

The Body of Skyid shod sprul sku: The Mid-Seventeenth Century Ties between Central Tibet, the Oirat Mongols, and Dgon lung Monastery in Amdo

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The earliest Tibetan history of Amdo¹ that we have—Skal ldan rgya mtsho's 1652 *A mdo'i chos 'byung* (History of the Dharma in Amdo)²—begins with mention of eminent lamas from Central Tibet and, in particular, the visits to Amdo by the Third and Fifth Dalai Lamas. The history of Buddhism in Amdo, at least according to Dge lugs scholars, is deeply indebted to its spiritual exchanges with Central Tibet. This article reveals one of the most important connections between Central Tibet and Amdo in the years immediately preceding and concurrent with the establishment of the Dga' ldan pho brang government in Lhasa: that between the Skyid shod polity of the Lhasa Valley and the influential Monguor monastery of Dgon lung byams pa gling. In the process we will encounter some answers to why Dgon lung became the recipient of so much Oirat Mongol largess and why the Qing emperors, too, gave so much attention to Dgon lung and adjacent monasteries in Amdo.

Dgon lung byams pa gling, or Youning si 佑寧寺

Dgon lung was the largest monastery in Amdo in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, housing 1500 monks in

¹ T. Amdo; sometimes referred to in scholarly literature as “northeastern Tibet,” although the region was and is as much or even more the homeland of various Mongolic groups, not to mention several other ethnic groups.

² Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Rje skal ldan rgya mtsho'i gsung las mdo smad a mdo'i phyogs su bstan pa dar tshul gi lo rgyus mdo' bsdus (A Concise History of the Manner in Which the Teachings Arose in the Land of Domé),” in *Mdo smad sgrub brgyud bstan pa'i shing rta ba chen po phyag na pad+mo yab rje bla ma Skal ldan rgya mtho'i gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Kelden Gyatso), vol. 1, 4 vols., Gangs can skal bzang dpe tshogs 1 ([Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 341–55. A translation of the verse section of this history is found in Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 587–91.

the 1690s³ and as many as 2400 on the eve of its destruction in 1724.⁴ It grew to this size from its founding in 1604 by a Central Tibetan lama,⁵ when it consisted only of small huts for a hundred monks or so.⁶ By 1644 it was already being referred to as “the foremost among all the commentarial schools in Mdo smad, the Great Monastery of Dgon lung.”⁷ However, its most significant growth in size and influence likely took place in the latter half of the seventeenth century after it received the generous attention of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Gūūshi Khan (the leader of the Khoshud, one of the four “tribes” of the Oirat confederation), and, eventually, the Manchu Qing emperors.

As is now well known, Dgon lung's first homegrown incarnate lama (T. *sprul sku*), the Second Lcang skya Khutugtu (1642-1714),⁸ became the intimate preceptor to the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661-1722) and spent the last two decades of his life serving the imperial Court in Beijing and Dolonnuur.⁹ Lcang skya II's successor, the Third Lcang

³ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po* (Yellow Beryl History of the Ganden School), ed. Rdo rje rgyal po ([Beijing]: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1998), 340.25.

⁴ A brief note in the *Deb ther rgya mtsho* (*Mdo smad chos 'byung*) recalls how an important lama from Dpa' ris gave extensive offerings to the “more than 2400 monks” at Dgon lung. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung* [*Deb ther rgya mtsho = Ocean Annals*] (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 117.8. Schram, who may be relying upon Chinese sources, says that Dgon lung had 2500 monks in the lead-up to the Lubsang-Danzin Rebellion. *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, ed. Charles Kevin Stuart (Xining: Plateau Publications, 2006), 283 and 323.

⁵ This was 'On Rgyal sras Chos kyi rgya mtsho (*fl.* 1603-1625).

⁶ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag dpyod ldan yid dbang 'gugs pa'i pho nya (The Monastic Chronicle of Gönlung Monastery),” in *Gsung 'bum* (Collected Works), vol. 2 (Lhasa: Zhol New Printery Block, 2000), 646/7b.4-5.

⁷ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Sde ba chos rje Bstan 'dzin blo bzang rgya mtsho'i nram thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed (Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso, 1593-1638),” in *Mdo smad sgrub bryud bstan pa'i shing rta ba chen po phyag na pad+mo yab rje bla ma Skal ldan rgya mtho'i gsung 'bum* (Collected Works of Kelden Gyatso), vol. 1, Gangs can skal bzang dpe tshogs 1 ([Lanzhou]: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 248.

⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzan chos ldan.

⁹ Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan dpal bzang po'i nram par thar pa mu tig 'phreng ba* (Biography of the Glorious Lord Ngakwang Lozang Chöden: A Rosary of Pearls), 1729, 59a.1-2; Klaus Sagaster, *Subud erike. “Ein Rosenkranz aus Perlen.” Die Biographie des 1. Pekinger lCañ skya Khutukhtu Nag dbaṅ blo bzaṅ č'os ldan, verfasst von Nag dbaṅ č'os ldan alias Śes rab dar rgyas* (Subud erike: “A Rosary of Pearls,” [Being] the Biography of the First Beijinger Lcang skya Khutukhtu Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, written by Ngag dbang chos ldan, alias Shes rab dar rgyas) (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967); Brenton Sullivan,

ska Khutugtu, is even better known and served as the preceptor to the Kangxi Emperor's grandson, the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736-1795). Other lamas of Dgon lung served at the Qing court,¹⁰ served as the personal tutors to the Dalai Lamas,¹¹ and made lasting impacts on Mongolian culture.¹²

The explanation of this rise to what became arguably the most important Dge lugs base outside of Central Tibet¹³ is the wealth and support given to it by the Oirat, that is, those "Western Mongols" who followed Gūūshi Khan to the Tibetan Plateau in 1637 and who aided the Dalai Lama and his school in eliminating its religious and political rivals.¹⁴ The Oirat, and among them the Khoshud in particular, were the dominant power on the Tibetan Plateau up until 1723 when the Qing empire irrevocably changed the power dynamic there. In the eighteenth-century chronicle of Dgon lung by the Third Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802) we read of the patronage conferred upon Dgon lung after the Oirat conquered Tibet:

"Convincing the Mongols to Join Mañjuśrī's Realm: The Diplomacy of the Second Changkya Ngawang Lozang Chöden (1642-1714)," in *Sino-Tibetan Buddhism: Essays in Memory of Monica Esposito*, ed. Ester Bianchi and Weirong Shen, forthcoming.

¹⁰ In particular, Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma.

¹¹ Chu bzang II Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1652-1723) served as the tutor to the Seventh Dalai Lama. Chu bzang III Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug (1725-1796) was asked to be the tutor to the Eighth Dalai Lama, although it appears that he did not actually serve in this position. E. Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 164; Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 86.24 and 92.26.

¹² This refers to Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor (1704-1788, "Sumba Kanbo"), who is well-known in Mongolia for his works on medicine and astrology, the latter being the basis for the Mongolian calendar. Rachael Griffiths, personal communication, 29 July 2017. Regarding Sumba Kanbo's "New Garden" calendar see Lobsang Yongdan, "A Scholarly Imprint: How Tibetan Astronomers Brought Jesuit Astronomy to Tibet," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine*, no. 45 (September 11, 2017): 91-117; Svante Janson, "Tibetan Calendar Mathematics" (2007), 41 n. 53, <http://www2.math.uu.se/~svante/papers/calendars/tibet.pdf>.

