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Introduction

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This volume is concerned with a general survey of monasteries, temples, hermitages of the Bon religion, known as gYung drung Bon, that have survived or recently been rebuilt in Tibet, Tibetan inhabited regions in China proper as well as the Himalayan regions.

The monastic system in the Bon tradition has a long history. It goes back at least to the eleventh century. However, Bon tradition itself traces it back to a period beyond the eleventh century, but this claim remains to be proved.

Although the monasticism of the Bon tradition owns its inspiration to Buddhism, the Bonpo already had established it when the Buddhists began to re-establish their monasteries in the eleventh century. This begins with the six Buddhist monks who returned to Central Tibet from Amdo where they were ordained by Bla chen dGe ba gsal (891-975) according to the *Deb ther sngon po* by 'Gos Lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal (1392-1481).

In the case of the Bon tradition it started with the disciples of gShen chen Klu dga'. Bonpo chronology ascribes this master to 996-1035. He is also thought to be contemporary with Lo tsa ba Rin chen bzang po (958-1055). The disciples of gShen chen Klu dga' established various religious centers, such as temples, hermitages and monasteries.

One of the disciples of this master, Bru chen Nam mkha' g-yung drung, is credited with founding a temple in 1072 near the estate of his own family called Bru, a few kilometers to the east of Shigatse and north of the gTsang po river, Central Tibet. It soon developed into a monastery called gYas ru dBen sa kha. The monastery was mainly maintained by the family by providing its abbots. While one brother ensured the line of the family, another would devote himself to religious life and often became the abbot of the monastery. In such an establishment, the monastery is usually considered as belonging to the family as the term *dgon bdag*, the "owner of the monastery" indicates. The ownership always remained the same even when the abbot was not a member of the family.

dBen sa kha came to be considered as the primary source of the monastic tradition among the Bonpo until the fourteenth century. It was an important centre of learning and produced a number of noted writers. Their works became classics for monastic learning in later centuries. The monastery, however, was destroyed by a flood in 1386. With the disappearance of this monastery a period of monastic culture of the Bon tradition came to an end.

A new era began with the foundation of two monasteries also in Central Tibet.

These will be briefly described here as they had a tremendous influence over other monastic establishments that are surveyed by the four authors in this volume.

One of the monks of dBen sa kha Monastery just referred to was Shes rab rgyal mtshan. He was the head of one of the colleges of the monastery, but he was absent from the monastery when it was washed away by a flood. He was on a visit to his mother in rGyal rong, eastern Tibet.

On the way back to Central Tibet, news of the flood reached him when he was in Dar rtse mdo. Discouraged, he withdrew himself into a retreat, but there he received good signs that encouraged him to resume his journey on foot back to Central Tibet. He is said to have found various objects in the ruins such as books and musical instruments that belonged to the destroyed monastery. With these objects, taken as an auspicious sign, he founded a monastery on the southern slope of Mount sMan ri in 1405. The monastery was called bKra shis sman ri (No.1). It is located in a rather secluded place, up the same valley where dBen sa kha Monastery was located.

With the help of his disciple Rin chen rgyal mtshan, a whole system in accordance with the Bru tradition of dBen sa kha Monastery was re-established with a strong emphasis on the need for abstention from alcoholic drink and the observance of celibacy as the principal guideline of the monastic discipline. These rules are laid out in the *bca' yig*, the monastic code and it was read out to the assembly in a solemn ceremony by the disciplinarian once a year. The discipline of the new monastery thus became the model for most Bonpo monasteries in later centuries. It was hard to stick to the rules set out in the *bca' yig* of sMan ri Monastery, but it became an established tradition and most monasteries that were founded later were expected to follow its tradition.

However, there were other monasteries which practised different ritual traditions such as the gShen lugs, the "Tradition of gShen" or Zhu lugs, the "Tradition of Zhu", but all were expected to follow the same monastic discipline.

The Bonpo were often characterized as being lovers of women and wine (*chang nag la dga' ba*) by the Buddhists, especially the dGe lugs monastics. In fact, in certain places the members of a monastery or temple were of what one calls *ser khyim*, that is a kind of "semi-monk" who observes only a few out of the many monastic vows. They usually spent a certain amount of time in the year in the monastery and the rest of the time at home in the village helping do household work. The *ser khyim* were not necessarily married men nor *sngags pa*.

