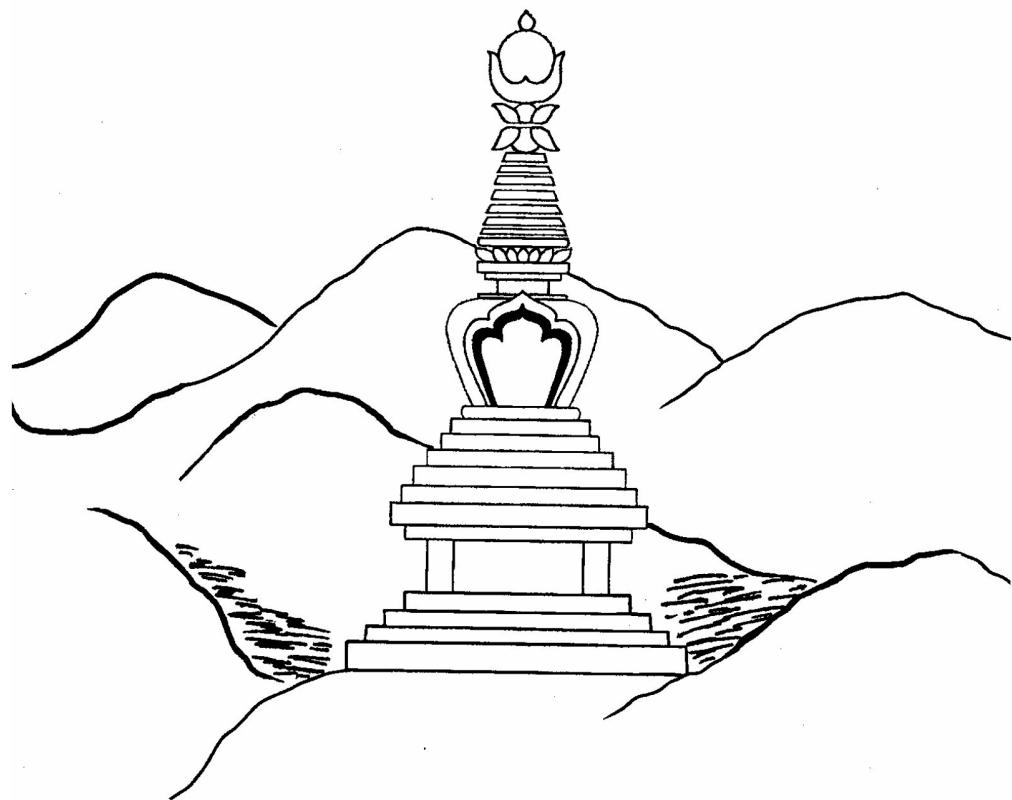


# ***Bulletin of Tibetology***



VOLUME 42

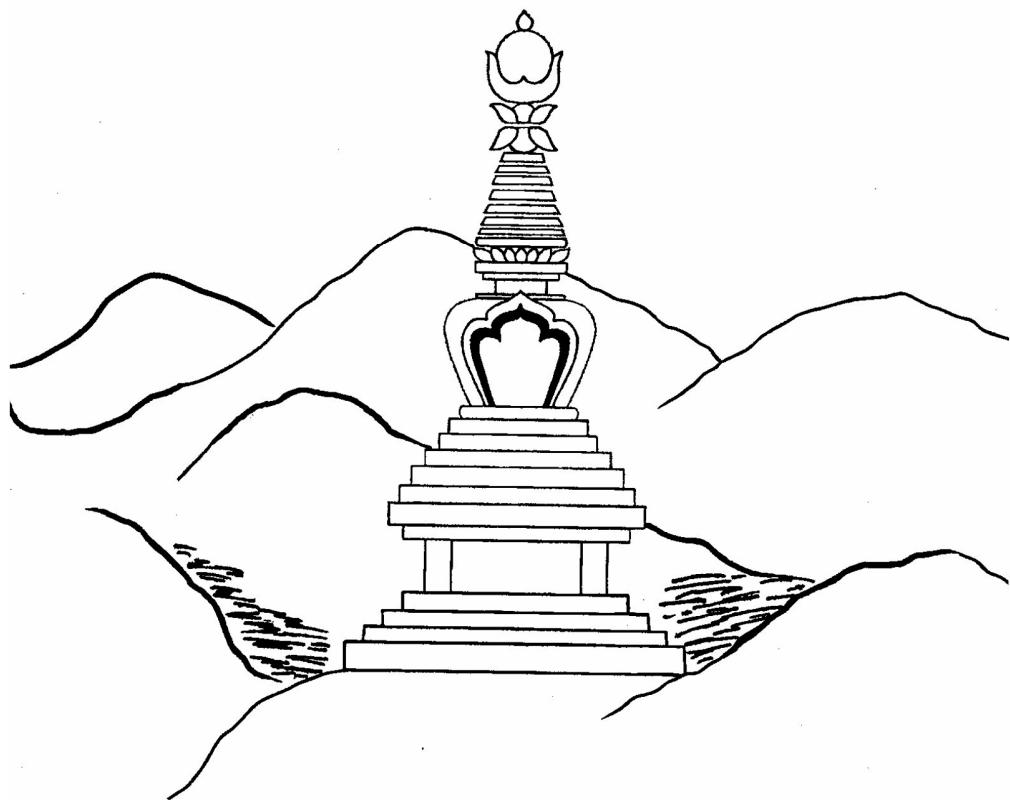
NO. 1 AND 2

2006

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY  
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

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

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Submission guidelines. We welcome submission of articles on any subject of the history, language, art, culture and religion of the people of the Tibetan cultural area although we would particularly welcome articles focusing on Sikkim, Bhutan and the Eastern Himalayas. Articles should be in English or Tibetan, submitted by email or on CD along with a hard copy and should not exceed 5000 words in length.

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## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA  
*Research Coordinator*  
*Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*

### THIS ISSUE

Following His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's suggestion, this issue is the second of two focusing on the lives and legacies of those Tibetan lamas who came to Sikkim. Also included are articles exploring historical ties of other nature between Sikkim and Tibet.

The first article, *The garden of liberation: a brief account of the manner in which, in the celestial realm of Sikkim, the sNang Sog Gong lineage spread and the 5th Dalai Lama left his mark on the rNying ma teachings* (in Tibetan) is by Khenpo L Tshering, Principal of Gangtok's Nyingma college. The article explores the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's critical views regarding the contributions of three sixteenth and seventeenth century Nyingma lamas—Nangtse Terton Zhigpo Lingpa, Sogdogpa Kyedup Lodro Gyaltsen and Gongra Lochen Zhanphan Dorje—who made contributions to the establishment of Buddhism in Sikkim and whose ritual texts are still in use in Sikkim today. These views are explored in the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's exchanges with his guru Changdak Pema Thinley. This article is a summary of a forthcoming book by the same author.

The following three articles, *Short biographies of three Tibetan lamas and their activities in Sikkim*, by Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya, present the lives and activities of three Tibetan lamas who made contributions to Buddhism in Sikkim: the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and his predecessors, Sakya Trichen (Sa skyā gong ma sGrol ma pho brang) and the *rimed* master Jamyang Kyentse Chokyi Lodroe ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros).

The fifth article, *Tibetan masters and the formation of the sacred site of Tashiding* by Mélanie Vandenhelsken and Hissey Wongchuk, in a first section, explores the early emergence of Tashiding as the meeting place between Tibet and Sikkim followed by a description of the site's sacred geography and contributions of its founding lamas. Interestingly, this history is reflected in the monastery's current ritual calendar where both the Chang ter (Byang gter) tradition introduced by

Rigzin Goddem (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem) and the Mindrolling Dzogchen (sMing grol gling rDzogs chen) tradition introduced by Lhatsun Chenpo (lHa btsun chen po) are represented and peacefully coexist. In a second section, the author presents the lives and contributions of three Tibetan masters who left their mark on the monastery in later years, Jamyang Chokyi Lodroe (bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros, 1893-1959), Chaktag Rinpoche (lCags thag rin po che, end of nineteenth century-1957) and Chorten monastery's Khandro Pema Dechen (mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen, 1923-2006).

The sixth article (in French) *Women in the diplomatic game: Preliminary notes on the matrimonial link of the Sikkim royal family with tibet (13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)* by Alice Travers explores the nature and evolution of the matrimonial alliances between the Namgyal dynasty of Sikkim and their ancestors, and the aristocratic families of Tibet. Starting with Kye Bumsa's (Gyad 'bum bsags) 13<sup>th</sup> century marriage with the daughter of the hierarch of Sakya and concluding with Chogyal Palden Thondup Namgyal's first marriage in 1950 to Sangay Dekila, daughter of the Samdrup Phodang family, the author lists some twenty such matrimonial alliances over the centuries which greatly influenced the development of Sikkim's relations with both Tibet and British India. The analysis of these relations reveals a gradual rise in the social status of the brides' Tibetan families and a shift from southern and western religious families to central Tibetan lay families a few decades after the establishment of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's Lhasa government in 1642. This shift towards alliances with higher Lhasa families occurs at a crucial moment in the context of political relations between Sikkim, Tibet and British India. As an example, the author explains how Yeshe Dolma, wife of Chogyal Thutob Namgyal, played an important diplomatic role at the turn of the twentieth century. After Sikkim was officially recognised as a protectorate of British India in 1890, and following the Younghusband expedition of 1904, the social status of the Tibetan brides rose even further, suggesting that their presence was necessary in order to counteract British influence in Sikkimese affairs and reaffirm Sikkim's traditional identity in the face of a very powerful British overlord. Similarly, Sikkimese princesses progressively married into the highest central Tibetan families. From the Tibetan viewpoint, sending brides of the highest nobility to Sikkim was a way of ensuring good relations with Sikkim and consequently with powerful British India. As for the British, tolerating these alliances provided a line of communication with the Tibetan elite and thus an additional avenue for diplomatic relations. The article concludes with

an analysis of the key role played by the Taring family, an offshoot of the Namgyals, within these diplomatic relations.

This issue is completed by the obituaries of Khandro Rinpoche Pema Dechen (1923-2006), better known in Gangtok as Chorten monastery Khandrola and Eleanor Hopkinson (1905-2007), wife of the last British Political Officer in residence in Sikkim.

*Bulletin of Tibetology*

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

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

In conclusion, I would like to thank all those who, in various ways, contributed in putting this issue together. At the institute: Carl Yamamoto, Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya, Tenzin Samphel, Sonam Thinlay, Ngodup Bhutia and Phurpo Tshering; as well as others who lend their much appreciated editorial help: Vérona Ossent, Tashi Tsing, Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Saul Mullard.



༄༅། ། ཡིତ୍ୱର୍ଷ୍ଣୀଦ୍ୱସାର୍ଵମର୍ତ୍ତଵେଶୁଷ୍ଟିର୍ବନ୍ଧିଶୁଷ୍ଟି  
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༄༅། ། བ୍ରିଦିକିଦ୍ୱୈତିମର୍ତ୍ତଵେଶୁଷ୍ଟିର୍ବନ୍ଧିଶୁଷ୍ଟି  
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<sup>2</sup> ଶ୍ରୀ ପଦମାତ୍ରେଶ୍ ପାତ୍ରକାନ୍ତରେ ଶର୍ମିଷ୍ଠାନୀ ପାତ୍ରକାନ୍ତରେ ଶର୍ମିଷ୍ଠାନୀ ପାତ୍ରକାନ୍ତରେ ଶର୍ମିଷ୍ଠାନୀ ପାତ୍ରକାନ୍ତରେ pp. 724-725 ।



<sup>6</sup> ཡིད·བྱଦ୍ରା ཛେତ୍ରିକ ກେଣ୍ଡରା ଶୀଘ୍ରମୁଦ୍ରିତ ପାଠ୍ୟରେ ପାଠ୍ୟରେ ପାଠ୍ୟରେ ପାଠ୍ୟରେ ପାଠ୍ୟରେ p.735 ଫିନଙ୍କୋ

<sup>7</sup> ལྷ-ସྐྱା-କୁ-ନ୍ତ-ସྐྱା-ସ୍ଵର୍ଗ-ମର୍କଣ୍ଡୀ-ହୃଦୀ-ହୃଦୀ-ଶବ୍ଦ-ପାତ୍ର-କୁମାରାଯ୍ୟ | p.331 ଫର୍ଦନ୍ଦୀ

<sup>8</sup> ພັດທະນາລົງຈາກສັນຕະພາບ ພຣະມະນູນ ພຣະມະນູນ ພຣະມະນູນ ພຣະມະນູນ

<sup>10</sup> ମୁଦ୍ରଣ ଧରିବାକୁ ସମ୍ପଦ ଏଥିରୁ ମହିନେ ଧରିବାକୁ ମୁଦ୍ରଣ କରିବାକୁ ପରିଷଦୀ କରିବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରିଛି । p.366 ଫିଲ୍ମ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଖା

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<sup>11</sup> ଶିଦ୍ଧକୁମାର-ପାତ୍ର-ନଗନ୍ଦ-ପାତ୍ର-ପାତ୍ର | p.733 ଶିଦ୍ଧକୁମାର-

୧୪ ମହାକାଶରୁଷ୍ଣିତାରେ ଶରୀରରେ

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୧୯ p.353 ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ କଥା ପାଇଁ ଶବ୍ଦାଳ୍ପନ ହେଲା ଏବଂ ଶବ୍ଦାଳ୍ପନ କଥାରେ ଆମେ ପାଇଁ ପରିଚୟ ଦିଲାମୁଁ। p.288

<sup>21</sup> ཤ්වාස්ථුත්වනුවූ කුස්ඩ් නැවත සියලු ප්‍රදාන සේය | ස්වීත් වාචික කුස්ඩ් මුද්‍රණ ප්‍රදාන යාම් | p.122

<sup>23</sup> ଗାୟତ୍ରୀଦେଶନାନାଶିକୁପାଦିଶାନ୍ତିରବନ୍ଧକଷାମ୍ବନ୍ଦ । p.215

24 ཆོག་ན་හිංශාසනය དැක්වූ සිටි යුතු යේ නී  
25 ප්‍රාග්ධනයෙන් තුළ ඇත්තා මින් ප්‍රාග්ධනයෙන් තුළ ඇත්තා මින් p.89

<sup>25</sup> 1597-1653 A.D.

<sup>26</sup> ພັນສົງໄຫວ້າພວມມະນາຄະນາ | ກົດກົມ p.317

28 1656 A.D-1675 A.D.

<sup>29</sup> 1682 A.D-1735 A.D.

30 1592 A.D.-1656 A.D.



<sup>33</sup> ରେମା'ନ୍ତିରୁ'କୁଣ୍ଡଳଦେଖି ସାହା'ନ୍ତିରୁ' ଫର୍ଦି'ନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ତଥାଶ୍ରୀ'ଯୁଧ୍ୟନ୍ତ୍ରେ'ପରି ଓ ଘନା'କୁଣ୍ଡଳାଶ୍ରୀ'ପରି'କଷା'ମାତ୍ର' ହେଁ। p.256

শুরু শুরু কে মানিদেশ্বর কৈমা ধৰ্ম শৰ্ম পদবী পৰিষ শুৰু মানিদেশ্বর শৰ্ম কে মানিদেশ্বর  
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শৰ্ম এশৰ পদবী পৰিষ মানিদেশ্বর কে মানিদেশ্বর পদবী পৰিষ মানিদেশ্বর পদবী

ସୁରନାର୍କ ପଶୁକୁ ଖୁଲ୍ଲିଲେ ଦେବତା ଯୁଦ୍ଧ ମହାକାଶ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅବଶ୍ୟକ । କୁମାର ଶ୍ଵର ସେଇଁ କରି ପରମା ପାତ୍ରିକ  
ଶ୍ରୀଦ୍ଵାରା ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପରମା ପାତ୍ରିକା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା ମହାକାଶ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା  
କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା  
କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏହା କରିଛନ୍ତି



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ସାହେବ'ପଦକଷ୍ଟ'ପକ୍ଷ'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ମୈତ୍ରି'ଯୁଗ'ମିଦି ॥  
 ସାହେବ'ପଦକଷ୍ଟ'ଶିଖ'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ମନ୍ତ୍ରକଷ୍ଟ'କ୍ଷେତ୍ର'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ବ୍ୟା ॥  
 ସାହେବ'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ମନ୍ତ୍ରକଷ୍ଟ'ପାଦକଷ୍ଟ'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ମନ୍ତ୍ରି ॥  
 ସାହେବ'ପଦକଷ୍ଟ'ମନ୍ତ୍ରକଷ୍ଟ'ଶାଶ୍ଵତ'ମନ୍ତ୍ରକଷ୍ଟ'ପାଦକଷ୍ଟ' ॥

କର୍ମଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନପବ୍ଲୁଷ୍ଟକର୍ମଶାଗୁଣ ॥  
ଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନପବ୍ଲୁଷ୍ଟକର୍ମଶାଗୁଣ ॥  
ଶ୍ରୀଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନପବ୍ଲୁଷ୍ଟକର୍ମଶାଗୁଣ ॥  
ଶ୍ରୀଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନଶ୍ରୀଦିନପବ୍ଲୁଷ୍ଟକର୍ମଶାଗୁଣ ॥

ମୁଖୀଶାରଦ୍ଵାରାପ୍ରକଳ୍ପିତାପରିଶର୍ଦ୍ଦମୁଖଶା||  
 ମୁଖରିତାଶୁଦ୍ଧାଶର୍ଦ୍ଦପ୍ରକଳ୍ପିତାପରିଶର୍ଦ୍ଦମୁଖଶା||  
 ତତ୍ତ୍ଵଶର୍ମଶାରାପଶୁଦ୍ଧନିଷହରିଶର୍ଦ୍ଦମୁଖଶା||  
 ମାର୍ଦନକରିତାଶୁଦ୍ଧାଶର୍ଦ୍ଦପରିଶର୍ଦ୍ଦମୁଖଶା||

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THREE TIBETAN LAMAS  
AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN SIKKIM<sup>1</sup>

THE 14<sup>TH</sup> DALAI LAMA

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA  
*Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*

English translation by  
Carl Yamamoto

His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama—a human form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who is the embodiment of the compassion of all of the buddhas—is the spiritual and temporal leader of the people of Tibet. He was born on 6 July 1935 (Buddha era 2479)<sup>2</sup> in a small village called sTag 'tsher<sup>3</sup> near sKu 'bum in the province of A mdo. His father's name was Chos skyong tshe ring and his mother's name was bSod nams mtsho mo. At his birth, there were many auspicious signs.

At the age of four, he was recognised, in accordance with Tibetan tradition, as the reincarnation of his predecessor, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Thub bstan rgya mtsho (1876-1933), and was invited to come to Lhasa. When he was four and a half years old, he was enthroned at the Potala palace with great ceremony.

From the age of six, he studied the five major and the five minor fields of knowledge, especially Buddhist doctrinal studies. As a result, by the time he was 24 years old, he had become a great scholar.

In 1950, at age 16, he assumed responsibility for both the political and the religious leadership of Tibet.

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<sup>1</sup> This work is based on sources found in the library of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, oral sources, and documents listed in the bibliography. I deeply apologise for any mistake that may be present; all errors remain my own.

<sup>2</sup> Indian and Tibetan scholars, using different systems, give differing dates for the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, but here we follow the system of the Sri Lankan Theravāda school, one of the four main schools of Hinayāna Buddhism, the system that is most commonly accepted in the modern world (624-544 B.C.E.).

<sup>3</sup> In the Tibetan division of three provinces (dBus gtsang, mDo stod, and mDo smad), sTag 'tsher is situated in the mDo smad province, also known as A mdo, in northeastern Tibet.

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In 1959, at the time of the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa, he passed his oral examinations and earned the *dGe bshes lha ram* degree. That same year, the Chinese occupied Tibet, and for the benefit of the Tibetan people, he went into exile on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. He arrived in the Bomdila district of the state of Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March.

Now we will focus on the relationship between previous Dalai Lamas and Sikkim.

There are two accounts of the enthronement of the first Chos rgyal of Sikkim. According to one, in 1642, when the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682), became the religious and political leader of Tibet, he established the dGa' ldan pho brang government. That same year, mNga' bdag sems dpa'i chen po Phun tshogs rig 'dzin (1592-1656), one of the patron saints of Sikkim, enthroned Phun tshogs rnam rgyal (1604-1669) at Yug sam nor bu khang (in what is now West Sikkim) as Chos rgyal. This is the most popular account among the Sikkimese.

But, according to a different account, in 1646, the three lamas of Sikkim met together at Yug bsam and enthroned the king. Whichever account you accept, the strong relationship between the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and Sikkim remains evident.

As per the collected works of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama<sup>4</sup> and the *Thang lha'i lung bstan* in the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*, lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1652) went to 'Bras spungs monastery in Central Tibet and there performed for the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama the long-life ceremony based on the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*, the Sikkimese visionary text. He made marvelous offerings of earth, stones, wood, etc., from Sikkim as well as the first print of the text of the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*. He empowered the Dalai Lama as custodian of the [*Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*] teachings, and, in return, the Great 5<sup>th</sup> empowered him as custodian of these same teachings.

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<sup>4</sup> The following sources have been used while compiling the histories of the Dalai Lamas, from the Great 5<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>:

mKhan po lha tshe ring 2002: 79-80, 116-117, 143-144, 147 and 151

Lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med *Rig 'zin srog sgrub*, item Gi, folios, 3-4

bKra shis Tshe ring 2003: 27

mKhan po chos dbang 2003: 125-27 and 235

mKhas btsun bzang po 1973: 619-633, 666

Lachung Lama Jigme Namgyal 2000: 10

At the time of the enthronement of the 1<sup>st</sup> Chos rgyal, Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama formally recognised him as Chos rgyal, and sent a decree, stamped with his official seal and accompanied by a ceremonial scarf, commending him as praiseworthy. In addition, he sent as gifts a hat that was a discovered hidden treasure, a statue of Guru Rinpoche, and Guru Rinpoche's highly blessed flaming dagger.

In 1660, the 2<sup>nd</sup> lHa btsun chen po (1656-1675) was, at the request of the lama Chos dbyings lhun grub, given the long-life ceremony by the Great 5<sup>th</sup>. At the haircutting ceremony, he was given the name *Ngag dbang kun bzang 'jigs med*. In addition, he received from the Dalai Lama the long-life initiation of Thang stong rgyal po. In 1661, he received the initiation of the Northern Treasure (*byang gter*) Mind Sādhana and the oral transmissions of the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* from the Great 5<sup>th</sup>. In 1674, the Dalai Lama presented him with the monastic seat called Pho brang thar pa gling. The next year, because of the low merit of sentient beings, the 2<sup>nd</sup> lHa btsun chen po passed away. In 1676, the Dalai Lama offered the aspiration prayer at the one-year memorial ritual service, and composed a prayer for the rapid continuation of the lineage by rebirth.

In 1682, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, just before he passed away, recognised a child of the Zur khang family in the Shangs district of gTsang as the reincarnation of Ngag dbang kun bzang 'jigs med, the 2<sup>nd</sup> lHa btsun. He also issued an order that the boy be sent to rDzogs chen monastery for his continuing training in the teachings of the lHa btsun lineage.

Thus, the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama established extraordinary teacher-disciple relationships with the first three incarnations of the lHa btsun lineage.

In 1697, at the age of 16, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lHa btsun chen po, 'Khrag 'thung 'jigs med dpa' bo (1682-?), received the haircutting ceremony in the presence of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Rig 'dzin Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683-1706), and was given the name *Blo bzang rdo rje*.

In the eighteenth century, during the reign of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chos rgyal of Sikkim, Phyag rdor rnam rgyal (1686-1717), Sikkim was invaded several times by the neighboring country Bhutan. Finally, the Chos rgyal, along with the royal family, went into exile in Lhasa. At that time, he requested help from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, as a result of which he completed his studies of accounting at the Tibetan government accounting office as well as other fields of study. His Holiness, out of consideration for the Chos rgyal's renown in education, and thinking him an extraordinary person, appointed him as the chief accountant of the government of Tibet.

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The 7<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708-1757), conducted the haircutting ceremony for the 4<sup>th</sup> lHa btsun chen po, who was born in 1741, and gave him the name *Kun bzang 'jigs med rgya mtsho*. According to a different account, the name *Kun bzang 'jigs med rgya mtsho* was his novice monk name.

In the 1870s, during the time of the British intervention in Sikkim, the 9<sup>th</sup> Sikkimese Chos rgyal, Mthu stobs rnam rgyal (1860-1914), was staying at Gro mo in Gtsang, intending to take a second wife. At that time, the ministers of Sikkim made repeated requests to the Lieutenant General of Bengal for a few elephants, which they wished to offer to the Dalai Lama.<sup>5</sup> Several high-ranking Sikkimese officers went to Lhasa with the elephants and offered them to the Dalai Lama.

In 1903,<sup>6</sup> during the time of the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Thub bstan rgya mtsho,<sup>7</sup> a rNying ma pa master, the treasure-revealer named Zhwa de'u 'Phrul zhig bde chen 'od gsal mdo sngags gling pa (end of nineteenth century to beginning of twentieth century), was sent to Sikkim by the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama for the sake of the religious and secular welfare of Tibet. bSe sgrub gdung 'dzin mKhyen brtse rig pa'i rdo rje (1880-1938) also came to Sikkim as 'Phrul zhig Rinpoche's attendant. He visited all of the corners of Sikkim, including bKra shis lding monastery, and performed rituals, built mchod rten, and conducted other religious activities. In addition, he did extensive renovations to the Mthong ba rang grol mchod rten at bKra shis lding, which had been damaged in an earthquake, and wrote a catalog of that mchod rten. While he was at bKra shis lding, he also revealed the *Kun bzang thugs thig*, a hidden treasure text. On his arrival in Sikkim, he was welcomed by the 9<sup>th</sup> Chos rgyal, Thub bstan rnam rgyal. He also made a religious tour of pilgrimage sites of Sikkim with the Prince and Princess of Sikkim.

In 1912, mKhyen brtse Rig pa'i rdo rje visited Sikkim. In accordance with the wishes and instructions of the government of His

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<sup>5</sup> It is not clear from the date whether this means the 12th Dalai Lama, Phrin las rgya mtsho, or the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Thub bstan rgya mtsho.

<sup>6</sup> This date is as per the biography of 'Phrul zhig rin po che in mKhas btsun bzang po rin po che's *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet & Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 619-633. According to the biography of bSe sgrub gdung 'dzin rig pa'i rdo rje in the same book, p. 666, they visited in 1906.

<sup>7</sup> During that time, there were disturbances in Lhasa involving the Manchu Ambans. Seeing this, the Dalai Lama sent these masters to Sikkim for the benefit of the Tibetan state.

Holiness, he performed rituals and built a mchod rten in each of the four sacred sites of Sikkim.

Thus, it can be seen that there have been many religious relationships between the Dalai Lamas and the Chos rgyals and religious leaders of Sikkim.

In general, it is known from the many annals of Sikkim that, at the political level, the dGa' ldan pho brang government, under the leadership of successive Dalai Lamas from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>, has maintained a strong relationship with the government of Sikkim—protecting it from invasions by Nepal, Bhutan, etc., mediating conflicts with other governments, and helping to maintain peaceful relations between countries.

Thus, there had been continuous, unbroken goodwill between the previous Dalai Lamas and Sikkim. Reflecting on this, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho, visited Sikkim four times in order to maintain that relationship between the two states.

In November of 1956, the Dalai Lama was invited by the Mahabodhi Society of India on the occasion of the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. At that time, the Prince of Sikkim came to Lhasa especially to invite the Dalai Lama. His Holiness travelled from Lhasa through gZhis ka rtse and Gro mo chu 'bi, then crossed the border at Nathula. He was met there by a delegate of the Indian government as well as by the Prince of Sikkim, and was given a great welcoming reception. That night, he stayed at Tsongo. The next day, he left for Gangtok and arrived at the Royal Palace.

After attending the celebration in Delhi and making a tour of Indian pilgrimage sites, including the four holy sites of the Buddha, he intended to return to Tibet by way of Sikkim, but the pass at Nathula was blocked by snow for almost a month, so he had to remain in Sikkim. He stayed at the Royal Palace as guest of the Indian central government and the government of Sikkim.

During his stay at Gangtok, on 10 February 1957, the Dalai Lama blessed the building site and laid the cornerstone for the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology (now the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology). The idea had originally come from Prince Lama Dpal ldan Don grub rnam rgyal of Sikkim (1923-1982), who, in 1953 or 1954, had had the idea of establishing a library and cultural institute for Indian and Tibetan studies. At that time, his father, Chos rgyal bKra shis rnam rgyal, had also given his permission for the establishment of such an institute. His Holiness, at the time of the bestowing of the

blessings, also donated a set of valuable books and other religious articles, which were valued at nearly two lakhs rupees.<sup>8</sup>

His Holiness visited Sikkim again in 1981, between 16 October and 26 October. During that time, he gave teachings on the 37 bodhisattva practices, Avalokiteśvara initiations, and a sermon in English at Paljor Namgyal Stadium. On 20 October, he consecrated the site of a monastery (now called dGon byang O rgyan mdo sngags chos 'khor gling) proposed to be constructed by the Venerable Ting nge dgon byang Rinpoche at Phenlong Phatak, a few kilometres from Gangtok. On the same day, he visited Sa ngor monastery at Rongnyi and gave a sermon based on the 8000-verse *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*brgyad stong pa*). On his way to the monastery, he blessed the ceremonial rice to be sprinkled over the bDe chen gling cremation ground. Then he visited dBen can monastery (gSang sngags rab brtan gling) and the Enchey School. On 21 October, he visited the Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, where he said prayers and praised the role played by the institute in preserving and propagating Buddhist philosophy and culture.

On 22 October, His Holiness gave a talk at the Tibetan refugee settlement at Ravangla in South Sikkim. He also visited and delivered sermons in West Sikkim, at the southern cave of the four supreme caves of the four cardinal directions, bKra shis lding, which is considered to be the centre of this hidden land, and Gsang chen Padma yangs rtse, the premier monastery of Sikkim. During that time, he also held audiences with the governor of Sikkim, the chief minister, cabinet ministers, and other high-ranking officials of the state government. On the morning of 26 October, he visited Rum btegs monastery, the seat of the 16<sup>th</sup> rGyal dbang Karma pa (1924-1981), in East Sikkim. Then, in the evening, he left Sikkim for Kalimpong, West Bengal.

In March of 1993, he again visited Sikkim on the invitation of the government of Sikkim. Just before he reached the capital, Gangtok, he visited bKra shis lding monastery in West Sikkim, where he led the five-day performance of the *tshogs 'bum* (one-lakh feast offering) ritual based on the *Bla ma rig 'dzin gdung sgrub* of the Northern Treasure tradition. After completion of the ritual at bKra shis lding, on the way Gangtok, he went to South Sikkim, where he paid a special visit to the

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<sup>8</sup> This figure is taken from Tibetan sources. However, according to the pamphlet, 'Establishment of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology: Documents and Speeches' (Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 1961), p. 9, the total value was 40,000 rupees.

Bon monastery called Bon po zhu ri zhing g.yung drung kun grags gling and visited the Tibetan refugee settlement named Kun phan gling in Ravangla, where he gave a teaching and advice to the people. Then, in Gangtok, at Paljor Stadium, he gave the eighteenth Kālacakra initiation—including instructions on the preliminary teachings of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and White Tārā long-life initiations—to hundreds of devotees, monks, and laypeople. During this visit, he met and had discussions with the governor and the chief minister of Sikkim.

On 21 October 1997, at the special invitation of the state government, His Holiness again set foot in South Sikkim at Namtse, and on that same day gave advice to local residents at the grounds at Aletar. On the morning of 22 October, along with his attendants, he left Namtse for Samdrupse, where he blessed the site and laid the foundation for the 130-foot Guru Rinpoche statue that was to be built by the state government. This Guru Rinpoche statue is known as the highest one in the world. After that, he visited and made a detailed inspection of the Tibetan refugee settlement at Ravangla in South Sikkim. On the morning of 23 October, he gave the long-life, Hayagrīva, Vajrapāṇi, and Garuḍa initiations as well as the scriptural transmissions for the Śākyamuni mantra, etc. That evening, he laid the foundation for the Thonmi Sambhota School for Tibetan near Gangtok and gave advice and teachings to the Tibetan people. On the morning of 24 October, he gave special teachings to the high-ranking officers of the state government at Tashi Namgyal Academy auditorium.

At the joint request of the eight Buddhist associations of Sikkim and six Tibetan organisations of Gangtok, His Holiness paid a week-long visit to Sikkim on 20 April 2005. For three days, beginning on 21 April, thousands of devotees thronged the Guards Ground in Gangtok to receive his teachings on the Great Perfection text called *Relaxation of Mind Itself* (*rDzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso*) written by Klong chen rab 'byams, the renowned Tibetan Buddhist master of the rNying ma pa tradition, and gave long-life initiations based on the *Bla ma rig 'dzin gdung sgrub* according to the Northern Treasure tradition. On the morning of 24 April, he visited the Tibetan refugee settlement at Ravangla in South Sikkim and gave advice and teachings to the Tibetan people and local residents. In the afternoon, he proceeded to Samdrupse near Namchi and performed the consecration of the recently constructed Guru Rinpoche statue, for which he had laid the foundation in 1997, and led the performance of the short ritual offering with the head lamas and monks of Mnga' bdag monastery. After that,

he gave a public talk at Bhaichung Stadium. During that visit, he held an audience with and gave teachings to the governor V. Rama Rao, the chief minister Dr. Pawan Kumar Chamling, the cabinet ministers, and high-ranking officials of the state government.

At the Chintan Bhavan, at Namnang in Gangtok, His Holiness gave a talk in English on ‘Compassion and Universal Responsibility’, followed by a short question-and-answer period, and advice to the state administration. In attendance were His Excellency the Governor of Sikkim Shri V. Rama Rao, Honorable Chief Minister Dr. Pawan Chamling, his cabinet colleagues, and a large number of intellectuals and officials of the state government. He also performed the inauguration of Ser byes ’Gro phan gling monastery,<sup>9</sup> one of the three premier monasteries of the dGe lugs pa<sup>10</sup> tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which is situated in Chandmari, Bod lha sol sa, near Gangtok. This monastery is the only one in Sikkim belonging to the dGe lugs pa order,<sup>11</sup> the lineage of the great lama Tsong kha pa.