¹³ Sku 'bum byams pa gling is another contender for this status. Ban Shinichiro makes a strong case for the importance of Rong bo dgon chen for the propagation of the Dge lugs school. BAN Shinichiro, "Darai rama seiken seiritsu zen'ya ni okeru geruku-ha no amudo fukyō: Geruku-ha sōryo depa choje no katsudō o chūshin ni mita (Propagation of Buddhism in Amdo by the dGe lugs pa Sect just before the Establishment of the Dalai-Lama Administration: with Special Reference to the Activities of sDe pa chos rje)," *Nihon chibetto gakkai kaihō* (Report of the Japanese Association for Tibetan Studies) 62 (March 2017): 1-11.

¹⁴ Uyunbili Borjigidai, "The Hoshuud Polity in Khökhnuur (Kokonor)," *Inner Asia* 4 (2002): 181-96.

Long ago the Oirat Zünghar King Baatur Khung-taiji,¹⁵ the Queen Anu,¹⁶ and others were the principal patrons of this great monastery. All the estates up to Ko phu se,¹⁷ or Stag rna Monastery, which was below Ejena,¹⁸ were donated to Dgon lung.¹⁹ Up until the Sino-Oirat conflict of the Water-Hare year [1723], the Zünghar kings repeatedly sent envoys²⁰ and made donations of tea, cash disbursements, horses, salaries, and so on.

After the Holder of the Teachings Dharma-King Güüshi Khan conquered Khalkha Tsogtu, the King of Beri, and so on, from among the communities he brought together under his control he donated as estates of Dgon lung the Monguor²¹ nomadic communities of Dpa' ris, Tsong kha, and the 'Ju lag [River area], up to De Lake of Stong shags and down to the Zhwa khog River. From the Water-Horse year of the eleventh *rab byung* [1642], eight nomadic communities sponsored the Summer Retreat and the Great Prayer Festival of Magical Displays, and the farming communities provided a permanent offering of bread.²² Corvé,²³ taxes,²⁴ and any other needs were met [by them]. In the Fire-Pig year [1647] the Panchen Lama, the Fifth Dalai Lama, and the Holder of the Teachings Dharma-King issued an order making [them] subjects²⁵ [of the monastery] in perpetuity.²⁶

The primary "basin" of Dgon lung's economic capacity thus included the extensive swathe of land stretching from, at a minimum, present-

¹⁵ T. O rod jun gar gyi rgyal po BA thur hung thas ji.

¹⁶ T. Dpon mo A nu. Queen Anu (Mon. Anu-Dara) was the granddaughter of the Khoshud ruler Ochirtu Tsetsen Khan (fl. 1639-1676) and wife to the Zünghar ruler Galdan (b. 1644, r. 1678-1697). Christopher P. Atwood, *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 193.

¹⁷ Tuttle has suggested a very plausible back-transliteration of this monastery: "Gepu si." Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 593.

¹⁸ T. E je na. Tuttle has identified this as Kharakhoto and Etzina.

¹⁹ The *Ocean Annals* gives different spellings for these places, explaining that these Mongol patrons donated "everything above God bu se, also known as Stag rna dgon, which was below E je na." Elsewhere in the *Ocean Annals*, reference is made to a "stag sna dgon," which is probably the same monastery in question. Brag dgon zhabs drung Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 76 and 41.

²⁰ T. *el chi*.

²¹ T. Hor.

²² T. *tsha ra*.

²³ T. *rkang 'gro*.

²⁴ T. *lag 'don gyi khral*.

²⁵ T. *mi ser*.

²⁶ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag," 779/69a.5-779/69b.4.

day Datong County 大通县 (where the Zhwa khog River is located)²⁷ to present-day Ledu County 乐都县 (where Stong shags is located).²⁸ These details give substance to the claim that G \ddot{u} ishi Khan made “all of Dpa’ ris”—the Tibetan name for the region in question—into an estate of Dgon lung.²⁹



This map shows the area around Dgon lung Monastery. Dgon lung probably collected taxes and rents and commanded religious donations from many of the communities in Su’nan, Minle, Qilian, Menyuan, and, especially, Datong, Huzhu, and Ledu Counties. My thanks to Danielle Zarnick (Colgate University) for her help in preparing this map.

- ²⁷ Thu’u bkwan III writes of “the three monasteries of Zhwa bo khog,” Bo khog corresponding to the area of present-day Baoku Township 宝库乡 and the Baoku River 宝库河 in Datong County. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 734/46b.4. Sum pa mkhan po had several monasteries in “Zhwa Bo khog,” including ‘Dul ba bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling of Zhwa khog, Te yan chi dga’ ldan rin chen gling of Bo khog, and Bo khog gi lung dkar gyi bkra shis rtse.
- ²⁸ I have not been able to identify the De Lake of Stong shags (Stong shags kyi de’i mtsho), but “Stong shags” corresponds to the area around Stong shags brka shis chos gling, also known as Yangguan si 羊官寺, a major branch monastery of Dgon lung in Shoule Township 寿乐乡, Ledu County.
- ²⁹ Thu’u bkwan III Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dgon lung gi dkar chag,” 687/28a.3.



The main assembly hall and debate courtyard of Stong shags bkra shis chos gling, a branch monastery of Dgon lung's located several valleys to the east from Dgon lung in north-central Ledu County.

Dgon lung's territory of subjects and estates may have stretched even farther to the west and north. As we read above, Dgon lung was also given "all the estates up to Ko phu se, or Stag rna Monastery, which was below Ejena."³⁰ Another sources tells us that a Stag sna

³⁰ Another eighteenth-century source likewise pegs the west-northwestern extent of Dgon lung's territory around what is today the Qinghai-Gansu where Qilian and Su'nan Counties meet. Sum pa mkhan po writes, "a great monastic estate (from Lab tshe kha mang downwards as far as Te [Lake]) was granted to Dgon lung byam pa gling, a great monastery in the center of Dpa' ri." The parentheses indicate marginalia in the blockprint. "Lab tshe kha mang" is said to be the mountain shrine that separates Kökenuur (mtsho sngon) from Amdo. The text is somewhat illegible at this point, so my rendering of "Lake" (mtsho ba) is tentative. Te Lake could refer to the area around Te thung / Ta'i thung (present-day Liancheng 连城), in Yongdeng County 永登县, Gansu Province. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, "Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa'i tshangs glu gsar snyan," in *Gsung 'bum (Collected Works)*, vol. 2, Sata-pitaka (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975), 983/6a.1. See also Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor* [Being a partial translation of the Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa'i tshangs glu gsar snyan zhes bya ba], trans. Ho-Chin Yang, Uralic and Altaic Series 106 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 17 and 38; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa'i tshangs glu gsar snyan* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 14. On Lha tshe kha mang see Ye shes dpal 'byor, Sum pa mkhan po, *PaN+Di ta sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor mchog gi spyod tshul brjod pa sgra*

Monastery belonged to “a land at the confluence of the Shug sha pad stong River and the Upper ‘Ju lag River, the latter river more commonly known today by its Chinese name, Datong River 大通河.³¹ Thus, this monastery was probably located somewhere along the northern border of Qinghai with Gansu Province, perhaps near the county-seat of present-day Qilian County 祁连县, Qinghai.³² The Yugur people who live in the area are said to have been particularly devout, and many of the monasteries there came to be devoted to Dgon lung or its incarnate lama lineages.³³

Dgon lung was not the only controller of properties and peoples in the region. The Monguor “indigenous headman” (Ch. *tusi* 土司) also commanded taxes and labor from certain communities, and some of Dgon lung’s own satellite monasteries grew in size and influence to the point that they even wrested from Dgon lung some of its erstwhile communities.³⁴ Indeed, by the time Thu’u bkwan and others were writing their eighteenth-century histories that tell us about Dgon lung’s estates, Qing authorities had confiscated many of them as punishment for Dgon lung’s participation in the 1723 uprising of Kökenuur Khoshud.³⁵ Nonetheless, it is clear that Dgon

’dzin bcud len (Autobiography of Sumba Kanbo Yeshé Peljor), Mtsho sngon bod yig gna’ gzhung (Beijing: Krung go’i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 2001), 590–91.

