

Civic Authority and Agrarian Management in Southern Mustang

Remarks on a nineteenth century land tax register from Kagbeni

— Charles Ramble

1.1. Introduction

Settlements in Southern Mustang, as indeed in many other places, feature intricate connections between agrarian practices, internal political organisation and local ritual. In many communities these connections have been largely obliterated by nationwide political changes, and it is not always clear how the various domains overlapped.

In an article that appeared in a recent issue of *Ancient Nepal*, the geographer Perdita Pohle addresses a range of subjects relating to the settlement geography of Kagbeni, in Southern Mustang (Pohle 1993). A part of the material contained in this study has been distilled into the form of a land use map. The present article may be regarded as a further comment to this map insofar as it examines the historical relationship

between agriculture and polity that prevailed until the time of the cadastral survey.

The historical perspective is possible thanks to the existence of documentary material that reveals something of the state of affairs prevailing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before living memory. The document that will form the basis of the present study is the land-tax register of Kag, henceforth referred to as KSM (for *bKag sa-'gro ma-yig*). Texts of this nature are rarely explicit about the overall situation. The KSM, being a sort of *aide-mémoire*, is completely silent concerning the organisation surrounding the obligations of the households that it lists. This has had to be reconstructed as far as possible by inference and from the recollections of elderly individuals.

In conformity with the dual character of the

material, the present article will be divided into two parts. The first will summarise the content of the KSM. An analysis of the tax obligations for different periods will make it possible to estimate the overall seed capacity — and to a certain extent the agricultural productivity — of Kag for the four different periods that are covered by the KSM. The document also provides fragmentary information on categories of landholding households and communally-held fields that are liable to special forms of taxation. The second part will present a broader picture of the social organisation surrounding the payment of land taxes. As stated earlier, there is much that is not contained in the KSM, presumably on the grounds that such things were widely enough known not to need to be committed to writing. The most obvious lacuna of this sort is the nature of the six sectors (*tshogs*) into which the tax-paying households are grouped. Particular attention will be given to those sectors which are concerned with the management of cultivated land. Finally, an examination of the six sectors will make it possible to understand the structure of local authority in Kag and to draw some limited comparisons with systems of headmanship in neighbouring communities of Baragaon and Panchgaon.

1.2. Structure and dates of the KSM

The KSM consists of several booklets formed by sheets of paper being sewn together in the centre and folded along a horizontal axis. Many pages have become detached, and some appear to be missing, with the result that the sequence is not always obvious.

The text, photographed by Prof. D. Schuh in

1989, consists of four main sections. Each section lists all the households in Kag, identifying them by the name of the principal household. Each household is followed by a figure stating the seed capacity of the land attached to it. The way in which tax liability is assessed on the basis of this seed capacity will be discussed presently.

The four sections will be designated simply A, B, C and D. The years by which they are identified are respectively: Wood Dragon, Water Dog and Earth Serpent and Wood Rat. Since the sections are (or have disintegrated into) separate compilations, with no physical features to suggest a sequence, there are few clues as to their temporal order. A few words may be said about the reasoning whereby a likely sequence for these dates has been established. There are in fact two distinct problems: first, that of getting the four entries in the correct order, and second, identifying the sixty-year calendrical cycle within which they fall.

We are greatly helped in this task by the fact that one of the four entries, made on the 25th day of the 10th month in a Wood Rat year, includes the day of the week, a Wednesday. The tables published in D. Schuh's study of the Tibetan calendar inform us that the 25th day of the 10th month fell on a Wednesday in the Wood Rat (fifty-eighth) Year of the 14th *rabbyung*, that is, 1864 (Schuh 1973: 212).

This conclusion is supported by the identification of one of the householders named in the entry as belonging to the third ascending generation of a villager who is now in his sixties. The ancestor is the celebrated Headman Daro (rGan-pa Dar-

po), whose story is related below. If we take thirty years to be a reasonable age for paternity, then rGan-pa Dar-po would have been born about 1840.

Having identified the date of one of the entries with a reasonable degree of confidence, we may turn to the second problem: the matter of arranging the other entries around it in the correct order. Since no days of the week are given to facilitate the task, the only possible means is to compare the frequency with which the same names appear in the different entries. The dating may be carried out according to the following steps (bearing in mind that the reliability of this method of dating is inherently limited by the fact that individuals who do not overlap in time may have the same names).

1. It is tempting to suppose that sections B (Water Dog) and C (Earth Serpent) fall on either side of section D (Water Rat), since a Water Rat year intervenes between them. However, this possibility must be discounted. Sections B and C are certainly close together, separated by just seven years, since the majority of names in each case are the same, and with the same, or similar, tax liabilities. The reason why it may have been necessary to review the register after such a brief interval will be discussed below. If section D represented an intervening year we would expect at least as great a degree of coincidence of names between it and sections B and C. But there is no such coincidence. Section D therefore does not fall between sections B and C.

2. There are nine names which occur in both C and B that also occur in A, but not in section D. This strongly suggests that section A is closer in

time to C and B than to D. This may be confirmed by the following observation:

3. Three names appear in section D that also appear in both C and B but not in A.

4. Two names appear in section D that are in C but not in B. (A third, counted in no. 2 above, occurs in both C and B; however, whereas the seed capacity of this household is the same in C and D, it is slightly different in B. This suggests that D and C are closer in time than D and B. Since we know for certain that C is only seven years later than B, B and C are likely to be earlier than D.

5. One name occurs in both A and B that is not found in C. The occurrence of a single name is by itself admittedly flimsy evidence for the greater antiquity of section A. The latter could theoretically be situated between C (Earth Serpent) and D (Wood Rat), since a Wood Dragon year does in fact intervene. If A fell between C and D, it would be twenty years earlier than D and thirty-five years later than C, and we would therefore expect a greater correspondence of names between A and D than between C and A. However, as we have seen in nos. 1 and 2, this is clearly not the case.

Thus the dates for the four sections suggested by the evidence above could be:

- A Wood Dragon — 1784
- B Water Dog — 1802
- C Earth Serpent — 1809
- D Wood Rat — 1864

It might be objected that the reappearance of the

same individuals in an entry for 1802 and for 1864 is an unlikely thing. As a general rule, a man "retires" from his position as head of household when his son is old enough to assume the responsibility, usually at the age of around thirty. The most likely explanation for the same individual being named as the head of his household over an abnormally long period is either that he had no heir-apparent, or, as sometimes happens, the son was considered to be incompetent. He would therefore continue to be listed as the household head until his death. One of the five people who are named in both D and B is a certain rGan-pa Ratna. In his case, the fact that he is named as the head of his household when he must have been well past the normal retirement age could be precisely because he was headman. As we shall see below, there was a period in Kag's history when headmanship was a lifelong office, and Ratna's household may have continued to be identified by his name even after he had effectively withdrawn from its running.

The longevity of certain names can also be explained by the likelihood that the people in question were unmarried religious practitioners or women whose siblings (or spouses) might have died before ensuring a succession. The nine names that recur in groups C, A and B include Jo-mo ("the nun" bSod-nams; sGrub-pa-mo ("the woman meditator") Tshe-dbang bzang-mo; sGrub-pa-mo Khya-mo,¹ and dKa'-bcu Srid-dar mi-'joms (dKa'-bcu is a monastic grade between *dge-slong* and *dge-bshes*).²

1.3. Household groupings and tax liabilities

Rather than to present a translation of the KSM, something that would make for tedious reading, the salient features of the document may be summarised and discussed.

As stated above, the KSM comprises four main sections, each listing all the tax-paying households in Kag. In each case, the households are not presented in a single sequence but in six sectors (*tshogs*). The significance of these sectors, and their relationship to the political organisation of Kag, will be discussed below. For now, it will suffice merely to list their names. They are:

Tshe-bcu dpal-gtor-ba
 Tshe-bcu 'dzing-chang-ba
 Tshe-bcu bu-tsha-ba
 Tshe-bcu yur-chang-ba
 Tshe-bcu dge-rtsa-ba
 Tshe-bcu lam-bcos-pa

Following the roll of households by sector the KSM gives a list of subsidiary households (*kha-'thor*). All "full" households (*grong-ba*) in Kag belong to one or another of the six sectors. One household cannot be in two separate sectors. However, in several cases the same householder is listed in two different sectors, a fact which requires some explanation.

The possibility that there may be several individuals of the same name in a given year may be discounted, since documents such as the KSM avoid ambiguity by adding some distinguishing epithet. For example, in the entries for the Bu-tsha-ba sector in section D we find a

certain g.Yung-drung che-ba ("Yungdrung the elder"), who is distinguished by his seniority from g.Yung-drung chung-ba ("Yungdrung the younger") listed in the dPal-gtor-ba sector. g.Yung-drung chung-ba is also listed in the 'Dzing-chang-ba sector, together with someone designated simply as g.Yung-drung, who, from the context, we may safely assume is g.Yung-drung che-ba. Both the g.Yung-drungs are to be distinguished from g.Yung-drung rnam-rgyal of the Lam-bcos-pa sector. In another case, we find that membership of a particular sector is the feature that distinguishes between two namesakes. The Lam-bcos-pa and Yur-chang-ba sectors in section A each include a householder called Dus-ston; in this case, confusion is avoided by the simple expedient of designating them respectively "Dus-ston of the Lam-bcos-pa" and "Dus-ston of the Yur-chang-ba".

The appearance of a single householder in two sectors is explained by the fact that one person may inherit two households. Such cases are relatively common throughout Baragaon even today. If a man has no children, as long as he has close relatives (especially patrilineal kin), rather than adopt a successor he will simply bequeath his house and land to a brother or cousin, whose household may belong to a different sector from his own. The inheritor will then probably allocate his two households to two different sons in the next generation. Inheriting two houses in different sectors obliges the owner to fulfil the duties required of householders by both these sectors (the nature of these duties will be discussed presently).

Obviously, the two households that a man might inherit need not be in different sectors. Several

entries in the KSM state explicitly that a single person has two households and that he is responsible for paying land tax on both. In these cases the liability of each household is not given separately, but the overall seed capacity is stated.

The seed capacity of each household is expressed in terms of 'bo-khal and zo-ba of six-row barley (*nas*). Twenty zo-ba equal one 'bo-khal. The zo-ba is equal to half a Nepalese *pathi*.³ Another unit that occasionally appears is the *se-khal*, equal to thirty zo-ba. It is worth noting that the KSM uses no units smaller than the zo-ba. In just two instances a half-zo-ba is specified. This contrasts with the land-tax register of Lubra, which frequently prescribes *drudra* ('bru-dra? Equal to a quarter of a zo-ba) and half-*drudra*.

