

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF *SE-RIB*, AND NEARBY PLACES
IN THE UPPER KALI GANDAKI VALLEY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE THAK KHOLA

Historical studies on the lands in Nepal's upper Kali Gandaki valley, or Thak Khola, are at last beginning to bear fruit. Until recently, only a few scholars had been able to visit the many temples, caves and ruins in the area. And of those past visitors, almost none was able to turn up first-rate historical materials. Hardly any documents seemed to have survived; those that remained were notoriously difficult to find and use. Even now the shortage of local records remains acute for anyone studying the uppermost regions of Thak Khola. For me, the most productive approach so far has been to look for helpful references in textual materials coming from outside the area itself.¹

For this study I have drawn mainly from Tibetan-language documents, most of which have survived in outlying districts of Nepal and Tibet. Although rather sparse, these sources do allow for some interesting discoveries. Among other things, they tell us that there formerly existed in Upper Thak Khola a distinct land and people called *Se-rib*. Here I would like to present some of my findings on the history of *Se-rib* in particular, and of Upper Thak Khola in general.

¹ There have been a few exceptions: I have been able to use several documents found in Upper Thak Khola for the following study. A small number of local documents from Thini in Panchagaon, for example, have recently become available. These documents were discovered by the Danish anthropologist, Michael Vinding, through the assistance of Mr. Krishna Lal Thakali (pages 181-93). Mr. Vinding generously entrusted his only copies of those texts to me for several months thus giving me the initial impetus to set down the following historical notes. I and my wife visited ThakKhola in the summer of 1977, and at that time Mr. Vinding and Krishna Lal Thakali assisted us in many ways. Truly, the present study would not have been written without their encouragement.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention the great help and hospitality extended to me in the summer of 1977 by Ms. Sidney Schuler, an American anthropologist working in the areas near Muktinath. She has also succeeded in turning up some interesting local documents (for example, see below p. 197) and has like Mr. Vinding been recording the oral historical traditions of the area.

Thak Khola, a modern geographical name for one of the main regions of the upper Kali Gandaki, has no exactly equivalent name in the Tibetan-language sources.² "Thak Khola" literally designates the river valley inhabited or dominated by the Thak (Thakali) people. Cartographers, however, have also used the name to indicate the whole valley below Mustangbhot, including Baragaon, down to the true Thakali-inhabited areas.

This widened, conventionalized usage of "Thak Khola" has been adopted also by writers describing the area,³ but it should be remembered that in both cases the name is merely a general designation for a large, heterogeneous area that includes many non-Thakali communities.

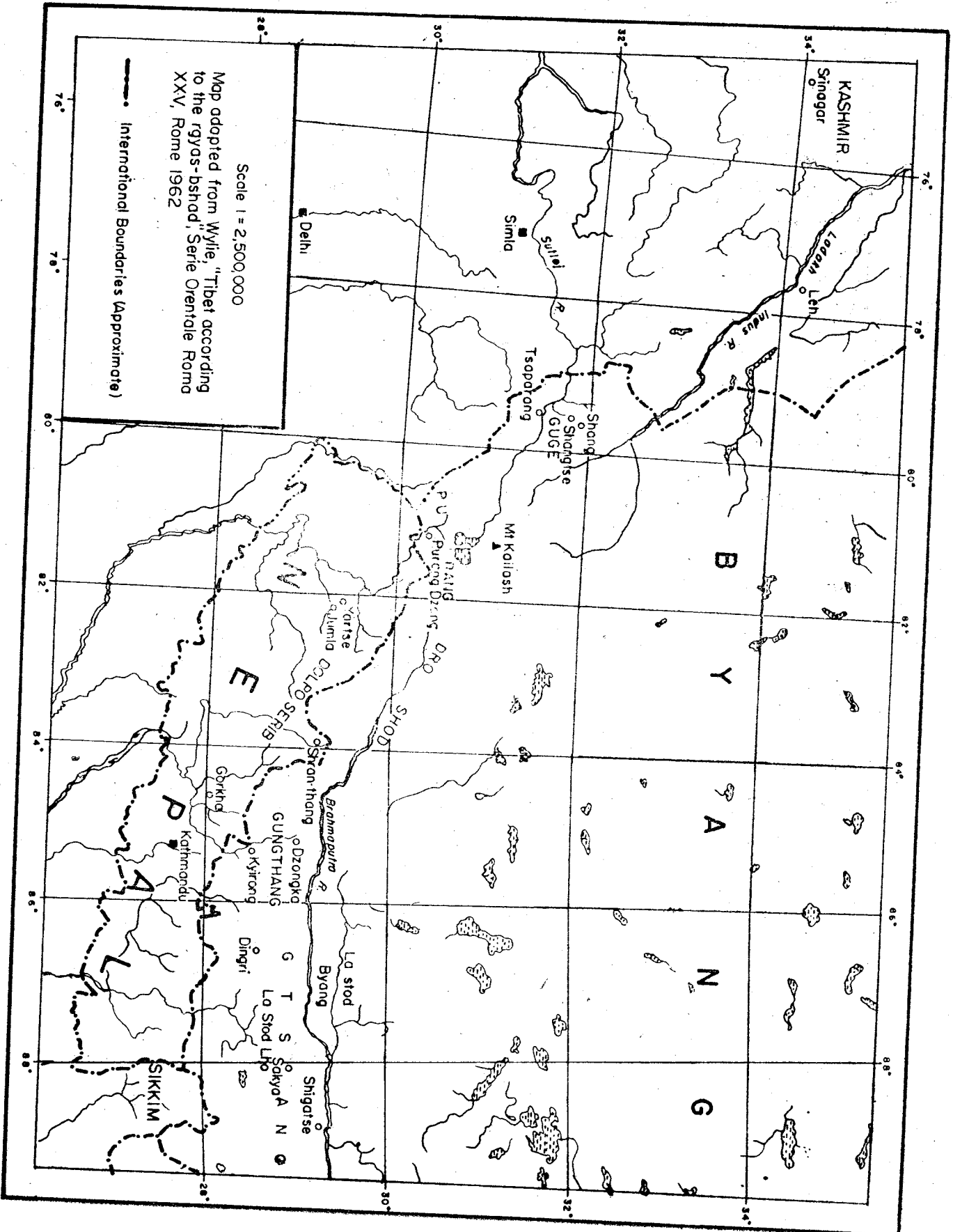
Thak Khola can be divided basically into two parts: to the south are the main Thakali areas, Thaksatsae and Panchagaon, while to the north lies the area of Baragaon.⁴ As is the case with the "Thak Khola", so with "Baragaon" there is no exactly equivalent name for its whole area to be found in the Tibetan-language sources. The name Baragaon (the twelve villages) may have been devised to suit some general and administrative end, for the area itself encompasses more than one ethnic group. In fact, the name seems to be a catch-all for whatever lies north of Panchayatgaon, south of Lo (Mustangbhot), east of Dolpo, and west of Nyeshang (Manangbhot).

2 The name "Thak" seems to have derived from the neighboring Tibetan dialects. See D. L. Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage* (Oxford: 1961) p. 174, note a. "Thakali" is often used by outsiders to designate all Thakali-language speakers in the Kali Gandaki region, including both Thaksatsae and Panchagaon. But the Thakali of Thak-satsae (or Tamhaang, as they call themselves) deny that the name Thak or Thakali can rightly be applied to anyone but themselves. See M. Vinding and Surendra Gauchan, "The History of the Thakaali according to the Thakaali Tradition", *Kailash*, V (1977), 97.

The name Thak is perhaps very old, but I have not noticed it in the oldest sources. It is met with in the biography of the lama Sangs-rgyas-bzang-po (b. 1715?) found by Prof. G. Tucci ("Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal", *Serie Orientale Roma* (Roma: Is M.E.O., 1956), X, 19). From Prof. Tucci's citation it appears that "Thak phyogs" referred to the district of Thaksatsae. This reference cannot date before the late 1600's or early 1700's because Sangs-rgyas-bzang-po enlarged the monastery of Sku-tshab-gter-lnga after its founding by Orgyan-dpal-bzang, a disciple of Bdud-'dul-rdo-rje (D. Snellgrove, *op. cit.* p. 186). Bdud-'dul-rdo-rje was the discoverer of the five treasures of Sku-tshab-gter-lnga, and was born in 1615. He was a disciple of the well-known Gter-ston, 'Ja'-tshon-snying-po effigies at Samye. (Khetsun another source we learn that he discovered *sku-tshab* (1585-1656), and from another source we learn that he discovered *sku-tshab* effigies at Samye. (Khetsun Sangpo, *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet* (Dharmasala: 1973)-, III, 818-820), Bdud-'dul rdo-rje passed away in 1672.

3 See, for example, C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Traders* (London, John Murray, 1975) pp. 134, 136

4 *Ibid.* See also Vinding and Gauchan. *op. cit.*, pp. 97-101.



Scale 1 = 2,500,000

Map adapted from Wylie, "Tibet according to the rgyas-bshad", Serie Orientale Roma XXV, Rome 1962

International Boundaries (Approximate)

Most of Thak Khola's inhabitants are ethnically set apart from the Bhotias of Lo and Tibet. The Thakalis, for example, speak a language which is not intelligible to speakers of Western Tibetan dialects. The exceptions to this are found in Baragaon, where some villages are found whose inhabitants speak dialects of Tibetan. This heterogeneous makeup of Baragaon indicates the area's status as an ethnic interface, and poses a puzzle for the reconstruction of the region's history. But whereas ethnic differences are found among the communities of Baragaon, the area's culture is much more homogeneous: Thak Khola has for centuries been a part of the Tibetan cultural world. And although the two main Thakali areas to the south have recently managed to shake off a great deal of their heavily Tibetanized cultural past, Baragaon as a whole continues to be dominated by Tibetan culture.

The forerunner of Tibetan culture may have first penetrated Thak Khola during the time of Tibet's political expansion in the 7th century A. D. Political control of the area, however, was probably not very secure, and the main impetus to the establishment of Tibetan culture there was most likely the introduction of Tibetan religious traditions. Buddhism and Bon, as the recognized vehicles for the transmission of learning and high culture became dominating cultural forces throughout Thak Khola. The adoption of these religions opened a way for Tibetan culture to strongly influence the area's non-Bhotias: practice of these religions required the reading of Tibetan texts and hence the learning of Tibetan language. One direct result of this was that literary Tibetan remained until recently the medium for written communication in Thak Khola.

EARLY REFERENCES TO SE-RIB

Our sketch of Upper Thak Khola's past begins with a number of references to a principality called Se-rib which formerly existed in the area of Baragaon and, seemingly, in adjoining areas to the south. The earliest such references from Tibetan sources are found in the oldest of Tibetan historical writings, the *Tun-huang Annals*.⁵ From the beginning we must be aware that these early references do not give many details about the places and events of which they speak. For that reason alone, some may question whether the Se-rib of the *Tun-huang Annals* can be identified as the land in the Kali Gandaki region called Se-rib by other sources. The nature of our materials precludes any concrete proof, but circumstantial evidence suggests that they both are the same.

