

IMPERIAL INTEREST MADE MANIFEST:  
SGA A GNYAN DAM PA'S MAHĀKĀLA PROTECTOR CHAPEL  
OF THE TRE SHOD MAṄḌALA PLAIN

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༄༅། ཉི་ལོག་ཏུ་གཏོགས་པའི་རྒྱལ་ཁམས་འཇང་སོགས་དྲག་ཞན་མི་མིན་བརྗེ་འདྲུལ་བྱེད་མི་བཅས་ཀྱིས་གསན་རྒྱུ་དེ།  
བདག་འཆང་བ་ལོ་ལ་གཞོན་ཅིང་འཆེ་བར་བྱེད་པའི་ལྷ་སྲིན་སྡེ་བརྒྱུད། བྱད་ལ། རྗོད་གཏོང་། རྒྱལ་འགོང་།  
ཐེའུ་རང། དམ་ལོག་སོགས་ཀྱིས་གཞོན་ཅིང་འཆེ་བའི་རིགས་གཏན་ནས་བྱེད་མི་ཆོག  
སྐ་ཨ་གཉན་དམ་པའི་བཀའ་ཤོག་འདི་ལ་ཅི་དགོས། ལར་མི་ཅི་མཁན་གལ་སྲིད་བྱུང་ན།  
ཆོས་སྲོང་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་བཀའ་ཆད་དྲག་པོ་བཏང་ནས། མགོ་བོ་ཆལ་བ་བརྒྱར་གས་བ་དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ།  
སྤལ་བོ་ལྷ་བའི་ཆེས་ ༥ བཟང་པོ་ལ་སྐ་ཨ་གཉན་དམ་པས་བྲིས།

“Non-humans who conceal/disguise [themselves] by magical emanation, of such high and low [places] as 'Jang'<sup>1</sup> of the empire which comprises everything under the sun, listen [to my command]!

It is absolutely forbidden to harm those who hold my [decree] by such means as the harmful eight classes of gods and demons,<sup>2</sup> curses, invocation rituals to destroy enemies,<sup>3</sup> malevolent spirits,<sup>4</sup> poltergeists,<sup>5</sup> and oath-breakers.<sup>6</sup> [All] must heed this decree by sGa A gnyan Dam pa! However, if there are those who disobey, [I vow by] the Three Jewels that, having unleashed the fierce punishment of the Dharma Protectors, their heads will split into one hundred pieces.”

–Written by sGa A gnyan Dam pa on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month.<sup>7</sup>

1 'Jang, in northern Yunnan, was incorporated into the Mongol Empire in 1253, during Qubilai Khan's campaign against the Dali kingdom 大理國, prior to the founding of the Yuan Dynasty. Later 'Jang became associated with the Kingdom of Lijiang 麗江.

2 *lha srin sde brgyad* can refer to various types of mundane spirits who can either help or cause harm, but remain invisible to normal human beings: *gshin rje*, *ma mo*, *bdud*, *btsan*, *rgyal po*, *klu*, *gnod sbyin*, and *gza*.

3 *rbod gtong* is a ritual to invoke the presence of one's guardian deity to destroy one's enemies (also translated as “sorcery and evil mantras”).

4 *rgyal 'gong* are nasty spirits that emerge when one views one's teacher as having hatred; male mischievous spirits, a class of spirits born of the union of the *rgyal po* and *'gong po*.

5 *the'u rang* are demons that possesses children / poltergeist; sky-traveling preta-demons that possess children.

6 *dam log (dam nyams)* are violators of promises.

7 This short text is only preserved as a single folio woodblock print, and probably carved for dissemination as a charm against destructive rites, and so the year of this decree by Dam pa is not known. The text is preserved in Sebasi 色巴寺 (=Seb mda' dgon pa?) in Khri 'du rdzong (Chengduo County 称多县), Yushu 玉树. (On this temple see: Andreas Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Kham vol.2 The Qinghai Part of Kham*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004, p.71).

Sangding Cairren 桑丁才仁 of the China Tibetology Research Center published a Chinese translation of this text (but without providing the Tibetan original), which changes the meaning of the text to be directed at the subject peoples of those lands of the Mongol empire, and thus reads more as a political decree:

Such reads a decree and protective charm by sGa A gnyan dam pa (ca. 1230–1303), Mahākāla ritual specialist at Qubilai Khan's court, which demonstrates his willingness to mix political authority with tantric power, commanding dominion over not only the human realm but even the spirit world.

As Elliot Sperling has shown an enduring interest in imperial engagement with Tibet, explored through both Tibetan and Chinese sources, including Tibetans in service at the Mongol court such as Dam pa, a continued exploration building on his earlier work seems a topic apropos for a volume in his honor.<sup>8</sup> Here I will introduce a surviving chapel, sDe mgon khang, built by Dam pa in Khams near the Sino-Tibetan frontier under Mongolian imperial patronage, which I will argue embodies court interest in Tibetan Buddhism.

Sperling has demonstrated the root of Mongol (and broader imperial) involvement with Tibetan Buddhism lay in both the model of sacrosanct rulership, the *cakravartin*, that spanned ethnic and clan divides allowing them to unite an empire of disparate peoples, as well as the corresponding esoteric means to real physical power that could be harnessed to serve the Mongol imperium.<sup>9</sup> He further traced the roots of the Mongols' choice of Tibetan Buddhism as the Yuan imperial vehicle to the Tangut court, and especially the Mongols' potent encounter

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阳光普照之国土暨纳西等文武百官听命，不准对吾持权者有任何危害之念。必须遵从吾之语命。若有违者向三宝发誓，必遭护法神之惩处。使其头破血流。藏历十一月七日嘎。阿宁胆巴亲笔。 which I translate as follows:

“In this sovereign land universally illuminated by the sun (that is by the Great Khan's benevolence), the one hundred civil and military officials of such [subject peoples] as the Naxi heed this command. Let them not even think of doing harm to anyone whom I have vested with authority. They must respectfully follow my verbal commands, and should anyone disobey, I swear by the Three Jewels that he shall suffer the punishments of Mahākāla, who shall cause his head to split open and blood to flow. Written by sGa A gnyan Dam pa on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month.”

Sangding Cairen 桑丁才仁, “Jian jie Yushu Zangzu zizhizhou shoujie minzu wenwu zhanlan hui shang zhanchu de ji jian wenxian ziliao 简介玉树藏族自治州首届民族文物展览会上展出的几件文献资料” (A Brief introduction to a few documents exhibited at the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture First Nationalities Cultural Relic Exhibition) in *Qinghai shehui kexue* 青海社会科学 1994 vol.4, p.118.

8 For instance: Elliot Sperling, “Some remarks on sGa A-gnyan dam-pa and the origins of the Hor-pa lineage of the dKar-mdzes region.” In Ernst Steinkellner, ed., *Tibetan history and language: studies dedicated to Uray Geza on his seventieth birthday*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991, pp.455-465; and “Hulegu and Tibet.” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* Tomus XLIV (1-2) (1990) pp.145-157.

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9 Why the Mongols chose Tibetan Buddhism as the official state religion of the Yuan dynasty tends to be addressed by Sinologists in a cursory and often somewhat derogatory manner, adopting the distaste for both the Mongols and Tibetan Buddhism reflected in the Chinese official sources upon which they depend, observing that Tibetans were likely chosen as the imperial preceptors because they specialized in magic rituals which appealed to the unsophisticated Mongols. See for instance Franke, “Tibetans in Yuan China.” in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John Langlois Jr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, p.305; and Wen Fong and James C.Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996, p.267.

with Mahākāla through their military campaign against the Xixia 西夏 state (1038–1227), where Tibetans served as imperial preceptors and anointers of sacral kingship.<sup>10</sup> This link is suggested in the Gur gyi mgon po section of the *mGon po'i 'chos byung* (“The History of Mahākāla”) where Qubilai Khan’s hearing of “the manner of actually destroying one’s enemies through the wrathful activity [of Mahākāla]” is juxtaposed with the Mongol king asking ’Phags pa for initiation into Vajrayāna, and entering into a priest patron relationship with the Tibetan cleric.<sup>11</sup>

### Mahākāla at the Mongol Court

Even before the founding of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) the Mongol court began developing a divine imperial Buddhist visual vocabulary based in Tibetan Buddhism to symbolize their rule, and specifically singled out the wrathful figure of Mahākāla in the form of Gur gyi mgon po (San: Pañjaranātha) (Fig. 1) as state protector and focus of the imperial cult. Mahākāla is a powerful Buddhist protector deity, a manifestation of divine wrath used in removing obstacles, both spiritual and physical, particularly known for his military efficacy.<sup>12</sup> This is not to reduce Mahākāla to simply a war god (*dgra lha*), as the deity is so much more than that, but this was clearly the role that most interested the Mongol court. A sculpture of this emanation of Mahākāla made by the Nepalese head of the Yuan imperial atelier Anige 阿尼哥 (1244–1278/1306) for Qubilai Khan’s final conquest of the Song dynasty (960–1279) became a potent symbol of both Qubilai’s rule and the Yuan imperial lineage.<sup>13</sup> This association was so strong that even

10 Sperling, “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-ba Sang-rgyas Grags-pa and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations.” In *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Fagernes 1992*, Vol.2 Oslo 1994, pp.801-824. By the time of the Mongol conquest, Tibetan clerics served as imperial preceptors (*dishi* 帝師) at the Xixia court, where Mahākāla was a focus of Tangut imperial Buddhism. Sperling, “Lama to the King of Hsia.” *The Journal of the Tibet Society*, vol.7, 1987, p.32; and “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-ba Sang-rgyas Grags-pa and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations.” In *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Fagernes 1992*, Vol.2, Oslo 1994, p.818.

11 ’Jam mgon A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams, p.257. The *mGon po'i chos 'byung* is a mid 17<sup>th</sup> century (1641) Sa skya history of the Mahākāla tradition in India and Tibet by ’Jam mgon A myes zhabs, Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams (1597– ca. 1662), author of other texts dealing with the destruction of one’s enemies through the invocation of Gur mgon such as the *dPal rdo rje nag po chen po'i zab mo'i chos skor nams 'byungs ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa bstan srung chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* and a history of the Sa skya ’Khon family lineage.

12 The cult of Mahākāla had already been brought to China early in the Tang dynasty, for instance in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Liang Fen (716-777) in his *Notes on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* said: “The Big Black God (Mahākāla) is the God of War. Worshiping this god will make the worshiper succeed in every war in which he engages.” Wang Yao, “A Cult of Mahākāla in Beijing.” In Per Kvaerne, ed. *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Fagernes*, vol.2, Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research In Human Culture, 1994, p.957, footnote 2.

13 This sculpture of Mahākāla was counted among the objects of inheritance symbolic of Mongol rule alongside Chinggis Khan’s spirit banner and the imperial seal. See Atwood, “Validation by Holiness or Sovereignty: Religious Toleration as Political Theology in the Mongol World Empire of the Thirteenth Century.” *The International History Review* 23, no. 2 (2004), pp.334-35.

four centuries later when the Manchus were positioning themselves as the rightful inheritors of the Yuan legacy they installed this same statue of Mahākāla in the Manchu imperial shrine at Mukden in 1635.<sup>14</sup>

While Qubilai Khan's statue of Mahākāla disappeared again with the fall of the Qing dynasty (whereabouts currently unknown), a sculpture dated to the same period (1292) survives in the Musée Guimet in Paris (Fig. 1). The name of the artist of the Musée Guimet piece is recorded in the inscription on the back of the sculpture as dKon mchog skyabs, an otherwise unidentified sculptor thought to be a Tibetan artist trained in Anige's school.<sup>15</sup> The purpose of the commission is recorded as: "To spread the Buddha Dharma, eliminate obstacles to the lives of priests and patrons, and to end the disputations of the opponents." The donor of this statue is identified as an "A tsara Bag shi," a close disciple of the Imperial Preceptor 'Phags pa and one who enjoyed the protection of Qubilai Khan.<sup>16</sup>

There has been some speculation as to the identity of the patron of the 1292 statue, "A tsara Bag shi." Heather Stoddard's suggestion that this might have been the Second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi (1206–1283), seems unlikely, as he was never considered a disciple of 'Phags pa.<sup>17</sup>

14 This was identified as the same image made for 'Phags pa by request of Qubilai to aid in the overthrow of Southern Song in the 1638 dedicatory inscription: "'Phags pa Lama had cast the golden image of Gur Mahākāla, made the statue an offering at Wutaishan and later to the land of Xixia..." (see: Grupper, "Manchu Patronage and Tibetan Buddhism During the First Half of the Ch'ing Dynasty." *The Journal of the Tibet Society*, vol.4, (1984), p.76, footnote 19). Qubilai Khan had been recognized as an emanation of Mañjuśrī in the Yuan Dynasty, and it is by this means that the Manchus linked themselves to his lineage through Tibetan forms, thus establishing themselves as the rightful spiritual successors of the Yuan legacy. Thus the establishment of this statue can be seen as an early stage of a larger Manchu program of symbolism designed to project themselves in the line of Qubilai Khan.

15 Heather Stoddard, "A Stone Sculpture of mGur mGon-po, Mahakala of the Tent, Dated 1292." *Oriental Art* vol.31, no.3 (Autumn 1985), p.281.