The founder of sMan ri Monastery bears the title mNyam med, the "Incomparable One", but in the colophons of books he wrote he describes himself as gShen gyi drang srong, the "monk who follows the gShen", i.e. gShen rab Mi bo. Amongst his writings there is a detailed commentary of the '*Dul ba kun btus*. It is entitled '*Dul 'grel 'phrul gyi sgron me*. The '*Dul ba kun btus* (Kvaerne 1974: T. 7)

is a classic text devoted to the monastic discipline composed in verse by Me ston Shes rab 'od zer (1058-1132). It is these two works that serve as the textual basis of Bonpo monasticism.

sMan ri Monastery remained small and modest in its development as its founder had wished. Before he died, he appointed his disciple Rin chen rgyal mtshan as the abbot of the monastery. Thus Rin chen rgyal mtshan bears the title rGyal tshab, the "Apostle". However, the successors of Rin chen rgyal mtshan were elected by secret lot from among the qualified monks. There were thirty-two abbots spanning over five hundred and sixty years till around 1966. Its uneasy access did not help it become a great centre, but it was highly esteemed for its strict practice of monastic rules. Per Kvaerne (1970) was the first Western scholar to devote an article to the administration of this monastery. The Monastery was plundered and finally totally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976. As of 2002, it still has not been rebuilt.

gYung drung gling Monastery (No.2) was the second in importance to sMan ri Monastery in Central Tibet. It was founded by sNang ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan (b.1796) of Amdo origin in 1834. Although the monastery was a relatively recent establishment in comparison with sMan ri, it became more prosperous and influential particularly in north-eastern Tibet. The monastery is located on a small plateau at the foot of Mount 'O lha rGyal bzang to the north of the gTsang po river facing the sTag gru kha ferry. It is on the axis of routes leading to Lhasa, Shigatse, Gyantse and Byang thang, the northern plateau. This explains in part the monastery's rapid development. For this strategic reason, the monastery was used as the base of a large People's Liberation Army garrison in the area during the Cultural Revolution. It therefore remained intact till the very last days of the revolution. At the beginning of 1980s, permission was given with funding to rebuild it, but it remains largely symbolic and the temples that have been rebuilt were totally empty when I visited them in 1997.

Persecution and destruction

The history of Bon monasteries is of a history of either sectarian persecution or wanton destruction by a foreign invader. The Bonpo religious establishments never had any political ambition and consequently there is no record of their holding any position that had a political significance. This might explain in part why the Bon religion and its monastic tradition somehow survived through the centuries in Tibet in spite of the Bon religion being a non-Buddhist creed among the 80% Buddhist population in Central Tibet.

From the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries, no record of general persecution is found apart from a few disputes between two individuals or two religious communities. On the contrary, there are a number of examples of showing good will

towards one another. Even after the fourteenth century, a certain number of Bonpo monks of sMan ri Monastery went to study philosophy at Sa skya pa monasteries till gYung drung gling Monastery managed to establish its own *mtshan nyid* studies in the eighteenth century.

In the seventeenth century, Tibet was seething with religio-political conflicts. The rise to political power of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) in 1642 calmed down the turmoil in the country. His reign was marked by a remarkable period of peace and tolerance. In 1664, the Fifth Dalai Lama issued a decree appointing sDe srin Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1658-1705) as the Regent of Tibet and in the decree the Fifth Dalai Lama recognised Bon as one of Tibet's official religions (Richardson 1998: 441). This tradition was belatedly revived by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in India only at the beginning of 1980s. There was therefore no notable persecution during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. On the contrary, the fact that he was deeply interested in the Bon religion is proved by the abundant references to Bon in his autobiography, the *Dukula'i gos bzang*.

