

# the early history of lo(mustang) and ngari

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"Surrounded on all sides by a garland of white rocky mountains, (and endowed) with perpetually flowing streams of cascading waters, clear and clean like a crystal orb, (such is) the palace of the King of Mustang."<sup>1</sup>

Thus did a Mustangi author, writing in 1535, describe his homeland, the capital of a small principality situated just south of the last ridge dividing the valleys of Nepal from the high, arid plains of Tibet. In the language of its natives, "Mustang" (smon thang) refers only to the small walled capital city of the larger territory of Lo (glo bo).<sup>2</sup> Lo's territory embraced all of the upper Kali Gandaki valley, from what is now called Baragaon up to the highest elevations in its watershed. The lands which Mustang's rulers controlled in the 15th century included all of Upper and Lower Lo (glo bo stod smad)<sup>3</sup> and Dolpo, while the adjoining areas such as Thak Khola and Manang were their tributaries. Set apart from those neighbours by a wall of mountains on three sides and a climatic boundary on the fourth, Lo's own borders are well defined. Its location makes it a strategic spot controlling what was once an important trans-Himalayan trade route, but the land's size, climate and terrain prevented it from supporting a population sufficient for permanent military domination of even the above mentioned areas. During low ebbs in its political history it sometimes lost control of all but Upper Lo. This was due to the encroachments of stronger states such as Gungthang, Jumla, Purang and Guge. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the present ruling line at the end of the 14th century Lo managed for centuries to maintain its status as a separate political entity. And when, at the end of the eighteenth century, Lo finally became a part of Gurkha Nepal, it continued to enjoy a great deal of autonomy, and its right to rule directly or demand tribute from its immediate neighbours was reasserted at that time by Bahadur Shah.<sup>4</sup>

## Ancient Ngari

Before its inclusion into a unified Nepal, the people of Lo considered their land to be a border region of Ngari, a general place name designating most of Western Tibet.<sup>5</sup> Ngari had not been an integral part of the early Tibetan kingdom, and it was not until 645 A.D. that its main area, a large expanse in the region of Mount Kailāsa which was then the independent kingdom of Zhang-shung, was brought under Tibet's sway. Although it was not long before the Zhang-zhung language and culture became replaced by those of Tibet, it and the surrounding areas retained the name Ngari (mnga' ris), meaning literally "sector under control" or "domain", which bears witness to its original status as a conquered land. In the minds

of Lo's native scholars, their land was included within the southern border of Ngari's easternmost region, "lower Ngari (mnga' ris smad),<sup>6</sup> which also included Gungthang to its east. But the general geographic designation "Ngari" did not denote any particular political alignment with the other kingdoms in Western Tibet.

The Chronicles of Ladakh (La dwags rgyal rabs) assert that Lo, together with Zhang-zhung, was part of the Tibetan King Srong-btsan-sgam-po's seventh century conquests in the western border-lands.<sup>7</sup> If true, this is the earliest event in Lo's history to which we can find reference. Considering the location of Lo roughly between Zhang-zhung (which included modern Guge) and Central Tibet, this conquest is not as far fetched as some which have been ascribed to that great king.

By the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, who was born some hundred years later in the year 742 A.D., the annexation of Ngari into Tibet was becoming complete. It is the period of his reign (enthroned in the year 755 or 756) to which the first of Lo's local legends refers. That was the time when the great saint Padmasambhava visited Tibet, and according to legend, journeyed to Lo, subdued a demoness there, and blessed several places which are now revered as holy spots.<sup>8</sup> There is nothing extraordinary about that legend in itself because as a legendary figure Padmasambhava was truly ubiquitous. Similar legends exist about countless other places in Tibet. Yet evidence supports that as a historical figure Padmasambhava visited Tibet in the last half of the eighth century, participating in the founding of Tibet's first monastery, Samye (bsam yas) (c-775). He is said to have been invited to Tibet from Nepal, and no doubt he came by way of Mangyul Gungthang.<sup>9</sup> Hence it is not unthinkable that from there he visited nearby Lo, as some literary sources also claim, he did.<sup>10</sup> We will shortly examine another piece of evidence which supports that such a visit was more than mere legend.

#### Buddhist Renaissance in Ngari

Tibet as a political power was already waning by 842 A.D., the year of Langdarma's assassination. After Langdarma's death and the ensuing collapse of the central power structure, the once great dominion became broken up into many small, independent principalities. Central Tibet was hardest hit by the following dark age. But in Ngari, particularly in Guge and Purang, the political fragmentation and the decline of Buddhism were not so long-lived. It was in Ngari that the embers of Buddhism were rekindled and, less than two centuries after the anti-Buddhist persecution by Langdarma, were carried back to Central Tibet.

The ancient royal line of Tibet had not died out after Langdarma, but had become fractured into many branches, each controlling a small principality. One side of the family, that descended from Langdarma's legitimate son 'Od-srung, came to control parts of Western Tibet.<sup>11</sup> One of the kings of this line, Bkra-shis-mgon, who flourished in the mid-tenth century, succeeded in uniting most of Ngari under his control. A fifteenth century historical work states that Lo and Dolpo were among the lands that he ruled.<sup>12</sup> Bkra-shis-mgon is remembered for having restored some of the glory to the old royal line that once ruled a large part of Asia. But even more than him, it is his descendants Lha-bla-ma Ye-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od who are lauded in Tibetan religious histories (chos 'byung) for their efforts taken to restore Buddhism in Tibet.