<sup>9</sup> The Gro phan gling monastery is a branch of the Se ra byes mkhas snyan grwa tshang, which is one of the leading universities of Tibetan Buddhist studies. The monastery was inaugurated, blessed, and consecrated by H.H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama on 26 April 2005.

<sup>10</sup> The three great dGe lugs pa monasteries (*gdan sa gsum*) are: (1) ’Bras spungs, located west of Lhasa, founded in 1416 by ’Jams dbyangs chos rje bKra shis dpal ldan (1379-1449). Earlier there were seven monastic colleges, but there are presently two principal colleges, Blo gsal gling and sGo mang. In exile, it has been relocated to Mundgod, Karnataka, India. The Dalai Lama is the monastery’s main incarnate lama. (2) Se ra, located north of Lhasa, founded in 1419 by Byams chen chos rje Shākyā ye shes (1354-1435). Presently, it is divided into an upper and a lower monastic college, commonly known as Se ra byes and Se ra smad. In exile, it has been relocated to Byalakuppe, Mysore, Karnataka, India. (3) dGa’ ldan, located east of Lhasa, founded in 1409 by Rje Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419), founder of the dGe lugs pa order. dGa’ ldan has two main monastic colleges, Shar rtse and Byang rtse. In exile, it has been relocated to Mundgod, Karnataka, India. The dGa’ ldan khri pa, who is appointed on the basis of ability, not incarnation, is the lineal successor of Tsong kha pa and the head of the dGe lugs pa school.

<sup>11</sup> The dGe lugs pa order was founded by the great master rJe Tsong kha pa bLo bzang brags pa (1357-1419) in the early fifteenth century as a revitalisation of the great Indian pāṇḍita Atīśa’s (982-1054) bKa’ gdams pa tradition. The dGe lugs pa sūtra tradition, which is carried on at the three great monasteries of Se ra, ’Bras spungs, and dGa’ ldan, is based on the study of the five great classes of philosophy texts (*gzhung chen sde Inga*): (1) the perfection of wisdom (*phar phyin*), (2) the middle way (*dbu ma*), (3) logic and epistemology (*tshad ma*), (4) monastic discipline (*’dul ba*), and (5) metaphysics (*mdzod*). The tantra tradition, which is carried on at the Upper Tantric College (*rgyud stod*)—which is now located in Dharamsala, India—and the Lower Tantric College (*rgyud smad*)—which is now located in Hunsur,

Thus, His Holiness, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, wishing to sustain the accomplishments and goodwill established by his predecessors, and for the spiritual development of his fortunate followers, visited this hidden land four times out of his unlimited kindness. At present, he abides as the nature of Amitāyus, buddha of longevity, expanding the Buddha's teachings in this universe.

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Karnataka, India—is based on three principal cycles of tantric texts and deities: (1) Guhyasamāja (*gsang ba 'dus pa*), (2) Cakrasaṃvara (*'khor lo bde mchog*), and (3) Vajrabhairava (*rdo rje 'jigs byed*). In India, the dGe lugs pa tradition is continued under the leadership of the dGa' ldan khri pa, the throneholder of rJe Tsong kha pa's lineage.

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SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THREE TIBETAN LAMAS  
AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN SIKKIM

SAKYA TRICHEN  
(SA SKYA<sup>1</sup> GONG MA SGROL MA PHO BRANG)

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA  
*Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*

English translation by  
Carl Yamamoto

The 41<sup>st</sup> throneholder of Sa skya order of Mahāyāna Buddhism (*sa skya khri chen*), Ngag dbang kun dga' theg chen dpal 'bar phrin las bsam 'phel dbang gi rgyal po of sGrol ma pho brang,<sup>2</sup> is the supreme head of

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<sup>1</sup> The Sa skya tradition began in the late eleventh century. Since the earth (*sa*) at the site where Sa skya monastery was established, near dBon po mountain, was grey (*skya*) in color, the new tradition became known as the 'Sa skya pa'. There are three subdivisions within the Sa skya tradition: Sa skya pa, Ngor pa, presently led by H.E. Ngor Klu lding mKhan chen 'Jam dbyangs bstan pa'i nyi ma, and Tshar pa, presently led by H.E. bCo brgyad Khri chen Rin po che. Sa skya Khri chen is the head of the Sa skya pa subdivision, as well as the general leader of the Sa skya pas. In India and Nepal, Sakya College (Dehra Dun, state of Uttarkhand), Dzongsar Institute (Bir, state of Himachal Pradesh), Ngor ma dgon dpal ewam chos ldan (Manduwala, Dehra Dun, state of Uttarkhand), Tshar pa (Kathmandu, Nepal), and many other new institutions were built in order to preserve the lineage in the present day. The main teaching and practice of the Sa skya pas is the Path and Its Fruits (*lam 'bras*), which is based on the *Hevajra Tantra* and which is considered to be the essence of the sūtra and tantra paths.

<sup>2</sup> Since the establishment of Sa skya monastery in Tibet by 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po in 1073 C.E., there have been 41 *Khri 'dzin*, or throneholders, of Sa skya up to sGrol ma pho brang. The first was dKon mchog rgyal po (1034-1102), then his son Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158), then Kun dga' 'bar , bSod nams rtse mo (1142-1182), rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216), dPal chen 'Od po (1150-1203), Sa skya Paṇḍita (1181-1251), Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1184-1239), 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1235-1280), 'Gro mgon Phyag na (1239-1267), Dharmapālarakṣita (1268-1287), Ratnabhadra, sLob dpon Ye shes 'byung gnas (1238-1274), bZang po dpal (1262-1324), and dPal Kun dga' blo gros (1299-1327).

Kun dga' blo gros created four *la brang* for his younger brothers: gZhi thog bla brang, Bla brang rin chen sgang, lHa khang bla brang, and Dus mchod bla brang.

(1) In *gZhi thog bla brang*, there were many accomplished masters, from mKhas btsun Nam mkha' legs pa (1305-1343) up to bDag chen Blo gros dbang phyug.

(2) In *Bla brang rin chen sgang*, the lineage was: Kun dga' nyi ma, 'Jam dbyangs Don yod rgyal mtshan (1310-1344), and Bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312-1375). Then 'Jam dbyangs Don yod rgyal mtshan's son Bla chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1310-1358), his son 'Jam dbyangs Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (-1472), and his sons rGya gar pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1436-1494) and bDag chen Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1436-1486). From among these, in particular, Bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan became a great master with many disciples, and his teaching lineage continues to the present day among the Sa skya orders.

(3) In *lHa khang bla brang*, there were many accomplished masters, from the two brothers Ngag dbang Kun dga' legs pa'i 'byung gnas (1308-1330?) and Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1310-1368) up to Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1332-1359) and Kun dga' legs.

(4) *Dus mchod bla brang* is the root of all of the present-day Sa skya lineages. It began with bZang po dpal (1261-1323?), then his three sons bDag chen Kun dga' legs 'byung (1308-1336), etc., Kun dga' legs 'byung's son Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1336-1376), his son rNam sras rgyal mtshan (1360-1408), his son Nam mkha' legs pa, his son Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, his son Nam mkha' bkra shis, his four sons 'Jam dbyangs Kun dga' bsod nams, Ngag gi dbang phyug, 'Jam dpal grags pa, and Sangs rgyas tshe brtan, and Sangs rgyas tshe brtan's two sons bDag chen Kun dga' bsam 'grub (1515-1572) and Kun dga' rin chen (1517-1584). bDag chen Kun dga' bsam 'grub stayed at rTse gdong (established in 1479 by Nam mkha' bkra shis), and from Kun dga' bsam 'grub to Ngag dbang Nor bu rgyan pa, the lineage is called *rTse gdong gi gdung brgyud*. From Kun dga' rin chen, the lineage continues with his two sons 'Jam dbyangs bSod nams dbang po (1559-) and Grags pa blo gros (1563-1617), Grags pa blo gros's son 'Jam mgon A mes Kun dga' bsod nams (1571-1659), his son 'Jam dbyangs bSod nams dbang phyug, his son Ngag dbang Kun dga' bkra shis (1656-), his son 'Jam mgon bSod nams rin chen (1705-), his two sons Ngag dbang Kun dga' blo gros (1729-), etc., Ngag dbang Kun dga' blo gros's two sons 'Jam mgon dBang sdud snying po and Kun dga' phan bde rgya mtsho, 'Jam mgon dBang sdud snying po's sons Khrichchen Padma bdud 'dul dbang phyug (aka Kun dga' bkra shis), Ngag dbang Kun dga' rin chen, 'Jam mgon Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, and Mgon po dNgos grub dpal 'bar.

At this time, Dus mchod bla brang divided into two *pho brang*: sGrol ma pho brang and Phun tshogs pho brang. (a) *sGrol ma pho brang* was established by Khri chen bKra shis rin chen, the son of Khri chen Padma bdud 'dul dbang phyug. bKra shis rin chen was succeeded by his sons Kun dga' snying po and gSang bdag dpal chen 'od po, then the eldest of the four sons of Kun dga' snying po, Drag shul phrin las rin chen, his two sons Ngag dbang kun dga' rin chen and Kun dga' stan pa'i rgyal mtshan, and Ngag dbang kun dga' rin chen's son Ngag dbang kun dga' theg chen dpal 'bar phrin las dbang gi rgyal po (the present throneholder of the Sa skya sGrol ma pho brang). (b) *Phun tshogs pho brang* originated with Ngag dbang Kun dga' rin chen, who was succeeded by his son 'Jam mgon rDo rje rin chen, his sons Khri chen Kun dga' bsod nams and dPal ldan phyogs kyi glang po, Kun dga' bsod nams's son 'Dzam gling che rgu dbang sdud, his sons Khri chen Ngag dbang mThu stobs dbang phyug

the Sa skya pa, which is considered to have descended from three unbroken lineages: the ‘sky light heaven’ (*gnam lha*) lineage,<sup>3</sup> the ’Khon clan lineage,<sup>4</sup> and the Sa skya lineage,<sup>5</sup> collectively known as

and Thub bstan mKhas grub rgya mtsho, and their son ’Jigs bral ngag dbang Kun dga’ bsod nams (the present thronesholder of Sa skya Phun tshogs pho brang).

<sup>3</sup> There are three sky gods: sPyi ring, g.Yu ring, and dBu se, emanations of the bodhisattva Mañjuśī who appeared in the region of upper mNga’ ris in far western Tibet. g.Yu ring, the second one, has seven sons known as the *Ma sangs spun bdun*. Among these, the youngest, Ma sangs spyi rje, had a son named Thog tsha dpa’ bo stag. His son was Klu tsha stag po ’od can. They all take forms that transcend the human form and live in the realm of space. All of them, up to Klu tsha stag po ’od can’s son g.Ya’ spang skyes, are called ‘the divine luminosity lineage’ (*’od gsal lha’i gdung bryud*) of the Sa skya tradition.

<sup>4</sup> g.Ya’ spang skyes of the ‘sky-god lineage’ subdued the demon called sKya rengs khrag med and took the demon’s wife, g.Ya’ ’brug si li ma, for his own wife. A son called ’Khon Bar skyes (the first ’Khon lineage holder) was born, and because he born out of a dispute (*’khon*) with a demon, or a mix between these two separate forms, since then he and his descendants have been called the ’Khon lineage. ’Khon Bar skyes’s son was called dKon pa rje gung stag (the second ’Khon lineage holder) or ’Khon dPal po che. Later, ’Khon dPal po che was the interior minister of Chos rgyal Khri strong lde’u btsan. His son was ’Khon Klu dbang sprung, who was one of the first seven Tibetan ordained monks, ordained by mKhan chen Bo dhi sa twa, and became a disciple of Guru Padmasambhava. His younger brother was the tantric master named rDo rje rin chen (the third ’Khon lineage holder). His son was Shes rab yon tan (the fourth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was Yon tan ’byung gnas (the fifth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was Tshul khriims rgyal po (the sixth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was rDo rje gTsug tor (the seventh ’Khon lineage holder). His son was dGe skyabs (the eighth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was dGe mthong (the ninth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was Bal po (the tenth ’Khon lineage holder). His son was Shā kya blo gros (the eleventh ’Khon lineage holder). His sons were ’Khon rog Shes rab tshul khriims and ’Khon dKon mchog rgyal po (the twelfth ’Khon lineage holder). From ’Khon Bar skyes up to ’Khon rog Shes rab tshul khriims, they are known as the ’Khon lineage of the Sa skya tradition, and up to Shes rab tshul khriims they formed an unbroken chain of tantric masters who practiced the rNying ma tradition.

<sup>4</sup> ’Khon dKon mchog rgyal po became disillusioned with the rNying ma tantras and was advised by his elder brother, ’Khon rog Shes rab tshul khriims, to study the new tantras with ’Brog mi lo tsā ba. Later he studied with many other masters, including ’Gos Khug pa, Pañdita Shes rab gsang ba, Mal lo tsā ba, Ba ri lo tsā ba, Bla ma sGyi chu ba, Pu hrangs lo tsā ba, the two gNam kha’u pa brothers, sKyur ra a skyabs, etc. Later, in 1073 C.E., he founded the first monastery of the new tantra at Sa skya in the southern part of Central Tibet. When the Sa skya pas converted to new tantra, the only rNying ma tantras they continued to practice were the *Yang dag* (*Vishudha*) and *rDo rje phur pa* (*Vajrakilāya*) tantras. Since then, the *gnam lha* lineage and the ’Khon family dynasty, along with its religious system and followers, came to be known as Sa skya pa.

the ‘three supreme names’ (*mtshan mchog gsum ldan*). He was born, accompanied by many miraculous signs, on the first day of the eighth month of the Female Wood Cock year of the 16<sup>th</sup> 60-year cycle (7 September 1945), son of the father Kun dga’ rin chen, the fifth incarnation of both the sGrol ma pho brang and the Phun tshogs pho brang, and the mother bSod nams sgrol dkar, from a high-ranking family named Bon shod, at rTse gdong, province of gTsang, Tibet. Soon after his birth, he was given the long-life empowerment by his father, along with the name *Ngag dbang kun dga’ theg chen dpal ’bar phrin las bsam ’phel dbang gi rgyal po*.

When he reached the age of two, he was taken to the great Sa skya monastery. At the age of four, his father gave him initiations in the Vajrakīlāya of the ’Khon tradition (*’khon lugs rdo rje phur pa*), Hayagrīva, Vajrapāni, the longevity sādhana, Vaiśravaṇa, and the oath of Tsi’u dmar, the *yakṣa* spirit.

In 1950, when he was five years old, Lama Nga blo Rin po che first taught him the Tibetan alphabet, and the senior tutor, Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, also taught him alphabet, as well as the reading of the *Gang blo ma*, a praise of Mañjuśrī, etc.

In 1952, when he reached the age of seven, a brief enthronement ceremony was held, and then in 1959, when he was 14, he was enthroned officially, with a grand ceremony, as the religious and secular leader of the Sa skya pa tradition.

Among his teachers were:

The Great Abbot of Ngor e wam chos ldan monastery, rDo rje ’chang Ngag dbang blo gros zhan phan snying po  
 The Great rDo rje ’chang Khang gsar zhabs drung  
 Phan bde mkhan Rin po che  
 The Tutor and Great Abbot, ’Jam dpal bzang po  
 Grub dbang ri rked Bya bral Rin po che  
 The 2<sup>nd</sup> rDzong sar mkhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros  
 The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, bsTan ’dzin rgya mtsho  
 The Great rDo rje ’chang sKyabs rje bco brgyad khri chen  
 mKhan po Rin chen  
 mKhan po A pad Rin po che  
 Grang che mkhan Rin po che  
 Bya bral Byang chub rdo rje Rin po che

From these and many other scholars and accomplished masters, he received the initiations, transmissions, and instructions of the following teachings: the Sa skyā pa teachings, including the Path and Its Fruits (*lam 'bras*), the heart of the Sa skyā teachings which runs into 31 volumes, the Hevajra (*kye rdo rje*) teachings, the *Compendium of Sādhanas* (*sgrub thabs kun btus*), the *Compendium of Tantras* (*rgyud sde kun btus*), the textual transmissions of the *Collected Works of Ngor chen dKon mchog lhun grub*, etc.

He also received teachings of other traditions: the Kālacakra (*dus kyi 'khor lo*), the initiations of Avalokiteśvara (*'phags pa thugs rje chen po'i dbang chen*), the *Klong chen snying thig* of the rNying ma tradition (*rnying lugs klong chen snying thig*), the oral transmissions of the phur pa (*snyan brgyud phur pa*), the *Bar chad lam sel* of the Mind Sādhana (*thugs sgrub bar chad lam sel*), and the treasure teachings of A pang gter ston Phrin las gling pa.

In addition, he studied many sūtra teachings, including the middle way (*dbu ma*), logic and epistemology (*tshad ma*), metaphysics (*mdzod*), perfection of wisdom (*phar phyin*), grammar (*sum rtag*), spelling (*dag yig*), and modern English from sKu ngo rgya chos lags and Jam dkyil sras dbang phyug tshe ring. Along with these teachings and studies, he did many meditation practices on the peaceful and wrathful deities (*bla ma zhi khro*), the Vajrapāṇi taming practices (*phyag rdor 'byung po 'dul byed*), the 10 wrathful Gur gyi mgon po dharma protectors (*gur mgon khro bcu*), the Vajrakīlāya based on the 'Khon tradition, etc. Through these meditation practices, he acquired great knowledge and became a master of both teachings and realisations.

From the time he was age 10, in 1955, he gave empowerments and transmissions of the profound Sa skyā pa teachings, including the Vajrakīlāya based on the 'Khon tradition, the Path and Its Fruits, the *Compendium of Sādhanas*, etc., bringing to maturity many fortunate beings.

In November of 1956, he met and gave a reception and audience to H.H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, who had been invited by the Mahabodhi Society of India on the occasion of the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, and was passing through Gzhis ka rtse on his way to India. After that, Sa skyā gong ma travelled to India via Nathula, Sikkim, for the purpose of paying religious visits to major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India. Following the pilgrimage, he returned by way of Sikkim, where he had an audience with the Dalai

Lama, as well as with rDzong sar mkhyen brtse Rin po che, who was also in Sikkim. Then, in 1957, he returned to Tibet via Nathula.

Then, in 1959, because of the overall dangerous situation in Tibet, he left his monastic seat on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the second month of the lunar calendar, reaching Kha'u brag rdzong on the 30<sup>th</sup>. Then, at dawn, he travelled secretly through Gzu 'u pass, reaching North Sikkim by way of Lachen after a few days, where he had to remain in exile. While he was staying at Lachen, he heard that Rdzong sar mkhyen rtse Rin po che's health was failing, and immediately went to Gangtok, where he met with Rin po che and performed prayers for his health. Although he prayed for Rin po che's long life in order to benefit the teachings and sentient beings in this degenerate age, because of the low merit of sentient beings, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar, Rin po che was absorbed into the ultimate sphere. Sa skya gong ma performed funeral feast offerings and other necessary rituals. During his one-month stay in North Sikkim, he learned English for the first time from Jo sKal bzang la chen pa. Thus, his first year of exile was spent in Sikkim. In July of 1960, he once again came to Sikkim for the one-year anniversary offering ceremony for rDzong sar mkhyen rtse, where he performed extensive feast offerings along with other prayers and dedications.

Before discussing the many contributions he made to Sikkim since the time he went into exile, I would like first to discuss briefly the well-known earlier historical ties between Sikkim and the Sa skya pas. According to the Sa skya pa histories and descent chronicles, in 1244, when Sa skya Panḍita went to Mongolia at the invitation of the Mongol king Ogodai, he was accompanied by his two nephews, Chos rgyal 'Phags pa and 'Gro mgon Phyag na. Sa skya Panḍita appointed Shākyā Bzang po as the chief administrator of Sa skya during their absence, and he administered for 27 years. During that time, in 1265, 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa returned from Mongolia to Tibet and expressed a desire to build a great temple, at which time Sa skya Bzang po began construction of the temple.

Also, according to a history of Sikkim, in 1268, the Crown Prince of the 25<sup>th</sup> King of Khams Mi nyag in eastern Tibet came to the monastic seat of Sa skya in upper gTsang in southern Tibet, and because no one else was able to raise the four great pillars of the Sa

skya temple,<sup>6</sup> the Prince himself raised them single-handedly. Because he was said to have had the strength of 100,000 men, he was given the name *Gyad 'bum bsags* ('the one who gathers the strength of 100,000'). He stayed for a short time at Sa skya, and married a daughter of the Sa skya family, Jo mo gu ru Shes rab sgrol ma.<sup>7</sup> In 1269, Gyad 'bum bsags and his family left Sa skya and travelled to the area north of Gam pa rdzong, where he built a monastery called Pakshi and established a monastic community. The younger prince of the Mi nyag king (Gyad 'bum bsags' younger brother) was ordained and appointed head lama of the monastery. Then, Gyad 'bum bsags proceeded to Phag ri rdzong, where he remained and founded another monastery, called bSam grub lha khang. It was there that Gyad 'bum bsags' father, the Mi nyag king, passed away.

Gyad 'bum bsags then travelled from Phag ri through Gro mo khang chung and Chu mo gshongs to Chu 'bi, where he built a house and settled for close to three years, but he remained without issue. In accordance with prophecies by a god and a living master, he decided to go to Sikkim with about 17 attendants and many excellent offering materials, travelling by way of bTso la and Sa brtag la to Seng lding long btsugs, and at Rin tsom la, he met for the first time the powerful and realised yogi, The kong teg, chief of the Lepcha tribals, the original people of this land, and his wife Nyu kong ngal. He offered them a variety of priceless rare articles and, as per the prophecies, prayed to be blessed with children. Soon after they returned to Chu 'bi, Gyad 'bum bsags' wife, Sa sky'a'i rje btsun lha lcam Jo mo Gu ru shes rab sgrol ma, became pregnant, and they travelled to Sikkim to the cave of La rgyab, where she gave birth to a son, who was given the name *Brag btsan dar pa*. The father, Gyad 'bum bsags, went to Ring tsom and performed a grand thanksgiving ceremony in remembrance of the grace

<sup>6</sup> The 'Four Great Divine Pillars of Sa sky Temple' (*sa sky'a'i lha khang chen mo'i sprul pa'i ka chen bzhi*) are: (1) dKar po 'dzum legs from Kong po, (2) Ser po 'dzum legs from Lu chu, (3) dMar po phrag mndzod from Gar yul, and (4) Nag po khun shes from La dwags.

<sup>7</sup> There is no indication in the literature who the actual father and mother of Shes rab sgrol ma were. All of the sources say only 'daughter of the Sa skya family'. Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan had five wives and eight children, including 'Phags pa and Phyag na, the only ones of whom we know the names. It is possible that one of Shes rab sgrol ma's parents was one of bSod nams rgyal mtshan's eight children. It is clear that Chos rgyal 'Phags and 'Gro mgon Phyag na were not the father, since the former was an ordained monk and the latter was born in 1239, which would make him too young to be her father. We leave this question to future researchers.

of the protector gods and local deities of Sikkim as well as the chief and wife of the Lepchas.

At the place in this land called Ga bhi long btsugs, when the two tribes—the Bhutias, from Tibet, and the Lepchas, the original inhabitants—swore an oath of mutual aid, the son Brag btsan dar pa took as witnesses his ancestors' patron gods and the powerful local deities of this land, and the chief of the Lepchas, The kong teg, took as witnesses all of the Lepcha gods. In this way, the lineage of Gyad 'bum bsags gradually became well established in Sikkim, and later, during the seventeenth century, the seventh-generation descendant of Gyad 'bum bsags, Chos rgyal Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, was enthroned as the first Chos rgyal of this land by the three brother yogis, the patron saints of Sikkim, who had come from Tibet.

Because past relations with Sikkim had been good, at the time Sa skyā Khri chen arrived as an exile, people very happily welcomed him to Sikkim. His Holiness, for the secular and religious revival of Tibet, established the Sa skyā settlement residence for laypeople and monastics and the mother Sa skyā monastery, Thub bstān rnam rgyal gling, near the place called Ponda in the state of Himachal Pradesh. On 16 March 1964, in Rajpur, Dehra Dun, state of Uttar Pradesh (presently in the new state of Uttarkhand, which was separated from Uttar Pradesh), he established the exile monastic seat, the religious and political foundation of the Sa skyā pa order. From the time he took it as his permanent residence, in order to benefit the Dharma and all sentient beings, His Holiness visited Sikkim four times, as follows:

In response to the long-standing request by the Sa ngor chos tshogs Centre<sup>8</sup> and the lay and monastic disciples of Gangtok, at the age of 42, in the Female Fire Hare year (1987), the first year of the 17<sup>th</sup> 60-year cycle, he arrived in Gangtok with his family and attendants, and performed the inaugural and consecration ceremonies for the Sa ngor chos tshogs Centre, the first and only monastery in Sikkim belonging to the Sa skyā pa order, which had been established at his request on a hilltop in Rongyek, about three kilometres from the state capital. The

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<sup>8</sup> The Centre was first established by H.E. Klu sding mkhan Rin po che and the late mKhan po Blo gros bzang po in 1961, under the guidance of H.H. Sa skyā Khri chen Rin po che, as a relief camp for the Sa skyā pa monks and Tibetan refugees fleeing Tibet at the time of the Chinese occupation. Until 1976, the Centre was housed in a private residence provided by its founder, the late Kazi bsTan po rnam rgyal 'bar phung pa of Khendzong House in Gangtok. The construction for the Centre in Rongyek was begun in 1975.

site had been donated by the 12th Chos rgyal of Sikkim in 1972 in the name of Rin po che himself, and at that same time, the Chos rgyal had made an insistent appeal for him to come to Sikkim. During his stay at the Centre, he gave extraordinary instructions and transmissions to the monks, and bestowed the Hayagrīva, Vajrapani, Garuḍa, and long-life initiations on the general public. He made offerings in front of the reliquary stūpa of mKhyen brtse rDo rje 'chang at the Royal Palace, had an audience with dBang phyug rnam rgyal, the 13th Chos rgyal of Sikkim, and gave the White Tārā long-life and Avalokiteśvara initiations to the general public. At the request of the Sikkim Buddhist Duchen Organisation, he delivered teachings in English on the Festival of the Buddha's Descent from Heaven to devotees at Paljor Stadium. Then, he travelled to West Sikkim with his family and visited a number of important religious sites, including Padma yangs rtse, the premier monastery of Sikkim, Yug sam nor bu sgang, where modern Sikkimese history began, mKha' spyod dpal ri, Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, the center of this hidden land, mKha' 'gro gsang phug, the southern cave of the four supreme caves of the four cardinal directions, etc., where he performed site-purification ablutions, hill ablutions, and consecrations, and gave advice and teachings to the general public. Along the way, he visited the Bon po zhu ri zhing g.yung drung kun grags gling monastery at Ravangla and the Tibetan settlement Kunphenling in South Sikkim. He blessed the main temples at Rum btegs monastery in East Sikkim and Ra dbang la monastery (Tibetan settlement) in South Sikkim.

On 20 May 1992, while he was visiting Rum btegs bshad sgrub chos 'khor gling monastery, the exile monastic seat of the 16<sup>th</sup> Rgyal dbang Karma pa, the two heart-disciples of the Karma pa, H.E. Tai situ Rin po che and H.E. G shi rgyal tshab Rin po che, at the request of the monastic committee, opened the official secret command-seal left by the 16<sup>th</sup> Karma pa containing directions for finding the 17<sup>th</sup> reincarnation, which they offered to Khri chen Rin po che for his viewing, at which time he read it and made prayers for a genuine reincarnation.

In 1994, Rin po che visited Sikkim, and while he was staying in Gangtok for one month, he gave reading transmissions for the six-syllable Avalokiteśvara mantra and the transfer of consciousness practice ('pho ba), and the initiations of Hayagrīva, Vajrapāṇi, and Garuḍa, along with a general public audience at Sa ngor chos tshogs Centre. Besides these, he gave a profound and extensive talk on the

need, first of all, to learn well the teachings of the Buddha individually, and then to put them into practice, along with the need to preserve the culture and language of the Himalayas, which are closely connected with the Buddhadharma. During his stay at Gangtok, since Lachen and Lachung have for so many years enjoyed a special relationship with Sa skyā, the people of these two valleys in North Sikkim requested that he visit. On the way, at Mangan, the district headquarters of North Sikkim, he was given a grand reception by the local district government officials. During his one-night stay, he held an audience with the general public and gave teachings. Then he visited the monasteries of La chen, La chung, Thang mo chen, bTsun thang, Pho gdang, etc., where he gave teachings, made offerings, and held audiences with, and performed rites for the benefit of, the local people. During his stay in Sikkim, he met with high-ranking officers of the state government. Wherever Sa skyā khri chen Rin po che went, whatever offerings he received from monasteries, he returned to the monasteries, along with extra financial support. By these means, he supported the Buddhadharma with great kindness.

In December of 1998, at the time His Holiness travelled to Sikkim, he performed the master offering ritual, or *gurupūjā*, at the relic stūpa of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros at the Royal Palace in Gangtok, and gave the reading transmission for the transfer of consciousness practice to the devotees of the Sa skyā Tshe bcu Association at Chandmari.

On 1 January 1999, His Holiness visited the Thonmi Sambhota School for Tibetan, which is under the Education Department of the exile Tibetan government, on his way to Lingdum near Gangtok, where he performed the inauguration and consecration ceremonies for dPal kar ma'i zur mang bshad sgrub chos 'khor gling, the new monastery built by H.E. Zur mang Gar dbang Rin po che, and gave the initiation of Amitāyus to the monastics and the general public of the area.

At the Sa Ngor chos tshogs Centre, he gave teachings in both English and Tibetan on the Sa skyā teaching called 'the Instructions on Four Non-attachments', as well as the Hayagrīva, Vajrapāṇi, and Garuḍa initiations to the monks of the monastery and the general public who were in attendance. During his stay at the Centre, his eldest son, Ratna badzra Rin po che, of the 'Khon family, blessed the building site of the meditation centre of Sa ngor chos tshogs monastery, and gave it the name *brTse chen bsam gtan gling*, and during the anniversary ceremony of 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phag pa, he performed the master

offering ritual, or *gurupūjā*, and the guardian deities offering. As per the request of the central committee of mTshur phu bla brang of Rum btegs monastery, and H.E. Go shri rgyal tshab Rin po che of dPal chen chos 'khor gling monastery at Ra langs in South Sikkim, he gave the initiation of the Vajrakīlāya of the 'Khon tradition, which is the extraordinary practice of the Sa skya pa order. His Holiness spoke to the Tibetan people of Gangtok about the importance of this land, which was blessed by Guru Rinpoche, and gave them profound and extensive instructions to follow the teachings and wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He met and held free discussions about Buddhism with high-ranking officials of the state government. During this visit, he was accompanied by his two lineage-holder sons and his consort.

Thus, by visiting this hidden land of Guru Rinpoche, he bestowed happiness and benefit on all of the fortunate beings of this land. In every direction of this world, by the unlimited activities of the three wheels—turning the wheel of the profound and extensive Dharma, etc.—and by the incomparable activities of upholding, preserving, and spreading the Buddha's doctrine in general, and the precious Sa skya pa doctrine in particular, he abides as the essence of the three long-life gods for the most excellent benefit of all beings.

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SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THREE TIBETAN LAMAS  
AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN SIKKIM

JAMYANG KHYENTSE CHOKYI LODROE  
('JAM DBYANGS MKHYEN BRTSE CHOS KYI BLO GROS)

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA  
*Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*

English translation by  
Carl Yamamoto

'Jam' dbyangs mkhyen brtse Chos kyi blo gros—mind embodiment of the Indian paññita Vimalamitra,<sup>1</sup> activity emanation<sup>2</sup> of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dBang po as prophesied, ecumenical (*ris med*) master and lineage holder of every Tibetan Buddhist tradition—was born in the autumn of the Water Female Snake year of the 15th 60-year cycle (Tibetan king year 2020,<sup>3</sup> 1893 C.E.) at Re khe, one of the four regions of mDud in mDo smad, Eastern Tibet, to the father Vajradhara 'Gyur med tshe dbang rgyal po, descendant of the great treasure-revealer

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<sup>1</sup> Indian Buddhist saint, known in Tibet as Dri med bshes gnyen, who was invited to Tibet by Dharma King Khri srong de'u btsan in the eighth century. Much respected by the rNying ma pa school as one of the forefathers of the rDzogs chen teachings, especially the *snying thig* teachings, in Tibet.

<sup>2</sup> In Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are generally considered to be three enlightened bodies (*sku gsum*): (1) the body of absolute reality (*chos sku*), which is naturally pure and free from adventitious defilements; (2) the enjoyment body (*longs sku*), which is visible only to bodhisattvas; and (3) the emanation body (*sprul sku*), which is visible to both bodhisattvas and non-bodhisattvas. The third category, *sprul sku*, is divided into four: (1) emanation body by birth (*skyé ba sprul sku*), which includes, for example, human beings and animals; (2) supreme emanation body (*mchog gi sprul sku*), the emanation that performed the 12 Buddha Acts; (3) emanation body in various forms and manners (*sna tshogs sprul sku*); and (4) constructed emanation body (*bzo sprul sku*), which takes the form of inanimate objects such as a statue or a bridge. In Tibetan Buddhist traditions, there are, in addition, five forms—all of them human—which an incarnate lama (*sprul sku*) may take at rebirth: (1) body (*sku*), (2) speech (*gsung*), (3) mind (*thugs*), (4) quality (*yon tan*), and (5) activity ('phrin las).

<sup>3</sup> The Tibetan king year (*bod rgyal lo*) is calculated according to the *phug lug*, the system of astrological calculation created by Phug pa lHun grub rgya mtsho, who was born in the Lho kha district in southern Tibet.

bDud 'dul rdo rje, and the mother Tshul khrims mtsho. He was given the name 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros by his father. At the repeated request of Kah thog Si tu Rin po che, 'Jam mgon blo gros mtha' yas recognised him as the reincarnation of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dBang po.

At the age of seven, he paid a visit to the monastery of Kah thog rdo rje gdan,<sup>4</sup> where the haircutting ceremony was performed by Kah thog Si tu Rin po che and he was given the name 'Jam dbyangs blo gros rgya mtsho thub bstan bshad sgrub rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po.