16 *bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal po 'phags pa zhes bya ba'i bka' drin gyis bskyangs shing thugs kyi bzung ba'i 'phrin las pa a tsar bag shi zhes bya bas...* For a full transcription of the inscription see Stoddard (1985), p.278.

17 The later tradition as recorded by Si tu Pan chen even suggests an acrimonious relationship between Karma Pakshi and 'Phags pa:

The *mahāsiddha* (Karma Pakshi) went to Mongolia. The year that he met with Qubilai the *mahāsiddha* himself was reaching his fiftieth year, it being the Wood Hare Year (1255/6). Since Prince Köten invited Sa skya Paṇḍita and his two nephews ['Phags pa and Phya na rdo rje] in the Wood Dragon Year (1244/5) eleven whole years had passed. Then, later, some audacious fools having thought about the male lineage of the Sa skya pa said a great deal of nonsense such as making 'Phags pa a great lama and *siddha*, which he was not, and there arose a very strange situation which was made into a rule by some similar [fools]. Those who are discerning among the Sa skya pa and know the archival record do not seem to follow after this custom.

Karma Pakshi. *The Autobiographical Writings of the Second Karma-pa Karma Pakshi*. Delhi: Lakshmi Printing, 1978.

Petech (1993, pp.647-648) notes that 'Phags pa failed to command the respect enjoyed by his uncle Sa skya Paṇḍita and that other sects, such as the Karma pa, vied for the favor and support of Mongke, and Prince Qubilai. Karma Pakshi, Petech said, was the most revered lama at the court of Mongke but his early fall from favor was to pave the way for the ascent of 'Phags pa. Furthermore, Karma Pakshi was suspected of being a partisan of Ariq-Böke, challenger to Qubilai's ascension to the Mongol throne, and was imprisoned and then banished. Qubilai had already decided that 'Phags pa was the most suitable

What makes this attribution even more unlikely for this date (aside from the fact that he was no longer living) is that Karma Pakshi previously had a falling out with Qubilai in about 1254; the latter tried to have Pakshi gruesomely murdered three times, and so would not be lauded as being under his protection.<sup>18</sup> Leonard van der Kuijp has alternatively suggested that the patron of this statue was A tsa ra dpa' shi, a scribe to 'Phags pa who later moved up in the ranks to become an important land holder and administrator (*slob dpon*) in Central Tibet.<sup>19</sup> However, van der Kuijp concedes, *a tsara* probably derives from the Sanskrit title *ācārya* and *bag shi* (or *pag shi*) derives from the Chinese loan word *boshi* 博士. This would make “a tsara bag shi” not a name but rather the polyglot title *ācārya boshi*, or “the learned scholar.” Taking van der Kuijp’s analysis as a starting point, another attribution is the A gnyan *pag shi*, sGa A gnyan Dam pa Kun dga' grags pa (ca. 1230–1303), a close disciple to 'Phags pa and often described as *pag shi* in both Yuan Chinese and Tibetan sources.<sup>20</sup> Dam pa was also the primary Mahākāla ritual specialist at Qubilai’s court, who was credited with intervening in several key battles in the Mongol’s military campaigns, including the momentous final fall of Southern Song, and building several imperially sponsored temples to Mahākāla, and thus an appropriate patron of this image.<sup>21</sup>

### sGa A gnyan Dam pa

The Persian historiographer Rashid al-Din, who wrote his famous history circa 1300 (that is within Dam pa’s lifetime), specifically mentions Dam pa as someone whose word carried great weight at the Yuan court.<sup>22</sup> Dam pa’s epitaph stele, erected in 1316, was written by the most famous Chinese calligrapher of his time and scion of the defunct Song royal house, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254–1322), which highlights Dam pa’s importance at the

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to his needs and declared him National Preceptor (*guo shi*) in 1260, the year of his enthronement. This rude language suggests some resentment toward the Sa skya pa for supplanting the Karma pa’s position. Calling 'Phags pa a *siddha* also implies an attempt to compare him to Karma Pakshi who is often referred to as a *mahāsiddha*. Sperling (1992, p.806) also translates this passage and explains its appearance by saying that “it should be noted that bKa' brgyud pa circles appear to have viewed the Sa skya pa position as somewhat illegitimate.”

18 Karma Pakshi, *The Autobiographical Writings of the Second Karma-pa Karma Pakshi*. Delhi: Lakshmi Printing, 1978.

19 Leonard van der Kuijp, “Ba si' and Ba si-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts.” *Central Asiatic Journal* 39 (1995) 2 Harrassowitz Verlag, p.287. Amy Heller, *Tibetan Art. Tracing the Development of Spiritual Ideals and Art in Tibet 600-2000 A.D.* Milano: Jaca Book, 1999, pp.87-88, accepts van der Kuijp’s identification of the patron.

20 van der Kuijp (1995), p.288. I have since discovered Elliot Sperling had already made this suggestion, buried deep in his copious footnotes. Sperling (1991), p.457, footnote 7.

21 The final wish expressed in the dedication on the back of the statue “to end the disputations of the opponents” might therefore refer to the Buddhist-Daoist acrimony at court, where Dam pa is recorded in his Chinese biography as being vehemently anti-Daoist, encouraging the burning of Daoist scriptures, and participating in debates at court.

22 Franke (1984), p.328 and (1996) pp.53-63.

Mongol court.<sup>23</sup> It has even been suggested that Zhao Mengfu's famous painting *Monk in a Red Robe* 红衣西域僧图, dated within a year of Dampa's death (1304), commemorates him.<sup>24</sup> At least one Tibetan biography of Dam pa by Ngor mKhan chen Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (1649–1705) is known to exist through its listing in the catalog of the sDe dge dgon chen printery, but until this text is made available a biography for Dam pa can be cobbled together from available Tibetan and Yuan Chinese sources.<sup>25</sup>

Dam pa was from 'Dan ma in Khams, on the 'Bri chu river, in contemporary Qinghai Province.<sup>26</sup> According to Tibetan sources, on the way to the court of Köten Khan in 1244, Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) and 'Phags pa met a young boy from Upper sGa on the northern road.

23 *Da Yuan chici Longxingsi dajue puci guangzhao wushang dishi bei* 大元敕賜龍興寺大覺普慈廣照無上帝師碑 (also called the “Imperial Preceptor Dampa Stele” *Dishi Danba bei* 帝師胆巴碑). See: Sun Zhixin, p.308, and Wang Yao, p.958. The text of this stele is reproduced in Franke (1996), pp.175-176 and discussed in German on pp.42-46. Strangely enough a rubbing of this stele is not included in the *Beijing tushuguan zang Zhongguo lidai shike taben huibian*, as Zhao Mengfu is considered the foremost calligrapher of the Yuan dynasty. The characters of the stele are only reproduced in a copy book as a model for calligraphy as the *Zhao Mengfu shu Danba bei* 趙孟頫書胆巴碑.

Previously in my dissertation (2007), Fig. 1.20, p.504, I mistakenly published the engraved image at the bottom of the Dam pa stele as “Dam-pa as a Yuan official” following the publication *Khams stod lo rgyus thor bsdus* (v. 1, p.22). However it has since been pointed out to me by several scholars that this is in fact a portrait of Zhao Mengfu added to the stele later. This can be seen by comparing very similar portraits of Zhao Mengfu, such as a hanging scroll in the Metropolitan Museum of Art “Copy of a Portrait of Zhao Mengfu” Accession Number: 1986.267.3: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/36146> Thanks to Shane McCausland for pointing this comparison out to me.

24 Hong Zaixin 洪再新, “Zhao Mengfu Hong yi Xiyu seng (juan) yanjiu” 赵孟頫《红衣西域僧(卷)》研究 [Research on Zhao Mengfu's *Red-Robed Western Monk* scroll]. In *Zhao Mengfu yanjiu lunwenji* 赵孟頫研究论文集. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1995, pp.519-533; James C. Y. Watt, ed. *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010, p.198; Shane McCausland. *Zhao Mengfu: Calligraphy and Painting for Khubilai's China*. Hong Kong: University Press, 2011.

25 This text is listed in vol.1 of the four volume collected works of sDe dge dgon chen printery. The most detailed biography is the Yuan Chinese text *Fozu Lidai Tongzai* 佛祖历代通载 (chapter 22) written sometime before 1340 (that is within 40 years of Dam pa's death) by Nian Chang 念常, and a shorter biography found in the *Yuanshi* 202, both studied by Franke (1984, 1996); supplementary material provided in related Tibetan texts like the *Hor Chos rje sku 'phreng gong rim gyi rnam thar* (“Biographies of the Successive Hor (Mongol) Dharma-rajās”) studied by Sperling (1991); as well as two texts on one of the temples he founded, which is the focus of this paper: *sDe mgon po 'i dkar chag* (“The Descriptive Catalog of sDe mgon po”) (said to date to 1668), and a modern internal PRC government (*neibu* 内部) publication in Tibetan: *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus* (“A History of sDe mgon khang”).

On the dating of the *sDe mgon po 'i dkar chag* see page \*20-1. There was a manuscript of Dam pa's collected writings (*gsung 'bum*) which is described in the *Sa skya dkar chag*: the *Chos rje khu dbon gyi slob ma sga a gryan dam pas mdzad pa 'i mgon po 'i sgrub skor shog dril nyer gcig sogs mang du bzhugs*. There was supposed to have been a copy of this in the monastery at sKye rgu mdo (where Dam pa was from). A famous lama of his lineage, Drung Kun dga' grags, wrote extensively on the ancestral Mahākāla practices. Copies of this manuscript *gsung 'bum* were supposedly at Sa skya, Ngor and sDe dge. I would like to thank the late E. Gene Smith for sharing this information with me. See also: Ye shes rdo rje, *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus bdud rtsi 'i thigs phreng* (lidai zangzu xuezhue xiao zhuan) Beijing: Zhongguo Zangxue yanjiu zhongxin, 1996, vol.2, pp.93-98.

26 Sperling (1991), p.462, and Stein (1961), pp.46-47, and the map at the back of that book. This is not far from dKar mdzes where he later founded sDe mgon po. Dam pa also founded the temple sKal bzang dpal 'byor gling (Khri 'du skal bzang dgon; 杂藏寺) also dedicated to Gur mgon in his hometown. See note 55.

He had a face like the bSe 'bag ye shes mgon po mask of Gur mgon in the sGo rum chapel at Sa skya (the focal image of the Gur mgon cult in Tibet), and they recognized him as an incarnation of Mahākāla walking on earth.<sup>27</sup> They took him in as an attendant, bringing him along to court, and he became a close personal disciple of Sa skya Paṇḍita and 'Phags pa. He showed an early mastery of the *Hevajra Tantra* and was recommended to service at court by 'Phags pa in the Zhongtong 中統 period (1260-1264), where he became Qubilai's Mahākāla ritual specialist at court.

According to the most detailed biography of Dam pa available, the Fozu Lidai Tongzai 佛祖历代通載 ("A Comprehensive Registry of the Successive Ages of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs"; written before 1340), when Dam pa first arrived in China he was ordered to reside in Shouningsi 壽寧寺 (rTag brtan bde chen gling) on Mount Wutai 五臺山 (Ri bo rtse Inga) where he was appointed abbot, raising the status of that monastery and making it what many consider to be the first Tibetan Buddhist establishment on that mountain.<sup>28</sup> Of course Wutaishan was also a popular pilgrimage site among Tibetans, so Dam pa could have had his own motivations for going there.<sup>29</sup> In 1272 Dam pa took up residence in the capital where he gave esoteric initiations to princes and lords.<sup>30</sup> While his primary title at court was state preceptor (guoshi 國師), it is suggested by this Chinese biography that Dam pa took over the role of imperial preceptor (dishi 帝師), the highest religious authority of the empire, after 'Phags pa returned to Tibet to fill the power vacuum at Sa skya with the sudden death of his brother.<sup>31</sup>

27 *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.155. The text reads: "Having also brought along the two nephews, the Dharma-rajā 'Phags pa, who was only ten, and Phyag na rdo rje, who was only six years old, in the wood-dragon year, 1244, they brought the previously mentioned religious objects (*sten*) (of Gur mgon) and left glorious Sa skya. And while they were going by way of the northern road, on the road there was a young boy from Upper sGa who became a student. As for his facial appearance, it was like the golden mask of sGo rum (at Sa skya) and so he became nicknamed "A gnyan." In truth he was seen by the two, uncle and nephew (Sa skya Paṇḍita and 'Phags pa) as an emanation of glorious Gur mgon. He was named Kun dga' grags and was taken as an attendant. Later sGa A gnyan dam pa became a close disciple of the two, uncle and nephew, Sa skya Paṇḍita (and 'Phags pa)." This account is also found in *Hor Chos rje sku 'phreng gong rim gyi rnam thar*, folio 17r, which is translated by Sperling (1991), pp.456-457.

It is this leather mask known as "bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes" ("the black mask depicting a *bse* spirit which was well known as being able to fly") that is the focal image of the early Gur mgon cult in Tibet. How this mask was transmitted to Tibet is outlined in the *mGon po 'i chos 'byung* (pp.190-194). The story of the mask is recounted in: Roberto Vitali, "Sa skya and the mNga' ris skor gsum legacy: the case of Rin chen bzang po's flying mask." *Lungta* 14 (Spring 2001), pp.5-44.