³¹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ‘byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*; Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ‘byor, *Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus sogs bkod pa’i tshangs glu gsar snyan*, 18.

³² Sum pa mkhan po visited Sta rna Monastery on his way to what is today Su’nan County 肃南县, Gansu Province from his hermitage of Lung dkar in present-day Datong County. Along the way, he passed by Lung skya ri khrod and a number of other Yugur monasteries. Ye shes dpal ‘byor, Sum pa mkhan po, *Autobiography of Sumba Kanbo*, 330. On Lung skya Hermitage see Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go’i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su’u glegs bam* (Chronicle of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of China: Kansu Volume), 711–12.

³³ On the Yugur people’s religiosity, see Ye shes dpal ‘byor, Sum pa mkhan po, *Autobiography of Sumba Kanbo*, 332. For an example of Dgon lung’s ties to the region, see Rdor phrug et al., *Krung go’i bod brgyud nang dgon dkar chag las kan su’u glegs bam* (Chronicle of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of China: Kansu Volume), 694.

³⁴ Thu’u bkwan III accuses Btsan po Don grub rgya mtsho (1613-1665) of stealing resources from Dgon lung to fund his own new monastery, Gser khog dga’ ldan dam chos gling. Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dgon lung gi dkar chag,” 69b.6. This would explain why the *bca’ yig* of Dgon lung’s supposed branch monastery known as Kan chen dgon (a manuscript held at today’s Kan chen dgon) was in fact composed by the high lama of Gser khog rather than a lama from Dgon lung. Ngag dbang ‘phrin las rgya mtsho, Smin grol III, “Theg chen thar pa gling gi bca’ yig mu tig gi phreng mdzes (The Charter of [Kanchen] Thekchen Tharpa Ling: the Beautiful Pearl Necklace)” (1758).

³⁵ Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dgon lung gi dkar chag,” 70a.6. Kökenuur is the Mongolian name for the giant lake on the northeastern corner of

lung was a great beneficiary of much Oirat largess, making it one of the most powerful monastic institutions in Amdo in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Why was this the case?

There are a number of factors that may have contributed to Dgon lung's position on the receiving end of Oirat patronage.

1. Location: Dgon lung is strategically located along one of the two principal routes for lamas and envoys traveling between the Tibetan Plateau and Inner Mongolia and Beijing farther east: the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Third Pañchen Lama (1738-1780), and several other lamas followed the Huangshui 湟水 (also known as the Tsong chu, or Tsong River) and peregrinated north through Dpa' ris en route to or upon returning from Beijing.

2. The legacy of Mongol empire in Dpa' ris and at Dgon lung: the Monguor people (Ch. Tuzu 土族; T. Hor) identify themselves as descendants of Mongols who initially settled the region in the thirteenth-century as part of or in the wake of Köden Khan's (fl. 1235-1247; second son of Ögedei Khan) army and the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). Köden, of course, is famously remembered for having invited the scholar-monk Sa skya Pañḍita (1182-1251) to Liangzhou 涼州 (present-day Wuwei 武威, Gansu Province) and establishing a priest-patron (*mchod yon*) relationship with him. This relationship was continued and sanctified by Sa skya Pañḍita's nephew, 'Phags pa Lama (1235-1280), and Qubilai Khan (r. 1260-1294), giving rise to the iconic priest-patron relationship against which later figures would measure themselves. Stories still abound today regarding the role played by these figures in establishing new monasteries throughout what is today Gansu Province and far northeastern Qinghai.

One such monastery is Dgon lung. To be exact, it is the legendary predecessor to Dgon lung that is said to have been built in connection with Köden.³⁶ Moreover, Köden or some other Mongol ruler from this period is believed to be the protector deity of Dgon lung Monastery.³⁷ Thus, the location of the later Dgon lung Monastery has intimate connections with the early Mongol settlers of the region. The Tibetan scholar Rin chen bkra shis, has even made the interesting observation that the location of the Yuan Western Pacification Prince 西平王, whose feudal investment included Tibet and the Tibetan

the Tibetan Plateau, referred to in Chinese as Qinghai or Qinghai hu 青海湖 and in Tibetan as Mtsho sngon po. In Tibetan sources, the region surrounding the lake where many of the Oirat had settled is also referred to as "Kökenuur."

³⁶ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 643/6a.5 and 645/7a.5-646/7b.2.

³⁷ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 645/7a.5-646/7b.2.

borderlands, was Gsum mdo (松多), which may correspond to the Gsum mdo that is just a half-day's walk away from Dgon lung.³⁸ Thus, it might very well have been the Western Pacification Prince A'urughchi (Qubilai's son) who is apotheosized as Dgon lung's protector.³⁹ Such historical evidence⁴⁰ as well as linguistic analysis (the Monguor of Dpa' ris is a Mongolic language)⁴¹ all point to considerable connections between thirteenth-century Mongols and the later Monguors who lived in Dpa'ris.

3. Polylinguism: Situated as they were between Tibet, Mongolia, China, as well as various ethnic groups (such as the Turkic Salars), Monguors were multilingual. Indeed, as Gerald Roche has argued, "the most multilingual people in Tibet would ... have been monks from farming regions whose first language was a minority language, whereas those with the least broad repertoire would have been pastoralist women [due, of course, to the limited economic opportunities afforded them] who spoke a Tibetic language as their first language." Perhaps the most famous Monguor, Lcang skya III Rol pa'i rdo rje,⁴² helped to oversee the translation of the Buddhist canon into both Mongolian and Manchu.⁴³ Forced, as they were, into

³⁸ Renqingzhaxi, "Xiping wangfu jindi kao 西平王府今地考 (Investigation of the Present-day Site of the Palace of the Western Pacification Prince)," in *Renqingzhaxi Zangxue yanjiu wenji 仁庆扎西藏学研究文集* (Collected Writings of Research in Tibetan Studies by Rinchen Trashi) (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1989), 74–80. Originally published in *Qinghai shehui kexue* (1986), no. 6. I would like to sincerely thank Li Shenghua for introducing me to this work and for taking the time to talk with me about these issues. Gsum mdo is also the site of Chos bzang Hermitage, a branch of Dgon lung's Thu'u bkwan lama.

³⁹ This, anyway, is the conjecture of the Monguor scholar Li Keyu 李克郁. Personal communication May 11 and May 12, 2011. For more on A'urughchi see also Herbert Franke and John D. Langlois, "Tibetans in Yüan China," in *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 300.

⁴⁰ Extant genealogies of the ruling Monguor clans (*jiapu* 家譜) and historical records of the *tusi* of Amdo also claim Monguor-Mongol connections.

⁴¹ Keith W. Slater, *A Grammar of Mangghuer: A Mongolic Language of China's Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 9–10.