At the age of 10, he was ordained as a novice monk and received the additional name of gTsug lag lung rigs nyi ma smra ba'i seng ge. From that age, he received an education in reading, writing, basic religious practice, and grammar from the great scholar Thub bstan rig 'dzin rgya mtsho, tutor to Kah thog Si tu Rin po che.

When he was 15 years old, the head incarnate lama at the monastic seat of rDzong sar died suddenly, and the previous 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse's treasurer, sKal bzang rdo rje, and others urged Kah thog Si tu Rin po che to allow him to proceed to rDzong sar monastery, monastic seat of the Sa ngor tradition of the Sa skya pa school.

He received basic monastic training and empowerments, instructions in the five major and the five minor subjects and the canonical scriptures and commentaries (*bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*), transmissions and treasure teachings (*bka' gter*) of the rNying ma tradition, empowerments and instructions of the four major and eight minor *bKa'* brgyud schools, the Path and Its Fruits (*lam 'bras*) teaching, heart of the Sa skya tradition, the tantric teachings and sādhanas of the Sa skya pa, the old and the new teachings of the *bKa'* gdams pa, including the Kālacakra, the five great treasury teachings, etc., from the following ecumenical (*ris med*) masters:

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<sup>4</sup> In the rNying ma tradition, there are six Great Mother Monasteries: (1) rDo rje brag, in the upper region of Tibet, founded in 1632 by rDo brag rig 'dzin chen po Ngag gi dbang po (1580-1639); (2) sMin grol gling, in the upper region of Tibet, founded in 1675-76 by sMin gling gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646-1714); (3) Zhe chen, in the middle of Tibet, founded in 1734-35 by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Zhe chen rab 'byams chos rje 'Gyur med kun bzang rnam rgyal (1713-1769); (4) rDzogs chen, in the middle of Tibet, founded in 1684-85 by Grub dbang rdzogs chen pa Padma rig 'dzin (1625-1697); (5) dPal yul, in the lower part of Tibet, founded in 1664-65 by Rig 'dzin chen po Kun bzang shes rab (1636-1698); and (6) Kah thog, in the lower part of Tibet, founded in 1159 by Kah thog pa dam pa bDe gshegs shes rab seng ge (1122-1192).

*rNying ma:*

Kaḥ thog Si tu paṇ chen Dharma sā ra  
 Zhe chen rab 'byams 'Gyur med kun bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma  
 Zhe chen rgyal tshab 'Gyur med padma rnam rgyal  
 A 'dzom 'brug pa 'Gro 'dul dpa' bo rdo rje  
 rDo grub gsum pa 'Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma  
 gTer chen Las rab gling pa  
 Grub dbang rdzogs chen Inga pa Thub bstan chos kyi rdo rje  
 rDzogs chen drug pa 'Jigs bral byang chub rdo rje  
 sMin gling khri rabs bcu pa 'Gyur med don grub dbang rgyal  
 mKhan chen Kun bzang dpal ldan  
 sKyabs rje bDud 'joms rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje  
 sKyabs rje Bya bral Sangs rgyas rdo rje, etc.

*Sa skyā:*

Thar rtse'i dpon slob rin po che 'Jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po  
 Thar rtse mkhan chen Byams pa kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan  
 Ngor mkhan chen rDo rje 'chang don dpal zhabs  
 Shar chen klu lding pa rgyal sras 'Jam dpal chos kyi nyi ma  
 Zhabs drung rin po che bKra shis rgya mtsho  
 sGa ston rdo rje 'chang Ngag dbang legs pa  
 mKhan po bSam gtan blo gros  
 sDe gzhung mchog sprul Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, etc.

*bKa' brgyud:*

Byams mgon si tu sku phreng bcu gcig pa Padma dbang mchog  
 rgyal po  
 rGyal sras 'Jam mgon mchog sprul  
 mKhas dbang bKra shis chos 'phel  
 Zur mang gTer drung rnam gnyis  
 Sangs rgyas mnyan sprul dgu pa Karma bshad sgrub bstan pa'i nyi  
 ma, etc.

*dGe lugs:*

Gong sa lha mi'i rnam 'dren rgyal mchog thams cad mkhyen pa  
 Thub bstan rgya mtsho  
 Gong sa skyabs mgon sku phreng bcu bzhi pa chen po mchog  
 mKhas pa'i dbang phyug dge bshes 'Jam dpal rol pa'i blo gros, etc.

These are just a few examples of his teachers. He received teachings from over 80 qualified ecumenical (*ris med*) masters. Having received and mastered these teachings, he meditated on them without mixing the philosophical views of the different schools. Because his special focus was on contemplative practice, he gained a reputation as a great meditator.

In 1918, at the age of 25, starting with 50 ordained monks, he established a monastic university called bShad sgrub dar rgyas gling at Khams kyi bye ma thang, just below the monastic seat of rDzong sar bkra shis lha rtse. In addition, he founded meditation centres at sDe dge lHun grub steng and Rong rme dkar mo stag tshang, performed renovations of the Kah thog tantric centre, gave advice and made donations to many small monasteries for the establishment of monastic schools and tantric centres, and constructed (1) gold and copper statues of gods and goddesses at rDzong sar, Kah thog, Khams bye monastic university, and the meditation centre of sTag tshang; (2) relief statues of the tantric deities of the old and the new traditions; (3) scroll paintings of his predecessor 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dBang po and of scenes from the stories of the Buddha's successive lives; and (4) woodblock prints of the collected works of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dBang po in thirteen volumes and the collected works of Mi pham, and, at Kah thog, rDzong sar and Zhe chen, woodblock prints of scriptures, etc. In this way, he contributed many of the three main shrine objects (*rten gsum*) to these monasteries.

At the age of 26, he received the full-ordination vows of the Lower Vinaya (*smad 'dul*) tradition from mKhan chen Padma blo gsal at the Tshe ring Ijongs hermitage of rDzogs chen o rgyan bsam gtan chos gling monastery. From the above-mentioned kind masters, he received the bodhisattva vows of both Nāgārjuna's and Asanga's traditions. Having been given various tantric empowerments, he also received the tantric vows, and thus became a master of the three vows (*sum ldan rdo rje 'dzin pa*).

For the benefit of the teachings and sentient beings, he turned the Wheel of the Dharma in the following ways:

He gave all of the empowerments and oral transmissions of the rNying ma transmissions and treasure teachings (*bka' gter*), the Path and Its Fruits (*lam 'bras*) and other tantric teachings and sādhanas of the Sa skya pa, the *Treasury of Oral Instructions* (*Gdams ngag mdzod*) of the bKa' brgyud pa, and the instructions of the Guhyasamāja, Cakrasamvara, and Vajrabhairava tantric teachings of the dGe lugs pa tradition, giving at least one or two initiations per day throughout the

summer, autumn, and spring. He remained at all times in meditation, without distraction. In the later part of his life, he stayed in strict meditation retreat through most of the winter.

In short, by seeing all of the teachings of the Tibetan traditions as pure visions, by learning, contemplating, and meditating, and by propagating the teachings, he became a learned and accomplished master.

In 1955, he foresaw, through his clairvoyance, the coming dangerous situation in Tibet, and in accordance with secret prophecies, at the age of 63 he left his monastic seat with his few attendants, travelling via Khams nang chen to dBus gtsang, where he made offerings at the main pilgrimage sites, then arriving at Sa skya in upper gTsang. After staying in dBus gtsang for a little over a year, in 1956 (the 19th day of the second ninth month of the Fire Male Monkey year), he finally arrived, by way of Tangku and Lachen, at Gangtok in Sikkim—the hidden land of lHa btsun chen po Nam mkha' 'jigs med, of whom his predecessor 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po was considered an incarnation.

After he made the decision to live in Sikkim, he travelled to the great pilgrimage sites of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, where he made extensive offerings.

He visualised Sikkim especially as an appropriate place for the spread of the teachings, and among the contributions he made at the end of his life are: in 1957, by an auspicious coincidence, he met with the 16th rGyal dbang Karma pa and the Crown Prince of Sikkim at Bkra shis lding in West Sikkim, where he received the clear display of the Karma pa's Black Hat five times, giving rise to powerful devotion, and he said maṇḍala prayers and the seven-branch prayer, and composed a long-life prayer (for the Karma pa). He performed the 'descent of blessings to the land' ritual based on the profound text *mKon mchog spyi 'dus*, which was discovered by Rig 'dzin 'Dza' tshon snying po. He also performed the long-life prayer to the Crown Prince Lama Rin po che by means of the offering of the eight auspicious symbols and the eight auspicious substances. He restrained the demons of the land and appointed them Dharma Protectors.

When he was at Padma yangs rtse monastery, the 21 lamas and monks, led by the head lama of the monastery, bSe sgrub mKha' spyod rin po che Ye shes blo gros dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma, performed the long-life prayer based on the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* for his sake. Another time, the same ritual was performed by 17 monks led by mKha' spyod

Rin po che. The Queen Mother of Sikkim, Kun bzang bde chen, sponsored the ritual offering based on the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel*. rDo grub chen Rin po che also performed the long-life prayer based on the *Yum ka* of the *Klong chen snying thig*. In the same year, he gave empowerments and transmissions of the texts of Rig 'dzin 'Dza' tshon snying po at Gangtok.

In short, during his stay in Sikkim of almost three years, he performed medical ritual practices based on the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*, the principal teaching of Sikkim, as well as many other extensive sādhanas practices. He travelled to Rum btegs in East Sikkim, Bkra shis ldings, Yug sam, and Padma yangs rtse in West Sikkim, and many other monasteries, sowing the seeds of ultimate happiness through his teachings. During that time, he also assisted in the establishment, in Sikkim, of the Vinaya traditions of restoration of vows and summer retreat. In addition, he had many secret visions in this land—descriptions of which can be found in his inner and secret biographies—that it would not be appropriate to discuss in a public presentation like this.

In 1959, at the age of 66, in the first month of the lunar calendar, when his health had declined a bit, H.H. Sa skya Khri chen, H.H., the 16th rGyal dbang Karma pa, H.H. bDud 'joms Rin po che, H.H. Bya bral Rin po che, H.H. rDo grub chen Rin po che, H.E. Khams sprul Rin po che, H.E. Ngor thar rtse Rin po che, H.E. kLu sding mkhan Rin po che, H.E. gNas brtan mChog gling Rin po che, H.E. bSod rgyal Rin po che, along with H.E. rGya ston Rin po che and H.E. 'Khrul zhig Rin po che, sponsored by the Queen Mother of Sikkim, performed the long-life ceremony and other related rituals and made extensive dedications for his recovery, as a result of which his health improved somewhat. The Crown Prince and the Queen Mother sponsored visits to both modern and traditional doctors, who examined him—taking his pulse, etc.—and when the doctors said there was nothing whatsoever wrong with his health, he looked at the Crown Prince and the Queen Mother and smiled.

At last, because of the poor merit of his disciples, sponsors, and devotees, on the evening of the sixth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar in 1959, at the Royal Palace of Sikkim, after taking a little bit of the black tea, nectar of barley beer, and milk that was offered to him—which put his mind at ease—during the ox period of the later part of the night (2 a.m.), while reciting a few of the eternal syllables of the mantra, he passed away and entered into the primordial ultimate sphere.

Then, for three days, his death was kept secret. On the ninth day of the lunar calendar, many old- and new-school lamas, abbots, and incarnate lamas, led by Sa skya Bdag chen rin po che, performed the master offering ritual, or *gurupūjā*, along with entreaties to arise from the meditative state, at which time the secret was made public. His grand funeral feast offering was performed before the body for seven weeks by H.E. Ngor mKhan po and H.E. Ngor Zhabs drung, led by H.H. Sa skya Khri 'dzin sGrol ma pho brang and H.H. Sa skya Phun tshogs pho brang. Other rituals of the various traditions were performed by H.E. rGya ston Rin po che and his disciples, H.E. Si tu Rin po che, H.E. gNas brtan mChog gling Rin po che and his disciples, H.H. rDo grub Rin po che, the Reverend Lady (*rje btsun ma*) of Sa skya, H.E. rDzong sar mnga' ri sprul sku, H.E. mKhar mdo khang gsar zhabs drung, H.E. g.Yon ru gter sras bla ma, H.E. Ngor thar rtse Rin po che, H.E. gNam mtsho do skya sprul sku, H.H. Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rin po che, H.E. Khams sprul Rin po che, etc., as well as many other abbots, incarnate lamas, and ordained monks of the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. From the Sikkim side, during the funeral feast offering, the government of Sikkim sponsored the *tshogs 'bum* ritual based on the *rDor sems*, the head lamas and monks of Padma yangs rtse monastery in West Sikkim performed the offering based on the *bDe gshegs kun 'dus*, and the monks of dBen monastery in East Sikkim, led by Ling rtogs sgom chen, performed the offering based on the *sMin gling rdor sems*.

At the time the cremation site was being discussed, some suggested Bodh Gaya, it being the holiest site, but 'Khrul zhig Rin po che argued that the cremation and stūpa should be at Bkra shis lding, the centre of this land, because (1) it would be a very auspicious fulfillment of the aspirations of the late lama and his predecessor, lHa btsun chen po, (2) the Buddha's teachings would spread and last for a long time throughout the world by the example of Sikkim, (3) it would be a great benefit for all living beings, and (4) the late lama himself had said, when he was on pilgrimage there, 'In a very clear dream I saw again and again the place where my body would rest. When I came to Bkra shis lding, I recognised it as the place I saw in my dream.' For these reasons, during the first part of the 11th month of the lunar calendar, the body was respectfully taken to Bkra shis lding, the centre of this hidden land.

At Bkra shis lding, H.E. Ngor thar rtse mkhan po, H.E. gNas brtan mchog gling Rin po che, H.H. Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rin po che, and

H.H. rDo grub chen Rin po che, etc., performed the cremation rites based on the five different ritual texts of their respective schools, and the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* maṇḍala ritual was performed by the monks of Padma yangs rtse monastery, led by H.E. mKha' spyod Rin po che and H.E. bSe sgrub gdung 'dzin dpal 'byor lhun grub Rin po che. After three days, the cremation chamber was opened and the bone-and-ash-collection ritual was performed, a stūpa was built, and the relics that had appeared were installed in the stūpa accompanied by the performance of rituals. After the completion of the stūpa, the monks, abbots, and high incarnate lamas of the old and new schools performed consecrations along with many feast offerings.

It is said that the place where the late lama passed away exists as a natural pure land of self-manifesting wisdom, and out of strong confidence in this, and to honor and fulfill the intentions of the late lama and create a field for sentient beings to accumulate merit, the late lama's consort, mKha' 'gro Tshe ring chos sgron, built two stūpas as indoor monuments within the residence of the late lama—one made of gold and copper that was the same height as the late lama, and one that was taller than the length of an arrow—and filled them with mantras written on pieces of paper. In 1960, they were consecrated by monks and lamas led by Tai Si tu Rin po che of dPal spungs, with lay devotees in attendance, and, in addition, H.H. the 16th rGyal dbang Karma pa bestowed upon them an extraordinary blessing with his wisdom mind. Once again, on the fifth month of the lunar calendar, on the first anniversary of his death, monks and incarnate lamas, led by H.H. Sa skya Khri chen Rin po che, performed grand day-long consecrations of the stūpas along with the feast offering for the late lama.

In this way, by its consecration and installation, the stūpa,<sup>5</sup> which is located on the ground floor of the Gangtok Royal Palace—the place where the late lama worked extensively for the benefit of the teachings and of sentient beings, the place of enlightenment, the nonsectarian garden of Dharma, the great adamantine palace of Akaniṣṭha—exists as a precious field for the accumulation of good merit for all beings.

Many of the works of the late Lama Vajradhara composed in or pertaining to Sikkim—praises, prayers, sādhanas, etc.—are contained in the individual texts of his eight-volume collected works, published by the rDzong sar mkhyen rtse La brang in 1981.

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<sup>5</sup> His consort, mKha' 'gro Tshe ring chos sgron, maintained the stūpa at the Royal Palace in Gangtok until 2006, at which time both mKha' 'gro lags and the stūpa moved to rDzong sar monastery, the exile monastic seat of the present rDzong sar mkhyen rtse (born 1961), at Bir, state of Himachal Pradesh.

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TIBETAN MASTERS AND THE FORMATION OF THE  
SACRED SITE OF TASHIDING

MÉLANIE VANDENHELSKEN  
HISSEY WONGCHUK  
*Namgyal Institute of Tibetology*

Tashiding (bKra shis sdings)<sup>1</sup> monastery in West Sikkim owes its importance to its sanctity which was created and then further enhanced by the arrival of several great Buddhist masters. From a religious perspective, bKra shis sdings monastery is located at the centre of Denjong ('Bras ljongs—lit. 'rice', 'grain' or 'fruits valley'),<sup>2</sup> i.e., the holy land and kingdom of Sikkim.<sup>3</sup> This would be the place from where Guru Rinpoche (Skt. Padmasambhava) blessed the land of 'Bras ljongs and, by doing so, recognised it as a holy place. Owing to both the close relation between Tibet and Sikkim and the crucial role played by Tibetan ideas and figures in the construction of the Sikkimese kingdom, bKra shis sdings emerged from an early stage as the meeting place between the two countries and thus as a central element of this religio-political space. Great Buddhist masters continued to put their stamp on the monastery in later years. bKra shis sdings was the cremation site of many high Buddhist incarnates with their reliquaries (*sku gdung*) being built there. Others offered the building of *mchod rten* (Skt. stūpa) during their lifetime or built houses for meditation (*mtshams khang*) in bKra shis sdings.

Together, these elements contribute to the perception of bKra shis sdings as a sacred place. This article aims to detail some of these elements<sup>4</sup> so as to gain a better understanding of this perception of

<sup>1</sup> Tibetan words are transliterated using the Wylie system (1959) with common nouns written in italics and proper nouns in roman. The Sanskrit words bear the mention 'Skt.' and the words in lHo skad, i.e. the Tibetan dialect spoken in Sikkim, are indicated by the mention 'Lk.'. The orthography of the original texts has not been changed in quotations.

<sup>2</sup> 'Centre of the holy place'—*gnas kyi lte ba*.

<sup>3</sup> The identification of the holy land that we are talking about with the kingdom of Sikkim applies only to ancient times. When the kingdom's territory expanded, the holy land having bKra shis sdings for centre became only its western region.

<sup>4</sup> The notion of perception implies that, concerning the past, we are going to present how the events are depicted in the literature and by the population—and

sacredness. Following a discussion about the early stages of the formation of bKra shis sdings' sanctity, since the present issue of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* is concerned with the contributions of Tibetan masters to Sikkim, the second part of this article presents biographies of Tibetan figures whose marks added to the holiness of bKra shis sdings monastery: bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros (1893-1959), lCags thag rin po che (end of nineteenth century-1957) and mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen (1923-2006).

#### THE EARLY STAGE

'Bras ljongs became a holy land after it was blessed by the Indian Saint Guru Rinpoche. According to Ringzing Ngodup Dokhampa, "[D]uring the first dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth-century, Guru Rinpoche and his twenty-five disciples (rje 'bngas nyer Inga) are said to have visited and blessed this land known as Beyul Demojong (sbas yul 'bras mo ljongs) or the 'hidden fruitful valley'. Thereafter, he tamed the malevolent beings and blessed the sites of some of the Sikkim's future monasteries and erected a number of Stūpas."<sup>5</sup>

In this regard, 'Bras ljongs is included among the seven 'hidden countries' of the Himalayan region discovered by the 'treasure discoverer' (*gter ston*) Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (1337-1408)—about whom more will be said below. According to Tibetan thought, 'hidden countries' are places where Buddhism will take refuge when it will be endangered in Tibet.<sup>6</sup> The process of 'construction' of the hidden land of Sikkim follows the same stages as other Himalayan hidden lands: besides having blessed the place, Guru Rinpoche prophesised about the Saint who will 'open' (i.e. give access to) it in future and appropriate time.

As a representation of a sacred land, sBas yul 'bras mo ljongs is thought of as a maṇḍala (Skt.) i.e. the abode of a deity and its retinue.<sup>7</sup>

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which concrete relationships to the site this perception leads to—rather than to make a history of bKra shis sdings. This perception is here to be considered as a narrative of which certain elements will be set forth.

<sup>5</sup> 2003a: 25. See also Khenpo Lha Tsering, 2002. In another text, it is said that “[I]n a pure vision, Santarakshita, Guru Rinpoche and Khri srong lde btsan set foot in this rice valley, the highest and most sacred of all hidden lands [...]” S. Mullard, 2005a: 61.

<sup>6</sup> See H. Diemberger, 1992: 291. Concerning the transformation of the land of Sikkim into a sacred Buddhist site, see also A. Balikci, 2002, chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> G. Tucci, 1974 [1969].

Indeed, a guide to the holy land of Sikkim (*'Bras ljongs gnas yig'*)<sup>8</sup> describes the country as a rectangular, oriented and centered space in the manner of a maṇḍala. The land is also sometimes qualified ‘maṇḍala’: it is for example the word ’Jigs med dpa’ bo used to name it when he met the Sikkimese king Phyag rdor rnam rgyal for the first time in 1710.<sup>9</sup>

The description of a place as a maṇḍala is frequent in the areas of Tibetan culture and, according to H. Diemberger the maṇḍala is “a model of interpretation of landscape giving a ritual dimension to the pilgrimage.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, most of the monastic Buddhist practices consist of entering the maṇḍala of a certain deity which occupies the central place, make its way until this central figure and visualise it (this latter practice is called *sgrub thabs* or *sgrub mchod*, Skt. sādhana, i.e. method of effecting propitiation or method of attainment). In consequence to the transposition of this ritual model to the landscape, “[T]he physical features of the landscape thus become the setting for ritual journeys. [...] The ‘landscape maṇḍala’ is the sacred enclosure which gives access to spiritual insight and mystic realization for the initiated.”<sup>11</sup>

*sBas yul 'bras mo ljongs* is considered as a maṇḍala of Guru Rinpoche and, as centre of this sacred land *bKra shis sdings* would be the throne of the master.<sup>12</sup> Several Buddhist Saints eventually recognised *bKra shis sdings* as the centre of the sacred land of Sikkim (see below). In the seventeenth century, after the first Sikkimese king and the three Tibetan religious men did so, “[T]he following wonderful phenomenon was observed at this time; a bright streak of light, issuing from the top of the peak of mDzod-lNGa (kinchen-jinga) shone right upon Tashiding, marking out the place as a divine spot.”<sup>13</sup>

According to some other texts, Guru Rinpoche blessed the land from the monastery’s location. *bKra shis sdings* itself could also be “a palace [i.e. mandala] of deities and that in the centre of Tashiding is the palace or mandala of Guru Rinpoche.”<sup>14</sup> It is also what Lha btsun ’Gyur med ’jigs brel bstan ’dzin dpa’ bo’s ‘Guide of the holy land of Sikkim’

<sup>8</sup> See Lha btsun ’Gyur med ’jigs brel bstan ’dzin dpa’ bo, c.1700 and in English, for instance Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003b and Tsultem Gyatso Acharya, 2005: 50.

<sup>9</sup> Lha btsun ’Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 273, line 2.

<sup>10</sup> 1992: 3.7.

<sup>11</sup> H. Diemberger, 1992: 292.

<sup>12</sup> See Ringzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003b: particularly 75-76 and 79.

<sup>13</sup> mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, 1908: 31.

<sup>14</sup> See S. Mullard, 2003: 16.

suggests, “[O]h king and ministers,<sup>15</sup> bKra shis sdings has a square shape, the land has six measures of length, in each of the four corners there is a sandal tree. If we go on the top of the rock, we can see Sikkim as clearly as in a mirror.”<sup>16</sup> In another text, “[T]he external setting [is perceived] as a palace of the Peaceful and Wrathful Jinas, the inside as if consisting of the nādis of the Vajrakāya, and its secret aspect as a maṇḍala of the spiritual dimension of the ‘Great Perfection’ (rdzogs pa chen po).”<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, “bKra shis sdings is a natural god’s heaven. Its shape is semi circular. It is the magnificent mountain and the key of the treasure. Its cremation ground is like bSil ba tshal cremation [located near to rDo rjen gdan and which has been blessed by the Buddha] and it is separated from the monastery. At each of the four directions there is an unchangeable throne of Guru Rinpoche. At each of the four corners there is Sandalwood that was formed from Guru Rinpoche’s walking sticks.”<sup>18</sup>

One can also read that Guru Rinpoche taught and “blessed the area [of bKra shis sdings] as the maṇḍala of Lama Gongdu (bLa ma dgongs ’dus), one of the three main rNying ma texts [in which the central deity is Guru Rinpoche].”<sup>19</sup> However *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* text has been discovered much later by gTer ston Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396). At the end of the 1640s, lHa btsun chen po<sup>20</sup> writes (without mention of

<sup>15</sup> We find this address in other hidden land’s guide; it is the Guru Rinpoche’s address to the Tibetan king Khri srong de’u btsan when, in bSam yas and to appease the king’s worries, he explained the existence and the function of the Himalayan hidden lands (see H. Diemberger, 1992: 292). Genuine or not, this address links sBas yul ‘Bras mo ljong to Guru Rinpoche and to the Tibetan tradition of hidden lands.

<sup>16</sup> *rgyal blon yon mchod kyi bzhugs gnas brag dkar bKra shis gdengs zhes bya ba: dbyibs gru bzhi pa srid du ’dom drug yod pa: rgyar ’ur rdo’i rgyang drug yod pa: steng me long gi ngos ltar khod snyoms la dwangs pa’i phyogs bzhir tsan+dan gyi stong po bzhi yod pa: brag de’i steng nas bltas pas ’bras mog shongs kyi phu mda’ thams cad me long phyis.* Lha btsun ’Gyur med ’jigs brel bstan ’dzin dpa’ bo, c.1700: 10.

<sup>17</sup> F-K. Ehrhard, 2005: 19-20.

<sup>18</sup> Khenpo Lha Tséring, 2002: 119. The mentions of the semi-circular shape and of the sandalwood are borrowed from lHa btsun ’Gyur med ’jigs brel bstan ’dzin dpa’ bo’s *gNas yig* (page 10), and the four thrones are mentioned in Lha btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, 1974, Vol. VI: 439.

<sup>19</sup> Ringzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003: 26 and unpublished: 2. See also Khenpo Dechen Dorje, 1995: 16 and Khenpo Lha Tséring, 2002: 118.

<sup>20</sup> lHa btsun chen po (1597-1650) is one of the three Tibetan religious men credited with the first *chos rgyal* of Sikkim’s enthronement. The introduction of Buddhism to Sikkim is attributed to him. His contribution to bKra shis sdings will be detailed hereafter.

Guru Rinpoche), “[I]t is written in the *dGongs ’dus bka’ rgya ma* that, according to oral sayings, Brag dkar bKra shis sdings is the palace of *Bla ma dgongs ’dus*, in the middle, bKra shis sdings is the main palace of Padma bedza rtsal [one of Guru Rinpoche’s name].”<sup>21</sup> *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* belongs to the sMin grol gling tradition and is nowadays practised yearly on the fifth, sixth, eleventh and twelfth months of the Tibetan calendar and on the tenth day of each month in bKra shis sdings monastery.

These characteristics attributed to the place determine the actual practice that pilgrims have of it. Indeed, most of the Buddhist families living in Sikkim sponsor one of the seven monastic funeral rituals in bKra shis sdings. It is believed that “[I]f one is able to go to Drag Kar Tashiding, even once then one will not be reborn in the lower realm.”<sup>22</sup> This saying reminds lHa btsun chen po’s words concerning the main *mchod rten* of bKra shis sdings that he consecrated (detailed hereafter), “[I]f we turn around this great *mchod rten* the pollution collected during more than four billion of years will be purified.”<sup>23</sup>

The funeral rituals as well as the *bum chu* ritual, held on the fifteenth day of the first Tibetan month every year and which attracts many pilgrims, are also occasions for visitors to experience the sanctity of the place, taking the blessing of the holy elements (trees, rocks, etc.) surrounding the group of temples which remind the venue of past saint men and their miraculous deeds: the highest coniferous tree near the main *mchod rten* represents Guru Rinpoche’s trident that he planted in the ground in order to subdue local deities; several rocks having a long and straight shape are believed to be pieces of a serpent spirit that the Indian Saint ‘killed’ as a malevolent entity and ‘liberated’, etc. The local inhabitants also locate for visitors the four Guru Rinpoche’s ‘thrones’ (*khri*, i.e. rocks)—each situated at one cardinal point—surrounding the group of temples, which gives visibility to the mandala of bKra shis sdings:

- 1) The Western one borders the cremation ground;
- 2) The second one is on the hill located in front of the Chos rgyal lha khang and carries a small *mchod rten*. This hill is called

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<sup>21</sup> 1974, Vol. IV: 438, *de yang dgongs ’dus bka’ rgya ma las gnas ’di dgongs pa ’dus pa’i pho ’brang gi tshul du yod gsungs pa las dbus su brag dkar bkra shis sdings gtso bo padma bdza rtsal gyi pho brang gi tshul du yod pa.*

<sup>22</sup> Khenpo Dechen Dorje, 1995: 17.

<sup>23</sup> 1974, Vol. IV: 441, *mchod rten chen po ’di nyid la bskor ba lan gcig bskor na ’ang bskal pa stong du bsags pa’i sgrib pa dag pa’o.*

Sing ge brag ('lion rock') after its shape. There are more precisely two 'thrones-rock' at this place, and it is not known which of these is Guru Rinpoche's.

- 3) One is located at the crossroad of Tshe chu phug and the monastery's roads;
- 4) The Northern one is in the forest behind the Chos rgyal lha khang—it is locally called 'flat stone' (Lk. rdo leb thang kha). We also heard the name '*nāga pani*', i.e. 'serpent spirit of the water' in Nepali, for this rock. But according to other informants, '*nāga pani*' is located in a tree, which is a 'Pure holy land' (*sangs rgyas zhing khams*) and the dwelling of a demon, a deity of the rock and a serpent spirit of the water (*bdud btsan klu gsum*).

According to some other local informants, the place would not only be marked by four stones but by eight, giving reality to a more complex maṇḍala shape. Each of these stones would be the throne of (or represent) one of the eight forms of Guru Rinpoche (Gu ru mTshen brgyad). Moreover, each direction from the main temple of bKra shis sdings has its protector:

- 1) In the eastern direction, bTsan chen rDo rje dgra 'dul lives with his wife, his son and his attendance in a rock having a *gtor ma* triangular shape.
- 2) In the southern direction, lHa btsan lHa bdud chen po are living in the place called Bong bu kyong or 'donkey of the pond' because mNga' bdag sem pa chen po used to take water from this pond and carry it on the back of his donkey. It is just below the White Rock (defined below).
- 3) Jo bo rang stong dGe bsnyen chen po is protecting the western direction. This protective deity is located further away from the monastery, in the forest on the Ra thong chu's bank, dwelling in a big and small protuberance of a rock (Lk. *bur jog*).
- 4) In the northern direction, bDud btsan dPa' bo hung ri is living in the high hill of Hung ri. Rig 'dzin rgod ldam built a temple there which ruins can still be seen.<sup>24</sup>

The central protective deity is rGyal mtshan sKu lnga.<sup>25</sup> Like for the rocks, the protective deity draw an eight angles diagram as there are dwellings at the intermediary directions:

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<sup>24</sup> Ringzin Ngodup Dokhampa, unpublished.

- a. In the south-east resides Am ding rom chen mo, at about two and half miles away from the monastery.
- b. In the south-west is mTsho sman chen po living in the place called Nub chug lung which is not safe for pregnant women.
- c. In the north-east is mTsho sman Yung drung lha mo living in rGyam be thang, in square-shaped stone.<sup>25</sup>

The path surrounding the group of temples is marked by many holy sites, the major one being the White Rock which gives its name to the monastery: Brag dkar bKra shis sdings, believed to be the door of an inner hidden land where people will find refuge in troubled times and when a suitable master will show them the way. The description of the White Rock suggests it to be the centre of the sacred land of bKra shis sdings, “[E]ach of the four holy caves of ‘Bras Ijongs has a holy door. Among these doors, Drag dkar is the main one,” explain an informant.

The cremation ground that we have already talked about is of course one of the holiest place of bKra shis sdings. Its door has been opened by Lha btsun chen po and in the past, there were three ‘thrones’ of this Tibetan master. Only one remains today. bKra shis sdings also links the site to other holy places of ‘Bras Ijongs as it is said that two other cremation grounds of equal sanctity exist in the country: at gSang sngags chos gling and Grub sde monasteries.

Further on the same path are two other rocks on which visitors press their knees and back to relieve pain. A few kilometres away from the monastery is the cave Tshe chu phug where Guru Rinpoche is said to have meditated and consequently materialised a source of pure water to appease the thirst of the local inhabitants.

One particularity of bKra shis sdings’s sacred site is that it does not have any specific ‘guide to the holy place’: *bKra shis sdings gnas yig* is ‘*Bras Ijongs gnas yig*. Moreover, the information concerning it is scattered in different texts which are not easily available to the common people so few religious men who took an interest in the subject only detain the literary knowledge of the place. A common knowledge of the site is mainly orally transmitted. Oral narratives are characterised by textual variants and allow more changes than written ones. However, though the religious description of bKra shis sdings is fluid, all these

<sup>25</sup> This information comes from a local informant. It is probably the five high-ranking spirits headed by the deity Pe har, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz: 107 onwards.

<sup>26</sup> Ringzin Ngodup Dokhampa, unpublished. The protective deity of the north-western direction is not known.

narratives recognize the high holiness of the site. Moreover, it is by these narratives that each visit to bKra shis sdings maintains and perpetuates the sanctity of the place.

Hidden lands also have a political dimension, as a place of refuge for Buddhist practitioners in a time of political trouble for instance. In the case of Sikkim, it takes on a particular aspect where the Buddhist history is also a political history in which bKra shis sdings is an important symbol: bKra shis sdings would be the place where Guru Rinpoche “prophesized the coming of the four saints”,<sup>27</sup> i.e. lHa btsun Nam mkha ’jigs med, mNga dag Phun tshog rig ’dzin and Ka thog Kun tu bzang po to whom the enthronement of the first Dharma king (*chos rgyal*, Skt. dharmaṛāja—a ruler governing according to the Buddhist principles) of Sikkim in the seventeen century is attributed. As such, it is the place of religious conception of a political entity, the place of creation of kingdom, i.e. a concrete element that legitimises a Dharma King’s political power installation in Sikkim.<sup>28</sup>

This political dimension also gives us a frame to understand the actual ‘practice of the monastery’ by its religious men and by the population. But it has to be taken into account that bKra shis sdings has never been a political centre, which could be compared to Padma yang rtse monastery for example: the latter has been closely associated to perpetuation of the Kingdom not only by rituals (Padma yang rtse religious men were royal priests) but also by the participation of its member to the political governance. bKra shis sdings is better understood as a symbol, which allowed a particular political power.