The Regent gives a list of monasteries that were founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Amongst these is Sog Tsan dan dgon which he mentions rather obliquely saying that it was originally Karma bka' brgyud pa, but no mention is made regarding whether it had any connection with Bon (*Vaidurya ser po*, p.405). However, according to the *Nag chu sa khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus* (p.351), in 1640, during the military campaign of Gushri Khan in Khams, a number of Bonpo and bKa' brgyud pa monasteries suffered destruction. Later in 1668, the Fifth Dalai Lama ordered a dGe lugs pa monastery to be built for the people of the Sog district, east of Nag chu kha, as compensation for the large Bonpo monastery called Sog gYung drung gling, four small bKa' brgyud pa monasteries and one small convent called Tsan dan dgon that had been destroyed by the Gushri Khan's troops. The new dGe lugs pa monastery was called Sog dGa' ldan 'phel rgyas gling, but it was normally known as Sog Tsan dan dgon. However, it was not built on the ruins of Sog gYung drung gling as the Bonpo often imply.

However, the Regent seems to have forgotten the very tolerant religious policy that his master maintained throughout his reign. In 1686 under his order, all the Bon religious establishments in the Ser tsha district in Khyung po, Khams, converted to dGe lugs pa. Four dGe lugs pa monasteries were then founded for the Ser tsha people in four different places: dGa' ldan bkra shis gling in 'Bro rdzong; dGa' ldan thar 'dod gling in Ga ngal; dGa' ldan skabs gsum gling in Ri dmar and dGa' ldan dpal 'byor gling in Phu dmar. A Lama from Rong po dGa' ldan rab brtan dgon founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1668, was appointed to be in charge of the new monasteries (*Vaidurya ser po*, p.459). Rong po dGa' ldan rab brtan dgon is usually known as Rong po Rab brtan dgon. Rong po is a place in the Sog district. The Regent does not mention the names of the Bon religious establishments that he had converted

and I have seen no other records mentioning them. It is not clear why the Regent had implemented such a drastic policy of religious conversion by force in this particular place. There were so many other places in the same region where the Bon religion was followed, but no similar action seems to have been taken.

He states: “in Khyung po gSer tsha people believe strongly in Bon (*khyung po gser [ser] tsha khul du bon lugs la dad 'dun che ba..*) and if the gYung drung Bon religion is practised properly,... (citation of a sutra) one cannot stop them, but during the day the practitioners stay in monasteries. There they fight over the offerings that were made by the faithful just like vultures over corpses. During the night they go to villages and sleep with women. So what they do is very serious sin...(citation of texts). Thinking for the benefit of myself and them, - since they are Bonpo just in name, in reality they behave like laymen - , I had them converted to dGe lugs pa” (*Vaidurya ser po*, p. 459).

It is hard to believe that such was the real reason for which the Regent caused the people of Ser tsha to change their faith. It seems that he was not against the religion itself as such, but rather against the Ser tsha people who probably resisted the policies of his dGe lugs pa dominated government in the area. Whatever it may be, this had set a precedent of forced conversion of monasteries belonging not only to the Bon tradition but also to other Buddhist orders. Each time there was a forced conversion the name of the new dGe lugs pa monastery began with the word *dga' ldan* or *dge ldan* following the example of the names of the new monasteries founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Apart from the method of forced conversion, other strategies were used to gain a foothold among a people whose religious tradition was not dGe lugs pa. This consisted of recognizing a child as a reincarnation in a non-dGe lugs pa family. That was what happened to the Bru family which was very prestigious and a strong bastion of Bon as mentioned earlier. The family seat was located to the north of gTsang po and a few kilometers to the east of Shigatse. It was the Fifth Dalai Lama, who in order to institute the reincarnation series of Panchen Lama, chose a child of the Bru family as the reincarnation of his spiritual master Panchen Blo bzang chos rgyan (1567-1662). The child became the Panchen Blo bzang ye shes (1663-1737), but the Fifth Dalai Lama made sure that the family continued to adhere to its own religion. However, another Panchen Lama, bsTan pa'i dbang phyug (1854-1882) was born again in the family. This time, it was the end of the family's own religion. Its seat became known as 'Khrungs gzhi, the “Base of births” and was made as an estate of bKra shis lhun po Monastery.

Another underhand method was used for enriching one's own establishments. In the nineteenth century, it was the intervention by bKra shis lhun po Monastery in a dispute between two branches of the gShen family located in the Dar sding village, a few kilometers to the west of Shigatse. The intervention resulted in properties of one

of the two families being confiscated and given to a dGe lugs pa monastery nearby (Dondrup Lhagyal, 2000: 444). These are just a few examples of religio-political persecution of a sort under the domination of the dGe lugs pa government. The Bonpo themselves unfortunately have rarely committed these events to writing.