During the time of Ye-shes-'od and Byang-chub-'od, the Qarluq Turks were contributing to the increasing political instability of Ngari.<sup>13</sup> Ye-shes-'od, the king of Guge, was captured by the Qarlucs, and the ransom for his release was to be his weight in gold. The king was old, and when the gold brought to ransom him fell short by an amount equalling the weight of his head, he convinced his nephew.<sup>14</sup> Byang-chub-'od, the prince of Purang, to abandon him and use the gold instead to invite from India one of the foremost Buddhist luminaries of the time. The religious teacher whom Byang-chub-'od succeeded in bringing was the peerless sage, Atisa (980-1054). He arrived in the year 1042, and for three years stayed in Guge and Purang. Then on his way back to India via Mangyul, he was prevented from proceeding past Kyirong by a border disturbance. After remaining there for some time, he continued on to Central Tibet where he taught until he passed away nine years later. His teachings greatly influenced the later course of Tibet's religious history. One of Atisa's major disciples was a native of Lo named Ston-pa Yang-rab.<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of this revitalization of Buddhism the main parts were played by Indian pandits and their Tibetan translators. Because of Ngari's geographical proximity to India and in particular to Kashmir, and owing to the favorable circumstances afforded there by the local rulers' active patronage, it became an early center of translation activities. The first translator of the New Translation Period was Atisa's older contemporary Rin-chen-bzang-po (958-1055) who was a native of Upper Ngari. He distinguished himself by going to Kashmir and India where he mastered Sanskrit and the specialized teachings of Tantra, and then returning to his homeland as a prolific translator and the founder of many temples.

The tremendous upsurge in religious activity was not limited to just Indian masters and Tibetan translators, for during this same period another remarkable figure, the first of his kind, was beginning his career in Lo. Since the first great spread of Buddhism in Tibet in the time of Padmasambhava, certain teachings of the Old Translation Period known as bka' ma had been kept alive in an unbroken transmission from master to disciple. Now, contemporaneous with translators such as Rin-chen-bzang-po, who were forging

new links with the living traditions of India, some followers of the older tradition were trying to find fresh connections with Padmasambhava and the golden age of his teachings. This was done by "treasure revealers" who claimed to have the ability to find hidden texts (gter ma). Such texts were said to have been concealed in special places by Padmasambhava himself, who intended that they be found there when the time was ripe for them. The first treasure finder was Sangs-rgyas-bla-ma,<sup>16</sup> and his first discoveries were made in Lo, in and around the monastery of Lo Gekar.<sup>17</sup> It is easy to be sceptical about such texts' authenticity. But some of them may have been genuine ancient documents if their description as being scrolls of yellow paper is accurate, for that matches the appearance of the trove of eighth and ninth century texts uncovered by western scholars at Tunhuang.<sup>18</sup> The fact that the first discovery of such texts was attributed to a place in Lo may be historically significant, whether they were authentic discoveries or not. Should they have been genuine texts, of course, they would be definite proof of a visit there by Padmasambhava. But even if they were spurious, one can still surmise that at the time of their "discovery" there must have existed a strong tradition relating to the activities of Padmasambhava there, perhaps only two centuries previously, a tradition which would lend seeming veracity to the "finds".<sup>19</sup>

#### Ngari in the Early Medieval Period

During the twelfth century a new political order emerged in Ngari. The old dynasty of Guge which descended from Bkra-shis-mgon came to an end, and they were replaced by the dynasty of the Western Mallas. This new line of kings was founded by one named Nāgarāja (or in Tibetan sources, Nāgadeva) of the Khasa tribe, an ancient Indo-Aryan people who inhabited what is now Western Nepal. The Tibetan chronicles portray their dynasty as being an extension of the Guge royalty whose line they replaced.<sup>20</sup> However, the work of modern scholars, notably that of Prof. Tucci, has brought to light much data refuting that.<sup>21</sup> The Western Malla kings seem to have become Tibetanized, and the first four generations of rulers following their founder were known by Tibetan names. And even after this practice was discontinued, they continued to patronize Tibetan Buddhism. Btsan-phyug-lde, the son of the founder, "went to Yatshe" (ya tsher byon).<sup>22</sup> This can be interpreted to mean that he moved his capital to Yatshe which is thought to be identical with Simja near modern Jumla. This dynasty and the ones succeeding it which ruled from Jumla almost continuously played a powerful role in Ngari until both Lo and Jumla entered the modern era at the end of the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile, in the far west of Ngari another princely line which was descended from Bkra-shis-mgon's older brother, Dpal-gyi-mgon,<sup>23</sup> was building a strong base of power in Ladakh. Around the beginning of the twelfth century one of these kings, Lha-chen Utpal, conquered Lo and all the territory between it and Purang. To the

south this conquest extended at least as far as Muktinath (chu la me 'bar).<sup>24</sup> Finally, toward the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth centuries, the power of yet another kingdom was rising at Dzongka in Gungthang to the west. In that place there ruled another line of kings, this one descended from Bkra-shis-brtsegs-paldal, the uncle of Bkra-shis-mgon. The Gungthang Chronicles (GGR) record that the power of these kings waxed great at this time during the reign of Lha-mchog-lde and his brothers, a period which coincided with the life of Milarepa (1040-1123).<sup>25</sup>