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<sup>27</sup> S. Mullard, 2005a: 61.

<sup>28</sup> See also B. Steinmann, 1996, who shows that the construction of ’Bras Ijong as a place of pilgrimage, with the different stages that this requires (prophecies of Guru Rinpoche, taming of the local deities, opening of the hidden land by predestined beings, etc.) is a metaphor of the lHo po political domination of the land. ’lHo po’ is the name of the ethnic group to which the *chos rgyal* of Sikkim belongs. It is a group of Tibetan culture speaking a dialect of Tibetan (*lho skad*). It is composed of ancient migrants who came from Tibet and Bhutan presumably from the thirteen century onward. This group is usually called ‘Bhotiyā’, a name that is commonly given by the Indo-European speakers’ groups to the Tibetan dialects’ speakers living in the Himalayas. The group’s members call themselves lHo po or ’Bras Ijongs pa. See also S. Mullard, 2003: 17, n 12.

## BKRA SHIS SDINGS MONASTERY'S FOUNDERS

*Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can (1337-1408)*

In the fourteenth century, the Treasures Discoverer Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can,<sup>29</sup> founder of the Northern Treasure School of Tibetan Buddhism (Byang gter), discovered the hidden land of Sikkim's northern door. Rig 'dzin rgod ldem can was born in Northern La stod in Tibet. He left Tibet for Sikkim in 1373 at the age of 37 with ten disciples and servant and arrived in summer 1374 (Tiger year).<sup>30</sup> The blessing of the White Rock Cave of bKra shis sdings is attributed to him.<sup>31</sup> He also established monasteries and meditation centres at bKra shis sdings and nearby dPa' bo Hung ri.<sup>32</sup> He passed away at the age of seventy-one in Zil gnon, on the neighboring ridge to bKra shis sdings.<sup>33</sup> Its 'Deep Treasure' is nowadays practised on the twenty-first day of the ninth month every year in the monastery.<sup>34</sup>

*mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po phun tshogs rig 'dzin (1592-1656)*

mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po is the founder of bKra shis sdings monastery since he identified its site<sup>35</sup> and built the first temples on its actual location (though one of these temples no longer exists). He not only established the monastery but also "consecrated it as the main seat of the followers of the Nyingma northern treasure (Byang gter) tradition, which was brought to Sikkim from the Tibetan monastery of Dorje Drak (rdo rje brag) by Rigzin Godemchen."<sup>36</sup>

mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po was born in La stod, western Tibet, in the Palace of Sag khri mkhar, in a ruling family of a local kingdom.<sup>37</sup> He left Zhi mkha tse to go to Sikkim in the third month of

<sup>29</sup> His full name was Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can and his first name was dNgos grub rgyal mtshan.

<sup>30</sup> Khenpo Lha Tsing, 2002: 15.

<sup>31</sup> M.J. Boord, 2003: 32.

<sup>32</sup> Ringzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003a: 26.

<sup>33</sup> M.J. Boord, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> The text practised at this date is *Rig 'dzin rgod sdem can gyi zab gter thugs bsgrub drag po rtsal gyi sgrub dkyil*.

<sup>35</sup> F-K. Ehrhard, 2005: 19.

<sup>36</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003: 27.

<sup>37</sup> See Khenpo Lha Tsing, 2002: 37 onward, S. Mullard, 2005b: 37-39 and Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 1996. According to Khenpo Lha Tsing, mNga' bdags

1642 (Water Horse year of the Eleventh sixty-year cycle, i.e. *rab byung*) with his son Prince Byams pa bstan 'dzin, another relative and servants. He arrived to Yog bsam about four months later. Here, he performed the *rTsa gsum 'khor ba las sgrol* (*sādhana* and liturgical texts from the cycle of practice focusing upon Avalokiteśvara) discovered by Zhig po gling pa (1524-1583).<sup>38</sup> This text is of primary importance in bKra shis sdings monastery: its *sādhana* and vase consecration's parts<sup>39</sup> are recited every year from the eighth to the fifteenth day of the first month, a period that ends with the famous *bum chu* ritual.

Like Guru Rinpoche, mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po recognised bKra shis sdings as the centre of 'Bras ljongs holy land. He built a first temple there called bKra shis dge legs dGon.<sup>40</sup> But the date of this foundation is still unsure. According to Byams pa bstan 'dzin, it was after the Fire Dog year of 1646<sup>41</sup>. According to mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, "[T]he mNga-bDag Lama visited Tashiding and built the monastery of Tashi-ga-legs first, and performed the ceremony of taking possession of the place, as prescribed in the oracular book of Ugyen-Rinpoche on the 3rd day of the 7th month of Sa-Glang year (earth bull) [1649]."<sup>42</sup>

So, the consecration ceremony would have been performed two month before the foundation of Zil gnon monastery (which took place on the ninth month of the Earth Ox year).<sup>43</sup> Khenpo Lha Tsing writes that mNga' bdag founded bKra shis dge legs dGon before the foundation of Zil gnon monastery but doesn't specify the date.<sup>44</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa<sup>45</sup> also mentions this temple as well as

Sems dpa' chen po was born on the Water Male Dragon year (1592 A.D) of the Tenth sixty-year cycle but according to Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, it was on the Iron Female Hare, i.e. 1591.

<sup>38</sup> *rTsa gsum 'khor ba las sgrol* is also called *Thugs rje Chen po 'khor ba las sgrol* and discovered in 1563 by Zhig po gling pa (complete name, Zhig po gling pa gar gyi dbang phyug rtsal or, according to Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 1992: 38, Chokyi Gyalpo Garwang Rigzin Zhigpolingpa) who was a reincarnation of Prince Mu rub btsan po, i.e. one of the Tibetan Khri strong lde btsan's sons. See also Khenpo Lha Tsing, 2002: 48 and F-K. Ehrhard, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> *'Phags mchog thugs rje chen po 'khor ba las sgrol gyi sgrub mchod dang phrel ba'i bum sgrub.*

<sup>40</sup> See Byams pa bstan 'dzin, c. 1600: 10.

<sup>41</sup> *brag dkar bkris sdings su phebs shing bkris bde legs btab.*

<sup>42</sup> 1908: 32.

<sup>43</sup> Khenpo Lha Tsing, 2002: 42.

<sup>44</sup> 2002: 42-44.

<sup>45</sup> *History of bKra shis sdings*, unpublished: 3.

another one called Dril bu lha khang and several *mchod rten* that the Master built before the foundation of Zil gnon. He adds that these buildings no longer exist due to fires and earthquakes. In another article the same author writes that the first ritual mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po performed in bKra shis sdings was conducted in bKra shis dge legs dgon<sup>46</sup>

Khenpo Chowang also mention bKra shis dge legs dGon, without giving any foundation date but specifying that it was before the building of another temple in 1651 and adding that after having consecrated this new *lha khang*, mNga' bdag founded bKra shis sdings's religious community (Skt. sangha) and acted as its abbot (*mkhan po*).<sup>47</sup> We also know that the cremation ground of bKra shis sdings already existed between 1646 and 1650 because lHa btsun chen po visited it during this period of time.<sup>48</sup>

In 1651 (the fifth day of the first month of the Iron Hare year of the Eleventh sixty-year cycle) mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po and his son Byams pa bstan 'dzin<sup>49</sup> as well as the newly enthroned Chos rgyal Phun tshog rnam rgyal started to build the foundation of a temple called Byams pa lha khang.<sup>50</sup> This temple was named after the principal deity Maitreya Buddha (Byams pa in Tibetan) to whom it was dedicated.<sup>51</sup> It no longer exists but the actual Chos rgyal lha khang, the main temple of bKra shis sdings today, would have been its later extension. At the same time, mNga' bdag and his son started the construction of the bsKang gsol lha khang (the temple that Khenpo Lha Tsiring calls 'Pe har cog gi lha khang').<sup>52</sup> They also built a statue of Byams pa that they consecrated and placed inside the *lha khang*. On the tenth day of the second Tibetan month of 1652 (Water Dragon year), mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po consecrated both *lha khang* after he came back to bKra shis sdings from Mustang.

The Tibetan master also brought the 'holy water vase' to bKra shis sdings which is the focus of the *bum chu* ritual. Prince Mu rup btsan po,

<sup>46</sup> 1996: 58.

<sup>47</sup> Khenpo Chowang, 2003: 115 (from line 4). Byams pa bstan 'dzin (c. 1600: 12) writes that mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po promised to handle the religious organisation of the holy site.

<sup>48</sup> Khenpo Lha Tsiring, 2002: 118.

<sup>49</sup> Also with mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po's grandson called mNga' bdag Rin chen mgon (according to Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003a: 27).

<sup>50</sup> See Byams pa bstan 'dzin, C. 1600: 11.

<sup>51</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 1996: 58.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 44 and personal communication from Khenpo Lha Tsiring.

Ye she tsog rgyal and Vero tsa na first consecrated this vase. It would have also been consecrated by Guru Rinpoche “by conducting Sadhana of Yidam Chuchig Zhal.”<sup>53</sup> The gTer ston Zhig po gling pa later discovered the vase, eventually offered it to the gTer ston sTag sham chen who gave it to mNga’ bdag Sems dpa’ chen po.<sup>54</sup> The latter “conducted special recitation of 1,300 million syllables ‘OM MANI PADME HUM, through Thugjchenpo Khorwalegrol Sadhna under the royal patronage of the first Chogyal [of Sikkim] Phuntshog Namgyal.”<sup>55</sup> After this consecration, the *bum chu* ritual, during which the water of the vase is distributed to the pilgrims, has been performed every year in bKra shis sdings.

mNga’ bdag Sems dpa’ chen po died in 1656 at the age of sixty-five in his house (*gzim chung*) in bKra shis sdings. His *sku gdung* can still be seen inside the Chod rgyal lha khang in bKra shis sdings.

According to Byams pa bstan ’dzin, the construction of the temple Thub chen lha khang,<sup>56</sup> which was the third built in bKra shis sdings, was started immediately after mNga’ bdag Sems dpa’ chen po death. It would have been done “[I]n fulfillment of the final wishes of the deceased teacher” and finished in 1658.<sup>57</sup> Then “[T]he new vihāra was furnished with a so-called ‘Enlightenment Stūpa’ (*byang chub mchod rten*), reminding the inhabitants of Sikkim of the central event in the life of Buddha Śākyamuni, and this religious edifice was finally inaugurated in the year 1665.”<sup>58</sup>

#### *lHa btsun chen po Nam mkha’ jigs med (1597-1650)*

lHa btsun chen po was born in sByar yul,<sup>59</sup> southern Tibet. He arrived in Sikkim on the tenth Tibetan month of 1646.<sup>60</sup> After he arrived to

<sup>53</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 1992: 37.

<sup>54</sup> Concerning the link between mNga’ bdag Sems dpa’ chen po and gTer ston Zhig po gling pa, see F-K. Ehrhard, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 1992: 38. See also 1996 from the same author and F-K. Ehrhard, 2005.

<sup>56</sup> Called Thub bstan lha khang by Khenpo Lha Tsiring.

<sup>57</sup> F-K. Ehrhard, 2005: 24.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> S. Mullard, 2005b: 14.

<sup>60</sup> The *Lha btsun gsung ’bum* writes *me byi* (Fire Rat) year which could be 1636 or 1648. But a correction shows *me khyi* (fire dog, i.e. 1646) which is also the date that Dudjom Rinpoche indicates for the arrival of Lha btsun in Sikkim (1991: 820). In the *Gsun ’bum*, this date is given at the page 438 (Vol. III) which then explains that Lha btsun performs a *tshogs kyi ’khor* ritual (‘feast gathering’ performed before a journey) and that monks and nuns wish they will meet him again. On the next page, it

Yog bsam at the beginning of the tenth month, Lha btsun enthroned the king Phun tshog rnam rgyal once more;<sup>61</sup> the prince rGyal ba'i sras po bKra shis rnam rgyal dpal zang po of Chos kyi rgyal po tshang pa lha'i me tog's lineage, [Kathog?] Kun tu bzang po, etc. joined the celebration.<sup>62</sup> According to Khenpo Lha Tsing, bKra shis rnam rgyal dpal zang po is the name given by Lha btsun chen po to mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po's son, i.e. Byams pa bstan 'dzin.<sup>63</sup>

Then, early morning on the fourteenth day of the third month of an unspecified year<sup>64</sup> (which can not be the same year but could be 1647), lHa btsun chen po consecrated the main *mchod rten* of bKra shis sdings called mThong ba rang grol, i.e. 'which bring liberation upon sight'. Though we have not found this specification in *lHa btsun gsung 'bum*, the *mchod rten* mThong ba rang grol could have been consecrated by 'the Three Saint Men' (rNal 'byor mched gsum).<sup>65</sup> This title most probably refers to the three Tibetan religious men who consecrated the first Sikkimese *chos rgyal*: lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, mNga' bdag Phun tshogs rig 'dzin and Ka' thog Kun tu bzang po. As it is usually referred to 'rNal 'byor mched bzhi', i.e. 'The Four Saints', which adds the Chos rgyal to the three above mentioned religious men,

is said that Lha btsun left on the 13<sup>th</sup> day with fifteen followers (*rnal 'byor pa*) but the year is not re-specified, so we can assume that it is still the Fire Dog year. On page 556, is written that he arrived in Yog bsam (in Sikkim) at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> month.

<sup>61</sup> The text indeed specifies that Phun tshog rnam rgyal was enthroned 'once more' ('slar' in Tibetan). Khenpo Lha Tsing writes that after mNga' bdag Sems dpa' chen po arrives in Sikkim on the third day of the eight month of the same years he left Tibet, i.e. the Water Horse year of the Eleventh sixty-year cycle (1642), "[H]e enthroned the first *chos rgyal* of Sikkim and gave him the name of Chos rgyal Phun tshogs rnam rgyal." (*op.cit:* 42). As lHa btsun chen po was not yet in Sikkim at that time, this means that Phun tshogs rnam rgyal has been firstly enthroned by mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po and then a second time by lHa btsun chen po in presence of, at least, mNga' bdags Sems dpa' chen po's son. See also *op. cit:* 117 and F-K. Ehrhard, 2005: 19.

<sup>62</sup> Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, 1974, Vol. III: 557, *slar rgyal srid sna bdun bKra shis rdzas rtags la sogs dpa' bo brtan bzhugs dang bcas te bstan pa'i sbyin bdag Chen por mnga' gsol/ de nas chos kyi rgyal po tshang pa lha'i me tog gi gdung 'dzin pa rgyal pa'i sras po bkra shis rnam rgyal dpal bzang po dang/ gnas chen gyi phyi nang du zhabs yun ring mo nas chags pa'i mtshungs med chos kyi rje kun tu bzang po sogs kyang rim par mjal.*

<sup>63</sup> 2002: 51 and 117, note 2.

<sup>64</sup> Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, 1974, Vol. III: 442.

<sup>65</sup> Khenpo Lha Tsing, 2002: 123 (line 4).

the mention of the three Saints suggests that the king sponsored the building of the *mchod rten*.

The idea of attaining liberation from *samsara* upon sight as well as the signification of the objects that lHa btsun chen po enshrined in the *mchod rten* in the frame of this ceremony as described in a text written by lHa btsun chen po have been analysed by Mullard.<sup>66</sup> This author shows amongst other things how, in this text, *sbas yul* (hidden / holy land) becomes synonymous of ‘pure land’ (*mkha’ spyod*, which in this case is the pure of Vajrayogini)<sup>67</sup> and how these religious notions are transformed into physical [visible] entities through the construction of the *mchod rten* mThong ba rang grol. He also reminds that the formation of the holy land of Sikkim conferred legitimacy to political changes and shows that the construction of the *mchod rten* took part in the introduction of institutionalised religious practices and institutions in Sikkim.

lHa btsun chen po is accredited with the introduction of rDzogs chen into Sikkim.<sup>68</sup> It is indeed following the revelation of the *Rig ’dzin srog sgrub* text by lHa btsun chen po at bKra shis sdings<sup>69</sup> that Sikkim became the main centre of rDzogs chen.<sup>70</sup> After the consecration of the *mchod rten*, he performed many rituals at the same place (like *Khrus gsol*, i.e. ritual for the purification of imperfections; *tshogs brgya*, ‘hundred offerings’; *lha srin dam bsgrags*, ‘restriction to the gods and spirits’, etc.).<sup>71</sup> He also gave two kinds of religious vows to followers: ‘Eight limbs of time discipline’ (Dus khrims yan lag brgyad), which are ascetic vows that can be taken temporarily and vows of Bodhisattva (Byang sems sdom pa).<sup>72</sup>

He also built statues of mGon po and Ma mo from stones found in bKra shis sdings and then consecrated it. He also built a statue of mKhan slob chos gsum. The king himself performed a *sMon lam* for long life after the consecration of the statues.<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion of this section, we can remind that the *mchod rten* mThong ba rang grol is a key element of Tashdiding’s sanctity. More practically speaking, it is consequently a major element of perpetuation

<sup>66</sup> 2003. Concerning the ‘liberation upon sight’ see particularly: 16 note 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Op. cit.*: note 15.

<sup>68</sup> See notably S. Mullard, 2003: 13.

<sup>69</sup> Or lHa ri rin chen snying phug, the northern sacred cave of the holy land of ’Bras ljongs (S.Mullard, 2003: 15) located above Zil gnon monastery.

<sup>70</sup> Rigzin Ngodup Dokhampa, 2003: 27.

<sup>71</sup> Khenpo Lha Tséring, 2002: 118-121.

<sup>72</sup> *Op. cit.*: 122.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

of bKra shis sdings monastery as the funeral rituals bring an important part of the monastery's economy.

*'Jigs med dpa' bo (1682-c.1730)*

'Jigs med dpa' bo was born at Shang in Central Tibet<sup>74</sup> (in the region of Gtsang) on the fifth day of the second month of the Water Dog year of the Eleventh sixty-year cycle (1682).<sup>75</sup> The fifth Dalai-lama (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) had prophesised that a reincarnation of the second lHa btsun rDzogs chen sPrul sku Kun bzang 'jigs med dbang po will be born (this prophecy is written in the *bKa' shog sbrag ma*) and that this man's father will send him to a rDzogs chen monastery.

'Jigs med dpa' bo came to Sikkim at the request of the third *chos rgyal* Phyag rdor rnam rgyal and arrived in Sikkim at the end of the Earth Ox year of the Twelfth sixty-year cycle (1709).<sup>76</sup> From this date onwards he returned many times to Sikkim until his death in the 1730s<sup>77</sup> at Brag dkar Yangs thing in front of the Gangs can mdzod lnga on his way back to Sikkim from Tibet.<sup>78</sup>

On the eighth day of the eleventh month of the Wood Sheep year of the Twelfth sixty-year cycle (1715, which is actually the beginning of the Fire Monkey year, 1716), 'Jigs med dpa' bo went to bKra shis

<sup>74</sup> mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, 1908: 37.

<sup>75</sup> His father's name was Dza ya mi tra and his mother's one, Rigs ldan drung (Khenpo Lha Tsering, 2002: 150 line 12).

<sup>76</sup> Lha btsun 'Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 270, line 4, *gnam gang nyin rgyal zhabs nas tshes gsum la gza' tshes legs khyad par gdan sa Padma yang rtser 'byor pa dgos tshul ltar sa glang rdzogs pa'i lcags stag zla ba bco geig pa'i tshes gnyis la bde chen skyid shongs su 'byor pa'i dbang drag gi khyim du mal phab. Op. cit. line 6, tshes gsum la gsang chen Padma yang rtser phyin pa'i chu mig can lhag nas Phyag mdzod mdzod Padma gar dbang zab 'tshor spras spos Phyag cig kher nas 'dug.*

<sup>77</sup> As Khenpo Lha Tsering writes, the exact date of the death of 'Jigs med dpa' bo is difficult to find. This author writes that he found in '*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs dwangs shes me long* [Ye shes grol ma's *History of Sikkim*?] that 'Jigs med dpa' po died on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the Wood Hare year, which is 1735. Put he adds that this date is not correct (2002: 187). Indeed, Khenpo Chowang (2003: 143) like mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma (1908) explains that being greatly moved by 'Jigs med dpa' bo's death, the fourth *chos rgyal* 'Gyur med rnam rgyal went to Tibet where he met the twelfth Karma pa Byang chub rdo rje. Consequently to this meeting, the king founded the first *karma bka' brgyud* monastery in Sikkim, i.e. Rab brtan gling (Ra lang) founded in 1730. In this case 'Jigs med dpa' bo died before 1730.

<sup>78</sup> mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, 1908: 53.

sdings to repair the *mchod rten* mThong ba rang grol and rebuilt (or built according to mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma)<sup>79</sup> the Gu ru lha khang.<sup>80</sup> The *mchod rten* had been burned in 1696 by the Bhutanese invaders and was falling into ruin.<sup>81</sup> 'Jigs med dpa' bo led the consecration ceremony of both buildings for the next two days after his revival joined by dignitaries of several Sikkimese monasteries like bKra shis sdings, Padma yang rtse, dPa' bo Hung ri, mKha' spyod dpal ri.<sup>82</sup> The third *chos rgyal* Phyag rdor rnam rgyal was the main sponsor of the rebuilding of mChod rten mThong ba ran grol and of the Gu ru lha khang. Around one thousand persons gathered on this occasion.<sup>83</sup> And, according to mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, “[T]he internal furnishing of the temple, in the way of images and varions books on the tantric lore and stupas or Chortens in plenty were built. An entire set of Ka-gyur, written in gold was brought from Lhasa. Monthly Pujas of the local deities was established at Tashiding, and an annual reading of the *Ka-gyur* on the anniversary of the Lord's descension from the Tushita Heavens, on the 22nd of the 9th month.”<sup>84</sup> This recitation still takes place yearly on the occasion of Lha bab dus chen; it gathers Rab brtan gling monastery (Ra lang) religious men (who recite the bKa' 'gyur in the Ma ni lha khang) and Padma yang rtse's ones who read it in the Gu ru lha khang while bKra shis sdings occupies the Chos rgyal lha khang. The entrance ceremony (*sgrigs cug*) to the religious community of bKra shis sdings are often performed on this occasion.

At the same period, Chos rgyal Phyag rdor rnam rgyal's sister, Phan sde dbang mo, “having incurred the sin of having conduced to the Bla nGa-dag-pa's [mNga' bdags sems dpa' chen po phun tshogs rig 'dzin's grandson, called mNga' bdag Rin chen mgon] breaking his priestly vow of celibacy, made him build the Senon Monastery, as an act of penance, while she herself built the Cho-gyal Lhakhang monastery of Tashiding.”<sup>85</sup> But we could not find any primary source

<sup>79</sup> P 46.

<sup>80</sup> Lha btsun 'Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 345 line 6 - 347.

<sup>81</sup> Lha btsun 'Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 332 line 2-3, *bKra shis sdings gi mchod rten Chen po 'Bras ljongs nang zhig gi 'brug 'dzin skabs me shor ba'i dus nas rim zhig tu song ba* [the *mchod rten* was burned when the Bhutanese invaded Sikkim] *me byi nas shing rta'i bar la lo bco bdun tsam song 'dug* [from 1696 to 1714, almost seventeen years have passed].

<sup>82</sup> Lha btsun 'Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 348.

<sup>83</sup> Lha btsun 'Jigs med dpa bo, 1735: 345 line 6 - 347.

<sup>84</sup> 1908: 46.

<sup>85</sup> mThu stobs rnam rgyal and Ye shes sgrol ma, 1908: 36.

to certify this latter fact. According to oral sources, it is consequently to this restoration that the extention of the temple bKra shis dge legs dGon came to be named Chos rgyal lha khang. The name of ‘chos rgyal’ given to the temple came from mNga’ bdag Sems dpa’ chen po’s descendent, who belonged to a Tibetan ruling family. Khenpo Chowang gives the date of 1716 for the rebuilt Zil gnon monastery.<sup>86</sup>

These short biographies of Tibetan high religious men, and especially their contributions to bKra shis sdings monastery, reveal amongst a diversity of religious influences, the co-presence in bKra shis sdings’ ritual organisation of mainly two sub-schools of Tibetan Buddhism, i.e. the Byang gter tradition introduced by Rig ’dzin rgod ldem can and institutionalised in bKra shis sdings by mNga’ bdags Sems dpa’ chen po Phun tshogs rig ’dzin and his descendants, and the sMing grol gling rDzogs chen tradition introduced by lHa btsun chen po and strengthened in Sikkim by ’Jigs med dpa’ bo. This fact recalls Mullard’s article showing how the sMing grol gling tradition has come to supersede mNga’ bdags’s one at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Today, these two movements are still present in bKra shis sdings’ religious calendar since texts belonging to both traditions are still practised as we have seen.<sup>87</sup> To support this idea, we can add that, five days after the practice of *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* which belongs to sMing grol gling tradition as we have seen, the *Byang gter rig ’dzin dung sgrub* is performed for the death anniversary of mNga dag Phun tshog rig ’dzin. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, are performed the *Byang gter thugs sgrub rtsal gyi sgrub dkyi* as well as the *’Bras ljongs gnas gsol lha bsang*. However, while some say that this latter text is the one discovered by lHa btsun chen po, others explain more convincingly because with more details that the *gNas gsol* of bKra shis sdings is a text called *gNas srung gtso ’khor gyi mchod sprin tshogs gnyis phan bde’i grib bsil dgos ’dod ’byung ba’i char rgyun zhes bya ba bz hugs so* written by mNga’ bdag sems dpa’ chen po, who took inspiration from kLong chen rab ’byams (1308-1364), author of several *gNas gsol*.

Concerning the monthly ritual, half are Byang gter (*Byang gter thugs bsgrub drag po rtsal* on the twenty-fifth day of each month and *Thugs rje chen po ’khor ba las grol gyi sgrub dkyil* and *tshogs* on the thirtieth) while on the tenth day of the month (*tshe bcu*) *Bla ma dgongs*

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<sup>86</sup> 2003: 135.

<sup>87</sup> See page 3 of this article concerning *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* and page 6 concerning Rig ’dzin rgod ldem can’s ‘Deep Treasure’.

*dus kyi skong chog* is practised and on *tshes bco lnga* (fifteenth day) *rDo rje gcod pa* (commonly called ‘Diamond sutra’)<sup>88</sup> is performed.

If this suggests that this coexistence is not conflictual, the contradiction existing amongst local informants concerning the school to which bKra shis sdings belongs—some claiming the monastery belongs to the Byang gter sub-school, others denying it—reveals an actual questioning about this coexistence. It has not yet been possible to confirm this idea but knowing that the past is often deciphered according to present necessities, we can assume that this questioning could be related to modern issues as well as to historical ones.

We are now going to look at three modern ‘prints’ on bKra sis sdings which, though they are less involved in the life of the monastery, have nevertheless taken part in increasing the sanctity of the place.

#### *bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros*<sup>89</sup> (1893-1959)

*bLa ma 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros* is the first incarnation of the Tibetan Buddhism nonsectarian movement’s<sup>90</sup> founder, *'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po* (1820-1892). He spent the end of his life in Sikkim at the invitation of *Chos rgyal bKra shis rnam rgyal* and passed away here. He has been cremated in bKra shis sdings monastery and his relics have been laid on the bright golden *mchod rten* that one can see when entering the *mchod rten* area, on the right of the *mchod rten* mThong ba rang grol. His consort (*gsang yum*) was mKha' 'gro Tshe ring chos sgron who lived in the gTsug lha khang for many years.

*'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros* was born in 1893 (Water Snake year of the Fifteen sixty-year cycle) in the locality of Ri khe a byam in the Tibetan province of Khams. His father<sup>91</sup> belonged to a tantric lineage (*sngags rgyud*). At birth he showed many remarkable signs. His father gave him the name *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros*. He started to learn reading and writing at the age of six with his uncle *bLa ma dGe* legs. *'Jam mgon kong sprul rin po che bLo gros mtha' yas*<sup>92</sup> (one of the

<sup>88</sup> Skt. Vajracchedikā-prajñāparamita-sūtra.

<sup>89</sup> This section is written according to *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros*’s biography (see bibliography here below for the reference), page 388 onward, kindly translated for the purpose of this article by Tashi Tenzing, T.N.A. Academy, Gangtok to whom I am deeply thankful.

<sup>90</sup> The Ris med movement.

<sup>91</sup> His father’s name was rGyur med tshe dbang rgya mtsho and his mother was called Tshul khrims mtsho.

<sup>92</sup> Before this recognition, he received the long life initiation (*tshe dbang*) from Brag dmar sprul pa.

four regents of the Karma bKa' brgyud school) recognised him as the action emanation (*phrin las*) of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po.

He was initially admitted in the rNying ma pa monastery of Ka' thog in Khams and received his ordination from Srid tu rin po che. The latter gave him the name of 'Jam dbyan blo gros rgya mtsho. With a tutor,<sup>93</sup> he learned ten volumes in a year, Tibetan grammar and poetry (*sum rtags* and *sgra rig*), astrology (*dkar rtsis*), preliminary instructions (*sngon 'gro'i khrid*), Shantideva's work 'Engaging in Bodhisattva Conduct' (*sPyod 'jig*, seventh century) and how to perform rituals (*cho spyod kyi phyag len*). He made a summer retreat (*dbyar gnas*) for meditation at the age of ten. Then, he joined a tantric college (*rgyu sde'i bshad grwa*) and studied there until he was fourteen years old. He studied the main texts of sutra and mantra (*mdo sngags kyi gzhung bshed pa*) and the sciences (*rig gnas*).

He eventually settled in his predecessor's place at the Sa skya pa monastery of bKra shis lha rtse at sDe dge, in Khams. During his life, he travelled to different Tibetan monasteries where he received explanations (*khring*) and transmission (*man ngag*) of an important number of teachings from teachers belonging to a great range of schools and branches of Tibetan Buddhism (he himself wrote in his biography that he received teachings from eighty Buddhist masters). For instance, at the age of seventeen, he received high tantric teachings and Sa skya pa main teaching (*Lam 'bras*, 'the path and the fruit'). At the age of eighteen, he received the teaching of *Rin chen gter mdzod* from his father. When he was twenty-eight, he went to North-East Tibet (at Byang rdo sgar) and received the teaching of *rDzogs chen klong snying rigs 'dus* from the previous incarnation of rDo grub chen rin po che<sup>94</sup> (i.e. rDo grub 'Jigs med btsan pa'i nyi ma). The latter also gave him the name of Ye shes rDo rje.

From the 1960s, he propounded the non-sectarian movement (Ris med). He came to Sikkim when he was sixty-three years old (1956) feeling that troubles were about to happen in Tibet.<sup>95</sup> He stayed a few years at the Tsuklhakhang with mKha' 'gro lags and directed ritual ceremonies and initiations.

<sup>93</sup> Called Thub bstan rig 'dzin.

<sup>94</sup> His complete name is rDo sgrub chen Thub stan phrin las dpal bzang.

<sup>95</sup> From this point, the information comes from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, *Rigs dkyil rgya mtsho'i khyab bdag...* (see bibliography) kindly translated by Tsultsem Gyatso Acharya. See also the article of this author in the present issue of the *Bulletin*.

He passed away in Sikkim on the sixth day of the fifth month of 1959 (Earth Pig year). The funeral ritual was performed over a period of forty-nine days at the gTsug lha khang led by four of the most important Tibetan incarnates: Dril ngo mkhyen rtse rin po che, rDo grub chen rin po che, brGya ston rin po che and Srid tu rin po che.<sup>96</sup> From Sikkim, were present religious men from Padma yang rste (practising *bDe gshegs kun sdus*) and dBen can (practising *sMing gling rdor sems*) monasteries led by gLing stog sGom chen.<sup>97</sup> 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros's body was taken in procession to bKra shis sdings where it was cremated at the place where his reliquary is now located. Here also, many important religious men from Tibet as well as from Sikkim (like mKa' spyod sPrul sku and his elder brother Srog sgrub) performed the ritual. Three days after the cremation, the *gdung khang* ('house of cremation') was opened and some relics were left on the spot where the golden *sku gdung* has been built while some others were brought back to the royal chapel, enshrined in one golden and silver *mchod rten* given to Chos rgyal dPal lden don grub rnam rgyal. Concerning the *sku gdung* in bKra shis sdings, it was partly sponsored by 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros's personal care takers (*bla brang*), which also collected some funds from donators, and partly by the Chos rgyal.

#### *lCags thag rin po che<sup>98</sup> (end of nineteenth century – 1958)*

There is no written biography of lCags thag rin po che and, though this name is very famous in Sikkim, very little is known about him. The following information comes from different members of his family who have interviewed. It is a summary of a forthcoming article for the *Bulletin* centered on lCags thag rin po che. There are some important differences between versions of events told by the informants and our position here has not been to choose one of these versions but to present the facts that are the most frequently found. The different version will be compared in the next article.

Different names are given for lCags thag rin po che's place of birth but all mention the Khams region of Tibet. He was born at the beginning of the 1870s or of the 1880s. His father was a provincial

<sup>96</sup> The information here comes from Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi who was a direct witness of these events and to whom we are deeply thankful to have shared her memories with us.

<sup>97</sup> Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, *Rigs dkyil rgya mtsho'i khyab bdag...*

<sup>98</sup> *lcags thag* [pa], lit. means 'iron rope'.

chieftain. He was the sixteenth incarnation of the Indian Yogi Saraha (eighth century), head of the Mahamudra meditation lineage nowadays held by the Karma pa school of Tibetan Buddhism. lCags thag rin po che's previous incarnation was called sGrub chen Ma Ni bSod rnam Rin chen.

He attempted many times to run away from his home and finally succeeded at the age of ten or eleven years. Very little is known about what he did then. He probably received a monastic education: he could read the Tibetan script and used to practise the text *rDo rje gcod pa*. But he didn't perform monastic rituals and never wore any monastic garment. He sponsored the first practice of *rDo rje gcod pa* in bKra shis sdings and this text is now chanted on the fifteenth day of every month.