⁴² Lcang skya's father was a nobleman in the Chi kya Monguor clan. Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug, chu bzang 03 (1725-1796), *Ñi ma'i 'od zer / Naran-u gerel: Die Biographie des 2. Pekinger Lañ skya-Qutuqtu Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717-1786). Herausgegeben, eingeleitet und zusammengefaßt* (The Sun's Rays of Light: The Biography of the Second Beijing Changkya Khutugtu Rolpé Dorjé, Edited, Introduced, and Summarized), ed. and trans. Hans-Rainer Kämpfe, *Monumenta Tibetica historica*, 2 (1) (Sankt Augustin: Wissenschaftsverlag, 1976), 17. The Western Qi Tusi line was descended directly from Chinggis Khan. The Eastern Qi Tusi is descended from a decorated Mongol commander who submitted to the Ming.

⁴³ Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, 134.

being conversant in other languages and dialects, the educated, Monguor lamas were well positioned to act as middlemen between the various political actors in Inner Asia.

3. The presence of Central Tibetan incarnate lamas at Dgon lung: in particular, the Skyid shod polity of the Lhasa valley and one of its representatives, the Skyid shod sprul sku Bstan 'dzin blo bzang rgya mtsho (1593-1638), played an important role in connecting Dgon lung to the important affairs of Central Tibet and thus to the Oirat. This shall be the focus of this paper.

4. The possible contribution of Monguor troops of Dpa' ris to Gūüshi Khan's conquest of Tibet. More shall be said about this below.

The Pivot between Central Tibet, Amdo, and the Oirats: Sde ba chos rje and Chu bzang Lama

Thu'u bkwan III's eighteenth-century chronicle of Dgon lung portrays the monastery as belonging to an elite group of monasteries founded by the Dalai Lamas:

The Victor Dge 'dun grub [the First Dalai Lama] established Bkra shis lhun po. The [Second Dalai Lama] Omniscient One Dge 'dun rgya mtsho established Chos 'khor rgyal [i.e. Rgyal me tog]. The [Third Dalai Lama] Victor Bsod nams rgya mtsho established Li thang thub chen byams pa gling. The Great Fifth established over thirteen monasteries. The [Seventh Dalai Lama] King of Victors Skal bzang rgya mtsho established Mgar thar Monastery. Apart from these, the fourth King of Victors, Yon tan rgya mtsho, is the one who laid the foundation for this great monastery of Dgon lung byams pa gling.

In addition, lamas representing Dgon lung—such as the First Lcang skya Grags pa 'od zer (d. 1641), 'Dan ma grub chen Tshul khrim rgya mtsho (1587-1664), and Ka ring dka' bcu Phun tshogs rnam rgyal (Dgon lung's abbot from 1612-1617)—would make their way to Central Tibet where they earned outstanding reputations.⁴⁴ Perhaps for these reasons or for the factors mentioned above (such as the

⁴⁴ Per Nyi ma 'dzin Ngag dbang legs bshad rgya mtsho, *Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i 'byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi gdan rabs zur rgyan g.yas 'khyil dung gi sgra dbyangs* (The Place Where Originated Expounding on and Practicing the Dharma: An Addition to the [Record of] the Succession of Abbots of the Great Religious Establishment Gönlung Jampa Ling, the Sound of the Clockwise-turning Conch Shell) (n.p.: s.n., n.d.), 137–39. For a study of 'Dan ma grub chen, see Brenton Sullivan, "The First Generation of Dge Lugs Evangelists in Amdo: The Case of 'Dan Ma Tshul Khriims Rgya Mtsho (1578-1663/65)," *Zentralasiatische Studien*, Under review.

monastery's Mongolic pedigree), Dgon lung soon attracted the attention of other major Geluk hierarchs from Central Tibet.⁴⁵ These connections would prove to be decisive for Tibet's future in general and Dgon lung's future in particular. Chief among the Central Tibetan hierarchs who visited and later officiated at Dgon lung are Chu bzang Rnam rgyal dpal 'byor (1578-1651) and the aforementioned Skyid shod sprul sku, otherwise known as Sde ba chos rje ("Governor Dharma Lord").

Chu bzang Lama would serve as the abbot of Dgon lung from 1639 to 1648, and he became the first generation of the important Chu bzang incarnation lineage based at Dgon lung.⁴⁶ Years earlier, however, he first attained recognition when his teacher, the Fourth Pañchen Lama Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal tshan (1567-1662) sent him to debate against Sa skya and Bka' brgyud monks before the King of Gtsang. He soundly defeated them, we are told, for which the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent, Sde srid Bsod rnam chos 'phel (1595-1657), as well as Sde ba chos rje's brother, Yid bzhin nor bu (1589-after 1647), rewarded him.⁴⁷ Around that same time, two figures from the vicinity of Dgon lung came before the Fourth Dalai Lama to request a suitable lama to provide teachings for their monastery back in northeastern Tibet.⁴⁸ The first individual chosen by the Dalai Lama was unable to go,⁴⁹ and so Chu bzang was sent.⁵⁰ Chu bzang, moreover, had

⁴⁵ In a recent article IKEJIRI Yōko argues that Gro tshang dgon (Ch. Qutan si 瞿曇寺) and Thang ring dgon were networked with Dgon lung and actually provided Dgon lung with its first generation of administrative and scholastic leadership. IKEJIRI Yōko, "Nai-hisho-in Mongoru-bun Tou-an ni miru 17 seiki amudo tōbu no geruku-ha sho jīn to shinchō (Early contacts between the Gelug monasteries in eastern Amdo and the Qing dynasty from the perspective of *Čing ulus-un dotuyadu narin bicig-un yamun-u mongyul dangsa*," Chibetto Himaraya bunmei no rekishiteki tenkai (The Historical Development of Tibeto-Himalayan Civilization), 2018, 55–56.

⁴⁶ His successor, Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan was the teacher to the Seventh Dalai Lama, who returned the favor by bestowing gifts, titles, and teachings on the third Chu bzang bla ma.

⁴⁷ Thu'u bkwan III Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag," 685/27a.3-4.

⁴⁸ The figures are said to come from Han bstag lung. This might be the practice center near Sku 'bum that the Fifth Dalai Lama names Dga' ldan skyed. Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 86.5 and 169. Cf. Zhiguanba•Gongquehudanbaraoji, *Anduo zhengjiao shi* <i>安多政教史 (Political and Religious History of Amdo; Mdo smad chos 'byung)</i>, trans. Wu Jun, Mao Jizu, and Ma Shilin, Gansu sheng shaoshu minzu guji congshu (Lanzhou: Gansu minzu chubanshe, 1989), 88 n. 2.

⁴⁹ The other individual was Lam pa rab 'byams pa Bsod nams grags pa. For a brief biography of this figure, see Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, ed., *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs sgo mang grwa tshang gi chos 'byung dung g.yas su 'khyil ba'i sgra dbyangs* (History of the Dharma at Gomang College of Drepung Monastery, the

attained the rank of *gling bsre*⁵¹ at 'Bras spungs Monastery's Sgo Gomang College. Chu bzang also served as the highest ranking disciplinarian at Sgo mang College, and he furthered his studies at Lhasa's Lower Tantric College.