On the basis of a few scattered references it is risky to set forth a specific account of Ngari's politics in this period. This is because there exists "a great gap in contemporary literary evidence between the ninth and thirteenth-fourteenth centuries,"<sup>26</sup> which probably more than anything else accounts for why "the period from 900 to 1200 has been neglected by scholars."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the general cultural trends of the time can be seen. Indian pandits and Tibetan translators continued to be important. Monasteries, as great and powerful centers of ordained monks, did not yet exist in Tibet. In fact, very few of the recipients of those fresh impulses of Indian Buddhism were monks. Like many of their Indian predecessors, the new Tibetan masters of Vajrayana, then the prevalent form of Buddhism, often either outwardly kept up the family life of a householder or else completely abandoned ordinary existence and devoted themselves to meditation in remote caves and hermitages. Marpa the Translator (1012-1096) is a famous example of the first type, while his disciple the great saint Milarepa epitomizes the second.<sup>28</sup> Eventually, temples sprang up on the sites where particularly charismatic masters had been active. When a great teacher was followed by able disciples, patterns of local patronage became established. Noble families became allied with or identified with religious lineages. In cases of noble families whose members displayed unusual aptitude for religion, when a noted teacher from the family was succeeded by an outstanding son or nephew a kind of religious aristocracy with increasing inherited prestige came into being. The 'Khon family of Sakya (sa skya) had such origins. Sakya monastery was founded in 1073 by 'Khon Dkon'mchog-rgyal-po (1034-1102), but its main teaching lines came to Sakya through his son, Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po (1092-1158). These teachings appear to have reached Lo very quickly because one of Sa-chen's disciples is said to have stayed in Lo.<sup>29</sup>

The last half of the twelfth century saw the establishment of four great Kargyu (bka' brgyud) monasteries in Tibet. With this the age of monastic politics began rapidly to unfold. Mount Kailāsa exerted a strong pull on many Kargyu monks and yogins, and in the footsteps of Milarepa who was their spiritual forefather they journeyed there in considerable numbers. In particular, the founder of Drigung ('bri gung) monastery, 'Jig-rten-mgon-po (1143-1217), in 1181 had a vision directing him to send monks to three holy spots,<sup>30</sup> one of which was Kailāsa. This ultimately led to a great

penetration of Drigung influence into Ngari during the thirteenth centuries. They were particularly successful in the Himalayan regions under the control of the Yatshe kings, but they were also strong elsewhere. A nineteenth century Drigung hierarchy writes that in the time of Goung Rin-po-che (Rdo-rje-grags-pa, 1210-1278) the temple at Muktināth (glo chu mig brgy rtsa) in Lower Lo was a branch monastery of Rgyang-grags at Kailasa, itself a branch monastery of Drigung.<sup>31</sup> He also claims that the temple of Kojarnāth at Purang was formerly Drigungpa, but his account of its later conversion to a Sakyapa establishment is confused.<sup>32</sup>

Early in the thirteenth century the great Kashmiri pandit Sākyasri (1127-1225), in the later spread of Buddhism perhaps second in importance only to Atisa, visited Tibet and established at Sakya the custom of full monastic ordination. Circa 1212 on his way back to Kashmir he passed through Lo.<sup>33</sup> In Lo he is recorded to have returned much gold to his Tibetan follower Khro-phu Lo-tsa-ba, lest it be lost to brigands as he continued on his westward journey. This indicates that an unstable condition existed west of there, but that it was relatively safe to travel from Tsang (gtsang) through Gungthang up to Lo.

#### Gungthang Linked with Sakya and the Mongols

As far as the kingdom of Gungthang was concerned, danger in the west was increasing. In that direction the powerful kingdom of Yatshe was threatening. In the reign of the Gungthang king Dgon-po-lde (c. 1235?) a war broke out between Gungthang and Yatshe. Gungthang was worsted, and its king fled to Kyirong where he ultimately was killed. Yatshe's position of predominance in Ngari probably would have remained unchallenged was it not for the following turn of events. One of the unfortunate king's three sisters probably sometime before the war broke out had been sent to Sakya to become the third consort of Zangs-tsha Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan (1184-1239),<sup>34</sup> the grandson of Sa-chen Kun-dga'-snying-po. It is doubtful that anyone in those times could have foreseen the Sakya 'Khon family's phenomenal rise to power which occurred through their contact with the Mongols. Repercussions from the Mongol expansion in Central Asia had been felt by Tibetans from afar since the early thirteenth century. Suddenly, in 1240 the Mongol forces of Köden threatened Tibet directly. Zangs-tsha's brother, Sakya Pandita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182-1251), the most respected Buddhist leader of the time, was chosen to negotiate with them. He ultimately became the official Mongol representative for Tibet. Meanwhile, Zangs-tsha's union with the Gungthang princess resulted in two daughters but no sons. One of these daughters was sent back to wed the then reigning Gungthang king, her first-cousin, Btsunpa-lde.<sup>35</sup> About this same time (c. 1252?), as a result of help from their then powerful Sakya 'Khon relatives, an army was sent to extract revenge from Yatshe. This was accomplished at great cost in human lives to Yatshe. Thus occurred the sudden recovery of the Gungthang kings from their previous catastrophe.

Their lot was now firmly linked with that of the Sakya rulers, and hence ultimately to the Mongols. But still greater things lay ahead. The initial success of Sakya Pandita in Köden's court had been aided by the presence of his bright young nephew, 'Phags-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan (1235-1280). This precocious youth went on to win great favor in the courts of other Mongol leaders, and finally received the hereditary donation of Tibet from the great khan, Khubilai, and also received from him the title of "Imperial Preceptor". This meant that the Gungthang queen was half-brother of the king of Tibet, and is the most probable reason for Gungthang's becoming the administrative center for Ngari during the Mongol period.<sup>36</sup>