He entered Sikkim when he was twenty five or thirty years old and visited many places, mainly in West Sikkim. He eventually got married with a Lepcha woman from Mangthiang ('Moong phyang' in Lepcha) nearby sGang rgyab. His wife was the niece of to Mkha' spyod sgro dbang sKu zhog (also called Mkha' spyod sgro dbang rin po che) of Mkha' spyod dpal ri. The details of his meeting with his wife vary according to informant. But all mention that lCags thag rin po che shot an arrow from a very distant place that reached the future wife's meditation house at a time when she was practising a long retreat for meditation under the guidance of her uncle. Rin po che then came to enquire about his arrow. The lady returned it to him and he then knew she would become his wife.

After his marriage, lCags thag rin po che went back to Tibet with his wife for a few years. His eldest son, mThsams po rin po che, was born there in 1910 (Iron Dog year of the Tibetan calendar). He was also well known in Sikkim though he has often been confused with his father. He passed away in August 2006. lCags thag rin po che's second son was born in Sikkim in 1911. Altogether, he and his wife had five sons and three daughters.

lCags thag rin po che is also famous for his appearance: he was very tall and strong, wearing only a leopard skin around his waist and, at the beginning, iron chains around his chest. "Without these chain, he would have flown" some say, adding that he often appeared very suddenly in a place, like if coming from nowhere. They explain he would not touch the ground without chains because of his practice of *rtsa rlung* or practice of *anu* yoga which leads to the control of the internal channels and the vital energy. Rin po che made the links of his

chains from bangles of different precious metals. He used to leave pieces of them in different places, often inside *mchod rten*. This led some to believe that he wanted to bless and transmit a force of protection by keeping it on his body; the object then exerting its power in different places. He eventually left the whole set in Rumtek from where it has been scattered.

Rin po che built the three thrones at Zil gnon monastery, one dedicated to his previous incarnation; the meaning of the two others is not known. He also built numerous *mchod rten*. He built eight of them in Mangtiang and we find again the idea of ‘protection’ in the belief that Rin po che did so in order to ‘reverse’ or ‘tame’ the local deities (*bzlog thabs*). He built them at night and refused any help. Because the construction was nevertheless very fast, it is believed that he received supernatural support. He also built one *mchod rten* at Ten Miles in Kalimpong—on a land donated by a Bhutanese queen—which no longer exists. He had stayed in Kalimpong after his return from Tibet.

Throughout his life in Sikkim, Rin po che meditated in three different places: his first ‘meditation house’ (*mthsams khang*) was in Mangtiang, the second was Ri gsung mThsams khang (above Zil gnon) and the third one in sGang rgyab itself.

At the end of his life he was no longer wearing chains; he was staying home most of the time, meditating and receiving visitors who came to ask him advice and receive his blessing. He passed away in 1958 at sGang rgyab. His dead body was cremated there, a *sku gdung* can still be seen at his cremation place. After his death, his family built a *tsa khang* or ‘recipient for clay icons of deity’ (*tsa tsa*) in bKra shis sdings in his memory at the feet of the two big *mchod rten* between the sTong mchod lha khang and the bsKang gsol lha khang.

#### *mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen*<sup>99</sup> (1923-2006)

*mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen* was born in rKong bo (near to Padma bkod, in the Brahmaputra’s big loop) in Tibet in a prominent family in the Water Pig year of the Fifteenth sixty-year cycle (1923).<sup>100</sup> When

<sup>99</sup> Her complete name was 'Khrul zhig dpa 'bo rdo rje mkha' 'gro Padma bde chen.

<sup>100</sup> Most of the information in this section comes from dKon mchog yon tan, secretary of mChod rten monastery in Gangtok who knew well *mKha' 'gro* lags. We are deeply thankful to him for his help. Another part of this information comes from two articles in the sikkimese daily newspaper *Now!* All information has been checked with dKon mchog yon tan and the source for each of them will be specified in

she was twelve or thirteen years old, 'Khrul zhig rin po che (1897-1952) came from Khams Mi nyak to visit rKong bo. Rin po che could have recognised the girl as being a *mkha' 'gro ma*, i.e. a Wisdom dākinī at that time. More precisely, amongts the five kinds of dākinī, mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen was a West dākinī. 'Khrul zhig rin po che would have explained to mKha' 'gro lags's mother that the girl's life would be in danger if she wouldn't let this inner religious capacity express itself by becoming a practitioner. It is also possible that the girl became a *mkha' 'gro* due to her marriage with Rin po che as it is usually the case. Indeed the terms '*mkha' 'gro*' as well as '*gsang yum*' (consort) or '*a ni*' (nun) are used to address a *rin po che*'s wife—depending on the religious perspective—and mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen was called 'Khrul zhig A ni' by Sikkemese people in her young age.<sup>101</sup>

mKha' 'gro lags started her religious training with 'Khrul zhig rin po che, accompanying him wherever he was going. Indeed, Rin po che was not attached to a specific monastery and was travelling very often for religious purposes. mKha' 'gro lags also had bDud 'jom rin po che (1904-1987) for 'root master' (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*), whose *gter gsar* (literally 'new treasure', in the present case, i.e. bDud 'jom rin po che's religious 'tradition') was followed by 'Khrul zhig rin po che. mKha' 'gro took the *dge snyen* vows from both Rin po che(s).

'Khrul zhig rin po che and mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen came to Sikkim in 1946 (bDud 'jom rin po che arrived latter) at the invitation of Chos rgyal bKra shis rnam rgyal.<sup>102</sup> Rin po che built the main *mchod rten* of 'Dud sdul mChod rten monastery (commonly called 'mChod rten monastery') in 1948 "according to the wishes of the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal and Crown Prince Palden Thondup Namgyal",<sup>103</sup> who also gave the land. He became dPal lden Don grub rnam rgyal's root master.<sup>104</sup> With the king's support, 'Khrul zhig rin po che built the Gu ru lha khang of mChod rten monastery in 1956 and the Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies in 1961.

mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen travelled extensively in Sikkim in her younger days, still accompanying her teacher 'Khrul zhig rin po che.

footnotes. Until the next footnote the information has been given by dKon mchog yon tan.

<sup>101</sup> Thank you to Tashi Densapa for this information.

<sup>102</sup> Now! 27 Sept.

<sup>103</sup> Tsultrim Gyatso Acharya, 2005: 61 note 21.

<sup>104</sup> dKon mchog yon tan.

They were based in La chung for a while and during her stay there, she organised the lay people into a socio-religious body which continues with the religious practice of offering Tshes bcu initiated by her in 1963. mKha' 'gro lags also organised the faithful at La chung to construct the Thang mo che monastery there.<sup>105</sup> Rin po che also meditated for two years in Lukshama, the *chos rgyal*'s cremation ground, and in Hung ri where mKha' 'gro lags provided him care.

She was also a very lively person and Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi, who has been close to mKha' 'gro lags throughout her life, remembers their young days as follows: “[W]hen dPal lden don grub rnam rgyal was going to meet 'Khrul zhig rin po che in mChod rten, I used to go with him and ask Rin po che the permission to give a leave to mKha' 'gro lags. Then, we used to go near to the White Hall where there was a grass field and played there. We were joking a lot and playing in the grass or jacks stones.”

'Khrul zhig Rin po passed away in 1962 and mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen stayed in mChod rten monastery. She became rDo grub chen rin po che's consort; Rin po che had arrived in 1956 in Sikkim and was known to 'Khrul zhig rin po che. He settled in mChod rten with her and took the administration of the monastery in-charge.<sup>106</sup>

mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen performed the strict and rigorous *sNgon 'gro*, which involves 500,000 different practices, including 100,000 prostrations, nineteen times in her lifetime. mKha' 'gro pad me bde chen then became respected as the most accomplished lady practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism of the era in Sikkim.<sup>107</sup>

About her function in the monastery, Sem Tinley Ongmu Tashi explains: “mKha' 'gro lags was looking after rDo grub chen rin po che's personal cares. She was Rin po che personal attendant and also a kind of social secretary. When people that Rin po che knew came to visit him, they were first going to mKha' 'gro lags's room and welcomed by her. She was offering them tea and talking with them. She was giving advice to everybody. She had time for every one; she was very kind, she never shown any anger.”

mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen died on the fifth of September 2006 and it is believed she remained in meditation for one week after her death (this meditation is called *thugs dam*) before the '*byang sems dkar dmar*' or 'the white and red [signs of] Bodhisatva' appeared. Her body was cremated on the twenty-sixth of September in bKra shis sdings

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<sup>105</sup> Now! 27 Sept.

<sup>106</sup> dKon mchog yon tan.

<sup>107</sup> Now! 09 Sept.

monastery and rDo grub chen Rin po decided that her remains would be thrown in the Ganga river. In bKra shis sdings, the location of her cremation has been demarcated with the belief that a *sku gdung* will be built, many pilgrims (mainly from Bhutan) attended the *bum chu* festival this year, declaring that they also came to pay their respects to mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen's remains. Indeed, the crowd which came to attend the *bum chu* ritual has been particularly numerous this year 2007 and these pilgrims' statements lead some bKra shis sdings villagers to believe that mKha' 'gro Padma bde chen's cremation in bKra shis sdings has played a part in attracting more pilgrims than the previous year. The role of these new 'marks' in bKra shis sdings monastery in the perpetuation of the sanctity of the place is here exemplified.

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WOMEN IN THE DIPLOMATIC GAME :  
PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE MATRIMONIAL LINK OF THE  
SIKKIM ROYAL FAMILY WITH TIBET (13<sup>TH</sup>-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES)

LES FEMMES DANS LE JEU DIPLOMATIQUE :  
NOTES PRELIMINAIRES SUR LES RELATIONS  
MATRIMONIALES DE LA FAMILLE ROYALE DU SIKKIM  
AVEC LE TIBET (XIX<sup>E</sup>-XX<sup>E</sup> SIECLES)\*

Alice TRAVERS  
*Université de Nanterre*

Au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la légende veut que l'ancêtre du premier *chos rgyal* (litt. « roi selon le dharma ») du Sikkim (tib. 'Bras ljongs, litt. « Pays du riz »), un prince du Mi nyag<sup>1</sup>, ait épousé une fille de la famille du

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<sup>1</sup> Deux versions coexistent au sujet de cette origine du Minyag. L'hypothèse la plus probable, selon Heather Stoddard, est que la famille royale du Sikkim descende d'un membre de la famille royale de Minyag, Royaume tangoute appelé également Xixia et situé au nord du Tibet. Il se serait enfui en 1227 après la destruction massive de leur royaume par Genghis Khan, cf. H. STODDARD, « The Nine Brothers of the White High. Mi-nyag and 'King' Pe-dkar Revisited. On the 'Re-membering' of History and the Creation of Gods », in S. KARMAY et P. SAGANT (dir), *Les habitants du toit du monde. Hommage à A. W. Macdonald*, Société d'Ethnographie, Nanterre, 1996, p. 103. La deuxième version situe la région d'origine de l'ancêtre de la dynastie royale du Sikkim au Kham, à l'est du Tibet, dans un endroit également appelée Minyag, comme le revendique la *Chronique du Sikkim*, cf. CHOS RGYAL MTHU STOBS RNAM RGYAL DANG RGYAL MO YE SHES SGROL MA, 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, The Tsuklakhang Trust, Gangtok, 2003. Saul Mullard a montré qu'il n'existe pas de preuve historique de ce schéma de migration de l'est du Tibet vers le Sikkim, cf. S. MULLARD, *Histories of the Hidden Land: An Introductory*

hiérarque du monastère tibétain de Sa skya. En 1950, le douzième souverain de cette lignée royale, le maharaja<sup>2</sup> Pälden döndrub NAMGYÄL (tib. dPal ldan don grub rNam rgyal, 1923-1982), épousait une noble tibétaine de la famille SAMDRU PHODRANG (tib. bSam sgrub pho brang). Les alliances matrimoniales entre la famille royale du Sikkim et les grandes familles tibétaines, religieuses et laïques, ont structuré les relations de ces deux pays sur seize générations, depuis les prémisses de la fondation de la royaute Sikkimaise, mais surtout à partir de sa fondation réelle, au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, jusqu'à son rattachement progressif à l'Inde britannique au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Au-delà de l'évidence que constitue la volonté pour une lignée de souche tibétaine et de religion bouddhique de renouer avec ses origines grâce aux alliances matrimoniales, on peut se demander quelle est la signification profonde de ces mariages récurrents tout au long de la période. Le phénomène évolue de façon manifeste au cours du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : alors que le Royaume du Sikkim se détache progressivement de la domination tibétaine pour rentrer sous la domination britannique, le nombre et l'origine sociale des épouses tibétaines des *chos rgyal* se modifient sensiblement. J'envisagerai les unions matrimoniales comme enjeu des relations internationales entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et l'Inde britannique, et j'avancerai des éléments d'explication de ce fait. Grâce à la diversité des sources utilisées et donc des points de vue reflétés, cette étude prendra en compte les regards croisés des trois pays, au niveau à la fois des individus et des gouvernements<sup>3</sup>. Bien qu'il m'ait semblé primordial de prendre en compte, dans un premier temps, ce que l'on sait des « mariages tibétains » de la famille royale du Sikkim à l'échelle de l'histoire du Royaume du Sikkim dans son ensemble, c'est-à-dire à partir du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, mon propos se concentrera ensuite principalement sur les XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, en raison de la nature des sources utilisées

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*Survey of Sources for the Study of Seventeenth Century Sikkim*, PhD dissertation, Oxford University, 2007, Chapitre 2, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Titre décerné par les Britanniques aux *chos rgyal* à partir de 1861.

<sup>3</sup> Ces sources reflètent principalement le point de vue du gouvernement sikkimais, à travers la *Chronique du Sikkim* dans ses deux versions, tibétaine et anglaise, et du gouvernement britannique, grâce aux archives du gouvernement britannique de l'Inde. Le point de vue des individus, tibétains et sikkimais, concernés par ces alliances a été étudié à partir d'entretiens oraux. Il appartiendra donc à des travaux ultérieurs de compléter le point de vue du gouvernement tibétain, par l'étude de sources littéraires et historiques se rapportant à la période envisagée, et de venir ainsi compléter cette étude préliminaire, en confirmant ou infirmant ses hypothèses.

ainsi que du caractère crucial que revêt cette période dans l'évolution du phénomène.

*Les épouses tibétaines dans la famille royale du Sikkim : description et évolution*

D'après le recensement que j'ai effectué dans la *Chronique du Sikkim* (tib. 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs)<sup>4</sup>, le Tibet aurait fourni environ vingt femmes de haute naissance à la lignée des rois du Sikkim et de leurs ancêtres<sup>5</sup>. Certes, des informations précises sur l'origine géographique et sociale de toutes ces épouses ne sont pas disponibles, mais nous pouvons remarquer que leur identité a connu une certaine évolution au cours des siècles. Ainsi, Gyäbumsa (tib. Gyad 'bum bsags), fondateur au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle de la lignée qui donna naissance au premier *chos rgyal* du Sikkim, Phuntsog NAMGYÄL (tib. Phun tshogs rNam rgyal, 1604-1654), aurait épousé une femme liée à la lignée du hiérarque de Sa skyā<sup>6</sup>, désignée dans la chronique par le titre de *Sa skyā'i rje btsun gu ru* ou *jo mo gu ru*<sup>7</sup>. Dans cette même source, il est dit que le fils de

<sup>4</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.* Cette chronique a été écrite en 1908 (CHOS RGYAL MTHU STOBS RNAM RGYAL DANG RGYAL MO YE SHES SGROL MA, 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, The Tsuklakhang Trust, Gangtok, 2003) et traduite en anglais (THEIR HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA SIR THUTOB NAMGYÄL AND MAHARANI YESHAY DOLMA OF SIKKIM, *History of Sikkim*, translated by Kazi Dousandup, 1908, IOR/MssEur/E/78, British Library, Londres). Cet ouvrage est, pour la partie ancienne, une mise par écrit de légendes touchant aux origines de la dynastie NAMGYÄL (tib. rNam rgyal). À partir de l'intronisation du premier *chos rgyal*, en 1646, et jusqu'à 1908, date de sa rédaction, il se fait de plus en plus « historique » et utilise comme sources un certain nombre de documents officiels. Pour une discussion concernant la date de l'intronisation du premier *chos rgyal*, cf. S. MULLARD, « The 'Tibetan' formation of Sikkim : religion, politics and the construction of a coronation myth », *Bulletin of Tibetology*, vol. 41, n°2, p. 31-48.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. document n°1. Le chiffre ne peut être tout à fait exact car les sources que j'ai utilisées pour l'époque ancienne manquent de précision sur l'origine géographique et sociale des épouses royales. De plus, l'une d'elle, Tsering Putri (tib. Tshe ring bu 'khrid), servante de l'une des épouses légitimes du septième maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL (tib. gTsug phud rNam rgyal) n'a pas été incluse, car, bien qu'elle ait donné naissance à des enfants, sa relation avec le raja est considérée comme illégitime, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 10-12 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ces expressions laissent incertaine la filiation exacte de cette dame, cf. *Ibid.* et p. 33. Certains ouvrages précisent qu'elle était la propre fille du hiérarque, cf. H. H. RISLEY (éd.), *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, [1894] 2005, p. 8 ; L. B. BASNET, *Sikkim, A short Political History*, S. Chand & co.

Gyäbumsa, Mipönrab (tib. Mi dpon rab), aurait épousé lui aussi une femme de la lignée *sa skya pa*, à nouveau simplement présentée comme une *Sa skya sras mo*<sup>8</sup>. Le deuxième *chos rgyal* Tensung NAMGYÄL (tib. bsTan srung rNam rgyal, 1644-1700) épousa selon la chronique, en plus de deux autres femmes, une fille du chef tibétain de gTing skyes rdzong<sup>9</sup>. Le troisième *chos rgyal* Chagdor NAMGYÄL (tib. Phyag rdor rNam rgyal, 1686-1717) épousa quant à lui une dame de la région du dBus, sur laquelle je n'ai pas davantage de précisions<sup>10</sup>. Le quatrième *chos rgyal* Gyürme NAMGYÄL (tib. 'Gyur med rNam rgyal, 1707-1734) épousa Mingyür drolma (tib. Mi 'gyur sgrol ma), fille cadette d'un hiérarque *rnying ma pa*, le *gter chen* de sMin grol gling en 1721<sup>11</sup>, dont la famille avait fui l'avancée des Dzungar et s'était réfugiée au Sikkim. Parmi les quatre épouses du cinquième *chos rgyal* Phuntsog NAMGYÄL (1733-1780), la première, qui mourut peu après son mariage, était la petite-fille du régent tibétain Rabden sharpa (tib. Rab brtan shar pa), qui avait été député par le gouvernement du Tibet pour assumer le pouvoir au Sikkim pendant la minorité et l'absence du *chos rgyal*<sup>12</sup>. La seconde et la quatrième provenaient de la famille noble tibétaine KYIDE BUGPA (tib. sKyid sde sbug pa)<sup>13</sup>. Ce nom correspond probablement à l'abréviation KYIBUG (tib. sKyid sbug)<sup>14</sup>, sous laquelle la famille est

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New Delhi, 1974 ; S. S. CHIB, *Encyclopaedia of India*, vol. XIV, Sikkim, Rima Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 14 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Territoire situé au sud du Tibet, à la frontière du Népal et du Sikkim, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 24 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> "Dbus nas lcams gcig", cf. 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 67 et "a lady of U", cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 26. J'ignore notamment si sa famille était ou non rattachée au gouvernement du dGa' ldan pho brang.

<sup>11</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 34 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Malheureusement, j'ignore le statut social de Rabden sharpa au Tibet, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 42 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Pour la fille de ce noble KYIDE BUGPA ainsi que pour la famille de Tingkye dzong, on trouve une qualification que je n'ai pu traduire avec certitude : *gtting skyes rdzong nye 'dabs sde pa zam sar ba'i sras mo*, cf. 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 60 et Zab [sic] gsar skyid sde sbug pa'i sras mo, puis Zam gsar skyid sde sbug pa'i sras mo, cf. *Ibid.*, p. 104. On peut supposer que l'expression *sde pa zam gsar* qualifie un chef qui est à la fois « dans la continuité et nouveau », donc héréditaire.

<sup>14</sup> P. P. OF GREECE AND DENMARK, *The Aristocracy of central Tibet. A provisional list of names of the noble Houses of Ü-Tsang*, Tibet Mirror Press, Kalimpong, 1954, p. 23 ; D. Y. YUTHOK, *The House of the Turquoise Roof*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York, 1995 [1990], p. 309 et 310 ; B. D. SREG SHING, « De snga'i bod sa gnas srid gzhung gi sku drag shod drung

connue au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Mais il peut se référer à deux familles différentes de *sger pa*<sup>15</sup>, liées soit au gouvernement de bKra shis lhun po<sup>16</sup>, soit au dGa' ldan pho brang. Les indications contenues dans les sources ne permettent pas de trancher<sup>17</sup>. Le septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL (tib. gTsug phud rNam rgyal, 1785-1863) épousa trois femmes de la famille du septième<sup>18</sup> *pan chen bla ma* Lobsang tenpä nyima (tib. bLo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1782-1853), désignées dans la *Chronique du Sikkim* par le nom de La mo *lha lcam*<sup>19</sup>, puis deux

ngam sger pa ngo yod gang dran ming tho », *in Bod rang skyong l jong srid gros lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha u yon lan khang*, *Bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs*, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Bejing, vol. 23, p. 183 ; et liste des fonctionnaires du gouvernement tibétain en 1924 reproduite par L. Petech, cf. L. PETECH, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, 1728-1959*, Serie Orientale Roma XLV, Ismeo, Rome, 1973, p. 246.

<sup>15</sup> Jusqu'en 1959, la hiérarchie interne de la noblesse du dGa' ldan pho brang était la suivante : au sommet de la hiérarchie, les *sde dpon*, quatre familles issues des anciens rois et ministres de l'Empire tibétain (VII<sup>e</sup>-IX<sup>e</sup> siècles), puis les *yab gzhis*, six familles anoblies des précédents dalai-lamas, puis les *mi drag*, environ dix-huit familles riches et politiquement influentes, et enfin les *sger pa*, terme qui, techniquement, désigne toutes les familles de propriétaires terriens, mais qui, dans l'usage courant, sert à se référer aux familles de la petite noblesse ne disposant pas d'un titre supérieur.

<sup>16</sup> Cependant, certains membres de cette famille servaient le dGa' ldan pho brang sous le nom de DINGYÖN (tib. sDing yon), cf. D. Y. YUTHOK, *Op. cit.*, p. 307 ; entretien avec Zhe bo Blo bsang dar rgyas, 07/10/2005, Dharamsala, Inde ; et liste des fonctionnaires du gouvernement tibétain en 1924 reproduite par L. Petech, cf. L. PETECH, *Op. cit.*, p. 245 et 247.

<sup>17</sup> Quant à la troisième épouse, son origine ethnique et sociale est malaisée à déterminer. Elle est décrite comme la fille du « Gerpa Changzod Mingyur » cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 42 ou « *gad pa [sic] phyag mdzod mi 'gyur* », cf. 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 104. Le terme *sger pa* qualifie un propriétaire terrien noble et *phyag mdzod* un trésorier ; reste à savoir si ce fonctionnaire est tibétain ou non.

<sup>18</sup> Selon la numérotation chinoise, mais le quatrième selon la numérotation tibétaine, cf. F. JAGOU, *Le 9e Panchen Lama (1883-1937). Enjeu des relations sino-tibétaines*, EFEO, 2004, Paris, p. 338.

<sup>19</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 56 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 138-139. Je n'ai pas pu déterminer avec certitude à quoi le terme La mo renvoie. Si l'on considère que son orthographe n'est pas erronée, l'expression signifierait « Dame de La mo ». La mo pourrait alors être soit un toponyme et désigner le lieu de naissance du septième *pan chen bla ma* (le nom aurait ensuite été repris par la famille anoblie de ce dernier, comme c'était le cas pour les familles anoblies des dalaï-lamas). Une ville située entre Drepung (tib. 'Bras spung) et Medrogongkar (tib. Mal gro gung dkar) porte le nom de La mo. Il est possible que la famille du septième *pan chen bla ma* soit originaire de ce lieu. Cependant, on sait que ce *pan chen bla ma* est né à Panam et son

femmes des familles nobles *sger pa* DINGJA (tib. lDing bya)<sup>20</sup> et MÖNKYI (tib. sMon skyid)<sup>21</sup>, rattachées au dGa' ldan pho brang. Le huitième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Sidkyong NAMGYÄL (tib. Srid skyong rNam rgyal, 1819-1874) épousa en 1848, après avoir obtenu une dispense de vœux monastiques par le onzième dalaï-lama<sup>22</sup>, une femme de la famille noble PENDING (tib. dPal lding), liée au bKra shis lhun po<sup>23</sup>. Le neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL (tib. mThu stobs rNam rgyal, 1860-1914) épousa en 1874 la veuve de son prédécesseur, puis, après son décès en 1880, il épousa en 1882 Yeshe drölma (tib. Ye shes sgrol ma, 1867-1910), fille de la famille noble PHAMO LHADING (tib. Phag mo lha sdings) ou, dans sa version abrégée, LHADING, liée au dGa' ldan pho brang et appartenant au groupe des *mi*

père à Lhasa, cf. S. TURNER, *An account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet containing a Narrative of the Journey through Bootan and part of Tibet 1783-1795*, [1800] 1991, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, p. 240 et 340. Soit, et cette hypothèse me semble plus probable, le mot La mo renvoie au lien familial existant entre ces dames avec l'oracle de La mo. Dans le monastère de La mo en effet, réside le La mo *tshangs pa*, oracle principal de la divinité *Tshangs pa dkar po*, cf. R. DE NEBESKY-WOKOWITZ, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, Tiwari's Pilgrims Book House, Kathmandu, 1993, p. 153. On sait qu'un lien fort unissait les *pan chen bla ma* à cet oracle. Fabienne Jagou précise que l'oracle de La mo participa à la découverte du cinquième *pan chen bla ma* et que ce dernier le consulta durant toute sa vie, cf. F. JAGOU, *Op. cit.*, p. 34 n. 26. Dobis Tsiring gyal a montré qu'un lien historique existe entre les *pan chen bla ma* et cet oracle, comme le suggère entre autre la présence d'éléments communs dans leurs deux sceaux, cf. DOBIS TSERING GYAL, *gZhung sa dga' ldan pho brang chen po'i gzhung bsten chos skyong khag la dpyad pa*, présentation orale au premier International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Londres, 9-13 août 2007.

<sup>20</sup> "Rta nag lding ka bya tshang", cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 57 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 140. Cette famille correspond très probablement à la famille DINGJA mentionnée dans les ouvrages suivants : P. P. OF GREECE AND DENMARK, *Op. cit.*, p. 18 ; D. Y. YUTHOK, *Op. cit.*, p. 308 ; B. D. SREG SHING, *Op. cit.*, p. 184 ; et la liste des fonctionnaires du gouvernement tibétain en 1924 reproduite par L. Petech, cf. L. PETECH, *Op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>21</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 57 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 140. Cette famille est mentionnée dans les ouvrages suivants : P. P. OF GREECE AND DENMARK, *Op. cit.*, p. 26 ; B. D. SREG SHING *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>22</sup> A. LAMB, *British India and Tibet, 1766-1910*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, [1960] 1986, p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 69 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 179. Cette famille n'est pas mentionnée dans la liste du Prince Pierre de Grèce, la seule à comprendre des familles liées au bKra shis lhun po.

*drag*<sup>24</sup>. Après le décès de Yeshe drölma, il épousa en troisième noce, en 1912, sa petite sœur LHADING Kelsang (tib. བ୍ୟାଲ ར୍ୱାଙ୍ଗ)<sup>25</sup>. Il avait épousé Yeshe drölma en union polyandrique avec son demi-frère Trinle NAMGYÄL (tib. ཀ୍ୟର୍ହିନ ཉନ୍ମା ར୍ୱାଯାଳ, 1866-1919<sup>26</sup>). Quant au dixième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Sidkyong NAMGYÄL (tib. ས୍ରି ଶ୍ରୀ ନମ୍ବ୍ୟାଳ, 1879-1914), son histoire n'est pas entièrement élucidée. Selon les sources britanniques, le roi serait décédé en étant toujours célibataire. Alexandra David-Néel soutient la même thèse bien qu'elle précise que des projets matrimoniaux qui le concernaient, visaient une princesse birmane<sup>27</sup>. Le onzième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tashi

<sup>24</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 82 et *'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*, *Op. cit.*, p. 209. Le statut de cette famille est incertain : la *Chronique du Sikkim* la décrit comme l'une des plus grandes familles de Lhasa, ce qui est confirmé par son inclusion dans la liste de familles décrites par L. Petech du fait que cette famille a produit un ministre, à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, cf. L. PETECH, *Op. cit.*, p. 197. Elle devrait ainsi jouir du statut de *mi drag* et c'est bien ainsi que la classifie D. Y. YUTHOK, *Op. cit.*, p. 306. Cependant, certaines sources décrivent cette famille comme une famille de *sger pa*, cf. B. D. SREG SHING, *Op. cit.*, p. 183. Il est probable que la famille ait connu une descension sociale au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

<sup>25</sup> *Who's Who in Tibet, Corrected with a few subsequent additions up to 30th September 1948*, Printed by the Government of India Press, Calcutta, India, 1949, IOR/L/P&S/20/D220/2, British Library, Londres, p. 84 et *List of Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet*, Calcutta, Government of India Press, 1933, IOR/L/P&S/20/D216, British Library, Londres, p. 1 ; *Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim Bhutan and Tibet*, Calcutta, Superintendent Government Printing, India, 1915, F0/371/2318, National Archives, Londres, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Mort du diabète au Tibet, cf. *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1919*, IOR/L/P&S/10/218/P2944, British Library, Londres.

<sup>27</sup> A. DAVID-NÉEL, *Mystiques et magiciens du Thibet*, Paris, Plon, 1929, p. 58-59. Cette information est également présente dans A. K. J. SINGH, *Himalayan Triangle. A historical survey of British India's relations with Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan 1765-1950*, The British Library, Londres, 1988, p. 254. Alex McKay a écrit que ce maharaja aurait épousé une noble tibétaine, prénommée Chönyi wangmo (tib. ཕୋସ ན୍ୟି དଙ୍ବ ཡୋ), cf. A. MCKAY, « 'That he may take due pride in the empire to which he belongs': The education of Maharaja Kumar Sidkeong Namgyäl Tulku of Sikkim », *Bulletin of Tibetology*, November 2003, Volume 39, N°2, Namgyäl Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim, p. 49. Je n'ai rien trouvé de tel dans les sources et cette jeune fille, qui se rend selon l'auteur à Bodhgaya pour honorer la mémoire du kumar, semble être la demi-sœur du kumar qui se nommait Chönyi wangmo. La piste d'un mariage tibétain est confortée par autre source, qui indique qu'il aurait épousé en 1912 la petite sœur de LHADING Yeshe drölma, épouse du neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL, donc en fait sûrement Kelsang, cf. <http://www.4dw.net/royalark/India/sikkim2.htm>, mais aucun autre élément ne vient conforter cette hypothèse. En raison de l'incertitude qui persiste sur la réalité de

NAMGYÄL (tib. bKra shis rNam rgyal, 1893-1963) épousa en 1918 Künsang dechen (tib. Kun bzang bde chen, 1904-1987)<sup>28</sup>, fille d'une famille de *sde dpon* liée au dGa' ldan pho brang, les RAGASHAR (tib. Rag kha shag) ou DOKHAR (tib. mDo mkhar). Enfin, comme je l'ai mentionné en introduction, le douzième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Pälden döndrub NAMGYÄL, épousa en 1950 Sangye dekyi (tib. Sangs rgyas bde skyid), fille de la famille de *yab gzhis* SAMDRU PHODRANG.

Quant aux autres épouses royales, elles provenaient soit de familles locales proches du pouvoir au Sikkim, comme l'épouse du premier *chos rgyal* Phuntsog NAMGYÄL<sup>29</sup>, ou celle du sixième *chos rgyal* Tenzin NAMGYÄL (tib. bsTan 'dzin rNam rgyal, 1769-1790/3), qui était fille de ministre<sup>30</sup>; soit des principautés voisines, comme l'une des deux épouses du troisième *chos rgyal* Chagdor NAMGYÄL, fille du roi du Mustang (tib. gLo bo rgyal po)<sup>31</sup>, ou bien encore l'une des trois épouses du deuxième *chos rgyal* Tensung NAMGYÄL, venue vraisemblablement du Bhoutan (tib. 'Brug yul)<sup>32</sup>.

Par ailleurs, trois épouses tibétaines furent données en mariage – ou auraient dû l'être – à des princes cadets de la famille royale du Sikkim<sup>33</sup>: Kyabgön labrang (tib. sKyabs mgon bla brang), fils de la première épouse de La mo du septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL, mourut juste avant d'épouser l'aînée des deux filles de cette même famille KYIBUG que j'ai déjà évoquée<sup>34</sup>; Sisum NAMGYÄL (tib. Srid gsum rNam rgyal, 1821-1843), fils de la deuxième épouse de La mo de ce même maharaja reçu en mariage une dame de la famille noble du fonctionnaire (tib. gzhung zhabz) tibétain LUNGNAG SHEKAR (tib. Lung nag shel dkar)<sup>35</sup>; enfin, Jigdrel tsewang (tib. 'Jigs bral tshe

ce mariage, je n'ai pas comptabilisé cette éventuelle épouse dans le recensement évoqué plus haut des vingt épouses tibétaines.

<sup>28</sup> *List of Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet*, 1933, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> H. H. RISLEY (éd.), *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 31 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>31</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 26 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 24 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

Parmi les contractées avec des épouses étrangères, il faut bien sur compter le mariage du douzième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Pälden döndrub NAMGYÄL, le 20 mars 1963, avec une américaine, Miss Hope Cooke.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. document n°1.

<sup>34</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 65 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>35</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 62 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

Lung nag shel dkar est situé entre Sa skyá et gZhis ka rtse, à la limite du gTsang. Cette famille ne semble donc pas liée à la famille SHEKARINGPA (tib. Shel dkar

dbang) ou Georges, né en 1928, frère cadet du douzième et dernier *chos rgyal* et maharaja régnant Pälden döndrub NAMGYÄL, épousa Sonam Yangchen (tib. bSod nams dbyangs can), de la famille de *mi drag* NAMSELING (tib. rNam sras gling)<sup>36</sup>.

