## Chapter5 The Inscription in gYung drung lha steng Monastery

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## Chapter 5 The Inscription in gYung drung lha steng Monastery

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the inscription [PI. 78] contains 135 stanzas of varying length which are incised upon the stone in 76 lines. The text is written in memory of the king Nam mkha' rgyal po of the Rab brtan royal house in Chu chen. However, many of the lines are badly damaged. The first six lines are completely obliterated and line 76 which is the last one is also partially effaced. In other places many words are either missing or simply indecipherable. One wonders whether some of these had been willfully damaged before the stele itself was used for the inscription on the other face. The text was incised upon the stone in 1768 . So it is only about 235 years old.

Nevertheless, the historical part of the text is happily more or less intact. The whole text of the inscription was meant to have three parts, because line 50 begins with the word gsum pa, the third (part), but we do not find the words dang po, the first or gnyis pa, the second anywhere. The word dang po may have been in one of the effaced lines at the beginning. Two syllables are broken off at the beginning of line 10 and it is possible that they were the word gnyis pa. If so, there were three parts, the 1st one would be from lines 1 to 9 and the 2nd from lines 10 to 49 and the 3 rd from 50 to 76.

The text of the inscription is concise and uses a language which is quite straight forward, but lines from 50 to 76 are embedded in a literary form which subsequently lacks any real significance apart from lines 71 and 72 to which I shall return below. The lines 54-56 are also partially damaged and not decipherable.

I have therefore made a translation of lines 7 to 49 only which to my mind shed light on the contemporary events that are related to our subject. The significance of this stele is the historical material that it has preserved for which we do not have other sources or only partially. The first 9 lines seem to have been devoted to a eulogy of Sangs rgyas gling pa. In line 4 only the word gling is decipherable and in line 7 it is stated that he recovered texts from the upper valley of Chu chen. This agrees with other sources which state that this master uncovered texts in Chu chen. ${ }^{1}$ In line 9 two names of people are mentioned as disciples of his. The second disciple Sangs rgyas rin chen dpal bzang is known from other sources and also referred to in the same inscription later on (11.34, 71). He was a cousin of Kun grol and one of the chief editors of the canonical texts for engraving on woodblocks in Khro skyabs. ${ }^{2}$ He was ordered by the king Nam mkha' rgyal po to compose the text of the inscription and to have it incised upon the stone (11.68-71).

Lines from 10 to 46 contain a historical account. It is stated that King Nam mkha' rgyal po of Rab brtan royal house was the son of the king rDo rje rgyal (11.12-13). This corroborates the genealogy which we have noted earlier. ${ }^{3}$ It further states that the king Nam mkha' rgyal po had five sons and gives their names (ll.18-19) including bSod nams dbang rgyal. As the king of Chu chen, he issued an edict around 1775 (Karmay

1998: 45). It was this king who led the resistance when the second Manchu campaign began in 1771 as mentioned above.

The inscription then refers to a war that had recently taken place (sngon lo, 1.20) without however giving any dates for it, but it certainly refers to the 1st Manchu military campaign that took place during the period of 1746-1749. The victory of the war on the part of Gyalrong is celebrated by stating that the 'people of the borderlands' were expelled, but regrets the misdeed that had to be committed in fighting against the enemy (ll.20-21). It seems that having won the war against the Manchus the kingdom of Chu chen became a powerful local state. The inscription states that ten 'kings' in Gyalrong including that of Khro skyabs were taken as its 'servants' (11.21-22). This sounds rather a bit blown up. However, in the construction of the monastery gYung drung lha steng by the Rab brtan royal house in Chu chen, ten principalities had to send people to participate in the construction work (ll.27-29). This would suggest that the Rab brtan royal house was able to exert its authority over other principalities when the common interest demanded it.

The next passage in the inscription (11.22-30) contains a crucial point concerning the famous monastery gYung drung lha steng. Nothing seems to have been written about it prior to its destruction by the Manchu army in 1776. Neither its founder nor the dates of its foundation were known. However, the inscription brings in interesting and important information on this point, but unfortunately the statement tends to be rather imprecise due to the clumsy construction of the verses. It is stated that the monastery gYung drung lha steng in Chu chen was founded in 1768 as was prophesied (11.23-24). However, this statement is contradicted by the following lines in which it is stated that the foundation of the monastery was laid in 1766 (1.25-26). I presume that the construction of the monastery began in 1766 and the whole work on the main temple completed in 1768. ${ }^{4}$ Kun grol refers to a monastery called dGa' ldan g-yung drung gling situated in the town Ka ling ka in Chu chen and he describes it as being 'a great gathering place of Bon'. ${ }^{5}$ This is certainly not identical with the monastery gYung drung lha steng.