The *Tun-huang Annals* record the period of Tibet's early political expansion, the time of the Yarlung Dynasty. During the 7th century, many of the regions that later became parts of Tibet were ethnically distinct tribes or nations. Spreading across

⁵ Some Chinese sources, however, appear to be earlier than the Tun Huang Annal's references. See below, n. 8.

most of what is now West Tibet, for example there was an independent kingdom or confederation called Zhang-Zhung, a land with its own language and customs. During the reign of Srong-btsan-sgam-po (d. 649/650) this land, together with other areas on Tibet's western frontiers, was conquered.⁶ The conquests of this period also included Lo,⁷ and may have also brought the adjoining regions, including a land to the south called Se-rib, under Tibetan rule. Se-rib was a state south-west of Tibet, known to the Chinese as Hsi-li and possessing a climate warmer than that of Tibet.⁸ Before its conquest, Se-rib, together with Lo, may have been somehow affiliated with Zhang-zhung; in later Bon-po geography these areas were thought to have been in Lower or Eastern Zhang-zhung (*zhang zhung smad*).⁹ Nevertheless, in all the sources for Se-rib's early history, Se-rib and Lo are referred to as distinct entities, and there is no mention of any connection with Zhang-zhung.

For a time Se-rib remained under the rule of Tibet, but following the death of the Tibetan king Dus-srong in A. D. 705, Se-rib revolted.¹⁰ In the year 709 its king was captured and it had to resubmit to Tibet.¹¹ In connection with the above events,

⁶ J. Bacot, F. W. Thomas, and Ch. Toussaint, *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs a l'histoire du Tibet* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940-1946), p. 29.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 30 See also A. H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (N. Delhi: S. Chand, 1972), II, 83.

⁸ R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972.), p. 60. Paul Pelliot, in p. 42, n. 3 of *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs a l'histoire du Tibet* (by J. Bacot, et al.) suggested that the Se-rib of the early annals is to be identified with the Si-li (*hsi-li*) mentioned in early Chinese sources. Pelliot, in an article entitled "Autour d'une traduction sanscrite du Tao t'ou "king" (*T'oung-Pao*) XIII (1912), 357-358), had already gathered together a number of references to Si-li. Translating from the *Fa yuan tchou lin* he wrote: "Du royaume de T'ou-fan en allant vers le territoire au sud des-monts neigeux: (Himalaya), on arrive aux royaumes de K'iu-lou-to (Kuluta), Si-li, etc." In a footnote on the land of Si-li, Pelliot added the following: "Si-li est trouvé dans le Sin ta'ng chou (ch. 2211, f. 12r.), ou il est dit a d'abord que le royaume de Tchang-k'ieou-pa est au sud-ouest du Si-li, puis que, en 646, le roi de Tchang-k'ieou-pa envoya une ambassade à cause de celle envoyé par le Si-li. Suit enfin une courte notice sur le Si-li, qui est au sud-ouest des T'ou;fan (Tibetains), compte 50000 feux, at dont les villes sont en majeure partie au bord de torrents; les hommes nouent une étoffe sur leur tête; les femmes tressent leur cheveux et portent des jupons courts; les morts sont abandonnés dans la campagne; le deuil se porte en noir, et dure un an; politiquement, le pays dépend des T'ou-fan. Une notice analogue se trouve dans le ch. 190 du *T'ong t'ieu* (f. 16 v. de l'ed de 1747). Si-li represente * S'it (ou S'ir)-lip (ou lap). Il semble qu'il s'agisse d'un royaume tibétain."

⁹ Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *zhang bod gangs ri'i lajongsfar g. yung drung bon gyi dgon deb* (found in vol. II of *G. yung drung bon gyi bstan 'byung*) (Dolanji, H. P.: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1972), pp. 568, 583.

¹⁰ Bacot et al. *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Hugh Richardson has surmised that the Se-rib in question was located in the Mustang district of Nepal.¹² I think it is possible to be even more specific, by locating Se-rib in the Kali-Gandaki valley south of Lo.

After the time of the *Tun-huang Annals*, the next period referred to in other documents begins in the 11th century. This was long after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire ruled by the Yarlung kings, and was a period of political consolidation within each region. The general name for west Tibet was now Ngari (*mnga, ris*); both Se-rib and Lo were included within its eastern-most limits. During this and the following century none of the principalities in the west seem to have been dominant for long. Alliances must have constantly shifted to accommodate the rise of new powers and the decline of the old. The times were rife with wars and skirmishes; old royal lines came to an end and new noble houses asserted themselves in their place. Ngari was also feeling pressures from without. In what is now the far-western borderlands of Nepal, for example, the Indo-European Khasa tribes were establishing themselves, and from there extending their influence into Purang and Guge.¹³ Other parts of Ngari came into contact with Turkic peoples¹⁴ The widespread political fluctuations and their economic-consequences probably encouraged the movement of people from one place to another, and thus chances for cultural interchange were increased. Some people may have had little choice in their leaving home, while others, notably scholars or men of religion, apparently travelled widely of their own accord

During the 11th and the following centuries many Buddhist and Bon-po religious figures made journeys to Se-rib and Lo. One of the first Buddhists whose visit to Se-rib is recorded in our sources is La-stod Dmar-po, a contemporary of Mar-pa lo-tsa-ba (1012-1099). His biography appears in the well-known 15th-century work, the *Blue Annals*, and was no doubt drawn from an earlier source.¹⁵ The mention there of Se-rib and Lo together, which seems to attribute to them a separate but comparable status likewise reflects a situation antedating the time of the *Blue Annals*' compilation.¹⁶

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BON RELIGION IN SE-RIB

More amply documented are the early visits to Se-rib by Bon-po masters. By the

¹² H. E. Richardson, "Ministers of the Tibetan Kingdom", *Tibet Journal* (Dharmasala), II 16.

¹³ G. Tucci, "Preliminary Report...", p. 108 f.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105. The Qarluqs are also mentioned in G. N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), p. 1029.

¹⁵ G. N. Roerich, *op. cit.*, p. 1029. I located this reference using T. V. Wylie's "A place-name index to George N. Roerich's translation of the Blue Annals", *Serie Orientale Roma*, XV (1957).

¹⁶ The *Blue Annals* i. e., the Deb ther sngon po of 'Gos lo-tsa-ba Gzhon-nu-dpal (1392-1481), was composed between the years 1476 and 1478. During this period

11th and 12th centuries Bon religion had become adapted, both in form and content, to its perennial counterpart, Tibetan Buddhism. From their centers in La-stod, and later in Gtsang proper, Bon-po masters travelled to various parts of Ngari, where they were well received. Perhaps these figures, as representatives of a newly reorganized Bon, were welcomed by the local leaders in Ngari for some of the same reasons that a new breed of Buddhist masters had gained favor. They may have been seen, for example, as an advance over the degeneracy into which the older religious forms are said to have declined.¹⁷ In any case, one of the earliest Bon-po lamas mentioned as having gone to Se-rib was said to have been invited to Ngari by the rulers of Purang, Shangs-pa, and Se-rib. According to a history of the Bru family lineage of Bon-po lamas, the Bru lama, Khyung-gi-rgyal-mtshan (uncle of Bru-rje G. yung-drung-bla-ma, b. 1040) visited Ngari upon just such a multiple invitation.¹⁸

Se-rib was dominated by Lo.

- ¹⁷ The main figure initiating the transformation of Bon in Gtsang during this period was Gshen-chen Klu-dga' (996 ?-1035?) He was one of the greatest Bonpo "treasure revealers". Through his rediscovered texts and the other teaching lines descending from him, his influence on later Bonpo doctrine and practice was very great. Representing the Buddhists in Ngari during this period of renewal was the great translator, Rin-chen-bzang-po, whose importance is well known. According to later Buddhist tradition, Rin-chen-bzang-po's main adversary was a figure called Sangs-rgyas-skar-rgyal or Klu-skar-rgyal, who some Buddhists identify as being none other than Gshen-chen Klud-ga'. See E. Gene Smith, Introduction to *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture* (Śatapiṭaka Series, Vol. 80), p. 6, n. 13.

Strangely enough, Sangs-rgyas-skar-rgyal is said by one 17th-century Tibetan scholar to have been active in the "valley of Bse-rib" (*bse rib kyi rong*). This is found in an extract from the *Mgon po chos 'byung* reprinted in *Collected Biographical Material about Lo-chen Rin-chen-bzang-po and his Subsequent Reembodiments* (Rdo rje-tshe-brtan: Delhi, 1977), pp. 227f. This *Mgon po chos 'byung* is almost certainly the work *Dpal rdo rje nag po chen po'i zab mo'i chos skor nams byung ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa bstan bsrung chos kun gsal bai nyin byed*, composed in 1641 by A-mes-zhabs Nga-dbang-kun-dga'-bod-nams (b. 1597). I once briefly examined a 227 folia manuscript of this book in Nepal. Unfortunately, the work has not yet become available through a modern reprint. A-mes-zhabs was the 27th Sakya throne-holder, and was the preceptor of the Lo ruler, Bsam-'grub-rab-brtan. He was thus probably familiar with the land of Se-rib. His use of the spelling bse-rib may have been influenced by his discussion of the Zhang-zhung word 'bse' earlier in the work (p. 204).

A figure whom A-mes-zhabs tentatively identifies as Sangs-rgyas-skar-rgyal is mentioned in the biographies of Rin-chen-bzang-po (*Collected Biographical Material*), pp. 86-87, 256.

- ¹⁸ Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *Sangs rgyas g. yung drung bon gyi bstan pa'i byung ba brjod pa'i legs bshad bskal pa bzang po'i mgrin rgyan*, (abbreviated title: *G. yung drung bon gyi bstan byung?*) (Dolanji, H. P. :Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1972), II (266).

Bon-po sources, furthermore, lead us to believe that prior to this period Bon had not been established in Se-rib. Even though Se-rib had apparently been a significant part of Ngari for centuries, these early Bon-pos considered themselves to be newcomers there. Bon was already established in Lo, but Se-rib was a new area in which to spread their faith. We cannot be sure what forms of religion preceded these Bon-po teachers, but the visit of La-stod Dmar-po, was an instance of contemporary Buddhist influence. It seems likely that Buddhism had reached the area long before. Also, local, "indigenous" beliefs must have been in evidence, although these are not to be confused with the newly restructured Bon mentioned above.

Yet if the spread of Bon into the area is indicative of a wider range of cultural penetrations, perhaps this was the period in which Se-rib became thoroughly immersed in the civilization of Tibet. For probably political and economic reasons, the people of Se-rib began to minimize the differences that existed between them and the Bhotias to the north. There were, after all, major ethnic differences, just as there nowadays continue to be. Even after centuries of Tibetan cultural influence the people of Se-rib have not completely lost their somehow alien identity in the eyes of their Bhotia neighbors.