The ratio of seed-capacity to tax varies from village to village. In Kag the tax payable is 10 per cent of the seed-capacity, something that is not actually stated in the KSM. The variations are only partly explicable in terms of differing productivity. The land tax in Chongkhor is also 10 per cent of a household's seed capacity, but because of the higher altitude of this settlement, crop yields are proportionately lower than in Kag. In Chongkhor, the seed-to-yield ratio (*skor-thang*) for six-row barley is 1:7 (*bdun-skor*), and in Kag it is about 1:9 (*dgu-skor*), occasionally somewhat higher.⁴ To my knowledge, there are only three villages which have a significantly greater seed-to-yield ratio than Kag. These are Tangkya, Dri and Surkhang, the only settlements in eastern Lo to cultivate barley rather than wheat (although a

few fields of barley are also planted in Yara). One householder in Surkhang claimed that he obtained a yield of 297 *pathi* for 20 *pathi* planted, a ratio of nearly 1:15. Yields in Dri were said to be even higher. The reason for this apparent fecundity seems to be a difference in the technique of planting. Seed barley in Bara-gaon is broadcast, and a certain proportion is lost to birds. In eastern Lo, barley is sown by pushing a stake into the earth at intervals and dropping three to five grains into the hole. This painstaking technique is said to be obligatory in the area to protect the seed from possible frosts and also from the depredations of red-billed choughs, which are abundant in the area.

The main features of the KSM are perhaps best expressed in tabular form. (See tables at the end of this article). Table 1 represents a summary of the four sections, displaying the number of households for each of the six sectors, the seed capacity of each sector and the total seed capacity of Kag. Since the KSM is damaged or illegible in several places, the figures for seed capacity and even the number of households are occasionally uncertain. The similarities between sections C and B have to a certain extent made it possible to overcome lacunae in one section by inference from the other. In other places, the missing numbers have been provided by estimating from the context. Whatever the case, the figures for seed capacity are probably accurate to within a few *'bo-khal*. Quantities are given in *'bo-khal* (b) and *zo-ba* (z). Note that the number of subsidiary households (*kha-'thor*) is bracketed because they are not included in the total number of households (*grong-pa*) for each section.

These figures enable us to make certain observations about Kag's cultivated land. First, the annual yield for the cultivable land listed in the KSM may be estimated as follows, assuming a seed-to-yield ratio of 1:9:

- A 14,676 *pathi*
- B 12,818 *pathi*^s
- C 12,838 *pathi*
- D 13,302 *pathi*

These figures are of course ideal, and do not account for attrition by rodents, caterpillars, disease and so forth.

Secondly, a few words may be said about the relationship between seed capacity and land area. As stated above, field size is locally reckoned not in terms of square units but the volume of seed it can sustain. Nevertheless, an approximate correspondence may be established between the two systems of assessment. A seed capacity of one *pathi* seems to correspond roughly with an area of one *ropani*, that is, 516 square metres. For the sake of convenience this equivalence will be retained in the following calculations.

The seed capacity of Kag's cultivable land, according to the most recent entry in the KSM, is approximately 147 *'bo-khal* 16 *zo-ba*, or 1478 *pathi*. This seed capacity implies a cultivable area of 147.8 *ropani*, or 7.6 ha. Pohle's analysis of Kag's territory, based on cadastral data, concludes that the village has a cultivable area of approximately 35.5 ha. — between four and five times more than the figure suggested by the KSM (Pohle 1993: 16).

Some of the possible reasons for this discrepancy

may be discussed. An important point to be noted is that the KSM only specifies the seed capacity of taxable fields. There were various categories of fields which were not subject to taxation. Non-taxable land in the past would have included the following three categories:

1. Communal fields ("*pishing*": *spyi-zhing*) corporately owned by the households of each of the six sectors. The various obligations of the sectors were financed with revenue from these fields. There appears to have been no fixed percentage that had to be paid by the lessee. He would make a flat offer of how much grain he was willing to pay to the lessor sector, based roughly on an assessment of seed capacity, and the sector would accept or reject his offer.

2. Monastic land (*chos-zhing*): fields are leased out to volunteers who provide their own seed and labour and pay a percentage of the yield to the monastery.

3. Fields from which the revenue was committed to the sponsorship of certain ceremonies. The system still exists in neighbouring villages. For example, the register of temple contributions from Lubra includes one ceremony which is entirely subsidised by part of the yield from seven named fields belonging to six households (see Ramble 1984: 302). In such cases the tax is referred to not as *sa-'gro* but as *zhing-rgyab*. The KSM uses the term *zhing-thob* (see also *zhing-thog* in discussion of dByar-ston fields below).

The only instance contained in the KSM of revenue other than normal land tax is an entry made in a Wood Rat Year. Only four names are

mentioned, and these make it clear that the year in question is not the same as that of section D (1864) but 1804, since they appear in the list of names for both section B (1802) and section C (1809). The passage concerns a number of fields referred to as the dByar-ston fields, and specifies not the seed capacity of the land but the quantity of grain to be paid as a lessor's fee (*thog*). Each of the four people named is required to pay 2 '*bo-khal* and 5 *zo-ba* of barley. According to normal practice in Baragaon, the fee for leased fields is 50 per cent of the yield or — as appears to be the case here — the probable yield estimated on the basis of seed capacity. (The lessor provides his own seed and labour.)

Assuming that 2 '*bo-khal* 5 *zo-ba* represents 50 per cent of the yield of each, the overall yield for the four would have been 18 '*bo-khal*. Since the seed-to-yield ratio for Kag's fields is about 1:9, we can draw the tentative conclusion that the dByar-ston fields must have had a seed capacity of 2 '*bo-khal* — in other words, two *ropani* (over 1000 square metres) of field area.

The yield was not committed to the funding of a religious ceremony but to constitute the annual salary of a public servant:

All the grain fee should be paid to the blacksmith at the stewards' office, 2 '*bo-khal* and 5 *zo-ba* from each of the lessors.

The entry continues with two clauses, intended respectively to protect the blacksmith from being cheated of his due and to assure the lessors — people who lease public land are themselves usually indigent — of their continuing usufruct of

the dByar-ston fields.

If there are even a few grains of inferior barley [*bso-ma*] mixed in with the superior barley [*nas*],⁶ [the blacksmith] shall receive 2.5 'bo-khal of grain [i.e. an additional 5 zo-ba]. Neither may villagers seize the fields [from the present lessors], nor may those who plant the fields abandon them.

Zhing tñog tshang [btsang] ma gnyer tshang du ser bzo ba'i [zo'i] 'bo [bo] khal gnyis dang zo ba lnga lnga 'debs ['dabs] rgyu [gyu] / gal [ga] srid nas la *bso ba* re re 'dre [gres] ba byung ['byung] na / 'bo [bo] khal phyed dang gsum len rgyu [gyu] chod [mchod] / zhing yul pas [ba'i] yang 'phrog [khrog] sa med / zhing 'debs [stabs] mi rñams {gyi} kyang 'grim [grim] sa med pa chod⁷

4. It is possible that land belonging to the nobility was not taxed. A significant feature of the KSM is that the lists of householders contain no names prefixed by the title *sras-po* or *dpon-po*, "Noble". This probably cannot be attributed to a simple omission of the title by the scribe, since official documents from the area are normally meticulous about observing this protocol. If this is the case, it is likely that a considerable area of private agricultural land is simply not included in the KSM. However, a clue to the amount in question may be obtained from present day noble landholdings — in other words, the area of fields that have been officially registered under the name Thakuri. The relevant data from the Jomsom Land Tax Office suggests that this represents approximately 15-20 per cent

of Kag's registered cultivated land.⁸

In addition to these categories it is likely also that land owned by the subbas was not liable to taxation. The KSM does in fact mention a dispute concerning revenue from a subba's field not having been paid to its absentee owner, but the passage is too confused to merit close analysis. The point is that the revenue from such fields would not have been paid to Kag's granary, and they would therefore not figure in the KSM.

It is possible that at least a part of the land that was previously classified as *spyi-zhing* has been converted to what is now known as village *guthi*, a category accounting for approximately 1.4 ha. of land in Kag. Unfortunately, inquiries have not yielded any documents contemporary with the KSM indicating how much *spyi-zhing* land was exempt from ordinary taxation. It is certainly likely that such a document does, or at least did, exist. Lubra, for example, has a text entitled the *sPyi-zhing sa-'gro mayig*, the land tax register for communal fields, which lists different areas of cultivable land that are not eligible for normal taxation, specifying the purpose for which their revenue is to be used.

The monastic community is said to possess a document listing the size of the *chos-zhing* from which it is still entitled to receive revenue. This document was not photographed, but the relevant figure was obtained from the Land Tax Office in Jomsom. According to the office's records, the equivalent of 2.3 ha. of land are registered as Kag monastic *guthi* territory, and 0.4 ha. as *guthi* land of Tiri monastery.⁹ This represents 36.8 per cent of the area of Kag's

land that was considered to be taxable in 1864. We do not know how much monastic land there was at this time, or what area of land was occupied by the other non-revenue-paying categories. But whatever the case, it is highly unlikely that it would have equalled the unaccounted-for 27.8 ha. that Pohle's assessment suggests.

The only conclusion that can be drawn, unless the foregoing assessments are wildly inaccurate, is that there was simply less agricultural land in Kag in the nineteenth century. The possibility that new fields may have been broken since this time is supported by the improvement in the irrigation system that has taken place since the compilation of the KSM. Details concerning this improvement will be discussed below.

1.4. Comparing the sections

In view of the considerable lapse of time between sections A and B and between C and D, we may wonder why there is such a short interval between B and C. The answer may be related to the observation that the overall seed capacity for section B is surprisingly low, especially in view of the fact that only seven years separate it from section C. I believe the discrepancy is to be explained by an omission in the text. Among the householders listed in section C is "the steward Karma", whose land has a seed capacity of 14 'bo-khal. This is an exceptionally high figure: the average seed capacity for the other households in the sector is slightly over 2 'bo-khal and 2 zo-ba. The list of householders for the dPal-gtor-ba sector of section B begins with the words: "The great steward sKar..." and breaks off abruptly. The remainder of the line, and the following line, are both left blank. The

third line resumes the list with a new name. Now "sKar" is quite probably a misspelling of the first syllable of the name Karma (spelt correctly in section C). The seed capacity of seven of the fifteen households is identical in both C and B, and the majority of others exhibit variations of only a few zo-ba. If we assume that the steward Karma's liability in section B was the same as in section C — 14 zo-ba — the total seed capacity of the former would be increased to 142 'bo-khal 8.5 zo-ba — very close to the figure for section C (142 'bo-khal 13 zo-ba). We can only speculate as to why the steward Karma's seed capacity was left blank. It may be that it was diverted to the sponsorship of a religious ceremony; alternatively, it may be that there was a dispute over the figure that was satisfactorily resolved only seven years later. Rather than merely fill in the blank, the community may have thought it preferable to draw up an entirely new list. Changes in the seed capacity and numbers of other households seem to be insufficiently significant to have merited a complete reassessment.