Another vague point in the inscription that needs to be discussed is the term lung which occurs four times. While in lines 10 and 23 it refers to a prophecy, in line 22 it designates an imperial authority. The use of the term in line 43 is totally obscure. In the case where the term lung is used in connection with an imperial order about eight syllables in the two verses (11.22-23) are obliterated rendering them meaningless. I suspect that they were purposely effaced. What is odd is the fact that after the $1^{\text {st }}$ Manchu campaign against Gyalrong to which the inscription itself refers one would have thought that the kingdom of Chu chen would have cut off its relation with the Manchus. However, as stated above, several syllables are missing in the lines which make it hard for us to state exactly what the Manchu emperor did for the monastery.

Four members of the sMon rgyal family were involved in erecting the stele. Kun grol who belonged to the family is of course highly extolled, but the context in which his name is mentioned suggests that he was no longer alive in 1768. The names bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan and Sangs rgyas rin chen dpal bzang of the same family are mentioned (1.34). While we know nothing about the first one, the second was a cousin of Kun grol as already mentioned. Here the king Nam mkha' rgyal po is referred to as the Monkruler (Mi dbang bslab gsum 'dzin pa) ${ }^{6}$ and the author himself as 'Buddha' since his name contains the term sangs rgyas. Another member of the family called Surya provided financial support for the work of the inscription.

## Partial Translation of the Inscription

(1.7) ...Opened the door of the treasury from the cave.....in Chu chen. He exhibited wonderful signs, left his foot prints and gave profound teachings of the uninterrupted line and those of the rediscovery (1.8) including magical force. This is just a tiny scrap about him. No time would be enough to tell fully about his life. The favoured followers of this master were... (1.9) Rab 'byams rGyal ba dbang drag and the little learned Sangs rgyas rin chen dpal bzang. It was auspicious and there was a wonderful sign (1.10) when this king was highly praised by the prophecy... (1.11) ${ }^{7}$ This was due to the blessings of the master Kun grol (grags pa). As before, he was highly respected by all in the land of gorges. (1.12) ...he had royal benefactors. (1.13) One of them was called Nam mkha' rgyal po, the son of the royal benefactor rDo rje rgyal. ${ }^{8}$ (1.14) From an early age he was wise and exceedingly intelligent. His knowledge of the world was vast and extended to the smallest matters. He promoted highly the precious doctrine of the Buddha (=gShen rab). (1.15) He had temples built in the upland, middle and lowland parts of the whole country. (1.16) He had the images of the deities of the three roots ${ }^{9}$ painted, made in relief, shaped in metal as well as portrait. As for the Word, he had canonical texts collected, copied, engraved on wood and recited. (1.17) He made offerings to and paid respects to the assembly of the ones who possessed the three teachings. ${ }^{10} \mathrm{He}$ made his country morally upright and made sure that he had royal descendants. (1.18) His sons were: Slob dpon Tshul khrims dbang ldan, bSod nams phun tshogs rgyal ba 'od zer (or 'od ldan) and (1.19) bSod nams dbang gi rgyal po, Grags pa rgyal and sTon pa rje. ${ }^{11}$ (They all) maintained good conduct. However, (1.20) like light and dark, white and black of nature, in recent years a big war took place. One had no choice but to commit wrong (1.21), but the people of the borderlands were expelled (from our land). The ten kings of the land of gorges were (1.22) brought under our control as servants. The order of the emperor ...... The monks of the great monastery were respected (by the emperor). (1.23) As it was prophesied (gYung drung) lha steng.... accordingly came into existence in Chu chen as a monastic community. In $1768^{12}$ (1.24), the doctrine began to be established. It was prophesied that "in each of the four bad
years ${ }^{13}$ a doctrine-holder would emerge. Although the Bon is abolished in the centre, it will flourish from the borders". ${ }^{14}$ (1.25) So on the $8^{\text {th }}$ of the $5^{\text {th }}$ month of the fire-dog year (1766, being one of the four gshed years), (1.26) the foundation was laid and the monk bSod nams rgyal mtshan performed the consecration to set up (the beginning of the work) and good signs occurred. (1.27) To assist in the work, there were labourers from Cag la'i rong, bTsan la, Khog zhe, (28) So mo (mang), rDzungs 'gag, Cog tse, Dam bha, Khro skyabs, (1.29) dGe bshes and Yad rgan. ${ }^{15}$ The labourers from these ten principalities having worked for four months, the constructions of the buildings were completed. (1.30) In 1767 (phag lo) one hundred and fifteen residential houses were built. At the beginning of the $5^{\text {th }}$ month in that year fifty-one painters from Central Tibet and Gyalrong itself (1.31) accomplished their work within two months. The consecration of the whole completed work was performed by the great Abbot bSod nams rgyal mtshan, (1.32) accompanied by Shes rab g-yung drung, the lama of sTag des and the four lamas who had fulfilled their spiritual training. (1.33) Auspicious signs could be seen in the form of rain bows and noises were heard. The consecration ceremony of the bKa ' 'gyur (in manuscript) when it was completed was carried out by sMon rgyal Rab 'byams bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan, sMon rgyal Sangs rgyas rin chen and others. (1.35) When they performed the ceremony remarkably auspicious signs such as rain bows occurred. When the building of the college bShad grwa dga' ldan was completed (1.36) the ritual of consecration was executed by the blameless lama bsTan g-yung (bsTan pa g-yung drung) and others. (1.37) The king Nam mkha' rgyal po realized that the worldly life was in reality illusory. From early on in his life, he (138) took the vows of the dge bsnyen (upasaka) as a layman in the presence of Rig 'dzin Kun grol grags pa. On that occasion he was given the name Nam mkha' (1.39) g-yung drung ye shes dbang gi rgyal po and he strictly observed the vows according to the rules. (1.40) Later he was also ordained as a novice in the presence of the abbot bSod nams rgyal mtshan and (1.41) received the name Nam mkha' ye shes. He observed his vows correctly and also widened (his knowledge) in the four empowerments of (Tantric teachings). (1.42) He made the country full of those whose intent was towards Enlightenment. In the great monastery gYung drung lha steng, (1.43) at the beginning of the $1^{\text {st }}$ month in 1768 , in accordance with the prophecy, which is infallible, he made numerous offerings. (1.44) To more than a hundred monks, he offered rations consisting of clothes, other items to be used as offerings, grains, and other food. (1.45) sMon rgyal rab 'byams (bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan) and the great abbot bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who were respected by the king, were present there. (1.46) The monastic code and the rules of assembly (1.47) were never broken in the past, neither will they be, and in this practice one follows the Incomparable One. ${ }^{16}$ The doctrine of the Enlightened One is like a creation of the artist Vishakarman. (1.48) When the sun rises on the shoulder of a mountain, ${ }^{17}$ the flowers of the early translation of Bon on the ground ${ }^{18}$ grow. (1.49) The bees of the people enjoy
the taste of the nectar of one's own and others' interests. This is just a short account of the monks, their benefactors (i.e. royal benefactors) and the monastery (i.e. gYung drung lha steng).