Unlike many of Tibet's early conquests in the western Tibetan borderlands, Se-rib was not a natural part of ethnic Greater Tibet (*bod chen*). During Tibet's early expansion the ethnic differences from region to region were often great; the strong regional identities that persist even now have descended in part from such early differences. But among the ancestors of modern Tibetans the differences were not so great that political and cultural similarities could not override them and, on the basis of underlying similarities, establish a more inclusive Tibetan national identity. In the case of Se-rib, however, the shared ethnic substratum was almost unrecognizable and Se-rib did not quickly become identified with Tibet. It was the view of a great 15th century Mustangi scholar, for instance, that the people of Se-rib were the progeny of an Indic people. The people of Se-rib, he held, were descendants of the Pandavas, while the other important bordering people (*mon*), the Khasa of West Nepal, were descendants of the Kaurava or Kirata.¹⁹

The establishment of Bon in Se-rib, according to Bon-po texts that have survived in Dolpo, was the work of the lama Klu-brag-pa Bkra-shis-rgyal-mtshan. He was but one of many members of the Ya-ngal Bon-po family lineage who were important in the upper Kali Gandaki region and adjoining areas. The first lama from this family to visit the general area was Klu-brag-pa's father, Yang-ston (an abbreviation for

On the Shangs-pa see below, p. 23 A Bonpo temple Survived in Shang-rtse until the recent past. See Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *Zhang bod gangs ri'i*, p. 567.

¹⁹ Bsod-nams-lhun-grob. Glo-bo mkhan-chen (1456-1532), *Mi'i dbang po mgon po rgyal mtshan gyi dri lan*, *Collected Works* (New Delhi: Ngawang Tobgay, 1977), III, 19. For references to the Kirāta see, G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report.*, pp. 74, 103.

Ya-ngal-gyi-ston-pa, the Teacher from the Ya-ngal family) Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan (1077–1141?).

Yang-ston was born at Stage-rtse in Upper Gtsang in the fire-serpent year (1077).²⁰ In his youth he studied with the master of La-stod, Khon-ston Dbang-phyug. He also went to G. yas-ru dben-sa-kha in Gtsang and studied there under Bru-rje-btsun (G. yung-drug-bla-ma, b. 1040) who founded that monastery in 1072. Another of his teachers was Rme'u-ston Lha-ri (-gnyan-po) (1024 ?-1091 ?), who is said to have had contact with the Indian saint Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas.²¹

In the course of Yang-ston's education he is said to have studied under one of the great Buddhist figures of the day, Ba-ri lo-tsa-ba (b. 1040).²² The teachings Yang-ston received, e. g., logic and Madhyāmika, make it almost certain that this was indeed Rin-chen-grags, the Buddhist translator from Ba-ri in Khams, who was very active in Western Tibet during this period and who occupied the Sakya religious throne for a time.²³

Yang-ston's importance in the history of Bon is mainly that he became a central figure in the transmission of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud* meditation precepts. To get these teachings, Yang-ston first had to wander far and wide in search of the man he believed to be his true master, Rong-sgom Rtogs-med-zhig-po.²⁴ By this time Bon was well established in Lo, and it was in fact in Lo that Yang-ston finally met Rong-sgom, and received from him the upper transmission of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud*. Yang-ston also went on to receive the lower transmission of that teaching from 'Or sgom Kum-'dul, and thus united in himself both lines of that tradition. Yang-ston also came into contact with Snyel 'Khrul-med-zhig-po of Lower Lo, who both taught

²⁰ Two brief accounts of Yang-ston's life are available to me. One appears in the collected biographies of *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud* masters in Dpal-ldan-tshul-khriims, G. yung drung bon. . . , II, 334-337. The second is found in Tenzin Namdak, ed., *Sources for a History of Bon* (Dolanji, H. P.: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1972), pp. 460-464.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 727f. In the same passage Dam-pa Ri-khrod-pa is said to have met Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas in Tingri (Pha-dam-pa was in Tingri c. 1097-1117, according to the *Blue Annals*, p. 915). If this really transpired, the dates for the early Bonpo masters mentioned seem to be several decades too early. In light of his alleged contact with Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas, it is interesting to note that Dam-pa Ri-khrod-pa was the author of Bonpo *god* texts. See Per Kvaerne, "Bonpo Studies: The A Khrid System of Meditation", *Kailash*, I (1973), 33.

²² *Sources* . . . , p. 460 f.

²³ According to the *Blue Annals* (p. 211) Ba-ri occupied the Sakya throne c. 1102-1121, roughly contemporaneously with Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas' stay in Tingri.

²⁴ Dpal-ldan-tshul-khriims, G. yung drung bon. . . . , II, 335. On this lineage see also S. G. Karmay, (ed. and transl.), *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). p. 111.

him and received teachings from him. Another of Yang-ston's students was Bru-ston Nyi-ma-rgyal-mtshan.

Yang-ston married for the first time at the age of 26 (1103 ?) but for the space of eleven years he had no offspring. After that he took a second wife, who likewise did not give birth for several years. The mother of his sons was ultimately one Gnyag-mo Bkra-shis-lcam seemingly his third wife.²⁵ Yango-ston passed away in his 65th year, i. e. at age 64 (1141?).²⁶ Although he is not said to have visited Se-rib or spread Bon there, he did journey to Lo and stay there for a while, thus pointing the way for the activities of his family's following generations.

Of Yang-ston's three children, two were boys. The eldest, Dam-pa 'bum-rje, was (like his father) a main transmitter of the *Zhang zhung snyan brgyud*,²⁷ but in a history of Se-rib he is definitely eclipsed by his younger brother. This second son of Yang-ston was to become known as Klu-brag-pa (the Man of Klu-brag), the founder of Bon in Se-rib.²⁸ From his father's dates we can guess that he was born between the years 1117 and 1135. One source reveals the information that he was thirty years old in a serpent year (1149 or 1161),²⁹ and thus based on his father's life history we can conclude that Klu-brag-pa was born in one of the two hog years 1149 and 1131. If we decide on the latter date he would have been a maximum thirteen or so years Dam-pa 'bum-rje's junior. This seems preferable to the earlier date, 1119, in which case he would have been only a year or two younger than Dam-pa 'bum-rje.³⁰

In his youth Klu-brag-pa studied with his father and also with Rma Lcam-me (son of Rma-ston Srol-'dzin). Then, probably following the death of his father (in 1141 ?) he went to G. yas-ru dben-sa-kha in Gtsang to study with the Bru lama, Nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan, one of his father's old disciples. There he also heard instructions from his older brother, receiving the *Rdzogs chen snyan brgyud* from him. There Klu-brag-pa took a wife, who bore him a son called Sngags-pa.³¹ Unfortunately, that wife died within three years, and after her death he went to Purang to study medicine for three

25 *Sources* ... p. 460.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 464.2

27 For brief biographies of Dam-pa-'bum-rje, see *Sources*... p. 464ff. and Dpal-ldan tshul-khrims, *op. cit.*, II 342f.

28 On Klu-brag-pa see D. L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon* (London: 1967), p. 4, n. 4.

Brief biographies of Klu-brag-pa are given in *Sources*... p. 468 f. and in Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *op. cit.* II, 343-345.

29 *Sources* ... p. 468.8.

30 This date is preferable because later Klu-brag-pa receives religious instructions from his presumably much older brother. See below.

31 According to Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims' version (*op. cit.* II 344.2) he had three children.

years. Then, at age thirty in a serpent year (1161, the iron-serpent year?), he returned to Gtsang where he received monastic ordination from Gshen-ston Nam-mkha'rgyal-mtshan.

The most famous scene of Klu-brag-pa's activities is a place called Klu-brag (Nāga Crag), a small settlement in an eastern side valley of the Kali Gandaki, a few miles south of Kagbeni in southern Baragaon. The two sources available to me conflict concerning whether he went to Klu-brag before or after his ordination.³² According to a recent work by the late Bon-po historian Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims he went to Klu-brag afterward. There he bound the local demons to oaths and received possession of the nearby land from them. The demons continued to serve him by watering his fields. An older source gives more details about Klu-brag-pa's activities in the area.³³ In nearby Kag (Kagbeni) an old childless couple divided up their possessions and offered them to two local priests. What happened next, according to my understanding of the difficult passage, was that after the old husband gave his land and house to the lama (Klu-brag-pa) and the wife gave her share to a younger priest, the two had a disagreement over the remainder of their property. It was expropriated (?) and turned over for the establishment of a monastic group (?). By sending out hunters throughout the land, and on account of lama Klu-brag-pa's magical efforts, within one year fifty monks were gathered together, and the "lamp of the (Bon-po) doctrine" became established in Se-rib from that time. Our understanding of Klu-brag-pa's career and the above events will probably be much improved when the historical record (*dkar chag*) of Lubra monastery becomes available.

Klu-brag-pa received tantric empowerments from Sman-gong-ba (b. 1123) after his ordination. He also studied with the Bon-po master Gshen-ston Ye-shes-blo-gros, who founded a monastery in 1137.³⁴ These data, together with the chronology established for Klu-brag-pa's father, support D. Snellgrove's opinion that Klu-brag-pa was studying as a young man in the mid-12th century.³⁵ Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims went one step further and linked the founding of Lubra monastery (klu brag dgon pa) to Klu-brag-pa himself, something that is not explicitly stated in any older sources available to me.³⁶ But again, in light of the above dates, his assigning of Lubra monastery's founding to the mid-12th century seems justified, if in fact Klu-brag-pa founded it.

32 Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims *op. cit.* II, 344. 5 has him going to Klu-brag after being ordained at age thirty in Gtsang. In *Sources...*, p. 468, however the narrative's order is reversed.

33 *Sources...*, p. 468.5.

34 On Gshen-ston Ye-shes-blo gros, see S. G. Karmay, *op. cit.* p. 132. n. 2.

35 D. L. Snellgrove, *Nine Ways of Bon*, p. 4, n. 4.

36 Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *Zhang bod gangs ri'i...*, p. 618.

Klu-brag-pa passed away at the age of eighty-four, which according to our earlier calculations would have been in the year 1215. His family line continued, particularly in Dolpo where it was an important line of Bon-po priests.³⁷

The last Bon-po master of this period whose life we shall take up is Bru-chen Tshul-khrims-rgyal-mtshan (1239 ?-1302 ?). His dates pose a problem because the two sources on his life available to me do not agree. Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims states that he was born in the earth-hog year of the fourth sixty-year cycle, which would be A. D. 1239.³⁸ A biography appearing in *Sources for History of Bon*, however, states simply that he was born in a hog year. This second source (p. 452) moreover gives his year of death as the wood-tiger year (1254 or 1314). But Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims tells us that he passed away at age sixty-three which would be another tiger year, the water tiger (1302). This latter date seems preferable in light of other evidence.