The next king in the Gungthang royal line was 'Bum-lde-mgon (1253-1280). His reign, although brief, marked a high point in this dynasty. The name of the Tibetan ruler 'Phags-pa is often mentioned in connection with this king. For example, when the king was born, 'Phags-pa was said to be nineteen (=18) years old, in the king's eighth year (= age 7) it mentions that 'Phags-pa became king, and in 1277, at the completion of a great religious monument in Gungthang by 'Bum-lde-mgon, 'Phags-pa is recorded to have come there and dedicated it.<sup>37</sup> One can reasonably presume that this king's political power derived in great part from his association with 'Phags-pa. As evidence of the great power of Gungthang during his reign, the Gungthan kings' chronicler, Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin Tshedbang-nor-bu (1698-1755), quotes a list of more than a dozen forts which 'Bum-lde-mgon founded. These included forts in Upper, Middle and Lower Lo, Dolpo, Manang, Guge-Purang, La-stod Byang and Lho, Nubri, and Kyirong.<sup>38</sup> Gungthan's paramountcy in Ngari was also directly confirmed by the Mongols. One of 'Bum-lde-mgon's two sons was invited to the Mongol court, and it was there that he died after completing the journey. The king's other son, by a different mother, was named Khri-lde-'bum (b. 1268). He also journeyed to China to the court of the Mongol emperor, and when he became king his rule over the thirteen sections (tsho)<sup>39</sup> of Ngari was sanctioned by the Mongols. In particular, in the year 1307 he received an official seal or patent from the Mongol rulers.

Contemporaneous with Gungthang's rise in power was the career of the Translator of Lo, Glo-bo Lo-tsa-ba Shes-rab-rin-chen (fl. mid-13th century).<sup>40</sup> This learned master of Vajrayana Buddhism, working together with pandits from Yatshe or Jumla,<sup>41</sup> and probably elsewhere translated a considerable number of Sanskrit texts into Tibetan language, many of which found their way into future redactions of the Tanjur (bstan 'gyur).<sup>42</sup> His special contributions were in the translation and transmission of the Red Yamāntaka (gshin rje gshed dmar po) cycle of tantric precepts which descended through Virūpa,<sup>43</sup> and in his translation of the Svarodaya Tantra, the basis for the g.yul rgyal system of astrology.<sup>44</sup> Besides those major accomplishments, he also achieved great preeminence unparalleled by any native of Lo up to that time through his becoming the religious preceptor of 'Phags-pa, the ruler of Tibet. Previous to his

imparting teachings to 'Phags-pa, Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba had already been associated with 'Phags-pa's uncle, Sakya Pandita. The traditional lists of Sakya Pandita's disciples included his name.<sup>45</sup> Also, Sakya Pandita's reply to a query by Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba can be found among the collected writings of Sakya Pandita.<sup>46</sup> Judging by the respectful form of address used by Sakya Pandita in that letter, Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba was already one of the day's most highly respected ecclesiasts. Later, some fifteen years after Sakya Pandita passed away, 'Phags-pa showed Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba a token of highest regard by requesting from him various tantric teachings including the transmission of the Red Yamāntaka cycle.<sup>47</sup> Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba's answer to one of 'Phags-pa's questions survived in Tibet until later times,<sup>48</sup> although the question itself was not included among 'Phags-pa's collected works.

#### Decline of Sakya and Gungthang, and the Second Peak in Western Malla Rule

The last period which led up to the establishment of Lo's ruling family was a time of decline for the power and prestige of the Sakya hierophants. The consequences of this were felt throughout Ngari, and especially in Gungthang. Although the Gungthang rulers received direct recognition from the Mongols, no doubt a great deal of their authority derived from their close relationship with the Sakya 'Khon family. The king Khri-lde-'bum (b. 1268) had married the daughter of the Sakya hierarch, Bzang-po-dpal (1262-1324), who was named Kun-dga'-'bum. She was the daughter of Bzang-po-dpal's fifth main wife, and was sent to Gungthang when quite young. Two children resulted from the union of Khri-lde-'bum and Kun-dga'-'bum. One was the prince whom the Sakya sources name Bzang-po-lde<sup>49</sup> but who would seem to be identical with Chos-skyong-lde (d. 1352), as Khri-lde-'bum's son and successor is called in the Gungthang Chronicles. The second child was the daughter Kun-skyong-rgyal-mo. She was given in marriage to Dbang Kun-dga'-legs-pa'i-'byung-gnas (1308-1336) who was the just mentioned Kun-dga'-'bum's full-brother and who was the founder of the Dus-mchod branch of the Sakya family.<sup>50</sup> The only child from this union was the daughter, Bsod-nams-'bum. She, in turn, was given as a consort to the Gungthang king, Bkra-shis-lde (d. 1365).

As long as Sakya was a center of power, which it remained through the beginning of the fourteenth century, such marriage alliances were useful. The Sakya generals were very powerful and could call for Mongol assistance. In 1290, for example, a Sakya army led by the general Ag-len and aided by the Mongols sacked the monastery of Sakya's main rival, Drigung.<sup>51</sup> However, a four-fold schism had occurred in the family of Sakya owing to a superabundance of male heirs. In the year 1327 the titles and seals of Sakya were divided among the four branches of the family by Bzang-po-dpal's son, Bla-chen Kun-dga'-blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan (1299-1237).<sup>52</sup> The splitting up of the Sakya 'Khon family opened the way for many violent internal disputes. And, coinciding as it did with the decline of their Mongol patrons upon whom their secular authority



ultimately rested, and with the ineffectualness of Sakya's having lost its preeminent figurehead position. By the mid-fourteenth century Sakya's titles were merely honorary and were not enforced by the then feeble Mongols. In the year 1349 when Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan of Phagmodru (phag mo gru) finally and permanently usurped the position of Sakya, the Mongols passively acknowledge him as the new ruler of Tibet.