For example, Katen 106-25, 27, 36, 43, 44.
See Chapter 3.
Chapter 2.
This date in fact has no value at all, see n. 12.
${ }^{5}$ bon kyi 'dun sa or 'dus sde chen po (Katen, 043-2, 043-3, 043-4, 043-6, 043-7, 043-9, 04314).

Cf. with the term gsum Idan in line 17 and note 8 .
7 For the prophecy see lines 23-24.
8 The $43^{\text {rd }}$ king of Chu chen, see Chapter 2.
9 They are bla ma, yi dam and mkha' 'gro.
10 This refers to the 'Three trainings' (bslab pa gsum), viz. shes rab kyi bslab pa, tshul khrims kyi bslab pa, ting 'dzin gyi bslab pa borrowed from Buddhism.
11 These names except the third one do not correspond to those given in $S G$ owing to the names received at the time of ordination, $c f$. Chapter 2.
12 The verse sa pho byi'i lor bstan pa'i 'go bo zugs/ occurs in $M G$ (p.319) as sa byi'i lo la bstan pa'i 'go bo 'dzugs/ In MG it is quoted along with the following prophetical verses of $S M$ (p.21): gshed bzhi'i lo la bstan 'dzin re re 'byung' bon 'di dbus na nub (bsnub) kyang mtha' nas dar/(ll.23-24 of the inscription). However, the verse sa pho byi'i lor bstan pa'i 'go bo $z u g s /$ is not attested in SM. The date sa byi (1768?) is probably a part of another prophetical text. In this case the date sa byi has no relevance at all.
${ }^{13}$ In the astrological tradition the four gshed years (gshed bzhi'i lo) refer to ox (glang), dragon ('brug), horse (rta) and dog (khyi).
14 The two verses gshed bzhi'i lo la bstan 'dzin re re 'byung/ bon 'di dbus na nub (bsnub) kyang $m t h a^{\prime}$ nas dar/ are quoted from $S M$ (p. 21), cf. n. 11.
${ }^{15}$ The names Khog zhe and Yad rgan are not mentioned in the traditional list of eighteen principalities in Gyalrong, see $K G M L$ p. 271, but Mansier gives nineteen as well as variations of their names (1990: 127).
16 This refers to mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415), founder of sMan ri Monastery (Survey No.1).
17 The term dbang phogs designates mountain.
18 The term rgya mtsho'i gos can refers to earth.



PI. 79 Detail of PI. 78 (First half of the inscription)


PI. 80 Detail of PI. 78 (Second half of the inscription), gYung drung tha steng Monastery, SGK 1997
[Pl. 79. 80]


3. $\mathrm{XxXxx} x \times x] \quad \mathrm{xx}$

5. $\mathrm{XXXXXXXX}_{\boldsymbol{T}}$ XxXXXXXX
6. $\mathrm{xxxxxxxxx}^{\mathrm{x}} \times \mathrm{xxxxxxx}$











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18. (
19. द5




















40. इय
41. च


44. द्री TV

















61. खेद"








69. Wद मaqk
70. ज