Sde ba chos rje, or Skyid shod sprul sku, was a scion of the Skyid shod family, one of the most powerful and important families in Central Tibet in the seventeenth century. The connections that Dgon lung shared with the Skyid shod have been occluded by the fact that the Skyid shod polity itself has been overlooked in most accounts of Tibetan history.⁵² Four recent studies have corrected this and revealed the crucial historical roles played by this family.⁵³ It is said that the Skyid shod Lord (*nang so*) Don grub rgyal po (ca. 1525-68) "was the principal patron of the Dge lugs generally and specifically of the Second Lord of Victors [i.e. the Second Dalai Lama]. Not only that, but he also venerated the Third Lord of Victors [i.e. the Third Dalai Lama] as his root lama."⁵⁴ His younger brother, Bkra shis rab brtan (1531-89), was the primary patron for the new Dga' ldan pho brang palace built at 'Bras spungs Monastery after the Third Dalai Lama had departed for Mongolia.⁵⁵ Bkra shis rab brtan's son (or, perhaps, nephew) was G.yul rgyal nor bu (d. 1607), the father of Sde ba chos rje. Altogether, the Skyid shod governors are said to have ruled over the holy land of Skyid shod and its subjects for ninety-four or ninety-

Rightward-Turning Sound), vol. 1 (Karnataka, India: Dpal ldan 'bras spungs bkra shis sgo mang dpe mdzod khang, 2003), 566–70.

⁵⁰ Incidentally, this is a common trope in the *Deb ther rgya mtsho* (the *Mdo smad chos 'byung*) and other histories from Amdo: an envoy travels to Central Tibet to request a lama to help back in Amdo. Such a lama is then dispatched and helps to spur the development of Buddhism in Amdo.

⁵¹ A monastery-wide scholastic rank.

⁵² Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor (On the Kyishö Governors)," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 2 (August 2006): 1–48.

⁵³ Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet: A Study of Tshal Gung-Thang* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007); Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor"; Peter Schwiieger, "A Nearly-Forgotten Dge lugs pa Incarnation Line as Manorial Lord in Bkra shis ljongs, Central Tibet," in *Tibetans Who Escaped the Historian's Net: Studies in the Social History of Tibetan Societies*, ed. Charles Ramble, Peter Schwiieger, and Alice Travers (Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2013), 89–109; BAN Shinichiro, "Darai rama seiken seiritsu zen'ya ni okeru geruku-ha no amudo fukyō: Geruku-ha sōryo depa choje no katsudō o chūshin ni mita."

⁵⁴ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 15.

⁵⁵ Yon tan rgya mtsho, 4 and 18; Sørensen and Hazod give most of the credit instead to the consort of the Phag gru gong ma, Sangs rgyas dpal 'dzom ma (ca. 1485-1555/61?). Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 53.

five years, from 1518-1612.⁵⁶ Dgon lung's ties with this family leant it a degree of legitimacy that was recognized by Güüshi Khan and the Khoshud of Kökenuur. And when the fortunes of the Skyid shod governors waned, so faded the history of Dgon lung's ties to the family.

Sde ba chos rje was born in 1593, the fourth son of the Kyid shod Governor G.yul rgyal nor bu. From an early age he was said to have been the rebirth of Sgom sde thams cad mkhyen pa Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1532-92). The retainers of the late Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan began to send invitations to the young boy, which infuriated his father, the governor. The governor then issued a law prohibiting anyone from proclaiming that his son was the rebirth of Nam mkha' rgya mtshan. Apparently he intended for his second son, Yid bzhin nor bu, to renounce and not his youngest.⁵⁷

Eventually, however, his father relented, and Sde ba chos rje renounced at the Second Dalai Lama's monastery of Chos 'khor rgyal. This signals a fortuitous connection with the future Dgon lung Monastery, since both monasteries are said to be located in a "White Hidden Land" (*sba yul dkar po'i ljongs*),⁵⁸ and also because Dgon lung's founder studied at and served as the abbot of one of Chos 'khor rgyal colleges.⁵⁹ Having fully embraced his youngest son's renunciation, Sde ba chos rje's father even built a seminary (*chos grwa*) for his son to pursue his monastic studies.⁶⁰ Sde ba chos rje's primary teacher throughout his lifetime was the Fourth Pañchen

⁵⁶ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 5-6; Sørensen and Hazod put the outright hegemony of the Skyid shod governors from the 1550s to 1620/25. Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 49.

⁵⁷ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 181.

⁵⁸ Rgyal sras Blo bzang bstan 'dzin, "Sbas yul dkar po'i ljongs kyi gnas bstod ka la ping ka'i sgra dbyangs (Praises of the Place of the Hidden White Land: The Song of the Cuckoo)," in *Bshad sgrub bstan pa'i byung gnas chos sde chen po dgon lung byams pa gling gi dkar chag dpyod ldan yid dbang 'gugs pa'i pho nya* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988), 157-73; Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "A 'Hidden Land' at the Border of 'Ol-Kha and Dvags-Po," ed. Roberto Vitali, *The Tibet Journal: The Earth Ox Papers: Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Dharamsala, 2009* 34-35, no. 3-4 and 1-2 (Autumn through Summer 2010 2009): 493-522.

⁵⁹ This is Dwags po grwa tshang. Yon tan rgya mtsho, *Dge ldan chos 'byung gser gyi mchod sdong 'bar ba* (The History of the Dharma of the Virtuous Ones [i.e. the Gelukpa]: The Radiant Golden Stupa) (Paris: Yonten Gyatso, 1994), 639; Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, *'Bras spungs sgo mang chos 'byung*, 1:518 and 519; The Second Dalai Lama is said to have invited the Dwags po College to settle at Chos 'khor rgyal in 1509. Nawang L. Nornang, "Monastic Organization and Economy at Dwags-Po Bshad-Grub-Gling," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne, vol. 12, *Studies in Asian Thought and Religion* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 249.

⁶⁰ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 38.

Lama, and it was under him that he took his full monastic vows at the age of twenty-three.⁶¹ He also received teachings from the Fourth Dalai Lama on numerous occasions. Sde ba chos rje's scholastic abilities were well-regarded, we are told, so much so that he was placed on a throne equal in height to the abbot (*mkhan chen pa*) of the important monastic center of Ngam ring dga' ldan byams pa gling. He performed in the "debate circuit" (*grwa skor*) at the monastery and further secured his status as an able philosopher and debater.⁶²

The fortunes of the Skyid shod governors and the Dge lugs school that they supported took a fateful turn in 1618. Violence between Dbus and Gtsang began to escalate in 1605, and in 1618 warfare broke out, leading Sde ba chos rje to flee northward along with his oldest brother, the Governor Bsod nam rgyal mtshan. They took with them on their northward journey the statue known as the Ārya Lokeśvara (T. 'phags pa lo ke shwa ra, "Noble Lord of the World"), one of the most important and venerated icons in Tibet.⁶³ Sde ba chos rje would spend the last twenty years of his life in Amdo.

Upon arriving in Amdo, both Sde ba chos rje and Chu bzang Lama played similar roles: they served as the lamas to successive Mongol rulers of the region. Sde ba chos rje was well received by the leader of the Tümed Mongols, Kholoche, and his royal retainers, to whom he gave numerous teachings.⁶⁴ He also exchanged teachings and empowerments with the important Stong 'khor III Rgyal ba rgya mtsho (1588-1639) from Khams.⁶⁵ Later, when Kholoche passed away, these two presided together over the funeral.⁶⁶ Later, in 1632 or 1634,

⁶¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 192; 182, 188, 191, 193, 195, *passim*.

⁶² Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, 192-93.

⁶³ Per K. Sørensen, "Restless Relic: The Ārya Lokeśvara Icon in Tibet: Symbol of Power, Legitimacy and pawn for Patronage," in *Pramāṇakṛtiḥ. Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday.*, ed. B. Kellner et al., Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, 70.2, 2007, 869 and 871 n. 25.