28 Li Jicheng 李冀誠, "Zangchuan fojiao yu Wutaishan" 藏传佛教与五台山, p. 18; Liu Yao 刘耀, et al., *Wutai shan lüyou cidian* 五台山旅游辞典. Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1992, p.227. He was also said to have founded temples on Wutaishan himself. See: Gao Lintao 高林涛, "Basiba yu Wutai shan" 八思巴与五台山, p.26. One of these temples may include Yul bsrung gling (Youguosi 佑國寺), founded in 1295. Dam pa's biography in *A Comprehensive Registry of the Successive Ages of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs* (chapter 22) mentions him building temples on Wutai. In 1293 a temple was built on Wutaishan in his honor for healing the emperor (Li Jicheng, "Zangchuan Fojiao," p.18).

29 On Tibetan interests in Wutaishan see: Karl Debreczeny, "Wutaishan: Pilgrimage to Five Peak Mountain." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, Issue 6 (Dec 2011), pp.1-133. <http://www.thlib.org/collections/texts/jiats/#!jiats=/06/debreczeny/>

30 Franke (1984), p.161.

31 Wang Yao, p.958; Petech (1980), p.199. However Dharmapalarakshita (1268-1287) is usually accredited with being appointed dishi in 1283.

Dam pa was also caught in political intrigue at Qubilai Khan's court. He was opposed by the infamous chancellor Sangha (Sangge 桑哥, d. 1291), (formerly Dam pa's pupil) whom Dam pa could not abide, and according to his shorter biography in the *Yuan shi* 元史, Dam pa was banished to Chaozhou 潮州, thus it is possible he served as imperial preceptor for less than a year.<sup>32</sup> Tibetan records provide a more graphic account of Dam pa being slandered to the throne and punished:

Then sGa A gnyan Dam pa, the close disciple of the *dharmaraja* 'Phags pa, having come to China as an attendant of the two *dharmaraja* lords, uncle and nephew (Sa skya Paṇḍita and 'Phags pa), the limitless homage of the king and his ministers having been made, they honored him with prostrations (made him their *guru*). There a minister called Mi che, harboring ill will, slandered him to the king (Qubilai Khan). Because of that, the king imposed a baseless penalty on sGa A gnyan, and the executioner, taking him, shut him in a box and cast him into the river. When it was carried to another land, those who came to fetch water discovered it. Having taken it to the riverbank [they] looked [inside]. They saw that A gnyan had a clear (unworried) complexion and was reciting the liturgy of Mahākāla. All those people were amazed and paid homage to him. At that time an epidemic having broken out in the nation, by whatever means [they tried] it was still not driven back. The king being anxious, gave the following order to his subjects: "Although that excellent one called A gnyan Dam pa did nothing wrong, I, through the sin of ignorance, by sentencing him acted unsuitably, bringing about this epidemic. Search out what place A gnyan Dam pa is now and invite him back." Everyone invited him accordingly, and because he was petitioned, the kingdom's epidemic was pacified.<sup>33</sup>

Dam pa was only able to return to court in 1290/1 after the fall of Sangha.<sup>34</sup> This exile from court leaves a seven year gap in the available accounts of Dam pa's life, when sDe mgon khang was founded.

## Dam pa's Imperially Sponsored Mahākāla Temples

Dam pa's applications of Mahākāla in the service of the Mongolian military machine is well attested to in historical sources, and in recognition many temples dedicated to Mahākāla were

32 Wang Yao, p.958; Petech (1980), p.199. However Dharmapalarakshita (1268-1287) is usually accredited with being appointed *dishi* in 1283.

33 *Yuan shi* 元史, ch. 202, p.4519; Franke (1984), pp. 163 & 173; Shen Weirong (2004): "Magic power, sorcery and evil spirit: the image of Tibetan monks in Chinese literature during the Yuan dynasty." In Christoph Cüppers, ed., *The Relationship Between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) In Traditional Tibet*. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, p.206.

Sangha was a former student of Dam pa's who persecuted him once he came to power. See: Atwood (2004), p.488; and H. Francke, "Sangha." In Igor de Rachewiltz et al. ed., *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period (1200–1300)*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1993, pp.558–583.

34 *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folios 9r-10r; *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, pp.157-158.

built throughout the empire. Numerous Mongol victories, like the fall of Xiangyang 襄陽 (Hubei) and Changzhou 常州 (Hebei), were attributed to Dam pa's summoning of Mahākāla.<sup>35</sup> Most famously in 1275 Qubilai asked Dam pa for the protector deity Mahākāla to intervene against the Southern Song, which his greatest general Banyan (Bayan; 1236-1295) could not conquer. Dam pa petitioned the throne to build a temple to Mahākāla, and a "beautiful temple with an imposing statue" was built north of the Zhuo River in Zhuozhou 涿州 (south of Beijing) with its statue facing south (i.e.: facing the Song).<sup>36</sup> According to the aforementioned *Dam pa Stele* Anige constructed the temple at Zhuozhou in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Zhiyuan (1276) and Dam pa consecrated it.<sup>37</sup> During the campaign in the south when the Chinese petitioned the Chinese martial god Zhenwu 真武 to deliver them from the Mongol onslaught, he responded that he had to yield to the Great Black God leading the Mongol army. Mahākāla was sighted going house to house on the battlefield, sending Chinese troops fleeing, and within a short time the Song surrendered. Interestingly these accounts of the fall of Southern Song are recorded in Chinese sources.<sup>38</sup> Such stories are also corroborated in Tibetan sources such as the *rGya bod yig tshang* which records that when the former emperor of the Song and his courtiers were brought north and shown the temple, they were astonished to see the image of Mahākāla as they had seen him among the Mongol troops.<sup>39</sup>

The *Huguosi beiming* 護國寺碑銘 ("Temple for the Protection of the Nation Stele Inscription"), dated 1318 by Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270–1342), records that the Mongol Khans "took greatest success due to the blessings of Mahākāla, thus he was admired as the greatest and most powerful protector, and was worshiped by the masses in the Great Hall. ... Dam pa requested to establish a temple south-west of the capital at Zhuozhou to offer sacrifices and pray [to Mahākāla]."<sup>40</sup> This stele suggests that Mahākāla was the central image at Huguosi's main hall during the Yuan, and that Mahākāla veneration was one of the primary focuses of worship there. The stele also records that this temple's imperial patron was Grand Princess Sengge

35 Vitali (2001), p.38, note 45. Dam pa's Chinese biography records the summons to return to court was in 1295. Sangha was overthrown by the Mongol aristocrats Öchicher (1247–1311) and Öz-Temür (Örlüg Noyan) and executed for corruption in 1291. See Atwood (2004), pp.415, 488.

36 Franke (1984), pp.161-162, and Wang Yao, p.959, quoting the *Gui er ji* by Zhang Duanyi (1246-).

37 According to Wang Yao (p.958) the *rGya Bod yig tshang* (part 1, 23<sup>rd</sup> section) says that inside the temple there was a large statue of Mahākāla and smaller statues of his retinue, all made by Dam pa himself. The Chinese translation of this text, the *Han Zang Shiji* 漢藏史集 (p.173) says only that Anige was sent to Juzhou 巨州 [sic] (should be Zhuozhou 涿州) to build the temple and that Dam pa consecrated it. Perhaps Wang Yao simply confused this citation with the next one (see footnote 37 below).

38 Wang Yao, p.958. This would agree with the account in the *Han Zang Shiji* cited above in footnote 36. Shen Weirong (2004, p.204) says that it was 'Phags pa who consecrated the chapel and appointed Dam pa abbot.

39 e.g.: the *Fozu lidai tongzai*, a comprehensive chronicle of Buddhism compiled before 1340 by the Chinese monk Nian Chang; and Liu Guan's *Huguosi beiming*. Franke (1984), pp.175 & 158 and quote on pp.161-162; Sperling (1991); Shen Weirong (2004), p.204.

40 Shen Weirong (2004), p.204, citing the *rGya bod yig tshang*, p.287.

Ragi/Rabjai (Tib: Seng ge rab rgyas; Ch: Xiangelaji 祥哥剌吉; ca. 1283–1332),<sup>41</sup> sister of Külüg Khan (r. 1307–1311) and Buyantu Khan (r. 1311–1320), and a famous collector of Chinese art touted in art historical writings as a heavily Sinified Mongol who had taken on the identity of a Chinese literati.<sup>42</sup> Princess Sengge was also an avid patron of Tibetan Buddhism, Dam pa, and the state Mahākāla cult in particular, revealing that she had not given up her Mongolian identity, but rather suggests the existence of a Mongolian elite that could move skillfully in different cultural circles that composed the multi-ethnic empire they ruled.<sup>43</sup>

There are other examples of Dam pa personally involved in building temples and making statues, such as in 1290 when he built a temple on the former site of Jinglesi 淨樂寺, south of the city wall. These images were described as being “Indian,” probably a reference to the Newar style popular in Tibet and patronized at court.<sup>44</sup> Even within the Mongolian imperial palace in the Huiqing Pavilion 徽清亭, a statue of Mahākāla was housed.<sup>45</sup> In another incident, Qaidu Mongols rebelled against Qubilai in 1295, and the Khan asked Dam pa to pray to Mahākāla.<sup>46</sup> A *maṇḍala* of Mahākāla was made in the temple of Wengshan, north-west of the Gaoliang 高粱 river, at Dam pa’s request, where he performed the necessary rites, after which victory was reported. It was said that due to Dam pa’s family line diligently revering this deity, Mahākāla would answer all of his requests.

## Baochengsi

An extant metropolitan Yuan dynasty site in the cultural heartland of China related to the state cult of Mahākāla and Dam pa is a sculptural niche on the former site of Baochengsi 宝成寺,

41 Ibid, and Franke (1996), p.51. Huguosi is in Quanning 全宁, modern Liaoning province. The text of this stele is reproduced in *Liu daizhi wenji* 柳待制文集, ch. 9, 1 a-b.

42 Princess Sengge was the younger sister of Khayishan Külüg Khan (Wuzong 武宗; 1281–1311, r. 1307–1311) and Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan (Renzhong 仁宗; 1285–1320; r. 1311–1320), the latter being famous for his promotion of Chinese culture. See: *Yuanshi* 22, p.481 (1303); 26, p.590; 35, p.782 (1331); 106, p.2700; 109, pp.2758 & 2765; 118, p.2917 (1307). Princess Sengge’s daughter Budasiri became the primary consort of Tuq-Temür Jiya’atu Khan (Wenzong; 1328/9-1332). Budasiri (dpon mo bhu dha shri) and her husband Tuq-Temür (rgyal po thug the mur) are two of the rulers depicted at the bottom of the famous silk *kesi* Yamantaka Maṇḍala in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1992.54), dateable to circa 1328-1329. See: James Watt and Anne Wardell, *When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 1997, cat. 25, p.97; and James C. Y. Watt, ed., *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty*. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010, pp.110-114. (*Yuanshi* 114, pp.2877-2878). Ibid., p.162, and Franke (1996), p.50.

43 See: Shen C. Y. Fu, “Princess Sengge Ragi Collector of Painting and Calligraphy.” In Marsha Weidner, ed. *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*. 1990, pp.55-80.

44 Franke (1996), p.50 and footnote 112. Other collaborative projects between Princess Sengge and Dam pa can be found in the petitions to grant amnesties for imprisoned officials as part of Buddhist observances. Franke (1996), pp.50 and 62 citing the *Yuanshi* 26, p.590.

45 See: Franke (1984), p.166.

46 Watt and Wardwell (1997), p.98, note 3, citing Zhu Yizun (1629-1709) *Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下旧闻考. Beijing, 1985.

located on the southeastern slope of Mount Wu 吴山 in Hangzhou (Fig. 2).<sup>47</sup> This site is composed of three sculptural niches,<sup>48</sup> of which the most interesting for our discussion is the east niche with a relatively well preserved triad of images in high relief of Mahākāla with two attendant deities. In general appearance the central deity of this niche at Baochengsi resembles the state protector Mahākāla: squatting on a human corpse with a circular scarf framing his head, flaming body nimbus, three overarching garuda-birds, a bird to top left, and a dog to top right, consistent with other period depictions. But upon closer inspection the central figure has some very unusual details when compared to the 1292 image (Fig. 1) and appears to be a strange amalgamation of Tibetan iconography and Chinese visual culture, suggesting local Chinese sculptors in Hangzhou, unaccustomed to the alien imagery requested by a Mongolian patron, fell back on familiar forms, resulting in these unusual Sino-Tibetan hybrid images.<sup>49</sup>

This site is dated by a dedicatory inscription to 1322 and names the donor as a high Yuan military official from the capital:

The official dispatched by the court, the Cavalry Generalissimo of the Guards, Left Guard, Imperial Army, Chief Military Commissioner, Bo Jianu 伯家奴, happily gives wealth [for the construction of] a hall for an imposing Mahākāla sacred image, to pray that I am one with good fortune, blessing and protection, that my mansion gates shine prominently, salary to increase and position to rise, and all times are auspicious and everything comes to me as I wish. Founded in stone on the second year of the Zhizhi 至治 reign (1322).<sup>50</sup>

That the patron of this image, Bo Jianu, was a Mongolian Yuan military official is fitting as Mahākāla was seen within the Mongol empire as the state protector. While there is not a great deal of historical documentation on Bo Jianu, we do know that he later held a court appointment in the Commission for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs (*Xuanzheng yuan* 宣政院), which also dovetails closely with his commissioning an image of this Tibetan Buddhist martial deity, as

47 On Qaidu Khan (1235-1301), heir apparent of Ögedei Khan (1229-41), and his defiance of Qubilai, see Atwood (2004), pp.444-5.