Bru-chen Tshul-khrims-rgyal-mtshan's greatest teacher was the famous master, 'Gro-mgon 'A-zha Blo-gros-rgyal mtsgan (1198-1263). Bru-chen received ordination from him at the age of twelve. This would have been possible in the year 1251, but not in the year 1203, which would have been Bru-chen's twelfth year had he been born in the iron-hog year (1191). In his early twenties Bru-chen received many teachings from four eminent masters of Bon who were gathered together: 'Gro-mgon 'A-zha, Bla-ma Dar-ma (=Bru-ston 'Dul-ba-rgyal-mtshan), Rma-ston Shes-rab-sengge, and Dbyil-ston Dpon-gsas Khyung-rgod-rtsal (b. 1175). If we follow the chronology for these figures put forward in the *Sangs rgyas kyi bsatn rtsis ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba* of Nyi-ma-bstan-'dzin,³⁹ this must have occurred just before 'Gron-mgon 'A-zha passed away, and at a time when Dbyil-ston was almost ninety years old ! Obviously, more work will be needed to sort out the dates of these early Bonpo masters.

At the age of twenty-four, Bru-chen was sent to various districts in the western borderlands of Tibet, including Lo, Dolpo, Se-rin, Purang, Limi, and the northern nomadic grazing lands.⁴⁰ He stayed for nine years, residing in such places as Ti-snyug, the seat of Snyel-ston 'Khrul-med-zhig-po (in Lower Lo ?); Gdong-skya, a Bonpo shrine in Lo: Byi-ba-mkhar; and Lubra. He was invited to the last place, Lubra, by one Slob-spon Rgyal-mtshan-'bum who was his first disciple from Se-rib. The working of the passage mentioning this gives the decided impression that Lubra was a part of Se-rib:⁴¹

37 A brief account of this family lineage is given in Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *G. yung drung bon...*, II, 471-474.

38 *Sources...*, p. 439.

39 For a description of this, the fundamental chronological work of the Bonpo tradition, see S. G. Karmay, *op. cit.*, p. xvii, n. 1.

40 Dpal-ldan-tshul-khrims, *G. yung drung bon...*, II, 470. 2.

41 *Sources...*, p. 442. 7.

*Klu brag tu spyan drangs nas | se rib tu slob bu la snga ba
slob dpon rgyal mtshan 'bum gyis dbang byin bka' 'grel zhus|*

“Having been invited to Lubra, his first disciple in Se-rib, the master Rgyal-mtshan-'bum, requested empowerments, blessings, and explanatory teachings”.

Bru-chen went back to G. yas-ru dben-sa-kha in Gtsang when he was thirty-three years old. But he later returned to the Kali Gandaki region and had a great number of disciples in all the surrounding areas. In one place he sums up his accomplishments, and he mentions especially his deeds in Lo, Dolpo, the northern (nomadic) region, and Se-rib.⁴² He says about the latter in particular that because in Se-rib there is the foundation of the Doctrine, he established a religious center at Pag-king (pron. Pag ling or Pa ling).⁴³ A village by this name now exists in the general vicinity of Kagbeni below the village of Phalak, just above the river-bed.⁴⁴

Bru-chen's biography gives some interesting information about the geographical distribution of his disciples: from Lo there were 198; from Se-rib, 246; from Dolpo, 99; and from Purang and the nomadic regions together, there were 133. Thus we see that the greatest number of his disciples was from Se-rib. And if his followings were more or less commensurate to the populations in each region, we could surmise that the populations of Se-rib and Lo were of roughly similar sizes.⁴⁵

* * *

Se-rib was thus the name of a large region encompassing many villages in the Kali Gandaki valley south of Lo. Among its lands were the areas of Lubra and Kagbeni. There are several other villages in modern Baragaon and Panchgaon that are no more than ten miles from Lubra and Kagbeni. Most likely these, too, belonged to Se-rib. Downstream from the Lubra valley, for example, there was a strategic strong-

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 451f.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 452.1.

⁴⁴ Ms. Sidney Schuler, personal communication. The village of Sangda is also called Pha-ling. See D. L. Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, p. 162.

⁴⁵ From *Sources...*, p. 455, the following chart is extracted: *blo dol 'brog pa se rib dang bzhi po'i khongs na...*

	Blo-bo	Se-rib	Dol-po	Pu-rang	'Brog-pa
btsun-pa	81	68	27	7	.33
Jo-sgom	69	150	21	24	
gsang-sngags	48	28	51		69
	198	246	99		133

hold near the present village of Thini. Unless it were the last outpost of a separate principality to the south, which seems unlikely, it would have been an important center of political power in Se-rib.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GA-RAB DZONG NEAR THINI

Indeed there are many local legends concerning the former importance of the the old ruined fortress near Thini. There is little doubt that the fort, called Ga-rab Dzong (*Dga' rab rdzong*), once dominated the whole of Panchgaon. The modern inhabitants of the nearby villages of Thini, Shyang, and Chimtan assert that their ancestors lived together in the fort and that they were the original Thakali-speaking group in the region.⁴⁶ In one version of the Thakali myth of origin a princess from this fort marries Hangsa Raja, the progenitor of all Thakalis.⁴⁷ A part of this myth is mentioned in the modern retelling of the *Dhimchan Rhab*, a Thakali clan history.⁴⁸ Other legends about the old fort and its past rulers are also current. Until recently, however, these legends were only known from their oral recounting; there were no documents available that told of the "history" of Ga-rab Dzong. The older recordings of Thakali clan histories, for instance, do not mention the rulers of the fort, while only the newly reconstructed Sherchan history by Narendra Gauehan does.⁴⁹ But last year two versions of the Thini Ga-rab Dzong local history (*bem chag*) were brought to light. Although perhaps only fragmentary remains of an earlier document, or a local attempt at reconstructing a lost document, these texts are nevertheless our only written record so far of Panchgaon's history or legends.

Of the two texts, one is definitely older, being written on a long scroll of paper and stored rolled up in a bamboo tube.⁵⁰ It is written in Tibetan characters and basically in a Western Tibetan dialect. It contains many words from local dialects, and that together with the fact that its spelling is very corrupt, makes the text difficult to decipher. The original manuscript remains in the possession of the Thini village headman. The second text is an edited version of the above, and was probably written by a monk since it shows a somewhat higher degree of literacy and Buddhist education.⁵¹ The original of this second text is kept by a local monk. We owe our knowledge of these two texts

46 M. Vinding and S. Gauchan, *op. cit.*, p. 137, n. 14.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 136, n. 13. See also C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 139 f.

48 M. Vinding and S. Gauchan, *op. cit.*, p. 136 f.

49 This is the above mentioned *Dhimchan Rhab*, presented by M. Vinding and S. Gauchan, *op. cit.* pp. 133-147.

50 M. Vinding, personal communication.

51 This second, newer text bears the title: *'Thing yul la rgyal gdong mig can gyi lo rgyus*, "The History of King Gyal-dong-mig-cen in the land of Thini".

to the industry and generosity of Michael Vinding and Krishna Lal Thakali.⁵²

Neither of these texts can be older than the 17th century since they mention the Dga-'ldan-pho-brang government of Tibet, which was established in 1642. Local tradition states that there was once an even longer and more detailed village history of Thini that was removed to another village some time ago. This would probably be the oldest such local history, and may yet turn up.

The two available texts deal mainly with the legends of the great founding king, Gyal-dong-mig-jen (approximate phonetic spelling, the written forms of which vary tremendously), who established the line of rulers at Ga-rab Dzong. Amidst the tales of legendary origin it is interesting to note that one of the great founding king's acts was to invite Bon-po priests to the area. In addition, towards the end of the older text there is a brief account of the founding of Lubra monastery.⁵³ It says that Yang-ston, the lama from Dolpo, asked the leader of Ga-rab Dzong and his ministers to give him the area of Lubra, and that they consented to give it. This would imply that the actual monastery at Lubra was founded by someone of the Ya-ngal family who had gone to Dol-po after the time of Klu-brag-pa. But it also could be a garbled reference to Klu-brag-pa, who was also from the Ya-ngal line. Until more details are known, the only observation we can make is that according to this tradition, the rural ruler of Ga-rab Dzong controlled the land around Lubra at the time that its first Bonpo monastery was founded. From that we can tentatively conclude that at an early time Ga-rab Dzong ruled part of Se-rib, since Lubra is clearly indicated elsewhere as being part of Se-rib.

Perhaps, even more interesting is a passage that immediately precedes the above. It is a traditional list of the past tributaries of Ga-rab Dzong, which enumerates what each territory's annual tribute was. Although this passage is too difficult for me to give an exact translation, it is clear that the tributaries mentioned include Marpa, Phalag, Dangkar Dzong, Gyiling, Sangda, and Lubra.⁵⁴ It also mentions a Nye-shang, and

⁵² See above, n. 1.

⁵³ This passage with which nothing is found to correspond in the newer text, is as follows: (p. 8)

'dol pa'i bla ma yang 'don skyis/ gsum pa ga rab dzong kyis dgen pa khor spon
rnams la/kl 'dra yi sa cha r nang pa zhus gsung pas/ spyi ma gra pa'i bla ma bsam te
phul pa yin/

My edited version of this passage:

dol po'i bla ma yang ston gyis/ sum pa dga 'rab rdzong kyi rgan pa 'khor dpon
rnams la/ klu brag gi sa cha g nang bar zhu gsungs pas/ phyi mar grwa pa'i bla ma
(ong) bsams te phul ba yin/

⁵⁴ The transcribed text of this passage (older text. p. 8) reads: de nas mar pa mtshong
pon rgyal mo'i/ rgyal po rin po che rtso rdzad pa'i ga' rab dzong gis mi ser rnams la
gang pa zhus te/lo sha phul sho zer de/ spun dri gro tsugs pa yin/dgar 'rab dzong ma
yin pas/ span 'dri bu yin pas/ lo sha pa 'khal 12 thod/ pha leg dang 'dang dkar dzong

possibly the Muktinath area. If the above passages represent genuine traces of a period when the rulers of Ga-rab Dzong ruled over Baragaon and Panchgaon, it would seem that the old ruined fort south-west of Thini was once the political center of Se-rib. The above two texts, however, are not to be thought of as proper historical sources. Their owners admit that they are not the old, original local histories, and we have no way of verifying contents. Nevertheless, the existence of the kingdom of Se-rib and its one-time rule from Ga-rab Dzong may account for the special high status accorded to the residents of Thini in the social order of upper Thak Khola. There persists among the people of Baragaon, for example, the opinion that the people of Thini are the equals of their highest social group.⁵⁵ The importance of Ga-rab is specifically mentioned in the oral traditions of the Muktinath area. A master of lore from that place asserts that in the past the main powers in the Kali Gandaki headwaters were Lo and Thini (Ga-rab Dzong). According to local tradition, lesser nobles who ruled fortified villages such as at Dzong, Dangkar Dzong, and Sa-mar had to align themselves with respect to the two great powers.⁵⁶ It remains for future research to uncover more textual materials in support of these traditions.