⁶⁴ A biography of Kholoche can be found in Qiu Jiushi 瞿九思, *Wanli wu gong lu* 萬曆武功錄 (Record of Military Activities Published in the Wanli Era), Shiliao si bian 史料四編 17, 1972. Cited in OTOSAKA Tomoko 乙坂智子, "A Study of Hong-Hua-Si Temple Regarding the Relationship between the Dge-lugs-pa and the Ming Dynasty," *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 52 (1994): 88.

⁶⁵ His predecessor played a crucial role in the early transmission of the Dge lugs school to Inner Mongolia. Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp and Gray Tuttle, "Altan Qayan (1507-1582) of the Tümed Mongols and the Stag lung Abbot Kun dga' bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1575-1635)," ed. Roberto Vitali, *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, Trails of the Tibetan Tradition: Papers for Elliot Sperling, 31 (February 2015): 471.

⁶⁶ Many sources talk of the defeat of Kholoche at the hands of Tsogtu Khan. The context of Sde ba chos rje's biography, however, suggests that Kholoche died much earlier, in 1621. More research is needed. Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 200. Sde ba

the Khalkha Mongol Tsogtu Taiji (d. 1637) arrived in Kökenuur with his army and soundly defeated the Tümed.⁶⁷ Sde ba chos rje was in Kökenuur at the time, and he fled in fear back east to Bya khyung Monastery. It was known that Tsogtu hated “the Teachings and the followers” of the Dge lugs school,⁶⁸ and Sde ba chos rje and company are said to have escaped the violence thanks to Sde ba chos rje’s spiritual powers.

Sde ba chos rje’s reputation preceded him, however, and Tsogtu Taiji soon invited the master to return to Kökenuur.

... When this Great Lord was residing upon the throne [arranged for him by Tsogtu Taiji], he was wearing atop his head a yellow hat. It is said that Tsogtu remarked, “Lama, seeing you my faith grows. However, seeing this hat I am angry [lit. the mind is sick].” Even though he did not ask for a dharma connection,⁶⁹ he asked numerous religious questions. [Sde ba chos rje] answered them without difficulty. Because [Dewa Chöjé] was without partiality for different religious tenets [*grub mtha’*] and so forth, [Tsogtu’s] faith [in him] grew, and he gave [him] immense offerings and service. In addition, the renunciants of the Sa skya, ‘Brug pa, and Karma also came to have great faith [in Sde ba chos rje]. In particular, the follower of the Karma pa called Zhwa dmar rab ‘byams pa discreetly listened to profound teachings from this Lord, and he also presented [Sde ba chos rje] with a Cornucopia of material offerings. He also asked Tsogtu for numerous famous Tibetan and Oirat patrons, which he thoroughly provided. Also, Tsogtu’s younger son⁷⁰ asked for a dharma connection.⁷¹

chos rje also officiated at the funeral of Kholoche’s son, Lhatsün the Elder (lha btsun che ba) Bstan skyong blo bzang rgya mtsho, in 1631.

⁶⁷ Various sources give either 1632 or 1634. Bilig says Tsogtu Khan arrived in Qinghai in 1634. Oyunbilig Borjigidai 乌云毕力格, “Zhuoketu taiji de lishi yu lishi jiyi 绰克图台吉的历史与历史记忆 (History and Historical Reflections on Tsogtu Taiji),” in *Shiqi shiji Menggu shilun kao* 十七世纪蒙古史论考 (Research on Mongols of the Seventeenth Century), ed. Oyunbilig Borjigidai 乌云毕力格 (Huhehaote shi 呼和浩特市: Neimenggu renmin chubanshe 内蒙古人民出版社, 2009), 243.

⁶⁸ For more on Tsogtu Khan see Oyunbilig Borjigidai 乌云毕力格, “Zhuoketu taiji de lishi yu lishi jiyi.”

⁶⁹ T. chos ‘brel.

⁷⁰ BAN suggests that this might be Asaral erke dayičin. “Darai rama seiken seiritsu zen’ya ni okeru geruku-ha no amudo fukyō: Geruku-ha sōryo depa choje no katsudō o chūshin ni mita,” 5.

⁷¹ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, “Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso,” 222.

Chu bzang Lama's story is bizarrely similar (so similar, in fact, that it's likely a case of conflation or plagiarism): he fled the violence by heading eastward; while serving as abbot of Skum 'bum Monastery (r. 1630-1638), he was invited by Tsogtu back to Kökenuur; the same kind of exchange took place between Tsogtu and Chu bzang, including the reference to the color of the lama's hat. This time the khan lauds *both* Chu bzang *and* Sde ba chos rje: "aside from [your] hat, both Sde ba chos rje and you are worthy to be my lamas."⁷²

All during this time (that is, from the time these lamas left Central Tibet up to the time they served as Kholoche's and later Tsogtu's lamas) both Sde ba chos rje and Chu bzang Lama were making visits to important Dge lugs monasteries, including Thang ring Monastery,⁷³ the famous Qutan 瞿曇寺 (or Gro tshang) Monastery, Dgon lung Monastery.⁷⁴ Important Monguors, such as the Li Family Master (Li kya slob dpon pa) Shes rab seng ge (fl. 1630s), whose title ("Li Family") indicates his connection with the Li clan under the supervision of the Li *tusi*,⁷⁵ sought out Sde ba chos rje, becoming his intimate disciples.

It was perhaps the relationships struck between these lamas (Sde ba chos rje and Chu bzang) and Dgon lung and the Monguors more generally that may account for what happened next. According to Sum pa mkhan po's eighteenth-century *Mtsho sngon kyi lo rgyus* (Annals of Kökenuur), sometime after the year 1634 a decision was reached to invite to Tibet a group of Oirat from Zungharia to help settle the ongoing conflict in Central Tibet. As the eighteenth-century history of Kökenuur by Sum pa mkhan po puts it:

⁷² Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 86.7-86.11. This reproduces nearly verbatim the account found in Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag."

⁷³ The full name is Thang ring bshad sgrub gling or Thang ring dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling.

⁷⁴ The full name is Gro tshang lha khang ko taM sde or Gro tshang lha khang gau dam sde. The biography of Sde ba chos rje mentions these places and several others, which he visited several times during his peregrinations. The details of Chu bzang's life and travels are less clear. On the importance of these earlier, more eastern Dge lugs monasteries see IKEJIRI Yōko, "Nai-hisho-in Mongorubun Tou-an ni miru 17 seiki amudo tōbu no geruku-ha sho jin to shinchō (Early contacts between the Gelug monasteries in eastern Amdo and the Qing dynasty from the perspective of *Čing ulus-un dotuyadu narin bicig-un yamun-u mongyul dangsa*."

⁷⁵ Actually, there were three different Li *tusis*. That this figure was ethnically Monguor is not certain. It is possible he is of another ethnicity (Mongol, Tibet, or even Chinese). However, given that his title is named after one of the ennobled Li *tusi*, and given the likely location of his monastery (Lcang skya brag) in the vicinity of Dgon lung, it is more likely than not that he was Monguor.