48 Su Bai (1996) pp.368-372; Xiong Wenbin (2003), pp.162-168; Shen Weirong (2004), p.207.

49 The central niche contains three free standing statues of the Buddhas of the Three Times, which were decapitated during the Cultural Revolution, and now have modern heads.

50 Mahākāla at Baochengsi appears to grasp a severed human head in both hands at his chest (one can see hair to the left by his fingertips, and a fairly realistic face with sunken eyes) instead of his traditional skull-cup and flaying knife; his face and whiskers appear human, more like that of a fierce Chinese general than the demonic face and flaming hair in typical Tibetan depictions; his crown is more like that of a Chinese bodhisattva, without his traditional five skulls; the jeweled necklace with hanging strands which run down his chest is also more typical of Chinese bodhisattva depictions, and not the wrathful bone ornaments described in his liturgy. Finally, behind the sleeves which fly out at his elbows a human head is tucked under each arm, which may stem from a misreading of his usual garland of severed heads. Usually flanking Mahākāla Pañjaranātha are the primary members of his retinue such as the goddess Tāmadhātviśvarī ŚrīDevī riding a mule with four arms holding sword, skull cup, lance, and trident; and Tiger Riding Mahākāla (Vyāghravāhana Mahākāla), wielding a club in the right hand and holding up a skull-cup at his chest in his left.

that office served military functions as well.<sup>51</sup> However, as Xiong Wenbin rightly points out, a government official paying for the creation of this image may not necessarily be a personal act of devotion, but rather may reflect a court order, and this Mahākāla niche appears to be a similar artistic creation to the stone niche carvings of nearby Feilaifeng 飞来峰 as well as the Juyongguan 居庸關 *stūpa* gate (north of Beijing), both being Yuan official projects.<sup>52</sup>

While the original subject of the west flanking niche is unknown, it has been suggested that, because of his prominent place within the imperial Mahākāla cult at this time (only nineteen years after his death in 1303), the original image was probably a portrait of Dam pa himself.<sup>53</sup> A poem about this sculpture recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century makes this direct connection, citing the aforementioned Dam pa epitaph by Zhao Mengfu.<sup>54</sup>

### sDe mgon po

While none of the prominent Yuan metropolitan temples founded in China proper by Dam pa survive, another protector chapel which follows a similar pattern, sDe mgon po (Fig. 3), built by Dam pa in 1284 under imperial patronage, and described as “without any differentiation from the sGo rum Protector Chapel of Glorious Sa skya,” remains in Tre shod, dKar mdzes (Ganzi 甘孜, Western Sichuan).<sup>55</sup> An account of the building of sDe mgon po, also known as Tre’i mgon khang,<sup>56</sup> is given in the *sDe mgon po’i dkar chag* (“Descriptive Catalog of

51 *chaoting chailai guan piaoqi wei shang jiangjun zuowei qinjun du zhihui shi Bojianu, fa xin xi she jing cai, zhuangyan Mahegela sheng xiang yi tang, qi fu baoyou zhaimen guang xian, lu wei zeng gao, yiqie shi zhong jixiang ruyi zhe. zhizhi er nian [ ] yue [ ] ri li shi.* 朝廷差来官骠骑卫上将军左卫亲军都指挥使伯冢奴，发心喜舍净财，庄严麻葛刺圣相一堂，祈福保佑宅门光显，禄位增高，一切时中吉祥如意者。至治二年？月？日立石。 For a rubbing of the inscription see: Su Bai (1996), p.370, fig. 18-3. This title suggests that the general Bo Jianu’s post was in the Yuan capital.

52 There are few historical records on Bojianu. It is recorded in the *Yuanshi* 元史 that in 1345 he was appointed the Pacification Commissioner of the Commission for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs Vice Prefect of Liaoning Circuit, Shanbei (*Shanbei Liaoning dao fengshi xuanfu de xuanzheng yuan tongzhi* 山北辽宁道奉使宣抚的宣政院同知); and in 1356 he was appointed Commandant Grand Defender (regional commander) Administrator of Henan (*shuai bing zhenshou tong guan Henan pingzhang* 率兵镇守潼关的河南平章). Xiong Wenbin (2003), p.163. In 1288 the Bureau of Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs was re-named the Xuanzheng yuan after a Tang court institution charged with receiving Tibetan dignitaries. The Yuan institution was charged with both overseeing Buddhist affairs throughout the empire and the overseeing of Tibetan affairs, including military affairs of that region. See Franke (1981), pp.311-313.

53 Xiong Wenbin (2003), p.163.

54 Su Bai (1996), p.372. The west niche now contains a modern image of Padmasambhava dating to 1996, commissioned by a Taiwanese Buddhist society in Taipei. This is an assessment that other prominent scholars such as Xiong Wenbin ([2003], p.168) accepts. A Ming Wanli period (1573-1620) record suggests that in the west niche was an image of Avalokiteśvara (*Guanyin da shi xiang* 观音大士像) (Xiong Wenbin [2003], pp.162-163). However, another niche farther off to the side on site also has an image of Avalokiteśvara, and the record may refer to that image.

55 Ibid.

56 “dpal sa skya’i sgo rum mgron khang dang dbyer med pa,” *sDe mgon po’i dkar chag*, 242r, line 4; and *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.153. sDe mgon po is not the only temple built by Dam pa dedicated to Gur mgon along the Sino-Tibetan frontier to survive. Dam pa also built sKal bzang dpal ’byor gling

sDe mgon po”) bearing the date 1668.<sup>57</sup> However this text could not have been written the same year the preported author, Hor Chos rje, Ngag dbang phun tshogs (1668-1746), was born. Based on the long life wishes for the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) that appear in the colophon at the end, this edition of the *dkar chag* probably dates to his lifetime in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and it is clearly stated that it is (at least in part) a compilation of earlier sources copied by Hor Chos rje:

In general, may the teachings of the Buddha flourish in general and happiness and well-being come to sentient beings. In particular, may the teachings of the Victorious One, the great bTsong kha pa may remain for a long time. May all holy beings who are holders of the teachings and holy illustrious gurus teach during the span of more than one-hundred years of life of the learned one Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (the Fifth Dalai Lama)! Thus the *dkar chag* was compiled by the Hor chos rje, Ngag dbang phun tshogs, and ancient documents of long ago from the old people who knew these events well, when compiled together, are like this. In order to learn this I made a copy.<sup>58</sup>

Another important source is the *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus* (“A History of the Great Image which Liberates Through Sight, the Ye shes mgon po of Tre shod”).<sup>59</sup> ‘Jigs med bsam grub’s account in *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus* is based largely on this work and reproduces much of it word for word.<sup>60</sup>

According to these accounts ‘Phags pa petitioned for the molding of an image to house the sacred relics of the Mahākāla cult which Sa skya Paṇḍita brought with him to the Mongol court, and the construction of a corresponding temple to house the image, pointing out that it should be sponsored specifically by the emperor and his sons. The king (Qubilai) and prince(s) consented to fulfill ‘Phags pa’s wishes. Then ‘Phags pa loaded the relics and images onto a white mule, and gave it to sGa A gnyan dam pa, saying to Dam pa, “You should erect the image of Gur mgon,

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(尕藏寺), also known as Khri ‘du sKal bzang dgon, in his hometown of Khri ‘du rdzong, in present day Qinghai Province. A history of this temple and Dam pa’s involvement in Tibetan can be found in the local history *Khri ‘du*, pp.189-196, a 2002 *neibu* (internal government) publication, and in *Khams stod lo rgyus thor bsodus*, vol.1, p.45. sKal bzang dpal ‘byor gling was restored by a bSod nams chos ‘phel in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For a short entry on the temple in English see: Andreas Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet’s Outer Provinces: Kham vol.2 The Qinghai Part of Kham*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004, pp.64-8.

57 A name based on the temple’s location, the Tre shod Maṇḍala Plain.

58 *Tre ‘i mgon khang ngam sDe mgon po’i dkar chag*, folio 247v.

59 A 16 folio hand-written manuscript in *dpe cha* format of undetermined date and authorship which cites a number of sources (folio 2b) including the *Hor dgon sde bcu gsum gyi lo rgyus* and *Khang gsar ma zur gyi lo rgyus*. While the *Tre shod ye shes mgon po’i brnyan mthong grol chen po’i lo rgyus* does not name the author or date, modern usages such as *spyi lo*, “Western year,” suggest a 20<sup>th</sup> century (post 1950s) dating. This is one of ‘Jigs med bsam grub’s main sources, who cites it as: “sku shogs lam brag nas mkho sprod byas pa’i *tre shod ye shes mgon po’i brnyan mthong grol chen po’i lo rgyus* zhes ba’i deb lag bris ma zhiḡ tu gsal/ khang dmar pas brtsams” (composed by Khang dmar pa). The *Hor dgon sde bcu gsum gyi lo rgyus* names the same Khang dmar pa as its author, and references to historical figures such as the Seventh Dalai Lama (1708-1757) suggests an 18<sup>th</sup> century date at the earliest for its source.

60 ‘Jigs med bsam grub also cites, without page numbers, the first volume of the so-called autobiography of Ngor mKhan chen dPal ldan chos skyong (1702-1758/59). I would like to thank the late E. Gene Smith for his assistance in locating these texts.

with these sacral objects placed inside it, wherever this mule lies down.” Having said that, they were dispatched together with a retinue. Eventually they came to the center of modern day dKar mdzes (Ganzi) prefecture, which is known as the Tre shod Maṇḍala Plain, where the white mule sat down, placing his tail into a small spring, and refused to get up. Based on this, Dam pa identified this place as that spoken of in ’Phags pa’s divination.

There is some variation in Tibetan sources on the patronage of the temple. The 1668 descriptive catalog simply states: “In the wood-monkey year (1284), the Mongol Qubilai Khan became sponsor for the erection of this *vihara*.”<sup>61</sup> The *Tre shod ye shes mgon po’i brnyan mthong grol chen po’i lo rgyus* provides an alternative narrative, initially saying that it was one of Qubilai Khan’s officials (*dpon po*) called “Wa” who was dispatched with Dam pa together with a retinue, but then goes on to say that the emperor’s son (*gong ma’i sras*) served as patron, and later in the text mentions the descendants of the imperial prince “Wang” (*gong ma’i sras wang*).<sup>62</sup> The modern history of the chapel *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus* recounts that instructions for the founding were given to both Dam pa and Qubilai’s son, “Wang” (the prince), who served as its patron and had the protector chapel built.<sup>63</sup>

The A gnyan *pag shi* (Dam pa) himself served as the principal sculptor who molded a colossal clay statue of Gur mgon (Fig. 4). Several sources add that Dam pa created the image together with skilled Chinese artisans (*rgya’i dzo bo*).<sup>64</sup> This served as the temple’s primary image among the eight Gur mgon deity forms (*Gur mgon lha brgyad*),<sup>65</sup> in which the sacred relics were placed.

61 In ’Jigs med msam grub’s account (p.158) it is Qubilai’s son “Wang” who became sponsor of erecting this *vihara*.

62 *Tre shod ye shes mgon po’i brnyan mthong grol chen po’i lo rgyus* (folio 11a, lines 4-5) says it was the patron King Sechen’s (Qubilai Khan’s) stainless official called “Wa”: *rje a gnyan dam pa dang sbyin bdag rgyal po se chen gyi gdongs dri ma med pa dpon po wa zhes bya ba ’khor tshogs dang bcas te rim gyi phebs pa na/*. However this text then goes on to say (folio 11b, lines 2-3) that the emperor’s son (*gong ma’i sras*) served as patron: *de ltar gong ma’i sras bod kyi sbyin bdag dang / rje a gnyan dam pa nyid kyi phyag bzo dngos dang / rgya’i lha bzo shin tu mkhas pa dag gi rog dang bcas ste legs par bzhengs shing /*; and later (folio 14a, lines 4-5) mentions the descendants of the imperial prince Wang: *de nas gong ma’i sras wang la gdung rgyud byung tshul dang / khang gsar mar zur gyis gdung rab byung tshul rnam ’dir ma spros par gzhan du bri bar bya’o//*

63 *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.158. “Wang” may just be a transliteration of the Chinese for prince wang 王, and not actually the name of one of Qubilai Khan’s sons. It is thus translated here as “the prince.” This prince is credited with fathering children by a local woman and thus starting the Hor (Mongol) line of Sichuan in the Ganzi area.