Gungthang and the rest of Ngari had been included within the westernmost of the three districts (chol kha) of Greater Tibet under the Mongols. When Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan and his Phagmodru successors received the traditional investiture of these three districts from the Mongols, the nominal allegiance of Gungthang would seem to have also passed to them. However, according to the majority of sources,<sup>53</sup> Ngari as a whole and Gungthang in particular were not among the thirteen myriarchies directly administered by the Sakya Dpon-chen, and one guesses that under the Phagmodru government whose capital was far away in Central Tibet, the semi-independence of Ngari from Tibet did not decrease but probably increased. On the other hand, during the height of the Yuan Dynasty the chain of command between Gungthang and the Mongols was quite direct. The real power in Tibet in those times was in the hands of the Mongols' military-political appointees, and the Gungthang king had been invested by the Mongols with the powerful title Ta dben sha, a position which reported directly to a Mongol office.<sup>54</sup> With the decline of the Mongols the patents possessed by Gungthang also became devalued. After the fall of the Yuan dynasty one cannot be sure what new alignment with China, if any, took the place of Ngari and Gungthang's previous links with the Mongols.

There are indications that the fortunes of Gungthang suffered during the last half of the fourteenth century. The Gungthang ruler Bkra-shis-lde's son, Phun-tshogs-lde (1338-1370), passed away while his sons Mchog-grub-lde and Bsod-nams-lde (1371-1404) were too young to ascend the throne. For a five year period the rule passed into the hands of a regent who seems to have been the district military commander.<sup>55</sup> When the sons reached maturity they were fully occupied with reasserting Gungthang's influence over some western territories which had been lost, territories which included Purang and, almost certainly, Lo.

The above mentioned territories had been lost to the renewed expansion of the Western Mallas. We saw how in the previous century an army from Ya-tshe had worsted Gungthang's forces and killed its king, and how that defeat was avenged with help from Sakya. That incident seems to have marked the end of the Malla's first wave of expansion into Western Tibet which, beginning at the end of the twelfth century,<sup>56</sup> had united Guge and Purang under the rule of the Malla kings of Yatshe. For a time the Mallas were held in check by the threat of Sakya or Mongol intervention, and Purang along with other parts of Ngari came back under Gungthang's control. Sakya's ally Gungthang built a fort during the reign of 'Bum-lde-

mgon (d. 1280) specifically for holding Purang and Guge in its power.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the first decades of the fourteenth century the Western Mallas' relationship with Sakya remained very cordial. One king received ordination there and another offered a gold roof to be erected above the religious throne (chos khri) of Sakya.<sup>58</sup> But for lack of male progeny the original line of Malla kings came to an end. Bsod-nams-lde of the Purang ruling house was then invited to Yatshe probably to marry a Malla princess and he was enthroned there as king. He adopted the name Malla, and with him began a second period of Malla expansion.

It would be expected that Yatshe's new ruler would want to merge his native Purang into the domain of the original Mallas. Although we yet lack definite chronological evidence, it would seem that Purang severed its last ties with Gungthang no later than the reign of Bsod-nams-lde's son, Prthvimalla. This king ruled from the 1350s to the 1370s, and it was during his rule that the second expansion of the Mallas, now actually the Gela family of Purang, reached its peak. During this time the lands which came under Yatshe and Purang seem to have included Lo. Then, near the end of the fourteenth century, the power of the Mallas suddenly collapsed. Soon thereafter a resurgent Gungthang leadership was undertaking the reconquest of Purang and other territories to their west. It was in the course of these events that the present family which became the line of Mustang rajas first established themselves in Lo.<sup>59</sup>

#### Summary of Lo's Early Political History

In brief, the early history of Lo cannot be studied apart from the history of Ngari. Because of the scarcity of sources for the history of Lo in particular, in the earliest period great gaps of two or three centuries at a time have to be filled by describing the general trends of the whole region. The first mention of Lo is in connection with Srong-btsan-sgam-po's conquests of the mid-seventh century. Next we hear that more than three centuries later Lo was a part of Bkra-shis-mgon's domain in Ngari. Then, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the situation grew unsettled, first on account of aggressive Turkic peoples and then through the influx of new tribes from the south. One such tribe, the Khasas, brought down the previous ruling line of Guge and Purang and established themselves as the Malla kings ruling from Yatshe. At about that same time Lo is said to have been conquered by Lha-chen Utpal of Ladakh.

The scarcity of historical information about Lo continues until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Our knowledge of its situation is primarily in terms of its status as a tributary of Gungthang, or as a potential area for Yatshe's expansion. In the middle of the thirteenth century Yatshe attacked and defeated Gungthang. Lo probably fell beneath Yatshe's sway at this time

if it had not already. Then Gungthang with Sakya help drove back the Western Mallas of Yatshe, and established forts in upper, middle, and lower Lo. Gungthang's relationship with Sakya and the Mongols helped them keep control over Lo and hold Yatshe in check until the mid-fourteenth century when the Malla ruling line ended for lack of male offspring. At that time, coinciding with the shift of power away from Sakya and the decline of the Mongols, a Purang noble assumed the Yatshe kingship and adopted the name Malla. By the time of Prthvīmalla's reign (1350s-1370s) Purang and probably Lo came under Yatshe rule. This second period of Yatshe expansion was shortlived, and after its collapse Gungthang regained control over Purang and Lo. At this time members of the family which was to become the line of Mustang rajas first established themselves as the rulers of Lo.