At that time, the Tibetan leader [*bod pa dpon*] Bsod nam chos 'phel, along with two bright monks who had gone to Tibet--the Official-Translator 'Ga' ru,⁷⁶ who was a monk from the great monastery of Dgon lung of Amdo, and the one called Sems nyid kha che--had faith in the Dge ldan pa [i.e., Dge lugs pa] but were powerless, and they had to serve as officials to the Gtsang King. At that time, they came to an agreement with the patron of Dga' ldan Monastery in Skyid shod--the governor of Stag rtse Fortress,⁷⁷ Mtsho skye rdo rje [i.e., the nephew of Sde ba chos rje]⁷⁸--after which they requested a prophecy from the La mo Dharma Protector. [The oracle] said, "a leader from the North whose sash has an image of a snake on it [will] be able to quell the enemy." Based on this, either Sems nyid or Translator 'Ga' ru was secretly sent to the land of the Zunghar. At that time, he went to his homeland, whereupon he led a few allied troops from Dpa' ris and arrived in Zungharia.⁷⁹

The messenger is said to have explained to the Zunghars the dire situation of the Geluk school in Tibet, after which Gūūshi Khan made a pilgrimage to Tibet to scout things out.

The reliability of this passage is questionable: it is a late source, and it is written by one closely connected with Dgon lung (Sum pa mkhan po's base monastery is Dgon lung). Moreover, I have not yet been able to identify an earlier attestation.⁸⁰ Were it true, however,

⁷⁶ T. 'Ga' ru *lo tsA ba sna che*.

⁷⁷ T. Stag rtse rdzong.

⁷⁸ This appears to be the Dharma King Mtsho skye rdo rje, the son of the Skyid shod Governor Bsod nam rgya mtshan and thus the nephew of the Governor Dharma King. Sørensen refers to the "*sde pa mTsho-skyes*" as the nephew of Yid bzhin nor bu. Sørensen, "Restless Relic," 873 n. 27. Confusingly, elsewhere he and Hazod write of the son of Bsod nam rgyal mtshan (i.e. a nephew of Yid bzhin nor bu) as having played a major role in Tibetan politics in the mid-1700s, too late to be the same individual. Sørensen and Hazod, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 245 n. 699. Yang has added to the confusion by misquoting Luciano Petech. Petech mentions a Zhabs drung Rdo rje rnam rgyal, a late-seventeenth-century descendant of the Skyid shod governors and the father of the Stag rtse sde pa Lha rgyal rab brtan (d. 1720). Yang, however, misquotes Petech as having said Mtsho skye rdo rje is Lha rgyal rab brtan's father. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 69 nn. 76 and 88 192.

⁷⁹ Translation is my own. Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, *The Annals of Kokonor*, 33–34. Both Yang and Ahmad have translated this passage. Yang identifies both Translator 'Ga' ru and Sems nyid Kha che as being monks of Dgon lung proper. This is a plausible but unlikely reading of the text. *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, Serie Orientale Roma, XL (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), 111–12. I have not yet been able to locate an earlier, seventeenth-century source that corroborates the role of these two monks in inviting Gūūshi Khan from Zungharia.

⁸⁰ Schwieger has summarized the early interactions between the Dge lugs pa and the Oirat in *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the*

the passage would reveal two figures associated with Dgon lung—one from Dgon lung itself, the other from Dgon lung's neighbor and branch monastery, Sems nyid—along with Monguor troops (“from Dpa' ris”) playing a rather significant role in Inner Asian history.

A few years later, in 1637, Gūūshi Khan returned to Amdo with his ally, Baatur Khung-taiji (d. 1653), this time with an army in tow. The combined forces crushed Tsogtu Khan's forces, and these Oirat (principally Khoshud and Zūnghar) settled the region. Chinese records indicate that at this point Gūūshi Khan captured cattle and people in Dpa' ris (specifically in Zhuanglang 莊浪) in the sixth month of 1637.⁸¹ Thus, additional Monguor troops likely joined (were conscripted into) Gūūshi Khan army. The twentieth-century historian Tsepon Wangchuk Shakabpa adds that,

In the fifth month of that year [1640], Gushri Khan together with the Mongolian army and the forces of Amdo Parik [a mdo'i dpa' rigs] moved into the Beri [Be ri] region in Dotö [Mdo stod], and without needing to wage a large war, many divisions of Beri's forces surrendered.⁸²

The name “Parik” is said to derive from “*dpa' bo'i rus*,” i.e. “lineage of heroes, and refers to the people of Dpa' ris where Dgon lung is located.⁸³ Thus, it appears that the Monguors lent an assist to Gūūshi Khan's conquest of the enemies of the Dge lugs school.

When Gūūshi Khan and his army settled on the Tibetan Plateau, Sde ba chos rje and Chu bzang Lama—who had proved to be dependable lamas to the two previous Mongol rulers of Kökenuur—were once again called upon for counsel. Sde ba chos rje advised both

Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 46–49.

⁸¹ Sui Hao-min 隋皓昀, “Wang tu yu wang chen: Qingchao zhili qinghai Meng Zang liang bu zhi yanjiu 王土與王臣——清朝治理青海蒙藏兩部之研究 (The King's Land and the King's Subjects: Research on Administering the Mongols and the Tibetans of Qinghai)” (Ph.D., National Chung Cheng University, 2011), 55, citing the *Pingding shuomo fanglüe* 平定朔漠方略. My thanks to Professor Sui for sharing this information with me.

⁸² Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons: An Advanced Political History of Tibet (bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs)*, trans. Derek F. Maher, Tibetan Studies Library 23 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 340; Shakabpa [Zhwa sgab pa], *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs* (Political History of Tibet), vol. 1 (n.p.: Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa Memorial Foundation, 2007), 414. I have not yet been able to locate the source of Shakabpa's claim.

⁸³ 'Brug thar, *Mdo smad byang shar gyi bod kyi tsho ba shog pa'i lo rgyus dang rig gnas bcas par dpyad pa* (An Investigation of the Culture and History of the Tibetan “Villages” (tsho ba) and “Federations” (shog pa) in Northeastern Amdo), Par thens 1. (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 254.

Baatur Khung-taiji and Gūūshi Khan on the importance of non-violence and religious tolerance, and he gave religious teachings and empowerments.⁸⁴ Indeed, the scholar Yon tan rgya mtsho has gone as far as to suggest that the primary reason Gūūshi Khan had for coming to Tibet was the Gtsang King's refusal to return lands to the Skyid shod family.⁸⁵ However, Sde ba chos rje cautioned against using military force to retrieve his estates: "If you are able to retrieve my estates with propriety [*gzhung mthun po*], do that. Otherwise, to use military force to retrieve them does not abide by the dharma relationship [I have]."⁸⁶ Yon tan rgya mtsho also suggests that Gūūshi Khan's failure to follow through with his promise to return the Skyid shod lands may be due to death of Sde ba chos rje in 1638, after which point Gūūshi Khan lost interest in the family.⁸⁷

Chu bzang, too, is said to have given many teachings to Gūūshi Khan, although he apparently lacked the restraint of his colleague, instructing Gūūshi Khan to "tame [the king of] Be ri, the Gtsang pa, and such enemies of the Dge lugs pa."⁸⁸ Sometime shortly thereafter he was invited to serve as abbot of Dgon lung, a position he held from 1639 to 1648. Significantly, we read in the eighteenth-century chronicle of Dgon lung that,

Previously, when he received the invitation to assume the throne of Dgon lung, Gūūshi Khan said to him, "after you go to serve as abbot, do great acts of the dharma. I too will try my best to help."