However, the tendency for non-dGe lugs pa religious orders to come under persecution was further intensified due to two developments: foreign interference in the internal affairs of Tibet and the gaining of the upper hand by an ultra fundamentalist section among the dGe lugs pa monasteries and in government clerical circles.

Foreign interference

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Jungar tribes of the Ili district in western Mongolia began to expand their empire. When they became a threat to the Manchu rule over China, the emperor Kangxi had to appeal to the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) to exert his influence over them since they were of recent conversion to the dGe lugs pa school. Tibetan authorities in Lhasa maintained good relations with them. However, after the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Manchus began to have political interests in Tibet. sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho was therefore in collusion with the Jungars in a design to outdo the policies of the Emperor Kangxi concerning Tibet. In 1717, they accordingly began to make incursions into Tibet intended partly to forestall any aggression from the Manchus and on the pretext of defending dGe lugs pa interests. As their hordes made their way into Tibet, they attacked Bonpo monasteries that they found in their way, looting, burning and murdering monks. As a people of recent conversion, they seem to have had the conviction that they should ransack other religious establishments in Tibet that were non-dGe lugs pa, such as those of the rNying ma pa and Bonpo. The rNying ma pa suffered particularly at their hands in Central Tibet as they executed several eminent rNying ma pa masters, like Lochen Dharmasri (1654-1717) amongst others, for no valid reasons. Many a Bonpo establishment, such as gShen Dar sding, had experienced the plunder of the Jungars. From the accounts of Phuntso Tsering, it is clear that they pillaged and destroyed at least six Bonpo monasteries (Nos. 15, 19, 22, 54, 27, 34). The Jungars were finally expelled by the Tibetans with the help of the Manchu army.

Sectarian persecution

The dGe lugs pa government in Tibet had a powerful supporter. Since 1720 till 1911 the Manchu influence over Tibet was firmly established and the dGe lugs pa saw this foreign power as their cherished patron which it was. At the same time, a certain segment among the dGe lugs pa began to claim that they were the upholders of the dGe lugs pa teachings as being the most authentic ones as taught

by the Buddha. This of course implied that other Buddhist schools in Tibet and not to mention the Bonpo held false views. The movement came often to be closely associated with the Shugs ldan cult. The deity's antipathy to non-dGe lugs pa teachings is all the more the object of praise in the ritual texts devoted to this deity.

Amongst other places I should mention here are two areas where this particular movement was very active and where conflicts between the Bonpo and the dGe lugs pa establishments were particularly fierce. The Sog district contained two important dGe lugs pa monasteries, Sog Tsan dan dgon and Rong po Rab brtan dgon as referred to earlier. It was in this area that Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po (1878-1941) of Se ra Monastery was active early the twentieth century. It was he who revived the cult of Shugs ldan in spite of opposition to it by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. In a forthcoming article I have dealt in some detail with his activities in this area and the revolt of the so-called "Thirty-nine Tribes of Hor" of Bonpo obedience against the Tibetan government.

The other place, where the relations between the two faiths were similarly strained, was Gro mo (Chumbi Valley) in southern Tibet. Around 1897 the most active dGe lugs pa master in this area was Ngag dbang skal bzang, also of Se ra Monastery. He was commonly known as Gro mo dGe bshes Rinpoche and was a disciple and friend of Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po. The cult of Shugs ldan which he set up in this place was based in Dung dkar Monastery. The Bonpo monastery in Gro mo known as Pus mo sgang (No.8) had a perpetual struggle with Dung dkar for its existence. The conflict between the two monasteries had inspired the composition of a four-line praise to the deity in the propitiatory text by Pha bong kha ba bDe chen snying po as follows:

"In the barbarous land where the bad tradition of gShen rab is upheld,
You made flourish the good path that is complete and faultless
With your rapid action of four kinds and many other omens,
I praise you who are the guide of living beings!"
*(gshen rabs(rab) lugs ngan 'dzin pa'i mtha' 'khob tu/
las bzhi'i rtags mtshan rno myur du ma yis/
tshang la ma nor lam bzang rgyas mdzad pa'i/
skye rgu'i 'dren par gyur pa khyod la bstod/).*