64 *sDe mgon po’i dkar chag* (p.91 folio 245r, line 4), and *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus* (p.158) only mentions A gnyan *pag shi* served as the principal sculptor, but no mention is made of Chinese artists. The 19<sup>th</sup> century *Hor Chos rje sku phreng gong rim gyi rnam thar* (written in 1849), p.34 (folio 17v, line 2) says “Dam pa together with Chinese artisans made the Eight Gur mgon Deity Forms” (Tib: *Dam pa nyid rgya’i dzo bo dang bcas pa Gur mgon lha brgyad yongs*); and the *Tre shod ye shes mgon po’i brnyan mthong grol chen po’i lo rgyus* (folio 11b, line 3) records that Dam pa was the primary sculptor working together with very skilled Chinese artists –see note 62 above for transcription of this passage.

65 For a description of the *Gur mgon lha brgyad*, see: Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp.49-51, and Tucci *Indo-Tibetica*, vol.III, p.122. The identity of the Mongol prince is discussed in *sDe mgon po* (2001), p.3, lines 15-25, but not included in the Chinese translation.

The dizzying number, array, and quality of relics from buddhas, bodhisattvas, *siddhas*, *paṇḍitas*, translators and great scholars of India and Tibet—especially focusing on the transmitted sacred objects at the very center of the Gur mgon cult, with the sandalwood Mahākāla image as the main relic in its heart,<sup>66</sup> and the nine-pronged vajra of meteoric iron in its hair<sup>67</sup>—as well as relics of most all of the individuals in the transmission lineage of the Gur mgon teachings (including Dam pa himself), all suggest the importance of the central statue in particular and the temple as a whole:

First, in his chignon resided the nine-pronged vajra of meteoric iron which was brought from India by the *paṇḍita* Gayadhara, relics of the Seven Generations of Buddhas Vipaśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhuk, Krakuccanda, Kanakamuni, Kaśyapa, and Śākyamuni an image of Akṣobhya made from the wood of the Bodhi tree, and a lock of hair of 'Phags pa Rin po che. In its third eye resided seven relics of the Buddha. In the right eye seven relics of Shāriputra, and in the left eye, seven relics of Maudgalyayanaputra (the two main disciples of the Buddha). In the head, a skull fragment of Nāropa. In the nostrils, teeth of the Buddha Kāśyapīya. In the neck, a tooth of the bodhisattva Dharmodgata. In the heart, [resides] the spontaneously arisen sandalwood Mahākāla image whose history was explained above<sup>68</sup> as the principal [consecration object] in the manner of inviting the wisdom element to reside in the image (*jnānasattva*); and an image of Gur mgon painted with the nose-blood of Ma gcig lab kyi sgron ma (1062–1149); an image of Gur mgon made from the black stone of Śītī-bhavati grove cemetery; a four-faced image (Sarvavid Vairocana?) which arose from the crystallized molten drops (from the cremation) of the reverend Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216); an image of Hevajra, tutelary deity which was the object of the Mañjuḥṣa Sa skya Paṇḍita; an image of Bhutadhara Vajrapaṇī made from gold material; an image of Four-armed Avalokiteśvara made of crystal. In his belly, the alms bowl of the Buddha Śākyamuni which was full of various precious objects.

Furthermore, blessing supports such as the bones, cremation relics (*ring bsrel*), hair, and clothes of many Indian and Tibetan scholars, *siddhas*, translators, and *paṇḍitas*: 'Phags pa Rin po che's rosary, Shariputra's belt, bones of lord Atiśa (982–1054), the monk's robes of the great *paṇḍita* Shākya-srī (b. 12<sup>th</sup> c.), bones of the *paṇḍita* Dharmāpala, a handkerchief of the

66 According to the *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag* (folio 244r-244v), this is said to be a spontaneously formed image of Mahākāla made from sandalwood from the pure Gosha Island brought by O rgyan Rin po che (Padmasambhava) and given to the Paṇḍita Dharmapala. When Dharmapala came to see Tibet's Mt. Kailash and Lake Manasarowar he gave to the great translator Rin chen bzang po (958-1055), and successively transmitted through several generations to the great Brag steng pa of mNga' ris, Yon tan tshul khrim, the great guru, the Translator of Mal, Blo gros grags pa, to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158). For more on the history of the sandalwood Mahākāla image see: Vitali (2001), pp.15 and 38.

67 According to the *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag* (folio 244v) this was the nine pronged vajra of meteoric iron of the Brahmin Vararuci (Bram ze mChog sred) , transmitted together with the bSe 'bag nag po 'phur shes mask (the focus of the Gur mgon cult), along with the aforementioned spontaneously formed sandalwood image, which were given successively to: Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, the reverend bSod nams rtse mo (1142-1182), the venerable Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216) and the Mañjuḥṣa Sa skya Paṇḍita (182-1251).

68 See notes 66-67 above.

Mahābodhi image of Bodhgaya, hair of [Pha] dam pa Sangs rgyas (d. 1117), the meditation belt of the Indian Vajrapāṇi (1239–1267), the bones of the *paṇḍita* Kāmalashīla, the flesh of the *mahāsiddha* Savari (Śabarīpāda), the bones of the *paṇḍita* Gayadhara, the hair of the *paṇḍita* Kaladgapa, the flesh of one who has been reborn a *brahmin* seven times, the hair of the great Nepalese *paṇḍita* Mahābodhi, the hat of the Great Glorious Translator of rGa, the cremation ashes and monk’s robes of ’Brog mi Shākya ye shes, nose blood of the great translator Rin chen bzang po (958–1055), hair of the Translator of Khro phu (Byams pa dpal), hair of ’Brom ston pa (1005–1064), bones of the *kalyāna-mitra* Po to ba, bones of the *kalyāna-mitra* byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan (b. 11<sup>th</sup> c.), bones of the great Sa skya Kun dga’ snying po (1092–1158), bones of the reverend bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182), bones of the reverend Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216), bones of the Mañjuḥṣa Sa skya Paṇḍita, the corpse salt of the Mañjuḥṣa Sa skya Paṇḍita, a skull fragment and hair of Mar pa of Lho brag (1002/1012–1097), the clothes of Mi la ras pa (1052–1135), the bones of Dwags po lha rje (sGam po pa; 1079–1153), bones of Phag mo grub pa (1110–1170), hair of U rgyan rin po che (Padmasambhava; 8<sup>th</sup> century), the meditation cord of ’Bri gung ’Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), bones of the conqueror rGod tshang pa [mgon po rdo rje] (1189–1258), clothes of Zhang g. Yu brag pa (1123–1194), flesh of Ma gcig re ma, bones of the mahāsiddha U rgyan pa, etc.

And earth of the dharma thrones of the teacher Śākyamuni Buddha, leaves and fruit of the bodhi tree, places/sites Bodhgaya; and various earth from *vihara* such as Vulture’s Peak, Śrī Nalendra, Nepal’s Swayambunath, Udayāna Shambala, Wutaishan, Mt. Kailash, bSam yas, and Khra ’brug of Lhasa. Various water from the four great rivers of India such as the Ganges, precious sand, and island grasses, etc. In short various earth, stones, water and dust particles and vestments of images of *vihara*, *stūpa*, famous pilgrimage sites, snowy and rocky mountains, great lakes, and cemeteries from the countries of India, China, Nepal, Khotan, and Tibet.

Furthermore, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, having gained the *siddhi* of swiftness, collected from the four continents and eight sub-continents such as the twenty-four lands, thirty-two holy sites, and the eight great cemeteries special earth, stones, water, wood, and the essence *mantra* of the deities of the four classes of *tantra*, which were drawn in gold on blue paper, especially a scroll of Mahākāla’s own *mantra* [were placed inside]. Below the feet (in the lotus throne) also an innumerable sequence of rolls of *mantras*, such as the *cakrā* of the male and female *yakṣa* together with the principal image, the great statue of glorious Gur mgon, was well erected.<sup>69</sup>

When the temple and the images within were completed, Dam pa sent a letter to ’Phags pa, who was residing in the Mongol royal palace, requesting the consecration of the *vihara*, together with its sacred images, with the actual entry of the wisdom being into the statue.<sup>70</sup> ’Phags pa

69 *sDe mgon po’i dkar chag* folio 245r- 246v; *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, pp.158. See Debreczeny (2007), Appendix 1 for the full translation.

70 The wisdom being, or *jnānasattva*, is the wisdom element that one invites to reside in an image, called the *samayāsattva*, thus “animating” or “activating” the image.

made the consecration from the imperial palace in Beijing on an astrologically auspicious date. It is reported that when 'Phags pa scattered white rice from his hand in Beijing, a snow of rice fell before the image of Mahākāla in dKar mdzes and the earth before the statue became white with grain.<sup>71</sup> Many other extraordinary signs of the actual entry of the wisdom being arose; for example when a soldier threw an axe at the door of this chapel he immediately vomited blood from his mouth and then died.<sup>72</sup>

The descriptive catalog *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag* then goes on to say: "Even now, many sick people who are stricken with kinds of diseases such as leprosy which are difficult to expel, even by whatever healing rituals and medical treatment, by doing such things as prostrations and circumambulation at this very temple, it is capable of instantly curing them."<sup>73</sup>

There are a number of chronological problems with this account. Specifically 'Phags pa departed for Tibet in 1274 where he died in 1280, four years before the completion of the temple in 1284. However, if 'Phags pa was involved, then perhaps the consecration of the statue described above happened after the sculptures were erected, but before the temple was fully completed. Regardless of the details, the intentions of this story is clear, the temple and its central image had 'Phags pa's blessings, as much a reminder that it was he who had initiated its establishment. However, it should also be kept in mind that Khams lore attributes far too much to 'Phags pa (much like the Chinese princess Wencheng from the Imperial Period), and the founding of this chapel has been commonly re-attributed to 'Phags pa himself in the region.<sup>74</sup> More broadly,

71 *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag*, folio 246v; *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folio 13a-13b; *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.161.

The account in the modern history *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus* (p.161) elaborates:

"When the *vihara* and the sacred objects within were well completed, [A gnyan] offered a letter to the Protector of Beings, 'Phags pa, who was residing in the Mongol royal palace, requesting the consecration of the *vihara* together with its sacred images with the actual entry of the wisdom being. To that [chapel] the Protector of Beings 'Phags pa made the consecration from the palace on an auspicious date of astrological perfection. When ['Phags pa] scattered white rice from his hand (in Beijing) a snow of rice fell before the image of Mahākāla (in dKar mdzes) and the earth became white [with grain]. Many marvelous signs such as the spreading of rainbow light in the sky and the sound of divine cymbals arose, which were commonly known to the people."

72 "And in accordance with that, a soldier of Nyag le 'bum bcu previously threw an axe at the door of this chapel, and that axe thrower immediately vomited blood from his mouth and then died, such signs of the entry of wisdom being arose." *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag*, folio 246v.

73 Folio 246r-246v. To this day people come for the curative properties of the water from the spring upon which the chapel is built.

74 Local modern Chinese gazetteer accounts of the founding of *sDe mgon khang*, known in Chinese as Hanrensi 漢人寺, re-attribute the building of the protector hall to 'Phags pa himself. This was also the commonly accepted account told to me by the resident Tibetan monks when I first visited the temple in 2001. According to this alternative narrative 'Phags pa came through Ganzi on his way back from the Mongol court to Sa skya in 1274, and personally constructed a temple and molded statues in Dajintan 大金滩, he himself molding a statue of the Yuan imperial protector deity (*Yuan chao huangdi de hufa shen* 元朝皇帝的护法神) "Dinggunbao" 定棍保 or "Dingkunbao" 定坤保 (a Chinese transliteration of the temple's Tibetan name), that is Mahākāla. Because it was built by an imperial officer or built with imperial funds, these Chinese sources explain, it is called "Hanrensi," or "The Chinese Temple."

a deeper problem with this traditional account is that the chronology of Dam pa's life previously sketched suggests that the temple was founded during his banishment from court, calling into question Qubilai Khan's direct involvement. It is possible that both 'Phags pa and Qubilai have been added to the foundational narrative as eulogistic embellishments to further glorify the temple. Still, the inclusion of certain key items of the Gur mgon cult, such as the sandalwood Mahākāla sculpture and the nine-pronged vajra of meteoric iron, which were brought to China by Sa skya Paṇḍita and passed into the king's treasury after his passing, suggests some imperial involvement in the chapel's founding. It seems more likely then (based on available sources) that the objects were sent to Dam pa with instructions to found the temple, as suggested in the wording of the *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar*.<sup>75</sup>

## Brief Temple Overview

### Architecture

Having reviewed the traditional accounts of the founding of the 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel, I will now briefly outline the temple as it survives today, with reference to records of later renovation or expansion. sDe mgon po (Fig. 3) is predominantly Tibetan in its architectural structure, with flat tamped-earth roofs and sloping walls made of earth, stone, and wood. The temple sits north and faces south and occupies 3,875 square meters of land, while the area inside the temple is approximately 1,350 square meters. The three story structure is 16.35 meters tall, with a front 19 meters wide, and sides 49.3 meters long.<sup>76</sup> The building is composed of an outer circumambulatory (*phyi bskor khang*) lined with prayer wheels which surrounds the entire building, a broad front porch or gallery (*mdun khyams*), a veranda (*bar khyams*) which leads to a large outer assembly hall (*'du khang*) in front, and a smaller three story

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See: *Ganzi zhou zhi* 甘孜州志 (1997), p.313; *Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou minzu zhi* 甘孜藏族自治州民族志 (1994), p.96; *Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou gaikuang* 甘孜藏族自治州概况 (1986), p.41; and *Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou shihua* 甘孜藏族自治州史话 (1984), pp.68 and 78.