A comparison between sections C and B on the one hand and section D on the other clearly shows the potential fluidity of land tenure. In the dPal-gtor-ba sector, for example, the number of households is similar (14 in D, 15 in C and B), but the seed capacity of 43 'bo-khal 16 zo-ba for section C becomes 52 'bo-khal 0.5 zo-ba in section D. In other cases, the overall landholding of a sector may remain fairly constant, even though the number of households changes: the seed capacity of the dGe-rtsa-ba has diminished from 19 'bo-khal 14 zo-ba in C to 17 'bo-khal 10 zo-ba in D, a relatively minor change in view of the fact that the number

of households has fallen from eleven to six (the problems of political organisation arising from this disparity are discussed below). In spite of this inconstancy in land tenure, and the decrease in the number of households, the overall seed capacity of Kag remained stable over this period (an increase of only some 5 *zo-ba*).

The greatest discrepancy is to be found between section C, B and D on the one hand and A on the other. There is evidence to suggest that the considerably greater number of households listed in section A may be the result of a different understanding of what constitutes a household. In Baragaon, a household (*grong-ba*) and its fields are frequently divided and treated as distinct economic units by, say, two brothers or two cousins. Nevertheless, the *grong-ba* remains the political unit. For example, in the roster of village officials, the *grong-pa* will have to provide just one incumbent in each circuit, and if the *grong-pa* is split, the two component houses will normally alternate in meeting their common obligation. It is probable that section A has listed not just full *grong-pa* but also fractions of *grong-pa*. In some cases, however, although the heads of two fractional households are named, their landholdings are treated as a single unit. For example, we are told at one point in the list for the 'Dzing-chang-ba that the land of "mGon-skyabs and his brother, the two of them together", is assessed as having a seed capacity of 16 *zo-ba*. That both individuals should be cited can be explained most satisfactorily by the likelihood that the KSM is, for this section, using a convention that assesses the seed capacity of fractional houses. It may also be significant that the section lists only three subsidiary households, whereas the others list eleven

(C and B) or twelve (D). It may be that certain categories of such households have been listed among the full households in section A.¹⁰

The greater seed capacity of Kag's land in section A may be the result of two possible factors: first, there may quite simply have been more land which has since been eroded away by the Kali Gandaki, as older villagers claim to be the case; or secondly, certain areas of land may have been transferred to categories that are not covered by the KSM — for example, one or more sizable donations to the monastery.¹¹ It is likely that a combination of both these processes has been responsible for the diminution of taxable land in Kag.

The KSM also contains two entries concerning the settlement known as Yule (spelt dByu-le or dByu-li in the KSM),¹² which lies south of Kag-beni on the right (west) bank of the Kali Gandaki. Informants in Kag maintained that Yule was first settled by two noblemen, sKu-zhabs dGra-'jom, the grandfather of the present Sras-po dBang-rgyal, and sKu-zhabs sTag-la dbang-rgyal, the grandfather of the present Padma snying-po. However, the KSM suggests that this area was under cultivation, if not actually settled, more than two generations ago.

The two entries list the seed capacity of Kagpas who held land in Yule. The tax was presumably to be paid to the Kag treasury, since Yule lies in the latter's territory, and to judge from the list, all the landholders are from Kag. (This is now no longer the case, since all the land has been sold to non-Kagpas. The residents of Yule are from Te, and most of the remaining land is owned by residents of nearby Pagling.)

Neither entry is dated, but the approximate period of each can be established satisfactorily by comparing the names in the lists with those in dated passages of the KSM. Almost all the nineteen names in one of the lists (Yule A) coincide with those in the entries for sections B and C; almost all the twenty-three names in the other (Yule B) correspond to householders listed in section D (included among them the Headmen Dar-po and Ratna).

The overall seed capacity for Yule A is 37 *'bo-khal* 8.5 *zo-ba*, while that for Yule B is 38 *'bo-khal* 2 *zo-ba*. The larger number of landholders and greater seed capacity in Yule B suggests that new fields were broken in the interim. This observation also confirms that sections C and B are indeed later than section D. Moreover, the absence of any mention of Yule in the KSM prior to a period contemporary with section B implies that the first fields were broken — or at least became eligible for taxation — around the first decade of the nineteenth century, and that section A does predate B.

C and D. The system of irrigation for the Yule fields is discussed below in the context of the Yur-chang-ba sector.

2. The six sectors

The six sectors into which the households of Kag are grouped are characterised by certain religious or secular services to the community as a whole. A brief description of these responsibilities may be given.

2.1. The Yur-chang-ba'i tshogs

Literally, the "group of irrigation-channel people", this sector was responsible for providing beer and food for those involved in the annual restoration of Kag's principal watercourses. All Kag's water comes from the Dzong Khola before being distributed along three arterial canals. The first replenishes the reservoir on the southern side of the Dzong Khola, and the water is subsequently released into the area of fields known as Khalung. An important subsidiary channel should be mentioned: this is called Shang, a branch which splits off from the first and serves the area known as Bowa. The second, which leaves the Dzong Khola at a site called Darkyang, irrigates the Shon fields on the northern bank of the river, and the third, which runs through the middle of the town and drives a series of water mills, feeds the Shung fields on the alluvial fan south of Kag.

As in neighbouring settlements, access to water is based on an irrigation roster (*'chu-re*). The way in which the order of access to water is established varies from one settlement to another. In Chongkhor, the villagers' fields are divided into two groups, each with its own water source. During cultivation of the fields for the first crop of the year, the sequence for one group of fields will follow the order of the *houses*, which are numbered from 1 to 32, while the reverse order pertains for the other group of fields. When irrigation is taking place for the second annual crop, the sequence is simply reversed for each group of fields. In Lubra, the order of access to water is established twice a year — once for the wheat crop and once for the buckwheat — by drawing lots among the householders. The order of access to water is

thus based on a sequence of households, irrespective of the geographical location of their fields. This variant of the *'chu-re* is called *sgo-rim*, or "door-to-door", in which "door" is metonymic for a household.

The system that prevails in Kag is referred to as *su-mgyogs-mgyogs*, "whoever is quickest", since that is essentially how the order is established. During the night a householder may leave a small pile of stones at the open sluice of the irrigation canal, and return home through the village, announcing in a loud voice that he is the next in line. When dawn breaks he will be entitled to divert the water to his own fields. Such a system can clearly only operate in a situation where water is relatively plentiful, and it does not much matter when one's turn comes. This is the case with Kag. The fact that there are three irrigation canals with abundant water means that Kag's fields can be irrigated in the space of just thirteen days, whereas other settlements require much more time. A first-come-first-served principle is therefore suitable to Kag, since it is not likely to lead to acrimony over access to water.

The present system has not always obtained in Kag. There have been at least two changes in living memory. Both preceding systems involved a circuit known as *rka-rim*, "sluice sequence". Now the "door-to-door" (*sgo-rim*) roster that we have encountered above means that an individual may irrigate all the fields belonging to him in the vicinity of the channel to which he has been allowed access for the day, even though these fields are not necessarily contiguous. The "sluice sequence", however, means that access to water follows the order of

the sluices (*rka*) disposed along the irrigation canal, irrespective of the ownership of the fields onto which these sluices open. Since this procedure meant that householders were obliged to close and open their sluices with annoying frequency, a modification was made in the system. This consisted of employing two people, designated as *chuma* (probably *'chu-ma*, "irrigators"), whose duty it was to work the sluices. For this service they were entitled to receive one *zo-ba* of barley per field, and 2 *zo-ba* for those fields containing *btsag-rdo*, the white stones that signify the presence of a serpent spirit (*klu*). In practice, householders place *btsag-rdo* only in their largest fields.

Perhaps because of an unwillingness on the part of the villagers to pay the *chuma*'s fee, this system was abandoned in favour of the *su-mgyogs-mgyogs* practice. Another factor that may have precipitated the change is the improvement of Kag's irrigation system, a subject we shall return to presently. While the *rka-rim* system was in operation, a rather different principle applied for the fields that were irrigated from the reservoir (the areas known as Rerag, Thana, Bowa, Shang and Khalung). In this case the householders concerned would cast lots on *each day* of the period during which irrigation was to take place for both the buckwheat and barley crops. The casting of lots took place at three different locations: on the first day at Thana; on the second at Ara, said to denote the covered passage to the east of the ruined castle;¹⁵ and on the third day at Darkyang (mDa'-rkyang), literally "arrow ground", a flat area at the north-western end of the town, where archery contests are said to have been held. On the

fourth day the sequence would recommence at Thana.

In the light of these relatively recent modifications in Kag's irrigation system, it is interesting to observe that precisely the reverse of these changes is prescribed in the KSM in the last century. The entry was written in a Water Snake Year (1833? 1893?):

Following a discussion among the people of Kag, who are led by the Headmen Ratna and Dar-po: even though it was, in the distant past, customary for people who took turns for the irrigation to [establish the order by] casting lots [this practice has been discontinued]. But because people are afraid of their souls being carried off and their lives endangered, there are some who do not even get one turn for irrigation¹⁴ and others get two. Because of this, following a discussion among the people of Kag, we have [reverted to] casting lots.¹⁵ For the four cultivated areas of Kag, five including Yule, [the order of irrigation shall be as follows].

— For Shang: [the circuit shall move] southwards, starting from the top and going downhill;¹⁶

— For Shon: northwards, starting from below and going uphill;

— For Shung: southwards, from the top downhill;

— For Khalong: northwards, from the top moving downhill;

— For Yule: northwards, starting at the

top and moving anticlockwise.

No one may say that he hasn't the time [to take his turn]. The time when water may first be channelled into the fields [each day] shall be the first cock crow.¹⁷

If the [water] with which the fields are being irrigated should stray [from its proper course during the night and risk damaging other fields?] [the person responsible] must go out in the middle of the night [and remedy the situation].

After the Khalong fields have been irrigated, any excess water may not be channelled into Bo-ga¹⁸ again.

When you have finished irrigating your field you should call the person after you [to take his turn].

There shall be no theft of water.