In 1967 Yongs 'dzin Khri byang Blo bzang ye shes, the late tutor of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, wrote a commentary on the propitiatory eulogy to the deity just quoted entitled *rGyal chen bstod 'grel* (folio 138b). In this work he explains that the phrase "barbarous land" refers to Gro mo and thanks to the "four actions of the deity" the dGe lugs pa tradition was firmly established there. The region was mainly inhabited by a Bonpo population until the dGe lugs pa penetrated there only

in the nineteenth century. Dung dkar Monastery was tacitly supported by the Tibetan government in its hostility, but Pus mo sgang seemed to have miraculously survived till the days of the Cultural Revolution.

However, there is yet another region, rGyal rong where relations between the two faiths were in constant struggle. The exact date of the Buddhist penetration there is not known. Vairocana, a Tibetan Buddhist monk of the eighth century is said to have resided there, but this is more of a myth than history. In the fifteenth century, Tsha kho Ngag dbang grags pa, a disciple of Tsong kha pa (1357-1519) and a native of the Tsha kho district, north of rGyal rong, returned to his native country after studying in Central Tibet. He is said to have made a vow to erect 108 monasteries in his native land in the presence of his master. He certainly founded some dGe lugs pa monasteries in Tsha kho and he is said to have used magic against the Bonpo to overcome the latter's opposition to his efforts in conversion (*mDo smad chos 'byung*, p.774). The dGe lugs pa expansion in the area was slow and difficult. However, in the second half of the 19th century, a child in the family of the local chief, Cog tse, was chosen to be the reincarnation of Byang rtse Blo bzang lhun grub, the 74th Throne-holder of Tsong kha pa in dGa' ldan Monastery. The local chief, the Cog tse rgyal po, "king of Cog tse" was powerful in his own right in the place. As the child grew up, the dGe lugs pa influence in the family increased, too. In 1874, he converted 'Bar kham gYung drung gling, one of the oldest Bon monasteries in the area, to dGe lugs pa and went so far as to erase its old Bon mural paintings and paint them over with the deities of the dGe lugs pa school. (Barkham ['Bar khams] is now the administrative seat of the 'Autonomous Prefecture' of Aba [rNga ba] in Sichuan.) This conversion of the monastery provoked a strong reaction from the people of Shar khog, the next easternly region of the Tsha kho district. A local religious war was fought between a section of the people in Cog tse who supported the conversion and the people of Shar khog who wanted to save the monastery as Bonpo. The people of Shar khog were ultimately defeated, but they took the lama of the monastery to Shar khog where he is said to have settled down.

However, the Bonpo people in rGyal rong, had to face much more serious hostility in the 18th century. Not only had they to fight on a religious front but also a political one. They resisted for nearly thirty years against the Manchu invasion, supported and encouraged by the influential dGe lugs pa lama sKyang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717-1786) who had then a high position at the Manchu imperial court of Qianlong. In 1760 the Manchu army finally won the war capturing bSod nams dbang 'dus, the king of Rab brtan. He was led to Beijing together with more than one thousand people as war prisoners. The king was finally executed. Five horses were attached to his head, hands and feet and then let pull in different directions, a privilege kept for kings in Manchu punishment customs. gYung drung lha steng, the royal monastery was partially destroyed and converted to dGe lugs pa and was given

the name dGa' ldan bstan 'phel gling. dGe lugs pa monks were summoned from 'Bras spungs Monastery to administer it. Qianlong issued an edict forbidding the practice of the Bon religion in the area. What is peculiar about this piece of history is that the monastery was totally destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. However, around 1980 the Sichuan government decided to reinstate it for a reason not known to me and even provided funds so that the local Bonpo people could begin to rebuild it as one of their own monasteries (No.187).

Surveying of the monasteries

This is the first time such a work of surveying of the Bonpo monasteries has ever been carried out. It was intended to cover as wide an area as possible, but given the vast geographic extent of Tibet's cultural boundaries the idea sounded very daunting indeed. Nevertheless, well supplied with the financial means, our colleague, Professor Yasuhiko Nagano was determined to carry it out in the programme of the Bon Culture Research Project at the National Museum of Ethnology and the four authors, who conducted the survey, spared no efforts in getting the intended work done. Moreover, the three Tibetan scholars, who mainly did the surveying in Tibet and Tibetan inhabited areas in China proper, are all acquainted with the cultural history of the Bon tradition and that helped them enormously in doing their fieldwork.

We have thus Dondrup Lhagal who surveyed the monasteries in the provinces of dBus and gTsang. Phuntso Tsering covered mainly the northern plateau, but also Chab mdo as well as the mNga' ris regions; Tsering Thar on the other hand took the survey in Amdo, parts of Khams and rGyal rong. Charles Ramble later joined by Marietta Kind attended to the monasteries in Nepal and India effectively covering the Himalayan region. Thus 233 religious establishments mainly monasteries, but also hermitages and temples were all briefly examined. However, this does not mean that every surviving or rebuilt monastery in Tibet was surveyed. Certain places such as Tsha ba rong in Khams have been left out. It is possible that still other places were not covered.

One of the biggest difficulties that the surveyors faced was that only a few of the places were within easy reach. The majority of monasteries were found in totally isolated places. To reach them required enormous physical exertion often in unfavorable weather, because many of them were located in places where there were no roads. If there were roads no transport was readily available. So the surveyors were often obliged to either ride on horseback or walk for days to see just one monastery or a hermitage at a time. It often happened that when a place was reached, no one was present and so the same journey had to be made twice.

There was another difficulty much more serious than the problem of inaccessibility. It was the scanty or simply non-existent information due to the

systematic destruction of the religious establishments and national monuments carried out during the so-called Cultural Revolution that spanned over ten years from 1966 to 1976. The criticism leveled against monuments such as fortresses were that they represented feudal society whereas monasteries were the basis of “superstition” (*rmong dad*).

The sporadic looting and burning committed by the Jungars seemed so insignificant when one compares their action to what the Chinese and their Tibetan collaborators did. This was purely robbery, carefully thought out and well organized with the intention of eradicating Tibet’s cultural identity in its own land. The mere word destruction does not seem sufficient to convey what kind of process the action involved, because the manner in which it was executed was so thorough and effective that in many cases not even traces were left. It is known that more than six thousand monasteries of both Buddhist and Bonpo perished during the period. Only a fraction of this number have survived.

It is therefore perhaps necessary to mention in a few words how the expropriation of property and demolition of the monastic buildings were orchestrated by armed hordes of the Red Guards with terror, threat, humiliation, public criticism and imprisonment for those who dared to resist.

As most of the monasteries and temples were centuries old, many were well equipped with what they needed and their religious tradition required them to possess. Much of the equipment was not actually all destroyed. It was simply expropriated. In a monastery of modest size the assembly hall usually possessed common effects such as archives, manuscripts, texts, thangka paintings, statues in both gilt-bronze and clay, woodblocks for printing, musical instruments made of various metals, tombs of abbots made of silver and gold with insets of precious stones, mural paintings, draperies made of silk and embroidered, masks and costumes for the *'cham* dance, ritual objects made of silver, gold and brass, ritual implements such as dagger and culinary utensils. Besides these effects of the assembly hall, the residence of the head of the monastery and the individual monks also normally possessed as private property, books, musical instruments and ritual objects.

The process of dismantling was carried out methodically stage by stage. First there was the removal of metal objects, followed by the wood work, books and other items. When the building was entirely emptied of its contents, it was often then detonated. However, in many cases, recorded documents that contained local histories and annual events of the monasteries and above all books were privileged targets of destruction. They were often brought out into the open air where they were either torn or chopped into pieces or simply burned with the public made to look on, but in certain cases some books were saved by being concealed in unsuspected places. This was possible only when two copies of a book existed. In such a case,

when a book was ordered to be brought out for destruction, the other copy was hidden away. Most of the expropriated property was secretly transported to China. Metal objects could either be used by melting them down or just kept for their intrinsic value in the future.

The events mentioned explain in part why written information on any given monastery had become so pitifully rare or practically non-existent in most cases. The surveyors therefore had to turn to other sources of information for their surveying work, but here too they faced incredible difficulties for the following reasons.

There were in fact two periods of monastic persecutions. In Amdo and parts of Kham a number of monasteries perished in fact during the period of 1957 and 1958, but the destruction of the majority of monasteries took place during the Cultural Revolution. The events of the 1957-58 period is not officially admitted by the Chinese authorities whereas the responsibility for the destruction during the Cultural Revolution was later put on the shoulders of the “Gang of Four”. In the 1960s and 1970s the monks, who witnessed and survived the onslaught of these events, were roughly aged between twenty and thirty years. When the survey of monasteries began to be conducted at the beginning of 1998 only few of these were still alive. However, most of these were in no position to give any detailed oral information in a coherent manner due to their old age. Nevertheless, some of these had written down historical accounts of their own monasteries from their memories some of which the surveyors were able to use.

Another destructive effect was the degradation of the Tibetan language in the same period that had the effect on it being nearly extinguished as a medium for the expression of Tibetan culture. Even in the aftermath of the revolution, only a few Tibetans were capable or would take the risk of putting to use their own language.

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, there was a radical shift in Chinese policies regarding the religious question. Tibetans, for the first time around 1980, were allowed to rebuild some of the destroyed monasteries. In many cases, the Chinese government even began to provide funds for this purpose particularly for those monasteries strategically located. The restriction of the use of religious texts was also lifted and the Chinese authorities even went on to encourage the publication of Tibetan classical texts on a scale unknown in the pre-1959 era in Tibet. A number of monasteries, it is true, have been rebuilt, but many of them only partially. The primary motive for this reconstruction is obvious. It is to promote tourism. They remain at best as deserted empty shells without the life of a real monastic tradition.

The framework for the survey

In order to have the same approach and standard in surveying the religious establishments, a guideline framework was worked out so that the authors could follow it. All the surveyors have followed it except Phuntso Tsering, who as a

voluntary contributor, conducted the surveying in his own fashion, but his work, nevertheless, does cover much the same ground as the others if only in some respects his scope tended to be rather more limited.

The framework, which is discussed below, consists of fourteen items. This was designed not only to produce an assessment of the general situation of a given monastery but also a review of the local population with regard to its importance to the monastery as well as cultural interchanges between clerics and laymen. However, in many instances information was simply not available and consequently not all of the fourteen items could be supplied. This is particularly so in the case of temples and hermitages. In the entries, items like 7 and particularly 10 are left out for the reasons that no information was available.

1. Name

This heading shows the name of the monastery concerned. In Tibetan tradition the names of religious establishments can vary considerably from one to another so as often to cause confusion regarding whether one is referring to the same entity or another.

2. Location

This item indicates the exact location of the establishment and the distance at which it is found from the main town of a region as well as the condition of the road leading to the place.

3. History

This section deals briefly with the history of the establishment.

4. Hierarchical system

In some monasteries such as sMan ri and gYung drung gling, abbots were elected by secret lot. The abbots are the supreme head of these monasteries, but in other places the head of the monastery can be hereditary (*gdung brgyud*, *gdung 'dzin*), i. e. the monastery was founded by a member of a family in a nearby place. The family usually continues to provide a man to be the head of the monastery and in this sense he is qualified as *dgon bdag*, "owner of the monastery". In this system, other important figures within the same monastery often take turns to be the head of the monastery and are in charge of the monastic affairs on a periodic basis under the authority of the *dgon bdag*.

However, the system of headship varies from one place to another. The head is often selected or appointed by general consent, but rarely did an individual monk take a personal initiative to be the head of a monastery, but after 1959 the system of appointing the head of a monastery had completely broken down. At the beginning of the 1980s when monasteries were allowed to be rebuilt, either an individual or a group of monks took the reconstruction initiative and as a result of this, in many

places the question of the head of a monastery remains unsettled to this day.

Under the authority of the head of a monastery, there are different functions held by monks in varying positions. This hierarchical system also varies slightly from monastery to monastery. There is a host of technical terms relating to the monastic administration and duties and we have grouped them together under the title of "Terms of governing system and duties in monasteries" in order to avoid the repetition of their English translation in each account of the monasteries.

5. Current number of monks

After 1959, none of the monasteries regained their former status. On the contrary, the number of monks and nuns is restricted and checked.