One Chinese gazetteer variation of this account that follows the Tibetan account somewhat more closely, but still substitutes 'Phags pa for Dam pa, says that on his way to the Yuan capital Dadu, 'Phags pa passed through Ganzi and, having seen the good geomantic conditions of the location, intended to build a temple and mold a statue on this spot. So having arrived at Dadu, he raised the issue with the emperor, who supported 'Phags pa's wishes and dispatched a high Mongol official (Menggu *dachen* 蒙古大臣) and 'Phags pa to Ganzi to oversee the construction of a temple and the molding of statues (*Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou shishuo* (1984), p.78). More recently in 2002 an internal *neibu* local cultural history was prepared by Tibetans in the local government in Chinese, *Jiebai meili de chuan shuo* 洁白美丽的传说 ("Pure Beautiful Traditional Sayings") which includes a small section on sDe mgon po (Degongbo 德贡波 pp.27-33), a translation of an unpublished, locally-circulated Tibetan manuscript *sDe mgon po* written by the abbot of Ganzi Monastery in 2001 (see footnote 83), which closely follows the above Tibetan accounts. However both these texts give the founding of the temple as the wood-dog year (1274), five years before the defeat of Southern Song and the founding of the Yuan dynasty.

75 "The sandalwood statue, as the main image, and the various *nang rten*-s, were loaded onto a white mule. As they were sent to sGa A gnyan pag shi, they were sent with instructions..." Translated by Vitali (2001), p.37, note 41, from the *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* (pp.90-94).

76 For more on the physical structure see: "Degongbo 德贡波" in *Zhongguo wenwu ditu ji, Yunnan fenge* 中国文物地图集, 云南分册, vol.2, p.1108.

inner structure behind, dominated by the inner chapel (*lha khang*, *srung ma khang*, or *mgon khang*) which forms the core of the temple, surrounded by an inner circumambulatory (*nang bskor*).

On the front porch to the left (west) of the main entrance to the temple is a wooden staircase that leads to the second floor which contains: a kitchen; a large sitting room (*rab gsal*) which serves as the library (*dpe mdzod khang*), woodblock printing hall (*dpar skrun khang*), and reception hall (*sne len khang*), with a large bay window that sits over the front porch supported by columns; adjoining monks communal quarters (*grwa shag*); the senior caretaker's cell; access to the inner chapel's second floor circumambulatory.<sup>77</sup>

A narrow ladder hatch in the ceiling (*gnam mthongs*) leads up to a skylight, and access to the flat tamped earth roof. Atop the roof the inner structure is surmounted by a small roof-top chapel (*rab gsal khang*) with a Chinese style clay tile roof, sloping eaves, and hip-gabled bracketing, topped with standard Tibetan temple ornaments like a gilt copper spire and victory banners.<sup>78</sup> It is probably because of the bracketing and tile roof that sDe mgon po has been called “a fusion of Tibetan and Chinese architectural styles.”<sup>79</sup>

## Records of Renovation

As the life of a temple continues after its founding, one cannot of course assume that the temple as it stands now is the same as it was at its initial founding, or that the images within date to the same time —indeed over the decade I visited the temple the façade had changed considerably. While sDe mgon po was first established as a temple of the Sa skya order in 1284, the temple has changed hands and undergone several expansions and renovations. We know from the temple's descriptive catalog (*dkar chag*), that it underwent several renovations under Mongolian sponsorship in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which culminated in a major renovation in the Earth Monkey Year (1668), when the original catalog was presumably written. According to this text most of the woodwork was replaced; all the wall paintings of the upper, middle and lower stories were newly designed; and the statues on the upper and lower floors which had become damaged were repaired:

dNgos grub bzang po, an official (*drung*) known as an emanation of 'Phags pa himself, repaired the circumambulatory of the protector chapel and the deities (*lha* images) above and below ...

The Mongolian official Nam mkha' blo bzang repaired the paintings and statues

<sup>77</sup> This second floor circumambulatory was blocked by rubble during repeated visits in 2001-2004. A tall narrow tower-shaped outhouse was added to the east side of the building attached by a short second floor catwalk (this structure has since been torn down).

<sup>78</sup> *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folio 12b; *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.161.

<sup>79</sup> “rGya Bod zung 'brel gyi sgyu rtsal nyams 'gyur ldan” in *sDe mgon po* (2001), p.5, line 1; and “ronghe le Zang Han jianju fenge” in *Jiebai meili de chuan shuo* 洁白美丽的传说, p.30, an internal publication prepared by the local Tibetan government and to my knowledge the only Chinese language publication that deals with this temple.

(*bris 'bur*) of the Chapel of the Seven Generations of Buddhas (the rooftop chapel). ... The Mongolian scholar-monk Nam mkha' rgya mtsho and dPon 'bum dge rgyal, the two, having built the outer courtyard of the new assembly hall, repaired the wall paintings and the thrones of the deities within. ...

As the dilapidation intensified through the power of time so that it was near destruction... in the Earth Monkey Year (1668), the woodwork of the roof of the rooftop [Chapel] of the Seven Generations of Buddhas, upper and lower [chapels], together with the upper and lower circumambulatories were newly replaced, and all the wall paintings of the upper, middle and lower stories were newly designed. Latticework (*drwa*) together with the statues on the upper and lower floors which had become damaged were repaired. New images of the principal deity with four faces (Sarvavid Vairocana) and his retinue, the five [Supreme Buddhas], were established.<sup>80</sup>

The Mongol official Nam mkha' blo bzang was the fifth generation of the local Hor Khang gsar ruling family and the great grandfather of the author of this text, Hor Chos rje (1668-1746), so Nam mkha' blo bzang presumably dates to the end of 16<sup>th</sup>–early 17<sup>th</sup> century, providing a general time frame for these earlier renovations.<sup>81</sup> It seems that sDe mgon po was under the control of the local Hor Khang gsar family, and its conversion to a dGe lugs pa institution, and an accompanying major renovation, may have been part of Hor Chos rje's broader program to convert all of the monasteries of dKar mdzes, the so-called “thirteen monasteries of Hor.”<sup>82</sup> An interesting aspect of sDe mgon po's renovations is that Mongol patronage again becomes part of the temple's existence four centuries after its founding and ensuing neglect. The mid 17<sup>th</sup> century was also a time when Mongols were attempting to re-unite the Mongol Empire under the banner of Tibetan Buddhism, and this may have been another reason for a renewed Mongol interest in this imperially sponsored temple at this particular time. At this point many Mongolians had already been converted to the dGe lugs pa, and members of the local Mongol elite such as Hor Chos rje were striving to convert the region.

While the 17<sup>th</sup> century *dkar chag* does not deal with the temple's later history, *sDe mgon po*, a short Tibetan manuscript written by the abbot of dKar mdzes dgon pa in 2001 does provide

80 *sDe mgon po'i dkar chag*, folio 247r-247v. See Debreczeny (2007), Appendix 1, pp.395-397 for the full translation.

81 Nam mkha' blo bzang (fifth generation) is the great grandfather of Hor Chos rje (1668-1746), who is the seventh generation in the Hor Khang gsar family. Nam mkha' blo bzang's son was Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, the sixth generation. For a genealogy of the family see: Khang gsar ye rdo, “dKar mdzes khang gsar dpon khyim rgyud kyi lo rgyus mdor bsdu.” *Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig* (49) 1, 2000, pp.117; and Khang gsar ye rdo, “dKar mdzes dpon khag khang gsar tshang gi lo rgyus rags bsdu” in: *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs*, no. 21. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999, p.5.

82 However sDe mgon po does not appear to be included in lists of these thirteen monasteries of dKar mdzes, such as the *Hor dgon sde bcu gsum gyis lo rgyis kun gsal me long*, where an incomplete list of ten to eleven of the thirteen monasteries is given.

some further detail.<sup>83</sup> According to his account: at the time of its founding in the 13<sup>th</sup> century sDe mgon po was only a small sixteen pillar protector chapel —that is the current structure's innermost chapel. Later, because the Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736-1795) and Xianfeng 咸丰 (r. 1851-1861) emperors successively paid for several expansions, it became a one hundred and two pillar temple as it appears now: with a front porch and outer assembly hall, incorporating the original protector chapel within its structure, and surrounding the entire building with an outer circumambulatory to form one large hall. Because of this imperial patronage it is also locally called rGya lha khang, meaning “the Chinese Chapel” (Hanrensi 漢人寺).<sup>84</sup>

The only dated text on site is a votive plaque, the “Nai ying lai xin” 乃應來歆,<sup>85</sup> dated to 1777, found above the second story landing, which seems to confirm this 18<sup>th</sup> century dating. It reads:

Offered respectfully by Hao 郝, commander of Fuhe 阜和 encampment in Sichuan, promoted by merit to commander of a thousand in the left patrol department, raised three times in merit, and recorded for merit fifteen times; and He 何, Ganzi *xun* 甘孜迅, Fuhe encampment in Sichuan, promoted by merit to auxiliary sentry post of the left, raised ten times in merit, and recorded for merit ten times. Erected in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Year of the Qianlong period of the Great Qing (1777), on the 15<sup>th</sup> day, full moon of mid-autumn (the eighth month).<sup>86</sup>

While the text does not specifically name donations for a renovation of the temple, this is most likely the act of devotion referred to in the title of the plaque, “to offer before a deity” (*lai xin* 來歆), and the reason for it being placed in the temple. The abbot of dKar mdzes Monastery understood this plaque as having been imperially bestowed by the Qianlong emperor.<sup>87</sup>

83 *sDe mgon po*, unpublished manuscript. In 2001 an unpublished locally circulated Tibetan text, *sDe mgon po*, was written by the abbot of dKar mdzes Monastery, citing by name (p.1) the *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, which I had given to the monks at sDe mgon po earlier in the year. (Previously the monks had followed the Chinese account that the temple had been founded by 'Phags pa –see footnote 73). Then, in 2002, an internal *neibu* publication was prepared by Tibetans in the local government in Chinese, *Jiebai meili de chuan shuo* 洁白美丽的传说 (“Pure Beautiful Traditional Sayings”), which includes a small section on sDe mgon po (Degongbo 德貢波 pp.27-33) that closely follows Tibetan accounts, largely paraphrasing this locally circulated Tibetan text (*sDe mgon po*).

84 *sDe mgon po*, p.9, lines 17-25; and *Jiebai meili de chuan shuo* 洁白美丽的传说, pp.32-33.

85 This title is difficult to translate, but an approximation might be “Made as an Offering Before the Deity.”

86 四川阜和營統領游巡左司廳功加千總功加三等紀錄十五次郝; 四川阜和營駐防甘孜迅左哨副部廳功加十等紀錄十次何,敬獻。大清乾隆四十二年歲次丁酉仲秋月望五日立。Fuhe 阜和 was the site of an important military garrison in southeastern Luding county 泸定县, present day Hualinping 化林坪, just east of Kangding. See: *Ganzi zhou zhi* 甘孜州志, p.721. *Ying* and *xun* were military offices. For more on the military organization of Ganzi and the offices of *ying* and *xun* and specifically the Fuhe Ying, the Hualin Xun 迅, and the Hualin Ying 營 in the Qing see: See: *Ganzi zhou zhi* 甘孜州志, pp.155-156. Having single character names like Hao and He in Chinese is unusual, and may indicate that these are adopted surnames by local Tibetans. This is especially common in north-eastern Tibet (Amdo), where adopted Chinese surnames like He were quite popular, however I am not aware of this being true in the south (Khams), like Ganzi.

87 *sDe mgon po*, p.9, line 19: “*ching rgyal rabs kyi Chen lung rgyal pos gnang ba'i dad bstun bde smin ...*”; and *Jiebai meili de chuan shuo* 洁白美丽的传说, p.33.

This would mean that the plaque simply records an imperial donation and the names included are simply the local officers who carried it out. *sDe mgon po* further renders the title of this plaque as “*dad bstun bde smin*,” “[acting] in accordance with faith [will cause] bliss to ripen.” It is likely the devotional act of repairing and expanding the temple that is being referred to here.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) *sDe mgon po* was looted and converted into a granary, and the statues were badly damaged or destroyed. Afterwards the temple became a government office. Then, after the Communist Party policy on voluntary religious belief was handed down, in 1983 local Tibetans, scraped together donations and bought back the Protector Hall from the Chinese Government. A committee was established for renovating the temple and they endeavored to build new statues exactly as they were before, and some objects surviving from the original statues were replaced. Now *sDe mgon po* is a functioning temple again, and water from the spring upon which it was first built is still valued for its healing properties. However, as renovations are ongoing, many of the wall paintings are being painted over and woodwork replaced.<sup>88</sup>

Thus we see that while *sDe mgon po* was first established as a *Sa skya* temple in 1284, the temple has undergone several expansions and renovations and the structure as it exists now seems to be primarily layers dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>, late 18<sup>th</sup>, and mid 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, after the local *dGe lugs pa* monastery *dKar mdzes bKra shis nor bu'i dgon pa* (*Ganzisi* 甘孜寺) took over its stewardship sometime between 1662 and 1668.<sup>89</sup> Thus the temple is the result of several stages of expansion, renovation, and restoration.<sup>90</sup>

## Outer Assembly Hall

The outer assembly hall (*'du khang*) is an open two-story structure supported by sixty-four pillars divided into eight rows of eight occupying sixty-three bays (*jian* 間; *khang mig*). On the central four pillars supporting a skylight (*byar ka*) are carved four Chinese characters, “*Tian xia tai ping*” 天下太平, or “Peace Under Heaven,” (referring to benevolent imperial rule) facing the main doors, said to be imperially bestowed in the Qianlong emperor’s own calligraphy after the temple’s expansion during his reign (1736-1795), circa 1771.<sup>91</sup>

88 Even in the last ten years since my fieldwork at the site (mostly consisting of five visits from 2001-2004) *sDe mgon po* has since undergone a series of dramatic renovations and expansions. A brief visit in 2010 revealed a facelift to its front exterior and new roof, cabinetry and statuary in the outer hall which block the painting program, and an additional hall nearby. However, here I focus on its appearance in 2001 before these more recent renovations.