If anyone diverges from [the terms of] this document he shall pay a fine of one red [copper?] coin.

[The above?] shall be implemented after the tenth day of the seventh [Tibetan] month, the month of dByar-ston.

rGan [gan] pa ratna [radna] rgan [gan] pa dar
gtso [rtsos] ba'i bkag [kag] pa yul pa [ba]
bka' [ka'] gros [bros] thog [thogs] nas sngon
snga mo chu [chus] sna [rna] zung ba tshos
[tsho ba'i] rgyan rgyab [gyab] srol yod kyang
[bkyang] / mi bla [sla] 'khyer [khyer] ba tshe
nyams [nyam] yong mno (?) [ngags] bsam
[sam] dang la la 1 mo 'chu [chus] la la gnyis
[snyis] 'chu [cus] ba la rten [sten] bkag
[bskags] pa [ba] yul pa [ba] bka' [ka'] gros
[bros] thog [thogs] nas chu'i [chub] rgyan
[gyan] rgyab [gyab] pa [ba] yin / bkag [skag]
tu [du] klungs [slus] bzhi [zhi] / dbyu li lnga

[snga] bo / shang go lhor stangs [stang/stad (unclear)] smad [mad] nas mar (err. for yar?) / zhon byang stangs [thang] smad nas yar / zhung lhor stangs [stang] stod nas mar / kha' long byang stangs [stang] stod nas mar / dbyu li byang stang stod nas g.yas [dbyas] skor [kor] / mis [mi] mi [smi] khom mna' [rna] sa med / klungs [slung] chu [byu] bcug [cugs] na (?) [sna/ta — unclear] mgo [go] la bya skad [gad] dang ma la / klungs [slung] chu [cu] 'grim [brim] na mtshan [tshan] phyed la 'gro [bro] rgyu [gyu] / kha' long bcus [chus] phyin chu lhag [lhags] bo ga la slad [las] te [de] 'chu [cu] sa med / bcus [chus] nas rang gi khyim mtshes [tshe] la brda' [da'] g tong [stang] rgyu [kyu] / chu rku sa med / gal srid chod tshig [tshigs] nas 'gal [gal] phyin chad pa dngul dmar [smar] 1 byung rtog [stogs] len chod pa yin / dbyar ston [stong] zla ba bdun [dun] pa'i tshes 10 'tshugs [tsugs] rgyu [kyu] /

This entry is clearly prescribing a system of priority that is based not on order or households (whether permanently fixed, as in Chongkhor, or established by lot, as in Lubra, but on an order of *fields* according to their geographical location: in other words, a *rka-rim* or "sluice sequence". The aim of casting lots is to establish the starting point and thereby the subsequent sequence of fields that are to benefit from the water. The order laid down in the entry was evidently not meant to be followed in perpetuity but revised each year by casting lots.

The KSM does not tell us about the existing system of irrigation that is to be abandoned, but a clue to its nature is contained in the reasons for its abandonment, namely that "people are afraid

of their souls being carried off and their lives endangered", and furthermore because there is an apparent injustice in the system. These features are characteristic of the *su-mgyogs-mgyogs* or "first-come-first-served" regime that is again current in Kag. One of the distinguishing requirements of this system is that householders must go out in the middle of the night to stake their claim to the water. Villagers in Baragaon (and many other places for that matter) are often reluctant to go abroad at night because of the danger of lurking ghosts, demons and various other malevolent nocturnal entities. Secondly, as pointed out earlier, the first-come-first-served principle is really practicable only when there is an adequate water supply. At the time of the KSM there may well not have been. Even now, conflicts over natural resources such as wood, grazing and water can acquire quite dramatic proportions; and this entry almost raises the suspicion that, in the darkened fields of Kagbeni, during the critical period of irrigation, lives really were endangered and perhaps even the occasional soul carried off by some undiscovered agency.

The irrigation canals were traditionally restored on two occasions in the year: in the second month (February/ March) for the barley crop, and in the seventh month (July/ August) for the buckwheat. The work of restoration was performed by everyone between the ages of thirteen and sixty, a category called *lenyi* (*las-nye?*) in Kag.¹⁹ The labour was spread over two days. On the first day the work party would deal with the Shon and on the second with the Shang. Work on the Shung channel, which runs through the centre of the town, was carried out over the same period by married women and older men,

apparently out of courtesy to the latter and convenience to the former, who had their hearths to maintain. The fact that it was predominantly women who worked on Shung is the basis of the nickname of this waterway: Mo-yur, the Female Irrigation Channel.

The Yur-chang-ba households would prepare a quantity of beer made from 2 *zo-ba* of barley (*chang-zo do-ma*), and one small basket (*bagchung*, with a capacity of some six or seven *mana*) of roasted barley (*yos*). The quantities involved were clearly of the order of a snack rather than a feast, sufficient to provide each worker with one or two cupfuls of beer and a handful of grain. The Yur-chang-ba were also responsible for providing fire and juniper incense with which to propitiate the gods at the point where the canal joined the river. In the evening the sector would hold a beer-drinking party for its own members.

Since the dissolution of Kag's sectors, the maintenance of the irrigation channels is no longer a properly communal affair. Instead, fourteen or fifteen young men volunteer for the task and are paid in cash from village funds.

2.2. The 'Dzing-chang-ba tshogs

The maintenance of Kag's reservoir is said to have been carried out once a year, in the second month, at the time the irrigation canals were being prepared for the barley crop. Unfortunately it has not been possible to determine the responsibilities of the 'Dzing-chang sector in this regard — informants' recollections were uncertain — but we may imagine that it was similar to the obligations of the Yur-chang-ba.

Accounts suggest that the annual clearance of the reservoir began with a certain amount of modest revelry between the young men and women of the village. Notably, the soft silt of the dried bed was considered a perfect site for a high-jump contest, with the men competing and the women progressively raising the rope. After the contest a few women would remain at the site to deepen the hollow, carrying the earth to the edges in baskets, while the other young women and the men went off to work on the canals. The preparation of reservoirs in the region not infrequently acquires a festive character. In Te, particularly, the event has acquired the proportions of an annual ceremony, called the Cingsa.

Kag's reservoir is located on the Shang (southern) side of the Dzong Khola. There is some indication that there may also have been a reservoir in Shon, on the right bank. One field in this area bears the name Ngodrup Dzingu (dNgos-grub 'dzing-bu); Ngodrup is likely to be the name of a past owner of the field, while Dzingu suggests that this was the site of a reservoir.

What is certain is that the irrigation system of the Shon fields has undergone changes within living memory. The present Shon irrigation canal, for example, was installed only some fifty years ago. Until then, the lower Shon fields were irrigated by a canal that left the Dzong Khola at a lower, more westerly location than the present junction. The upper fields of Shon were fed by a wooden aqueduct (*wa*) that carried water from the Shang canal, on the left (south) bank of the Dzong Khola, across the river to the right bank. The construction of the Shon canal may have been contemporary with the improvement of the Shang irrigation system, which in places also

The story goes that rGan-pa Dar-po — who is now something of a local folk hero — earned the hostility of the nobles by championing the welfare of the people. After a protracted dispute his rivals succeeded in obtaining a royal seal from the palace in Kathmandu on a forged warrant for his death. The seal was obtained by one Ga-ga ("noblewoman") Phyag-mtshan sgrol-ma, a woman of Kag's ruling Khri-thog-pa lineage and a wife of the ruler in Kathmandu. rGan-pa Dar-po was duly seized and taken to the middle of the bridge that spans the Kali Gandaki west of Kag. His rivals hewed at his neck for a while in an unsuccessful attempt to behead him, until he removed from inside his mouth a protective amulet that he had concealed there. Saying that if people really wanted him dead he would no longer resist, he yielded to his captors, who duly removed his head with a single stroke. The head was then hung under the bridge as a grim warning to any other prospective opponents of the nobility.

If this last detail is true, it undoubtedly indicates a vicious sense of humour on the part of the noble assassins. Not infrequently in Baragaon and Lo one sees goats' heads hanging beneath bridges over streams. The heads belong to goats that have died from a certain variety of madness. It is believed that so suspending the mad goat's head under a bridge will prevent other animals in the herd from falling victim to the same insanity.

The story goes on to relate how justice was finally done when the king of Nepal discovered the subterfuge and summoned the offenders to trial. After passing through a series of lesser courts they found themselves in Tansen, where they all perished from heat and illness. The

queen who had stolen the seal was likewise banished from the royal court, and, too ashamed to return to Kag, died somewhere in obscurity.

2.9. The constables of Kag

At the period when the *tshogs* system was in operation there were six constables, one recruited from each of the six sectors, serving by annual rotation. The fact that each sector provided one constable is the source of an alternative name for the office, *tshogs-pa*, that is commonly used instead of *rol-po*. In Panchgaon and the five Shod-yul (the *Se-skad*-speaking villages north of Kagbeni), the usual term for the *rol-po* is *tshowa* (< *tshogs-pa*).

One of the chief tasks of the Kag constables was to guard the fields during the two annual harvests. For the barley harvest, about the middle of June, each constable would appoint an assistant, probably from within his own sector. Although the assistants served for only three days the appointment was made well in advance of the harvest, on the day of the Loyak (*Lo-yag*)²⁹ ceremony. The six assistants were referred to as the *mi-thus drug-po*.

Kag is reputed to have enjoyed better crop yields than most neighboring settlements, and large numbers of people from the villages in the Muktinath Valley would come to provide labour for the harvest and to glean the fields. The gleaners were known by the somewhat pejorative term *gumbu thukhen*. *Gumbu* (*gong-bu*?) is a local term implying "leftover grain", or "bird-food", and designating the ears of barley that fall to the ground when the stalks have been gn

used to depend on wooden aqueducts for conveying water. In the case of the latter at least the improvements are said to have been financed by Jetha Subba of Thak in collaboration with a Kagpa named Gara. (As Pohle points out, the subba's motives for constructing this channel were probably something other than pure public-spiritedness, since he himself had fields in the area.)

It may be that it was precisely the improvement of the Shon irrigation system that led to the obsolescence of the reservoir, since the water would thenceforth have been abundant enough not to require storage. For the sake of comparison we may point to the extreme contrast provided by the settlement of De in eastern Lo: water here is scarce, and *every one* of the thirteen households has its own reservoir. An interesting feature of the situation is that two irrigation rosters are required, one for replenishing the reservoirs and one for watering the fields.