6. Current education

Under this heading, the current education of young monks and nuns in the monasteries and convents is meant to be discussed, but as will be seen in many places the situation is so desperate that there is hardly anything to be indicated. In many cases, this item is left out since it simply does not exist in the monastery under review.

7. Educational exchange

Before 1959, the educational exchange of young monks between monasteries was considered as the key instrument for training young monks. In some respects, this tradition is still kept up, but inevitably it tends to be less frequent and more symbolic and in many monasteries it simply does not exist anymore.

8. Daily rituals

This heading is intended to show the daily rituals performed by the monks collectively or in private, but it has been somewhat impracticable and complicated for the surveyors to record them separately from the annual rituals performed in assembly.

9. Annual rituals

Under this item a summary of the ritual events in the monasteries is given. This is important since ritual traditions and their dates vary enormously from monastery to monastery. In such a survey, no details concerning the identification of divinities and ritual texts devoted to them could be provided. These obviously need separate studies. One of the elements of these ritual events is the performance of various 'cham dances that takes place either as part of a ritual in private or as entertainment for public spectators.

10. Books held in the monastery

In large monasteries, there used to be separate libraries, but in many cases the books were simply kept as part of the three *rten* and so were usually found in the

chapels. As will be seen, during the Cultural Revolution archives, manuscripts and books mostly perished, but in certain cases some brave people managed to hide them away. It is still with much reluctance and fear that these hidden treasures are gradually revealed. This explains why this section is left blank or not even entered in many cases of the monasteries.

11. Income and expenses

Under this heading the income and expenses of the monasteries and monks were intended to be discussed, but given the situation as we know it, there is little to be said about them in the present circumstances.

12. Local community

Villages or nomadic tents clustered in the proximity of monasteries have always been important for the monasteries as their main livelihood, but in descriptions of Tibetan monasteries they are very often ignored. The surveyors were therefore requested to give a fair amount of information about them. Such information in fact gives an interesting idea whether the villagers regard themselves as still being Bon believers, and as it has been found in certain places that they in fact do not differentiate between Bon or Buddhism in clear cut terms. However, there are still many villages in various regions whose populations declare themselves to be followers of the Bon religion to this day.

13. Local festivals

Local festivals are either organized as common ones for both clergy and laymen or separately. When laymen carry out their celebration the members of the clergy do not normally participate in it, particularly when it is about the propitiation of local deities. Moreover, one village does not even allow members of villages from other regions to join with them. It is considered strictly private. On the other hand the villagers almost always attend the ceremonies in monasteries if these are intended for the public. Monasteries also often have their own "local deities" and the members of the clergy propitiate them normally on their own.

Another type of local festival takes the form of a pilgrimage which consists of walking round a nearby sacred mountain (*gnas ri*). In this festival it is not only the local people and clerics who join together in the celebration but also people from neighbouring regions join in. The content of this celebration is purely religious. In a forthcoming article I have tried to analyse the notions of the local deity and the development of the *gnas ri* pilgrimage based on early documents such as Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts: "Concepts of Territorial organization and sacred sites". This will appear in the Proceedings of the 8th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington (July 25-31, 1998).

14. Occupation of the local people

Here it is intended that the life mode of the local people as farmers, nomads, semi-nomads and traders should be indicated.

Editorial work

While Dondrup Lhagyal wrote his accounts of monasteries first in Tibetan and then translated them into English himself, Phuntsog Tsering wrote his accounts in Tibetan. Later an English translation of them was made by someone else. The introduction and epilogue sections of his work could not be included in the present volume due to the problem of length and relevance. However, Phuntso Tsering will publish the whole of his original Tibetan version. Tsering Thar wrote his accounts directly in English, but he intends to write a Tibetan version which he hopes to be able to publish before long.

In all the three cases, a heavy and long editorial process has been involved not only in order to make the English language acceptable but also to improve the coherence of the work and make it presentable as scholarship.

However, in editing their works, the editors made strenuous efforts to keep the gist of each account as far as possible, and each author is therefore directly responsible for the accuracy and reliability of his own statements. An attempt is also made to standardize the various approaches adopted by each author, but their personal styles have largely been left as they are.

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