89 *dKar mdzes dgon pa* was originally founded in 1662 by the Qoshot Mongols overlooking their castles of Mazur and *Khang gsar*, also built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Since the construction of these castles, strongholds of two of the five *Hor* (Mongol) states, the town of *dKar mdzes* (*Ganzi*) became the largest and most important in the *Trehor* region, and *dKar mdzes dgon pa* became one of the two largest monasteries in *Khams*.

90 For a brief overview of each chapel and an initial evaluation of its dating see: Debreczeny (2007), chapter 1.

91 Here we see the Manchu emperors of the Qing dynasty trying to project themselves as the inheritors of the Mongol Buddhist legacy in this temple built under the sponsorship of *Qubilai Khan*.

Lining the south, east, and west walls of the outer assembly hall are twenty-four panels of paintings, with two additional panels on the adjoining eastern and western walls of the inner circumambulatory for a total of twenty-six panels (Plate 1 Chart, nos. 1-26). Internal evidence found within the wall paintings themselves, especially the presence of historical lineage figures of the dGe lugs pa monastic order in five of the twenty-four panels (Plate 1, nos. 8–11, and 14), as well as the appearance of several deities, necessitates a later date, most likely sometime after the local dGe lugs pa institution dKar mdzes Monastery (Ganzisi 甘孜寺) took over its stewardship sometime after its founding in 1662, when the chapel presumably changed sectarian affiliations.<sup>92</sup> As the 1668 renovation record refers to “the new assembly hall,” the initial structure presumably dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the appearance of the paintings themselves (Figs. 6–7) suggest they are from the Qianlong (ca 1771) or Xianfeng (1851-1861) period expansions.

These panels were in the process of being cleaned and restored—with the damaged sections entirely repainted—in 2003 and 2004. The photographs of Hevajra in panel 14 (Fig. 5), and Kālacakra in panel 15 (Fig. 6) provide a good measure of the original appearance of the paintings in this gallery, for while they had been recently cleaned and repaired, these photographs were taken before any significant over-painting had begun.

## Inner Chapel

A short flight of steps at the rear of the Assembly Hall leads to the Inner Chapel. The inner structure has three floors, the first two floors of which are mostly taken up by the inner shrine, with narrow walkways for inner circumambulatories on the first and second floors. While the inner shrine is two stories in height, it is much smaller than the outer hall, being only twenty-five bays (*jian*), and is mostly taken up by a massive three-sided statue case which houses the primary images of the temple, pulled out from the wall to allow for a third innermost space for circumambulation.

## Sculpture Program

The central images of veneration for the chapel are a large set of clay sculptures of the eight Gur mgon deity forms (*Gur mgon lha brygad*) in the Inner Chapel as described in the 1668 descriptive catalog quoted above. While all of the statues were badly damaged or destroyed in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution, based on the reconstruction made in 1984 by the local Tibetan community, which is described as an exact copy of the original 13<sup>th</sup> century images, the main clay statue of Gur mgon (Fig. 4) was colossal, being one and a half stories tall,

<sup>92</sup> dKar mdzes dgon is an important dGe lugs pa monastery and was seat of the Tre hor khang gsar line. See: *dKar mdzes rdzong gi dgon sde so so'i lo rgyus*, pp.3-210. In other words, the appearance of historical dGe lugs pa figures in the wall paintings indicates that those murals were painted after the temple changed from Sa skya to dGe lugs pa in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Also, the choice of such deities as gNas chung, as well as iconographic forms of deities like Vajrabharava with a circular face arrangement, further reflects a dGe lugs pa iconographic program.

approximately four meters in height. The rest of the sculptural program at sDe mgon po (see Plate 1, I-XVII), is detailed in the *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*:<sup>93</sup>

First is the principal image which faces South, Glorious Gur gyi mgon po which was born from the mind of the Highest Vairocana.<sup>94</sup> To the [central deity's proper] right is mGon po stag zhon (the Father Bhagavat Vyāghravāhana Mahākāla Riding a Tiger – [who is the representation of] Action);<sup>95</sup> in front of that facing East in sequence: the Son Mon Black Bhadra,<sup>96</sup> to the right of that the Oath-bound Mahāputra,<sup>97</sup> and to the right of that Ekajaṭā (Srin mo ral cig ma),<sup>98</sup> these three are known as “Gur mgon's Retinue of the Three Putra Siblings”:<sup>99</sup> To the right of those three are Black Mon pa Who Sounds an Animal Horn Trumpet [who is the representation of] Speech; to the right of that Mon pa sō nag Who Wields a Knife [who is the representation of] Mind; and to the right of that Black Mon pa Hanging a Corpse [who is the representation of] Body, these three are known as “The Three Mon pa of Tiger Riding Mahākāla's Retinue”.<sup>100</sup>

To the main image's [proper] left is: is dPal ldan lha mo 'Dod pa khams kyi dbang phyug ma (Śrī Devī),<sup>101</sup> in front of that, facing west, (in sequence) yum nag mo

93 *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folio 11b-12a; and also copied word-for-word in the *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.160. Note in Tibetan texts the convention is to give the deities' proper left and right, not the viewer's.

94 *de yang thog mar rten gyi gtso bo zhal lho gziḡs la 'og min rnam par snang mdzad kyis thugs las 'khrung pa'i dpal ldan gur gyi mgon po/*

95 Residing within the glorious Mahākāla riding a tiger: the hearts of the eight classes (of *yakṣa*), and A nyan *pag shi's* own hair, clothes, and rosary. (ibid.) For the iconography of mGon po Legs ldan stag gzhon see: *Lalitavajra*, fig. 259.

96 Beguin, cat. no. 190 (color plate p.46) He is described as holding a *dam shing* in his right hand, and lifts a heart to his mouth with his left. He wears a breast-band of black silk and a tiger skin (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp.50-51).

97 Putra nag po is described as holding a long saber in his right hand, and in his left a skull cup held to his mouth. He wears a breast-band (*ga zha*) of Mon tri fur and a dress of black silk (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p.50).

98 The Daughter Ral gcig ma (Ekajaṭā) is described as being turquoise in color and in terrifying aspect, with a single face and two arms, sitting in *vajraparyāṅka*. She is usually depicted as holding in her hands at chest level a vase of turquoise filled with nectar (Tucci (1989), p.128) or holding a golden razor in her right hand and bowels in her left (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p.51).

99 The Three Putra Siblings (Pu tra *ming sring sum*) have their own retinue: one hundred armed men march to the right, one hundred *bikṣu* (fully ordained monks) to the left, behind walk one hundred magicians lifting *phur bu*, and in front one hundred black women (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p.51). This may explain the presence of the Head Bikṣu (dGe slong ru 'dren), the Tantrika, the Man, and the Black Woman that follow after the Black Mother Yakṣī and Black Father Yakṣa, who thus actually belong to the Three Putra Siblings (each standing in for the compliment of one hundred).

100 For a discussion of Mon pa, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp.8-11. For Tucci, the presence of the Mon pa, Western frontier people, suggests that additions were made to the original Sanskrit liturgies imported from India by the Western Tibetans like the kingdom of Gu ge. Tucci (1989), pp.123-126.

101 As for the sacred relics residing in Śrī Devī they include: an image of the reverend Tārā drawn with the nose-blood of the lord Nāropa, a Guhyasamāja Manjuvajra made from the nose-blood of Nāgārjuna, an image of Śrī Devī drawn with in nose-blood of the ācārya dMar po, and the precious treasures of the ruler, the treasures which increase the three: people, wealth, and food. (ibid.) Tāmadhātviśvarī Śrī Devī

gnod sbyin ma; to the left of that yab nag po gnod sbyin; to the left of that the Head Bikṣu (dGe slong ru 'dren); to the left of that the Tantrika (sNgags pa)<sup>102</sup>; to the left of that the General (sKyes pa); and to the left of that the Black Woman (Bud med). They are so terrifying as to make one tremble with fear, possessing the brilliance of 100,000 suns.

The statues in the left and right statue cases are slightly smaller than those in the central case, being about two meters tall. The primary members of each set of attending deities once had an impressive array of consecratory relics, including Dam pa's own hair, clothes, and rosary placed within Tiger-Riding Mahākāla.

The primary theme of the wall paintings of the inner chapel are the five primary deities of the Sarvavid Vairocana *maṇḍala*, each approximately two meters tall. These are the "new images of the principal deity with four faces and his retinue, the five, established" as part of the 1668 renovation. These appear to be based on the *Sarvadurgati pariśodhana tantra*, a practice associated with Vairocana, the celestial ruler and symbol of the *cakravartin*, a focus of royal cults going back to the very formation of Tibetan Buddhism during the Tibetan Imperial period. Vairocana is the deity that Pañjaranātha (the central image of the hall) is considered a manifestation, as stated in the previously quoted text.<sup>103</sup>

### Third Floor rooftop chapel

The third floor of the inner structure is a small rooftop chapel (*rab gsal khang*) which faces south, known as the Chapel of the Seven Generations of Buddhas (Sangs rgyas rab bdun khang), accessible from a ladder by the kitchen on the second floor of the outer chapel. The large statue case contains clay sculptures of the Seven Generations of Buddhas and lineage masters which are also detailed in the *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*:<sup>104</sup> The Unequaled Lord Śākyamuni is the principal image among them. To the [proper] right of that are: Vipaśyin, Śikhin, and Viśvabhuk. To the [proper] left of the primary image are: Kakutsunda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa. At the end of the statue case on the right facing West are portrait-statues of the two primary preceptors of the Mahākāla cult at court: an image "meaningful to behold" (*mthong ba don ldan*) of the *Dharma-rajā* 'Phags pa<sup>105</sup> (Fig. 7), and to his proper left a (Female Lord of the Desire Realm) is described as turquoise in color with one face and four arms holding a sword, skull cup, lance and trident. The upper part of her body is covered by an elephant skin, the lower part by an ox skin. She wears a girdle of snakes and rides a mule (Tucci (1989), p.128).

102 Within the Tantrika statue were placed the life *cakras* of the eight great *nāga* and a great deal of *nāga* treasure such as the five kinds of precious objects. Tucci (1989), p.129.

103 Similarly, according to the *mGon po'i chos 'byung* ("History of Mahākāla") within the classification of the Five Buddha Families Gur mgon is the mind manifestation of Mahā-Vairocana. *mGon po'i chos 'byung*, p.21.

104 *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folio 12a-12b; closely followed in the *sDe mgon khang gyi lo rgyus*, p.161.

105 "An image 'Meaningful to Behold' (*mthong ba don ldan*) of that very one who illumines the three realms, the white banner of renown called "the Protector of Beings Dharmaraja 'Phags pa," the Second Buddha

likeness of the temple's founder sGa A gnyan Dam pa (Fig. 8).<sup>106</sup> These statues are all part of the modern reconstruction.

## Conclusion

Central to Mongol interests in Tibetan Buddhism was the use of esoteric means to real physical power, most clearly manifested in Mahākāla rites, a practice that can be traced back from the court of Köten Khan to the imperial Tangut Mahākāla cult. The image of the Sa skya protector Gur gyi mgon po came to symbolize Qubilai Khan as the wrathful destructive power of the *cakravartin* ruler, and Dam pa, as the embodiment of this deity on earth, was at the center of Mahākāla practice at court. He was recorded as building temples dedicated to Mahākāla throughout the empire. Thus what survives at the site of sDe mgon po provides a modest window into what was a widespread phenomena of Tibetan Buddhist temples across the Yuan branch of the Mongol empire. Even after the time of Qubilai's reign the image of Mahākāla continued to hold a central role at the Yuan court. For instance, in 1323 a statue of Mahākāla was erected within the imperial palace of the Forbidden City.<sup>107</sup>

This legacy became an important model for subsequent dynasties who would rule China, such as the succeeding Chinese Ming (1368-1644), where the Yongle 永樂 emperor (1402-1424) consciously modeled many of his policies closely on Qubilai Khan—including engagement with Tibetans.<sup>108</sup> A striking continuation of this Tibetanized visual language of sacral rule in the early Ming court can be found among the objects excavated from the Prince Zhuang of Liang's (d. 1441) tomb: a large gold hat ornament in the form of Gur mgon (Fig. 9).<sup>109</sup> It is amazing to

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of this Degenerate Age” *de'i mdon phyogs kyis zhal nub gzigs la snyigs dus kyis rgyal ba gnyis pa 'gro ba'i mgon po chos rgyal 'phags pa zhes snyan pa'i ba dan dkar po srid pa gsum na gsal ba de nyid kyi sku mthong ba don ldan bzhugs/*. *Tre shod ye shes mgon po'i brnyan mthong grol chen po'i lo rgyus*, folio 12b.