2.3. The *dGe-rtsa-ba* tshogs

The *dGe-rtsa* (lit. "root of virtue") is a liturgical ceremony that was, and continues to be, held on the fourteenth day of the fourth month (April/ May).²⁰ The salient feature of the *dGe-rtsa* ceremony is the making of large numbers of clay *tsha-tsha* by a dozen or so monks. The duty of the *dGe-rtsa* sector was to provide food for the monks and oil with which to grease the *tsha-tsha* mould. All the *tsha-tsha* would then be placed on stones beside the principal watercourses, apparently as a measure to prevent the erosion of the fields by the river. The distribution of the

tsha-tsha was performed by village children, who would be rewarded for their cooperation by having the surplus oil rubbed into their hair.

The *dGe-rtsa-ba* was latterly the smallest of the six sectors, a fact which, as we shall see below, resulted in disputes concerning the administrative system of Kag. Moreover, with a seed capacity of just 6 *zo-ba*, their communal field was the smallest of the six. Exceptionally, following the cadastral survey of Kag's fields, the land was not auctioned to private bidders as in the case of the other five sectors. Instead, the members of the sector gave the field, together with a donation of Rs. 201, to the monastery, pleading that they no longer wished to subsidise the ceremony. Since then, the field has formed part of the agricultural land of the monastery (*chos-zhing*).

2.4. The *dPal-gtor-ba* tshogs

The *dPal-gtor* ceremony is held on the fifteenth day of the fourth month, that is, on the day after the *dGe-rtsa* ritual. The sixteenth day is marked by a general circumambulation of Kag. The villagers walk around the perimeter of the cultivated area, carrying the sacred texts from the monastery library, as a means of protecting the barley crop from possible misfortune. The procedure is known variously as *chos-skor*, "circumambulation with sacred books", and *klungs-skor*, "walking around the fields". The chief feature of the procession is a small image of Maitreya which is kept in the shrine room of one of the noble houses.²¹ The monastic ceremony that accompanies the circumambulation is called the *bsTan-pa rtsi-*

'dril.²²

Even since the dissolution of the sectors the *dPal-gtor-ba* householders have retained the responsibility for sponsoring the *dPal-gtor* and *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril* rituals, with the financial burden being borne by one household each year on a rotating basis. When the common fields were sold, the money collected was distributed equally among the various householders. The ceremonies are annually subsidised with part of the interest accumulated by each household on this capital, through investment in trade.²³

There is a brief section in the KSM that records a dispute over village subsidies for the *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril* and the Loyak. The entry suggests that the sponsorship of the Loyak and the *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril* were connected, and that the village as a whole may have been responsible for subsidising the events:

Things shall be the same as in the register [*bem-chag*] of the Ox year, but the following addition shall be made. The 11th day of the 7th month in a Hare year. Having gathered together the land-tax payments²⁴ of the village of bKag, subsidies were [also] collected, and there was a discussion concerning the subsidies for the Loyak and *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril*. The people of bKag made the following agreement.

According to the settlement concerning the fact that the *rol-po* were in disagreement, from the Hare year onwards, the payment for the Loyak and the *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril*,

those two, shall be no more than 4 'bo-khal of superior barley and 1 'bo-khal of inferior barley, and nothing else shall be paid even if the *rol-po* say it must. This document of agreement among the people of bKag has been presented to the six constables of the Hare year.

Glang [sla] lo'i [lor] bem chag ['chags] nang
 bzhin yod pa [ba] la phyis ['phyis] su lo [lor]
 rtags [sta] yos lo zla ba bdun pa'i tshes 11 la
 bkag [skags] yul gyis [skyis] *bskal bdag*
 bsdus [dus] nas 'gro dgos ['gros dgo] bsdus
 [bdus] lo yag [dbyags] dang bstan pa rtsi
 ['tshil] 'dril ['drin] 'gro [gros] dgos kyī
 [dgo'i] skor [bskor] gleng [glang] mo byung
 ['byung] (nas) [lacuna of 1 syllable] bkag
 [skags] yul pa [ba] bka' gros ['dros] thog
 [thogs] nas rol po rnam [rnam] ma [sma]
 beam [cham] pa'i [ba'i] chod [mchod] tshig
 [rtsigs] nas / lo [ltor] rtags [sta] yos nas
 'phan lo yag [dbyags] dang bstan pa rtsi
 [rtsil] 'dril 2 'gro ['gros] dgos [dgo] (zhing
 tog?) [lacuna: ...ogs] 'bo [bo] khal [mkhal]
 bzhi dang so nas 'bo [bo] khal gcig [cigs] ma
 gtogs [stogs] gzhan [bzhan] rol po [bo] rnam
 [rnam] kyis [skyis] (ster) [lacuna] dgos [gos]
 zer kyang [skyang] ster [bster] rgyu med
 [smi] chod [mchod] zer nas skag [bskags] yul
 pa'i [ba'i] bka' gros ['dron] chod [mchod]
 tshig [rtsigs] yos lo'i [lus] rol po [bo] 6 la
 ster ba yin /

2.5. The Lam-bcos-pa tshogs

Only very scant information could be obtained about this sector, and even this is probably of dubious reliability. Like the Yur-chang-ba and the 'Dzing-chang-ba, the sector is said to have been concerned not with the sponsorship of

religious activities but the performance of a civic task. In this case, as the name suggests (*lam-bcos*: "road-repair"), the work involved the maintenance of routes in and around the village.

One informant substantially confused the issue, asserting that *lam-bcos* signified a memorial ceremony for a certain Lama Ngawang Thogme. On the third day of the second Tibetan month the patrons — apparently the sector itself — would hold a celebration, and on the eighth day of this month the entire community would participate. The nuns of Tiri convent used to make *tsha-tsha* in honour of Lama Ngawang Thogme. The lama is said to have been a *'ja'-lus-pa*, whose body dissolved in rainbow light after death. The final shrunken remains are said to constitute the inner treasure for the consecration of the image of Maitreya in the house of Pema Drolkar (the Red House Lodge Hotel).

The confusion — which may have arisen from the similar pronunciation of the terms *lam-bcos*, "road-repair", and *bla-mchod*, "offerings to the lama" — is interesting because of its possible relevance to the history of the sectors' formation. The matter will be taken up again in the conclusion.

2.6. The Bu-tsha-ba tshogs

As far as I could ascertain, the name Bu-tsha appears to have been the epithet of a lama from Nyilung who lived at an unspecified time. My principal informant pronounced the name of the sector as "Beza",²⁵ and seemed not to be entirely certain of the identity between it and the group responsible for sponsoring the cult of the lama. In addition to the six sector names that appear in

the KSM the same informant offered a few others, which appear to have been pejorative sobriquets for both the Bu-tsha-ba and the Lam-bcos-pa. For example, the groups were also known as the Dziting *tshogs*, the "quarrelling sectors",²⁶ and the Baltag *tshogs*, the Beer-porridge sectors, after the name of an alcoholic mash that is sometimes eaten during festive gatherings.

The lama's retreat (*ri-khrod*) at Nyilung may still be seen a few hours west of Tiri on the way to Sangdag. The place is said to be marked by a chorten. The fragmentary information that I was able to obtain about the lama is in the nature of pious anecdotes about his mystical affinity with animals. It is said, for example, that he used to milk the wild blue sheep, and used a domestic cat as a courier for messages between his mountain retreat and the convent of Tiri, of which he may have been the tutelary lama. On one occasion he sent the cat down to Tiri with an urgent message attached to its collar requesting a small quantity of beer for a ritual he was due to conduct the following day. The nuns duly supplied the beer and sent the cat back with the following reply:

Grandfather anchorite of Nyilung

The cat has set off briskly

To fulfill your wish.

Grandfather anchorite of Nyilung

We have brought you the finest beer.

Nye lung [sp?] mes mes mtshams pa

be le bsam pa'i don grub

hur thag byed la song

Nyi lung mes mes mtshams pa

chang gi *tingma*²⁷ khur yod

The lama's connection with Kag is not clear, but it is likely that his reputation won him patronage from the community, and many of the nuns of Tiri are likely to have been women of Kag. Whatever the case, the people of Kag honoured him after his death by building a chorten in the village. The duty of the Bu-tsha-ba sector was to perform an annual reconsecration (*rab-gnas*) of this stupa, and also perhaps of the stupa at Nyilung itself, by resurfacing it with coloured clays (*btasag*) and making an offering of juniper incense (*bsangs*). This regular veneration and maintenance have been discontinued since the dispersal of the sectors.

2.7. Community leaders, field management and the six sectors

The internal political organisation of Kag was broadly similar to that of other settlements in Baragaon and Panchgaon. It should immediately be stated that there are sometimes spectacular differences between villages regarding the numbers of officials, the methods whereby they are recruited and so on, and I hope to present a comparative study of these variations in the near future.²⁸ As a general rule, the senior person in each village is the headman (*rgan-pa*), who may serve alone or together with a number of junior headmen. The incumbency may be for just one year or it may, exceptionally, be lifelong. The headman is the highest authority in the *internal* affairs of the village, but major disputes are referred to the organs of the state government. Under the headman are a number of lesser officials called *rol-pö* (Nep. *katuwal*), or "constables". They are, in a sense, the executive wing of the headman's authority, being charged with enforcing village law and imposing

finer. The situation is complicated by an assortment of other religious and secular officials, serving for varying periods. Before discussing the recruitment of the constables, a few words may be said about the institution of headmanship.

2.8. The headmen of Kag

As in many communities, the system for recruiting headmen in Kag seems to have undergone a series of changes. Shortly prior to the dissolution of the *tshogs*, recruitment seems to have been based on either appointment or household rotation. Whatever the case, it is certain that the headmen held office for only one year at a time. At the time of the KSM, however, during the nineteenth century, the position of headman seems to have been a lifelong one. This is evident from the repeated appearance of two names, rGan-pa Dar-po and rGan-pa Ratna. Informants in Kag confirm this situation, since the former has passed into local folklore as a long-serving village leader. However, the evidence of the KSM contradicts the common assertion that there was a single headman, since Dar-po and Ratna figure together in several entries.

The seventeenth-century Kag *bem-chag* states that the headman received his authority from the nobility (D. Schuh, personal communication). The advantage of such a system would have been that the rulers could retain in power for as long as they wished someone who was cooperative with their interests. It is therefore interesting that Kag folklore should contain an account of a conflict between the nobility and a headman that was resolved not, as one might expect, simply by the dismissal of the former, but by his murder.

through by mice or by the red-headed black caterpillars that infest the fields in June. (*Thukhen* means simply "gatherers": *'thusmkhan*). These "birdfood gatherers" were entitled, after the reaping, to collect any grain that the owners had left behind. However, if unobserved, they would attempt to steal grain from the harvested sheaves. The task of the constables and their assistants was to supervise the gleaners and to ensure that they took no more than their due.