Inversement, quatre princesses de la famille royale du Sikkim furent données en mariage à des nobles tibétains<sup>37</sup>. En premier lieu, la fille aînée du septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL fut mariée à un noble du gouvernement du bKra shis lhun po, DARDING SHENTSANG (tib. Dar ldings gshan tshang)<sup>38</sup>. Ensuite, en 1906, Künsang wangmo (tib. Kun bzang dbang mo, 1889-1914), fille du neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL et de LHADING Yeshe drölma, épousa le frère et héritier pressenti du *khri chen* de Sa skya<sup>39</sup>, Ngawang lhündrup gyältsen (tib. nGag dbang lhun grub rgyal mtshan), sans doute dans l'idée de renouer l'ancienne alliance entre les deux lignées, inaugurée par le mariage de Gyäbumsa, fondateur de la lignée royale du Sikkim<sup>40</sup>. Il y eut enfin les deux filles du onzième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tashi NAMGYÄL : l'aînée, Pema tsedeun (tib. Pad ma tshe sgron) ou Ku ku lags, épousa en 1941 PHÜNKANG (tib. Phun khang) Gombo tsering (tib. mGon po tshe ring) né en 1918<sup>41</sup>, tandis que la

pling pa), dont le domaine se trouve à Shel dkar rdzong dans la région de Ding ri. Cette famille n'est pas mentionnée dans les listes de familles nobles du Tibet central.

<sup>36</sup> Entretien avec rNam sras gling bSod nams dbyangs can, 23/09/2004, Gangtok.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. document n°2.

<sup>38</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 56 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', Op. cit., p. 138. Cette famille n'est pas mentionnée dans les listes de nobles du Tibet central.

<sup>39</sup> Les hiérarques de Sa skya n'ont porté le titre de *khri chen* qu'à partir du milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ils portaient auparavant le titre de Ti shri (litt. tuteur impérial) puis de Gong ma (litt. empereur), cf. Cassinelli, C. W., Ekvall, Robert B., *A Tibetan Principality: the Political System of Sa-sKya*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1969, p. 20. Kun bzang dbang mo donna naissance à un fils en 1910, (cf. *Gyantse Diary for July 1910*, IOR/L/P&S/7/242/1292), puis décéda prématurément en 1914, cf. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim Bhutan and Tibet*, 1915, Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 135 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', Op. cit., p. 372 ; *Memoranda on Native States in India, 1911, together with a list of Independant Ruling Chiefs, Chiefs of the Frontier States, and other Personages with their proper form of address*, Calcutta, Superintendent Government printing, India, 1911, 306 p., p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> Entretien avec son épouse Phun khang Pad ma tshe sgron, 29/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde ; *Who's Who in Tibet, Corrected with a few subsequent additions up to 30th September 1948*, Op. cit., p. 141 ; L. PETECH, Op. cit., p. 27 [donne faussement la date de 1940]. Le contrat de mariage intitulé « Lchags sbrul gnyen yig rdo rnge'i (sic rje'i) mdud rgya 'dra gnyis yab gnyis phun chogs (sic tshogs) khang gsar nas

cadette Pema chökyi (tib. Pad ma chos skyid) ou Ku lags (1925-1969) épousait en 1950 YUTHOK (tib. g.Yu thog) Rigdzin tseten namgyäl (tib. Rig 'dzin tshe brtan rnam rgyal, 1928-1968)<sup>42</sup>.

L'évolution de l'identité des épouses tibétaines suit certaines tendances sur la période couvrant l'histoire de la fondation du Royaume sikkimaïs jusqu'au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Elles sont en partie le reflet des évolutions propres à l'histoire interne tibétaine depuis le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, sur les plans à la fois politique et religieux. On observe d'une part un déplacement géographique global de l'origine des épouses, du sud et de l'ouest du Tibet central, vers l'est et en particulier vers Lhasa, à partir du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ce déplacement ne fait en réalité que suivre, avec un léger décalage, celui du centre politique du Tibet, du gTsang vers le dBus. Ce n'est en effet qu'à partir de 1642 qu'un pouvoir centralisé est établi durablement à Lhasa par les *dge lugs pa*, sous l'égide du cinquième dalaï-lama<sup>43</sup>. Parallèlement, on observe un changement dans la nature de ces familles de haut statut : issues de lignées religieuses dans les premiers temps, celles du *khri chen* de Sa skya, du *gter chen* de sMin grol gling ou du *pan chen bla ma* de bKra shis lhun po, les femmes choisies pour devenir épouses du roi ou d'un prince cadet le sont de façon croissante dans les familles nobles laïques du dGa' ldan pho brang<sup>44</sup>.

Cependant, l'histoire interne du Tibet n'explique pas tout, en particulier la dernière tendance, qui concerne le statut social des épouses tibétaines liées au gouvernement du dGa' ldan pho brang pendant la période qui a plus précisément retenu mon attention ici, les XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles : le rang des familles dont elles proviennent est de plus en plus élevé. Les premières épouses tibétaines étaient nées dans

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thugs nyar mjad (*sic mdzad*) rgyud. Complete with red seal, 1941 » se trouve dans la collection de manuscrits du Palais de Gangtok mais n'est pas encore accessible pour cause d'inventaire.

<sup>42</sup> Entretien avec sa fille g.Yu thog bSod nams sgrol dkar, 21/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde ; la cérémonie du mariage a été décrite en détail par le Prince Pierre de Grèce qui était présent, cf. P. P. OF GREECE AND DENMARK, *A Study of Polyandry*, Mouton & Co, The Hague, 1963, p. 421.

<sup>43</sup> Ainsi, les alliances se concluaient toujours avec des épouses appartenant à l'élite tibétaine du moment. Au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, par exemple, le monastère de Sa skya était bien le centre du pouvoir au Tibet ; et au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les familles nobles du gTsang avaient la prédominance sur celles du dBus en raison de la position privilégiée donnée au gTsang par Pho lha nas, cf. L. PETECH, *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Il faut noter qu'il est difficile d'établir une hiérarchie de statut entre les lignages nobles laïcs et les lignées religieuses, qui tirent leur prestige respectif de sources différentes et difficilement comparables.

des familles laïques du dGa' ldan pho brang, au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les KYIBUG, DINGJA, ou MÖNKYI, appartenaient à des familles nobles de rang modeste. À partir de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle et du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, c'est-à-dire à partir du règne du *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL, ces épouses furent recrutées dans des familles plus prestigieuses, jouissant d'un plus haut statut dans la hiérarchie de la noblesse du dGa' ldan pho brang : elles possédaient désormais le rang de *mi drag* comme la famille LHADING ou NAMSELING, de *sde dpon* comme la famille RAGASHAR et de *yab gzhis* comme la famille SAMDRU PHODRANG. Il est intéressant de noter que cette évolution concerne également les familles tibétaines auxquelles sont données des princesses sikkimaises.

Les alliances matrimoniales entre la famille royale du Sikkim et le Tibet n'ont pourtant pas toujours été couronnées de succès. Elles ne faisaient parfois pas le bonheur des individus concernés : que ce soit pour les filles de la noblesse tibétaine qui venaient épouser les princes ou les rois du Sikkim ou bien pour les princesses de la famille royale mariées au Tibet. Pour les premières, de plus en plus citadines vers le tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles, le Sikkim, petit royaume mal connu et distant – il fallait vingt-et-un jours de cheval pour l'atteindre – était considéré comme un pays de *rong pa* (lit. « gens des vallées »), c'est-à-dire de simples villageois<sup>45</sup>. Certaines n'ont pas attendu longtemps avant de regagner leur pays natal, comme par exemple la fille de la famille du hiérarque de sMin grol gling, qui n'eut pas l'heure de plaire à son mari le roi et dut repartir au Tibet<sup>46</sup>, ou bien la fille de LUNGNAG SHEKAR, dont l'époux, le prince Sisum NAMGYÄL, décida d'observer le vœu de célibat, l'obligeant ainsi à embrasser elle aussi la vie religieuse et à repartir pour le Tibet<sup>47</sup> ; enfin, Kelsang, la troisième épouse du maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL, repartit au Tibet en 1919<sup>48</sup>, quelques années après le décès de son mari. Pour les princesses sikkimaises envoyées au Tibet, il fallait supporter le mépris des Tibétains pour leur pays, les difficultés causées par leur méconnaissance de la langue

<sup>45</sup> Entretiens avec rinpoche bKra shis gDan tshab pa, 27/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde ; avec Rag kha shag 'Phrin las dbang mo, 22/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde ; avec g.Yu thog bSod nams sgrol dkar, 21/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde ; et avec Skyid sbug zur pa Pad ma g.yu sgron, 02/11/2003, Lhasa, RAT.

<sup>46</sup> En raison de sa trop grande laideur, précise la chronique, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 35-36 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 89-90.

<sup>47</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 62 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>48</sup> *List of Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet*, 1933, *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

tibétaine et la moindre variété de nourriture disponible<sup>49</sup>. Aussi, la princesse Chönyi wangmo (tib. Chos nyid dbang mo, 1896-1994), fille cadette du neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL refusa-t-elle d'épouser un Tibétain<sup>50</sup>.

Malgré les réticences qu'elles pouvaient susciter, la récurrence de ces alliances montre qu'elles revêtaient la plus grande importance. Il est donc légitime de s'interroger sur leur raison d'être comme sur les éventuels éléments permettant d'expliquer les évolutions décrites plus haut, d'autant que ce recentrement des alliances, achevé à la fin du XIXe siècle, sur le plan géographique, social et hiérarchique vers des familles tibétaines laïques, issues de la haute aristocratie de Lhasa, au plus proche du pouvoir central, s'opère dans un moment clé des relations entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et l'Inde britannique.

#### *Mariages et diplomatie : les alliances matrimoniales comme enjeu des relations internationales du Sikkim avec le Tibet et l'Inde britannique*

Les projets matrimoniaux des *chos rgyal*, source incontestable de prestige, représentaient pour le Royaume sikkimaïs un enjeu politique très significatif à la fois au niveau intérieur et extérieur. Si l'on considère l'ensemble des mariages des rois du Sikkim, on entrevoit que deux logiques différentes ont présidé à ces alliances : d'un côté, l'unité interne du royaume, par exemple lorsqu'il épousait une Lepcha, ou la fille d'un ministre, comme le fit Phuntsog NAMGYÄL<sup>51</sup> et, de l'autre, la diplomatie au niveau international. Cette double logique a été étudiée

<sup>49</sup> La plainte de la princesse tibétaine, sœur de l'Empereur Srong btsan sgam po, mariée au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle au lointain roi du Zhang-zhung reste une vérité intemporelle, cf. D. SNELLGROVE & H. RICHARDSON, *A cultural history of Tibet, Shambala*, Boston, 1968 1986, p. 60 ; et J. BACOT, F. W. THOMAS et G. C. TOUSSAINT, *Documents de Touen Houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet*, Paris, 1940, p. 116 et 155.

<sup>50</sup> Elle épousa finalement le roi du Bhoutan raja bSod nams stobs rgyas rDo rje (1897-1952) en 1918, cf. M. ARIS, *The Raven Crown. The Origins of Buddhist Monarchy in Bhutan*, Serindia Publications, London, 1994, p. 86 et 106.

<sup>51</sup> L'histoire du Sikkim a été le théâtre de tensions permanentes entre les partis lepcchas et tibétains, tensions particulièrement perceptibles au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, cf. J. C. WHITE, *Sikkim & Bhutan. Twenty-one years on the North-east frontier*, Manas Publications, Delhi, [1909] 1986, p. 19 et A. LAMB, *Op. cit.*, p. 68. À cause de leurs liens matrimoniaux et religieux avec le Tibet, les maharajas avaient tendance à défendre le parti tibétain, cf. A. K. J. SINGH, *Op. cit.*, p. 176 et P. R. RAO, *India and Sikkim*, 1814-1970, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1972, p. 6.

dans d'autres contextes, notamment pour le Tibet de l'Empire<sup>52</sup> ou bien pour les alliances contractées par les dynasties régnantes dans l'Europe de l'époque moderne<sup>53</sup>. L. E. Rose avance l'hypothèse selon laquelle les *chos rgyal* se seraient mis à épouser de façon récurrente des nobles tibétaines après avoir expérimenté à leurs dépens les dissensions que causaient chacune de leurs unions avec des filles de l'élite locale, lepcha ou de l'élite limbu : « Thereafter, until 1963, the Namgyäls obtained their wives from prominent Tibetan families whose pedigrees may have been of the highest order but whose relatives were in no position to cause dissension in Sikkim<sup>54</sup>. » Il me semble que cette explication ne rend compte que de façon très partielle des causes ayant présidé au choix matrimonial des *chos rgyal*, car, comme nous allons le voir à présent, ce choix d'établir des alliances tibétaines, loin d'être un pis-aller, semble être partie intégrante d'une politique extérieure fort cohérente qui, de surcroît, était intimement liée à la politique interne du royaume et au renforcement de la faction tibétaine dans le Royaume du Sikkim.

En réalité, ces unions matrimoniales ont varié selon que le pays était sous domination tibétaine ou britannique. Un bref rappel de l'histoire des relations entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et l'Inde britannique s'impose. Le royaume du Sikkim fut le vassal du Tibet depuis sa création au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, son premier roi, Phuntsog NAMGYÄL, ayant été officiellement reconnu peu après son avènement par le cinquième dalaï-lama, en échange de quoi ce dernier lui offrit sa protection<sup>55</sup>. Durant tout le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le gouvernement tibétain servit à la fois de refuge pour les *chos rgyal* lors des invasions successives bhoutanaise et

<sup>52</sup> B. DOTSON, « A note on *zhang*: Maternal relatives of the Tibetan royal line and marriage into the Royal Family », *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 292, n°1-2, 2004, p. 75-99. Sur les mariages des Empereurs tibétains avec des princesses étrangères, cf. également H. UEBACH, « Eminent ladies of the Tibetan Empire according to Old Tibetan Texts » in S. KARMAY et P. SAGANT, *Les habitants du toit du monde*, Société d'ethnologie, Nanterre, 1997, p. 53-74 et J. BACOT, « Le mariage chinois du roi tibétain Sron bcan sgan po », in de La Vallée Poussin, Louis (dir.), *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques publiés par l'Institut belge des Hautes Études Chinoises*, Troisième volume, 1934-1935, Bruxelles, Juillet 1935, p. 1-60.

<sup>53</sup> Opposition entre la « logique dynastique » et la « logique internationale », cf. L. BELY, *La société des princes, XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Fayard, Paris, 1999, p. 215.

<sup>54</sup> L. E. ROSE, « Modern Sikkim in historical perspective », in L. EPSTEIN & R. F. SHERBURNE (ed) *Reflections on Tibetan Culture. Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 1990, p. 64.

<sup>55</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 23 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, Op. cit., p. 55.

gurkha au Sikkim<sup>56</sup> et d'intermédiaire dans les traités de paix. Comme État suzerain, il veillait à la bonne marche des affaires internes du royaume sikkimais, à ce que le Sikkim paie régulièrement son tribut et à ce que sa fidélité soit sans faille, punissant tout écart par la confiscation de domaines ou l'envoi d'une force armée. Les relations entre les deux gouvernements étaient à la fois politiques et religieuses : nombre de *chos rgyal* se rendaient au Tibet dans le but d'effectuer un pèlerinage et de recevoir des instructions religieuses<sup>57</sup>. Le plus fréquemment, l'objet était triple, politique, religieux et matrimonial.

Mais l'installation de la Compagnie des Indes orientales en Inde modifia sensiblement l'équilibre des forces en place dans l'Himalaya, vers lequel s'orientait l'expansionnisme commercial des Britanniques<sup>58</sup>. La Compagnie des Indes orientales avait essayé, dès le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, d'ouvrir des relations avec le Tibet, par l'envoi à la cour du *pan chen bla ma* de George Bogle en 1722, de Samuel Turner en 1782<sup>59</sup> et enfin de Thomas Manning à Lhasa en 1822. Devant l'échec de ces tentatives, elle changea de tactique et décida d'accéder au Tibet par l'intermédiaire des royaumes himalayens qui le bordaient, parmi lesquels le Sikkim. La Compagnie des Indes orientales instaura des relations avec le Royaume du Sikkim par le traité de Titalia, en 1817, après avoir repoussé une nouvelle invasion gurkha hors du territoire sikkimais. La présence et l'influence croissante des Britanniques au Sikkim, notamment après l'acquisition du territoire sikkimais de Darjeeling en 1835, remettaient en cause la relation de vassalité qui unissait le Sikkim au Tibet. Du fait de la volonté britannique d'instaurer des relations commerciales avec le Tibet, leur présence menaçait la politique d'isolation menée par ce dernier. Ce n'est qu'en 1861 que le Sikkim devint un protectorat britannique *de facto*, par le traité de Tumlong, après des décennies de tension avec le septième maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL qui voulait garder son obédience au gouvernement tibétain. Les relations entre l'Inde et le Sikkim connurent une première période de relative stabilité sous le règne du

<sup>56</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 25, 37, 49 et 54 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*', p. 66, 93, 125 et 132.

<sup>57</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 27, 29, 54 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*', p. 69, 74, 132.

<sup>58</sup> Plusieurs auteurs ont admirablement décrit l'évolution des relations des trois pays qui nous intéressent : cf. A. LAMB, *Op. cit.* ; P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.* ; A. K. S. SINGH, *Op. cit.* Les lignes qui suivent sont une synthèse de ces ouvrages.

<sup>59</sup> L. PETECH, «The missions of Bogle and Turner according to the Tibetan texts», *T'oung Pao*, vol. XXXIX, 1949-1950, Brill, Leiden, 1950, p. 330-346.

huitième maharaja Sidkyong NAMGYÄL. Mais, dans les années 1880, sous le règne du maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL, les gouvernements tibétain et mandchou virent quelles conséquences avait produit leur politique d'inaction<sup>60</sup>. Ils tentèrent alors de réimposer leur suzeraineté *de jure* sur le Sikkim. En 1886, le Sikkim réaffirmait sa fidélité au Tibet par le traité secret de Galing et, en 1888, les Tibétains occupaient le territoire sikkimaïs de Lingtu en réaction contre la menace britannique d'envoyer une mission au Tibet<sup>61</sup>. Les Britanniques ripostèrent par les armes, évacuèrent Lingtu et signèrent en 1890 la « Convention Sikkim-Tibet » par laquelle le gouvernement de la Chine impériale, représenté par l'amban mandchou, reconnaissait le protectorat *de jure* des Britanniques au Sikkim, sans toutefois inclure le gouvernement tibétain dans ce traité. Les années qui suivirent montrèrent, d'une part, aux Britanniques que leur influence au Sikkim n'était toujours pas reconnue par les Tibétains et, d'autre part, que la tactique qu'ils avaient menée, soit celle de reconnaître l'empire mandchou comme suzerain du Tibet dans l'espoir que le premier les aiderait à asseoir leurs intérêts commerciaux au Tibet, était une erreur. Pour atteindre le but qu'ils poursuivaient depuis si longtemps, il leur fallait instaurer des communications directes avec le gouvernement tibétain. L'échec de nouvelles tentatives conduisit à l'expédition Younghusband et à la signature de la Convention de Lhasa en 1904, puis à la Convention de Pékin en 1906. Ainsi, c'est en affirmant son influence au Tibet que l'Inde britannique parvint finalement à faire reconnaître à la fois par la Chine et par le gouvernement tibétain l'exclusivité du protectorat *de facto* qu'elle avait instauré auparavant au Sikkim. La faction pro-tibétaine au Sikkim cessa d'exister ou du moins de s'opposer aux intérêts britanniques<sup>62</sup>.

Quelques auteurs ont remarqué l'importance du rôle des reines tibétaines dans les affaires du Royaume du Sikkim et celle des mariages

<sup>60</sup> Pour une description éclairante des effets de la politique britannique sur les relations entre la Chine et le Tibet et le statut de ce dernier, se reporter également aux ouvrages d'A. LAMB, P. R. RAO et A. K. S. SINGH.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. l'étude de cette confrontation tibéto-britannique d'après les sources tibétaines : H. STODDARD, « The “phi ling dmag zlog” of 1888. Tibet's first hands on confrontation with the West », *Proceedings of the 11th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, 27 août-2 septembre 2006, Bonn, à paraître.

<sup>62</sup> P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

dans les relations diplomatiques de ces trois pays<sup>63</sup>. Après le décès de la maharani PENDING en 1880, les Britanniques observaient déjà que tout le pouvoir de l'État reposait entre les mains de la reine agée MÖNKYI, qui favorisait le parti tibétain<sup>64</sup>. Certains ont considéré le mariage du maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL avec la noble tibétaine LHADING Yeshe drölma (1873-1910) en 1882 comme un tournant dans les relations politiques du Sikkim, du Tibet et de l'Inde britannique<sup>65</sup>, sans toutefois replacer ce mariage dans la continuité des autres alliances matrimoniales avec le Tibet. Cette maharani<sup>66</sup>, auteur principal de la *Chronique du Sikkim*, apparaît, aux yeux des Britanniques et des historiens, comme l'emblème de l'influence du Tibet au Sikkim<sup>67</sup>. Les propos de certains voyageurs et observateurs de l'époque le montrent bien. J. C. White, Officier politique britannique du Sikkim de 1888 à 1908, décrit le maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL comme « entièrement sous l'influence de la maharani, sa seconde épouse », la reine LHADING Yeshe drölma, qui était selon lui « une intrigante et diplomate née<sup>68</sup> ». Selon C. Bell, elle se chargeait de l'administration quotidienne du royaume – du moins la part qui leur était laissée par les Britanniques – et gardait même le sceau royal<sup>69</sup>. P. Landon précise quant à lui : “[...] she has long been a factor in our relations with Tibet which by no

<sup>63</sup> Alex McKay évoque cet aspect dans son article sur l'éducation du jeune kumar dans lequel il étudie les différents projets matrimoniaux du prince : « It also sheds an interesting light on the difficulties faced by the Himalayan aristocracy in finding suitable marriage partners, and the diplomatic considerations involved in these alliances. », cf. A. MCKAY, *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>64</sup> *Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim Bhutan and Tibet*, 1915, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.*, p. 68 et A. LAMB, *Op. cit.*, p. 142. En fait le couronnement du maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL en 1874 à Chumbi au lieu de Tumlong, auquel assistaient des fonctionnaires tibétains et l'amban mandchou, en était déjà le signe, cf. A. LAMB, *Op. cit.*, p. 142 et A. K. J. SINGH, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. document n°5. L'auteur de cette photo n'est pas précisé. Une photo différente mais prise au même moment par la même personne existe dans l'une des collections de l'India Office Records, la collection Wheeler (99/51). L'auteur n'est pas non plus spécifié, mais J. C. White est mentionné comme auteur supposé. Il pourrait donc être l'auteur de la photographie ici présentée.

<sup>67</sup> Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh déclare : « time was to show that she was the chief advocate of the Tibetan point of view in the counsels of the Darbar and was spirited in her defense of Sikkim's traditional suzerain », cf. A. K. J. SINGH, *Op. cit.*, p. 212. Cf. également A. LAMB, *Op. cit.*, p. 142 et P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>68</sup> J. C. WHITE, *Op. cit.*, p. 24-25 (ma traduction).

<sup>69</sup> C. BELL, *The People of Tibet*, Motilal Banarsi Dass Publishers, Delhi, 1992 [1928], p. 64-108, p. 161.

means could be disregarded<sup>70</sup>.” Son mariage avec le maharaja marquerait le début d'un déclin de l'influence britannique au Sikkim<sup>71</sup>. À la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> et au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les mariages de la famille royale du Sikkim avec les nobles Tibétains correspondaient pour les Britanniques à un enjeu de taille : par cette pratique, la dynastie régnante du Sikkim s'exprimait en leur défaveur<sup>72</sup>. Au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les Britanniques considéraient ces mariages comme une mauvaise habitude car ils restaient le signe que, selon les mots de J. C. White, le Sikkim se faisait une idée exagérée de l'importance du Tibet et de la Chine et, au contraire, une idée par trop réduite de celle de l'Inde britannique<sup>73</sup>. En effet, le statut social de cette maharani<sup>74</sup> qui, comme nous l'avons vu, appartient à une famille noble ayant compté parmi ses ancêtres un ministre ou *bka' blon*, est inédit dans l'histoire des relations matrimoniales du Sikkim et du Tibet et il n'est sans doute pas sans lien avec le rapprochement alors récent entre le gouvernement tibétain et le maharaja du Sikkim, après des décennies de froid causé par la présence britannique au Sikkim<sup>75</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> P. LANDON, *Lhasa: an account of the country and people of central Tibet and of the progress of the mission sent there by the English government in the year 1903-1904*, Hurst and Blackett, London, 1905, p. 364. Cf. également L. A. WADDELL, *Among the Himalayas*, Archibald Constable & Co., Westminster, 1899.

<sup>71</sup> P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>72</sup> Ils étaient très conscients d'une politique active de résistance à leur ingérence par ce que l'on pourrait appeler une « politique tibétaine » de la part du neuvième maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL : ils déclarent par exemple que le Raja souhaite que son fils aîné Tsodag (tib. gTso bdag) exilé au Tibet, hérite du trône, plutôt que son cadet Sidkyong *trülk*, car ce dernier, ayant été éduqué à Oxford, serait plus enclin à agir selon les vœux du gouvernement britannique, cf. *Weekly frontier confidential report for the week ending 4<sup>th</sup> January 1902. From E. H. B. Walsh, Esq., I. C. S., Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling, to The Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal*, L/P&S/7/142/P310, IOR, British Library, Londres et A. MCKAY, *Op. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> J. C. WHITE, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 82 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 208. Sans compter que, des trois familles retenues par le gouvernement tibétain pour fournir une épouse au maharaja, celle-ci était la moins prestigieuse, les deux autres étant les familles de *yab gzhis* YUTHOK et la famille de princes religieux LHAGYARI (tib. Lha rgya ri), souvent assimilés à des *sde dpon*. Je reviendrai sur ce mariage plus loin.

<sup>75</sup> J. C. White précise à propos de la maharani LHADING Yeshe drölma : « Her energies were unfortunately, but naturally, owing to her Tibetan origin, misdirected for many years, until, finding out her mistake, she frankly confessed she had been in the wrong, and turned her thoughts and attention to matters which should be lefted to the welfare of her husband's State. », cf. J. C. WHITE, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

L'importance de ces mariages est manifeste dans la façon dont ils furent pris en charge sur le plan matériel. Jusqu'à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, lorsque le Sikkim était encore un royaume vassal du Tibet, c'est le gouvernement tibétain qui les organisait et les finançait. Ainsi, après avoir reçu une demande écrite du septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja de se marier avec une Tibétaine, le gouvernement tibétain couvrit toutes les dépenses liées à son mariage avec les parentes du *pan chen bla ma* : « The Tibetan Government itself undertook to provide everything, in the way of costs of expenses for the proposed marriage etc., as well as of receiving and conveying the bridal party to Sikkim » (tib. *slong ster chang sa bsu len 'gan 'khur*)<sup>76</sup>. Puis, comme les unions successives manquèrent à produire l'héritier attendu, il s'en remit à nouveau au gouvernement tibétain, qui entreprit d'effectuer les rituels nécessaires et de dépêcher lettres et émissaires dans tous les monastères du Sikkim et du Tibet afin de trouver l'épouse adéquate, ce qui fut fait en la personne de la reine MÖNKYI, mère du *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL<sup>77</sup>. De même, en 1881, lorsque ce dernier se retrouva veuf, il adressa une pétition accompagnée de dons au gouvernement tibétain afin d'obtenir des terres supplémentaires au Tibet et la main d'une noble tibétaine. Le nom de plusieurs dames de haute naissance fut soumis à la divination de lamas et d'oracles, avant que ne soit choisie Yeshe drölma LHADING. La mère du maharaja et son fils Trinle NAMGYÄL, le demi-frère du maharaja, qu'elle avait eu avec le *phyag mdzod dKar po*, lui-même fils illégitime du septième raja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL, partirent alors à Lhasa pour quérir la future reine qu'il devait épouser en union polyandrique avec son demi-frère le roi<sup>78</sup>. Le gouvernement tibétain couvrit chacun de présents et décorations<sup>79</sup>. La version britannique présente l'affaire différemment : elle accuse la reine MÖNKYI et Trinle NAMGYÄL d'avoir manigancé toute l'affaire. Selon eux, Trinle et sa mère n'auraient été envoyés à Lhasa qu'en qualité d'émissaires, pour ramener une épouse au roi, mais ils auraient finalement profité de la situation. Ils auraient non seulement obtenu pour fiancée une fille de la famille LHADING, de rang inférieur à celui de la fiancée promise auparavant, qui appartenait à la famille de *yab gzhis* YUTHOK ; mais de surcroît, Trinle aurait vécu avec l'épouse de son frère, lui donnant deux enfants, avant de la lui rendre. Tout cela

<sup>76</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 56 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, Op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>77</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 57 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, Op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>78</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 82 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, Op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>79</sup> *History of Sikkim*, Op. cit., p. 83 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, Op. cit., p. 210.

dans le but de faire reconnaître Trinle comme héritier potentiel et légitime du trône<sup>80</sup>. Cependant, la lecture de deux autres sources prouve que Trinle était bien partie intégrante et officielle de ce contrat : d'une part, la *Chronique du Sikkim* et, d'autre part, le contrat de mariage de LHADING *lha lcām*, reproduit dans un ouvrage de grammaire de S. C. Das en 1915 et qui recommande à la jeune épouse de faire montre « d'amitié et de respect sans discrimination aux deux frères princes » (tib. *rgyal sras sku mched la'ang mdza' grogs kyi 'du shes ma bor ba'i bkur sti*)<sup>81</sup>.

Quelques années plus tard, à la suite du traité de 1890 et de la réaffirmation du protectorat britannique sur le Sikkim, le gouvernement britannique se trouva naturellement impliqué davantage dans ces alliances. En 1906, le neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL considérait qu'il allait de soi que la dot de sa fille Künsang wangmo, donnée en mariage au futur *khri chen* de Sa skyā, Ngawang lhündrup gyältsen<sup>82</sup>, devait être financée par les Britanniques, qui contrôlaient alors tous les revenus et dépenses du royaume. Il demanda à ce que cette dot représente l'équivalent de celle qui avait été accordée par le passé à une princesse royale, fille du septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL, donnée en mariage au noble de bKra shis lhun po nommé DARDING SHENTSANG. C. Bell transmit donc à ses supérieurs la lettre du maharaja qui précisait la composition de la dot, constituée principalement de parures, coiffes, bijoux et tissus, pour une valeur globale de 12 735 roupies. Il proposa une participation à hauteur de 3 500 roupies<sup>83</sup>, mais J. C. White, devant les difficultés rencontrées par le maharaja dans le remboursement des emprunts contractés pour financer le reste des dépenses, insista pour que le gouvernement

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim Bhutan and Tibet*, 1915, *Op. cit.*, p. 5 ; H. H. RISLEY (éd.), *Op. cit.*, p. 25 ; et P. LANDON, *Op. cit.*, p. 364.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. S. C. DAS, *An Introduction to the grammar of the Tibetan language*, Calcutta, 1915, Appendix II, 2-3 ; *gnyen yig*, *Tibetan marriage deed of the Maharani of Sikkim*. Ce document est brièvement évoqué par L. Petech dans le chapitre consacré à la famille LHADING, cf. L. PETECH, *Aristocracy and Government in Tibet*, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>82</sup> FD/ExtLA/Feb1907/107-113, National Archives of India, Delhi.

<sup>83</sup> *Confidential letter from C. A. Bell, Esq., Officiating Political Agent, Sikkim, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, dated Gangtok, the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1906*, FD/ExtLA/Feb1907/107-111, N°2810, National Archives of India, Delhi.

britannique finance la dot à hauteur de 10 000 roupies<sup>84</sup>. Quelques années plus tard, les Britanniques s'investirent activement dans le choix d'un parti pour le jeune kumar Sidkyong *sprul sku*<sup>85</sup>.

On peut noter que la politique matrimoniale du gouvernement tibétain en faveur du Sikkim s'inscrit dans le cadre plus large des relations diplomatiques du gouvernement du dGa' ldan pho brang avec ses principautés vassales et des stratégies permettant de les récompenser ou de s'assurer de leur fidélité. Ainsi, bien qu'observant en général une stricte endogamie de groupe, il arrivait à la noblesse tibétaine de conclure des alliances avec les chefs de royaumes voisins, comme le Bhoutan<sup>86</sup>, ou de principautés tibétaines semi-autonomes comme le royaume de sDe dge ou de sPo bo<sup>87</sup>. En fonction du statut de l'épouse accordée à ces principautés, il est possible de prendre la mesure de l'estime qui leur était portée. Ainsi, bien que le Sikkim fût considéré comme un village, la qualité des femmes tibétaines qui étaient données à sa dynastie régnante montre que celle-ci était tenue en haute estime<sup>88</sup>. La *Chronique du Sikkim* est à ce sujet très explicite lorsqu'elle commente le mariage du père fondateur de la lignée des rois du Sikkim avec une fille de Sa skya comme étant une preuve de la noblesse de cet illustre ancêtre. Il est dit à propos des hiérarques de Sa skya : « It is well known how high they regard themselves. The fact of their having given the hand of the lady shows that the suitor must have

<sup>84</sup> FD/ExtIA/Sept1907/108-109, National Archives of India, Delhi. Les Britanniques acceptent, bien qu'ils mettent en doute la paternité du maharaja sur la jeune fille, considérée comme la fille de la maharani et de Trinle NAMGYÄL, mais élevée au palais royal comme enfant légitime, cf. FD/ExtIA/Sept1907/107, National Archives of India, Delhi.

<sup>85</sup> A. MCKAY, *Op. cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Tsering Yangdzom TSARONG (tib. Tshe ring dbyangs 'dzoms Tsha rong), alias Tess, épouse en novembre 1942 Jigme DORJE (tib. 'Jigs med rDo rje), Premier ministre du Bhoutan, cf. *Yatung News Report for the Period ending 31st October 1942*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4208/P1456, British Library, Londres.

