevity of former traditions, such as the monastery's own customary, without doing anything whatsoever that lacks tradition, that is made up or spontaneous.¹⁶¹³

The monastic customary to which Sumpa Khenpo is referring is no doubt the extensive customary composed by Gyelsé Rinpoché in 1737 that we examined in chapter four. But Sumpa Khenpo did not think it was enough to simply enforce traditional procedures and oversee discipline within the monastery.¹⁶¹⁴ He also felt a personal obligation to restore authority at Gönlung.

As the worldly adage goes, “if the judge destroys [another’s life or property], who is to be sued?”¹⁶¹⁵ I myself worked to not transgress the rules of discipline [*sgrig khrims*]. Everything I did, I did only as service to the clergy, for loyalty [toward the clergy and monastery], for the interest of the Teachings,¹⁶¹⁶ for patrons, etc., and to bring joy to all, near and far. All monastics far and wide came to know that I [and our] monastic judges [*khrims bdag*] did not do any deceptive actions and were not crooked or spiny like the gooseberry bush¹⁶¹⁷ but were upright like the mulberry tree and thereby followed the path of reasoning: no question or proposition concerning anything was not thought about, and [each matter] was assiduously practiced with respect¹⁶¹⁸ and in its own right like an ill person taking medicine. [Our] recitations, daily devotions,¹⁶¹⁹ teachings, rules of discipline, and so forth were heard of far away, and [they] became the ornament of the eyes of those nearby, and therefore [this] thorough service on behalf of the Teachings became known everywhere. The idea that this had become a place that, heard of, sounded wondrous but, seen, looked miserable and had to aspire after others was no more a reality than the child of a barren woman.¹⁶²⁰

¹⁶¹³ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 271–72.

¹⁶¹⁴ Or, alternatively, he did not wish forego another opportunity to promote and bolster his image.

¹⁶¹⁵ T. *khrims bdag pos bshig na gtug sher su la byed*.

¹⁶¹⁶ T. *bstan pa'i mig rgyan*.

¹⁶¹⁷ T. *gla shing*. My translation is tentative.

¹⁶¹⁸ T. *gus 'dod < gus 'dud*.

¹⁶¹⁹ T. *chos spyod*.

¹⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 272–3; My translation of this last sentence is tentative. Also, the passage in the 2001 reprint has been truncated, and I have completed my translation based on the older blockprint. I have noted at least one other place in the 2001 edition where this occurs, which should caution other readers of Sumpa Khenpo's autobiography against relying solely upon the newer edition. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, “Mkhan po erte ni paN+Di tar grags pa'i spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len (Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Pejor),” in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works), vol. 8, 578/104b.4–5.

Monastic discipline and respect for authority were again two of Sumpa Khenpo's foremost priorities during his second term, a term that lasted from 1756 to 1761. "In general," he writes, "I gave a little bit of gentle encouragement in the way of the former, longstanding rules of discipline [*sgrig lam*] as found in the customary [*bca' yig*]: memorization and recitation of texts, recital of prayers [*skyor sbyangs*], assembly recitations [*tshogs 'don*], teachings, debate, spiritual practice [*thugs dam*] inside the small quarters of each individual, and so on."¹⁶²¹ Sumpa Khenpo thought it important, as abbot, to strike an appropriate balance between harshness and being too carefree. "There was not even a need to roughly smack a child monk. All were pleased."¹⁶²² Although those were "end times" and the world was full of "impudent" types, Sumpa Khenpo refrained from harsh punishments such as corporal punishment:

Bad individuals, silver, and drums;

Impudent horses, women, and clothes.

If you beat them, then the tamed ones they become

Are not good, suitable vessels for learning.¹⁶²³

During his tenure as abbot there was a tremendous amount of philandering, consumption of alcohol, and theft.¹⁶²⁴ Nonetheless, he dealt with these and with even more egregious cases (such as fighting with other monks, engaging in lawsuits with laity, and robbery) *not* by requiring that the offenders make offerings to the abbot to other officials, or to the monastic

¹⁶²¹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len*, 338.

¹⁶²² *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁶²³ *Ibid.* Sumpa Khenpo is citing Nāgārjuna's *Tree of Wisdom* (T. *shes rab sdong bu*). Incidentally, such blatant misogyny, although not frequent in Sumpa Khenpo's writing, is not uncommon. Elsewhere he concludes the liturgy he composed for one of his temples with the prayer "May I not be reborn as a woman!".

¹⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*

assembly as a whole. Rather, “in accordance with the monastic customaries composed by previous generations such as Butön and Lord Tsongkhapa,” he asked for prostrations (“a hundred or twenty-one”), offerings of butter lamps and offering scarves for the deities, prayer flags to be strung around the monastery, circumambulations inside and outside the chapels, the carrying of water for assembly, work on repairing roads and bridges, and so forth. Perhaps it was this lax or “gentle” approach to discipline that gave rise to one of the most tumultuous events of his abbatial career.

The Bottom Line

Sumpa Khenpo and supporters attempted to model a new way of comporting themselves. In particular, they refrained from accepting the extra shares of donations and tips due to them as monastic officials, instead choosing to “work solely on the loyalty of the monastery’s estates.”¹⁶²⁵ This “loyalty” (*la rgya*) is the same term mentioned above, and it alludes particularly to one of the major concerns of abbots during Gönlung’s reconstruction period: the consistent financial support of the monastery by its lay parishioners.¹⁶²⁶ Following Sumpa Khenpo’s reforms, some monks, feared that “the ocean would dry up” or that “Mt. Meru would topple over.”¹⁶²⁷ They began to blame Sumpa Khenpo, and they spared no harsh words in their infighting. Sumpa Khenpo then relates an intricate story of a

¹⁶²⁵ Ibid., 340.

¹⁶²⁶ In writing about Degu Lama serving as abbot instead of himself, Sumpa Khenpo graciously commends Degu’s efforts at accomplishing the two primary tasks of an abbot at that time: teaching and fund-raising: “he continued the legacy handed to him and left his own glorious record in terms of teachings and [installing] loyalty among the laity [ru sde’i la rgya].” Ibid., 557.

¹⁶²⁷ Ibid., 340.

dysfunctional Gönlung involving a feud that extended over a period of several years. Because of the difficulty of this passage, I here paraphrase the important parts:¹⁶²⁸

In the past, there was a certain Dharma Protector named Yar Damjawa¹⁶²⁹ (i.e. the medium of the god Namsé Dungmarchen¹⁶³⁰) who said “at a certain time the Char Dharma King [lit. Rain Dharma King] will be appointed as abbot of Gönlung.” A faction of four *garwa*¹⁶³¹ did not like this, and they called the dharma protector down a second time, whereupon he related the following telling of a past event, (which I here paraphrase):

Earlier, in 1743, there was a medium¹⁶³² named Lokar Gangyak¹⁶³³ who lived in the mountains around Gönlung. He was accused and attacked over a trivial matter, and the major [monastery] rulers conspired against him. Ultimately the monastic judge [*khriims bdag*] and the abbot [*gdan sa pa*] were also deluded by this nasty talk, whereupon they led an attack on the monastery’s wealth, plundering its horses, livestock, and goods. At the end of this year when distributing cash disbursements¹⁶³⁴ to the clergy, we refused our shares of these stolen goods.¹⁶³⁵

The story-teller, Yar Damjawa, here identifies with the previously maligned medium. The story may be an attempt to establish “the facts” and to warn to the discontented faction of *garwa* not to stir up trouble.

Later, one of the groups related to this story returned from a trip to Mongolia loaded down with wealth and goods, performing a ‘song and dance’ as if nothing had happened. The main conspirators from before also acted as if they had forgotten the bygones and sent out a

¹⁶²⁸ I am indebted to my classmate at the University of Virginia, Rinchen Dorjé, for helping me make sense of this story.

¹⁶²⁹ T. *g.yar dam bca’ ba’i chos skyong*.

¹⁶³⁰ T. *mam sras mdung dmar can*.

¹⁶³¹ T. *sgar ba*. See chapter one for a discussion of *sgar ba*.

¹⁶³² T. *lus khog*.

¹⁶³³ T. *lo dkar gangs g.yag*. “*Lo dkar*” appears interlinearly in the xylograph and in parentheses in the 2001 edition.

¹⁶³⁴ T. *spyi ’gyed*.

¹⁶³⁵ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 342.

welcoming committee. The recent arrivals were placed on thrones and feted. By this time, Sumpa Khenpo was abbot, and, seeing this, he thought that the embattled factions had made up their differences and would not fight like before. So, he consulted with the elders, and in 1759, thinking there would be no problem, he invited the maligned dharma protector (i.e. Lokar Gangyak). However, the former abbot and company deluded everyone with further rumors, resentment was rekindled, and no resolution was reached. Sumpa Khenpo felt as if his lifetime of achievement was for naught. He fell into a resentful “sleep,” and escaped to Mongolia for several years.

Incidentally, the problematic abbot in the above story was likely Gyatik Rapjampa Lozang Döndrup,¹⁶³⁶ who served as Gönlung abbot from 1743 to 1746. He was recognized as the reincarnation of Tsenpo “the Stern,” the founder of Serkhok Monastery.¹⁶³⁷ Tuken III’s summary of Gyatik Rapjampa’s tenure as Gönlung abbot alludes to some controversy surrounding this figure:

After coming [back] to Domé he became the head of this monastery's tantric college. After that, in the Water-Pig year [1743] he took the abbatial throne of the great monastery. The rules of discipline were [kept] pure, and the teachings flourished. His virtue in philosophy at this time was unmatched. However, like it says in the *Good Advice of Sakya Paṇḍita*:¹⁶³⁸ Compared with scholars, a man with a monkey is of a [much] greater status.¹⁶³⁹

This subtle impugment suggests that Gyatik Rapjampa used chicanery to impress his followers.

¹⁶³⁶ T. rgya tig rab ‘byams pa blo bzang don grub.

¹⁶³⁷ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle,” 743/51a.4.

¹⁶³⁸ T. *sa skya legs bshad*.

¹⁶³⁹ Cf. The Tibetan of the *Sa skya legs bshad*: “*blun po’i drung du mkhas pa bas/ /spre’u ‘dzin pa khyad par ‘phags//*, that is “Amid fools, a man with a leashed monkey / Is much more respected than the wise.” Sakya Pandita (sa skya paNDi ta kun dga’ rgyal mtshan) and John T. Davenport, *Ordinary Wisdom: Sakya Pandita’s Treasury of Good Advice* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 77.

When Sumpa Khenpo returned from Mongolia in 1764 he felt serene and unmoved in the presence of commotion or immorality, he tells us. The bad eggs of the monastery made at least a pretense of apologizing, which Sumpa Khenpo accepted. From this point on, the moral behavior of the Gönlung sangha is said to have steadily improved. Sumpa Khenpo goes as far as to say:

today, Gönlung Jampa Ling has become renowned as a second Gomang College. Songs erupt from the sound of 100,000 lutes of Celestial Musicians and spread across this vast land like a great divine drum. This is not flattery composed of partial or contrived words.”¹⁶⁴⁰

Celestial abode or not, there were still a few bad, spoiled ones in the general management office (*spyi pa*) and incarnate lama villas who did not attend assembly, he continues, and who smoked in the monastery. This same incorrigible bunch also made loans and collected a “light” interest in the name of coming up with firewood and caring for their horses, *but*, Sumpa Khenpo tells us, they did at least refrain from ever making loans to other monks.¹⁶⁴¹

The aforementioned dispute over Changkya’s order that Sumpa Khenpo serve as abbot of Gönlung occurred a little over a decade later. Degu Lama was roped into serving as abbot instead. However, five or six years later, “when the position transitioned, the main caretakers of Gönlung’s general affairs and the major leaders again awoke as if from a deep sleep and said to me that I was needed to serve as abbot, as if [our] ‘footprints were erased by the [brush of] a hand.’”¹⁶⁴² Sumpa Khenpo was ready for this, however, and spared the solicitors no displeasure:

¹⁶⁴⁰ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 344.10–14.

¹⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 345.1–4.

¹⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, 557.

Formerly, when Changkya Rinpoché's order arrived you all shunned it. Now, at this inappropriate time and [in spite of] those words [of his], you all are capable of being shameless in the eyes of others. But beyond being embarrassed of oneself what else is there? In addition, first, I am now nearly eighty years old, and the expectation of [my] being able [to complete the task] is like flowers in the sky [i.e. illusory]. Moreover, if I were to take that position and spend my days striving to collect whatever income possible and focusing only on my own benefit, this would be a grave sin, it would not be in accord with the [two] systems, and would not be any better than going off to some other [far off] place.¹⁶⁴³

In addition, he thought again about the forboding spiritual powers that plagued Gönlung's past and present:

... the 'commitment[-breaking] demons¹⁶⁴⁴ at that monastery are numerous, and since former times its local guardian spirits¹⁶⁴⁵ and followers of the local malevolent demons are said to be very powerful. The many unsuitable laity and monks give rise to trouble. A few say frivolous things, and then some gather together and their words greatly spread, like a tiny spark setting fire to a large stack of hay. Agitating words are like dripping a few drops of water on molten rock, which ignites a fire of destruction. When evil words are few, [suddenly] great, evil omens that are baseless will appear. [I] worried that the nature of the evil place and these evil times would clearly manifest.¹⁶⁴⁶

Sumpa Khenpo ultimately conceded to the pressure put on him to serve a third term as abbot, but one wonders what motivated him to speak so ominously of the conduct and relations of the Gönlung monks? Likewise, what might have led to stories of feuding within the monastery that we read about above?¹⁶⁴⁷

Although we may never know all the details, it seems very likely that it was uncertainty surrounding the monastery's wealth that motivated Sumpa Khenpo to seek out the loyalty of lay parishioners and incited the monastery's more sordid elements to steal from

¹⁶⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴⁴ T. *dam sri*.