As limited as the present historical sketch is, it nevertheless introduces the basic situation which existed around Lo in early times, and it sets the stage for the next period in which Lo itself plays an important role.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Kun-dga'-grol-mchog, Jo-nang (149 or 1507-1566), Dpal ldan bla ma 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyi rnam par thar pa legs bshad khyad par gsum ldan, 125 folia cursive script (tshug yig) manuscript copy, p. 7a-7b.
2. Many spellings occur for Glo-bo, all of which are phonetically identical. These include blo bo, klo bo, glo'o, blo'o, and klo'o, and even sometimes the erroneous spelling lho. The standard form used throughout this study is glo bo because this form was preferred by the greatest native scholars such as Glo-bo lo-tsa-ba Shes-rab-rin-chen (13th century) and Glo-bo mkhan-chen Bsod-nams-lhun-grub (1456-1532).
3. "Upper Lo" seems to have indicated all of the territory in the Kali Gandaki Valley above but not including Gtsang-rang (Charang on the Survey of India map). "Lower Lo" included the Muktinath Valley and Kagbeni located at its confluence with the Kali Gandaki. Gtsang-rang seems to have been considered "Middle Lo". See note #37.
4. D.R. Regmi, Modern Nepal, Calcutta, 1975, pp. 329-30. A copper letter dated May, 1790 from Rana Bahadur to Wangyal Dorje, the Raja of Mustang, is quoted there.
5. Ngari was traditionally subdivided into three districts (skor). 15th and 16th century sources commonly list these as Purang, Guge and Mang-yul (or Mar-yul). Prof. Tucci (PR, pp. 72-74) advances the view that the third division, Mang-yul, is always to be understood as being the furthest west

of the three districts, corresponding roughly to Ladakh. As such, the Mang-yul of Gung-thang or Kyirong (skyid grong) to the east is to be excluded from the three main districts of Ngari, and hence their designation, "Lower Ngari" (mnga' ris smad). (Seenote 1, p. 74). However, he also admits that this was often not clearly understood by Tibetan writers.

Lo's native accounts seem unanimous in declaring Lo to be a part of Ngari. See, for example, Kun-dga'-grol-mchog, op. cit., p. 7a, Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa (1646-1723), Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug bstan 'dzin ras pa'i zhal gdams mgur du gsungs pa rnams, 66 folia xylograph, p. 31a., and Padma-'phrin-las, Rdo-rje-brag Rig-'dzin II (1640-1728), DD, p. 723.

6. Kun-dga'-grol-mchog, op. cit., p. 7a.
7. A.H. Francke, Antiquities of Indian Tibet, vol. 2, Calcutta, 1926, p. 83 (p. 32 in Tibetan text). See also L. Petech, A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet), Calcutta, 1939, p. 51.
8. Tucci, PR, p. 10, mentions a guidebook to the shrine of Muktinath which contains legends linking it with Padmasambhava. It is entitled, Chu mig brgya rtsa brgyad/sku tshab gter lnga/ mu le gangs/gu ru gsang phug sogs kyi dkar chag gsal ba'i me long ngo mtshar can rnams.
9. His invitation and journey to Mangyul Gungthang is recorded in the biography of Padmasambhava by Bkra-shis-stobs-rgyal (1550-1602), Rig 'dzin grup pa'i dbang phyug chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar phun sum tshogs pa'i rgya mtsho, New Delhi, 197, pp. 332-335.
10. Ibid., p. 344. His visit to Lo is mentioned here, as is his binding to oath of nine sibling guardian spirits (bstan ma spun dgu).
11. There exists a curious reference to another branch of the old Tibetan royalty which established itself in Ngari and founded a capital in Lo. This is mentioned by Padma-'phrin-las (DD, pp. 272-3) as follows: /rigs lha rigs/ rus gnya' khri btsan po'i brgyud/ cho 'brang bod yul dkar por bkod pa'i rigs las byung ba/ lde dgu las/ jo jo rgod lde gu ger byon/ khyung lung dngul mkhar gyi rgyal sa btab/ bdud re ti 'gong yag sogs btul/ khyung lung rdo rje sryan gcig mas gsang yum byas/ slar glo bor byon g.yu ri sngon po'i rtser dgongs pa mdzad/ sa dpyad gzigs nas glo bo ma thang stod du rgyal sa bzung/rgod lde la sras gsum byung ba'i bar pas bal po dbang du bsudus/ spu rang du sku mkhar nyi bzung btab cing/ de nas brgyud pa mang por rim bzhin 'phel tshul du ma yod ... / For further details concerning these kings and their doings, padma-'phrin-las (p. 273) directs the reader to the full-length bi-

- ography of Rig-'dzin-rje (Legs-ldan-bdud-'joms-rdo-rje (1500?-1577?). At present it is difficult to account for this passage and the king, Rgod-lde, mentioned therein.
12. Kun-dga'-bzang-po, Ngor-chen (1382-1456), Lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i man ngag gi byung tshul gsung ngag rin po che bstan pa rgyas pa'i nyi 'od, Sa skya bka' 'bum, Tokyo, Toyo Bunko, 1968-69, vol. 9, p. 113. 2. Ngor-chen himself did not finish this work, but two completed versions exist. The one cited above was completed by Ngor-chen's disciple, Gung-ru Shes-rab-bzang-po, while a second version which was completed by Ngor-chen's nephew Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug (1424-1479) was included in the 12th volume of Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-seng-ge's (1429-1489) complete works, vol. 15 of the Toyo Bunko reprint.
  13. G. Tucci, PR, p. 106.
  14. The Tibetan historians are not in agreement on the paternal descent of Ye-shes-'od and his relationship to Byang-chub-'od. A full account of the differing versions is given by Prof. Tucci, op. cit., pp. 51-63.
  15. Gzhon-nu-dpal, 'Gos lo-tsa-ba (1392-1481), Deb ther sngon po, New Delhi, 1974, p. 233.
  16. For the dating of Sangs-rgyas-bla-ma I am following the account given by Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, Kong-sprul (1813-1899), Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus bkod pa rin chen bai du rya'i phreng ba, Mtshur-phu edition (of Rin chen gter mdzod), pp. 36a-37a.
  17. Ibid. His discoveries were extracted from the capital of one of the monastery's pillars and also from a nearby rock. They included many texts of the sutra class of teachings which had been translated from the Chinese.
  18. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, London, 1972, p. 72.
  19. It is interesting to note that the teachings embodied by these gter ma continue to enjoy considerable popularity among certain Buddhist communities of Nepal. I learned that a teaching based on one of the treasure-texts of Lo, the Rtsa-gsum dril sgrub, was given in Boddhanath during the spring of 1976.
  20. Kun-dga'-rdo-rje, Tshal-pa, (14th c.), Hu lan deb ther or Deb ther dmar po, Gangtok, 1961, pp. 19b-20a.
  21. G. Tucci, PR, and also his Discovery of the Malla, translated by Lovett Edwards, London, 1962.
  22. Kun-dga'-rdo-rje, Tshal-pa, loc. cit.