<sup>87</sup> À propos du roi de Derge, C. Bell écrit en 1906 : « The Gyal-po usually takes a wife from among the leading families of Lhasa, e.g., from those of Pa-lha, Ra-ka-shar, etc. His present wife is a member of the Ram-pa family of Lhasa. », cf. C. BELL, *Report on the government of Tibet*, Calcutta, Office of the superintendent of Government printing, 1906, p. 20, IOR/L/P&S/10/150, British Library, Londres.

<sup>88</sup> C. BELL, *The People of Tibet*, *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

been known to be of pure and noble stock<sup>89</sup>. » Au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ces considérations sont plus que jamais de mise, comme le montre l'épisode du roi de Powo dans les années 1920. Le gouvernement tibétain lui donna certes une épouse noble, mais de rang secondaire puisqu'il s'agissait de la sœur de TSARONG (tib. Tsha rong), un homme puissant, mais roturier fraîchement anobli<sup>90</sup>. C. Bell rapporte le commentaire du noble tibétain PHALA (tib. Pha lha) à ce propos : « ‘These rulers of Po often take a Lhasan lady to wife, but are unable to win a bride from the highest families, partly because their country is a long way off, but still more because it is rough and ignorant of law. Sikkim, on the contrary, though distant, is quiet and law-abiding. And so it comes that the rulers of Sikkim are able to marry into the noblest families in the land’<sup>91</sup> ».

En règle générale, l'un des grands avantages résultant d'un mariage princier entre deux pays est d'instaurer des liens familiaux susceptibles de servir de canaux de communication pour les négociations diplomatiques<sup>92</sup>, avantage que les Britanniques ne manquèrent pas de mettre à profit. Ainsi, en 1900, le gouvernement britannique, par l'intermédiaire de C. R. Marindin, Rajshahi Commissioner, demanda à la reine Yeshe drölma de faire pression auprès du gouvernement tibétain pour qu'il accepte d'ouvrir son territoire au commerce pour les Britanniques, en faisant valoir qu'il existait une coutume selon laquelle les reines jouaient le rôle de médiateurs (tib. *rgyal mo nas chings 'grigs byed srol yod lugs*)<sup>93</sup>. La reine obtempéra et envoya à son parent LHADING mda' dpon<sup>94</sup> une lettre pour sonder son opinion sur la question. Ce dernier transmit sa réponse au maharaja du Sikkim par l'intermédiaire de la famille TARING (tib. Phreng ring). Cette réponse, négative, fut considérablement retardée en raison de deux décès

<sup>89</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 10. La version tibétaine ne comporte pas ce commentaire, soit parce qu'il est uniquement le fait du traducteur, soit parce qu'il a été omis lors de l'impression.

<sup>90</sup> C. BELL, *Op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178. L'épisode est raconté en détail dans R. D. TARING, *Daughter of Tibet*, Wisdom Publications, London, 1986 [1970], p. 98.

<sup>92</sup> L. BÉLY, *Les relations internationales en Europe (XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, 1992, PUF, Paris, p. 345.

<sup>93</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 125 et 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs', *Op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>94</sup> LHADING mda' dpon est probablement rNam rgyal rdo rje, le père de la reine, mais l'identité de ce général reste incertaine, cf. L. PETECH, *Op. cit.*, p. 198.

frappant la famille royale du Sikkim à Taring au même moment<sup>95</sup> et les Britanniques n'obtinrent finalement gain de cause que grâce à l'expédition militaire de Younghusband en 1903-1904.

Il est intéressant de noter qu'après que le gouvernement mandchou en 1890, puis le gouvernement tibétain, à la suite de l'expédition Younghusband de 1904, aient finalement vraiment reconnu le protectorat britannique sur le Sikkim, le statut des épouses tibétaines des *chos rgyal*, choisies dans des familles de *sde dpon* et de *yab gzhis*, ne fit que se confirmer et s'améliorer. Le choix d'épouses tibétaines provenant de familles laïques de plus en plus prestigieuses et proches du gouvernement central du Tibet suivait probablement un but politique conscient, visant à faire contrepoids à l'ingérence britannique dans les affaires sikkimaises. Les épouses tibétaines des maharaja du Sikkim ont sans doute permis, par leur naissance et leur personnalité, dans ce contexte de domination britannique, rejetée puis acceptée, une certaine affirmation de l'identité Sikkimaise perçue par les *chos rgyal* comme partiellement mais fondamentalement tibétaine.

Du point de vue britannique, avec la nette amélioration des relations entre l'Inde britannique et le Tibet d'une part, et avec le Sikkim<sup>96</sup> d'autre part, ces mariages furent perçus comme un rite obligé qu'il fallait garder sous contrôle<sup>97</sup>, et même parfois comme un atout dans les relations entre le Sikkim – en tant que protectorat britannique – et le Tibet, ainsi que le montre leur attitude lors du mariage de la princesse Künsang wangmo avec le frère du hiérarque de Sa skya en 1906. Après avoir donné son accord à l'union et au financement de la dot, L. Dane, Secrétaire du gouvernement de l'Inde, ajoutait : « I see no objection and many advantages in present circumstances which are

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<sup>95</sup> *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 127 et *'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*, *Op. cit.*, p. 341-342.

<sup>96</sup> L'aide active apportée par la famille royale du Sikkim aux Britanniques pendant l'expédition Younghusband en 1904, est sans doute pour beaucoup dans ce rapprochement. D'après les auteurs de la *Chronique du Sikkim*, l'invitation de la famille royale du Sikkim par les Britanniques à Calcutta lors de la visite du Prince de Galles en 1905 a marqué la naissance de cette nouvelle amitié, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 291. Cette déclaration finale d'amitié pour les Britanniques et en particulier pour J. C. White dans cette chronique est bien le signe de la volonté de réconciliation de la famille royale avec les Britanniques et de la forte orientation politique de l'ouvrage tout entier.

<sup>97</sup> A. MCKAY, *Op. cit.*

very different from what they were 18 years ago<sup>98</sup>. » Par ailleurs, ce statut de plus en plus prestigieux des épouses tibétaines choisies pour les *chos rgyal* et les princes cadets est, du point de vue tibétain, le signe du renforcement, au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, du Sikkim à la fois comme État désormais séparé et surtout comme protectorat d'une grande puissance, l'Inde britannique, avec laquelle le Tibet doit s'assurer de bonnes relations.

*Le rôle clé de la famille Taring et de son réseau d'alliés : apprivoiser l'étranger*

Conséquence directe des événements politiques évoqués plus haut et suscités par l'évolution des relations entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et l'Inde britannique, un autre élément permet d'expliquer la relative augmentation du nombre d'alliances et en tout cas leur maintien au tournant du XIX<sup>e</sup> et du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, alors que l'obédience du Sikkim passe progressivement du Tibet à l'Inde britannique : c'est l'installation définitive sur le territoire tibétain de membres de la famille royale du Sikkim et le rôle d'intermédiaire qu'ils ont joué dans la formation de ces alliances matrimoniales.

La famille royale avait anciennement pris l'habitude de passer de longs mois sur les domaines que le gouvernement tibétain lui avait accordés, principalement dans la vallée de Chu 'bi où elle profitait du climat sec tibétain. Certains de ces domaines avaient été confisqués puis rendus à plusieurs reprises par le gouvernement tibétain. Les Britanniques interdirent le séjour de la cour du *chos rgyal* dans les frontières tibétaines, séjour qu'ils jugeaient peu propice au bon fonctionnement des affaires du royaume, mais surtout trop risqué pour leur contrôle et leur influence sur la famille royale. Pour cette raison, mais surtout en raison des relations qui unissaient les deux pays depuis plusieurs siècles, le Tibet, traditionnelle terre d'asile pour les *chos rgyal* du Sikkim lors des invasions bhoutanaise et népalaise, servit également de refuge devant la menace britannique pour l'un des plus ardents détracteurs de l'ingérence britannique au Sikkim, le ministre, appelé *dewan* ou *mgron gnyer* NAMGYÄL qui avait épousé Pema (tib.

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<sup>98</sup> *Telegram from the Political Officer in Sikkim, dated the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1906, FD/ExtLA/Feb1907/107-113, N°2468, National Archives of India, Delhi.*

Pad ma)<sup>99</sup>, fille illégitime du septième *chos rgyal* et maharaja. Il avait été exilé par les Britanniques en 1861 à la suite de l'incident survenu en 1849 avec les Dr. J. Hooker, un naturaliste et Campbell, surintendant de Darjeeling, incident dont il avait été tenu pour responsable<sup>100</sup>.

Puis, en 1888<sup>101</sup>, au plus fort de la crise décrite plus haut entre le Sikkim et les Britanniques, deux membres de la famille royale s'installèrent au Tibet, après que, s'étant enfui du Sikkim avec le maharaja, ils furent, contrairement à ce dernier, autorisés par les Britanniques à demeurer au Tibet<sup>102</sup>. Il s'agissait de Trinle NAMGYÄL, demi-frère du neuvième *chos rgyal* et maharaja Thutob NAMGYÄL, connu au Tibet sous le titre de *lha sras sku gzhogs* et de Tsodag NAMGYÄL (tib. gTso bdag rNam rgyal), fils aîné du même maharaja, connu à son arrivée au Tibet sous le titre *rgyal sras sku gzhogs*<sup>103</sup>.

L'accueil que réserva le gouvernement tibétain à ces Sikkimais exilés est encore le reflet de l'état des relations qui unissaient le gouvernement tibétain au Sikkim et un bon exemple des mesures qui permettaient habituellement, au même titre que la politique matrimoniale, de récompenser et de renforcer la fidélité des vassaux<sup>104</sup> :

<sup>99</sup> Nommée parfois Tsering Putri (tib. Tshe ring bu 'khrid), selon *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>100</sup> Les deux hommes, après avoir traversé la frontière du Sikkim avec le Tibet, avaient été reconduits à la frontière par des fonctionnaires tibétains, puis arrêtés et détenus par les fonctionnaires du maharaja, cf. P. R. RAO, *Op. cit.*, p. 27 ; A. LAMB, *Op. cit.*, p. 75 ; A. K. J. SINGH, *Op. cit.*, p. 184 ; et W. D. SHAKABPA, *Tibet. A Political History*, Potala Publications, New York, [1967] 1984, p. 196.

<sup>101</sup> IOR/L/P&S/7/196/2150, British Library, Londres ; P. CARRASCO, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1972 [1959], p. 130 ; et W. D. SHAKABPA, *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>102</sup> La version de la suite des événements diffère selon les sources. Les Britanniques, après avoir sommé en vain Tsodag NAMGYÄL (tib. gTso bdag rNam rgyal) de revenir au Sikkim et après l'avoir averti qu'il perdrat son droit sur le trône s'il ne revenait pas, ont reconnu en 1899 son frère cadet Sidkyong *trülku* comme héritier officiel, cf. *Chiefs and Leading Families in Sikkim Bhutan and Tibet*, 1915, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> Ces titres princiers, bien que servant à désigner ici, pour le premier, un petit-fils du raja Tsugphü NAMGYÄL par voie considérée comme illégitime et, pour le second, le fils aîné et légitime du raja Thutob NAMGYÄL, semblent être utilisés alternativement et indifféremment pour ces deux princes dans la *Chronique du Sikkim*, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>104</sup> C. Bell a noté que le gouvernement du Sikkim lui-même recourrait à ce procédé : « The History of Sikkim, referred to above, shows the importance of granting ceremonial rights to secure the allegiance of unwilling subjects. », C. BELL, *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

tous ces individus se virent attribuer des titres honorifiques, des charges au sein du gouvernement et des domaines. Le ministre banni du Sikkim par les Britanniques, dewan NAMGYÄL appelé aussi TRELING (tib. bKras gling) *sku gzhogs* fut nommé à un poste conférant le quatrième rang, celui de général (tib. *mda' dpon*) dans l'armée tibétaine et reçut le domaine dont il portait le nom, Treling<sup>105</sup>. Puis, l'hostilité dont son fils<sup>106</sup> fit preuve à l'encontre des Britanniques se trouva récompensée lors de l'expédition Younghusband. Le rapport du Capitaine O'Connor, Agent commercial britannique de rGyal rtse en août 1905, précise : « The Teling Depon has been decorated with the 3<sup>rd</sup> class button and given a seat along with the Shapes in the Council. He has also been made Chikyap of the Tsang army<sup>107</sup> ».

De même, Tsodag NAMGYÄL, premier membre installé au Tibet de la famille TARING et connu à partir de 1922 sous le nom de TARING raja (1877-1942)<sup>108</sup>, se vit accorder le quatrième rang (tib. *rim bzhi*) dans le gouvernement tibétain à l'automne 1922<sup>109</sup>. Il ne servait pas réellement le gouvernement – son fils Jigme sumtsen wangpo (tib. 'Jigs med sum btsan dbang po), né en 1912 le représentait à Lhasa<sup>110</sup> –, mais il participait aux cérémonies officielles du nouvel an à Lhasa<sup>111</sup>. Ses autres fils servaient aussi le gouvernement tibétain et, du fait de leur origine princière, leur famille était considérée dans les listes de nobles comme une famille de *mi drag*. C'est pourquoi le fils cadet, Gyürme rigdzin namgyäl (tib. 'Gyur med rig dzin rnam rgyal), né en 1925,

<sup>105</sup> 'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs, *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>106</sup> Un document d'archive se réfère à lui comme son petit-fils, cf. *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1908*, IOR/L/P&S/7/222/1878, British Library, Londres ; et un autre comme son fils, cf. *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1905*, IOR/L/P&S/7/180/P1465, British Library, Londres. Il lui succéda et il portait le même titre, TRELING *mda' dpon*. Il mourut en 1908, cf. *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1908*, IOR/L/P&S/7/222/1878, British Library, Londres.

<sup>107</sup> FD/SecE/Apr1908/988-1006/N1000, National Archives of India, Delhi. Il mourut en 1908, cf. *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1908*, IOR/L/P&S/7/222/1878, Indian Office Records, British Library, Londres.

<sup>108</sup> Le titre de Raja lui fut conféré par les Britanniques le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1922, cf. *Revised Who's who in Tibet*, 1944, FO/371/46121 (ex. F2195/1/10), National Archives, Londres, p. 41 et *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1923*, IOR/L/P&S/10/218/P2135, British Library, Londres.

<sup>109</sup> FO/371/9186 (ex. F62/15/10), National Archives, Londres

<sup>110</sup> *Revised Who's who in Tibet*, 1944, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>111</sup> R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

commença sa carrière de fonctionnaire laïc (tib. *drung 'khor*) avec le titre de *sras nang pa*, apanage des fils de familles *mi drag*<sup>112</sup>. Pour cette même raison, les membres de la famille TARING s'allierent, dès leur arrivée au Tibet, à des familles de la grande noblesse tibétaine : TARING raja épousa une femme de la famille DODE (tib. *mDo bde*)<sup>113</sup> ; ses fils épousèrent trois filles TSARONG<sup>114</sup> ; enfin, trois de ses quatre filles se marièrent dans les familles RAGASHAR, KYIBUG et NUMA (tib. *Nu ma*) – la quatrième étant devenue nonne<sup>115</sup>.

Au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans le contexte de l'apaisement des relations entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et les Britanniques, Trinle NAMGYÄL et Tsodag NAMGYÄL socialisaient intensément avec les représentants au Tibet de l'Inde britannique, postés dans l'Agence commerciale nouvellement installée à rGyal rtse<sup>116</sup>. Ils les recevaient avec faste dans leur domaine de Taring, non loin de rGyal rtse, domaine qui leur avait été donné par le gouvernement tibétain et par le nom duquel on se mit à

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<sup>112</sup> *Who's Who in Tibet, Corrected with a few subsequent additions up to 30th September 1948*, *Op. cit.*, p. 122. Il semble cependant que le fils aîné n'ait pas bénéficié de ce privilège, puisqu'on peut lire dans le *Who's Who* de 1937 : « Is an official of the 5th rank », cf. *Who's Who in Tibet, Corrected to the Autumn of 1937, with a few subsequent additions up to February 1938, Calcutta, Government of India Press, 1938*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4185A, British Library, Londres, p. 65.

<sup>113</sup> Sans doute Dode kyipa (tib. *mDo bde skyid pa*). Le statut de cette famille reste incertain. Bien qu'elle soit considérée comme une famille de *sger pa* dans plusieurs listes (pour la version longue du nom, cf. B. D. SREG SHING, *Op. cit.*, p. 184 ; pour la version courte, cf. D. Y. YUTHOK, *Op. cit.*, p. 309 et P. P. OF GREECE AND DENMARK, *The aristocracy of Central Tibet*, *Op. cit.*, p. 19) et qu'elle soit absente de l'étude de L. Petech, R. D. Taring écrit : « Dode family, which was considered to be the tallest in Tibet ; their estate was also in the district of Gyantse. », cf. R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>114</sup> R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.* ; *Who's Who in Tibet, Corrected with a few subsequent additions up to 30th September 1948*, *Op. cit.*, p. 121 ; Annotations manuscrites de Hugh Richardson sur le *Revised Who's who in Tibet*, 1944, MS.OR. Richardson 44, Oxford, p. 41 et 42 ; *Annual report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1934*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P3566, British Library, Londres.

<sup>115</sup> *Revised Who's who in Tibet*, 1944, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>116</sup> L'Agence commerciale britannique fut installée à rGyal rtse en octobre 1904, selon les dispositions prévues par la Convention de Lhasa. Deux autres agences étaient en même temps installées à Gartog (tib. *sGar thog*) et Yatung (tib. *Gro mo*), cf. A. MCKAY, *Tibet and the British Raj. The Frontier Cadre 1904-1947*, Curzon, Londres, 1997.

les désigner, signe de leur intégration à la noblesse tibétaine<sup>117</sup>. Les Britanniques leur rendaient des services : en juillet 1909 par exemple, Captain R. S. Kennedy, faisant fonction d'Agent commercial britannique à rGyal rtse, aida Trinle NAMGYÄL à se procurer de fausses dents<sup>118</sup> ; D. Macdonald, Agent commercial britannique de 1909 à 1924, aida Tsodag NAMGYÄL à récupérer certains domaines situés dans la vallée de Chumbi, qui avaient été confisqués en 1911 à la famille royale du Sikkim<sup>119</sup>. En échange de quoi les TARING fournissaient les Britanniques en informations<sup>120</sup>, au point de pouvoir craindre au début d'essuyer des représailles de la part du gouvernement tibétain<sup>121</sup>. La famille TARING, tout en s'intégrant progressivement à la noblesse tibétaine, resta intimement liée à la lignée royale du Sikkim : le gouvernement du Sikkim leur envoyait une subvention annuelle et des présents étaient échangés à l'occasion des fêtes qui rythmaient le calendrier tibétain<sup>122</sup> ; l'éducation de deux des fils de Tsodag NAMGYÄL, Jigme sumtsen wangpo et Gyürme rigdzin namgyäl, fut prise en charge par le gouvernement sikkimais<sup>123</sup>. Enfin, à l'occasion du mariage de Jigme sumtsen wangpo et de son frère cadet Chime dorje (tib. 'Chi med rdo rje), en 1930, le gouvernement sikkimais dépêcha un ministre avec une escorte militaire qui présenta les armes lors de la cérémonie<sup>124</sup>. Les liens de sociabilité entre les membres de la famille TARING et les représentants britanniques, inaugurés du temps de

<sup>117</sup> Première occurrence du titre « Tering kusho » (tib. Phreng ring sku gzhogs) en lieu et place de « Lhase kusho » (tib. lha sras sku gzhogs) dans le *Gyantse diary for the month of October 1910*, IOR/L/P&S/7/245/1742, British Library, Londres.

<sup>118</sup> *Gyantse diary for the month of July 1909*, IOR/L/P&S/7/230/1284, British Library, Londres.

<sup>119</sup> D. MACDONALD, *Twenty Years in Tibet*, Vintage Books, New Delhi, 1995 [1932], p. 59. Il en avait fait la demande dès avril 1911, cf. *Gyantse diary for the month of April 1911*, IOR/L/P&S/7/249/991, British Library, Londres.

<sup>120</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1914*, IOR/L/P&S/10/218/P2396, British Library, Londres.

<sup>121</sup> *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1907*, IOR/L/P&S/7/200/625, British Library, Londres. Il est intéressant de noter que les membres de la famille TARING n'apparaissent dans les *Who's Who* qu'à partir de 1935, ce qui marque l'intégration politique des fils de TARING raja.

<sup>122</sup> R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 106. Cette subvention de 1500 Rs par an, après qu'elle lui ait été retirée, fut renouvelée, à partir de l'automne 1935, cf. *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1936*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P4567, Library, Londres.

<sup>123</sup> R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Tsodag NAMGYÄL avec l'Agence commerciale britannique de rGyal rtse, ne firent que se consolider au long de la période. À partir de son entrée au gouvernement vers 1930, son fils Jigme sumtsen wangpo TARING devint un habitué de la Mission britannique temporaire puis permanente à Lhasa<sup>125</sup>.

La séparation géographique de la famille royale du Sikkim fut cause de nombreux voyages, à partir du moment où les gouvernements britannique et tibétain les y autorisèrent<sup>126</sup>. Les membres de la famille royale du Sikkim installés au Tibet rendirent fréquemment visite aux membres restés au Sikkim et vice-versa. Ainsi, TARING raja se rendit au Sikkim en 1909-1910<sup>127</sup>, ainsi qu'en 1916-1917<sup>128</sup>, en 1925<sup>129</sup>, en 1936<sup>130</sup> et en 1942<sup>131</sup>. De son coté, la maharani RAGASHAR Künsang

<sup>125</sup> Les occurrences, de 1905 à 1950, sont trop nombreuses pour être citées. À la suite de la Mission britannique envoyée à Lhasa en 1936, un représentant britannique fut posté à Lhasa jusqu'en 1950.

<sup>126</sup> Trinle avait été interdit d'entrée au Sikkim en 1890 et Tsodag à partir de février 1899. Lorsque le maharaja demanda qu'il lui soit autorisé de rendre visite aux cinq membres de la famille royale qui se trouvaient au Tibet en 1900, ou qu'eux-mêmes soient autorisés à lui rendre visite au Sikkim, les Britanniques lui opposèrent un refus catégorique, cf. *Letter of J. A. Bourdillon, Esq., CSI, Offg Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated Darjeeling, the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1900*, FD/ExtA/Aug1901/107-116/N°108, National Archives of India, Delhi. Mais, quelques années plus tard, les relations entre les Britanniques et le *chos rgyal* semblent avoir changé et c'est le gouvernement tibétain qui fit obstacle au voyage de Tsodag NAMGYÄL au Sikkim en février 1906, cf. *Gyantse diary for the week ending the 24th February 1906*, IOR/L/P&S/7/186/P712, British Library, Londres. Ces visites furent finalement autorisées à partir de 1909.

<sup>127</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Gyantse for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1911*, IOR/L/P&S /7/249/1151, British Library, Londres ; et *Memoranda on Native States in India, 1911*, Op. cit, p. 128.

<sup>128</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency at Yatung for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1917*, IOR/L/P&S/11/123/P2400, British Library, Londres ; et *Memoranda on Native States in India, 1935 (corrected up to the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1935)*, Published by authority, Government of India Press, New Delhi, 1936, 316 p., p. 222.

<sup>129</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency, Gyantse, Tibet for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1929*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P2080, British Library, Londres.

<sup>130</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agency, Gyantse, Tibet for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1937*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P4528, British Library, Londres.

<sup>131</sup> *Yatung News Report for the period ending 15<sup>th</sup> January 1943*, FO/371/35754 (ex F1370/40/10), National Archives, Londres ; *Annual Report of the British Trade Agent, Gyantse, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1943*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P3092, British Library, Londres.

dechen fit le voyage jusqu'à Lhasa en mai 1934<sup>132</sup>, puis à l'été 1943 avec sa fille Pema chökyi<sup>133</sup>. Elles s'y rendirent en pèlerinage et, comme le veut la coutume, en profitèrent pour s'enquérir d'une épouse potentielle pour le kumar Pälden döntrub<sup>134</sup>. La maharani était de nouveau à Lhasa, avec sa fille Sonam pälden (tib. bSod nams dpal ldan) jusqu'en décembre 1945<sup>135</sup>. De même, *dza sag RAGASHAR Phüntsog rabgye* (tib. Phun tshogs rab rgyas) vint passer quelques mois au Sikkim, à l'été 1942, en visite à sa sœur la maharani<sup>136</sup> et, en 1953, la maharani alla à Lhasa rendre sa visite à son frère *dzasa RAGASHAR* avec sa fille Trinle wangmo (tib. 'Phrin las dbang mo)<sup>137</sup>.

Les mariages fournissaient un prétexte bien légitime à ces voyages entre les deux pays. Une suite de Tibétains vint chercher la princesse Pema tsedeun, qui allait devenir PHÜNKANG *lha lcām* en 1941 pour aller célébrer son mariage à Lhasa<sup>138</sup>. De novembre 1944 à avril 1945, elle revint avec son mari en visite au Sikkim<sup>139</sup>. En 1950, la princesse Pema chökyi fut quant à elle mariée à Gangtok, après que son futur époux et sa suite l'y ait rejoints<sup>140</sup>. Tous ces voyages contribuaient à forger une meilleure connaissance mutuelle des deux pays et à augmenter les relations individuelles au sein de leurs élites respectives, autant d'éléments propres à favoriser la multiplication des alliances matrimoniales.

Le premier type d'alliances, à partir du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, avait permis la création de réseaux religieux qui ont perduré au fil des siècles et ont été renouvelés de diverses manières : soit par la reproduction d'anciennes

<sup>132</sup> *Annual Report on the British Trade Agent, Yatung, Tibet, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1935*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4166/P3676, British Library, Londres.

<sup>133</sup> *Lhasa letter for the week ending 11<sup>th</sup> July 1943*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4201, British Library, Londres.

<sup>134</sup> *Yatung news for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> May 1943*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4208/3652, British Library, Londres.

<sup>135</sup> *Gyantse News Report for the Period ending the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1946*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4208/P1433, British Library, Londres.

<sup>136</sup> *Annual Report of the British Trade Agent, Yatung, Tibet, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1943*, FO/371/35758 (ex F4805/40/10), National Archives, Londres.

<sup>137</sup> Entretien avec Rag kha shag 'Phrin las dbang mo, 22/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde.

<sup>138</sup> Entretien avec Phun khang Pad ma tshe sgron, 29/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde.

<sup>139</sup> *Annual Report of the British Trade Agent, Yatung, Tibet, for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1945*, FO/371/46122 (ex F3286/1/10), National Archives, Londres.

<sup>140</sup> Entretien avec sa fille g.Yu thog bSod nams sgrol dkar, 21/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde.

alliances, comme avec la lignée de Sa skya<sup>141</sup> ; soit par le système de réincarnation, pour la lignée de sMin grol gling, puisque le fils de Trinle NAMGYÄL et de la maharani LHADING Yeshe drölma, TARING *rin po che* (1886-1947) fut reconnu comme une réincarnation de sMin grol gling<sup>142</sup> ; soit simplement par des échanges de visite, comme pour la lignée des *pan chen bla ma* : en octobre 1905, en effet, le neuvième *pan chen bla ma* résida quelques jours à Gangtok et il fut accompagné par le maharaj kumar dans son voyage en Inde<sup>143</sup>.

Mais c'est entre 1870 et 1970, période pour laquelle nous disposons de la plus grande quantité d'informations concernant les alliances au sein de la noblesse du Tibet central et avec la famille royale du Sikkim, que l'on peut observer de la façon la plus manifeste la création d'un véritable réseau social forgé par les alliances matrimoniales. On trouve en son centre la famille royale du Sikkim et sa branche TARING, ainsi que les familles de deux maharani, les familles RAGASHAR et SAMDRU PHODRANG. Ces quatre familles ont échangé de façon réciproque des femmes dans la première moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>144</sup>. Étant donné que la famille royale du Sikkim et la famille TARING peuvent être considérées comme une seule et même famille, on peut parler d'échange restreint à peine différent. Les familles déjà alliées au groupe familial TARING/famille royale du Sikkim servaient d'intermédiaires pour la contraction d'autres unions parmi leurs alliés : aussi, en 1930, *bka' blon* RAGASHAR est-il témoin des mariages entre TSARONG Rinchen drölma (tib. Rin chen sgrol ma) et Changchub drölma (tib. Byang chub sgrol ma) d'un côté, et TARING Jigme sumtsen wangpo et Chime dorje de

<sup>141</sup> Il est intéressant de noter qu'en plus des trois alliances matrimoniales déjà mentionnées avec la famille des *khri chen* de Sa skya. Ce monastère fut également mis à contribution lors du dernier mariage du cinquième *chos rgyal* Phuntsog NAMGYÄL avec une dame KYIBUG, vers 1750, le hiérarque ayant présidé au choix de l'épouse par divination, cf. *History of Sikkim*, *Op. cit.*, p. 42 et *'Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>142</sup> Connu aussi sous le titre de *lha btsun rin po che* (titre donné aux descendants royaux qui prononçaient des vœux de renonciation), il vivait à Gangtok avant d'être expulsé du Sikkim en 1934 à la suite de troubles causés par la réclamation qu'il avait faite afin de s'approprier le domaine de Dobtra appartenant à la famille royale du Sikkim au Tibet et en réalité à TARING raja. Il passa le reste de ses jours au monastère de Lingbu, près de rGyal rtse, cf. *Revised Who's who in Tibet*, 1944, *Op. cit.*, p. 41 ; R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 126. Homme d'une grande érudition, il était très demandé par les familles nobles de Lhasa, cf. *Lhasa mission diary from 15<sup>th</sup> May to June 15<sup>th</sup>*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4193, British Library, Londres.

<sup>143</sup> *Memoranda on Native States in India*, 1911, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. document n°3.

l'autre<sup>145</sup>. De même, PHÜNKANG *zhabs pad*, essaie-t-il d'arranger en avril 1946 un mariage entre Sonam pälden, la fille cadette du onzième *chos rgyal* et maharaja du Sikkim Tashi NAMGYÄL et le fils du « roi » du Ladakh<sup>146</sup>. Autour de ces quatre familles gravite un nombre important d'autres familles, qui ont toutes au moins deux liens matrimoniaux avec la famille royale du Sikkim et/ou la famille TARING et une autre famille du groupe, ce qui forme un réseau de treize familles. Dans ce réseau, ce sont les familles YUTHOK et TSARONG qui présentent le degré de centralité le plus élevé, c'est-à-dire qui cumulent le maximum de liens, après le groupe familial TARING/famille royale du Sikkim<sup>147</sup>. La majorité de ce réseau d'échange en chaîne ou généralisé appartient, de façon très homogène, à la haute aristocratie tibétaine : sur les douze familles concernées, en faisant exception de la famille royale du Sikkim, dix sont des familles de *mi drag*, *yab gzhis* ou *sde dpon* et seulement deux des familles de *sger pa*.

Les sources britanniques, très prolixes en ce qui concerne la description des mondanités qui se déroulaient à la Mission britannique et chez les nobles tibétains, montrent bien la réalité de ce réseau. Ainsi, en février 1937 par exemple, la Mission britannique organise parmi d'autres une fête particulièrement réussie, avec cinéma et danses, à laquelle étaient conviés les TARING, TSARONG, DELEG RABDEN (tib. bDe legs rab brtan), RAGASHAR et KYIBUG. Ces familles étaient, comme on l'a vu, toutes liées à la famille royale du Sikkim ou à sa branche TARING<sup>148</sup>. Enfin, la multiplication des contacts par les voyages et l'élargissement du réseau d'alliances ont naturellement entraîné la multiplication des mariages et ce également avec des familles sikkimaises autres que la famille du *chos rgyal*<sup>149</sup>.

<sup>145</sup> R. D. TARING, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>146</sup> *Lhasa weekly letters of the British Mission for the week ending the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1946*, FO/371/53614 (ex. F9104/71/10), National Archives, Londres.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. document n°4. Par souci de cohérence dans l'étude de la création de ce réseau, 1870-1970, je n'ai pas pris en compte les mariages entre la famille royale du Sikkim et la famille Kyibug qui ont eu lieu avant 1870.

<sup>148</sup> *British Mission Diary, Part XIV 5<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February 1937*, IOR/L/P&S/12/4193, British Library, Londres.

<sup>149</sup> Par exemple entre un membre de la maison sikkimaise DEN SAPA (tib. gDan tshab pa) et la maison tibétaine MUJA (tib. Mu bya) arrangé par l'intermédiaire de la famille TARING, cf. Entretien avec rinpoche bKra shis gDan tshab pa, 27/09/2004, Gangtok, Inde.

Dans le contexte étudié, les alliances matrimoniales sont donc à la fois le baromètre et la pierre de touche des relations diplomatiques. Elles constituent un angle d'attaque fécond pour l'étude des relations entre le Sikkim et le Tibet du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XX<sup>e</sup> siècles et entre le Sikkim, le Tibet et l'Inde britannique à partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Ces mariages tibétains sont le reflet de la construction religieuse et politique du royaume Sikkim, de sa formation, au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, jusqu'à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Dans le processus de construction d'un bouddhisme d'État, les relations avec des hiérarques religieux tibétains (*Sa skyā khri chen*, *pan chen bla ma* et *sMin grol gling gter chen*) furent consolidées par des échanges matrimoniaux avec leurs filles ou sœurs. À partir de la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, ces alliances, qui concernent désormais de puissantes familles laïques liées au gouvernement central du Tibet, sont le signe de l'évolution du rapport de forces sur la scène politique de l'Himalaya : bien que fluctuants, les intérêts politiques des trois puissances en jeu vont se rencontrer à l'endroit de ces mariages, expliquant leur caractère de plus en plus laïc et prestigieux. Pour le Sikkim, les alliances matrimoniales contractées au Tibet favorisent le soutien du Tibet et permettent l'expression de son identité tibétaine dans le contexte de la lutte contre l'ingérence britannique ; pour les Tibétains, le Sikkim sous domination britannique est désormais un voisin et égal puissant dont il faut s'assurer l'alliance ; enfin, pour les Britanniques, ces alliances sont une voie supplémentaire d'accès à l'élite tibétaine. Il serait extrêmement intéressant d'approfondir cette étude par l'utilisation de sources littéraires et historiques tibétaines, qui permettraient d'informer davantage la première période, du XIII<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, sur laquelle, malheureusement, les données présentées sont encore très lacunaires. Une meilleure connaissance de l'histoire de ces relations matrimoniales anciennes apporterait sans doute un éclairage utile sur l'histoire de la construction religieuse du bouddhisme au Sikkim.