¹⁶⁴⁵ T. *gzhi bdag*.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Ye shes dpal 'byor, Sum pa mkhan po, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 558–59.

¹⁶⁴⁷ According to the *Ocean Annals*, Gung thang III Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me alluded to these troubles in his acceptance speech for serving as Gönlung's abbot. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 68.

the public coffers. To be sure, there was an imperial policy in place to furnish Gönlung and other monasteries with an imperial allowance, which was meant to serve as a “replacement” for “the 'divine communities' [or “estates,” *lha sde*],” which were “lost to the Chinese tax rolls.”¹⁶⁴⁸

What exactly did the monasteries lose? In the decades or perhaps centuries before the rebellion, “the barbarian people [*fan min*] paid taxes to the lamas no different than [the system of] paying tribute.”¹⁶⁴⁹ A more extensive depiction of this bygone era of monastic rule in Amdo is given in the *Xining fu xin zhi* (New Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture):

At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the Tibetan Buddhist Sanla 三刺 from [Xi]ning wrote a letter to all the tribes (*bu*) of Handong 罕東 asking them to surrender. He founded a monastery south of Nianbai for the residence of his followers. He visited the Court and offered horses. He asked [the emperor] to appoint him as a 'protector' (*huchi* 護持) and to bestow a monastery name plaque (*ci'e* 賜額). Based on the request, Taizu bestowed a plaque entitled "Qutan" 瞿曇. The *senggang si* of Xining was established. [San]la was made the *dugang si* and ruled with conformity. Thenceforth, his disciples vied to found monasteries. The emperor bestowed a good name upon each and appointed them as 'protectors.' [This area] thus formed a powerful district in the region (? 由是形域勢區) and was entirely occupied by Tibetan Buddhist monks. During the time of the Yongle [Emperor], gradually the

¹⁶⁴⁸ Sumpa Khenpo corroborates this. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor [Being a Partial Translation of the Mtsho Sngon Gyi Lo Rgyus Sogs Bkod Pa'i Tshangs Glu Gsar Snyan Zhes Bya Ba]*, 50 and 25. In 1727, the Banner Vice Commander-in-chief Danai 达鼐 in conjunction with the Regional Commander Zhou Kaijie 周开捷 memorialized, suggesting that the monasteries there be given allowances of food, vestments, and registration certificates (*yidan kouliang* 衣单口粮). Others have pointed out that it was Nian Gengyao who memorialized. I have not had the opportunity to track down and read this memorial myself. Mi Yizhi 牟一之, *Qinghai lishi gaikuang (chu gao)* 青海历史概况 (初稿) (Overview of Qinghai History, First Draft), ed. Qinghai sheng wenwu guanli chu and Qinghai shifan xueyuan zhengshi xi ([Xining]: s.n., 1979), 164; Bai Wengu 白文固 and Xie Zhanlu 解占录, “Qingdai lama yidanliang zhidu tantao 清代喇嘛衣单粮制度探讨” (An Inquiry into the Qing Dynasty Food, Vestment, and Registration Certificate Allowance System), *Zhongguo Zangxue* no. 3 (2006): 57; See also Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 386 (*juan* 15).

¹⁶⁴⁹ Bai Wengu and Xie Zhanlu, “Qingdai lama yidanliang zhidu tantao,” 57. Citing a memorial of Nian Gengyao, the language of which is said to be found in the *Qinghai shiyi jielüe*, (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), p. 72.

titles of "Lama Dhyāna Master" (*lama chanshi*), "Consecration National Preceptor" (*guanding guoshi*), and even up to "Great National Preceptor" (*da guoshi*), and "Western Son of Buddha" (*Xitian fozi*) were conferred. Each was given a seal and mandate (*yin gao* 印誥) and permitted to pass [these] on to successive generations. Also, they were ordered to make an annual visit and give gifts to the Court (*chaogong*).

Thus, [the Court] took [the fact of] the Tibetan Buddhist monks being revered by the Qiangrong 羌戎 people and used it to tame them. Moreover, the borderland people see how magnificent is their [i.e. the monks'] chariots and dress and greatly honor them. Therefore, if Tibetan [Fan] people or Monguor [Tu] people have two sons, [the parents] must order one of the two to become a monk. Also, if there is one who is mourning his parents' death and who has no heirs, [Tibetan and Monguor people] like to enjoin him to renounce. [Even] among Chinese [Han] people there are also Tibetan Buddhist monks. Therefore, when a Tibetan or Monguor person dies, [the relatives] uses their resources and donate to the monastery, requesting [the monks] to recite scriptures. They are unable to have have sons and grandchildren. Therefore, the wealth of Tibetans and Monguors is poor, and the wealth of the monks [and] monasteries is rich.

Each of the Tibetan clan-polities [*zu* 族] had submitted [to the authority of a monastery]. The majesty of the monasteries was the same as that of the 'tribes' (*buluo*).¹⁶⁵⁰ Moreover, the government offices went to the Tibetan Buddhist monks to request trade of tea for horses (? 以茶中馬). ...¹⁶⁵¹

After the "impudent" actions of many monasteries during the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, proposals were made to "cut off the arms" and "wings" of the monks and 'barbarians' in Amdo by completely remaking the political, social, and religious landscape of the region. For instance, we read that in 1725 the following memorial was approved (*yizhun* 議准):

In Xining, there are 94 Buddhist temples outside the county's administration [*baili wai* 百里外]. In Hezhou there are only three. Among these, there are those called "national preceptors" who have imperial seals [*chiyin* 勅印] and there are those called "national preceptors" without imperial seals. There are those named after monasteries

¹⁶⁵⁰ My translation is tentative. The Chinese reads 其各番族，各有歸附，寺院儼同部落。

¹⁶⁵¹ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 385 (*juan* 15).

when in fact there is no such monastery,¹⁶⁵² and there are those not named after monasteries but who are named after ‘tribes.’ Each place will have varying numbers of Tibetan Buddhist monks [*fan seng* 番僧], from two or three to a hundred and sixty or seventy.¹⁶⁵³ The Monguors and Tibetans who originally belonged [here] live intermingled. At the beginning of the Ming imperial seals were bestowed [on them]. Later, our dynasty [also] bestowed imperial seals. Those living on the periphery have a wild nature and are difficult to civilize. Therefore, the famous lamas who these people trust in inherit [their positions] and govern them. If they [just] follow the past and rule and do not consider reforms, fearing only for their continual preservation and always relying [solely] on their inherited succession [*shishou* 世守], then they will botch that which they should be taking care of.¹⁶⁵⁴ It must [therefore] be ordered that the tenants of each of the monasteries and clan-polities reunite [*guibing*] with China Proper [*neidi*] and become [its] subjects. All imperial seals that have been given must be fully collected. [They] are not to be ordered to govern [*buling* 不令] the barbarian tribes [*fanluo* 番落]. As for places given empty lama titles’ [*lama kongxian* 空銜] and salaries, it is ordered that these be monitored, deliberated in detail, and submitted as a memorial, and, when the day arrives, they are to be deliberated [again].¹⁶⁵⁵

Qing policy sought to confiscate monastic land holdings, curtail the prestige and independence of monasteries and their lamas, and, in exchange, provide monasteries with an allowance. We even have some idea how much these imperial allowances were supposed to be. One Chinese scholar, quoting from the 1822 *Qinghai shiyi jielüe* 青海事宜節略 (*Summary of Qinghai Affairs*),” writes

After gathering and compiling [a registry of monks at monasteries], the specific quantities of food, vestment, and registration certificate allowance [*yidan liang* 衣單

¹⁶⁵² The Chinese reads 有名為寺廟實無寺廟者.

¹⁶⁵³ The Chinese reads 至百六七十. Bai Wengu, on the other hand, cites a Nian Gengyao memorial in which he says that monasteries in Xining have as many as 2-3000 monks and as few as 5-600. “Qingdai lama yidanliang zhidu tantao,” 57.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Ch. *suo guan fei xi* 所關匪細.

¹⁶⁵⁵ The Chinese for this last sentence reads 命該督詳議具奏。到日再議。Aixinjueluo Hongli [Qianlong], “Qinding Da Qing huidian zeli,” 94a.6–95a.4 This also appears in the *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben Lifanyuan zeli*, pp. 135-6, and the *Qinding Da Qing huidian shili (Jiaqing chao)*. I do not have access to the latter at the moment, although I believe the relevant passage appears in vol. 691 (69), *juan* 738, p. 376.

粮] was: “Guide Sub-prefecture ought to support 640 *yidan kouliang* allowance monks; Bayanrongge Sub-prefecture, 362; Xining County, 2244; Nianbai County, 736; Datong County, 1323; Dangaer Sub-prefecture, 226. Among the above 5531 *yidan kouliang* allowance-monks that ought to be supported, the amount given to each one varies; altogether the amount of public grains that ought to be given is 8990 *dan* 6 *dou* and 2 *sheng*.”¹⁶⁵⁶

Thus, we see in the *Xining fu xin zhi* that Hongshan Monastery 洪善寺 annually received 500 taels of silver from the state. Similarly, the nearby monastery of Qutan 瞿曇寺 had extensive land grants from the state.¹⁶⁵⁷ However, these two monasteries may have been the exception rather than the rule. Both had ties to Beijing dating back to the Ming Dynasty or at least the early Qing. In fact, there is no way to ascertain the implementation of this policy. Even the Chinese scholar Bai Wengu—who has made outrageous claims such as that 84,000 monks in Tibet were supported by the *yidan liang* allowance, including monks in *Central* Tibet—agrees that the implementation of this policy may not have been one hundred percent:

... over the course of making payments, “above it passes through the officials who take [their] cut, below it passes through the petty officials who extort [theirs], and in reality only five or six tenths of the allotted pay are made.” Fortunately, the monasteries had their own revenue. “Looking at the *yidan liang* allowance, whether there was some [money left] or none at all, they disparaged it all.”¹⁶⁵⁸

In an otherwise problematic article on Offices of Clerical Supervision (*senggang si*) among Tibetan populations during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Bai Wengu makes an interesting comment regarding the socio-economic changes of the region around Gönlung during the late Qing, a comment that is apropos here:

¹⁶⁵⁶ This is over 900,000 liters of grain. Bai Wengu and Xie Zhanlu, “Qingdai lama yidanliang zhidu tantao,” 58. Citing the *Qinghai shiyi jielüe*, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 377. For more on this monastery see Gray Tuttle, “Local History in A mdo: The Tsong Kha Range (Ri rgyud),” *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 6 (2010): 23–97.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Bai Wengu and Xie Zhanlu, “Qingdai lama yidanliang zhidu tantao,” 58. Bai is citing Xu Ke’s *Qing bai lei chao* 清稗类抄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), pp. 224–225, for at least some of his information here.

... by the latter half of the Qing Dynasty, following the transformation of the Hehuang region's economic system from a nomadic economy to an agricultural economy, the identity of its workers also underwent a change; namely, they transformed from religious slave-like subjects of the monasteries into tenant peasants in purely economic contract[-based system]. Most of the subjects attached to monasteries left the monasteries, which caused the economic collapse of monasteries in this region. The monks fled, and not a few Officers of Clerical Supervision also resigned of their own accord. On the eve of the Xinghai Revolution, those places that still retained the name of the Office of Clerical Supervision included only Ta'er [Kumbum] Monastery, Chongjiao Monastery,¹⁶⁵⁹ and a very few other monasteries.¹⁶⁶⁰

Setting aside the Marxist historical terminology, Bai is in fact referring to the very real social and economic changes that, as discussed above, began to take off in the years and decades following the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion.

As agricultural production and settlement was ramped up in Xining and surrounding areas, the monasteries, too, had to adapt to major social and economic changes. The “barbarian clans originally administered” by the ennobled lamas of the region were to “return

¹⁶⁵⁹ Among the twenty-six monasteries in Minzhou, the Lama Houzhijidanzi 后只即丹子 of Yuanjue si 圓覺寺 [and] Da Chongjiao si 大崇教寺, had been the recipient of twenty-one imperial charters [*chi* 勅]. He handed in an imperial mandate [*gaoming* 誥命] to the Qing, twenty-one charters [*chishu* 勅書], and a seal [*tushu* 圖書]. One charter was returned to him by the Qing, as was a bronze seal, and he was made the Seal-guarding Officer of Clerical Supervision [*huyin senggang si* 護印僧綱司]. Then the emperor ordered, “in order to control each of the monasteries and lamas of Minzhou, all of the twenty-one charters that had been handed in should be returned. Only the charter of “Hongji guangjiao da guoshi” 宏濟光教大國師 conferred during the Chenghua 成化 reign is not to be returned.” Later, in the fourteenth year of the Kangxi reign, this same lama lead troops in rounding up some brigands. He petitioned to inherit his post (*zhi* 職) of “Gongji guangjiao da guoshi,” which was thereupon reinstated. However, his title of Officer of Clerical Supervision was said to have been rescinded. Tuo Jin and Cao Zhenyong, *Jiaqing huidian shili*, vol. 691 (69), *juan* 738, pp. 3a–b (369–70). See also pp. 373–4. Interestingly, the successor of Lama Houzhijidanzi as well as his “grand-successor” are singled out when, in KX 49 (1710), Kangxi decides to terminate the automatic inheritance and renewal of the title of “Dynastic Preceptor.” Yi Tai and Zhang Yanyu, *Yongzheng huidian*, vol. 774, pt. 2, *juan* 105, 10a (7045); See also Tuo Jin and Cao Zhenyong, *Jiaqing huidian shili*, vol. 691 (69), *juan* 738, p. 4b–5a (372–3); and, vol. 774, pt. 2, *juan* 105, 10a (7045).

¹⁶⁶⁰ Bai Wengu 白文固, “Ming Qing de fanseng senggangsi shulüe” 明清的番僧僧綱司述略 (A Sketch of the Tibetan Buddhist Offices of Clerical Supervision in the Ming and Qing Dynasties), *Zhongguo Zangxue* no. 1 (1992): 138. One of the more disappointing problems with this passage is that Bai does explain how he arrives at this conclusion.

to the administration of the prefectures and counties. Originally [the lamas] collected incense and grain. [This land] is to 'return' and pay official taxes.”¹⁶⁶¹ Sumpa Khenpo remarks that many monks begrudged the new duties imposed on them by the imperial authorities:

every time it is required to provide agricultural or construction labor for the monastery [*spyi'i sa las shing las*][,] taxes to the [emperor's] officials [*rgyal dpon*], and fawning on [official] travelers [*'grul ba'i ngo bsrung byed*], [some,] who are attached to material things and cannot bear to spend them, will strive to avoid [spending] their own and to take only from the common wealth. [This is something] I never tried to do, and [instead] my villa lead the way [in paying and providing].”¹⁶⁶²

To make matters worse, the region around Gönlung was (and is) notoriously prone to droughts and famines, and the early years of Gönlung's reconstruction were no exception to the rule.¹⁶⁶³

Rare land deeds dating from before and after the Lubsang-Danzin rebellion help to illustrate the changes in landownership and taxes that the monasteries had to confront. Wes Chaney at Stanford University uncovered a land deed dating from the first decade of the 18th century.¹⁶⁶⁴ The parcel of land in question is an “irrigated incense-grain” field; that is, land dedicated to supplying a monastery material support in the shape of incense, grain, and so forth.¹⁶⁶⁵ In this case, the incense-grain land is required to annually pay a tax in kind to the monastery known as Huayan Monastery 華嚴寺, or Chözang Monastery, a subsidiary temple

¹⁶⁶¹ Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 532 (*juan* 20).

¹⁶⁶² Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra 'dzin bcud len* (Autobiography of Sum pa mkhan po Ye Shes Dpal 'Byor), Mtsho sngon bod yig gna' gzhung 3 ([Beijing]: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 2001), 345.10–13.

¹⁶⁶³ The year 1739 appears to have been a bad year. Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi*, 835 (*juan* 32); also, 818 (*juan* 31) and 840 (*juan* 32); *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo*, 215; also, 194, 275, 565, *passim*.

¹⁶⁶⁴ I would like to thank Wes for generously sharing this rare text with me.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Tuttle, “Tsong Kha Range,” forthcoming, 39–40. See also the related term *xianghuo* 香火. Tuttle, “An Unknown Tradition of Chinese Conversion to Tibetan Buddhism: Chinese Incarnate Lamas and Parishioners of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Amdo,” 26.

of Gönlung's. The seller, likely a Monguor,¹⁶⁶⁶ appears to have belonged to the estate of Chözang Monastery, since the contract refers to him as belonging to the monastery's 'feud' (*zuren* 族人). The contract reads that after the transaction is completed, "... Each year one *sheng* five *ge* of incense-grain [tribute] is collected [*chengna*] [by the monastery]. The original owner does not heed any [future] shortage." The transaction amount was 2 *liang* 6 *qian* and 1 *fen* of silver. Another clause appears to say that whichever side first "regrets" and reneges on the contract is required to initially pay a fine of three *dan* of wheat (*xiaomai*) and repair of the monastery's roads (*gongyong lu* 公用路).¹⁶⁶⁷

By contrast, a set of land deeds shared with me by Ulan at Columbia University show a very different story.¹⁶⁶⁸ Significantly, these three deeds all date from the decades following the Lubsang-Danzin rebellion—specifically, the years 1739, 1742, and 1791. In addition, all of them deal with parcels of non-irrigated land being sold *to* a monastic community, which illustrates how the monastery was (re-)growing its assets and doing so in a market economy. The monastery in question is Tratsang Monastery, another subsidiary temple of Gönlung. The deeds all describe the size of the land in terms of the amount of seed needed to sow the fields (*xiazi* 下籽), and this is given in the local "market liters" (*shisheng nei* 市升内) unit of

¹⁶⁶⁶ Monguors have the custom of naming children after the age of their grandmother when born. According to Schram, the local Chinese also named children after the age of their grandfather when born. Based on my own travels in the areas around Chözang Monastery, the inhabitants there are mostly Monguor and Tibetan, not Chinese. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 2006, 210, 229, and 239.

¹⁶⁶⁷ It is not clear whether the wheat is to be paid to the monastery or to the other party in the agreement. The character that I am translating as "road" (Ch. *lu* 路) is written in a script unfamiliar to me. "Road" is my best guess.

¹⁶⁶⁸ My thanks to Ulan for sharing these texts with me. They are scans kept at the Qing History Project (Qingdai lishi gongcheng) in Beijing.

measurement. Similarly, the deed gives the amount of the transaction in terms of the “market value” (*shijia* 市價) of a specified amount of silver. In addition, the buyer henceforth becomes solely responsible for paying an annual tax in kind to the government’s public granary (*naguan liangcang* 納官糧倉), the amount to be paid specified in terms of official “granary liters” (*cangsheng*).¹⁶⁶⁹

These four deeds compose a small sample size, and it is possible that the differences between the earlier deed and the later deeds can be explained by the fact that they are dealing with different *places*. Nevertheless, the differences between them are so striking that they do suggest that changes in *time* have played a role. In particular, the earlier deed clearly indicates that the parcel of land is near and somehow in the service of Chözang Monastery, requiring an annual “incense-grain” contribution be made to the monastery. The latter deeds refer to land for which the new owner, Tratsang Monastery, is required to pay an annual tax *to the government*. It is also interesting that the official units of measurement are explicitly employed in all of the latter deeds but not in the earliest deed. The conclusion one might extrapolate from this admittedly limited evidence is that monasteries in the post-Lubsang-Danzin period were divested of their estates and thereafter operated within a social and economic framework designed by state officials rather than one created by the monasteries themselves.

¹⁶⁶⁹ For an overview of the difference between the “market liters” and other measures used in Xining and surrounding areas and how they compare with the “official” measures found further east, see Wu Mu 武沐, “Qingdai Hezhou duliangheng zhiqian dimu jisuan danwen ji fangfa 清代河州度量衡制钱地亩计算单位及方法 (Units and Methods of Calculating Weights and Measures, Currency, and Land Area in Qing-Dynasty Hezhou),” *Xibei minzu daxue xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 西北民族大学学报 (哲学社会科学版) 3 (2004): 24–29.

But just how much of Gönlung's tax base was taken following the rebellion? Unless archival documents surface and become available to the public, it will be difficult to come up with specific numbers. As discussed in chapter two, Güüshi Khan is said to have granted Gönlung all the land in Pari—an immense swath of land even if one counts only present-day Datong, Huzhu, and Ledu Counties. By the 1940s, however, Gönlung is said to have possessed no more than three percent of the cultivated land in Huzhu County where the monastery is located.

Were Gönlung's estates actually confiscated, and if so, what did that mean for the economic situation at Gönlung? A key source for evaluating the economic status of Gönlung and other monasteries prior to the major reforms introduced by the Communist Party is the *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* (Research on the Social History of Qinghai Monguors).¹⁶⁷⁰ As the preface to the series explains, its findings were the result of research conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, although it was not written until after the Cultural Revolution.¹⁶⁷¹ Its accuracy in terms of local history prior to the twentieth century is suspect. For instance, it claims that all of the first three Jamyang Zhepa incarnations served as abbot at Gönlung, when in fact only the Second Jamyang Zhepa did so.¹⁶⁷² Likewise, it claims that in the late nineteenth century, prior to Gönlung's destruction by Hui Muslim forces (an event

¹⁶⁷⁰ I would like to thank Prof. Elliot Sperling for first bringing this source to my attention.

¹⁶⁷¹ Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group), *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*; Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group) and “Zhongguo shaoshu minzu shehui lishi diaocha ziliao congkan” xiuding bianji weiyuanhui 《中國少數民族社會歷史調查資料叢刊》修訂編輯委員會, eds., *Qinghai sheng Zangzu Mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha* 青海省藏族蒙古族社會歷史調查, 國家民委《民族問題五種叢書》之5 中國少數民族社會歷史調查資料叢刊 (修訂本) 95 (Beijing 北京: Minzu chubanshe 民族出版社, 2009).

¹⁶⁷² Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* 青海土族社会历史调查 (An Investigation of the Social History of the Tu Ethnicity of Qinghai), 53.

it assigns incorrectly to the year 1874), the monastery had “over 3000 monks,” a fact unattested in any nineteenth-century sources with which I am familiar.¹⁶⁷³

Nonetheless, this *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* may be more reliable for the years closer to its composition. The incarnate lamas at Gönlung are said to have lived rather sumptuous lives, supported by the toil of “those people who ‘truly believe’ in Buddhism because they fear the might of the incarnate lamas and have no choice but to put up with hunger and cold, offering to the monastery or to the villa of each incarnate lama *half* of the produce of their annual labor.”¹⁶⁷⁴ Ordinary monks, meanwhile, are said to have lived in rather abject conditions at Gönlung but “still more affluent than the typical laboring masses.”¹⁶⁷⁵ The lamas and monks at Gönlung are said to have lived off the rent they collected on the land and houses they owned, donations, the usurious interest on loans made, as well as the produce of its herds of cattle and sheep.¹⁶⁷⁶ In a good year, a monk could receive 50 *jin* [25 kg] of grain and five silver *yuan* from rent and distributions.

Enterprising or poor monks could also supplement their incomes by reciting scriptures in villages, an act that could supposedly garner “two *sheng* [‘liters’] of wheat¹⁶⁷⁷

¹⁶⁷³ The modern gazetteer of Huzhu cites the same number, although, notably, it prefaces the number with the marker of hearsay or oral history, “it is said” (Ch. *ju shuo* 据说). “Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), ed., *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi* 互助土族自治县县志 (Huzhu Autonomous Tu County Gazetteer) [[Huzhu]: s.n., 1984], 158.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group), *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 50. Emphasis added.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 52. Note that the authors seem to suggest that the monasteries burden the local nomads by leasing out the monastery’s herds. They do not explain that such economic transactions can actually be very profitable for the leasees, too.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Ch. *maizi* 麦子. This would presumably be ground into flour and used by the monks to make noodles for daily meals. It is difficult to assess the market value of such commodities without delving too deeply into the economic history of the area. Between 1950 and 1960, the price of a *jin* (1/2 kg) of wheat ranged between 5.38 and 12.35 *yuan*. Another example taken, which is from a passage that is attempting to underscore the hardship suffered by peasants in pre-Communist times reads that “in the 31st year of the Republican Period (1942 CE) ...

(altogether approximately ten *jin* [five kilograms]¹⁶⁷⁸) and two or three *jin* [1-1.5 kilograms] of steamed bread.”¹⁶⁷⁹ Some monks also worked as tailors, blacksmiths, making butter sculptures, printing texts (over 30 monks), cutting xylographs (over 20 monks), painting religious statues (four or five monks), painting temple murals (a dozen or so monks), making sand mandalas¹⁶⁸⁰ (a dozen or so monks), copying scriptures, and so forth.

Pu Wencheng, in his useful overview of monasteries in Qinghai Province, says that Gönlung and its incarnate lama estates owned over 49,000 *mu* of land (approx. 3,267 hectares or 32.7 million square meters) on the eve of the Communist revolution, of which some 33,000 *mu* is in the modern-day county of Huzhu.¹⁶⁸¹ It is unclear what Pu’s source is for his numbers, which do not exactly match up with those in the *Research on the Social History of Qinghai Monguors*. According to the latter, Gönlung had 37,000 *mu* in what is now Huzhu County.¹⁶⁸² Ownership of this is broken down roughly in the following way:

10 *jin* [5 kg] of barley was traded for only one ‘bundle’ [*xia* 匣] of firewood; 80 *jin* [40 kg] of grain was traded for only one *jin* [.5 kg] of brown sugar; 100 *jin* [50 kg] of grain was trade for only one package of [brick] tea [*fucha* 茯茶]; 200 *jin* [100 kg] of grain could buy only one small wok [*xiao guo* 小锅].” (Note barley was on average 19% cheaper than wheat, at least during the 1950s). Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 267 and 274.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Ch. *yue he shi jin* 约合十斤.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group), *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 52. Nowadays, monks’ residences are so replete with steamed bread loaves that the monks will sun the older, staler bread and sell it to a Chinese merchant who comes periodically to the monastery and ultimately turns the stale bread into animal feed. If my memory serves me right, the Chinese merchant in 2011 would buy each kilogram of stale bread for one *renminbi*.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Ch. *zuo fen hua tu fo* 作粉画土佛.

¹⁶⁸¹ Pu Wencheng, *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan*, 77; Nian Zhihai and Bai Gengdeng, in their more-or-less plagiarized reproduction of Pu’s book, do not discuss Gönlung pre-Communist landholdings, although they do provide some other interesting data regarding the contemporary finances of the monastery. See their *Qinghai Zangchuan fojiao siyuan mingjian*.

¹⁶⁸² Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 52. See also p. 101. The modern gazetteer of Huzhu gives 49,000 *mu*. Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 160.

Tuken Lama Villa (Ch. Tuguan <i>ang</i> 土观昂)	14,000 <i>mu</i>
“Monastery Sangha” (<i>zhongseng</i> 众僧)	10,000
Changkya Lama Villa	5,000
Sumpa Lama Villa	4,000
Wang Lama Villa	700-800
Chuzang Lama Villa	800
Li Lama Villa	200
Villa of the “Monastery Management Office” (<i>jiwa ang</i> 吉哇昂 < T. <i>spyi ba nang</i> [<i>chen</i>]?)	160-170
Villa of Khenpo [Lama] (?) (kanbu <i>ang</i> 堪布昂 < T. <i>mkhan po nang</i> [<i>chen</i>]) ¹⁶⁸³	100
Horkyong Lama Villa ¹⁶⁸⁴	100
Gyatik Lama Villa ¹⁶⁸⁵	80-90
Wushi 五十 Lama Villa (> T. <i>ul shri / ul shi</i>)	40-50
Lin jia 林家 Lama Villa	‘Several dozen’ ¹⁶⁸⁶

Tenants on the land of the “monastery sangha,” which appears to have been land owned by the monastery as a whole,¹⁶⁸⁷ were required to pay a substantial portion of their yields as rent.

¹⁶⁸³ The authors of the *Investigation of the Social History of the Tu* list “Kanbu fo” as one of the “nine minor incarnate lamas” of Gönlung. However, Nyima Dzin’s list of the nine does not include such a name nor does his list of other incarnate lamas who regularly stayed at Gönlung. The same is true for at least one other name found therein: Yangsha fo 羊沙佛. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*; Per Nyi ma ’dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 122–25; Qie’er Nimazeng Awanglexuejiacuo 尔尔·尼玛增·阿旺勒雪嘉措 [Per nyi ma ’dzin ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho], *Youning si xuzhi*, 60–2.

¹⁶⁸⁴ The Chinese given is Forijun 佛日郡. However, the modern gazetteer of Huzhu gives “Heerjun” 贺尔郡, which appears to be a transliteration of the Tibetan Hor skyong. Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 160.

¹⁶⁸⁵ The Chinese given is Rudeng 如登. However, the modern gazetteer of Huzhu gives “Jiadeng” 加登, which may be a transliteration of the Tibetan “Rgya tig,” although I am not sure about this identification.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group), *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 52.

¹⁶⁸⁷ It is not clear how the “monastery sangha” (*zhongseng*) owned property that was distinguished from that owned by the monastery’s general management office (Ch. *jiwa* < T. *spyi ba*).

For instance, for a parcel of land sown with one *dan* 石 of seed (approx. 100 liters)¹⁶⁸⁸—such land amounting to approximately 40 *mu* or 2.67 hectares, we are told—the tenant was required to pay five *dou* 斗, or 50 liters of grain as rent.¹⁶⁸⁹ Presuming a relatively low seed-to-yield ratio of 1:2 or 1:3 for the relatively unproductive fields of premodern Gansu, this no doubt amounted to a considerable burden for tenants.¹⁶⁹⁰ The “monastery sangha” would have collected 1,250 *dou*, or 12,500 liters of grain upon each annual harvest, which is no small allowance.¹⁶⁹¹

That being said, it is important to note that what is now Huzhu County had some 1.16 million *mu* of cultivated land in the years leading up to the Communist takeover there.¹⁶⁹² That means that Gönlung, its lamas, and their subsidiary temples possessed *no more than* 3.2

¹⁶⁸⁸ On the unreliable nature of such figures in the pre-Communist period see Wu Mu 武沐, “Qingdai Hezhou duliangheng zhiqian dimu jisuan danwen ji fangfa.”

¹⁶⁸⁹ In addition, for each *mu* of land, the tenant is said to have paid ten *liang* 两 of (canola) oil and 10 *jin* of hay. For every *dan* of land rented, the tenant had to give the monastery two days worth of chopping firewood in return as well as ten sacks (*dai* 袋) of earth (for constructing buildings). Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 52; Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 160.

¹⁶⁹⁰ I do not know what actual yields were. The *Research on the Social History of Qinghai Monguors* includes a table that suggests a 1:10 ratio. Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 14; Sumpa Khenpo writes of an extremely robust harvest that occurred in 1782 when yields were as high as 1:110. Others are said to have had yields of 1:50, and just about everyone, it seems, got over 1:10. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor*, 567. The modern gazetteer of Huzhu, for its part, says that a single *mu* of land “normally produced only 100 *jin* [i.e. 50 kg of grain],” while a single *mu* was seeded with 2.5 liters (*sheng*) of seed. My attempts at converting *jin* to *sheng* have resulted in even more outrageously high seed-to-yield ratios. Suffice it to say that Huzhu and surrounding areas have been notoriously draught-prone since at least the early Qing. Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 160 and 187.

¹⁶⁹¹ The communist authors of the *Research on the Social History of Qinghai Monguors* also inform us that Gönlung was not tolerant of late payers: “Prior to Liberation, Gönlung also had tools for punishment and a prison. If there were incidents of peasants owing rent or interest, then [the late payer] would be arrested, tied up and beaten or punished with corvée labor. For more serious [cases], they were sent to the [Chinese] government for punishment.” Qinghai sheng bianji zu (Editorial Group), *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha*, 11.

¹⁶⁹² Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 187.

percent of the cultivated land in Huzhu.¹⁶⁹³ Since there were only 290 monks at Gönlung and perhaps another 250 monks¹⁶⁹⁴ at its subsidiary temples, this means that monks made up less than .5% of Huzhu's population of over 112,000 people.¹⁶⁹⁵ Thus, it does appear that the communist authors of our *Qinghai Tuzu shehui lishi diaocha* have some basis for their assertion that monks were better off than the “toiling masses.” Nonetheless, ownership of a mere three percent of cultivated land pales in comparison with the dominion exercised by some medieval Christian monasteries and abbeys,¹⁶⁹⁶ not to mention outright lordship over all of Pari with which Gönlung was endowed in the seventeenth century by Güüshi Khan.

In conclusion, it is clear that Gönlung was *not* deprived of *all* of its estates. The Gönlung customary of 1737 specifies Gönlung's pastures:

The livestock of the Monguor [hor] nomads are not allowed on [the monastery's] restricted pastures be it winter, spring, summer, or fall, including Chugo kari [chu mgo dkar ris], below the Khekya Shortcut [khe skya'i 'phred lam 'og, the Khoré Mountains [mkho re sgang rgyud], the Kyerkhé Lake and Mountain [skyer khe'i/ mtsho ris], Phutung letsé [phu thung las tshe], and the Mönné Mountains [smon ne sgang rgyud].¹⁶⁹⁷

Similarly, the customary instructs that local laity are responsible for financing Gönlung's Great Prayer festival when no patron appears and that they must give gifts of butter to the monastery's medium (*sku rten*) whenever he makes visits to the villages. Moreover, Sumpa Khenpo regularly refers to the “divine communities” (*lha sde*) of Gönlung in his autobiography.

¹⁶⁹³ There is no indication that all of Gönlung's 37,000 *mu* of land was entirely made up of cultivated land. It is quite likely that some of this land was used for lumber or not used for any economic gain at all.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Pu Wencheng gives figures from the 1950s or earlier for a handful of monasteries in Huzhu.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (Editorial Committee), *Huzhu Tuzu zizhi xian xian zhi*, 119.

¹⁶⁹⁶ C. H. (Clifford Hugh) Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed (Harlow, England ; New York: Longman, 2001), 123–27.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Rgyal sras 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, “Customary of Gönlung Monastery, etc. (Xylograph),” 36b.6.

At the same time, it is an oversimplification to say that the rules and restrictions set forth by the Qing authorities “were not implemented.”¹⁶⁹⁸ As we have seen, Gönlung’s landholdings in the early twentieth century were not that impressive, and Gönlung, like its subsidiary temples, was burdened with new obligations like paying taxes and providing corvée for government officials.

Conclusion: “Imperial Monasteries”

Review of all this data regarding the loss of Gönlung’s autonomy and the introduction of imperial oversight raises the question of whether Gönlung is to be considered an “imperial monastery.” “Imperial monastery” is a term used by a number of scholars to refer to monasteries in the Qing that received imperial recognition and were supported, supervised, and even administered by court authorities. The term has no strict, agreed upon definition, and its use is questionable at best. Nonetheless, it is important for our understanding Gönlung’s place in the Qing that we consider the term and its application to monasteries in Gansu.

There is no emic or indigenous term that corresponds to what has been called an “imperial monastery,” although there are several Chinese terms that one might consider corresponding to an “imperial monastery.” These include “*chongning*” 崇寧 (lit. revering peace) monasteries and “*huguo si*” 護國寺 (“monasteries that protect the state). According to

¹⁶⁹⁸ Mi Yizhi, *Qinghai lishi gaikuang (chu gao)*, 164.

the Song historian Martin Schlütter, *chongning* monasteries were later called Tianning wanshou 天寧萬壽 (lit. [Monasteries of] Heavenly Peace [of] Ten Thousand Years), and

were Buddhist monasteries set up specifically to pray for the long life of the emperor. Each prefecture was charged with setting up one of these monasteries, although it is not clear whether new monasteries were built or existing ones appropriated. ... the most illustrious monks in the empire were to be appointed to their abbacies (*Luohu yelu* 羅湖野錄, Z 2b.15.497b). The abbots for the Chongning monasteries were naturally appointed by imperial command, and it seems likely that this inspired imperial appointments to the abbacies of other monasteries deemed important to the state.¹⁶⁹⁹

The Tibetan “*zhabs brtan gyi dgon pa*,” or “monastery of long life,” suggests a similar sort of institution; that is, one established to perform prayers on behalf of the reigning emperor. One example of such a “monastery of long life” is Drati Rabgyé Monastery (pra sti rab rgyas dgon) in the Pari region, which is said to have received an imperial allowance for its services.¹⁷⁰⁰ Another monastery in Pari, Taklung Monastery (stag lung dgon dga’ ldan dam chos gling), was made into a “*huguo si*” and given the name Baoen si, or “Monastery that Protects [the Emperor’s] Kindness.”¹⁷⁰¹ None of these terms has been applied to Gönlung, and I do not know of any examples of the monks at Gönlung reciting prayers on behalf of the emperor.

The *etic* or English term “imperial monastery” and its cognates, on the other hand, have been employed by a number of different scholars, including the Mongolists Robert Miller and Isabelle Charleux as well as the Sinologist John Fairbank. Fairbank, who seems to be drawing on Miller for his information, writes

¹⁶⁹⁹ Schlütter, “Vinaya Monasteries, Public Abbacies, and State Control of Buddhism Under the Northern Song (960–1127),” 147.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 134.27.

¹⁷⁰¹ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Tianzhu Zangzu zizhi xian weiyuanhui and Kong Lingming, *Tianzhu Zangchuan fojiao siyuan gaikuang*, 104 and 105.

For Inner Mongolia the ICang-skya Khutughtu, a reincarnating lama resident in Peking, was head of a centralized monastery system under imperial patronage and was the Inner Mongols' most important ecclesiastical figure. The monasteries and lamas under his authority were exempt from taxes and services and enjoyed many privileges.¹⁷⁰²

Miller, for his part, writes that imperial monasteries were those which

frequently numbered their residents in the thousands and had extensive staffs, received financial support from the Manchu Court through salaries and contributions, and attracted worshippers from all parts of Mongolia. These monasteries often carried out official functions for the Court, for example, *Dolon-nor*, which “once had the Lamistic printing office and had authority to issue all kinds of instructions.”¹⁷⁰³

The clearest definition of an imperial monastery is given by Charleux, who identifies twenty-four “imperial monasteries” and “imperialized monasteries.” “For all these imperial monasteries,” she writes,

the Lifan yuan [Board of Colonial Affairs] enacted an ordinance fixing the status and income of the monastery, appointed its administrators, gave an official title to the monastery and ordination certificates to a quota of monks. When monastic communities were created *ex nihilo*, every banner was ordered to send monks and money to support them. Besides the imperial monasteries, other large monasteries received an official title with a wooden board.”¹⁷⁰⁴

It is noteworthy that all of these scholars have in mind *Mongolia* when discussing these monasteries. This is particularly true of Charleux. However, not every scholar is as careful as Charleux. Miller, for instance, considers the system of imperial monasteries to be one component in a larger “Peking Organization” of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, an organization headed by Changkya Khutughtu:

As head of the [Peking] organization that reached from Peking and Jehol in the east to *Hsining in the west*, and that controlled numerous monasteries and temples in Inner

¹⁷⁰² Joseph Fletcher, “Ch’ing Inner Asia c. 1800,” in *Cambridge History of China, The: Volume 10, Late Ch’ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10, pt. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 52.

¹⁷⁰³ Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, 19 I would like to thank my advisor, Kurtis Schaeffer, for first bringing this valuable book to my attention.

¹⁷⁰⁴ “Buddhist Monasteries in Southern Mongolia,” 358n23.

Mongolia, the Changchia Khutukhtu was not always resident in Peking, but was assisted by other *khutukhtus* residing in or near the capital.¹⁷⁰⁵

Miller includes “Guolong” [Wade-Giles: Kuo-lung] Monastery, i.e. Gönlung, among Changkya’s monasteries in Xining.¹⁷⁰⁶ Of course, Miller is not incorrect in suggesting that Changkya had some oversight of the goings-on at Gönlung. However, his casual suggestion that the “Peking Organization” of monasteries stretches from Manchuria in the East to Xining in the West conflates a diverse array of monastic institutions. For instance, unlike those “imperial monasteries” located in Beijing, the *Lifan yuan zeli* (Supplements to the Statutes of the Board of Colonial Affairs) do not stipulate the types and numbers of monastic officials that are to staff Gönlung, nor do they specify the amount of an allowance that is to be paid to the monastery. Similarly, the *Lifan yuan zeli* do not set a quota for the types and numbers of monks allowed to reside at Gönlung. As we have seen, most of these things are indeed mentioned elsewhere (e.g. in the imperial stele erected at Gönlung), and the monastery was certainly on the Board’s radar.¹⁷⁰⁷ However, Gönlung’s acquisition of some of the traits of an “imperial monastery” was a more piece-meal process, and its interactions with Qing officialdom seem to have been limited to authorities in Xining and Gansu and to its lamas in Beijing (such as Changkya).

An even more reckless appraisal of what comprises an imperial monastery can be found in one dissertation on the Board of Colonial Affairs:

¹⁷⁰⁵ Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, 72. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 71n2.

¹⁷⁰⁷ *Qingdai gebuyuan zeli: Qinding lifanyuan zeli*, 2:700 (*juan* 56, p. 7); Ji Yuanyuan 季垣垣, ed., *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben Lifan yuan zeli 乾隆朝内府抄本《理藩院则例》* (Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue chubanshe, 2006). My thanks to Ulan for bringing the latter edition to my attention.

The *Li-fan Yuan tse-li* [i.e. The Regulations of the Board of Colonial Affairs] listed ninety-one Lamaist temples *under its direct administration* in Peking, Seng-ching, Jehol, Wu-tai shan, Dolonor, Kuei-hua, Kansu and Hsi-ning.¹⁷⁰⁸

As I have already pointed out, it is not at all correct to speak of “direct administration” of all of the monasteries that shared one or more of the traits spelled out by Charleaux. Remember, too, that on several occasions Gönlung appointed its own abbot or head of its tantra college in direct opposition to the wishes of the Beijing-based lama who theoretically had the power to make the decision.¹⁷⁰⁹ Nonetheless, even before the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, Gönlung was enmeshed in the imperial bureaucracy. By 1705, one of Gönlung’s principal incarnate lamas and ultimately its proprietor (*dgon bdag*)¹⁷¹⁰, the Changkya Rinpoché, had been made a ‘national preceptor’ (*guoshi*) by the Kangxi Emperor.¹⁷¹¹ In addition, there were at least five other major lamas from Gönlung living in Beijing before the Lubsang-Danzin, thus signifying the importance that the Qing placed on the monastery as well as the value Gönlung itself placed on its relationship with the Qing Court.¹⁷¹² After the rebellion the ties between the Qing and Gönlung grew even stronger when, for example, it was given an imperial plaque with its new, “elegant” name and the monks there found themselves required to pay taxes for the state coffers in Xining.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Ning Chia, “The Li-fan Yuan in the Early Ch’ing Dynasty” (The Johns Hopkins University, 1992), 225–6. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 168; citing Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Gönlung Monastic Chronicle.” Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshulb brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 267–8.

¹⁷¹⁰ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshulb brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 566. This title applies to the third Changkya, Rölpe Dorjé.

¹⁷¹¹ Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, “Rje btsun bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan’s Autobiography (Zhol),” 30a.6–30b.1.

¹⁷¹² Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal ’byor mchog gi spyod tshulb brjod pa sgra ’dzin bcud len*, 147–8. These “*bla ma che gra*” of Gönlung are said to be the *tham ka bla ma*, *Ha ca ja sag*, *Hor dum*, *Khyi ca* (< Ch. Qijia?), and *O ra ser* (= ‘Od gser?).

Whether or not all of these reforms discussed in this chapter were actually or fully implemented is beside the point. Attempts at regulating the Buddhist and other religious clergy in China have a long and spotted record. Imperial edicts and laws passed, once stringently enforced, came to be empty letters. Other times the emperor would simply give his imprimatur to an already existing reality. The *suspicion* of religious types, however, has been an unwavering part of official rhetoric and policy for centuries. In the eyes of Qing authorities, by participating in the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion, Gönlung proved itself incapable of avoiding the worst aspects of religion: the economic exploitation of society and the cultivation of social unrest. Gönlung's leadership, morale, and finances were in disarray, and the monastery was left to limp out the rest of the eighteenth century, no longer the largest and most renowned outpost of Geluk Buddhist philosophy and practice in Amdo and subject to the oversight and "benevolence" of Qing authorities.

Conclusion

The present work ends where the last chapter left us, with Gönlung limping out the eighteenth century. This is admittedly one of the shortcomings of this work. After all, Gönlung maintained a population of over 2000 monks into the nineteenth century. In addition, it appears to have retained some of the institutional features that characterize a mega monastery: the nineteenth-century *Ocean Annals* gives us a rich description of Gönlung's ritual calendar: among other things it tells us that the proper performance of the Great Prayer Festival of the sixth month was "firmly established." One of Gönlung's incarnate lamas, Wang Khutugtu, is even found traveling to Eastern Mongolia and exporting Gönlung's systems of scholastic examination at the close of the nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, the post-Lubsang Danzin Gönlung lacked the robust system of local and regional patronage that brought the monastery into existence in the first place. In addition, as we saw in the last chapter, it lacked a strong system of governance that a mega monastery requires to hold together its other components. When its related system of discipline began to erode, so did Gönlung's reputation. Thus, we find instances of scholars from other monasteries outclassing and humiliating Gönlung monks.

What defines mega monasteries is the *integration* of multiple, complex, and overlapping systems that managed, socialized, trained, supported, and mobilized hundreds or thousands of monks. It is no surprise that the Three Seats in Lhasa, Trashi Lhünpo in Tsang, Labrang, Kumbum, and Gönlung Monasteries *all* have (or had) complex bureaucratic

structures, well-publicized systems of discipline,¹⁷¹³ philosophical colleges, tantric colleges, and numerous affiliated monasteries and hermitages whence these mega monasteries draw their monks and where they project their influence.

One way of gauging whether the term “mega monastery” actually has any analytical value is to try to imagine a monastery with *all but one* of the institutional features presented in this work: governance, discipline, scholasticism, and ritual. (The first part of this work describes the complex history of Gönlung’s patronage. Robust patronage, incidentally, is also common to mega monasteries). One might argue that one of the reasons the most paradigmatic mega monasteries of Tibet’s past have struggled to reestablish themselves in exile is that the institutional features of a mega monastery have been recreated piecemeal: tantric colleges and their philosophical counterparts are founded in different parts of India or not at all; some annual exams that once involved the meeting of monks from different colleges or different monasteries were never reestablished; and, of course, the traditional forms of patronage on which the monasteries relied vanished after so many Tibetan fled over the Himalayas and took refuge in South Asia.

Alternatively, one might look to see whether the term “mega monastery” can be applied to other, less obvious massive monastic institutions, such as Larung Gar.¹⁷¹⁴ Larung Gar is a dynamic monastic center founded in 1980 in eastern Tibet that has “a revolving population of about 2,000 in winter and 1,400 in summer, with an expanded population of up

¹⁷¹³ I am reminded of the inescapable presence of a guard of monks at the main entrance to Labrang Monastery that my cohort, Ben Deitle, and I observed one night in 2011. They were stopping each and every car that approached the road into the monastery and aggressively shined flashlights on the faces of the individuals inside the cars. When asked what they were doing, the guard-monks explained that they were enforcing the monastery’s curfew.

¹⁷¹⁴ T. bla rung sgar.

to 10,000 during major initiatory rituals.”¹⁷¹⁵ Notably, Larung Gar is strongly affiliated with the Nyingma sect of Tibetan Buddhism, although it maintains a nonsectarian and ecumenical identity. The Geluk sect, the sect most strongly identified with large-scale monasteries, is particularly underrepresented there.¹⁷¹⁶ Moreover, Larung Gar’s founder “self-consciously termed the monastic center a mountain hermitage (*ri khrod*) rather than an actual monastery that would establish and maintain his own distinctive traditions in line with the characteristic Tibetan emphasis on sectarian continuity and lineage (*brgyud pa*).¹⁷¹⁷ Although Larung Gar maintains unique features that sharply distinguish it from “institutionalized Buddhism” (e.g. an on-going and living practice of prophecy and revelation), it shares an uncanny resemblance with the founding and development of Gönlung.

Both institutions were founded as *shedra*¹⁷¹⁸ (‘commentary schools’) based on prophecies made by distinguished lamas. Both have systems of monastic discipline that help ensure they serve as objects of lay devotion and patronage. Both have systematized curriculums, modes of evaluation, and levels of achievement. Both also have procedures for distributing alms (or at least tea) to their respective congregations. Finally, both belong to large networks of “brother-“ and “child-monasteries.”¹⁷¹⁹ However, there are clear differences. Larung Gar does not track membership as does (or did) Gönlung, hence its

¹⁷¹⁵ David Germano, “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People’s Republic of China,” in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, ed. Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew T. Kapstein (University of California Press, 1998), 65. Larung Gar has periodically been placed under severed pressure (even partial destruction) since this article was published. Thus, the population there has no doubt fluctuated. Nonetheless, it is my understanding that the population of Larung Gar today is still in the thousands.

¹⁷¹⁶ Germano reports that only five percent of the resident population are Geluk. “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet: Contemporary Tibetan Visionary Movements in the People’s Republic of China.”

¹⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64–5.

¹⁷¹⁸ T. *bshad grwa*.

¹⁷¹⁹ My information on Larung Gar is drawn primarily from Germano, “Re-membering the Dismembered Body of Tibet.”

“revolving population.” In addition, it is not clear the extent to which Larung Gar has a regular calendar of communal, ritual worship, nor is it clear that it has a centralized governing apparatus as extensive as that found at Gönlung. These differences are crucial, because they separate those centralized institutions with proven staying power and centralized systems for managing every aspect of life within the monastery¹⁷²⁰ from those with more far-flung mechanisms for training and educating their monks. The former have already been destroyed or heavily regulated by the imperial powers that base themselves in Beijing, while the latter may lack the institutional resources necessary to sustain themselves, although they too have raised a great deal of suspicion and ire among the political elite in China.

Mega monasteries are complex institutions, and as such they deserve complex answers. The answers I have given here are no doubt incomplete. Moreover, there are many dimensions of Gönlung that I have not explored in the present work, including the monastery’s estates and the forms of exchange it had with the laity, the monastery’s oracle (what Schram calls the “Kurtain” < T. *sku rten*), and the monastery’s *sacra* and physical layout, to name a few. Some of these lacunae are the result of the lack of access to sources (e.g. the tantric college’s customary would no doubt provide greater detail concerning the monastery’s ritual practices; unfortunately, the text is off-limits to the uninitiated). Some are due to time constraints (e.g. in the future I would like to more closely examine the contents of the ritual texts recited at Gönlung’s protectors’ hall). Some are simply due to my own shortcomings (e.g. a knowledge of the local Monguor language, i.e. Mongghul, would have

¹⁷²⁰ They also nurture strong sectarian and other identities; hence Gönlung following its Mongol patrons into battle in 1724.

facilitated my interviews with elderly monks concerning monastic life prior to the communist revolution in China).

Nonetheless, in the present work I have identified important historical and institutional features of Gönlung that may help us gain a clearer understanding of what constitutes a mega monastery elsewhere on the Tibetan Plateau. A complex web of local, regional, and interregional relationships with patrons fostered the financing and early development of Gönlung. Over the course of the seventeenth century, its *shedra* became fully institutionalized in a system of debate, lecture, examination, and degrees, among other things. Shortly thereafter, this mega monastery transformed exclusive, esoteric traditions of ritual and contemplative practice into a monastery-wide system of communal worship. These developments in scholasticism and ritual were matched by equally novel developments in monastic administration and finance. This included codified expectations of behavior and social norms within the monastery along with specified punishments for those who did not conform. Finally, all of these developments were integrated into a single whole, and this fully formed mega monastery inevitably became part of various monastic networks linking “trunk” institutions with its branches and fostering sectarian identities based on common systems of scholasticism, ritual, and so forth.

Whether these conclusions are challenged or further corroborated depends on whether there are any future attempts to explain the sizeable phenomenon that is “mega monasticism” and to elucidate the place of monasteries in Tibet’s past. As a preface to his explanation of the need for and origin of Gönlung’s extensive customary, the author, Gyelsé Jikmé Yeshé Drakpa, paraphrases and builds on a quote by Śāntideva;

The sole source of the uprooting of the suffering and the causes [of suffering] of all sentient beings and [the source] of all benefit and happiness is the Victor's Precious Teachings. Moreover, the Teachings¹⁷²¹ depend upon the exegetical learning and spiritual accomplishment as well as the comportment of the Sangha who upholds them [i.e. the Teachings].¹⁷²²

Here, considerable weight—indeed, Buddhism itself—is being placed on the shoulders of the Buddhist clergy and its training. Given the religious (and social) importance that Tibetans have traditionally given to monks and the places where monks reside, it is vital that we make *every attempt* to better understand them.

¹⁷²¹ The pronoun that is used to refer back to “the Teachings” (*bstan pa*), namely “*de*,” indicates that it is understood as a singular noun. Thus “Teaching” might be a more appropriate translation..

¹⁷²² 'Jigs med ye shes grags pa, Rgyal sras (1696-1750), “Dpal snar thang dang [/rwa sgren / dgon lung byams pa gling dgon ma lag bcas kyi] gi bca' yig 'dul khirms dngos brgya 'bar ba'i gzi 'od (Customaries of Pelnarhang, Reting, and Gönlung Monasteries and Branches),” in *Gsung 'bum (Collected Works)*, vol. 'a (23) (n.p. [Lhasa], 1737), 30a.6–30b.1.

Appendix I: Gönlung Abbots

Number in Abbacy Lineage 1723	Name	Years in Office ¹⁷²⁴	Length of Term (in years) 1725
	Gyelsé Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso (rgyal sras don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho)	1604-1609	5
1	Sumpa I Damchö Gyatso (sum pa dam chos rgya mtsho)	1609-12	3
2	Karing Kachupa PüntsoK Namgyel (kwa ring dka' bcu pa phun tshogs rnam rgyal)	1612-17	5
3	Jangchup Semjong Trashi PüntsoK (byang chub sems 'byongs bkra shis phun tshogs) ¹⁷²⁶	1617-21	4
4	Sumpa I Damchö Gyatso (second term)	1621-27	6

¹⁷²³ For this table of Gönlung's abbots, I have relied principally on the following three sources: For the first forty abbots, Tuken's (T. thu'u bkwan) *Gönlung Chronicle*. For forty-one through the one hundred ninth abbots, Wang V's *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*. Finally, Nyima Dzin's (T. nyi ma 'dzin) modern publication (*Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*) provides information on the 110th abbot through the 123rd abbots.

¹⁷²⁴ If the sources do not tell us that an abbot has resigned, then I have assumed that his term ends when the next abbot's term begins.

¹⁷²⁵ The figures in this column are approximations based on the third column ("years in office") and other information gleaned from the sources.

¹⁷²⁶ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, trans. and ed. Bireshwar Prasad Singh (Patna, India: Bihar Research Society, 1991), 92; Note that the *Yellow Beryl* has "Khonor Chö PüntsoK" (kho nur chos phun tshogs) listed as the third abbot. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

5	Wangchuk Chö Gyatso (dbang phyug chos rgya mtsho) ¹⁷²⁷	1627-30	3
6	Drakpa Özer (lcang skya grags pa 'od zer) ¹⁷²⁸	1630-33	3
7	Sumpa the Younger Damchö Gyeltsen (sum pa slob dpon pa chung ba dam chos rgyal mtshan) ¹⁷²⁹	1633-37	4
8	The Great Adept of Denma Tsültrim Gyatso ('dan ma grub chen tshul khriims rgya mtsho)	1637-39	2
9	Namgyel Peljor (rnam rgyal dpal 'byor) ¹⁷³⁰	1639-48	9
10	Lama Tsenpo Döndrup Gyatso (bla ma btsan po don grub rgya mtsho) ¹⁷³¹	1648-50	2
11	Lozang Ngakyi Wangpo (blo bzang ngag gi dbang po) ¹⁷³²	1650-1651 ("two spring dharma sessions")	1
12	Hardong Dönyö Gyeltsen (har gdong don yod)	1651-1652	1.5

¹⁷²⁷ Aka Jampa Chöjé ('jam pa chos rjes). Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 94; The *Yellow Beryl* lists "Samlo Chö Gyatso" (bsam blo chos rgya mtsho) as the fifth abbot. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

¹⁷²⁸ He is retroactively recognized as the first Changkya lama. Sumpa Khenpo refers to him as "Changkya Chöjé" (lcang skya chos rje). *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 94 and 191; The *Yellow Beryl* calls him "Changkyawa Drakapa Özer" (lcang skya ba grags pa 'od zer). Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

¹⁷²⁹ He is referred to by the title of "Khalitsawa" (kha li tsha ba) in the *Yellow Beryl*. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

¹⁷³⁰ He comes to be recognized as the first Chuzang. The *Yellow Beryl* refers to him by the title of "Tödlung Chuzangwa" (stod lung chu bzang ba). Ibid.

¹⁷³¹ The *Yellow Beryl* refers to him by the title of "Gawa dongpukpa" (dga' ba gdong phug pa). Ibid.

¹⁷³² Several other sources give him the title of "Samdrup Gangpa" (bsam grub sgang pa).

	rgyal mtshan)	("a year and a half") ¹⁷³³	
	Lama Tsenpo Döndrup Gyatso (serves as temporary substitute)	1653	0.5
13	Den Chung Trashi Özer ('dan chung bkra shis 'od zer) ¹⁷³⁴	1653-56	3
14	Trashi Gyeltsen (bkra shis rgyal mtshan) ¹⁷³⁵	1657-61	4
15	Dönyö Chödrak (don yod chos grags) ¹⁷³⁶	1661-65	4
16	Pelden Gyatso (dpal ldan rgya mtsho) ¹⁷³⁷	1665-72	7
17	Lozang Rabten (blo bzang rab brtan) ¹⁷³⁸	1672-75 ¹⁷³⁹	3
18	Lozang Gyeltsen (blo bzang rgyal mtshan) ¹⁷⁴⁰	1675-80	5
19	Chuzang II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen (chu bzang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan)	1680-88	3
20	Changkya II Ngawang Lozang Chöden (lcang	1688-90	2

¹⁷³³ He asked the Fifth Dalai Lama for permission to resign on the latter's trip through the area en route to Beijing in 1652.

¹⁷³⁴ The *Yellow Beryl* inverts the order of his name, giving Özer Trashi ('od zer bkra shis). Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

¹⁷³⁵ The *Yellow Beryl* gives him the title "Pakré" (spag ras). Ibid.

¹⁷³⁶ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title of Lukya Chöjé (lu'u kya chos rje). *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 195. The *Ocean Annals* give him the title of Tharwo Chöjé (thar bo chos rje).

¹⁷³⁷ The *Ocean Annals* gives him the title of "the Degu the Elder" (bde rgu che ba).

¹⁷³⁸ He comes to be recognized as the first Tuken lama. Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title of Tuken Chöjé (thu'u bkwan chos rje). *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 100.

¹⁷³⁹ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 152; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 100.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title of Likya Pönlop (li kya dpon slob). He later comes to be recognized as the first Likya lama. *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 100; The *Yellow Beryl* fails to mention Likya as abbot of Gönlung. Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340.

	skya ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan)		
21	Pelden Gyatso (dpal ldan rgya mtsho) ¹⁷⁴¹	1690-93	3
22	Degu Lama the Younger, Kün'ga Gyeltsen (bde dgu bla ma chung ba kun dga' rgyal mtshan) ¹⁷⁴²	1693-1701	8
23	Lozang Tenpa Chökyi Nyima (blo bzang bstan pa chos kyi nyi ma) ¹⁷⁴³	1701-04	3
24	Tuken II Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso (thu'u bkwan ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtsho)	1704-12	8
25	Chuzang II Lozang Tenpé Gyeltsen	1712-23	11
	Wushi Lodrö Gyatso (U shri [< Ch. Wushi 五十] blo gros rgya mtsho) and Tsanggya Tendzin Gyatso (tshang rgya btsan 'dzin rgya mtsho) serve as the 'minor preceptors' (T. <i>slob dpon</i> , i.e. the monastery's instructors) during Chuzang's abbacy	1712-23	
26	Denma II Ngawang Tendzin Trinlé ('dan ma	1723-24	1

¹⁷⁴¹ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title of Dowa Rapjam (rdo ba rab 'byams). *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 102; *The Yellow Beryl* refers to him by the title of Khalé (kha le). Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDurya ser po*, 340.

¹⁷⁴² *The Yellow Beryl* refers to him as Khola Kün'ga Gyatso (kho la kun dga' rgya mtsho). Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDurya ser po*, 340; Changkya II also refers to him by the name Kün'ga Gyatso. Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan (1642-1714), "Dgon lung gi bla brgyud gsol 'debs nor bu'i 'phreng ba (The Jeweled Garland of Devotional Prayers to the Succession of Abbots of Gönlung Monastery)," in *Gsung 'Bum* (Collected Works), vol. 7 (Beijing, n.d.), 2b.3; See also Lcang skya II Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, "Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan's Autobiography (Peking)," 15a.4.

¹⁷⁴³ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title Taklung Zhapdrung (stag lung zhabs drung). *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 103.

	ngag dbang bstan 'dzin 'phrin las)		
27	Sumpa Püntsok Namgyel (sum pa phun tshogs rnam rgyal) ¹⁷⁴⁴	1729-34	5
28	Drakpa Peljor (grags pa dpal byor) ¹⁷⁴⁵	1734-37	3
29	Khyungtsa II Ngawang Wanggyel (khyung tsha ngag dbang dbang rgyal)	1737-40	3
30	Degu III Ngawang Geluk Gyatso (bde dgu ngag dbang dge legs rgya mtsho) ¹⁷⁴⁶	1740-43	3
31	Lozang Döndrup ¹⁷⁴⁷	1743-46	3
32	Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor (sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal 'byor)	1746-49	3
33	Chuzang III Ngawang Tupten Wangchuk (ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug)	1749-54	5
34	Likya II ¹⁷⁴⁸ Püntsok Drakpa Tendzin (phun tshogs grags pa bstan 'dzin)	1754-56	1
35	Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor (second term)	1756-61	5

¹⁷⁴⁴ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him as Sumpa Chöjé. Pütsok Namgyel may be a later rebirth of the first abbot, Sumpa Damchö Gyatso, aka Sumpa Chöjé. The more illustrious Sumpa Khenpo, for his part, is a later rebirth of the first abbot's younger brother, Sumpa the Younger, Damchö Gyeltsen. Thus, this latter lineage is better documented. *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁷⁴⁵ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him as Wang Chöjé (wang chos rje). He is later recognized as the first Wang lama. *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴⁶ His predecessor is Degu Püntsok Ngön'ga (phun tshogs mngon dga'). The latter's predecessor is the above Degu Pelden Gyatso (the sixteenth abbot). Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 128.26.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Sumpa Khenpo refers to him by the title Gyeltik Rapjampa (rgyal tig rab 'byams pa), which should be corrected to Gyatik Rapjampa (rgya tig rab 'byams pa). Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Chronology of Tibet According to the Re'u mig of Sum pa mkhan po*, 109.

¹⁷⁴⁸ He is the rebirth of Likya Lozang Gyeltsen (the eighteenth abbot).

36	Tuken III Lozang Chökyi Nyima (thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma)	1761-63	2
37	Jamyang Zhepa II Könchok Jikmé Wangpo ('jam dbyangs bzhad pa dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po)	1763-64	1
38	Changkya III Rölpé Dorjé (lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje)	1764-69 ¹⁷⁴⁹	5
	The Zasag Lama Kelzang Lhawang (ja sag bla ma skal bzang lha dbang) served as the monastery's 'preceptor' (T. <i>slob dpon</i> , i.e. main spiritual instructor) in Changkya's stead.	1764-?	
	Chuzang III Ngawang Tupten Wangchuk serves as the 'minor preceptor' (<i>slob chung</i>) after the Zasag Lama's tenure.	?-1770	
39	Serding Zhapdrung Ngawang Chöden (ser lding zhabs drung ngag dbang chos ldan)	1770 ¹⁷⁵⁰	1
	Tuken III Lozang Chökyi Nyima (serves as substitute for Serding Zhapdrung) ¹⁷⁵¹	1771-72	3
40	Dowa Zhapdrung Ngawang Drakpa Namgyel	1772-76	4

¹⁷⁴⁹ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, *Lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje rnam thar*, 533–4; Cited in Wang, "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing," 171–2.

¹⁷⁵⁰ He passed away at the end of 1770.

¹⁷⁵¹ Wang V, the author of the later supplement to Tuken III's chronicle of Gönlung, does not count Tuken as the fortieth abbot but rather as the substitute of the late Serding Zhapdrung. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*.

	(rdo ba zhabs drung ngag dbang grags pa rnam rgyal)		
41	Degu (bde rgu 'dul 'dzin dar rgyas rgya mtsho pa) ¹⁷⁵²	1776-81	5
42	Sumpa Yeshé Peljor (third term)	1781-85	4
43	Wang II Kelzang Tupten Yeshé Dargyé (wang skal bzang thub bstan ye shes dar rgyas)	1785-88	3
44	Tuken III Lozang Chökyi Nyima (third term) ¹⁷⁵³	1788-92	4
45	Degu Zhapdrung Künga Yeshé Zangpo (bde rgu zhabs drung kun dga' ye shes bzang po)	1792-95	3
46	Chuzang III Ngawang Tupten Wangchuk (second term)	1795-97	2
47	Gungtang Könchok Tenpé Drönmé (gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me)	1797-99	2
48	Kharachin Toin Tutop Nyima (har chin tho yon mthu stobs nyi ma) ¹⁷⁵⁴	1799-1800	1
49	Wang II Kelzang Yeshé Dargyé (second term)	1800-02	2
50	Gyatik Zhapdrung Lozang Samdrup (rgya tig zhabs drung blo bzang bsam 'grub)	1802-09 ("about seven years")	7

¹⁷⁵² He is the rebirth of Degu Dargyé Gyatso (bde rgu dar rgyas rgya mtsho). Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 127.15.

¹⁷⁵³ This is his third term if one counts the replacement position he served in.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Also known as the "Former Gomang Abbot" (T. sgo mang mkhan zur).

51	Denma IV Pelden Thupten Gyeltsen ('dan ma dpal ldan thub bstan rgyal mtshan)	1809-?	2.5 ¹⁷⁵⁵
52	Wushi Zhapdrung Lozang Gelek (Ul shri zhabs drung blo bzang dge legs)	?-1814	2.5
53	Sumpa Zhamar Zhapdrung Lozang Gyeltsen (sum b+ha/pa zhwa dmar zhabs drung blo bzang rgyal mtshan)	1814-17	3
54	Likya Zhapdrung the Younger, Ngawang Jamyang Tendzin (li kyA zhabs drung chung ba ngag dbang 'jam dbyangs bstan 'dzin)	1817-19	2
55	Denma IV Pelden Thupten Gyeltsen (second term)	1819-21	2
56	Sumpa Zhamar Zhapdrung Lozang Gyeltsen (second term)	1821-23	2
57	Khyungtsa Zhapdrung Peljor Lhündrup (khyung tsha zhabs drung dpal 'byor lhun grub)	1823-24	1
58	Tuken IV Lozang Tupten Chökyi Gyeltsen (thu'u bkwan blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi rgyal mtshan)	1824-27	3
59	Sumpa Lopön the Younger IV, Jampel Tsultrim	1827-29	2

¹⁷⁵⁵ This and the following are estimates based on dividing the five year period between the 50th and 51st abbotships by two.

	Tendzin (sum b+ha/pa 'jam dpal tshul khrims bstan 'dzin) ¹⁷⁵⁶		
60	Dowa Zhapdrung Lozang Lungrik Nyima (rdo ba zhabs drung blo bzang lung rigs nyi ma)	1829-30	1
61	Wang III Kelzang Tupten Tenpé Nyima (wang skal bzang thub bstan bstan pa'i nyi ma)	1830-32	2
62	Khyungtsa Zhapdrung Peljor Lhündrup (second term)	1832-34 ("about two years")	2
63	Degu Khenpo Lhündrup Gyeltsen (bde rgu mkhan po lhun grub rgyal mtshan)	1834-37	3
64	Chuzang IV Lozang Tupten Rapgyé (chu bzang blo bzang thub bstan rab rgyas)	1837-39	2
65	Changkya IV Yeshé Tenpé Gyeltsen (lcang skya ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan)	1839-42	3
	Gomzhi Tsültrim Tendzin Gyatso (sgom zhi tshul khrims bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho) (Changkya IV appoints him to serve as 'preceptor' in his stead.) ¹⁷⁵⁷	1839-42	

¹⁷⁵⁶ This is the rebirth of Sumpa Khenpo. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 63.19.

¹⁷⁵⁷ This happened "not long" after Changkya IV took the abbatial throne. According to literature produced and handed out by Gomzhi's monastery (i.e. Stong shags bkra shis chos gling; Ch. Yangguan si), Tsültrim Tendzin Gyatso (1782-1853) is the fourth Gomzhi lama. This lineage is also known as the Lukya lineage (IU kya < Ch.

66	Dowa Zhapdrung Lozang Lungrik Nyima (second term)	1842-43	1
	Khyungtsa Peljor Lhündrup (substitute for the late Dowa Zhapdrung)	1843-46	3
67	Gyatik Zhapdrung Jampel Gyatso (rgya tig zhabs drung 'jam dpal rgya mtsho)	1846-47	1
68	Serding Zhapdrung Lozang Damchö Tendzin (ser lding zhabs drung blo bzang dam chos bstan 'dzin)	1847-48	1
69	Tuken Khenpo Könchok Lekshé (thu'u bkwan mkhan po dkon mchog legs bshad)	1848-51	3
70	Gyatik Zhapdrung Jampel Gyatso (second term)	1851-53	2
71	Degu Khenpo Lozang Könchok Gyeltsen (bde rgu mkhan po blo bzang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan)	1853-55	2
72	Kharachin Khenpo Lozang Pelden Tendzin Nyima (har chen mkhan po blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin nyi ma)	1855 (“a few months”)	.5
73	Likya Khenpo Jampel Yeshé Tendzin Gyatso (li	1855-58	3

Liujia 柳家) (not to be confused with the Lukya lineage (IU kya / IU kyA / lu'u kya / IU'u kya < Ch. Lujia 魯家) of Liancheng.

	kyA mkhan po 'jam dpal ye shes bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho)		
74	Horkyong Khenpo Lozang Gyeltsen (hor skyong mkhan po blo bzang rgyal mtshan)	1858-60	2
75	Tongkyia Khenpo Lozang Tendzin (stong gya mkhan po blo bzang bstan 'dzin)	1860-61	1
76	Tuken Khenpo Könchok Lekshé (second term)	1861-63 ("about two years")	2
77	Horkyong Khenpo Lozang Gyeltsen (second term)	1864-5	1
78	Likya Khenpo Jampel Yeshé Tendzin Gyatso (second term)	1865-69	4
79	Wushi the Younger, Könchok Tendzin Nyima (ul shri chung ba'i sprul sku rin po che dkon mchog bstan 'dzin nyi ma)	1869-71	3
80	Drati Zhapdrung Lozang Tsenchen (pra sti zhabs drung blo bzang mtshan can)	1871-73	2
81	Sumpa Lodrö Püntsock Namgyel (sum b+ha/pa blo gros phun tshogs rnam rgyal)	1873-74	1
82	Khyungtsa Zhapdrung Lozang Tenpé Nyiima (khyung tsha zhabs drung blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi	1874-76	2

	ma)		
83	Wushi the Younger, Könchok Tendzin Nyima (second term)	1876-77	1
84	Akyung Zhapdrung Tupten Drakpa Gyatso (a khyung zhabs drung thub bstan grags pa rgya mtsho)	1877-79	2
85	Wang IV Lozang Tsültrim Dargyé Gyatso (wang blo bzang tshul khrims dar rgyas rgya mtsho)	1879-83	4
86	Likya Ngawang Tenpel (li kyA ngag dbang bstan 'phel)	1883-84	1
87	Serding Zhapdrung Ngawang Drakpa Chokdrup (ser lding zhabs drung ngag dbang grags pa mchog grub)	1884-85	1
88	Sumpa Lodrö Püntsock Namgyel (second term)	1885-88	3
89	Gyatik Zhapdrung Tupten Jikmé Gyatso (rgya tig zhabs drung thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho) ¹⁷⁵⁸	1888 (“three days”)	.01
	Sumpa Lodrö Püntsock Namgyel (substitute for the late Gyatik Zhapdrung)	1888-90	2
90	Denma Zhapdrung V Jikmé Yeshé Tupten Gyatso	1890-92	2

¹⁷⁵⁸ His title is prefaced by “Tsalung” (tsa lung < zab lung), which is the area around Zablung Hermitage (zab lung ri khrod) in present-day Jiading Township (T. rgya tig), Huzhu County, along the Qinghai-Gansu border. The current Gyatik lama is abbot of Chöten Tang Monastery (mchod rten thang; Ch. Tiantang si 天堂寺) in the same area.

	('dan ma zhabs drung 'jigs med ye shes thub bstan rgya mtsho)		
91	Serding Zhapdrung Ngawang Drakpa Chokdrup (second term)	1892-94	2
92	Semnyi Rebirth Jamyang Damchö Nyima (sems nyid <i>sku skye</i> 'jam dbyangs dam chos nyi ma)	1894-96	2
93	Gyatik Zhapdrung Sanggyé Gyatso (rgya tig zhabs drung sangs rgyas rgya mtsho)	1896-98	2
94	Horkyong Zhapdrung Jamyang Tenpa Rapgyé (hor skyong zhabs drung 'jam dbyangs bstan pa rab rgyas)	1898-1900	2
95	Wang IV Lozang Tsültrim Dargyé Gyatso (second term)	1900-01	1
96	Emanation of the Gomang Abbot, Jamyang Drakpa Gyatso (sgo mang mkhan sprul 'jam dbyangs grags pa rgya mtsho) ¹⁷⁵⁹	1902-04	2
97	Degu Khenpo Lozang Nyendrak Gyatso (bde rgu mkhan po blo bzang snyan grags rgya mtsho)	1904-06	2
98	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (li kyA tshul khrims bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan)	1906-09	3
99	Sumpa Zhapdrung Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso (sum	1909-10	1

¹⁷⁵⁹ See the forty-eighth abbot above.

	b+ha/pa zhabs drung ngag dbang blo gros rgya mtsho)		
100	Lomchi Rebirth, Jamyang Tupten Drakpa Gyatso (lom chi sku skyes 'jam dbyangs thub stan grags pa rgya mtsho)	1910-11	1
101	Semnyi Rebirth Jamyang Damchö Nyima (second term)	1911-1914	3
102	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (second term)	1914-16 ("two years")	2
103	Semnyi Gomang Khenpo (sems nyid sgo mang mkhan po)	1916-17	1
104	Lokar Gongwa Rinpoché Lozagn Jangchup Tenpé Gyeltsen (lo dkar gong ba rin po che blo bzang byang chub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan)	1917-20	3
105	Sumpa Zhapdrung Ngawang Lodrö Gyatso	1921-22 ("two years") ¹⁷⁶⁰	2
106	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (third term)	1923-27	4
107	Wang V Ngawang Khenrap Gyatso (wang ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho)	1927-29	2

¹⁷⁶⁰ He passed away at the end of 1922. Wang V Ngag dbang mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs*, 40b.4.

108	Wushi Zhapdrung Ngawang Jamyang Gyatso (ul shri zhabs drung ngag dbang 'jam dbyangs rgya mtsho)	1930 (“age thirty”)-31	1
109	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (fourth term)	1931-34	
110	Unknown.	1934-37 (?)	3
111	Gyatik Zhapdrung VI Lozang Damchö Gyatso (rgya tig zhabs drung blo bzang dam chos rgya mtsho)	1937-39	2
112	Horkyong Khenpo Jampel Damchö Gyatso (hor skyong ¹⁷⁶¹ mkhan po 'jam dpal dam chos rgya mtsho)	1939-41	2
113	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (fifth term)	1941-42	1
114	Chuzang VI Lozang Tenpé Wangchuk (chu bzang blo bzang bstan pa'i dbang phyug)	1942-43	1
115	Sumpa VI ¹⁷⁶² Lozang Pelden Tenpé Nyima (sum b+ha/pa blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma)	1944-46	2
116	Khyungtsa Zhapdrung (khyung tsha zhabs drung) ¹⁷⁶³	1946	0.5
117	Sumpa VI Lozang Pelden Tenpé Nyima (second	1946-47	1

¹⁷⁶¹ This has been corrected from “hor sgyong.”

¹⁷⁶² He is said to be the sixth in the series, which is presumably the “junior” (T. *chung ba*) series. This would make him the successor thrice removed from Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor. Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho (1942-), *Dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan*, 308.

¹⁷⁶³ His name is unknown. Another source refers to him as Wushi Qiongcha (= T. Ul shri khyung tsha). Duo Zang and Pu Wencheng, *Youning si zhi*, 226.

	term)		
118	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (sixth term)	1949-50	1
119	Gyatik Zhapdrung Lozang Damchö Gyatso (second term)	1950-51	1
120	Likya Tsültrim Tenpé Gyeltsen (seventh term)	1951-53	2
121	Linkya Khenpo IV Lozang Könchok Gyatso) (lin kyA mkhan po blo bzang dkon mchog rgya mtsho	1953-55	2
122	Sumpa VI Lozang Pelden Tenpé Nyima (third term)	1955-57	2
123	Wang V Ngawang Khenrap Gyatso (second term)	1957-58	1

Appendix II: Gönlung Branch Monasteries and Hermitages

Adapted from Nyi ma 'dzin's *Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i 'byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan g.yas 'khyil dung gi sgra dbyangs* (The Place Where Originated Expounding on and Accomplishing the Dharma: An Addition to the [Record of] the Succession of Abbots of the Great Religious Establishment Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Sound of the Clockwise-turning Conch Shell), n.p.:s.n., n.d. The numbering corresponds to the order in which Nyi ma 'dzin lists the monasteries.

A. Dgon lung

Gansu Province 甘肃省: (no. of monasteries: 10)

01. Rgya yag dgon; Jiaya si 嘉雅寺

02. Yan zhi dgon; Yanxi si 延禧寺

03. Ser rtsud dgon;¹⁷⁶⁴ Saizi si 赛孜寺

04. Bra sti rab rgyas dgon;¹⁷⁶⁵ Zhadereji si 扎德热吉寺 / Huazang si 华藏寺

05. Zhwa dmar dgon;¹⁷⁶⁶ Xiamar si 夏玛尔寺

¹⁷⁶⁴ Nyi ma 'dzin has "ser rtsi," a spelling which is not attested elsewhere.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Other spellings include "pra sti" and "bra ti," among others.

¹⁷⁶⁶ Nyi ma 'dzin has "shad mar dgon," a spelling that is not attested elsewhere.

06. Mchod rten thang bkra shis dar rgyas gling; Tiantang si jixiang xingwang zhou 天堂寺吉

祥兴旺洲

07. Se ra lung dgon;¹⁷⁶⁷ Sailong si 塞隆寺

08. Stag lung dgon; Dalong si 达隆寺

09. tA ban dgon chos 'khor dar rgyas gling; Dayuan si falun xingwang zhou 大宛寺法轮兴

旺洲

10. Ma the zi dgon;¹⁷⁶⁸ Mati si 马蹄寺

Qinghai Province 青海省 : (39 or 41 monasteries)

Ledu County 乐都县 (13 monasteries)

11. Ma yang dgon bkra shis chos gling; Maying si jixiang fa zhou 马营寺吉祥法洲

12. Srog mkhar dgon dga' ldan chos gling; Hongka si juxi fa zhou 红卡寺具喜法洲

13. Log dkar dgon theg chen chos gling; Luhua si dacheng fa zhou 芦花寺大乘法洲

¹⁷⁶⁷ Nyi ma 'dzin parses the name differently, giving "ser lung dgon," a spelling that appears on a couple of occasions in the Peking edition of Lcang skya II's autobiography. This monastery is also known as te thung dgon chung ba dga' ldan dam chos gling.

¹⁷⁶⁸ Also known as Dga' ldan dam chos gling.

14. Stong shags bkra shis chos gling; Dongxia jixiang fa zhou 东霞吉祥法洲 / Yangguan si

羊官寺

15. Khran rdzongs ri khrod bsam btan gling;¹⁷⁶⁹ Chanzong jingfang jinglü zhou 禅宗静房静

虑洲

16. Rdzong rje dgon; Zongji si 宗吉寺

17. Bra ma lung ri khrod;¹⁷⁷⁰ Zhamalong jingfang 扎麻隆静房

18. 'Brug lung dgon dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling; Longgou si juxi jiangxiu zhou 龙沟寺具喜

讲修洲

19. Lcang skya dgon gsar thar ba gling; Zhangjia xin si jietuo zhou 章嘉新寺解脱洲

20. Ser ldeng dgon;¹⁷⁷¹ Seerdang si 色尔当寺

21. a kya ri khrod; Ajia jingfang 阿嘉静房

22. Ma chu sgar; Maquga'er 麻曲噶尔

23. Gro tshang dgon bkra shis lhun po;¹⁷⁷² Zhuocang si jixiang xumi 卓仓寺吉祥须弥 /

Yaocaotai si 药草台寺

¹⁷⁶⁹ Pu Wencheng gives the name as Bra sti khran tshong ri khrod bsam gtan gling.

¹⁷⁷⁰ Nyi ma 'dzin spells this as “dza ma lung ri khrod.”

¹⁷⁷¹ The name of this monastery is probably more properly spelled as “ser lding dgon.”

Minhe County 民和县 (1 monastery)

24. Len hwa the'i dgon; Lianhuatai si 莲花台寺

Huzhu County 互助县 (10 monasteries)

25. Chu bzang dgon dga' ldan mi 'gyur gling; Quezang si fojiao hongyang zhou 却藏寺佛教
弘扬洲

26. Shing lung ri khrod; Xianglong jingfang 祥隆静房

27. Bum pa chu lung ri khrod;¹⁷⁷³ Wenbaquelong jingfang 温巴却隆静房

28. Man ti ri khrod chos lung dge 'phel gling;¹⁷⁷⁴ Mantou jingfang fagu xingshan zhou 馒头
静房法谷兴善洲

29. Zab lung ri khrod; Zhalong jingfang 扎隆静房

30. Kan chen dgon theg chen thar ba gling; Gan chan si dacheng jietuo zhou 甘禅寺大乘解
脱洲

¹⁷⁷² Nyi ma 'dzin gives the unattested spelling "jo tshang dgon bkra shis lhun po."

¹⁷⁷³ This may be "bum pa chos lung." Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 106.24. Note that the *Mdo smad chos 'byung* lists this and several other supposed branch monasteries of Dgon lung as branches of it neighbor and rival, Gser khog.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Also spelled as "mang 'du" or "man tho'i ri khrod."

31. Dmar gtsang dgon; Maerzang si 马尔藏寺

32. Phun tshogs gling; Pengcuolin si 彭措林

33. Chos bzang ri khrod bde chen chos gling; Huayuan jingfang dale fa zhou 花园静房大乐
法洲

34. Rgyal sras ri khrod byang chub gling; Jiase jingfang puti zhou 嘉色静房菩提洲

Datong County 大通县 (10 or 12 monasteries)

35. Te yan chi dga' ldan rin chen gling;¹⁷⁷⁵ Tayan xiao si juxi bao zhou 塔雁小寺具喜宝洲;

Zhangjia si 张家寺

36. 'Dul ba dgon;¹⁷⁷⁶ Duwa si 都哇寺

37. Gser khog dga' ldan dam chos gling; Saikehe si juxi shengfa zhou 赛柯合寺具喜圣法洲;

Guanghai si 广惠寺

38. Dga' ldan rin chen gling; Baobei si 宝贝寺

¹⁷⁷⁵ Nyi ma 'dzin spells this as "mtha' yang chung ba dga' ldan rin chen gling."

¹⁷⁷⁶ The full name is 'dul ba bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling.

39. Bkra shis rtse ri khrod bsam gtan gling; Zhaxize jingfang jinglü zhou 扎西则静房静虑洲

; Xunbu si 逊布寺

40. Nom chi dgon dga' ldan bde chen gling; Numuqi si juxi dale zhou 奴木齐大乐洲

41. Ban rgyud dgon;¹⁷⁷⁷ Wangu si 宛固寺

42. Wang dgon; Wanggong si 王贡寺

43. Phin an zi dgon gsar bshad sgrub gling; Ping'an xin si jiangxiu zhou 平安新寺讲修洲

44. Mtha' yang bkra shis rtse dgon;¹⁷⁷⁸ Tayangzhaxize si 塔阳扎西则寺

(50. Bde chen rnam par rgyal ba'i gling; Zunsheng zhou si 尊胜洲寺 (not revived))

(51. Rtag brtan rdo rje gling; Changgu jin'gang zhou si 常固金刚洲寺 (not revived))

Menyuan County 门源县 (5)

45. 'Bru gu dgon dga' ldan chos 'khor gling; Zhugu si juxi falun zhou 珠固寺

46. Rgya rdog dga' ldan legs tshogs gling;¹⁷⁷⁹ Jiaduo si juxi jushan zhou 加多寺具喜聚善洲

¹⁷⁷⁷ This monastery may also have been known as Chos lung thos bsam gling and Dpe 'gre bshad sgrub gling. Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 107.25.

¹⁷⁷⁸ This name, given by Nyi ma 'dzin, suggests that The yan chi che ba and Lung dkar gyi sgrub sde bkra shis rtse are a single place. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Autobiography of Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor*, 315–36 passim; Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 107.18.

¹⁷⁷⁹ Elsewhere spelled as “Rgya ldog” and “Rgyal ldog.”

47. Sems nyid dgon dga' ldan dar rgyas gling; Xianmi si juxi xingwang zhou 仙米寺具喜兴

旺洲

48. Ban rgyud dgon smin grol thos bsam dar rgyas gling;¹⁷⁸⁰ Bangu si chengshu jietuo wensi
xingwang zhou 班固寺成热解脱闻思兴旺洲

49. Khar ma dgon; Tongmu si 同母寺

B. Thu'u bkwan Lama Villa

Huzhu County 互助县

01. Chos bzang ri khrod bde chen chos gling; Huayuan jingfang dale fa zhou 花园静房大乐

法洲

02. Man ti ri khrod chos lung dge 'phel gling; Mantou jingfang fagu xingshan zhou 馒头静

房法谷兴善洲

03. Rtag brtan rdo rje gling; Jin'gang si 金刚寺¹⁷⁸¹

¹⁷⁸⁰ Other sources write of a “ban rgud” Monastery and a “ban gur” Monastery, which likely refers to the same place.

¹⁷⁸¹ Above, Nyi ma 'dzin locates a monastery of the same name in the neighboring county of Datong. It is not clear whether this is an example of inconsistency or there are in fact two monasteries with the same name. The former seems more likely.

05. Bra sti; Zhazi si 扎兹寺 ¹⁷⁸²

Ledu County 乐都县

04. Lcang skya dgon; Zhangjia si 章嘉寺

07. Bra sti dgon; ¹⁷⁸³ Zhadi si 扎的寺

Datong County 大通县

06. Chi kya zi; Qijia si 祁家寺

Gansu Province 甘肃

08. Ma the zi dgon; Mati si 马蹄寺

Tianzhu County 天祝县

09. Rgya yag dgon; Jiaya si 嘉雅寺

C. Lcang skya Lama Villa

¹⁷⁸² I have been unable to identify this monastery in Huzhu County.

¹⁷⁸³ This is Khran rdzongs ri khrod listed above.

Ledu County 乐都县

01. Lu'u kyo ba zi;¹⁷⁸⁴ Lujiawa si 鹿角哇寺 / Lujiawa si lujia 芦家哇寺

Datong County 大通县

02. Lcang skya zi;¹⁷⁸⁵ Zhangjia si 章嘉寺

D. Sum pa Lama Villa

Huzhu County 互助县

01. Rgyal sras ri khrod; Tianmen si 天门寺

Ledu County 乐都县

02. Ma yang dgon; Maying si 马营私

02.a. a kya dgon; Ajia si 阿家寺

02.b. pe hA dgon;¹⁷⁸⁶ Baihua si 白化寺

¹⁷⁸⁴ Also known as Tshang kya'i sku 'bum bkra shis kun 'phel gling.

¹⁷⁸⁵ This is Te yan chi dga' ldan rin chen gling.

¹⁷⁸⁶ Pu Wencheng says that “pe hwa zi” is a subsidiary temple of log dkar dgon theg chen chos gling in Ledu County, not ma yang Monastery. *Gan Qing Zangchuan fojiao siyuan*, 65.

03. Hran kh rin ki' u zi;¹⁷⁸⁷ Shanchenggou si 山城沟寺

04. Hong khar zi;¹⁷⁸⁸ Hongka'er si 红卡尔寺

Datong County 大通县

05. Phin an zi;¹⁷⁸⁹ Ping'an si 平安寺

06. Sum b+ha kA zi; Songbuga si 松布尕寺

07. Nom chi dgon; Numuqi si 奴木齐寺

E. Chu bzang Lama Villa

Huzhu County 互助县

01. Chu bzang dgon; Quezang si 却藏寺

Hualong County 化隆县

¹⁷⁸⁷ Pu says that “hran kh rin dgu zi” belonged to the Thu'u bkwan villa, not the Sum pa villa. Ibid., 63.

¹⁷⁸⁸ This is likely Srog mkhar sgrub sde dga' ldan chos gling.

¹⁷⁸⁹ Nyi ma “dzin suggests this was the home to Dgon lung”s Kālacakra College (*dus 'khor grwa tshang*). Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i 'byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan g.yas 'khyil dung gi sgra dbyangs* (*The Place Where Originated Expounding on and Accomplishing the Dharma: An Addition to the [Record of] the Succession of Abbots of the Great Religious Establishment Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Sound of the Clockwise-turning Conch Shell*) (n.p.: s.n., n.d.), 18.

02. Bya khyung dgon; Xiaqiong si 夏琼寺

Huangyuan County 湟源县

03. Grwa tshang dgon; Zhacang si 扎藏寺

Guide County 贵德县

04. Pe ma zi; Baima si 白马寺

Gansu Province 甘肃

Yugur Autonomous County 裕固族自治县

05. Ne man zi; Naiman si 乃曼寺

Xinjiang Region 新疆

Yanqi County 焉耆县

06. Chu bzang su'u mu dgon; Quezang sumu si 却藏苏木寺

Hejing County 和靜县

07. Sha ra su'u mu dgon; Xiarisumu si 夏日苏木寺.

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