CONQUEST OF SE-RIB AND LO BY THE GUNG-THANG PRINCIPALITY

The political power that once existed in Se-rib and Thak Khola seems to have declined in the 13th and 14th centuries, in the face of intensified expansion into the area by adjoining states. Throughout much of the 13th and 14th centuries the main political powers thereabouts were Jumla to the west, and Gung-thang to the north-east. Both of these principalities had their ups and downs, but during the following periods in the area's political history their names appear again and again. In Tibetan sources the name of the early kingdom in the vicinity of modern Jumla was Ya-tshe, a fact we see noted in the biography of the wide-ranging master, Tshe-dbang-nor-bu (1668-1755).⁵⁷

yi mi la lo sha ba 'khal dguthob/ 'gyi ling de ba la lo re reng la g.yag ci la dung ma ci thobs/ bsang'ta yul nas lo re re la ra 'dre pho rgyad rgyad thob/ gnye shang chur skyib yul na lo re la ma gyang cob gyad dang/ lham brot hor 'da ma zhi thobs/ (chur skyibs=a corruption of chu-mig ?)

In the newer text (p 5f):

de nas mar pa tshong bon rgyal mo mi yis rgyal po rin po che la shad phul zer te/ spun gro tshug pa yin/ ma bu byung lu de yin/ lo sha bo khal bcu gnyis yin/ phen lag gi lo sha bo khal dgu yin/ gyi lung nas lo sha re la sag dung ma 1, 1 thob/ sag mda, nas ra dre bo rgyad bryad thob/ nye shang nas ma rkyang bco bryad thob/ klu grag nas som po'i ri ga nas tag ma (p. 6) stags pa'i legs drus ka gsum dang dzam bu bags dang gang thob/

55 C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

56 S. Schuler, personal communication.

57 Rig-'dzin Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug, Brag-dkar-rta-so sprul-sku, *Dpal rig 'dzin chen po*

Ya-tshe had two great periods of expansion during these centuries: one in the early to mid-13th century and the second in the mid-14th century. In both cases its encroachments into the borderlands of Nagri were beaten back by forces led by Gung-thang.⁵⁸

During the last half of the 13th century the kings of Gung-thang, owing to their close ties to Sakya and hence to the Mongols came to rule from their capital at Dzongka the thirteen hundred-groups (brgya tsho) of Ngari. These thirteen administrative districts were:

The four basic communities:

1. Gung-thang
2. Skyid-rong (Kyirong)
3. Nub-ri
4. Ma-zhang Rgya-tshang-pa

The four districts carved out by the sword:

(*ral gris bcad pa'i sde bzhi*)

5. Glo-stod (Upper Lo)
6. Glo-smad (Lower Lo)
7. Dol gru-bzhi (Dolpo)
8. Bzang-brgyud-pa

The communities which respectfully submitted:

9. Gnyos
10. Dngul
11. Phu-ri-mtsho-'khor
12. Gtsang-so Zang-tsha-ba

The consort's valley:

13. Pha-bzhi-chags⁵⁹

The importance of Gung-thang during this period in the eyes of the Sakya rulers of Tibet is indicated by the fact that when the young Gung-thang king, 'Bum-lde-mgon (1253-1280) returned from Sakya after visiting his uncle 'Phags-pa, he was accompanied to Ngari by an army headed by the famous official, Shākya-bzang-po.⁶⁰ Gung-thang's major conquests during this time were no doubt aided by the armies of Sakya, and I think that those conquests, which included "Lower Lo", probably embraced much or all of Se-rib.

rdo rje tshe dbang nor bu'i zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa'i cha shas brjod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i rol mtsho (ms., Library of the Gangtok Institute of Tibetology), p. 91b.

⁵⁸ For a summary of these events see D. P. Jackson, "The Early History of Lo (Mustang) and Ngari", *Congributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 4 (1976), no 1.

⁵⁹ Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, Kah-thog Rig-'dzin (1698-1755), *Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ris smad mang yul gung thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dwangs*

It was in this period that Gung-thang rulers founded the Mu-khun-srin Fort in the Muktinath area, which was considered part of Lower Lo. Mention of this is found in Tshe-dbang-nor-bu's history of the Gung-thang kings, where there is presented a list of forts controlled by Gung-thang during the late 13th century. The relevant lines and their translation are as follows

ta mang se mon kha gnon du/
glo smad mu khun srin rdzong brtsegs/
 "For the domination of the Ta-mang Se Mon,
 The Mu-khun Demon Fort of Lower Lo was built".⁶¹

The name Mu-khun is almost certainly a reference to Muktinath. Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, the compiler of the above list, writes elsewhere: "I went to 'Hundred-and-some Springs' the renowned holy spot revered by both Hindus and Buddhists, which is called Mu-mu-ni-se-ṭa or Mu-khun-kṣe-ṭa (Tibetan gloss *sgrol ba'i zhing* 'the field of liberation') in the *Hevajra mūlatantra*, and is called Mu-ṭa-ṣaṭa in border dialects.⁶² It is a place where a natural fire burns on rock and water, and where dakinis mass together like clouds."⁶³ A pilgrim's guide to Muktinath gives the Tibetanized Sanskrit

shel 'phrul gyi me long (hereafter referred to as the "Gung thang gdung rabs") ms., library of Dujom Rinpoche), p. 5b. The Tibetan text reads:

de'ang brgya tsho bcu gsum gyi grangs ni/
gung thang skyid grong nub ri gsum/
ma zhang rgya tshang pa dang bzhi/
rtsa ba'i mi sde rnams bzhi yin/
glo stod glo smad dol gru bzhi/
bzang brgyud pa dang rnam pa bzhi/
ral gris bcad pa'i sde bzhi yin/
gnyos dngul gnyis dang phu ri mtsho 'khor dang/
gtsang so zang tsha ba ste rnam pa bzhi/
gus pas btud pa'i mi sde yin/
pha bzhi chags kyi brgya skor gcig/
lcam gyi ljongs la byung ba ste/
brgya tsho bou gsum de ltar grags/

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5a.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, This passage, together with the full list of forts under Gung-thang, is given in D. P. Jackson, , *op. cit.*, n. 37.

⁶² Could *mu ṭa ṣa ṭa* and not *smon thang* have been the origin of the name "Mustang"?

⁶³ Rig-'dzin Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug, Brag-dkar-rta-so sprul-sku, *op. cit.*, p. 90a. On Mu-mu-ni see M. A. Stein, *Kalhana's Rāja-taranginī, A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1961), vol. I, P. 98, verse 332, footnote: "... Mummuni is named between the *Tuhkharas* and the *Bhauttas*." Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, the Glo-bo mkhan-chen, discusses the name Mummuni, and says that it is mentioned in the (*Kye rdor rgyud*) *brtag pa gnyis pa*, the *Chos rgyal ma chen mo* (a versified enlogy of Sakya Pandita), and the biography of

equivalent: Mu-gu-ji-tar (my phonetic approximation of *dmu gu byi ltar*).⁶⁴ The word Mu-khun seems best linked to the root *muc* of Sanskrit (Tib--*sgrol*) just as the *mukti* of the present name Muktinath is. Thus Mu-khun probably derives from *moksana* by way of *mokhana*.

It may never be ascertainable exactly who the Ta-mang Se Mon people or peoples were, but there is little doubt that they included the non-Bhotias near the southern boundary of Lo. The name "Tamang" (*Tamhaang*) is used even today by some Thakalis when referring to themselves. The word "Se" probably derives from the old name "Se-rib", and it is still the case that non-Tibetan (Se-rib) dialects in Upper Thak Khola are called *se skad* by neighboring Bhotias. "Mon" is a general name used by Tibetans for their southern, non-Bhotia neighbors,⁶⁵ although here it may go together with Se, indicating a specific Mon (i. e., the Mon of Se or Se-rib). Taken together, it seems very probable that those names imply the domination of Thak Khola by Gung-thang during the late 13th century.

Before Gung-thang extended its sway over the area, Lo and Se-rib were already part of the Tibetan cultural and religious world. Politically however, the area was for the moment either independent or under the control of a neighbor such as Ya-tshe. Only this would explain the need for Gung-thang to conquer Lo and Dolpo by the sword.⁶⁶ Gung-thang's control over its conquests may have been precarious at first. Hence the need to establish strategic and defensible fortresses. If the present population of Baragaon

Glo-bo lo-tsa-ba Shes rab-rin-chen. Glo-bo mkhan-chen takes the position that Mummuni is a country in S. E. India, and further more cites the *Jam dpal zhal lung gi, grel ba* in support of that (*Collected Works*, III, 18).

Muktiksetra is the main name of the shrine according to modern Hindu Sanskrit writings. A work containing references from the Puranas and Tantras in connection with Muktinath and nearby places is mentioned by G. Tucci *Preliminary Report* . . . , p. 11, n. 1

⁶⁴ *Gnas chen chu mig brgya rtsa'i dang cong zhi sku tshab gter lnga mu li rin chen gangs gu ru gsang phug sna* (sic) *ris jo bo sogs kyi bka* (sic) *chag dngul dkar me long* (appears as the second of eight *Rare Tibetan Texts from Nepal*), (Dolanji, H. P.: Tashi Dorje, 1976), p. 62f.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, the term *mon* is also used by the Thakalis to designate their own southern neighbors. See M. Vinding and S. Gauchan, *op. cit.* p. 100.

⁶⁶ See above, p. 18 and n. 59. Ya-tshe's influence in the area is perhaps indicated by a reference stating that the Tibetan Buddhist faction they favored, the 'Bri-gung order, was established in the Muktinath area in the time of Darma-rgyal-mtshan (mid-13th century), a contemporary of the fifth 'Bri-gung abbot, Gcung-rin-po-che Rdo-rje grags-pa (1210-1278). See Dkon-mchog-bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-blo-gros, *Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung lo rgyus mdor bsdus su brjod pa'i rab byed shel dkar me long* (ms., ff. 66), p. 31a-31b. Perhaps Ya-tshe, and certainly the 'Bri-gung-pas were driven out of the upper Kali Gandaki basin by the Sakya/Gung-thang alliance.

is an indication of the situation in times past, Kag would have been the lowest and most exposed extension of the Bhotia peoples. It would need to be fortified and garrisoned. But even if non-Tibetan peoples were Kag's main inhabitants at the time because of its strategic value a military outpost stationed with Bhotias may have been established there. During this time Tibetan nobles probably became established as the leaders in Baragaon, if they were not already. They derived their authority from their ties with Gung-thang, and some noble families may have lasted to become local rulers for the kings of Lo. Under Gung-thang's domination perhaps Dzong or Kag became a more important center of local rule, replacing the Thini overlordship.