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**Document n°1. Les femmes tibétaines entrées par mariage dans la famille royale du Sikkim**  
nb : la mention « - » signifie que l'information est inconnue

<i>Chos rgyal</i>	Nom de l'épouse	Origine géographique	Lien administratif	Nombre de soeurs	Type de noblesse	Statut hiérarchique
Gyäbumsra XIII <sup>e</sup> siècle	-	Sa skya (fille du hiérarque)	Sa skya	1	religieuse	-
Mipönrab	-	Sa skya (fille du hiérarque)	Sa skya	1	religieuse	-
Tensung NAMGYÄL (2 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos rgyal</i> ) (1644-1700)	-	gTing skyes rdzong	-	1	laïque	-
Chagdor NAMGYÄL (3 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos rgyal</i> ) (1707-1734)	-	dBus	-	1	-	-
Gyürme NAMGYÄL (4 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos rgyal</i> ) (1733-1780)	Mingyür drohma	sMin grol gling (sœur du <i>gter chen</i> )	-	1	religieuse	-

Phuntsog NAMGYÄL (5 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos rgyal</i> ) (1769-1790/3)	Fille de Rabden sharpa KYBUG	- gTsang	- -	1 2	- laique	- <i>sger pa</i>
Tsugphü NAMGYÄL (7 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos rgyal</i> et maharaja) (1785-1863)	Lä mo <i>lha lcām</i> DINGJA	gZhis ka rtse (parentes du <i>pan chen bla ma</i> ) Rta nag ( <i>rdzong</i> de gZhis ka rtse)	bKra shis lhun po dGa' Idan pho brang	3 1	religieuse laique	- <i>sger pa</i>
MÖNKYI	-		dGa' Idan pho brang	1	laique	<i>sger pa</i>
Sisum NAMGYÄL (1821-1843): fils de Tsugphü NAMGYÄL	LUNGNAG SHEKAR	-	-	1	laique	-

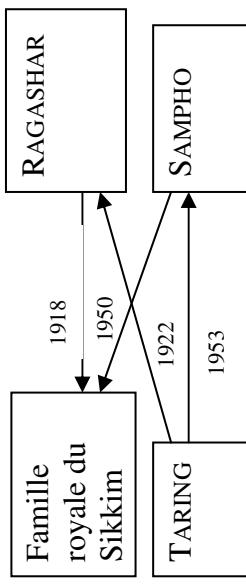
Sidkyong NAMGYÄL 8 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos</i> <i>rgyal</i> et maharaja (1819-1874)	PENDING	-	bKra shis lhun po	1	laique	-
Thutob NAMGYÄL 9 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos</i> <i>rgyal</i> et maharaja (1860-1914)	LHADING	dBUS	dGa' ldan pho brang	2	laique	<i>mi drag ?</i>
Sidkyong NAMGYÄL 10 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos</i> <i>rgyal</i> et maharaja (1879-1914)	LHADING Kelsang ?	dBUS ?	dGa' ldan pho brang ?	1 ?	laique ?	<i>mi drag ?</i>
Tashi NAMGYÄL 11 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos</i> <i>rgyal</i> et maharaja (1893-1963)	RAGASHAR/ DOKHAR Künsang dechen	dBUS	dGa' ldan pho brang	1	laique	<i>sde dpon</i>

Pälden döndrub NAMGYÄL 12 <sup>ème</sup> <i>chos</i> <i>rgyal</i> et maharaja (1923-1982)	SAMDRU PHODRANG Sangye dekyi	Lho kha	dGa' ldan pho brang	1	laique	<i>yab gzhis</i>
Jigdrel tsewang NAMGYÄL (né en 1928) : fils de Tashi NAMGYÄL	NAMSELING Sonam yangchen	Lho kha	dGa' ldan pho brang	1	laique	<i>mi drag</i>

**Document n°2. Les princesses de la famille royale du Sikkim données en mariage à des Tibétains**

<i>Chos rgyal</i>	Nom de la princesse	Nom de l'époux tibétain	Lien administratif	Type de noblesse	Statut hiérarchique
Tsugphü NAMGYÄL 7 <sup>ème</sup> maharaja (1785-1863)	inconnu (fille aînée)	DARDING SHENTSANG	bKra shis lhun po	laique	-
Thutob NAMGYÄL. 9 <sup>ème</sup> maharaja (1860-1914)	Künsang wangmo	Sa skyā <i>khri chen</i>	Sa skyā	religieuse	-
Tashi NAMGYÄL 11 <sup>ème</sup> maharaja (1893-1963)	Pema tsedun (Kuku lags)	PHÜNKANG Gompo tsering	dGa' ldan pho brang	laique	<i>yab gzhis</i>
	Pema chökyi (Ku lags)	YUTHOK Rigdzin tseten	dGa' ldan pho brang namgyäl	laique	<i>yab gzhis</i>

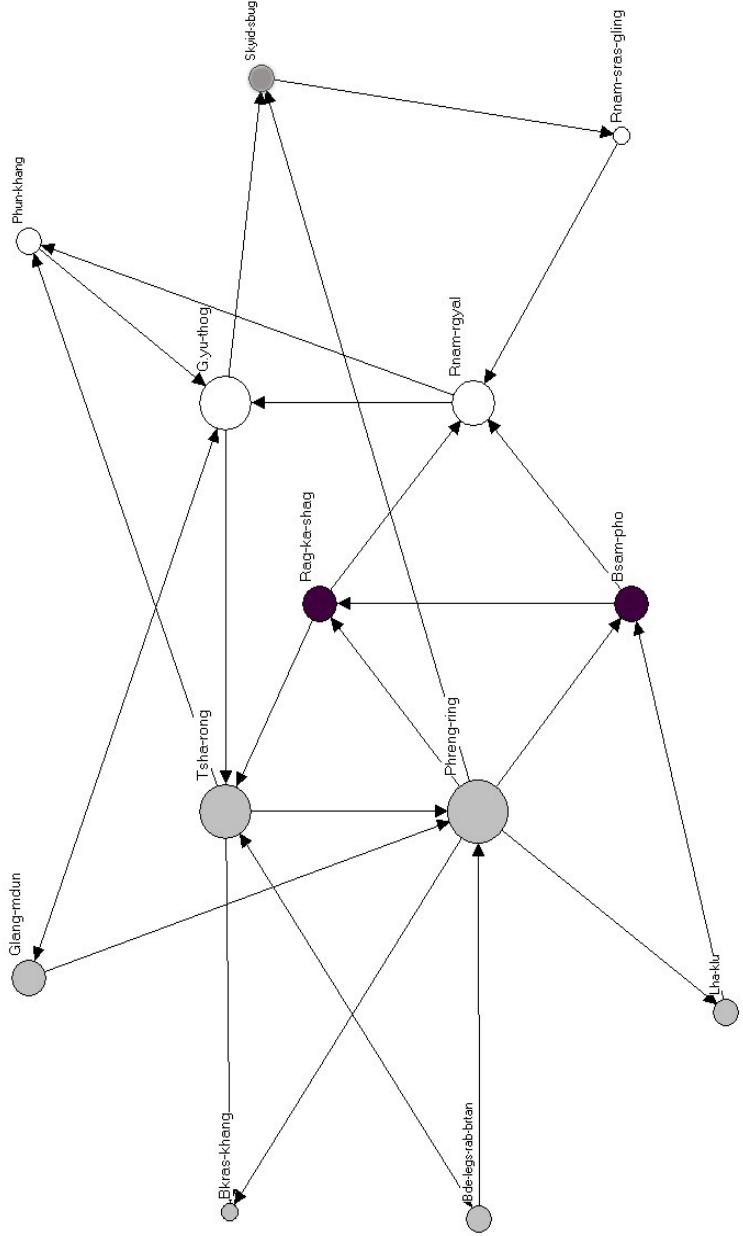
**Document n°3. Échange immédiat et restreint d'épouses entre la famille TARING et la famille royale du Sikkim (1918-1953)**



**Document n°4.**

- Famille entretenant au moins un lien matrimonial avec la famille royale du Sikkim NAMGYÄL (tib. rNam rgyal)
  - Famille entretenant au moins un lien matrimonial avec la famille TARING (tib. Phreng ring)
  - Famille entretenant des liens matrimoniaux à la fois avec les familles TARING et NAMGYÄL
- Nb : la taille des cercles dépend du nombre total de liens matrimoniaux que chaque famille entretient avec l'ensemble des familles du réseau (de 1 à 9).

**Document n°4. Réseau matrimonial tibétain de la famille TARING et de la famille royale du Sikkim**



KHANDRO RINPOCHE PEMA DECHEN (1923-2006)

TULKU THOGMED  
*Chorten Monastery, Gangtok*

English translation by  
Tenzin Samphel and Carl Yamamoto

*Om Svasti!*

*From the integral nature of the all-pervading primordial state,  
The Rupakaya of the uninterrupted unity of voidness and awareness,  
The mother of the spiritual activities of the lord of the three times,  
The widely manifested venerable Dakini—at her lotus feet, I do service.*

Lately, a number of people have been asking about the venerable Khandro Rinpoche and her spiritual activities. This obituary is a modest attempt at presenting some information about the late divine mother's spiritual life.

Khandro Rinpoche was born in Brula, in the province of Kongpo in Eastern Tibet, to the noble lawyer family of Dekyi Khangsar in the Water Female Pig year of the 15th 60-year cycle of the lunar calendar (1923). She was given the name Pema Dechen. From early childhood, she displayed noble signs of altruism such as mercy and compassion, together with an unshakable faith in Ogyen Rinpoche and the Vidhyadhara siddhas. Unlike the other children, when she played as a child, she would repeatedly assume the bare cross-legged posture and pretend to meditate, recite, make ritual offerings, etc., which awakened her divine predispositions.

Around the age of six, she learnt from her father the arts of reading, writing, and memorizing texts. During this period, she helped her family and successfully carried out similar worldly responsibilities.

At the age of 13, realizing that the answers to her prayers and aspirations had come, she became the consort of the great Dzogchen master Trulshik Rinpoche Pawo Dorjee (1897-1962) of Kham Minyak, Eastern Tibet. Since then, by means of the three ways of giving delight (respect, food, and meditative accomplishment) and long-term reliance, she received initiations, oral transmissions, and secret instructions of

the Nyingma transmission, treasure, and pure vision teachings from Trulshik Rinpoche, H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche (1904-1987), H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche (b. 1927), etc. In particular, she performed about 18 times the accumulation and purification of five hundred thousand preliminary practices of the profound ‘Ter-Sar’ teaching of the great treasure revealer Khragthung Dudjom Lingpa. It is believed that through the proper performance of the meditation practice based on the assembly of deities of guru, yidam, and dakini (the three ‘roots’ of Vajrayana practice: the guru being the root of blessings, the yidam the root of accomplishments, and the dakini the root of activities), she attained realization and experienced many signs of accomplishment.

Together with Trulshik Rinpoche, she traveled to various meditation places, hermitages, and mountain retreats in Tibet, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, etc., and practiced meditation—enduring heat, cold weather, and hardships, and relying only on scant food, clothing, and shelter—whereupon she had visions of tutelary deities and many miraculous dreams, reveries, and pure visions. Usually, as soon as she arrived at the place where she would spend the night, instead of relaxing, she would immediately begin doing a hundred prostrations, and only afterwards would she prepare her meals—which clearly shows her active engagement with spiritual activities.

While she was concentrating on meditation at the upper side of Kongpo forest, an ape approached her a few times carrying butter, tea, and meat to serve her. Thinking, ‘If I stay here any longer, only sins will result,’ she had to move somewhere else. The fact that even nonhuman local spirits wished to aid and venerate her is further evidence of her divine quality.

One day, while praying and circumambulating the nine-storey tower built by Milarepa at Lodrag Kharchu, the most holy place of Guru Rinpoche, she met a yogi with knee-length hair, wearing a meditation cord and white robe and holding a wooden bowl. As soon as she had completed another circuit, she looked closely at the same spot, but found that the yogi had disappeared. Wondering who it was, she asked the master, who replied, ‘Oh! You have met Milarepa in reality.’

On her pilgrimage to South India, at Sri Parvata, the place where Nagarjuna spent his last days, she saw a human corpse whose head was separated from its body. Later, when she recounted this to Lama Trulshik Rinpoche, he scolded her for being unaware that she had met with the real body of Arya Nagarjuna.

One day, during a pilgrimage to Nepal with her fellow pilgrims, she felt someone touch her from behind. When she turned around, she saw a young Indian girl carrying a human skull, begging. She gave her some money, but wondered 'Who could that have been?' Later, when she told H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche about it, she came to understand that Vajravarahi had appeared to her in the form of a beggar.

Another miraculous incident took place during her visit to the Stupa of Great Purity (where the Buddha had cut off his hair) in India, when three oranges suddenly fell from the sky into the palm of her hand. Extremely amazed, she took them and showed them to H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, who kept one and asked her to keep the remaining two oranges with her. Even after she had kept them for a very long time, they did not spoil or turn rotten.

She traveled with Trulshik Rinpoche to the sacred site in Mön Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) where Guru Rinpoche had engaged in meditation practices, and when they were individually doing meditation practice in that very place, she heard a loud cracking sound. Wondering what the sound could be, she looked up and saw the rock suddenly open up like a door. Fearing that if the boulder fell, it would land on her, she immediately ran out and asked the master, who replied by raising his thumb (which means 'good') and saying, 'Oh! What a pity, it could have been like this,' and then showing his little finger (which means 'not good') and saying, 'But it was like this.'

Then, during the Fire Male Dog year of the 16th 60-year cycle (1946), both of them traveled from Tingri (a district in western Tibet) to Gangtok via Chöten Nyima (county of Gampa district in western Tibet bordering Sikkim) and Lachung, North Sikkim. By the power of the karma of profound spiritual relationships in past lives, Chögyal Tashi Namgyal and Crown Prince Palden Thöndup Namgyal of Sikkim, through their unflagging faith, became royal patrons of Trulshik Rinpoche and honored Rinpoche as the chief of the ecclesiastical order. In particular, Trulshik Rinpoche and Khandrola, in accordance with the unsurpassable intention of the Chögyal and the Crown Prince, accepted principal responsibility for instructing the Chögyal on the construction of the present Dudul Chöten at Deorali, Gangtok, considering it to be a most fortunate sphere for the accumulation of merit and the purification of the obscurations of all beings.

Having thus fulfilled the wishes of the Chögyal, Rinpoche and Khandrola went to the hidden valley of Pema kod (southeastern district

of Tibet) and to Kongpo, where again the Crown Prince sent his messengers to invite them, but they could not come. Later, the Crown Prince went personally along with his attendant and convinced Rinpoche and Khandrola, who, agreeing to the invitation, came to Gangtok.

Later, during the Fire Female Bird year of the 16th 60-year cycle (1957), the Chögyal beseeched Rinpoche and Khandrola to stay permanently at Deorali Chöten. Initially, the old residence—presently in the front yard—was built. The Chögyal personally took the initiative for providing all of the facilities, such as monthly salaries, meals, clothing, servants, and firewood.

Considering the benefits for posterity, H.H. Trulshik Rinpoche eventually invited the master of Longchen Nyingthik (secret profound teachings) and the destined deity of our lifetime, Jigme Thupten Thrinle Palzang—popularly known as H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche—to the Chöten, where, at what is today his old residence, a grand ceremony was arranged and he was enthroned. H.H. Trulshik Rinpoche prayed that he stay at the Chöten and appealed to him to establish a centre of Buddhist learning. After instructing the Chögyal to give his royal patronage and honor to H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche as the chief of the ecclesiastical order, H.H. Trulshik Rinpoche, having attained the age of 66, passed away peacefully in 1962 (63?), accompanied by numerous miraculous signs.

By the power of the profound concern and inspiration, in the past, of the omniscient spiritual father and son (Longchen Rabjam and Jigme Lingpa), the 25 divinely emanated disciples of Padmasambhava, the Khenlob Chösum (Bodhisattva Shantarakshita, Padmasambhava, and Chögyal Trisong Deutsen, King of Tibet), etc., and especially by the power of the timely aspirational prayer, entrustment, and prophecy of Ogyen Maha Guru, H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche established the grand Nyingmapa religious institution of Dzogchen Longchen Nyingthik. Since then, the number of monks has increased and continues to grow every year.

In the meantime, Khandrola, for the benefit of sentient beings, applied herself to collecting the ‘three receptacles’ (statues, scriptures, and stupas) and the various other ritual instruments required for the monastery. Until her last days, she was actively involved as the chief patron for all of the auspicious religious observances such as Tshechu, Nyernga, the four great occasions of Lord Buddha, the summer retreat, and the great Dupchen of Phurpa Gudlug, which is usually performed

at the end of each year. Khandrola's abundant affection and kindness towards us all was immeasurable. She received with warmth and affection all of the devotees from outside who came to obtain the blessings of Rinpoche, and readily offered them all possible help and support such as food, accommodation, etc. Immensely delighted and satisfied by her utmost humbleness and affection, even the affluent devotees were attracted to her like swans to a lake.

She consistently put into practice the sublime 'Tersar Khandro Thugthik' teachings, which she received from H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche, without skipping a single day, and was appointed custodian of these teachings by the latter. Time and again, during her visualization, she was blessed with visions of Ogyen Rinpoche, tutelary deities, and protector deities, such as Masa Damsum and Nödzin Chiumar, who accompanied her and communicated to her good and bad prognostications. She then instructed the monk disciples to conduct a prayer for Rinpoche, even insisting that, if the prayer were performed by the entire monastery, there would be present and future benefit for everyone. It was in just this attitude of Khandrola that she surpassed the nature of ordinary people.

Thus, during the progress of all of her inner, outer, and secret spiritual activities, Khandrola willingly manifested as a consort in order to help H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche for the sake of the precious Buddha's teachings of doctrine and realization.

In the third lunar month of 2006, while relaxing in bed, she suddenly fell into a short sleep, and just before she awoke, she dreamt that there appeared before her a young girl, wearing a brilliantly ornamented headdress adorned with symbols of the five Dhyani Buddhas, who asked her age. Khandrola replied that she was 84, and the girl said, 'Now it is time for you to leave.' When Khandrola said that she did not wish to leave, the girl entreated Khandrola, saying, 'No, no, this year you have to go.' Later Khandrola narrated the whole incident to her close attendants.

Since the time she received the welcoming sign from the Dakini, Khandrola was bedridden due to an ailment that made it difficult for her to breathe—a misfortune for all sentient beings in general and for us, her disciples, in particular. Although her devout followers offered to take her to the hospital, she refused. 'I don't wish to go to the hospital,' she said. 'For whatever treatment is required, the physician should be summoned here.' There was never a trace of bad odor emanating from her body, even on the eve of her passing away. Surrounded by all of her

attendants, with a smile, she melodiously sang the following lines from the *Pema Kathang* text:

*Embracing the five Buddhakayas, the self-originated truth;  
By various skilful means, placing sentient beings in blissful rest;  
Thoroughly fulfilling the desires of trainable beings;  
To the Vajrakaya (the unchanging quality of the Buddha nature),  
which is beyond birth and death (i.e., Guru Rinpoche), I bow down.*

Finally, on the morning of the 12th day of the 7th month of the Fire Male Dog year of the 17th 60-year cycle of the lunar calendar (5th September 2006), Khandrola, in stages, held audiences with visitors, gave out blessed cords, blessed medicinal substances, and sanctified incense, and, with amusement, offered a silk scarf to each person, especially to the visiting patrons. Then, at 12.30 PM, her condition suddenly deteriorated and she passed away, absorbed into the sphere of eternal bliss.

At that time, Rinpoche and Lopön Kunzang Thegchok Yesi Dorje, along with other incarnate lamas, led a single gentle recitation of the *Tagdröl* (*Liberation through Wearing the Sacred Diagram*) text of the Longchen Nyingthik and the *Chöying Zöd* (*Treasury of Dharmadhatu*).

For seven days, her physical body remained in meditation. On the eighth day, when the sign of release from meditation appeared, substances such as camphor, various other medicines, and fragrant water were applied to the body, and the incarnate lamas and senior monks performed ablutions with water blessed through the recitation of the *Zhi Khro Ngan Jong* text of the Longchen Nyingthik. Sacred letters were applied to each sacred place of the body. Then the precious body was wrapped in white aromatic cotton and fine silk, ornamented like an Enjoyment Body of the Buddha, holding a vajra and a bell, and kept on the bed for 20 days. All of the necessary offering substances were arranged in front of the body. At that time, countless male and female devotees from all around visited to receive the last blessing. The devotees were extremely amazed and profound faith was aroused in them when they saw that, even in the summer heat, and without the aid of any medical preservatives, her body did not putrefy.

On the 25th day of September, under the aegis of the Government of Sikkim, a throng of male and female devotees took the mortal remains to Tashiding, the centre of this hidden land, in a grand funeral procession. On the 26th day, at ‘Silwatshal’, the holy cremation

ground, southwest of Tashiding, that had been blessed by Guru Rinpoche, in the midst of an assembly of more than 5,000 male and female devotees and patrons, the funeral rite based on the Dorsem Ngönga mandala ritual of the Longchen Nyingthik was led by Vajra master H.E. Yangthang Rinpoche, incarnation of Domang Terchen, and the ritual based on the Thug chen Dugngal Rangdrol mandala of the Longchen Nyingthik was led by Tsang Tingkey, H.E. Gönjang Rinpoche, at which time the cremation took place. Straight out of the chamber containing the mortal remains, a dome of rainbow lights issued forth into the sky, along with a cluster of rainbow-colored clouds, completely filling the sky, and finally various relics, etc., appeared, thus satisfying the three highest distinguishing features of the Great Perfection of the Nyingma school: the ground, the path, and the fruit (the *ground* is ascertainment of the view, the *path* is meditation practice, and the *fruit* is the attainment of enlightenment). The people who assembled there to participate in the last funeral rites were very amazed, and their faith of conviction was evidenced by the tears streaming from their eyes. Finally, for a period of 49 days, those disciples who had been left behind fulfilled their aspirations to make offerings and completed the ritual activities in full.

This account of the Late Khandrola was written by Tulku Thogmed—who was born as a caretaker for the exposition of the teachings of the omniscient spiritual father and son (Longchen Rabjam and Jigme Lingpa), and who lives under the compassionate gracious guru, H.E. the 4th Dodrupchen Rinpoche of Sangche Ngödrub Palbarling Chöten Monastery, at Gangtok—during the 5th month of the Fire Pig year of the 17th 60-year cycle (2007), on the 25th day, which is the day on which the auspicious occasion of the Assembly of Dakinis is commemorated.



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ELEANOR HOPKINSON (1905-2007)

ROGER CROSTON

Eleanor Hopkinson, who has died at the age of 101, was the widow of Arthur John Hopkinson, Indian Civil Service, the last British Political Officer and Resident in Sikkim. In her old age, she was impressive with the clarity and forcefulness of her recollections as the wife of a servant of the Raj, and a way of life that is now a matter of seemingly ancient history.

Eleanor Hopkinson was born in 1905 into a large extended Quaker family in Newcastle on Tyne. She recalled that, one day in 1926, her future father-in-law had sent his son Arthur (who was on leave from India) to call at her home “as my parents were known to have two eligible daughters! On his next leave two years later we married”. When asked if it had been a kind of arranged marriage because they could hardly have known each other, she laughingly replied “Oh, in a way yes, but he was a wonderful correspondent”.

In 1928, aged 22, she joined her husband in India, first in Kathiawar and later in the North West Frontier Province, which she found “to be part of Kipling’s India”. She recalled life there: “In winter, tribesmen came down from Afghanistan with their womenfolk and camels, going as far as Bengal. They were moneylenders who extracted their interest with ‘the big stick’ – literally. The men were tall, burley and much bigger than the small farmers – if they couldn’t pay, they beat them with a pole 8ft long as thick as my arm, bound with four brass rings. The British Indian Government tried to put a stop to it”.

With the threat of war looming she returned to England, living with her parents in the Lake District and, apart from two short spells of leave, separated from her husband. At the war’s end (a fourth child was born on VE day) she took the first possibility of a passage to India to rejoin her husband, by then Political Officer and Resident in Sikkim. “But I had an 18 month old baby and because I did not know what to expect there, my dear sister took charge of my four children and I went out alone.”

She found India had been badly disrupted by the war; however, the journey from the railhead at Siliguri up the Teesta Valley to Gangtok, surrounded by the Himalayan giants impressed her. "Sikkim was totally alien to my other experiences of India. My husband was supposed to be in charge of the Trade Route to Tibet but that was a bit of a pretence because really it was to control the high border passes and to check that law and order was kept. The British Indian Government regarded Tibet as an autonomous buffer between the great powers of Russia, China and India."

In Gangtok she found 'The Residency' – supposedly a private house – was always full of visitors. "They poured through – things had got out of hand. Both my husband and his predecessor had been posted there alone and wives were not usually allowed and so they liked a crush of people. Even the guidebooks stated that Europeans should travel with dinner jackets, as they would probably dine there. It had become a habit of people from Calcutta who had few wartime places to visit on leave. They wanted permits for Tibet – as far as Phari – so they could claim to have been there, yet the Tibetans didn't want them all, the country simply could not feed them." She put her foot down to bring the household in order again. "Our bedroom window looked out across the whole Kanchenjunga Range. The servants were marvellous unlike many in India where you heeded their demands. There, you were a servant of your servants – they saw to it that you managed according to what suited them!" The Residency garden was particularly beautiful with magnolia trees and rhododendrons. Many interesting plants had been collected and planted there by Lt. Col. Bailey in the 1920s.

As a means of daily transport, the Hopkinsons rode ponies, Mrs Hopkinson having been instructed, when they became engaged, to learn to ride although she never liked it, as she always feared falling off. A daily trek on tours of duty was 12 to 14 miles at a steady pace. At the behest of Whitehall in 1947, Arthur Hopkinson, accompanied by Eleanor, made a month's tour to the main Tibetan administrative centres – other than the capital, Lhasa – of Shigatse, Gyantse and Sakya, which were in contact with British India, to tell them "That the English were gone and thenceforth they were dealing with independent India." They went via north Sikkim where very few, and no Englishwoman, had ever travelled, rather than on the regular route over the Nathu La pass. In Tibet, they reached Khampha Dzong, then still an

intact and magnificent inhabited mediaeval castle, "You looked back at the Himalayas and many of the high snows were below you. The Tibetans reacted to our news with dismay as we were the only outside people they had known. In Tibet, dust got everywhere. It was blown about every afternoon by intense cold blasting winds, yet the houses were always warm because they were built around a sheltered courtyard which caught the intense sun." They took their own cook with them and carried many stores, especially tinned fruit for luncheons they had to give. "Fortunately all this was in the hands of Rai Bahadur Sonam Topden, my husband's second in command who knew all the protocol, having dedicated his life to the Raj in Sikkim and Tibet and having previously worked for Lt. Col. Bailey, Sir Basil Gould and Frederick Williamson. All was carried on 24 ponies assisted by three clerks. The Tibetans in return threw big parties. Their barley beer was awfully good – one good drink did you no harm, but you hadn't to indulge!"

Mrs Hopkinson bought many Tibetan souvenirs. "The Tibetans weren't stupid – they would sell off damaged things so as to buy new. For example, twice soldered worn out ornate copper teapots and highly decorative painted religious thangka banners, many of which were soot stained or whose original silk backings had turned to dust. Later, in England, some items I'd bought were examined by a museum and found to be incorrect. So what? That is how we bought them."

On earlier journeys, Mrs Hopkinson had had the then rare privilege of travelling to the Kingdom of Bhutan, east of Sikkim, as well as to Gyantse in Tibet. "From the Sikkim side you got your first glimpse of mount Chomohlari [23,997 feet] standing up in a great peak above the enormous Tibetan plain. It was extremely beautiful. On route to Yatung, there was a wonderful little temple known as the Kargyu Gongpa with some quite exceptionally beautiful images – the first bit of Buddhism you came to when dropping off the high passes. Years later, after the Chinese had annexed the country I saw a photograph of it – the whole place was a ruin. The Tibetans never thought the Chinese would come – who still insist they delivered Tibet from the darkness of medievalism – up to a point they did, but they destroyed so much, it was brutal, they wiped it flat."

While on tour, they carried with them a ciné projector and showed films to hosts and villagers. On such a tour to Namchi in 1947, they

presented films to an audience of 2000 people with their servants holding the screen to prevent it blowing down. It was a huge success and people did not get away until after eleven.

In 1947, the Hopkinsons travelled to Bhutan on the last official British mission to that country before Indian Independence when the second king of Bhutan, King Jigme Wangchuk, received the insignia of Knight Commander of the Star of India. The investiture took place in the valley of Ha in western Bhutan where the Hopkinsons travelled with Princes Palden Thondup and Jigdal Tsewang Namgyal of Sikkim, Rai Bahadur TD Densapa, Rai Bahadur Sonam Topden, Yap Tempo Namgyal Barfungpa and Rai Sahib Tseten Wangdi of the Political Office.

By the end of their posting, “Sikkim was regarded as an outpost on the fringe of Empire and received no recognition. Our friends in England erroneously thought we had been making a fortune and living really well, which was far from the case. We were simply doing our duty.” On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1948, Arthur Hopkinson handed over his post to his Indian successor. Mrs Hopkinson’s entry in her diary for that day reads as an epitaph for the British Raj, “Today we are no longer masters of The Residency.” The entry for September 3<sup>rd</sup> reads: “a difficult departure... It was very hard to say good-bye to all our good, old servants, so kind and willing, and friends like Sonam and Lobzang... We were loaded with garlands... the school children all turned out and nearly the whole bazaar and the Christian community. It was all rather harrowing especially for Arthur. Later we threw our enormous wads of garlands into the Tista.”

Arthur Hopkinson became an Anglican clergyman in Whitby and died in 1953. Eleanor Hopkinson then moved back to Northumberland, finding that her life with a young family was not easy. She became involved in the lecture circuit of the W.I. and later took to teaching them embroidery and needlework of which she had had a lifelong skill. In her final years, she moved to Welwyn Garden City to be near family. In her very nineties she was still a great raconteur with a phenomenal memory for detail both equally good from yesterday’s news – she took a great interest in current affairs – to her time in India and Tibet, though it was sometimes difficult to engage her in the latter which she tended to regard as “All just history from so long ago.” She is survived by her four children.

A.J. Hopkinson's Tibetan photos from his visits to Tibet in 1926 and 1945-8 are now kept by the British Museum as the Hopkinson Archive.



Eleanor Hopkinson returning from Bhutan in 1947

## CORRIGENDA

In *The Bulletin of Tibetology* Vol. 42 (1 and 2) in the article *Tibetan masters and the formation of the sacred site of Tashiding* some points were overlooked by the authors Mélanie Vandenhelsken and Hissey Wongchuk which were later discovered and discussed by all authors involved. The results of these discussions are the following corrections:

Page 76, fn 60 should begin with: *As Mullard has already mentioned (2005b, p.37, fn 18),*

Page 77, fn 61 should have included reference to Mullard 2005b, p. 39, fn 30, and fn 62 should have included reference to Mullard 2005a, p.76, fn 68.

Page 79, fn 76 should have mentioned that the transliteration given in that footnote and the translation (on the same page) had also been made by Saul Mullard.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

VEN. KHENPO L TSHERING is presently serving as Principal of the Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies (SIHNS), Gangtok. He obtained his Acharya degree from the SIHNS and was conferred his PhD degree by the International Nyingma Studies, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan. He is a keen innovator in the field of Nyingma Buddhist studies and a lama of Tashiding monastery.

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

MÉLANIE VANDENHELSKEN is a Doctor in anthropology from the University of Montpellier, France. Her dissertation is entitled: *The Buddhist Monastery of Pemayangtse in Sikkim (Oriental Himalayas, India): a Monastery in the World* (completed under the direction of Dr HDR Brigitte Steinmann). She is presently affiliated to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology where she directs the anthropological part of a project on Sikkimese monasticism. She has authored one previous article on Pemayangtse monastery in the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. 39 (1).

HISSEY WONGCHUK BHUTIA was born in 1981 in Chumpong, West Sikkim. He studied Buddhist Philosophy at the Institute for Higher Nyingma Studies in Gangtok and obtained his Acharya degree (M.A.) from the Institute of Sampurananda Sanskrit Visva Vidhyalaya, Varanasi. He works at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology as Research Assistant for the Sikkimese Monasticism project while simultaneously doing his PhD on the *History of Tashiding Monastery* at Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan.

ALICE TRAVERS (alicetravers@yahoo.fr) is a doctorate student in social history at the University of Paris X-Nanterre and at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Paris. Her research

concerns the aristocracy of central Tibet during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. She uses the prosopographical method (collective biography) and focuses on the matrimonial strategies and the careers of the lay officials of the Ganden Phodrang government.

TULKU THOGMED was born in Kurtod, Eastern Bhutan, in 1972. From the age of nine, he studied under the guidance of H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche at the Chorten Monastery in Deorali, Gangtok. He later received teachings from Lama Gyalwang Nyima, Khenpo Dazer, Lama Tsondru Senge, Khenpo Thubten Odzer and studied the Sutra and Tantra under his father Lopon Thegchok Yeshe Dorje. From his most revered root Guru H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche, he received the oral transmissions and treasure teachings and particularly the complete teachings on upper and lower Nyingthik. He is presently residing and engaged in religious activities at the Chorten Monastery.

CARL YAMAMOTO is a doctoral student at the University of Virginia. He is currently working on a dissertation on Lama Zhang, founder of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud pa order.

TENZIN SAMPHEL obtained his Bachelors degree from North Bengal University and his Shastri degree from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi. Also holding a Bachelors degree in Library and Information Sciences, he is presently working as Librarian at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology.

ROGER CROSTON is an independent researcher who, since 1996, has been tracing and interviewing the few westerners who were and are still living who witnessed the old Tibet before China annexed the country in 1950. He is especially interested in the British Mission to Tibet of 1936 and in August 2007 gathered most of the second generation of the mission members to a one day meeting at the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford. He is currently researching the Ernst Schaefer Expedition to Sikkim and Tibet of 1938-39. His particular interest is in old photographs of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet.