


## Reb kong: Religion, History and Identity of a Sino-Tibetan borderland town\*

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### Introduction

iven that Reb kong is an important place in A mdo, the north-eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, so far it has received relatively little attention.<sup>1</sup> The monastery of Reb kong, Rong bo dgon chen (Rong bo bde chen chos 'khor gling), counts as one of the larger monasteries in A mdo. Reb kong is the birthplace of a number of remarkable people who are viewed as important religious, political and cultural figures within Tibetan history. The Buddhist master Chos rje don grub rin chen (1309-1385), who was the teacher of Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho (1606-1677), an influential monk-scholar, the yogi Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781-1851), the intellectual and historian Dge 'dun chos 'phel

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<sup>1</sup> The following works deal with individuals from Reb kong: Mathieu Ricard, trans., *The Life of Shabkar. The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogi* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001); Heather Stoddard, *Le Mendiant de l'Amdo* (Paris: Societe d'Ethnographie, 1985); Pema Bhum, "The Life of "Dhondup Gyal. A Shooting Star that Cleaved the Night Sky and Vanished," trans. Luran Hartley, *Lungta*, no. 9 (1995) and Victoria Sujata, *Tibetan Songs of Realization. Echoes from a seventeenth-century scholar and siddha in Amdo* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). On Reb kong's art, see Mark Stevenson, "The Politics of Identity and Cultural Production in A mdo Reb gong," *The Tibet Journal*, vol. XXIV, no. 4 (winter 1999) and "Art and Life in A mdo Reb gong Since 1978," in *Amdo Tibetans in Transition. Society and Culture in the Post-Mao Era*, vol. 5 of *PIATS 2000: Tibetan studies: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Leiden 2000*, ed. Toni Huber (Leiden: Brill, 2002). For a brief historical introduction of Reb kong see: Lawrence Epstein and Wenbin Peng, "Ritual, Ethnicity, and Generational Identity," in *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*, ed. Melvyn C. Goldstein and Matthew Kapstein, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Andreas Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Amdo*. vol. 2: The Qinghai Part of Amdo (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2001). Anthropological works on some villages in Reb kong include: Kalsang Norbu, Yongzhong Zhu, and Kevin Stuart. "A Ritual Winter Exorcism in Gnyan Thog village, Qinghai," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1999); Dpal ldan bkra shis and Kevin Stuart, "Perilous Novelties: The A mdo Tibetan Klu rol Festival in Gling rgyal Village," *Anthropos* 93; Snying bo rgyal and R. Solomon Rino, *Deity Men. Reb gong Tibetan Mediums in Transition* (Lulu.com: Asian Highlands Perspective, 2010) and Charles Kevin Stuart, Gerals Roche and Tshe dbang rdo rje, eds., *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, vol. 1 (Lulu.com: Asian Highlands Perspectives, 2009) and Katia Buffetrille, "Qui est Khri ka'i yul lha? Dieu tibétain du terroir, dieu chinois de la littérature ou de la guerre? Un problème d'identité divine en A mdo," in *Territory and Identity in Tibet and the Himalayas, Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the IXth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Leiden 2000*, ed. Katia Buffetrille and Hildegard Diemberger. (Leiden: Brill, 2002),

(1903-1951) and Sha bo tshe ring (1920-2004), master artist of the Reb kong Art School, all hailed from Reb kong. Don grub rgyal (1953-1985), founder of modern Tibetan literature, although born in the neighbouring county of Gcan tsha (Ch. Jianzha), studied in Reb kong. Yet despite Reb kong's rich cultural resources and its unique location at the frontier, the area still remains under-researched.

In this paper, I explore the role played by local regional and religious elites in the formation and mobilisation of a cultural, political and religious identity in Reb kong. After a brief introduction of the place, I begin with looking at the origin myth of Reb kong. I then examine how the elites of Reb kong maintained cultural and political ties with the Chinese empire as well as with central Tibet. One way of maintaining a relation was through the system of receiving titles and seals. My focus here is on the *nang so* title, which the rulers of Reb kong borrowed from central Tibet as a model of ruling system. I trace the origin and use of the term *nang so* in Tibetan history and examine the practice of that title in Reb kong. Next, I discuss the religious landscape of Reb kong, why and how Reb kong became a Dge lugs stronghold. The role played by religious figures such as the new Shar skal ldan reincarnation line in influencing, transmitting and shaping a sense of identity will be covered in this section. Finally, I highlight Reb kong's multi-religious society by focusing on the community of tantric practitioners (Reb kong sngags mang).

The essay covers the period from the fourteenth until the nineteenth century. The chronological purview is extremely broad but necessary if major changes in agency practice are to be identified. The article is also a narrative of Tibetans living in the Sino-Tibetan border region. Reb kong shares a distinct culture with other border communities located at a frontier.<sup>2</sup> Alvarez suggests that we look at the borderland as "a region and set of practices defined and determined by this border that are characterized by conflict and contradiction, material and ideational".<sup>3</sup> The border can thus be understood as a space where societies, cultures and individuals clash or come together. The survival of their identity depends on symbols, rituals and behaviours.

According to an official Chinese website, 65.2% of the people living in Reb kong county are Tibetans.<sup>4</sup> As in many parts of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, different ethnic groups (Han, Hui, Mongol, Salar, Bao'an and Monguor) share the territory with the Tibetans. The Hui,<sup>5</sup> for example, trace

<sup>2</sup> On borderlands, see Alexander Horstmann and Reed L. Wadley, ed., *Centering the Margin. Agency and Narrative in Southeast Asian Borderlands* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009); Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1997); Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 28 (2002) and Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Robert R. Alvarez, Jr. "The Mexico-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 24 (1995): 448.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.huangnan.gov.cn/html/124/1973.html>, accessed 15 February 2010.

<sup>5</sup> On the Hui see Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) and Jonathon N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A history of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997). See also Susette Cooke, "Surviving State and Society in Northwest China: The Hui Experience in Qinghai Province under the PRC," *Journal of Muslims Minority Affairs*, 28 (3), (2008) and Andrew Fischer, "Close Encounters of an Inner-asian Kind: Tibetan-Muslim

their origins back to Central Asian Muslims and settled in Xining, the present capital town of Qinghai province, as early as the fourteenth century;<sup>6</sup> the Great Mosque in the Hui quarter of Xining, for instance, dates back to 1380 and was built by the Ming government to foster trade in the area.<sup>7</sup> The Bao'an, believed to be originally Mongol soldiers, settled in Reb kong after the fall of the Mongol empire and the records of the emperor Wanli (1563-1620) mention a Bao'an camp in the village of Tho kyA (Ch. Bao'an).<sup>8</sup> Like the Bao'an, the Monguor inhabitants of Gnyan thog (Ch. Nianduhu), Seng ge gshong (Ch. Wutun), Ska gsar (Ch. Gashari), and Sgo dmar (Ch. Guomari), all villages in Reb kong, claim their descent from Mongolian frontier soldiers.<sup>9</sup> The Salar, who migrated from Samarkand, settled in the nearby Xunhua county (Tib. Rdo sbis) as early as 1370.<sup>10</sup> Thus the different ethnic groups have been residing in and around Reb kong for centuries. This multi-ethnic composition makes Reb kong a culturally diverse and dynamic place, which can be seen, for example, in the cultural traditions of the Monguor and the Bao'an, or in the style of the Reb kong Art School.<sup>11</sup>

It is also evident, then, that Reb kong has become a place of multiple religious communities: Confucianism (Han), Islam (Bao'an, Hui and Salar) and Tibetan Buddhism (Bao'an, Tibetans, Mongols and Monguor) are the main three set of beliefs with which each ethnic group identifies itself. In addition to that, the Dge lugs, Rnying ma and the Bon traditions are all represented in Reb kong.

In spite of Reb kong's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition, the Tibetan inhabitants of Reb kong have maintained their distinct identity in an environment that screams pluralism and diversity from all corners, be it in the ethnic, religious or linguistic sense. Some obvious questions then can be raised: How was this possible and who were the institutions and agents which played a role in the formation and confirmation of a Tibetan identity? How did these agents postulate and reproduce a trans-local relationship with other members of their community and what kind of strategies did the political elites employ to maintain power?

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Coexistence and Conflict in Tibet, Past and Present," *Working Paper no. 68*. Crisis States Programme, LSE (2005).

<sup>6</sup> Piper Rae Gaubatz, *Beyond The Great Wall. Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Cooke, "Surviving State and Society in Northwest China: The Hui Experience in Qinghai Province under the PRC", 402 & Gaubatz, *Beyond The Great Wall. Urban Form and Transformation on the Chinese Frontier*, 220.

<sup>8</sup> Henry G. Schwarz, *The Minorities of Northern China. A Survey* (Bellingham, WA: West Washington University, 1984), 139. Kalsang Norbu, Zhu Yongzhong and Kevin Stuart mention a castle that was built in Tho kyA (Tho kyA, Ch. Bao'an) in 1589. See Kalsang Norbu, Zhu Yongzhong, Kevin Stuart, "A Ritual Winter Exorcism in Gnyan Thog Village, Qinghai," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1999), 191.

<sup>9</sup> Kalsang Norbu, Zhu Yongzhong, Kevin Stuart, "A Ritual Winter Exorcism in Gnyan Thog Village, Qinghai," 191-192.

<sup>10</sup> Schwarz, *The Minorities of Northern China. A Survey*, 40; See also Ma Jianzhong and Kevin Stuart, "Stone Camels and Clear Springs. The Salar's Samarkand Origins," *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 55, no. 2, (1996): 288.

<sup>11</sup> For more on Reb kong Art see Mark Stevenson, "Art and Life in A mdo Reb gong Since 1978". On the Monguors, see Louis M. J. Schram. *Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier* in ed. Charles Kevin Stuart (2006 [1954-1961]), [www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/rarebooks/](http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/rarebooks/); Kevin Stuart and Limusishiden, "China's Monguor Minority: Ethnography and Folktales," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no 59, (December 1994).

### The Setting

Reb kong (Ch. Tongren) is situated in the traditional Tibetan province of A mdo. Tibetans also refer to the region as Mtsho sngon. Much of the area lies within the Chinese province called Qinghai, and Mongols refer to it as Kokonor. All these terms mean “Blue Lake” and refer to the largest salt water lake in China. In Tibetan literature, Reb kong is also known as the Golden Valley (gser mo ljongs), a reference to Reb kong’s topography such as the Golden Mountain (gser ri) or the Golden Stone (gser rde’u).

Reb kong is located about 180 kilometres south of Xining, the capital of Qinghai province. It is the capital of Rma lho (Ch. Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.<sup>12</sup> Established in 1955, the prefecture consists of four counties: Gcan tsa (Ch. Jianzha), Rtse khog (Ch. Zeku), Sog po Mongol Autonomous County (Ch. Henan) and Reb kong (Reb kong / Thung ren; Ch. Tongren). At present, the county of Reb kong consist of two towns, ten townships and 75 villages.<sup>13</sup>

According to local history, Reb kong comprised of eighteen outer groups (phyi shog bco brgyad) – a vast area that not only covers present-day Reb kong, but also includes places in the north such as Khri ka (Ch. Guide) in Mtsho lho (Ch. Hainan) prefecture, Rdo sbis (Ch. Daowei) in Mtsho shar (Ch. Haidong) prefecture and Sog po in the south – and the twelve inner groups (nang shog bcu gnyis), which include numerous villages in the surrounding of Reb kong. The names of the villages within the twelve inner groups are too many to be listed here and the reader can consult them elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

Reb kong’s historic area has diminished greatly over the time and in particular after the founding of the PRC, when it was given a county-level status. The villages which belonged to the twelve inner groups have remained up to the present under the jurisdiction of Reb kong and Rtse khog county. The little available literature on the subject suggests Mdo sde ’bum, son of Lha rje brag sna ba, as the one who established the twelve inner groups.<sup>15</sup> More information about the two people will follow shortly, but suffice it to say that the time frame for founding the twelve inner groups was in the fourteenth century. Those who ruled over the twelve inner groups were the holders of the *nang so* title and the Shar skal ldan incarnations, both of which will be discussed in detail in the following pages.

<sup>12</sup> There are the six Autonomous Prefectures in Qinghai Province: Mgo log (Goluo), Mtsho byang (Haibei), Mtsho lho (Hainan), Rma lho (Huangnan), Mtsho nub (Haixi) and Yul shul (Yushu).

<sup>13</sup> [www.qh.xinhuanet.com/tongren/trjj.htm](http://www.qh.xinhuanet.com/tongren/trjj.htm) accessed 15 February 2010.

<sup>14</sup> See Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong rig pa ’byung ba’i grong khyer le lag dang bcas pa’i lugs gnyis gtam gyi bang mdzod las bsdu pa’i chos ’byung sa yi lha mo zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Delhi, 2005), 12; Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong gser mo ljong kyi chos srid byung ba brjod pa ’dod ’byung gter gyi bum bzang* (Xining: Tianma, 2002), 37; ’Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen gyi gdan rabs rdzogs ldan gtam gyi rang sgra zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988), 731.

<sup>15</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 15 and ’Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 731-732.

### Myths of Origins

The historian Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1905-1951) states that the Tibetans from A mdo are descendents of the royal army from central Tibet that fought with the Chinese army in the area during the seventh century.<sup>16</sup> Other Tibetan historians, including the well-known Tsepon W. D. Skakabpa and Samten Karmay, make similar statements.<sup>17</sup>

Each village has its own version of the origin of the Tibetans in Reb kong. For instance, a well-known folk story suggests that many are descendents of minister Mgar (Blon po Mgar).<sup>18</sup> King Srong bstan sgam po (617?-650) famously sent this minister to China to arrange a marriage for the King with Wencheng, a princess from the Tang imperial family.<sup>19</sup> This version of the story describes a love affair between the Princess and the minister during the long journey back to Tibet, and the consequent birth of their son. Knowing that he will receive harsh punishment from the King if he brings his son back to Lhasa, Minister Gar puts his son in a leather trunk and places it into the Rma chu River.<sup>20</sup> An old couple finds the trunk and names the child Bse rgyal mtshan 'bum, who remained in the village called Mgar rtse. His four sons and their descendents spread throughout the area of Reb kong.

A more widely accepted origin myth is that of the rulers of Reb kong (or Rong bo tsang), who trace their origin back to Lha rje brag sna ba, a doctor and accomplished tantric practitioner of the Sa skya Khon lineage. At the request of the Sa skya hierarch 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa (1235-1280), Lha rje brag sna ba sets out on his mission to propagate Buddhism and arrives in Reb kong with three hundred men.<sup>21</sup> He settles down in the area and marries a girl from Khri ka.

The identification by the Reb kong Tibetans with the Sa skya Khon lineage seems to fit with local beliefs. We can see this in the worship of the protector deity Gur mgon (Skt. Mahākāla).<sup>22</sup> This deity, who is a patron protector of the Sa skya pa, has special significance for the people from Reb kong.<sup>23</sup> Gur mgon is also the clan deity (rus lha) of certain villages in Reb kong.<sup>24</sup> A visit to Sa skya monastery to pay respect to the monastery and to

<sup>16</sup> Dge 'dun chos 'phel, *The White Annals* [Deb ther dkar po] trans. Samten Norboo (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1978), 25.

<sup>17</sup> Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet. A Political History* (New York: Potala Publications, 1984), 42; Samten Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998), 427.

<sup>18</sup> Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos 'byung*, 21.

<sup>19</sup> Rolf A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 1972), 63; Hugh Richardson, "The Mgar Family in the Seventh-Century Tibet," in Hugh Richardson, *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture* (London: Serindia, 1998), 114.

<sup>20</sup> Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos 'byung*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 729; Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos 'byung*, 30; Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 303.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan S. Bell, "The Murals of Baiya Monastery," Asianart.com <http://www.asianart.com/articles/bell/index.html#7>, April 1998 (accessed 30/12/2008); Chaya Chandrasekhar, "Gur-gyi Mgon Po," [http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/Essays/CCGur\\_gyMgonPo.html](http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/Essays/CCGur_gyMgonPo.html), 9 June 1998 (accessed 30/12/2008).

<sup>23</sup> Before leaving, Lha rje brag sna ba chooses Gur mgon as his protector deity. See 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 81 & 736. Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring also mentions this deity in relation to the people from Reb kong. See Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 114.

that deity is an essential part for many from Reb kong during a pilgrimage to central Tibet.<sup>25</sup> For instance, when the rulers from Reb kong went to central Tibet, they visited Sa skya monastery and usually left a generous donation for the monastery.<sup>26</sup> This deity is thus connected with local history.

According to this story, Lha rje brag sna ba's descendents become the subsequent rulers of Reb kong, starting with his son Mdo sde 'bum, who ruled over the twelve Reb kong groups (Rong bo shog khag bcu gnyis).<sup>27</sup> Mdo sde 'bum's rise in power was even recognised by the Yuan emperor, who sometime in 1301 or 1302, conferred on him through writing the title of *nang so* and an official ivory seal.<sup>28</sup> Mdo sde 'bum thus became the first ruler of Reb kong to have that title.

### Titles, seals and recognitions

I shall only briefly touch upon the practice of conferring titles and seals to leaders of local ethnic groups as this subject has been dealt with in other literature.<sup>29</sup> Titles and seals were used, among others, to manipulate or to reinforce alliances with local leaders. This is nothing new in Chinese history. The court bestowed titles, seals and sometimes stipends to local leaders, which the grantee accepted as "official" or legitimate approval of his position. The act of granting such investitures to local leaders demonstrated the superiority of the emperor while the acceptance of these titles "confirmed" the subordination and submission of the recipients. The acceptance of such titles thus brought the local leaders within China's polity.

The incorporation of local leaders within the imperial system also served to diffuse the authority of the leaders in the periphery while strengthening the centre. If the emperor was not satisfied with a local leader, he had the right to strip him off his titles and credentials. However, it was mainly during the Qing period (1644-1912) that local elites from the periphery were under considerably more political control than during the Ming period (1368-1644).<sup>30</sup> The native chieftain system (Ch. *tusi zhidu*), which was created during the early Ming, was reformed by the Qing state.<sup>31</sup> As a

<sup>25</sup> I thank Sonam Tsering for pointing this out to me.

<sup>26</sup> See 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 720-777.

<sup>27</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyid chos srid*, 15. The twelve Reb kong groups and the twelve inner groups are the same (*nang shog bcu gnyis*). 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 732.

<sup>28</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 732; Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyid chos srid*, 15.

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Denis Twitchett, John K. Fairbank, and Michael Loewe, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 1. The Ch'in and Han Empires*, 221 B.C. – A. D. 220 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 412-418; Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *The Eunuchs in the Ming Dynasty* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 189-197. Jennifer Took, *A Native Chieftaincy in Southwest China: Franchising a Tai Chieftaincy under the Tusi System of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) and John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> John E. Herman, "Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Feb. 1997).

<sup>31</sup> The institutional predecessor of the *tusi* system was the "haltered and bridled prefecture" (Ch. *jimi zhou*), established during the Song dynasty (960-1279). For more on this, see Jennifer Took, *A Native Chieftaincy in Southwest China: Franchising a Tai Chieftaincy under the Tusi System of Late Imperial China*.

consequent, the Qing's political legitimacy increased and they were in control of the selection process of its frontier elites.

The late historian 'Jigs med theg mchog, by citing others, writes that the term *nang so* refers either to a rank (go sa) or to a minister or a high functionary.<sup>32</sup> In *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, the entry for *nang so* shows the definition as a rank (go gnas).<sup>33</sup> However, the historian Dge 'dun chos 'phel traces the term back to the duty of an official who watched over the border.<sup>34</sup> He differentiates between two terms, the "inner (nang) watchman; or spy (so)" and the "outer (phyi) watchman; or spy (so)". The task of the *nang so*, he writes, is to watch out for *internal* enemies whereas the *phyi so* guards against *external* enemies. From his explanation, we can conclude that the person who holds the title *nang so* is the watcher or spy for the one who confers him with this title. Dge 'dun chos 'phel's explanation of the term does not differ much from the definition provided in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, which defines *nang so* as an individual who keeps watch at the border.<sup>35</sup> Sperling translates *nang so* as "frontier official", which seems to fit with Dge 'dun chos 'phel's initial remark about an official whose duty is to guard the border.<sup>36</sup>

In the *Old Tibetan Annals*, Dotson locates the term *khab so* and defines it as a functionary within the Tibetan imperial system. He writes "the *khab so* appear to have been the Tibetan Empire's accountants and tax collectors" and suggests the term as the precursor to *nang so*.<sup>37</sup>

Petech, in his monograph on the history of the Yuan-Sa skya period, mentions several times the terms *nang so*, *nang chen pa* and *nang gnyer*.<sup>38</sup> He translates Chief Attendant for *nang ngyer* and *nang chen* (sometimes also referred to as Chief Secretary for *nang chen*) and the duty of the *nang gnyer* or *nang chen* was to be in charge of the general administration of the Sa skya estates and treasury.<sup>39</sup> Once promoted, the *nang so* became the *nang chen pa*.<sup>40</sup>

It is Tucci who provides us with the most detailed information on this title. By consulting the *Rgyal rtse Chronicles* (Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar), written between 1479 and 1481, he states that the highest officials,

<sup>32</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 736. Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring gives the same explanation for this term. See Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2002), 1204.

<sup>34</sup> Dge 'dun chos 'phel, "Sngon dus bod pa rnam kyis gnas skabs dang tshul lugs ci ltar yod lugs skor," in *Dge 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom. Deb gnyis pa*, ed. Hor khang Bsod names dpal 'bar (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1994 [1990]), 85 and Dge 'dun chos 'phel, "Bod chen po'i srid lugs dang 'brel ba'i rgyal rabs debt her dkar po zhes bya ba bzhuugs so," in *Dge 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom. Deb gsum pa*, ed. Hor khang Bsod names dpal 'bar (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1994 [1990]), 220. Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring also relies on Dge 'dun chos 'phel's explanation. See Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> Zhang Yisun, ed., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1998 [1993]), 1511.

<sup>36</sup> Elliot Sperling, "A note on the Chi kyā tribe and the two Qi clans in Amdo," in *Les Habitants Du Toits Du Monde. Etudes Recueillies en Hommage a Alexander W. Macdonald*, ed. Samten Karmay and Philippe Sagant, (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 1997), 112.

<sup>37</sup> Brandon Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals, An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History* (Wien: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 2009), p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> I thank the anonymous reader for directing my attention to this book.

<sup>39</sup> Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols. The Yüan-Sa skya Period of Tibetan History* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 18-21 & 79.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

who were the princes of Rgyal rtse, were holding the office of *nang chen* or *nang so chen mo* at the Sa skya court. He then continues by saying that “the *nang so* presided over the administration of justice and was a sort of Prime Minister.”<sup>41</sup> Tucci also mentions the *phyi so*, an official who was concerned with external affairs, as opposed to the *nang so*, whose duties concerned with internal affairs. He continues, “these two names, although they correspond to modern expressions, cannot be rendered with “Home Secretary” and “Foreign Secretary”: the *nang blon* was rather a prefect of the Court, who helped the king in his work, after the manner of absolute governments, while the *phyi blon* was rather the head of the executive machine, an overseer of state administration.”<sup>42</sup>

From this, we learn that the term *nang so* refers to a civil officer and that the precursor of this term, *khab so*, was used to refer to an official of the Tibetan Empire who was responsible for taxation. The term and office *nang so* seems to be in use since the Sa skya-Mongol rule in Tibet. On that account, Tucci observes that “this office was also to be found in other states, and in fact continued ancient traditions.”<sup>43</sup> We can also conclude that the rank, responsibility and authority of the individual who held that title increased depending on the time and place and included dignitaries such as the lords of Rgyal rtse to the rulers of Reb kong and abbots of monasteries. Moreover, the *nang so* title was not only restricted to Tibetan officials. Sperling, for instance, talks of a Mongol frontier official bearing the title of *nang so*.<sup>44</sup>

The ancestors of the ruling house from Reb kong had close contact with the Sa skya government and it is therefore not surprising to see that the office of the *nang so* was modelled on the administrative organisation of the Sa skya pa's. This “inherited” tradition legitimised the practice of the *nang so*.

The *nang so's* residence, which was located in Rong bo (Ch. Long wu), the historical centre of Reb kong, was referred to as the *nang so's* court (*nang so'i khrims sgo*), built and first occupied by Mdo sde 'bum.<sup>45</sup>

As to how the *nang so* governed the territory, we know from Petech that the holder of that title was in charge of the general administration and treasury. Unfortunately, we do not have abundant information on the governing system of the *nang so* from Reb kong, but similar to the princes of Rgyal rtse, we can say that the *nang so* of Reb kong was the chief ruler of Reb kong who may have, for a limited time, executed orders from the Sa skya hierarchs.

Samten Karmay writes that Tibetans in A mdo were not ruled by a single leader after the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> Principalities such as that of Co ne (Ch. Zhuoni), chieftains, tribal heads and Lamas with considerable political power shared among them the territory of A mdo.<sup>47</sup> The rulers of Reb kong were among

<sup>41</sup> Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Sperling, “A note on the Chi kyā tribe and the two Qi clans in Amdo,” 112.

<sup>45</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 732.

<sup>46</sup> Samten Karmay “Amdo. One of the Three Traditional Provinces of Tibet,” *Lungta*, no. 8 (1994):3. However, there were some, such as the chieftains of Mgo log, who acknowledged the authority of the Central Tibetan government. See Lodey Lhawang, “The Conferring of Tibetan Government Ranks on the Chieftains of Golog,” *Lungta*, no. 8 (1994):13-17.

<sup>47</sup> For more on Co ne, see the article by Wim Van Spengen, “Chone and Thewu: Territoriality, Local Power, and Political Control on the Southern Gansu-Tibetan Frontier, 1880-1940,” in *Tibetan Borderlands, PIATS 2003*, ed. Christiaan Klieger (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For Lamas with political power in Amdo, see the article by Nietupski in which he



the many who ruled in the region. Also, there was not only one *nang so* ruling over Reb kong. For example, Mdo sde 'bum's three middle sons were known as "the three *nang so*" (*nang so gsum*) for they were the rulers of upper Reb kong (Rong bo yar nang), lower Reb kong (Rong bo mar nang) and Blon che, territories which their father had divided among them.<sup>48</sup> But even within the territory of Reb kong itself, smaller units such as hamlets or larger villages had their own chieftain. The hundred household chieftain from 'Jam, Gnyan thog, Bse, Hor nag or Rgyal bo serve here as examples. However, these chieftains and local leaders usually accepted the authority of the *nang so* and were loyal to him. In return, they had a certain degree of autonomy within their own village or area.

The Reb kong *nang so* was assisted by a council of twelve ministers, who came from different backgrounds such as local chieftains, rulers and lamas.<sup>49</sup> The *nang so* was responsible for the taxation, a duty which, as we have seen, dates back to the Tibetan empire.<sup>50</sup> His authority also stretched into the monastic community and when necessary, the *nang so* gave orders to tighten monastic rules. One *nang so* even conducted a population and household census and ordered families with three sons to send at least one to Rong bo dgon chen, the monastery founded by his family and which consequently became the main monastery of Reb kong.<sup>51</sup>

In Reb kong, the *nang so* title was initially a hereditary title but this system changed over the time as in the early eighteenth century, a council consisting of lay and clerical members re-established the rule that the *nang so* could only be transferred hereditarily.<sup>52</sup> The same council also decided that the *nang so* could hold his position only for a certain period of time.

The legitimacy of the *nang so* was based on a mixture of hereditary claims and official recognition given by the Chinese emperor and the central Tibetan government.

To strengthen the relationship and to heighten their prestige, the *nang so* went to these two places to receive additional titles. Consequently, from the Chinese emperor, they received titles such as *Daguoshi* (Great National Preceptor) or *Beile* (Lord).<sup>53</sup> Among those who went to China was Blo gros seng ge, son of Mdo sde 'bum, who received the title of *Daguoshi* from the emperor.<sup>54</sup>

Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, a nephew of Mdo sde 'bum, received the title of *Be lu nang so*<sup>55</sup> and *Daguoshi* from the Ming emperor.<sup>56</sup> Not only was he the

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discusses the lineage of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa. Paul K. Nietupski, "Labrang Monastery: Tibetan Buddhism on the Sino-Tibetan Frontier," *Religion Compass*, 2/4 (2008).

<sup>48</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 16; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 735.

<sup>49</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 733.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 744.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. This was Blo gros seng ge, the son of Mdo sde 'bum.

<sup>52</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 34; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 746.

<sup>53</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 308; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 738; Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 17.

<sup>54</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 304; Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 13. 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> The term *be lu* refers to the Manchu term *bei le* (Lord). Given the time period of Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, it is therefore not possible for him to have received such a title. Thus, the *be lu* might either refer to some other title or the author has mis-applied this title to him. I am grateful to the anonymous reader for pointing this out to me.

<sup>56</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 17.

*nang so* of the twelve inner groups, but he also controlled the territories of upper Reb kong, lower Reb kong and Rdo sbis.

Don grub rin chen, the son of Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, went twice to China to receive titles while Blo gros mchog grub, his grandson, received the title of *Daguoshi* from the emperor. The younger brother of Blo gros mchog grub, Blo gros don grub, went four times to China and received the title of *Daguoshi*. He was also given the rank of a General in the imperial army, which implied that he is expected to assist China in protecting its territory.<sup>57</sup> In return for such assistance, the local elite holding a military title enjoyed a higher degree of autonomy than the one holding a civilian title.<sup>58</sup>

During the time of Blos gros bstan pa and Bsod nams don grub, the authority of the *nang so* diminished. To regain their power, the *nang so*, who was at that time Bsod nam don grub's son Dpal ldan gu ru, entered into a patron-priest relationship with the Mongol ruler Ta'i ching chu khu.<sup>59</sup> In return for the Mongol's support, *nang so* Dpal ldan gu ru gave orders to build four *stupa* in 1605 and enlarged the monastery of Rong bo dgon chen.<sup>60</sup> From this time onwards, the Dge lugs tradition was established in Reb kong.

Central Tibet was the primary cultural and religious centre. The acceptance of titles from the Tibetan government not only legitimised the authority of the *nang so*, but equally important, it was a means to claim membership within that community. The "rituals" of travelling to central Tibet could be viewed as symbolic expressions of identification with that community, but China was equally important and a visit there brought prestige to the *nang so* and the recognition by the Chinese state as the official representative for that area. As a consequent, they went to central Tibet and to China to receive titles and to negotiate influence and political control.

To sum up, the *nang so* played an active role within the complex political structures of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing and the Tibetans. And because of the *nang so*, Reb kong became a regional centre and gained a significant position within the history of A mdo. Most importantly, they were instrumental in creating a sense of collective identity among its subjects.

The peripheral location of Reb kong also turned into a strategic advantage for its rulers. The relative distance from central Tibet and China meant that they were able to enjoy a high degree of autonomy while maintaining at the same time a healthy relationship with both powers. In other words, the rulers of Reb kong were quite content with their marginal location – not only did it gain their autonomy and thereby an avenue to evade incorporation into the state systems of Tibet and China, but their continual friendly relationship with the two powers also provided them with access to its resources. The ties to both places were thus essential in creating and maintaining autonomy, legitimacy, prestige and social cohesion.

<sup>57</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 99 & 739.

<sup>58</sup> John E. Herman, "Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System".

<sup>59</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 18; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 99.

<sup>60</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 18.

### Religious pluralism in Reb kong

Reb kong's main monastery, Rong bo dgon chen, can be considered as the third largest Dge lugs pa monastery in A mdo. As mentioned, it was founded in 1342 by Mdo sde 'bum's family, the first *nang so* of Reb kong.<sup>61</sup> The eldest son of Mdo sde 'bum, Rong bo bsam gtan rin chen, established a patron-priest relationship with the hundred-household chieftain of Sa kyil and he founded eighteen other monasteries in the area.<sup>62</sup> Because his ancestor (i.e. Lha rje brag sna ba) was of the Sa skya school, the monastery was originally of that tradition.<sup>63</sup> However, Rong bo bsam gtan rin chen was also a disciple of Chos rje don grub rin chen,<sup>64</sup> Tsong kha pa's teacher, and Rong bo monastery gradually turned into a Dge lugs institution, most notably with the emergence of the Shar skal ldan lineage.<sup>65</sup>

As mentioned above, the power of the *nang so* weakened in the early seventeenth century and their structure of leadership declined. A new incarnation line, the Shar skal ldan lineage, took over the leadership from the *nang so*. The decline of the *nang so* power and the establishment of a new incarnation line occurred during a time when the Dge lugs were gaining political and religious dominance. Their rise in power was supported by the Qoshot Mongols and partly by the Qing emperor.

The first Shar skal ldan, known as Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho (1606-1677) was born in 1606 in Reb kong. He learnt reading and writing from his half-brother Chos pa rin po che (1581-1659), said to be a reincarnation of Mi la ras pa, the famous 11<sup>th</sup> century yogin and poet.<sup>66</sup> At the age of eleven, Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho went to central Tibet with his half-brother and studied at Dga' ldan monastery. There, he received the name Skal ldan rgya mtsho.<sup>67</sup> After ten years of absence, he returned to Reb kong and planned to lead the life of a hermit. His half-brother discouraged him from this and had other plans with his younger brother - he wanted him to pursue a monastic career in order to expand Rong bo monastery and thus increase Dge lugs influence in Reb kong.<sup>68</sup> At his request, Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho established the College of Philosophy (mtshan nyid grwa tshang) and became the first abbot of Rong bo monastery.<sup>69</sup> To the disapproval of his half-brother, he divided his time between the monastery and Bkra shis 'khyil, his hermitage where he practiced meditation and composed many spiritual hymns (mgur) which are still sung today.<sup>70</sup> At the age of sixty-three, he resigned from his position at Rong bo monastery and spent his remaining years in Bkra shis 'khyil, his

<sup>61</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 12 & 143; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 92.

<sup>62</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 92; Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 304.

<sup>63</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 143.

<sup>64</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 304.

<sup>65</sup> Stevenson also comes to this conclusion. See Stevenson, "Art and Life in A mdo Reb gong," 202.

<sup>66</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 304-306; Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 20.

<sup>67</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 166; Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 306. Earlier to that, he was called Skal ldan thogs nyis.

<sup>68</sup> 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 143-144.

<sup>69</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 24; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 168.

<sup>70</sup> For the spiritual hymns, see Sujata, *Tibetan Songs of Realization*.

hermitage.<sup>71</sup> Besides a collection of two hundred and forty-two spiritual hymns, he authored fifty-nine other works ranging from biographies to local religious histories as well as instructions in meditation and deity practices.<sup>72</sup> Shar skal Idan rgya mtsho is the most revered and the most popular of all the Shar skal Idan incarnations.

With Shar skal Idan rgya mtsho as its head, Rong bo monastery became firmly established in the Dge lugs tradition. The religious teachings he gave all over the region also helped in the spreading of the Dge lugs tradition in A mdo. Shar skal Idan rgya mtsho lived at a time when Gushri Khan, the Qoshot leader, after defeating the rival tribe led by Chogtu (also known as Tsogt by Mongolians) *taiji* in the mid-1630s, moved his tribe from the north to settle down in the Kokonor area. Although Gushri Khan and his descendents were fervent supporters of the Dge lugs, and the ascendance of a Dge lugs pa Lama in Reb kong coincided with the rule of the Qoshot Mongols in Kokonor, Shar skal Idan rgya mtsho seemed to dislike the Mongol overlords. In 1662, he wrote the following song:

In this time in which the Buddha's teaching,  
the origin of benefit and happiness,  
is being seized by the Mongols  
generally it is hard for the Tibetan people to be happy.  
In particular, the lamas don't have independence.  
The most beautiful clothes, the best cushions,  
the best horses, the best food and drink  
are in the hands of the Mongol masters.<sup>73</sup>

The second Shar skal Idan, Ngag dbang 'phrin las rgya mtsho, received the title and seal of *Nomunhan* from the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in 1703.<sup>74</sup> At the age of thirty he became the chief religious advisor (*dbu la*) of the Mongol prince Tsaghan Tenzin and his royal family and received for this recognition a seal and a certificate.<sup>75</sup> In collaboration with the *nang so*, at that time Ngag dbang blo bzang, he established in 1732 the Great Prayer Festival (*smon lam chen mo*),<sup>76</sup> based on the tradition established in Lhasa in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. This was yet another attempt at embedding the Dge lugs tradition within the religious landscape of Reb kong. It was around this time that the twenty-one *smon shog*, the number of villages who in turn were sponsors of the Great Prayer Festival, was established.<sup>77</sup> Later on, the *nang so* decided to give a large portion of his share of donations from the Prayer Festival to the Shar skal Idan, indicating thus a shift of power from the *nang so* to the Shar skal Idan reincarnation.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Sujata, *Tibetan Songs of Realization*, 29.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>74</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 31.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 34; 'Jigs med theg mchog, *Rong bo dgon chen*, 134. 'Jigs med theg mchog describes the year as the Water Dog year of the 12<sup>th</sup> rab byung. This would correspond to 1742, when the second Shar had already passed away. Blo bzang mkhyen rab writes that the third Shar established the Great Prayer Festival. See Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos 'byung*, 169.

<sup>77</sup> Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos 'byung*, 169.

<sup>78</sup> Gling rgya bla ma tshe ring, *Reb gong kyi chos srid*, 34.

The third in the Shar skal Idan lineage, Dge 'dun 'phrin las rab rgyas (1740-1794), ascended the throne of the monastery at the age of twenty.<sup>79</sup> In 1764, at Dgon lung monastery, he met Lcang skya rol pa rdo rje, who had come from Beijing to perform ceremonies for his deceased father.<sup>80</sup> The son of Shar skal Idan's nephew was recognised as the third 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1792-1856), the head of Bla brang monastery.<sup>81</sup> The 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa from Bla brang were a religious and political authority in A mdo and to have the next reincarnation born into one's own family naturally increased the power and influence of the Shar himself. Likewise, the fourth Shar, Blo bzang chos grags rgya mtsho (1795-1843), was born into the family of Lcang skya rol pa rdo rje, who was the most influential Lama in the Qing court.<sup>82</sup> The fourth Shar is credited with having enlarged the monastery by adding a library and a chapel for the protectors. A year later, he secured enough money to renovate the Assembly Hall and the courtyard.<sup>83</sup>

The majority of the Shar incarnations went to study in one of the great Dge lugs monasteries in central Tibet. Their long journey to central Tibet shows that although Rong bo monastery offered scholastic training, the monasteries at the periphery were, as Dreyfus writes, "unable to compete with the great scholastic centres" in Lhasa.<sup>84</sup>

At its peak, Rong bo monastery had about 2,300 monks and 43 incarnate Lamas.<sup>85</sup> The economic resources of the monastery were similar to those of any other monastery in Tibet. Income was generated through its estates, patrons, private donations and by mortgaging land to peasants.<sup>86</sup> The monastery was thus also an active agent in the local economy with activities such as loans, trade and other commercial ventures.

Reb kong had maintained good relation with Tsaghan Tenzin (aka Erdini Jinong), the Qoshot prince whom the Qing played against his cousin Lozang Tenzin, a grandson of Gushri Khan, who led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Qing in 1723.<sup>87</sup> For his loyalty, the Qing emperor elevated Tsaghan Tenzin from a *junwang* (prince of second rank) to a *qinwang* (prince of first rank) and as the only *qinwang* in the Kokonor region, entrusted him

<sup>79</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 309.

<sup>80</sup> Xiangyun Wang, "Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing: The Life and Work of Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717-86" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1995), 166.

<sup>81</sup> Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos'byung*, 166; Nietupski, "Labrang Monastery," 528.

<sup>82</sup> Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos'byung*, 310; Blo bzang mkhyen rab, *Mdo smad re skong chos'byung*, 169.

<sup>83</sup> The fifth Shar died at a young age and was followed by Blo bzang skal Idan bstan pa rgyal mtshan (1859-1915), the sixth Shar. The seventh Shar Blo bzang 'phrin las lung rtogs rgya mthso (1915 – 1976) was followed by the present Shar, Bstan 'dzin 'jigs med skal Idan, who was born in 1979.

<sup>84</sup> Georges B.J. Dreyfus, *Sound of Two Hands Clapping. The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 47.

<sup>85</sup> Gruschke, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet's Outer Provinces: Amdo*, 54.

<sup>86</sup> For an example of monastic economic organisation, see Melvyn C. Goldstein and Paljor Tsarong, "Tibetan Buddhist Monasticism: Social, Psychological & Cultural Implications," *The Tibet Journal* 10, 1 (1985).

<sup>87</sup> For more on the rebellion, see Shuhui Wu, *Die Eroberung von Qinghai unter Berücksichtigung von Tibet und Khams. 1717-1727* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1995); Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet* (Leiden: Brill, 1950) & "Notes on Tibetan History of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century," *T'oung Pao* vol. LII (1966); Uyunbilig Borjigidai, "The Hoshuud Polity in Khökhnuur (Kokonor)." *Inner Asia*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2002)

with maintaining stability in the region.<sup>88</sup> Tsaghan Tenzin thus ruled over four banners located in Sog po, south of Reb kong.<sup>89</sup> The Qing then took revenge on those who supported Lozang Tenzin and monasteries such as Sku 'bum, Dgon lung, Gser khog and Bya khyung were ransacked or burned down and head Lamas, monks and entire villages were wiped out.<sup>90</sup> Since Labrang monastery was under the patronage of the Mongol prince, it was spared destruction after Lozang Tenzin's revolt.<sup>91</sup> Rong bo monastery also escaped the wrath of the Qing. As mentioned, Ngag dbang 'phrin las rgya mtsho, the second Shar, was close to Tsaghan Tenzin's family and he even became their root Lama.<sup>92</sup>

Mongol intervention was prevalent in the areas where there was strong Dge lugs pa influence since the Qoshot princes were supporters of the Dge lugs – Bla brang and Sku 'bum monasteries are good examples of earlier Qoshot Mongol support and patronage. In areas where the Mongols had less influence, and therefore also the Dge lugs pa, other Buddhist traditions were able to flourish. In Reb kong, for example, we can see clusters of Rnying ma and Bon po villages in the outskirts, and the Jo nang school, widely thought to have been almost extinct in central Tibet, is well-represented in Mgo log 'dzam thang (Ch. Rang tang) by Chos rje and Gtsang ba monasteries.

I will now take a closer look at the Rnying ma pa tantric practitioners community to highlight the diverse religious communities found in Reb kong. A central figure of that community is Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol (1781-1851), the yogin-poet from Zho 'ong, a village belonging to Reb kong. Zhabs dkar was born into a family of Rnying ma pa tantric practitioners, also referred to in Tibetan as a sngags pa (Skt. māntrin). The tantric practitioners often have hereditary lineages, where the tradition is passed from the father to the son, but individuals who do not claim to belong to a lineage can also train to become a sngags pa. The study for a sngags pa takes from twelve to eighteen years and involves rigorous training and practice in reciting mantras, meditation, readings, receiving esoteric instructions and transmissions and undertaking solitary retreats.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Wu, *Die Eroberung von Qinghai unter Berücksichtigung von Tibet und Khams. 1717-1727*, 59.

<sup>89</sup> The four banners included the following tribes: the first front banner, the right central banner south of Machu, the left central banner south of Machu and the front banner in the south. See Yizhi Mi, *Qinghai mengguzu lishi jianbian* (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1993), 231.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Perdue, *China Marches West. The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 180-197; Dam chos rgya mtsho Dharamatala, *Rosary of White Lotus, Being the Clear Account of How the Precious Teaching of Buddha Appeared and Spread in the Great Hor Country*, trans. Piotr Klafkowski (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 311 and Wu, *Die Eroberung von Qinghai unter Berücksichtigung von Tibet und Khams. 1717-1727*, 181-191.

<sup>91</sup> In 1709 Tsaghan Tenzin invited the first 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1648-1721) to establish Bla brang bkra shis 'khil, the largest Dge lugs pa monastery in A mdo. From then on, Bla brang was under the patronage of all the subsequent Mongol rulers from Sog po, since they had established a patron-priest relationship with the 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa lineage. See Dbal mang pandita dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, *Gya bod hor sog gyi lo rgyus nyung ngur brjod pa byis pa 'jug p'i 'bab stegs bzhungs so* (Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1990), 84; Nietupski, "Labrang Monastery," 526-527.

<sup>92</sup> Rje 'jigs med dam chos rgya mtsho, *Phyag na pad mo yab rje skal ldan rgya mtsho'i skyes pa rabs kyi rgyud gsang gsum snang ba'i sgron me zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1997), 277-278.

<sup>93</sup> For a detailed description on the education of a sngags pa, see Nyi zla he ru ka, "Sngags pa'i shes rig la dpyad pa'i gtam," in *Sngags pa'i shes rig dus deb* 6, vol. 2, 2003, ed. Sngags mang zhib 'jug khang (Xining: Xining minzu yinshuachang), 82-99.

Zhabs dkar was a member of the Reb kong sngags mang, the collective term used for the sngags pa community in Reb kong, famous for their supernatural abilities acquired through reciting mantras. The community is also known as Reb kong's One Thousand Nine Hundred Ritual Dagger Holders (Reb kong phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya), a name that refers back to a tantric ceremony held at Khyung mgon monastery in 1810.<sup>94</sup> During that ceremony, Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med (1757-1821), the head Lama of the monastery, offered each of the participants a gift of a wooden ritual dagger, a tool used during ritual ceremonies or initiations. At the end of the ceremony, he had distributed one thousand nine hundred wooden daggers, roughly reflecting the number of tantric practitioners then living and practising in Reb kong.

The sngags pa tradition in Reb kong traces its origin up to the ninth century, but it acquired a structure only in the early eighteenth century, under the initiative of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis (1688-1743), a native of Rgyal bo chu ca, a village belonging to Reb kong.<sup>95</sup> He summoned all the tantric practitioners to Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling, the monastery located in his native village and which later became his monastic seat, established mandatory prayer sessions and laid down the community's constitution and code of conduct.<sup>96</sup> In doing so, a communal identity of the sngags pa was created, which Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis expanded in his travels and teachings in other areas. For these reasons, he is credited as the founder of the Reb kong sngags mang.<sup>97</sup>

The members of the Reb kong sngags mang are loosely affiliated to two branches: the three seats on the shaded side (srib kyi gdan sa gsum) and the three monasteries on the sunny side (nyin gyi dgon pa gsum).<sup>98</sup> The shaded and sunny sides refer to the location of the monasteries on each side of the mountains near Reb kong, with the Dgu River marking the border between the two traditions and their sites.<sup>99</sup> The main monasteries which belong to the "shaded side" are Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis's seat, Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling; Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med's monastery, Khyung mgon mi 'gyur rdo rje gling and Zhabs dkar's monastic seat, G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil. The main monasteries on the "sunny side" are Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje's seat, Ko'u sde dgon rdzogs chen rnam rgyal gling;<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, eds., *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004), 46.

<sup>95</sup> For a more detailed history of the tantric practitioners in Reb kong, see Yangdon Dhondup, "From Hermit to Saint: The Life of Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (1798-1874)," in eds., Hildegard Diemberger and Karma Phuntsho, *Ancient Treasures, New Discoveries: PIATS 2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter 2006* (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2009).

<sup>96</sup> Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, *Rig 'dzin chen po dpal ldan bkra shis kyi gsung rstom phyogs bsgrigs* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 14-28.

<sup>97</sup> Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus*, 8.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>99</sup> On the use of the terms "srib" and "nyin", see Anne Chayet, "A propos de l'usage des termes "nyin" and "srib" dans le Mdo smad chos 'byung," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no 14 (October 2008), 71-80.

<sup>100</sup> Considering that Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje is seen as the third reincarnation of Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, he should belong to the *sngags pa* community of the shaded side (srib lta sngags mang). However, his monastery is considered as one of the main monasteries of the sngags pa community of the sunny side (nyin lta sngags mang). It

Khams bla khrag 'thung nam mkha' rgya mtsho's seat, Dgon la kha; and Mag sgar kun bzang stob ldan dbang po's, Rig 'dzin pad ma rnam grol gling. Those belonging to the "shaded side" follow the tradition of Smin grol gling; members of the "sunny side" emphasise the teachings of Klong chen snying thig. The tantric community was thus known as the "nyin lta (mtha or tha) sngags mang", the tantric community of the sunny side and the "srib lta sngags mang", the tantric community of the shaded side.

Zhabs dkar chose to lead a non-monastic lifestyle and, in contrast to a systematic scholastic training, received his education from many different lamas. It was only in the later part of his life that he spent most of his time in G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil, the small monastery on a hilltop near Reb kong. His root-teacher was one of Tsaghan Tenzin's descendents - the fourth Mongol prince from Sog po, *junwang* Ngag dbang dar rgyas (1740-1807). To the great disappointment of his subjects and Bla brang monastery, of which the *junwang* was the patron, Ngag dbang dar rgyas, unlike his Mongolian predecessors, had adopted the Rnying ma tradition.<sup>101</sup> Zhabs dkar received many instructions, empowerments and teachings from this remarkable Rnying ma pa master, the most notable being "the Wish-fulfilling Gem, Hayagriva and Varahi" (Rta phag yid bzhin nor bu), a collection of teachings that covers the preliminaries to the Great Perfection category of Tantra practices.<sup>102</sup>

Zhabs dkar then travelled to central Tibet and Nepal and requested teachings from Lamas of all the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. On his journey, he composed spiritual hymns (mgur), meditated in caves and visited monasteries. In the following song, he expressed his freedom as a wanderer:

I am called "Child of Garuda, King of Birds".  
To begin with, I was nurtured with warmth from my bird-queen  
mother.  
Later, I was fed with foods of various kinds.

Now, my great wings are spread out in strength;  
the Garuda soars in space through his parent's kindness.

I don't stay in one place now,  
but go wandering across azure heavens.  
The Garuda's domain is the vast skies.

...  
I don't stay in one place now,  
but go wandering across high plateaus.  
The renunciate's home is wild solitude.<sup>103</sup>

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therefore seems that Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje created his new incarnation lineage with the founding of his monastery.

<sup>101</sup> For a detailed account of his life, see Lce nag tshang hum chen, "A Brief Introduction to Ngag dbang dar rgyas and the Origin of Rnying ma Order in Henan County (Sogpo), the Mongolian Region of Amdo," in *The Mongolia-Tibet Interface. Opening New Research Terrain in Inner Asia, PIATS 2003*, ed. Uradyn. E. Bulag and Hildegard Diemberger (Leiden: Brill, 2007) & Ricard, *Life of Shabkar*, 565-567.

<sup>102</sup> For the lineage of this cycle of teaching, see Ricard, *Life of Shabkar*, 569-576.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-71.



Zhabs dkar's lifestyle was in keeping with his Rnying ma pa background. Unlike the Dge lugs, who had established monastic centres and who stressed a monastic lifestyle with scholastic training, the Rnying ma pa were only gradually conforming to this monastic model.<sup>104</sup> Though not living in a monastery, Zhabs dkar was ordained and led a celibate life, which was not required for the practice of tantric Buddhism.<sup>105</sup>

The majority of the members of the Reb kong sngags mang were non-celibate and were leading an ordinary life, mostly as farmers in the surrounding villages of Reb kong. At present, the lay tantric practitioners still represent the majority within the sngags pa community. Those who have mastered the practice of inner heat (gtum mo) wear the white robe (gos dkar), which together with the way in which the hair is worn, marks symbolically the identity of a tantric practitioner. The identity of a sngags pa is thus marked visually by their long hair and white robe and spiritually by their arcane rituals and practices of worship.

Many of the villages where tantric practitioners live, also referred to as sngags sde, have a "tantric hall" (sngags khang) in which they hold their ritual ceremonies. Among the regular ceremonies is the Ritual of the Tenth Day (tshe bcu'i mchod pa), a ceremony honoring Padmasambhava.

Within the Reb kong sngags mang, there were many charismatic figures who were instrumental in strengthening a sngags pa identity and in spreading the Rnying ma pa tradition in A mdo. Among them were as mentioned Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, the founder of the Reb kong sngags mang community, Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med, Mag gsar kun bzang stob ldan dbang po (1781-1832), Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje (1785-1848), Grub dbang pad ma rang grol (1786-1838), Khams bla khrag 'thung nam mkha' rgya mtsho (1788-1859), and Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (1798-1874).

Why did so many of the tantric masters appear at this particular time? The proximity to Khams, where many Rnying ma pa masters were active and influential, such as Rdo grub chen 'jigs med 'phrin las 'od zer (1745-1821) or Gzhan phan mtha' yas (b. 1800), may have influenced the Rnying ma pa revival in Reb kong.<sup>106</sup> If we widen the historical lens, we could link the upsurge of Rnying ma pa activity in A mdo with the resurgence of the Rnying ma pa in the eighteenth-century.<sup>107</sup> The person who stood out during this period was 'Jigs med gling pa.<sup>108</sup> For instance, Zhabs dkar's root-teacher, *junwang* Ngag dbang dar rgyas, was a close disciple of Rdo grub chen, who, in turn, was one of the main disciples of 'Jigs med gling pa.<sup>109</sup> At the

<sup>104</sup> For the time period when the main Rnying ma pa centres were built, see Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts. History & Literature of the Himalayan Plateau* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 17.

<sup>105</sup> He is not alone in this and there were many Lamas who were celibate and members of the Reb kong tantric practitioners community. For some of their lives, see Yangdon Dhondup, "From Hermit to Saint: The Life of Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje (1798-1874)".

<sup>106</sup> Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 24; Lce nag tshang hum chen, "A Brief Introduction to Ngag dbang dar rgyas and the Origin of Rnying ma Order in Henan County (Sogpo), the Mongolian Region of A mdo," 242.

<sup>107</sup> See Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 14-26.

<sup>108</sup> For more on his life and work, see Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self. The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>109</sup> Ricard, *Life of Shabkar*, xxii.

invitation of the *junwang*, Rdo grub chen stayed for a while in Sog po, the main seat of the Mongol prince located not far from Reb kong.<sup>110</sup> Also, Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med, who studied in Khams for three years, became a disciple of Rdo grub chen.<sup>111</sup> Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje and Khams bla khrag 'thung nam mkha' rgya mtsho, too, were disciples of that great Lama.<sup>112</sup> The influence of Rdo grub chen in spreading the Rnying ma tradition in A mdo cannot be underestimated.

The lifestyle chosen by the tantric practitioner also suggests a reason for the Rnying ma pa's growth. The decentralised and non-hierarchical structure, coupled with the bypassing of the officially sanctioned monastic centres, allowed more flexibility and freedom for the recognition and development of outstanding and charismatic individuals. Thus, Zhabs dkar and his contemporaries found an avenue to distinguish themselves outside the conventional monastic institutions. Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik aptly describe this phenomenon: "the relatively non-standardized and open environment of yogic communities ... allowed more leeway than hierarchical monastic settings for recognising outstanding ... teachers."<sup>113</sup>

With such great masters within their community, tensions between the Dge lugs and the Rnying ma pa were inevitable. This is exemplified in the remark by Brag mgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1801-1866), author of *Mdo smad chos 'byung* and forty-ninth abbot of Bla brang monastery. He writes condescendingly about Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, whom he accuses of practising neither the Buddhist nor the Bon religion.<sup>114</sup> Or, the hostility between Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis and Mkhan chen dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1679-1765), the abbot of Rong bo monastery, is still not forgotten and is recounted in colourful stories today by locals.

One reason for resentment might have to do with the socio-religious role played by the Rnying ma tantric practitioners. As mentioned, the tantric practitioners from Reb kong are renowned for their incantation of powerful mantras and the lay community consult them for specific purposes such as controlling the weather, curing diseases, protection or riddance of evil spirits or the increase of one's luck or well-being. Their reputation of possessing "supernatural" power was not only confined to Reb kong or A mdo. During the British invasion of Tibet in 1904, the Tibetan government even requested the assistance of the second Zhabs dkar, 'Jigs med theg mchog bstan pa rgyal mtshan (1852- 1914), in opposing the enemy.<sup>115</sup> In their varied functions as healers, astrologers, diviners or religious teachers, the community of tantric practitioners challenged the authority of the Dge lugs monasteries. In addition, these charismatic religious figures were articulating an alternative form for salvation based on an esoteric interpretation of Buddhism. Thus, by offering an alternative path to liberation and thereby challenging the legitimacy of the authority of the Dge lugs, they were not only in direct competition with the Dge lugs, but were also competing for influence.

<sup>110</sup> Dbal mang pandita dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, *Gya bod hor sog gyi lo rgyus*, 120.

<sup>111</sup> Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgröl ma, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus*, 715.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid: 72 & 757.

<sup>113</sup> See Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik, eds., *Women in Tibet* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005), 12.

<sup>114</sup> Brag mgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 326.

<sup>115</sup> Lce nag tshang hum chen and Ye shes 'od zer sgröl ma, *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus*, 163.

Reb kong is also the main centre of the Bon religion in the Kokonor area, where a Bon po monastery was built as early as during the time of Khri srong lde btsan (790-844), the second religious King of Tibet.<sup>116</sup> Nowadays, the Bon po are represented in Reb kong by Bon brgya monastery. Tsering Thar surveyed the Bon po population in 1996 and found that there were 681 Bon po families with a population of 4368 in Reb kong.<sup>117</sup> Like the tantric practitioners, the Bon po represent only a minority in Reb kong and their relationship with the Dge lugs remains strained. The Bon po's biggest challenge is to keep their tradition alive, whose decline is accelerated by the fact that they carry a social stigma because of their belief.

The inhabitants of Nyanthog village belong to another minority group that differs not in religious tradition but in ethnic composition or self-identification. The Gnyan thog people are ethnically Monguors; they practise Tibetan Buddhism but speak a language which is incomprehensible to local Tibetans. To complicate the matter further, the inhabitants of Seng ge gshong village are also classified as Monguors, but speak a language which is incomprehensible to those from Gnyan thog.<sup>118</sup>

The inhabitants of these two villages and the different religious communities in Reb kong have managed so far to hold on to their distinct identity. The agents in shaping and articulating their identity were the local elites such as the *nang so*, Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho, Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis or Zhabs dkar. Each of them defined themselves through a tradition which they passed on to the next generation and to which a group identified themselves. Although the primary aim of the Shar lineage was to encourage and further a Dge lugs identity, they were nonetheless active in promoting Rong bo monastery as a centre for Tibetan religious practices and learning in general. Likewise, the Rnying ma pa tantric halls or the Bon monasteries are regarded not only as sites of worship but also as places where Tibetan culture and tradition is preserved and studied.

### Conclusion

Despite Reb kong's diverse religious and cultural environment there seems to exist nevertheless a group identity that transcends all these multiple identities, histories and loyalties. It is within this communal, shared identity that the inhabitants, despite their diverse and fluid identities, feel "the sense of a primacy of belonging".<sup>119</sup> This communal identity is, as I have tried to demonstrate above, defined and constructed by dominant institutions such as the *nang so* or the Shar skal ldan lineage. It "exists in the minds of its members" and is, according to Cohen, highly symbolised and "refers to a putative past or tradition."<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, it is "sufficiently malleable that it

<sup>116</sup> Tsering Thar, "Bonpo Tantrics in Kokonor Area," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no 15 (November 2008): 538.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 541.

<sup>118</sup> Kalsang Norbu, Zhu Yongzhong, Kevin Stuart, "A Ritual Winter Exorcism in Gnyan Thog village, Qinghai,"

<sup>119</sup> Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London: Routledge, 2000 [1985]), p. 15.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

can accommodate all of its members' selves without them feeling their individuality to be overly compromised."<sup>121</sup>

But from the set of shared values and meanings which induces a community, I would argue that ethnicity and religion (Buddhism or Bon) - within the context of being situated at the border - are the two elements which reinforced this communal identity. These criteria are parts of what we today understand under the concept of a "national identity" but even in the pre-modern period they seem to have provided enough resources to construct a group identity and to make the imaginary community a tangible reality.<sup>122</sup>

The history of Reb kong is a marginal and perhaps a neglected history. In focusing on the local, I have presented some preliminary observations about the cultural and historical complexity of the place. There is need for more study, in particular, a detailed history of the many villages of Reb kong. It is clear that the area is of considerable historical significance to local, borderland and even national histories of Tibet and China.

The various histories of the borderlands differ in political and symbolic significance according to those who read them. To the local inhabitants, it provides them with a sense of identity that allows them to define their spatial and social space; we may also examine in this way the distinction between the "local" definition of boundary and the state's definition of borders or simply, the relation between the borderland and the state. Histories of the borderlands are also an attempt to redress the imbalance whereby the national history is the point of departure. Thus, an informed historiography of the Sino-Tibetan borderland would help not only to better understand past events but also to enable us to analyse and anticipate the long-term continuance of centuries of complex communal, religious and ethnic strategies of co-existence in the Sino-Tibetan relationship.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>122</sup> See E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991). Smith lists the features of national identity as follows: 1) an historic territory, or homeland 2) common myths and historical memories 3) a common, mass public culture 4) common legal rights and duties for all members 5) a common economy with territorial mobility for members. See Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

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