During the early 1300's the Mongols continued to endorse the Gung-thang king's rule over the thirteen districts of Eastern Ngari. The Mongols and also Sakya, however, were now declining, and this must have caused the influence of their Gung-thang proteges to diminish. Meanwhile, Gung-thang's old rival Ya-tshe was waxing strong. This second period of expansion for Ya-tshe (early Jumla) reached its peak in the middle of the 14th century, and at this time Purang and Guge broke away from Gung-thang, as Upper and Lower Lo also seem to have done. Then, c. 1370, the power of the Malla kings of Ya-tshe rapidly disintegrated, and the vacuum they left was filled by a resurgent Gung-thang.⁶⁷

DOMINATION OF SE-RIB BY SHES-RAB-BLA-MA AND HIS DESCENDANTS AT LO

During the last decades of the 14th century a general of Gung-thang named Shes-rab-bla-ma engineered, near the end of his life, the reconquest of Upper and Lower Lo.⁶⁸ Perhaps a few years later (late 1380's) his younger of two sons, Chos-skyong-'bum, led the retaking of Purang. As a reward for the latter deed, the Gung-thang king Bsod-nams-lde (1371-1404) gave him the rule over Lo and Dolpo.⁶⁹ Under this family the power of Lo, the nominal tributary of Gung-thang, became established in the Kali Gandaki valley and throughout Ngari.

Already at the time of Chos-skyong-'bum's reconquest of Purang, Lo seems to have been the *de facto* possession of that family, because Shes-rab-bla-ma led its reconquest. Although his son Chos-skyong-'bum is mentioned in Tshe-dbang-nor-bu's history of the Gung-thang kings,⁷⁰ our knowledge of Shes-rab-bla-ma himself is derived solely from a very terse passage in the *Molla of Tsarang*. It says that the conquest

67 For a summary of these events, see D. P. Jackson, *op. cit.*

68 *Molla of Tsarang* (ms.), pp. 8a-8b. This work will be described in more detail in a future study.

69 Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, Kah-thog Rig-'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (ms., Dujom Rinpoche), p. 16a.

70 *Ibid.*

of Upper and Lower Lo was accomplished through Shes-rab-bla-ma's cooperation with (a people or country named) Zhang. But it adds that the two allies fought after the conquest of Lo, and Shes-rab-bla-ma emerged the victor.⁷¹ Clearly, in order to understand this period of the area's history we must identify the Zhang.

We know that Shes-rab-bla-ma's family supplied high officials to the court of the Gung-thang king.⁷² Known as "the lineage of Jir-ma the Myriarch" (*khri dpon jir mai' rjgs*), they acted as district governors in Ngari, for example, near Mt. Kailash.⁷³ It would not be surprising if the Zhang were also located in a nearby part of Ngari. In northern Guge, for instance, there is in fact a district still called Shang, and it is possible that this place was the seat of the bygone rulers called "Zhang" in sources from Lo. Nowadays Shang is a small hamlet where there are found two ruined fortresses, one of which is "of enormous size"⁷⁴ One day's journey south-east from Shang there is located the village of Shang-tse, formerly the summer residence of the Tsaparang (Guge) district governor. In Shangtse also there are found huge ruins of an old castle, and these ruins are still known as "the king's palace" (*rgyal po'i mkhar*).⁷⁵ Shang and Shang-tse were thus formerly major centers of power in Guge, and their kings, in later times at least, were the kings of Guge. The identification of Shang with Zhang, although by no means certain, is thus one possibility. Also, Sarat Chandra Das (*Tibetan-English Dictionary*) apparently identifies Zhang with Shangs, "a district of Tsang situated to the north of Tashilunpo."

Glo-bo mkhan-chen Bsod-nams-lhung-grub (1456-1532) writes in his autobiography that the *zhang-pa* was still quite powerful in the early 15th century, even in Lo. The permission of the *zhang-pa* was required for the appointment of an early Sa-skyapa

71 *Molla of Tsarang*, pp. 8a-8b: *zhung shes rab bla ma zhes bya ba'i bla zhang gnyis kyi phrin las la dbang las la dbang* (8b) *bsgyur/ sku tshe smad la glo bo stod smad kyi sa la dbang bsgyur/ lugs gnyis kyi bka' khrim bcas pa/zhang shes gnyis, knon pa las/ phas rgol shis pa'i g. yul ngo bcom ste dpa'bo'i g. yul las rguyal bar mdzad/*

72 See, for example, G. Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma-Tibetan Chronicles* (Roma: 1971), p. 170. (P. 39a of the Tibetan' text.) See also Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, Glo-bo mkhan-chen, *Rje btsun bla ma'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar rgya mtsho* (ms.), p. 1b.

73 Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, Kah-thog Rig-'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (ms. Dujom Rinpoche) pp. 14a, 16a. On p. 14a there is told the story of how a great gold nugget was discovered at Drang-lung ring-mo, near the eastern slopes of Mt. Kailash, and how the Lho-lde khri-dpon, Byir-ma (p. 16a spelled *jir-ma*), offered it to the Gung-thang king, Bkra-shis-lde (enthroned 1352)

74 F. A. Peter, "Glossary of Place Names in Western Tibet", *Tibet Journal*, 2 (1977), 26. See also G. Tucci and E. Gherzi, *Chronaca della missione scientifica Tucci nel Tibet Occidentale* (1933) (Roma; 1934), p. 262.

75 F. A. Peter, *op. cit.* p. 26; Tucci and Gherzi, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

abbot in Lo.⁷⁶ The kings of Guge, as the rulers elsewhere in Tibet, did take an active interest in local religious affairs. One king of Guge is mentioned in the biography of Ngor-chen as having invited Ngor-chen from Lo to Purang. This king, however, was probably not the *zhang-pa* mentioned above, being perhaps a decade later.⁷⁷

By the 1430's the authority of Zhang was definitely eclipsed in Eastern Ngari, and the rulers of Lo, descendants of Shes-rab-bla ma, became the most powerful rulers. A-ma-dpal, the son of Chos-skyong-bum and nephew of Jir-ma the Myriarch, from his capital Smon-thang in Upper Lo controlled a vast territory in Ngari. His authority extended as far away as Guge and Purang. He and his sons appointed and removed officials to the Kar-dum Fort, a fort designed to dominate Purang and Guge.⁷⁸ Indeed,

76 Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, *Glo-bo mkhan-chen, Rje btsun bla ma'i* . . . , p. 6a: At that time (c. 1430?) the Zhang-pa people controlled the old Namgyal monastery in Lo. A-ma-dpal, at Ngor-chen's request, asked the Zhang-pa to allow 'Gig mkhan-po Ratna-Sbri, formerly of Rgyang 'Bum-mo-che, to act as monastic leader there.

77 Sangs-rgyas-phun-tshogs, *Rgyal ba rdo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang po'i rnam par thar pa legs bshad chu blo'i, dus pa'i rgya mtsho yon tan yid bzhin nor bu'i 'byung gnas* (published together with the *Kye rdor rnam bshad* of the Sde-dge Yab-chen) (N. Delhi: Trayang and Jamyang Samten, 1976), p. 23. There we learn the following:

The Bzhi-sde noble monk, Nam-rtse (Nam-mkha'-rtse-mo ?), and the king of Guge, Khri Nam-mkha'i-dbang-po sent Guge mkhan-chen Chos-nyid-seng-ge and his followers to Lo for the purpose of inviting Ngor-chen to Purang. The Guge king later took monastic ordination from Ngor-chen (p. 240). Cf. G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report* . . . , p. 19.

It may have been that sometime prior to Ngor-chen's second visit to Lo (1436) the Guge or Zhang rulers were reluctant to let followers of Ngor-chen become established as head of the old Namgyal monastery, where they traditionally had some influence. Rulers sometimes manipulated such religious appointments to political advantage, as, for example, the Ladakh king Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal did after conquering Guge. (See G. Tucci, "Tibetan Notes", *HJAS*, XII (1949), 486). The Guge kings in general were known as supporters of the new and rising Gelug order. King Blo-bzang-rab-brtan, under the influence of Tsong-kha-pa's student, Ngag-dbang-grags pa, seems to have been a strong supporter of the Gelugpas during this time (*Ibid.*, 483 ff. See also his *Preliminary Report*, p. 19, n. 2.). Curiously, a religious notable by the name of Ngag-dbang-grags-pa is recorded to have advised Ngor-chen against undertaking his first journey to Ngari, after he himself had returned from there (Bsod-nams-lhun-grub *Glo-bo mkhan-chen, Rje btsun bla ma'i* . . . , p. 2a.) By the time of Ngor-chen's second visit, however, A-ma-dpal had rebuilt the Namgyal monastery (Sangs-rgyas-phun-tshogs, *op. cit.*, p. 238.6), and he and his sons were at about the peak of their power. A-ma-dpal and his son A-mgon-bzangpo were extremely devoted to Ngor-chen, and are said to have been somewhat antagonistic toward the Gelugpas (Tucci, *Deb t'er* . . . , p. 170),

78 Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa, *Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug rje btsun bstan 'dzin ras pa'i rnam*

he seems to have been the myriarch (*khri dpon*) of Ngari,⁷⁹ which the *Tsarang Molla* asserts.⁸⁰ One of the officials thus appointed was Khro-bo-skyabs-pa, an ancestor of the lama, Bstan-dzin-ras-pa. That official's brother was sent to Guge as a local governor, while Khro-bo-skyabs-pa himself was made the fort-commander of Dzong, near Muktinath in Baragaon.⁸¹ We can be quite sure that under A-ma-dpal and his immediate successors, Lo's territories included Se-rib. His son, A-mgon-bazang-po, maintained the preeminent position of Lo, and is said to have ruled over many peoples of different languages and races.⁸²

Although the political power of Se-rib was greatly diminished in the new order, the economic and strategic importance of Thak Khola remained. For as long as trade moved regularly between Western Nepal and Tibet, the Kali Gandaki valley would be one of its principal routes.⁸³ The valley's northern passes leading to Tibet are relatively low, and the lower part of the river valley connects with easy routes through the hills of Nepal to the plains of India. Thak Khola is situated at the half-way point for traffic on this route. Having come that far, the traders would exchange what they had brought for what was available from the opposite direction. It was the highest point that traders from the lowlands were likely to visit; for traders from Tibet and the high borderlands it was the end of their world: the bottom.

For centuries the lower limit of Tibetan culture in Thak Khola has been near Kobang, south of Tukche.⁸⁴ There is a temple in that area, aptly named in Tibetan "Temple of the Bottom" (*smad kyi lha khang*) which Tibetan Buddhists still consider the boundary of their own religion and culture. Further south, and lower in the valley, were the lands of hot-land diseases and Hindu "heretics". Many were afraid to go much

thar mdzad pa nyun ngu gcig (xylograph, Dolpo blocks), p. 1b: A-ma-dpal summons one of Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa's ancestors from Guge. p. 2a: The Lo ruler appoints a member of the same family to the leadership of the Kar-dum fort at Guge-Purang. This fort was one of Gung-thang's strongholds in the late 13th century. See Jackson, *op. cit.*, n. 37.