Prior to the harvesting the twelve men would make beer from one *'bo-khal* of barley (using their private grain) in the *gnyer-ishang* (the "stewards' office", a building used for civic functions), and transport it up to a house situated on the vantage point called Thana Gata, "Checkpost Ridge". The beer, and a slaughtered goat, would help to ease the tedium of watching the fields for the three days that the gleaners were permitted to gather the surplus grain. The guards were entitled to appropriate for themselves all the grain gathered by any gleaner who was caught stealing, and in this way, it is said, they would attempt to make up the *'bo-khal* of barley that they had pooled for their beer. After these three days the six assistants would be dismissed and the village animals let into the fields to graze the stubble. The *rol-po* were also required to supervise the fields during the buckwheat harvest, but no assistants would be appointed to help them on this occasion.

More generally, the constables were responsible for the supervision of the fields, ensuring that livestock did not stray into the crops and fining the owners of any animals that did. Consistent with their role of guardians of the fields, the

constables, together with the headman, were also responsible for agrarian rites involving the propitiation of Kag's territorial divinities. Traditionally, they were required to procure the goats and the yak which were annually sacrificed to the three principal *genii loci*, and would reconsecrate the cairns marking their residences with washes of clay and lime (*btsag*).

The roll of taxpaying households listed in section A of the KSM is followed by a brief section that specifies some of the duties and rights of the headmen and constables. The passage was added "at the insistence of the religious community (*lha-sde*), who have made a statement to the secular community (*mi-sde*)". The first point is that it is the responsibility of the headmen and constables to see to it that a number of monks should be present to read the register at the time of the dGe-rtsa ceremony, on the sixteenth or seventeenth day of the month. If the monks do not assemble, substitutes should be arranged. The timing of the assembly is appropriate in view of the association of the dGe-rtsa ceremony with agrarian affairs. (As we have seen the date of the dGe-rtsa coincides with the obsolete Loyak festival, and the appointment of assistants to help the constables with the policing of the harvest.) The entry continues:

The gabions for the irrigation channel of the Shung fields should be properly constructed, and the headmen and constables of Kag should verify whether or not this has been done. If it has been done, the people of Kag shall receive one large earthenware jar of beer.

The text of this passage is as follows:

Lha sde rnams kyis [gi] nan gyis [gi] / mi [mis] sder gsungs [gsung] par [bar] rten / ma yig cig 'thus [thus] pa'i bka' gros [sgros] bsgrigs ['brigs] / 'di skabs gsung [bsungs] tshig [tshigs] chod tshul ['tshul] la / dge rtsa skabs su / tshe [tshes] bcu [cu] drug gam / bcu [cu] bdun ma dge 'dun tshang [mtshang] sgo dang de bzhin btsun pa yongs kyis [gi] zher (?) [gzher] zhib [zhibs] pa / bkag [skags] gi rgan [sgan] pa dang rol pos [po'i] byed rgyu ['gyu] / gal [sgal] srid ma 'dzoms tshe / tshab [tshabs] sgrig [grigs] rgyu ['gyur] chod yod / gzhung gyi [gi] yur ba [ra] la / sgrom [sgroms] yang dag [bdag] rol rgyu ['gyu] / byung ma byung / bkag [skag] gi rgan [sgan] rol rnams kyis [gi] gzigs [bzigs] rgyu [gyu] / byung phyin / bkag [skags] pa yul ba [pa] rnams kyis [gi] / chab ['chab] ka [ska] khal rgyang (?) [rgyangs] re zhu [gzhu] rgyu /

The passage concludes with the seals of witnesses and representatives from the monastic and secular communities of Kag.

2.10. Divine witnesses

Any official, such as the *rgan-pa* or *rol-po*, whose power is sanctioned by the community, is ultimately responsible to the people. This is most dramatically illustrated by Te, where the headmen and constables are *always* fined by the village at the end of their office: the only uncertain issue is the scale of the fine (Ramble 1993b). A similar reckoning is said to have taken place in Thini, and apparently still occurs at three-yearly intervals in Marpha. But even in settlements such as Kag, where conclusion of office was not marked by a civil trial, the village

officials would sometimes call the gods to witness that they had discharged their duties properly.³⁰

The wording of the oath that was traditionally taken by the *rol-po* of Kag is given in the KSM. The passage begins by calling to witness a number of divinities. Precisely which gods are so invoked is not clear because of uncertainty concerning the sequence of folios at this point. It is certain at least that the "mighty gods (*lha*), serpent-spirits (*klu*), *bisan*, *rgyal-po*, *gza'-gnyan* and lords of the soil (*sa-bdag*)" are invoked, because they figure on the same folio as the oath itself. Another folio cites a long series of siddhas, lamas, tutelary gods, protectors and other divinities from the Buddhist pantheon, but it is doubtful that these head the list of witnesses.³¹

The wording of the oath itself runs as follows:

If [the six *rol-po*] have acted without duplicity and negligence with respect to the law of the community in dealing with everyone, whether powerful or weak, high or lowly, outsider or insider, may they be blessed by the gods who are here called to witness. If they have acted with duplicity and negligence with respect to the law of the community in dealing with everyone, whether powerful or weak, high or lowly, outsider or insider, may they be punished by the gods who are here called to witness. If they have stolen any fodder or food from the villagers, whether a great or a small quantity, saying nothing about it and concealing it, may they be punished. If they have not done this, may they be blessed. If they have acted in accordance with

past custom, may they be blessed by the gods who have been called to witness above. If they have done anything that is not in accordance with past custom, may they be punished by the gods who have been called to witness above.

Yul pa'i yul khirms ched [phyed] du drag [grag] zhan [gzhan] mtho [thos] dman [man] phyi nang gang du yin kyang / kha gnyis [nyi] 'dzem [mdzems] rib med pa byas yod na / gong [dgong] gyi [gi] lha dpang [spang] rnams kyis bkra shis shog / yul pa'i yul khirms ched [phyed] du drag [grag] zhan [gzhan] mtho [thos] dman [man] phyi nang gang du yin kyang / kha gnyis [nyi] 'dzem [mdzems] rib byas yod na / gong [dgong] gyi [gi] lha dpang [spang] rnams kyis [kyi] chad pa gcod [bcod] / yul pa'i chag [chags] zas che chung gang yin rung bzhed (?) [zhes] med sbas te [ris] rku gsum (?) byas yod na / chad pa gcod [bcod] / ma byas yod na / bkra shis shog / gang ltar kyang sngon [mngon] srol ltar gyi slar [lar] *rgya* la ci [bci] drag [gyag] byas yod na / gong [dgong] gyi [gi] lha dpang [spang] rnams kyi bkra shis shog / sngon [mngon] srol ltar gyi slar [lar] *rgya* la ci [bci] drag [grag] gang drag [grag] ma byas na / gong [dgong] gyi [gi] lha dpang [spang] rnams kyi chad pa gcod [bcod] /

2.11. The waning of the constabulary

Information about what happened to the structure of village leadership after the end of the sectors is inconsistent, but broadly speaking the institution seems to have undergone the following changes. There was an intermediate phase in which there were one *rgan-pa* and three

rol-po. This situation has been reversed: there are now three *rgan-pa* and one *rol-po*. No system of household rotation applies for either position, and the institution of hereditary headmanship has long ceased to exist.

Today, the three *rgan-pa* are appointed by the community for a period of one year. As an honorarium for their service they are each given an interest-free loan of Rs. 3000 from the village coffers, repayable at the end of the year. The position of *rol-po* is held by anyone who volunteers for the post. Since the task involves much irksome patrolling of the fields and carries no prestige, volunteers can be obtained only by offering a financial incentive. The first paid constable, who is said to have taken office at the time of the cadastral survey, received a fee of Rs. 1800. The most recent holder received Rs. 3000. The only volunteers available are indigent villagers who alone are willing to accept such a small stipend.

2.12. Fluctuating membership of the sectors

A significant factor in hastening the dissolution of the sector-based constabulary appears to have been the inequality of sector membership. As we have seen earlier, the number of households in each sector did not remain consistent over the course of time. It is said that, prior to the cadastral survey, the dPal-gtor-ba counted about three times as many members as the *dGe-rtsa-ba*. An indication of this trend is seen in the Wood Rat Year entry of the KSM, where the sectors number fourteen and eight households respectively. In practice, this discrepancy was even greater, because in two cases a single householder of the *dGe-rtsa-ba* is the head of two house-

holds. Thus the ratio of *householders* for the two sectors at this time was 14:6.

One result of this imparity was that the cycle of incumbency for constables differed considerably from one sector to another. Being a constable is not a popular job. It is neither gratifying in terms of prestige nor financially remunerative, as the preceding section has shown. The office is seen as a thankless chore which inevitably leads to enmity with certain neighbours and, above all, obliges the incumbent to forgo trading activities by binding him to the village. The fact that a *dGe-rtsa-ba* household found its turn for constabulary duty coming up with markedly greater frequency than a neighbour from a larger sector led to considerable discontent with the system. Calls for a revision of the situation came to nothing, since, in the nature of the dispute, the complaints came from a minority. Nevertheless, it does seem that this dissatisfaction was one of the factors that led to the precipitate abandonment of the *tshogs* system.

3. Conclusion

An important question that has not been satisfactorily answered by the foregoing commentary to the KSM concerns the real reason for the division of Kag into six sectors. This may seem surprising, since each of the sectors is named, and the functions bearing on these names have been described in varying detail on the basis of interviews with villagers. At first sight, then, the justification for the existence of the sectors would appear to be the fulfilment of the civic duties after which they are named.

The sectors were certainly required to meet these

obligations, but there are reasonable grounds for doubting that this was their principal function. A closer examination of the situation suggests that the relationship of the sectors to their ostensible duties was rather tenuous.

Let us consider first the role of the Yur-chang-ba and the 'Dzing-chang-ba. The involvement of these sectors in the actual clearance of the irrigation canals and the reservoir was apparently limited to the provision of small quantities of beer and roasted grain to the labourers. The greater part of the beer that was prepared was for the benefit of the sectors themselves. Moreover, the sectors played no special part in the organisation of the necessary labour. Work was carried out by the village as a whole, and the workers were summoned and directed by the constables.

The superficial character of the sectors' involvement in their supposed obligations is not confined to the Yur-chang-ba and 'Dzing-chang-ba. The task of the Bu-tsha-ba is said to have been limited to repainting one, or possibly two, stupas commemorating an obscure lama. By contrast, the annual reconsecration of the stupas representing the main divinities of Kag was performed by the headmen and constables.

Turning to the *dGe-rtsa* and *dPal-gtor* sectors, there are several points to be noted here. The two ceremonies in question are liturgical rituals that coincide in time with two rites that have strongly agrarian overtones: the *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril*, which among other things features the circumambulation of the village land, and the now obsolete *Loyak*, which involved the sacrifice of a yak to one of the three main village gods. It is significant that the sectors' responsi-

bility is for the two essentially Buddhist ceremonies: in the case of the dGe-rtsa even this seems to have been almost nominal, since the communal field from which the sector provided the material support for the occasion had a seed capacity of just 6 *zo-ba*. As we have seen, support for the bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril and Loyak ceremonies was probably the responsibility of the entire community, under the supervision of the headman and constables.

Little need be said about the Lam-bcos-pa, since the information obtained is too fragmentary to bear analysis. Nevertheless, the fact that there is no clear recollection of the function of this group may itself be significant: the nominal function was far less important than the existence of the group itself.

The picture that emerges is as follows. All the important agrarian activities of Kag are carried out by the entire village, and supervised by the headmen and constables. The most important agrarian rites were financed by the whole community, and organised or performed by the headmen and constables. The involvement of the sectors is cosmetic. Even their names are inappropriate: each is preceded by the word *Tshe-bcu*, the tenth day. While this day of the month may have special religious significance in the Tibetan Buddhist calendar, it is entirely irrelevant to the present context since none of the sectors has any obligations connected with the tenth day.

The inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that the sectors originally existed for some purpose quite different from the roles implied by their names, and that these obligations were imposed on them

— one almost suspects the hand of the monastic community — at a later stage.

The principal reason for the existence of the sectors was the clearly the recruitment of the constables, and all other considerations are secondary. The conclusion is supported by inquiries in other communities in Lo and Baragaon, where a system of sectors (known by a variety of names) continues to operate. The sectors may have various subsidiary obligations, but the principal reason for the division is the recruitment of village officials.

The constables are the chief executors of the agrarian affairs of a community, organising agricultural labour, ensuring the security of the fields and acting as the priests for the gods of the soil. In certain settlements there is evidence that the community is organised, and the constables accordingly recruited, as a function of agrarian geography. Might this also have been the case in Kag? This was not explicitly asserted by any of my informants, and information concerning the sectors is unfortunately too fragmentary to provide a clear answer. Nevertheless, since there is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence, the matter should at least be given some consideration.

The settlement of Thini, to the south, was traditionally organised in three sectors (called *pha-dzin*), a grouping that is said to have been based on the existence of three arterial irrigation canals. There used to be six constables (called *tshowa*), two being recruited annually from each sector.

Kag, too, has three irrigation canals and used to

have six constables; but it had six, not three, sectors. And yet, if we examine the sectors closely it becomes apparent that they are paired. Information concerning the Bu-tsha-ba and Lam-bcos-pa is unfortunately too indistinct, but it may be significant that our informant applied the nicknames Dziting and Baltag to them indiscriminately, and that Lam-bcos-pa, perhaps understood as Bla-mchod-pa, was said — like the Bu-tsha-ba — to signify the veneration of a lama from Nyilung connected with Tiri.

The other two pairs are more explicit. The Yur-chang-ba and 'Dzing-chang-ba were both concerned with the maintenance of Kag's irrigation channels, and shared at least one day of common activity. Similarly, the dGe-rtsa-ba and dPal-gtor-ba were responsible for financing ceremonies on two consecutive days, and may even have held joint financial responsibility for a part of the events.

The evidence is tenuous, but there is clearly some suggestion that the six sectors may have evolved out of an older, tripartite division of the community based on the settlement's irrigation system.

Notes

1. Khya-mo; possibly for 'Khyam-mo, "the errant woman", suggesting that she may have been a Tibetan. Landless Tibetans who crossed the border into Nepal are frequently referred to as 'khyam-po.

2. Problems with the estimated lifespans of certain people are posed by another entry in the

KSM. The entry, which will be discussed below, is dated the Water Serpent Year and names both the headmen Ratna and Dar-po (who is referred to as "rGan-pa Dar"). The year is either 1833 or 1893. The latter would make Ratna impossibly aged, while the former is earlier than the date of birth we have estimated for rGan-pa Dar-po.

3. This is true only of Kag. Although they may have the same name, measures are not standard throughout Baragaon. In Chongkhor, for example, 1 *pathi* is equal to 3 *zo-ba*, and in Tshug approximately 2.6 *zo-ba*. An exhaustive treatment of this matter need not be undertaken here.

4. The ratio of 1:18 recorded by Pohle (1993) in Kagbeni is considerably in excess of the figures I was able to obtain. This difference may be due to the relatively superficial nature of my enquiries with regard to crop yields. Nevertheless, for the present article, I shall take 1:9 (rather than Pohle's average of 1:13-14) to be the mean seed-to-yield ratio for Kag.

5. Taking the total seed capacity to be not 128 'bo-khal 8.5 *zo-ba* but 142 'bo-khal 8.5 *zo-ba*, for the reasons discussed below.

6. Respectively *Hordeum vulgare* L.s. convar. *hexastichon* var. *hypathorum* and convar. *intermedium* (Pohle 1993 citing Nakao 1956).

7. In the transliterated excerpts from the KSM, material in square brackets [...] represents incorrect spellings in the original. Words in round brackets (...) have been inserted to improve the reading. {...} indicates superfluous words in the

original. Terms between asterisks *...* denote expressions in the local dialect with no obvious literary equivalent.

8. The necessary information was kindly provided by Perdita Pohle.

9. I am grateful to Perdita Pohle for providing me with this information.

10. A brief description of the nature of subsidiary houses (*kha-'thor*) in Baragaon is given in Ramble 1984: 188 ff.

11. Today, when a person dies, the bereaved family makes an offering of cash to the monastery. However, in the past (although it is not clear when the practice stopped) a gift of land would be made instead. Monastic land, as we have seen, is not susceptible to taxation.

12. The name designates a variety of willow tree that is said originally to have been introduced from Ladakh.

13. The etymology of this name is uncertain, but it may be noted that the term '*ar-ba*' means "lot".

14. Or: "there are some who get [only] one chance at irrigation" — text not clear.

15. The translation of this passage is partly conjectural, as the meaning of the text is obscure. However, a more literal rendering would make no sense: the implication would be that a system of casting lots is being abandoned in favour of the same system. The interpretation given here assumes that the passage is elliptical, and that the

existence of another intervening system must be assumed. Such a reading may be supported by the emphatic *sngon snga mo*, translated here as "in the distant past", which seems to imply that irrigation by lottery was abandoned a long time ago.

16. The text is not at all clear in this last sentence: the meaning might even be the opposite.

17. Around 3 a.m.; the dawn is said to be heralded by the third cock crow.

18. Note that this name, which I have anglicised as Bowa, appears as Poa on the land use map (Pohle 1993).

19. In relatively recent times the lower age limit was raised to eighteen years, although in other villages, such as Te — where this category is known as *memang* (< Tib. *mi-dmangs?*) — thirteen is still the lower limit.

20. This is also the date of the now obsolete yak sacrifice that used to be held in Kag (see Ramble 1993a). It is possible that the *dGe-rtsa* ceremony was introduced into the calendar of monastic rituals precisely as a Buddhist compensatory measure against the perceived ill-effects of a blood sacrifice. Currently, many lamaist communities hold ceremonies at Dasain to offset the potential repercussions of abundant slaughter.

21. The house is well known as the Red House Lodge, whose shrine room also houses a much larger image of Maitreya.

22. I have not been able to establish whether there was an explicitly political dimension to the

bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril, as there is in Lo Monthang. In the case of the latter, two *bsTan-pa rtsi-'dril* ceremonies are held each year, an "Old" and a "New" one. The ceremony is generally pronounced *tici*, apparently a colloquial form of *bsTan[-pa] rtsi[-'dril]*. The new one is a largely monastic affair, while the old one seems to be concerned more particularly with royal power. All seven divisions (*tsho*) of Lo participate in this event, which culminates in a *mdos* ritual.

23. This method of sponsorship is reminiscent of the system used in the neighbouring settlement of Lubra. In the latter case the situation is complicated by the fact that all the ceremonies in the annual cycle of liturgical rituals are financed in this way, that the householders themselves are the priests, and the capital they control has been invested by outsiders (Ramble 1984).

24. The term used is **kaldag**, a Kag colloquialism for *sa-'gro*.

25. It may be noted that the term for "son" in the Baragaon dialect of Tibetan is *piza*, which probably represents a colloquial pronunciation of *bu-tsha*.

26. *Dziting* is a local term meaning quarrelsome or noisy, possibly cognate with *'dzing-ba*, to quarrel.

27. **Tingma** (*gting-ma?*) is a synonym for the more commonly used *nying-khu*, the strongest beer drawn off from a fermentation jar.

28. For a discussion of the highly complex system of recruitment for Te's headmen, see

Ramble 1993b.

29. Concerning this ceremony (which traditionally involved the sacrifice of a yak), and the justification for the Tibetan orthography given here, see Ramble 1993a.

30. The oaths sworn by the officials of Lubra and Te have been discussed respectively in Ramble 1984 and 1993b. A passage in the Kag *bem-chag* suggests that, contrary to the practice of these two settlements, where constables systematically swear oaths at the conclusion of their incumbency, those of Kag were required to do so only when they were under of suspicion of mismanagement (D. Schuh, personal communication).

31. It may be mentioned that divine witnesses to oaths sworn by headmen in other communities seem to emphasise gods of place: in the case of Te, for example, only the three main divinities of the village territory are invoked, while Lubra's oath cites "The Bonpo protectors of Lubra, ...[lacuna of two or three syllables in text], the excellent mother Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo [the head of the *ma-mo*], the eight categories of gods and sprites, village gods and lords of the soil, and the goblin Kyerang Dragme [the principal soil-god of Lubra]".