23. Prof. Tucci speculates that the old royal line ruling in Ladakh may have come to an end at about the same time that the Western Mallas became established, and that a similar group took control of Ladakh beginning with Lha-chen Utpal. PR, p. 108.
24. A.H. Francke, op. cit., p. 96 (Tibetan text p. 35).
25. Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, Kah-thog Rig-'dzin (1698-1755), GGR, p. 2b.
26. D. Snellgrove and H. Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, New York, 1968, p. 96.
27. H. Hoffman, Tibet: A Handbook, Bloomington, 1975, p. 51.
28. The Collected Songs of Milarepa record that in the course of his wanderings Milarepa visited Upper Lo and spent a summer at Lo Lake. See The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, translated by Garma C.C. Chang, New York, 1970, p. 95.
29. Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, Glo-bo Mkhan-chen (1456-1532), Mkhas pa rnam 'jug pa'i sgo rnam par bshad pa rig gnas bsal byed. In the colophon of this work, Glo-bo mkhan-chen states that a disciple of Sa-sakya-pa Chen-po (=Sa-chen) named Rong-sgom dwelled at Bsam-grub-gling monastery in Upper Lo.
30. The three holy spots were Rdza-ri, La-phyi and Ti-se (=Kailāsa).
31. Dkon-mchog-bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-blo-gros (34th abbot of 'Bri-gung), Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus su brjod pa'i rab byed shel dkar me long, ff. 31a-31b.
32. This account states that A-mgon-bzang-po offered the shrine to Kun-dga'-bzang-po after Bde-legs-rgya-mtsho's conquest of Purang. This is impossible since Bde-legs-rgya-mtsho reigned some fifty years after A-mgon-bzang-po.
33. G. Roerich, The Blue Annals, Parts I-II, Calcutta, 1949-53, Part II, p. 1071.
34. The account of the Yatshe-gungthang wars and the Gungthang-Sakya marriage is taken from the GGR, p. 3a. To this it might be added that the Gungthang princess who married Zangs-tsha, according to DCh p. 285, was named Lha-gcig-mdzes-ma. It is ironical that it was not the princess, but her servant, who mothered Ye-shes-'byung-gnas (1238-1274), the father of Bzang-po-dpal.
35. In DCH, p. 285, this king is called Bkra-shis-brtsegs-pa-dpal. Dkon-mchog-lhun-grub (1497-1557) in his Ngor chos 'byung, p. 251, gives the name Gtsug-lde for Mgon-po-lde's son.

36. We can safely guess that it immediately gained some sort of official recognition from the Mongols because Gungthang's power was so great during the reign of the young and short-lived ruler who followed, 'Bum-lde-mgon.
37. But, according to Dkon-mchog-lhun-grub, *op. cit.*, p. 251, the Bkra-shis-sgo-mang temple was built by 'Bum-lde-mgon's father, who is said to be 'Phags-pa's disciple.
38. GGR, p. 7b: gu ge pu reng (sic) kha gnon du/ dkar dum gnam gyi khyung rdzongs brtsegs/