⁷⁹ According to the *Rgya bod yig tshang* (=Shri-bhūtibhadra, *Rgya bod gyi yig tshang mkhas pa dga' byed chen mo'i dkar chab*) (ms., East Asian Library, U. W.), P. 168b, there was a myriarchy (*khri bskor*) in Ngari that was composed of Lo, Dolpo and Ljongs (=Dzong-ka) ? Ljongs-dga' is the name given by Bla-ma Btsan-po for Dzong-ka. See T. V. Wylie, *The geography of Tibet according to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad* (Roma: 1962). (The more usual form of the Gung-thang capital's name is *rdzong--dkar*, "white fort"). This occurrence of Ngari as one of the thirteen myriarchies is mentioned by G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Roma: 1949), I, 681.

⁸⁰ *Molla of Tsarang*, p. 9a.

⁸¹ Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa. *op. cit.*, p. 2a.

⁸² *Molla of Tsarang*, p. 10a, "*skad rigs mi gcig pa mang po la dbang bsgyur.*"

⁸³ See C. von FÜRER-Haimendorf, *op. cit.* pp. 182—184.

⁸⁴ See D. L. Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, p. 181.

further. A temple has marked the cultural boundary at Kopang since at least the 1400's. A story that has survived from the 15th century suggests that Kopang was the approximate limit of Tibetan culture during Ngor-chen's third visit to Lo (1446-7). At the bottom end of the valley in the "middle joint (?)" (*bar tshigs*) of Lo, there lived a man named Bsam-gtan-'od-zer. Although appearing to be a merchant selling barm for the brewing of local beer, he was actually a "hidden yogin", highly adept in vajrayana meditations. It came to Ngor-chen's attention during his last visit to Lo that this local master continuously practiced a meditation from the Cakrasamvara cycle that he had received from the Newari tantric master, Mahābodhi. Recognizing that this teaching had never been translated and spread in Tibet, Ngor-chen resolved to receive and preserve its teaching line.

Ngor-chen coached Bsam-gtan-'od-zer on the ways of conferring the initiations. On the night before the initiations were to begin, however, the unassuming local meditator lost his nerve and fled. He ran to what was probably the furthest he could go without leaving his cultural area: "the low end of the valley, the 'Bottom Temple', (*rong gting smad lha khang*).⁸⁵

DECLINE OF THE POSITION OF LO

That temple at the bottom of Tibetanized Thak Khola probably also marked the main trading spot for caravaners and merchants during the 15th and 16th centuries. We see it mentioned, for example, in the biography of Bsod-nams-blo-gros (1516-1581) ("Merit Intellect" of Snellgrove's *Four Lamas of Dolpo*). In c. 1544, following a time of conflict, the crops of Upper Lo were lost to the *Mon* (Jumla or another bordering state), and there was a great famine. Many of Bsod-nams-blo-gros' relatives had been killed by a rival group in Upper Lo and most of the surviving relations had fled to Dzong, near Muktinath. In order to save his parents from starvation he made plans to plant crops. Then, collecting the gold restitution from the killers of his relatives, he went to the "Bottom Temple". There he spent half of the gold on rice and barley, and the other half on buckwheat.⁸⁶ Thus that temple marked the spot for buying both things from the lowlands (rice) and from the higher borderlands.

85 Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams, A-myes-zhabs, *Dpal ldan sa skya pa'i yab chos kyi snying khu 'khor lo sdom pa'i chos byung ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa bde mchog chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (N. Delhi: Ngawang Tobgay 1974) p. 454f.

86 D. L. Snellgrove, *Four Lamas of Dolpo*, p. 91. For determining the dates of these episodes one must move forward by one sixty-year cycle the dates of the first three "lamas of Dolpo". This is necessitated by various pieces of internal evidence. The lama Bsod-nams-blo-gros ("Merit Intellect") for example studied as a young man with the 10th abbot of Ngor, Dkon-mchog-lhun-grub (1497-1557) (*Four Lamas* p. 86 n. 1.) and hence could not have been born in 1456.

This last episode, with its turmoil and famine is indicative of the declining position of Lo during the 16th century. Lo's influence in Thak Khola must have also lessened then. During the last decades of the 1500's in particular, both Jumla and Ladakh exercised great influence in the Kali Gandaki region, with Thak Khola coming into Jumla's sphere of influence and Lo being barely kept from total disaster by the power of Ladakh.

In the late 16th century Jumla was poised to completely overpower Lo. The great influence of the Jumla king during these years is illustrated by some events in the life of the lama Chose-skyabs-dpa -bzang (d. 1625). In the 1580's the king of Jumla asked this lama to go and mediate a serious dispute there.⁸⁷ Since Jumla was playing such an intimate role in Lo's internal affairs, no doubt its influence also encompassed the economically valuable region of Thak Khola to the south of Lo. Perhaps less than a decade after these last events, Lo was again rocked by violent disturbances. That same lama again set out to settle the fighting, and he seems to have tried to settle property disputes that apparently arose from Lo's being divided into a number of smaller districts. The lama's biography speaks of Lo as having upper, lower and middle districts. Among the places he had to go at this time (c. 1590) were Tsarang, Dga'-mi (Gemi) Dge-lung (Gelung), and Se-rib.⁸⁸ Although the picture is not clear, there is no doubt that Jumla had a hand in all of this.

During these same decades, the kings of Ladakh had also established themselves as very powerful rulers in Ngari. Tshe-dbang-rnam-rgyal initiated this period of Ladakhi supremacy through his wide conquests, which are said to have included Lo, Jumla, and Purang.⁸⁹ Ladakh's important position seems to have continued during the reigns of 'Jam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal and his son, Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal (d. 1645). This last king is recorded to have campaigned eastward (i. e. , toward Tibet proper) in 1638. On his way back to Ladakh he stopped to collect "offerings" from the nobles of Upper and Lower Lo.⁹⁰ The results of such contacts with Ladakh continued to be felt through the 17th and early 18th centuries. A fuller account of this period may one day be reconstructed with the help of Ladakhi and 'Brug-pa writings, as well as documents from the lowlands of Nepal. For the present, however, it might be useful to review some of the important events mentioned in already accessible sources.

87 D. L. Snellgrove *op. cit.* p. 153

88 *Ibid.*, p. 166

89 A. H. Francke *Antiquities of Indian Tibet* (N. Delhi: S. Chand, 1972), II, 105.

90 *Ibid.*, II 110: Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal "brought Lho-mo-sdang into his power". This must be a reference to Lo and its capital Smon-thang, and is identified as "Lomanthang in Nepal" in the index (*Ibid.*, II, 298). See also the note on p. 121. See also Bsod-nams-tshe-br'an yo-seb-dge-rgan, *Bla divags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* (Srinagar: 1976), pp. 375, 389

The biography of Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa (1646-1723), a lama born near Muktinath, contains the sad story of war in Lower Lo (including Se-rib), and of the resulting poverty and ruination. When he was six years old (1652), Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa's father, one of the Skye-skyas-gang-pa ruling family of Dzong, passed away. "At the time there was a fight between the king (of Lo) and his minister (the local official of the Skye-skyas-gang-pa noble family). The ruler of Mustang had the minister beaten at the Kag Fort. In support of the Skye-skyas-pa nobleman, the army of the Jumla king came and killed many men.⁹¹ The outcome of this battle is not stated clearly in this source, but for the family of that lama it was a time of great disaster. The army of Jumla stayed for a long time, and taxes became very heavy. Their family had to furnish supplies for the war, and for that had to borrow at high interests from the Hala'i Mon (a southern Hindu people). After a few years so much interest had accumulated that the lama's widowed mother, once the wife of a wealthy nobleman, lost everything she owned and the whole immediate family was reduced to the worst poverty. Finally the Brahmins from the south who had lent the money demanded repayment. And it was only through the timely help of their paternal uncle that Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa and his brothers were saved from indentured servitude.

It seems that during this round of fighting Lo received help from Ladakh. The great royal minister of Ladakh, Shakya-rgya-mtsho, was active during the reign of the Ladakhi king, Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal (fl. 1650), assisting the Lo rulers and founding (*rmang 'bebs*) forts in Lo and Kag.⁹² An alliance of sorts probably existed between Ladakh and Lo during the reigns of Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal and that of his son, Bde-legs-rnam-rgyal. The Lo rulers during the last half of the 17th century included a king named Bsam-'grub-dpal-'bar, and his brother, Brtan-pa'i-rdo-rje. Perhaps these brothers led Lo against Tibet during the Ladakh-Tibet war of 1683. The *Molla of Tsarang* does mention a war with Tibet in the time of Bsam-'grub-dpal-'bar, just as it mentions a fight with Jumla.⁹³ This king is mentioned as a participant in a war against Jumla also by a Ladakhi source, the account from which follows later.⁹⁴

As we have seen in response to the great pressure exerted upon Thak Khola and Lower Lo during the last half of the 17th century, some local officials of Baragaon revolted against the overlordship of Lo, and sided with Jumla. The revolt of the Skye skyas-gang-pa noble, and the Jumla king's coming to his aid, has been remembered by the local lore-masters, and its story, with various embroideries, is still retold.⁹⁵

91 Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa, *op. cit.*, p. 2a-2b.

92 A. H. Francke, *op. cit.*, II, 243.

93 *Molla of Tsarang*, p. 12b.

94 A. H. Francke *op. cit.* II, 234.

95 S. Schuler, personal communication.

That rebellious nobleman's family, however, seems to have continued to rule in the Muktinath valley for many years to come. They may have been the ones mentioned by Tshe-dbang-nor-bu as the "officials known as 'throne holders of Dzong'", who were his patrons in 1729.⁹⁶ The continuation of the Skye-skya-sgang-pa family is mentioned in a letter from the Lo ruler, 'Jam-dpal-dgra'-dul, dated water-horse (1822).⁹⁷

The conflict between Lo and its southern neighbors during this time is perhaps also indicated by an event in the life of lama Bsod-nams-dbang-phyug (1660-1731). In the past, monks from various monasteries of Lo and Baragaon used to go for ordination and advanced studies to the monastery of Rta-nag Thub-bstan-rnam-rgyal in Gtsang,⁹⁸ which was a Ngor affiliate founded in 1473 by Go-rams-pa Bsod-rams-seng-ge (1429-1489). When Bsod-na-dbang-phyug was studying there as a young man (c. 1682), an argument erupted between a "professor" of Lo and one from Se-rib. A serious fight ensued in which the one from Lo received a head wound from a large metal key. "Thus Lo and Se-rib struggled against each other, and one from a large metal key. "Thus Lo and Se-rib struggled against each other, and one man of Se-rib was wounded."⁹⁹ This fighting between regional groups in the monastery may have reflected an antagonistic situation existing between the communities at home.

⁹⁶ Rig-'dzin Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug, Brag-dkar rta-spo sprul-sku, *op. cit.*, p. 91a. The reference to the Dzar-rdzong throne-holder may be taken two ways. One is that it refers to the rulers or the fort (rdzong) at Dzar; the other is that it denotes the rulers Dzar and Dzong. The latter is quite possible because in references to the region found in the writings of its native son, Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa, the whole district is called "Dzar, Dzong, and Kag, the three" (*rdzar rdzong bkag gsum*) (Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa, *Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug bstan 'dzin ras pa'i zhal gdams mgur du gsungs pa rnams*, p. 21b').