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Table 1: Summary of Kag's land-tax register

A. Wood Dragon Year (1784)

Sector	No of households	Seed capacity
Tshe-bcu dpal-gtor-ba	24	53 b 11 z
Tshe-bcu 'dzing-chang-ba	20	37 b
Tshe-bcu bu-tsha-ba	10	15 b 6 z
Tshe-bcu yur-chang-ba	16	20 b 1+ z
Tshe-bcu dge-rtsa-ba	12	19 b 14 z
Tshe-bcu lam-bcos-pa	10	15 b 19 z
Khal-'thor-ba	(3)	2 b 1 z
TOTAL	92	163 b 2 z

B. Water Dog Year (1802)

Sector	No. of households	Seed capacity
Tshe-bcu dpal-gtor-ba	15	32 b 16.5 z
Tshe-bcu 'dzing-chang-ba	16	35 b 6 z
Tshe-bcu bu-tsha-ba	7	11 b 2 z
Tshe-bcu yur-chang-ba	11	16 b 15 z
Tshe-bcu dge-rtsa-ba	13	17 b 9 z
Tshe-bcu lam-bcos-pa	10	9 b 14 z
Kha-'thor-ba	(13)	5 b 6 z
TOTAL	72	128 b 8.5 z

C. Earth Serpent Year (1809)

Sector	No. of households	Seed capacity
Tshe-bcu dpal-gtor-ba	15	43 b 16 z
Tshe-bcu 'dzing-chang-ba	15	34 b 8 z
Tshe-bcu bu-tsha-ba	7/8	11 b 4 z
Tshe-bcu yur-chang-ba	10	16 b 8 z
Tshe-bcu dge-rtsa-ba	11	19 b 14 z
Tshe-bcu lam-bcos-pa	11	11 b 12 z
Khal-'thor-ba	(12)	5 b 1 z
TOTAL	69/70	142 b 13 z

D. Wood Rat Year (1864)

Sector	No. of households	Seed capacity
Tshe-bcu dPal-gtor-ba	14	52 b 0.5 z*
Tshe-bcu 'dzing-chang-ba	13	?32 b 1.5 z**
Tshe-bcu bu-tsha-ba	7	10 b 5 z
Tshe-bcu yur-chang-ba	7	?16 b 13 z
Tshe-bcu dge-rtsa-ba	6	17 b 10 z
Tshe-bcu lam-bcos-pa	8	14 b 6 z
Kha-'thor	(11)	?5 b
TOTAL	55	?147 b 16 z

* The seed capacity of one household in the dPal-gtor sector is illegible because of damage to the text. All that is visible is the vowel *o* following the word *'bo-khal*. The possibility that the missing word is *do*, meaning "two", must be discounted. The term *do* is frequently used in conjunction with *zo-ba* but conventionally may never refer to *bo-khal*. The lowest figure containing the vowel *o* is fifteen (*bco-lnga*), and the seed capacity of this household has been taken as such. The figure is exceptionally high, but accords with a large landholding that occurs in the dPal-gtor sector of sections C and A and — as we shall see below — almost certainly in section B.

** Question marks indicate that the figure is uncertain due to the text being damaged or otherwise illegible in places.

Facsimile extracts from the KSM

The present section contains photographic reproductions of selected passages from the KSM. The text has not been presented in its entirety: of the four major entries, only two - sections A and D - have been included. However, since the presentation of tax requirements does not differ significantly from one section to another, the two excerpts will at least provide an adequate idea of the way in which the register is structured. Besides these main entries dealing with the payment of *sa-'gro* taxes, other passages that have been discussed above are reproduced here.

The contents of the plates may be summarised briefly:

Plates I-VIIa: land tax register for Section A, Wood Dragon year (1784).

Plates VIIb-VIIIa: duties of headmen and constables (see 2.9 above).

Plate VIIIb: payment to blacksmith of a percentage of yield from dbYar-ston fields (see 1.3).

Plates IXa-XIII: land tax register for Section D, Wood Rat year (1864).

Plates XIV: regulations concerning irrigation (see 2.1).

Plate XV: oath sworn by constables (see 2.10).

Plate XVI: dispute over subsidies for ceremonies in Kag (see 2.4).

The letters a and b following a Roman numeral signify respectively the upper and lower halves of a plate. It should be noted that the plates do not necessarily replicate the form of the KSM booklets: in order to avoid reproducing the numerous blank pages of the original, lower pages are sometimes presented in the top half of the plate, and upper pages in the bottom half.

IN NOMINE DOMINI AMEN

IN NOMINE DOMINI AMEN
HABITANT IN SOLITUDINE
MONTIS SION QUI
SUNT IN IERUSALEM
QUI DICUNTUR
SANCTI PATRES
QUI HABENT
IN DOMIBUS
SUIS
QUI DICUNTUR
SANCTI PATRES
QUI HABENT
IN DOMIBUS
SUIS

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar, on a parchment leaf. The text is arranged in approximately 12 lines, starting with a large initial 'N' and ending with a decorative flourish.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar, on a parchment leaf. The text is arranged in approximately 12 lines, starting with a large initial 'N' and ending with a decorative flourish.

Plate II

Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely Coptic, on the left page of an open book. The text is arranged in several lines, starting with a large initial letter. The script is dense and characteristic of early Christian manuscripts.

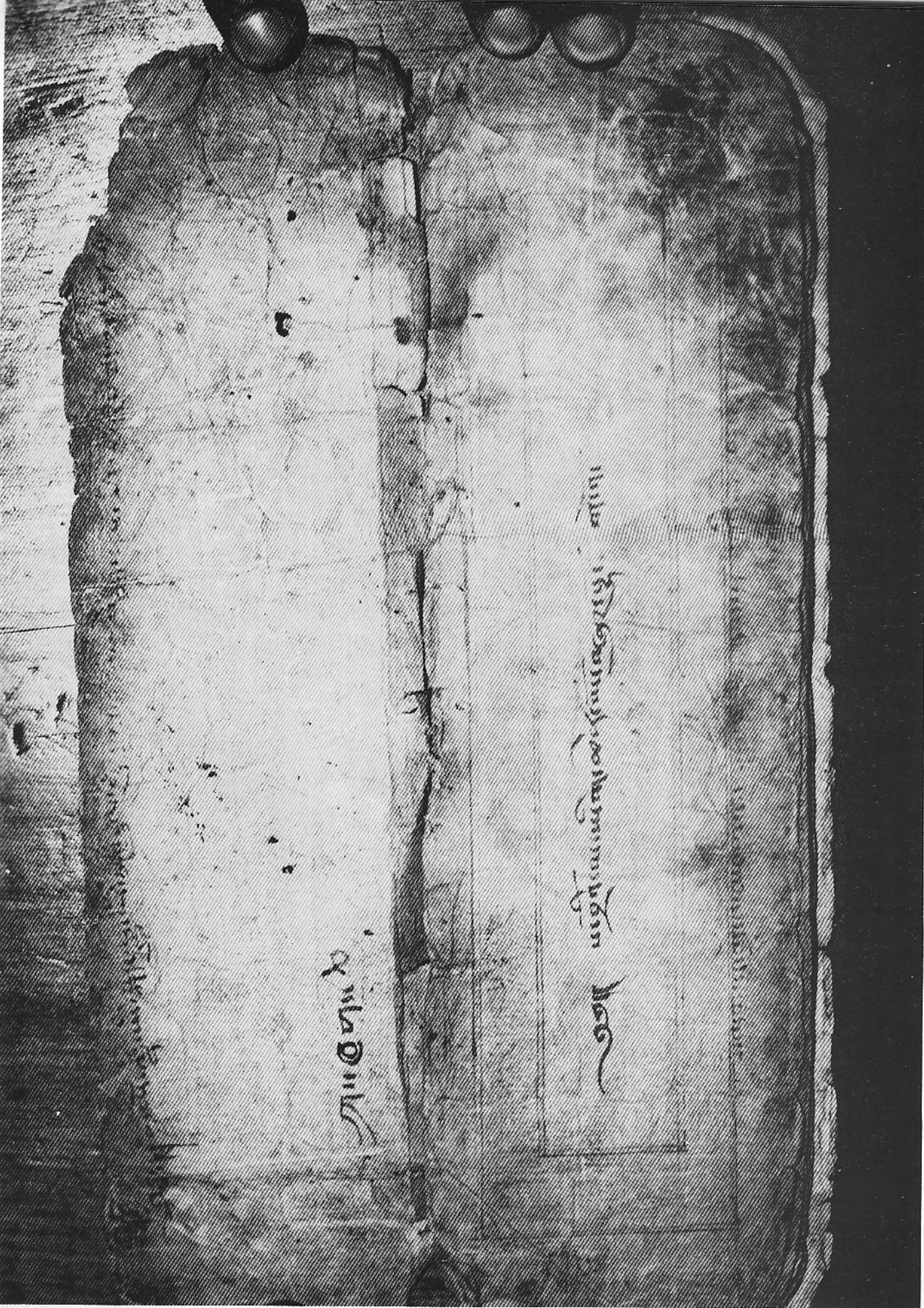
Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely Coptic, on the right page of an open book. The text is arranged in several lines, starting with a large initial letter. The script is dense and characteristic of early Christian manuscripts.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic, on the left page of an open manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, starting with a large initial letter 'I' followed by 'H'. The script is dense and characteristic of the late Middle Ages.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic, on the right page of an open manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, starting with a large initial letter 'I' followed by 'H'. The script is dense and characteristic of the late Middle Ages.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a medieval manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines across the page. A large, decorative initial letter is visible at the beginning of the first line. The script is dense and characteristic of the late Middle Ages.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a medieval manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines across the page. A large, decorative initial letter is visible at the beginning of the first line. The script is dense and characteristic of the late Middle Ages.



quidam

in diebus illis

Handwritten text in a medieval script, possibly Latin or Old English, arranged in several lines. The text is written in a dark ink on a parchment-like surface. The script is dense and characteristic of the 12th or 13th century. The lines are roughly horizontal but follow the curve of the parchment.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, possibly Latin or Old English, arranged in several lines. The text is written in a dark ink on a parchment-like surface. The script is dense and characteristic of the 12th or 13th century. The lines are roughly horizontal but follow the curve of the parchment.

Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely cuneiform, arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The characters are small and densely packed, typical of early writing systems. The ink is dark and the background is a lighter, textured surface.

Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely cuneiform, arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. This section appears to be a continuation or a separate part of the text on the left. The characters are consistent in style and density with the first section.

Plate XII

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a medieval manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be in a different script or dialect than others, possibly indicating a mix of languages or a specific regional dialect. The ink is dark and the parchment shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a medieval manuscript. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be in a different script or dialect than others, possibly indicating a mix of languages or a specific regional dialect. The ink is dark and the parchment shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar. The text is arranged in approximately 12 lines, written from right to left across the page. The ink is dark, and the parchment shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar. The text is arranged in approximately 12 lines, written from right to left across the page. The ink is dark, and the parchment shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in a medieval script, likely Gothic or similar. The text is arranged in approximately 12 lines, written from right to left across the page. The ink is dark, and the parchment shows signs of age and wear.

Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely Linear B, on a fragment of a clay tablet. The characters are arranged in a single line.

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