106 “A likeness shining brilliant with blessings of that very one sGa A gnyan Dam pa, the one and only true meaning of Glorious Gur gyi mgon po” *de'i gyon du nges pa don gyis dpal ldan gur gyi mgon po dang gnyis su med pa sga a gnyan dam pa de nyid kyis 'dra 'bag byin rlabs kyis gzi 'od 'bar dang /*

107 This was in the Huiching Pavilion of the Life Lengthening Hall. Wang Yao, p.959.

108 See: David Robinson, “The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols.” In David M. Robinson, ed. *Culture, Courtsiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2008, pp.365-421.

109 “Statue of Mahakala” (大黑天), Chinese, c. 1400-41. Gold; 9.4cm x 5.4cm x 1cm (114 g.) Hubei Provincial Museum 湖北省博物館 5.25042. Excavated in 2001 from the Tomb of Zhu Zhanji, Prince Zhuang of Liang, and Lady Wei, Zhongxiang, Hubei province. Zhu Zhanji, Prince Zhuang of Liang (1411-1441) was grandson of Yongle and brother of Xuande. His second wife Lady Wei (d. 1451) was daughter of Nanchang cavalry commander; the tomb was re-opened for her burial. Publications: Craig Clunas, Jessica Harrison-Hall, eds. *Ming: 50 Years that Changed China*. London: The British Museum, 2014, p.210; Hubeisheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Zhongxiangshi bowuguan 鐘祥市博物館, eds., *Liang zhuang wang mu 梁莊王墓*. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007, p.185; color pl. 191; Hubeisheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館, ed., *Liang zhuang wang mu he Zhengde shidai de guibao 梁莊王墓鄭和時代的瑰寶*. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2007. While the goldsmith did not understand the form perfectly, he can be recognized by the stick (*ganḍi*) balanced across his arms.

think that Yongle's grandson prominently displayed such an image of the most potent symbol of Tibetan esoteric power in the Yuan pantheon upon his head. Subsequently, the Manchu Qing (1644-1911) made Qubilai Khan's Mahākāla sculpture a very public part of their declaration of rightful inheritance of the Yuan legacy, installing it in their own imperial shrine in 1635.<sup>110</sup>

One can learn a great deal from the available historical sources and the physical site of sDe mgon po, despite the fact that, as this brief survey reveals, little of what survives of the chapel belongs to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The visual program of this protector chapel (as documented in surviving materials *in situ* and corroborated in textual sources), from the sculptural program of the state protector Mahākāla, to the wall painting of the embodiment of the *cakravartin*, the celestial ruler Vairocana, can be seen as a kind of esoteric conduit of political power, and thus this temple embodies the very core of imperial interest in the production of Tibetan Buddhist visual culture. While questions remain about how the temple fits into the chronology of Dam pa's life, and thus the extent of actual imperial involvement, hopefully when additional sources, such as sGa A gnyan dam pa's longer Tibetan biography and collected works, become available a more complete picture can be fleshed out of the site and the larger pattern it represents.

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At least one other image of Gur mgon was found in the Prince of Liang's tomb, among golden vajra and other objects that reflect his engagement with Tibetan Buddhism.

110 See footnote 14.

- 'Jam mgon A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams. *Mgon po'i chos 'byung (History of the Protectors, 1641)*. New Delhi: Dhongthog, 1979[b].
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### Outer Hall

1. gNas chung rdo rje grags ldan
2. Byang rnam thos sras
3. mGon po zhal bzhi pa
4. mGon po rus khrab
5. Gur gyi mgon po
6. sPyan ras gzigs phyag stong
7. Phyag rdo 'khor chen
8. rTa mgrin yang gsang
9. dGra nag gShin rje gshed
10. gShin rje gshed dmar
11. dPal rDo rje 'jigs byed
12. dPal gSang ba 'dus pa
13. Vajrakilla (?)
14. Kye rdo rje
15. dPal Dus kyi 'khor lo
16. dPal 'Khor lo bDe mchog
17. rTa mgrin
18. (yet to be identified)
19. mKha' 'gro Seng gdong ma
20. mGon po phyag drug-pa
21. Chos rgyal brkyangs brkums ma
22. dPal ldan Lha mo
23. lCam sring
24. dGra lha
25. Mañjuśrī
26. Four-Armed Mañjuśrī

### Inner Hall

#### Wall Paintings

- A. Amoghasiddhi
- B. Aksobhya
- C. Sarvavid Vairocana
- D. Ratnasambha
- E. Amitabha
- F. Bhutadamara
- G. Yama
- H. Śrī Devī

#### Statues

- I. Gur mgon (Mahākāla)
- II. mGon po stag zhon
- III. 'Dod khams bdag mo
- IV. mGon po bram ze
- V. Pu tra
- VI. Bha tra
- VII. Srin mo ral cig ma
- VIII. Ming pa dmar po
- IX. Ming pa ljang gu
- X. Ming pa nag po
- XI. E ka dza ti
- XII. gNod sbyin yab
- XIII. gNod sbyin yum
- XIV. dGe slong

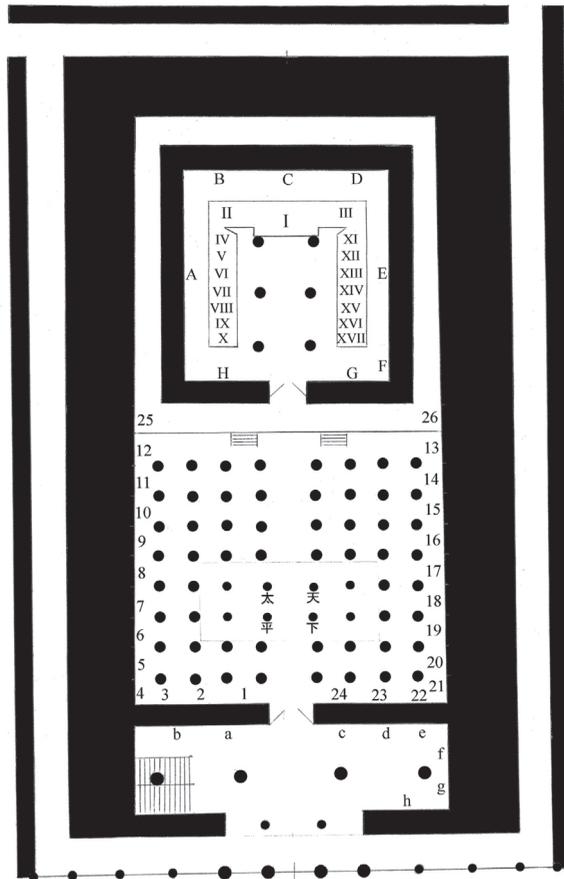


Plate 1 sDe mgon po floor plan.

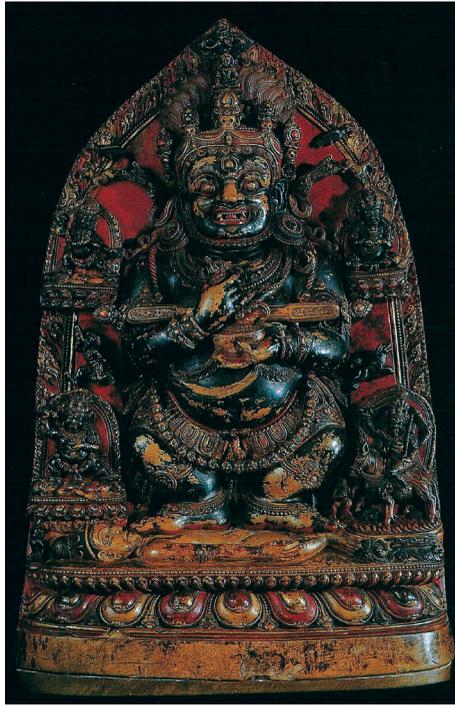


Fig.1 Gur gyi mgon po (Mahākāla Pañjaranātha), dated 1292. Musée Guimet, Paris.  
(After Stoddard, p. 279).



Fig. 2 Mahākāla niche, Baochengsi, dated 1322. Wu Shan, Hangzhou.

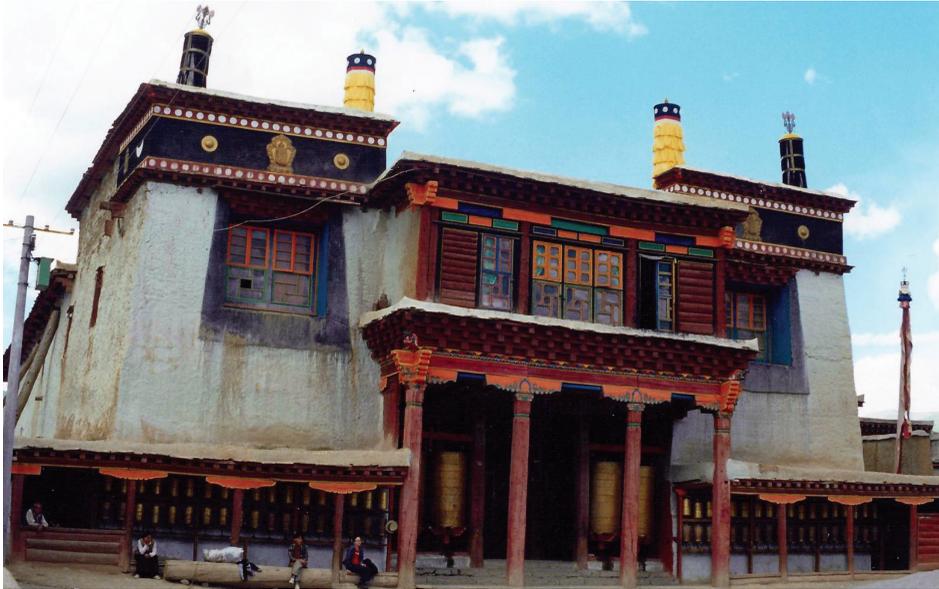


Fig. 3 sDe mgon po Protector Chapel, founded 1284. Tre shod, dKar mdzes, Western Sichuan (2001).



Fig. 4 Gur gyi mgon po, primary image in sDe mgon po, ca 1984 reconstruction. (2004).



Fig. 5 (Panel 14): Kye rdo rje (Hevajra).  
Outer Assembly Hall, sDe mgon po. (2003).



Fig. 6 (Panel 15): dPal Dus kyi 'khor lo (Kālacakra). Outer Assembly Hall, sDe mgon po. (2003).

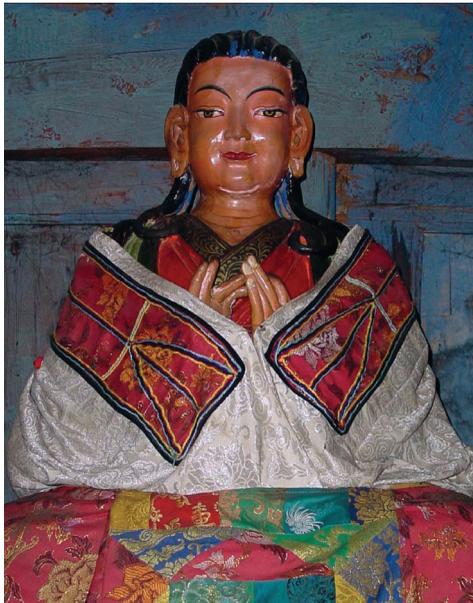


Fig. 7 The image “meaningful to behold” (mthong ba don ldan) of the Dharma-rajā 'Phags pa. Rooftop chapel. (2001).

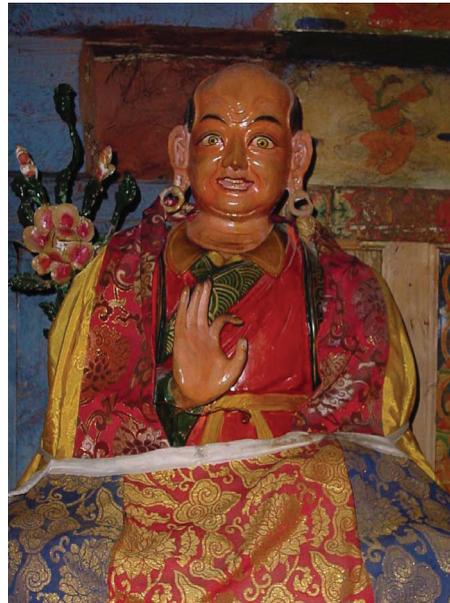


Fig. 8 sGa A gnyan dam pa statue. Rooftop chapel. (2001).



Fig. 9 Mahākāla. Excavated from Prince Zhuang of Liang's (1400-1441) tomb. Chinese; c. 1400-41. Gold; 9.4cm x 5.4cm x 1cm (114g). Hubei Provincial Museum 5.25042. Photographer Yu Le (余乐).