⁹⁷ This letter was recently photographed by Ms. Sidney Schuler. It was sent by the Lo ruler 'Jam-dpal-dgra'-dul in the water-horse year (1822) to the nobleman Kun-dga'-rab-brtan of the Chongkor (chos-'khor) line of tantric lamas (Chongkor being a village near Muktinath). The letter states that the earlier Lo ruler, Tshe-dhang-lhun-grub (= Tshe-dbang, husband of the Ladakhi princess), had given the Skye-skya-sgang-pas an official order for their line (some of whom were lamas) to render service for the well-being and long-life of the Lo rulers. Later, however, since the time of the nobleman (*drung*) Bstan-'dzin, they did not act propitiously for the health and longevity of the Lo rulers. "And now (*da cha yang*), on account of the past good relations (*'phrod 'byor*) with the Lo rulers, the nobleman Kun-dga' rab-brtan succored the Lo rulers." Because of that, Kun-dga'-rab-brtan and family were exempted from certain compulsory duties. The connection between the Skye-skya-sgang-pa and Chongkor lines is thus not explicitly stated. Nevertheless, the Skye-skya-sgang-pa line continued until King Tshe-dbang's time (d. late 1720's), and remained in existence at least until the time of their own Drung Bstan-'dzin (= Bstan-'dzin-ras-pa ?).

⁹⁸ The traditional connection of the Kagbeni monastic community with Thub-bstan rnam-rgyal monastery in Tibet is indicated in the index of a manuscript obtained by Prof. Tucci in Kagbeni. See *Preliminary Report*, p. 14f.

⁹⁹ D. L. Snellgrove, *Four Lamas of Dolpo*, p. 250.

During the early 18th century Lo and Ladakh renewed their links through two marriages. Ladakhi King Nyi-marnam-rgyal's son, Bde-skyong-rnam-rgyal, married the Lo princess, Nyi-zla-'dbang-mo.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps in exchange, Nyi-ma-rnam-rgyal's daughter, Nor-'dzin-bde-legs-dbang-mo, was sent to Lo as the royal consort of Phun-tshogs-gtsug-rgyan-nor-bu *alias* Tshe-dbang.¹⁰¹ This Lo ruler escorted his bride from Ladakh to Lo, and their party included the Ladakhi general, Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje, who was sent as their escort.

The marriage of this Lo ruler to the Ladakhi princess coincided with resumed efforts by Jumla to take control of Thak Khola and the upper Kali Gandaki. From about this time copper plates from Jumla begin to be inscribed with invocations to Muktinath.¹⁰² And now, c. 1720, the Jumla king seems to have personally led an expedition against Lo. About the time that the Lo ruler and his consort returned to Lo there was a military engagement with Jumla in which Lo lost heavily. The Lo ruler, his Ladakhi consort, and about forty nobles from Lo were imprisoned in the Kag castle by the forces of Jumla.

The Ladakhi general, Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje, hastened to the adjoining Tibetan region to the north, Gro-shod, where he rallied together about one hundred nomadic horsemen (*sog po*) and about seventy Ladakhis. Returning to Lo, he mustered its fighting men and returned to do battle at the Kag fortress. From the fort a number of Jumla's warriors poured out, and when they had drawn near, the fighting began. Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje personally dispatched one of the enemy princes with a shot from his gun, while his men managed to turn back the Jumla attack while killing quite a few of the opposing fighters. Then about one thousand lowland troops arrived, sent by the king of Gru (=Parbat or Doti ?). Together the forces laid seige to the castle at Kag. Finally, after eighteen days, the Jumla king came out to negotiate a peace. He agreed to release the Lo ruler and consort, and also the forty imprisoned noblemen. Furthermore, both sides promised to abide by the terms of non-hostility laid down in the time of the Lo king Bsam-'grub-dpal-'bar and a past ruler of Jumla. An oath to this effect was taken in the Kag fort before the Protector image made of black stone and on the Jumla king's own iron rosary.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ A. H. Francke, *op. cit.*, II, 120. In the notes (p. 121) Lho-mon-sdang or Lho-mon-thang is identified thus: "a town situated a few miles north-west of Muktinath of Nepal."

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, II, 233. Francke's translation, "Upon an unfair action by the father, the governor of Lo. . . . whilst smiling, he (nurtured) hatred", should be amended to read: "Upon an unfortunate act by the Lo governor. . . . conflict with Jumla came about". (see Tibetan text, p. 230, line 12)

¹⁰² G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report*, p. 127. See also D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal* (Calcutta: 1975), p. 8

¹⁰³ A. H. Francke, *op. cit.*, II, 234.

According to the Ladakhi document from which the above was summarized, the battle took place in the water-hare year (1723). But this may be in error since there exists a copper letter of Parbat dated B. S. 1776 (A. D. 1719) that seems to mention this same encounter.¹⁰⁴ It contains a reference to the king of Jumla's having freed the Lo ruler from his imprisonment at Kagbeni. Furthermore, it helps establish the identity of the Gru ruler and army that came to the aid of Lo and the Ladakhi general. According to this copper letter, the Mustang ruler had asked the ruler of Parbat to help Lo shake off the domination of Jumla. Parbat could not defeat Jumla by itself, and therefore it entered into an alliance with Doṭi. Together these two attacked the forces of Jumla (where they were engaged at Kagbeni?) and some five hundred of Jumla's troops, including the one important officer, were killed in the war. Following this victory, the influence of Jumla was driven out of the Thini area in upper Thak Khola.

The amicable relations supposedly established at this time between Lo and Jumla did not last long. We may be able to learn more about the events in the troubled decades that followed if ever the writings of the Ladakhi princess, or those of her daughter, 'Chi-med-dpal-dren-dbang-mo, become available. A short work by Nor-'dzin-bde-legs-dbang-mo, called the "Phyag deb chen mo", is said to contain many anecdotes from the life of her son, Bstan-'dzin-dbang-rgyal, and it probably mentions some of the hardships they had to endure.¹⁰⁵ Her husband Phun-tshogs-gtsug-rgyan-nor-bu (or Tshe-dbang), passed away when Bstan-dzin dbang-rgyal was only eleven years of age.¹⁰⁶ Since the biography of Tshe-dbang-nor-bu mentions that his visit to Lo in 1729 was by the invitation of the Lo ruler, Bstan-'dzin, one can conclude that by that year his father had already passed away.¹⁰⁷ The prince would also have been eleven years old by then, and thus must have been born by 1719.

Soon after his father's death, the youthful Bstan-'dzin-dbang-rgyal was compelled to go to Kag, on account of new disturbances caused by Jumla.¹⁰⁸ During the following six years his mother, a remarkable and able woman, acted as the ruler of Lo. But by that time Ladakh's power to intervene on Lo's behalf was gone, and Jumla seems to have had a free hand. We may be sure that these times were among the lowest ebbs in Lo's history. Its former tributaries, including Thak Khola, were under Jumla's

¹⁰⁴ Tek Bahadur Shrestha, "Parvatakā Kehī Tamrapatrā", *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 3 (1976), 77f.

¹⁰⁵ Ven. Chogay Trichen, personal communication.

¹⁰⁶ Ven. Chogay Trichen, *Rin chen phra tshoms* (ms.), p. 9. This work will be the subject of a future study.

¹⁰⁷ Rig-'dzin Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug, Brag-dkar rta-so sprul-sku, *op. cit.*, p. 90a. Tshe-dbang-nor-bu himself composed a song of advice to the Lo ruler, Bstan-'dzin, entitled *Glo bo rgyal po la gdams pa'i mgur*, which was dated 1749. See *Selected Writings of Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu* (Darjeeling: 1973), p. 575.

¹⁰⁸ Ven. Chogay Trichen, *Rin chen phra tshoms*, p. 10.

sway, and Lo itself had to pay tribute to Jumla. This situation was to remain unchanged until late in the reign of the next king, Dbang-rgyal-rdo-rje when Lo regained a small part of its former position. Lo's recovery was solely due to the Gorkha conquest of Jumla,¹⁰⁹ and Lo's renewed power in the Kali Gandaki region was the result of the Gorkhali leadership's having recognised the Lo ruler as a regional leader. Soon after the fall of Jumla, Thak Khola was officially designated as a tributary of Lo.¹¹⁰

The history of parts of Thak Khola after the 18th century is somewhat better known,¹¹¹ and since my sources yield little that is new, except specifically concerning the history of Lo, I shall bring the account here to a close. I hope that these references will be found to be useful by those doing field-work in the upper Kali Gandaki region, and by those who are studying the history of West Nepal. I trust, moreover, that other useful materials remain to be found, and that it will be possible to supplement the foregoing account in the future. The present references, nevertheless, are enough to indicate a place named Se-rib as an old political and cultural entity in the upper Kali Gandaki. They also provide a few hints for reconstructing the circumstances in which the area of Se-rib subsequently lost its power, national identity, and until now even the memory of its name. In the future, however, histories of the region should not overlook Se-rib.

* * *

¹⁰⁹ On the conquest of Jumla by the Gorkhals, see, L. F. Stiller, *The Rise of the House of Gorkha* (Patna: 1975), pp. 185-187. The Mustang raja's cooperation at this time may have earned them their later privileges from the Gorkhali ruling house.

¹¹⁰ D. R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, p. 329 f. Nepalese edicts from this period to the Mustang Raja, Wangyal Dorje (Dbang-rgyal-rdo-rje), have been presented by Mahesh C. Regmi (ed.) *Regmi Research Papers* (Lazimpat, Kathmandu), II, (1970), 99; IV (1972), 167; and VI (1974), 134..

¹¹¹ See, for example, C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-147.

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Errata

Page	Line	for	read
195	note 1.1	tones	notes
195	note 1.14	p.197	p.221
196	17	Pancayatgaon	Panchgaon
196	note 2.16	Snellogrove	Snellgrove
196	note 2.18	He was a disciple... Samye	He was a disciple of the well-known Gter-ston, 'ja'-tshon-snying-po (1585-1656), and from another source we learn that he discovered sku-tshab effigies at Samye.
199	note 8.5	sansctite du. . . .	sanscrite du Tao to king" (T'oung-Pao
199	note 8.8	des-monts	des monts
199	note 8.14	T'ou : fan	T'ou-fan
199	note 9.1	lajongsfar	ljongs far
199	note 9.2	bstq <u>u</u>	bstan
200	7	mnga, ris	mnga ris
200	17	economic-consequences..	economic consequences probably encouraged
201	4	regorganized	reorganized
201	note 17.8	who some	whom some
201	note 17.25	Sangs-rgyas-skar-rgyalis	Sangs-rgyas-skar-rgyal is
202	note 18	see below...	see below, p.215. A Bonpo temple survived
203	3	Stage-rtse	Stag-rtse
204	6	Yango-ston	Yang-ston