phyi 'brog men zhang kha gnon du/ bya rtsi rnam rgyal mthar po dang/

mtsho dbar nye ba'i glo stod du/ (8a) ni ri g.yag rdzong dkar po brtsegs/

glo ba (sic) tsho bzhi'i kha gnon du/ gtsang rong bya pho'i khro ba brtsegs/

ta mang se mon kha gnon du/ glo smad mu khun srin rdzong brtsegs/

dol po mon gyi kha gnon du/ dol po yi ge drug ma brtsegs/

la stod byang pa'i kha gnon du/ la ru'i gad rdzong dkar po brtsegs/

la stod lho'i kha gnon la/ khun tsho gad rdzong dkar po brtsegs/

skyid rong mthil du seng ge rdzong/ glang mkhar gsal ba'i yang rtse brtsegs/

rgya bal gnyis kyi kha gnon la/ bal bo ljongs kyi rdzong dmar brtsegs/

rnye shong rong gi kha gnon la/ bong tshogs gnam gyi ka ba brtsegs/

nub ri mtha' 'khob kha gnon du/ rod kyi brag rdzong nag po brtsegs/

phyag pa kha bzhi'i btsag pa ru/ chu dbar rdzong chung 'dzum skor brtsegs//

39. The division of land area into tsho units was common in Ngari and Lo since early times. In the fourth verse of the passage reproduced in the preceding footnote, "Middle Lo" (read glo bar instead of glo ba) is divided into four tsho. Natives of Mustang still commonly refer to the "seven tsho of Lo" (glo bo tsho bdun). According to modern reckoning, these are: 1) Smon thang, 2) Gad smad & Brag dmar, 3) Gtsang rang (= rtse brang) & Ma rang, 4) Tsho nub, i.e., 'Phred dkar, Rnam rgyal, etc., 5) Tsho shar stod, i.e., Yar 'brog, Sgar phug, etc., 6) Tsho shar smad, i.e., A kar, Na ma gzhung, etc., and 7) Shar pa, i.e., 'Bril, etc.
40. Concerning the dating of Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba, we know he was already flourishing before Sakya Pandita's going to Mongolia in 1244 because Sakya Pandita's letter to him was sent from Sakya. (See kun-dga'-rgyäl-mtshan, Sakya Pandita (1182-1251), Glo bo lo tsa ba'i zhu lan, Sa skya bka' 'bum, Tokyo, Toyo Bunko, 1968, vol. 5, p. 414. 2.) Furthermore, he gave religious teachings to 'Phags-pa in the year 1265 or 1266. (See DCH, p. 204).
41. Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba worked with Jayānanda, a pandit of Jumla (Yatshe), in translating texts connected with the Svarodaya Tantra. Jayānanda was also associated with Chag Lo-tsā-ba Chos-rje-dpal (1197-1265) who translated texts belonging to this very same tantric cycle. (cf. E.G. Smith, Preface to Pad-dkar-dbang-po's commentary on the Ngo mtshar rgyan gyi me long, Dhyangs 'char 'grel pa gzhan phan ngo mtshar rgyan gyi me tog, Gangtok, 1970. Two of the other main masters that Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba received teachings from were Darpan and Revenda. (See G. Roerich, Blue Annals, pt. I, p. 379).
42. The translator's colophons of his works are usually not signed either Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba or Shes-rab-rin-chen. The name he preferred was Rmongs-pa'i-gnyen-po-dgos-'dod-thams-cad-'byung-ba. Rmongs-pa'i-gnyen-po (literally: "antidote for ignorance") is a synonym for Shes-rab ("wisdom") and dgos-'dod-thams-cad-'byung-ba ("the arising of all that one needs or wishes for") is the equivalent of rin-chen ("jewel"). (See E.G. Smith, op. cit., p. 2, n. 3).
43. G. Roerich, Blue Annals, pt. II, p. 1046.
44. Besides the g.yul rgyal astrological system, Tibetan historians mention two others: skar rtsis which derived from Indian sources and 'byung rtsis which originated in China. (See E.G. Smith, op. cit., p. 1, n. 2).
45. Sangs-rgyas-phun-tshogs, in his completion of the Ngor chos 'byung (p. 320) lists Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba as one of four great translators who were Sakya Pandita's disciples.



46. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Sakya Paṇḍita (1182-1251), op. cit.
47. Dkon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa II, (1728-1791), Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i 'khrung rabs kyi phreng ba gtan du brjod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i ljon shing, Collected Works of Dkon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, New Delhi, 1971, vol. 2, p. 354.
48. Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, Glo-bo Mkhan-chen (1456-1532), Chos kyi rje tshul khrims rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung, MS, p. 20a. In this biography of Dpal-ldan-pa Tshul-khrims-rgyal-mtshan (d. 1476), a 'Phags pas dris pa'i lan is included among a list of Glo-bo Lo-tsā-ba's works.
49. DCH, p. 449.
50. The Dus-mchod bla-brang at Sakya was initially the most ill-fated of the four branches of the family. For five generations they did not once attain the position of throne-holder (khri pa) of Sakya. The first to do so was Sa-lo 'Jam-dbyangs-kun-dga'-bsod-nams (1485-1533), one of Glo-bo mkhan-chen's main disciples.
51. G. Tucci, TPS, p. 16.
52. DCH, p. 300, 305.
53. G. Tucci, TPS, vol. II, p. 681, n. 52.
54. The Gungthang king (mnga' bdag) Khri-lde-'bum is referred to as "Ta-dben-sha" in connection with his marriage to Kun-dga'-'bum of Sakya. See DCH, p. 449. The GGR, p. 10a, mentions his receiving a Mongol patent, but it does not specify the title.
- There were two Tu yuan shuai (Tib.: du dben sha or ta dben sha) in Ngari. They were chosen among laymen and the real power was in their hands. (See G. Tucci, TPS, p. 16, 34).
55. GGR, p. 11b. This figure is referred to as rta dbon which may mean ta dben.
56. G. Tucci, PR, p. 129.
57. See note #37.
58. Kun-dga'-rdo-rje, Tshal-pa (14th century), op. cit., p. 20b.
59. The important part that one family of officials to the Gungthang court played in the conquest of Purang and Lo led to their subsequent appointment as regional governor of Lo. The history of Lo under the first generations of this family's rule is the topic of a forthcoming study.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DD Padma-'phrin-las, Rdo-rje-brag Rig-'dzin II (1640-1718),  
'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pai' rnam thar ngo  
mtshar dad pa'i phreng ba, Leh, 1972.
- DCH Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams, A-mes-zhabs (1597-c.1662),  
'Dzam gling byang rhyogs kyi thub pa'i rgyal tshab chen  
po dpal ldan sa skya pa'i gdung rabs rin po che ji ltar  
byon pa'i tshul gyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar rin po  
che'i bang mdzod dgos 'dod kun 'byung, New Delhi, 1975.
- GGR Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin (1698-1755), Bod rje  
lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ris smad mang yul gung  
thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dwangs shel  
'phrul gyi me long, 20 folia cursive script MS. Composed  
by author in Mustang in the year 1749.
- PR G. Tucci, Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in  
Nepal, Rome, 1956.
- TPS G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, (3 vol.), Rome, 1949.
- For references made to the Gungthang Chronicles see GGR.  
For the Ladakh Chronicles see A.H. Francke, op. cit., and L. Petech,  
op. cit.