⁸⁴ Schwieger, citing an archival document from Kun bde gling, explains that Sde ba chos rje was the chief lama (*dbu bla ma*) of Gūūshi Khan. Schwieger, "A Nearly-Forgotten Dge lugs pa Incarnation Line as Manorial Lord in Bkra shis ljongs, Central Tibet," 99.

⁸⁵ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 33. Yon tan rgya mtsho's source for this is the eighteenth-century *Deb ther rgya mtsho* (i.e., the *Mdo smad chos 'byung*). He recognizes other competing narratives, too, particularly Gūūshi Khan's concern for the attacks on the Dge lugs school by the Gtsang King. As I note below, the 1644 biography of Sde ba chos rje also alludes to the importance for Gūūshi Khan of recovering Sde ba chos rje's estates.

⁸⁶ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 242. The dharma connection (*chos 'brel*) to which Sde ba chos rje refers may be one between him and the object of Gūūshi's ire: the ruler of Tsang. Nothing is said of such a relationship in Sde ba chos rje's biography, although we might surmise that such a relationship emerged during an eight-month period he spent as a captive in Gzhis ka rtse. Recall, too, that Sde ba chos rje had been lauded by Tsogtu Khan for his non-sectarian approach to the dharma.

⁸⁷ Yon tan rgya mtsho, *Dge ldan chos 'byung gser gyi mchod sdong 'bar ba*, 34. The other reasons Yon tan rgya mtsho gives are laid out on pp. 31-2.

⁸⁸ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag," 687/28a.1; Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 86.12-13.

Accordingly, he gave all of *Dpa' ris* as an estate for *Dgon lung*.⁸⁹

As abbot, Chu bzang gave significantly to the monastery, donating statues, stūpas, infrastructure, salaries, food, and, of course, teachings to the congregation of the monastery.⁹⁰ Chu bzang is portrayed as a conduit for wealth that contributed greatly to the growth of this monastery.

Long ago, the scholar Zahiruddin Ahmad noticed this succession of relationships that were maintained between Central Tibet and whatever Mongol force occupied the Kökenuur region:

From this time onwards [i.e. after 1579, when Kholoche became ruler of Kökenuur], a very close connection was maintained between Tibet and the Valley of the Blue Lake (*mtsho kha*). 'Kho lo che's son, Guru Khung-taiji, fought the Ruler of Gtsang at Rkyang thang sgang in 1621. In c. 1634, the Valley was occupied by the Khalkha prince, Chog-thu Taiji. In 1637, Chog-thu was defeated, and his territory seized by Guši Khan (1582-1655), the Khan of a branch of the Western Mongols, coming from the Valley of the Ili river. Neither the removal of 'Kho lo che in c. 1634, nor that of Chog-thu in 1637, seems to have meant the end of their lines in Koko-nor. For, we hear of messengers from Chog-thu Tha'i ji of Koko-nor at the Court of the Dalai Lama on 24 August 1671; and of one Da'i ching Ko lo che on 15 April 1677. But their rule over the Valley of the Blue Lake, no doubt, ended in c. 1634 and 1637 respectively. ...⁹¹

He did not, however, identify Chu bzang Lama and especially Sde ba chos rje and his brothers as the lynchpin to this connection. Sde ba chos rje's presence in Amdo was constant, and we find him in Kökenuur in 1626 giving empowerments to a gathering of *dge bshes* and other scholars as well as Mongol royalty.⁹² He was there again in 1627 or 1628, whereupon he made a vow not to accept that emblem of wealth and gratitude among the Mongols, namely meat, thereby taking part in the "civilizing" project initiated by the Third Dalai Lama just forty years earlier.⁹³ Likewise, Sde ba chos rje's brothers,

⁸⁹ Thu'u bkwan III Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag," 687/28a.3-4. Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 28a.4-28b.1.

⁹¹ Zahiruddhin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, Serie Orientale Roma XL (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), 65.

⁹² Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 211.

⁹³ On the Third Dalai Lama's missionizing in Mongolia see Johan Elverskog, *The Jewel Translucent Sūtra: Altan Khan and the Mongols in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden;

the exiled Skyid shod Governor Bsod nam rgyal mtshan and his brother Yid bzhin nor bu, both spent a great deal of time in Kökenuur. The relationships established and maintained by the Skyid shod family and by Chu bzang were to prove crucial to the success of the Dge lugs school.

The Afterlife of Sde ba chos rje

Shortly after meeting Güüshi Khan and Baatur Khung-taiji, in 1638, the abbot and former abbots of Dgon lung along with local patrons and meditators all invited Sde ba chos rje back to Dgon lung, asking him to officiate at the upcoming New Year's ceremonies, an invitation he accepted.⁹⁴ At that time he also lectured on some of the details of the rebirth process, telling the origins of the seven generations of the Karma pa lineage and also explaining that, in some miraculous cases of the rebirth of holy persons, the child does not have to be in the mother's womb for a full term.⁹⁵ This sermon may have been the catalyst for identifying Dgon lung's first incarnate lama, Lcang skya II, just a few years later.⁹⁶

Sde ba chos rje passed away the very next month. Based on his own earlier request, Chu bzang Lama officiated at the funeral. The consequence of having Sde ba chos rje perspire at Dgon lung was that the monastery was suddenly on the receiving end of much largess. Not long thereafter, Sde ba chos rje's brother, Governor Yid bzhin nor bu, came to Dgon lung to pay his respects and made donations to all the monasteries of Amdo. "In particular," we read,

he venerated the ocean-like assembly of Dgon lung and so on by giving "mass teas" [*mang ja*] and bread⁹⁷ night and day, each day,

Boston: Brill, 2003), 158–59. Significantly, after Sde ba chos rje passed away, all of those influenced by his teachings—including Chinese, Tibetans, Mongols, and Oirat—are said to have forsaken the taking of life (i.e. butchering). Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 215 and 252.

⁹⁴ Officials (*drung 'khor*) from the Skyid shod polity are also said to have urged him to go to Dgon lung. Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 247–48.

⁹⁵ Rong po grub chen I Skal Idan rgya mtsho, 249. I do not know the context or specific referent of this statement, although the implication seems to be that a boy who is born less than nine months after the death of a holy person can still be considered as the rebirth of the deceased holy person.

⁹⁶ This happened before 1646.

⁹⁷ T. *tsha bra*. I am taking this to be an alternative spelling of *'tshab ra*, which is used in various texts from A mdo (such as Thu'u bkwan III's chronicle of Dgon lung and the *bca' yig* of Dgon lung and that of Kan chen Monasteries) to refer to bread.

thereby accomplishing a lavish memorial service [for Sde ba chos rje.]⁹⁸

Also around this time Sde ba chos rje's nephew⁹⁹ was invited to Dgon lung, where he built a shrine hall and reliquary and established a fund for making continual offerings to the deceased lama.

The presence of this reliquary at Dgon lung was a boon for the monastery for decades to come. We read in the chronicle of the monastery:

formerly, when the Skyid shod sprul sku Bstan 'dzin blo bzang rgya mtsho came to Kökenuur, the Queen Anu, as an offering for having listened to the dharma, gave [him] some five hundred households of communities¹⁰⁰ from the Shar drang Ruler along the banks of the Yellow River. Skyid shod pa made this an estate endowment of Dgon lung. Up until the time of unrest [i.e. 1723] [the monastery] would annually collect taxes from these divine communities,¹⁰¹ and they would be offered to the reliquary of Skyid shod at Dgon lung, and so on.¹⁰²

This three-way relationship struck between Skyid shod sprul sku, the Oirat, and Dgon lung Monastery would have repercussions that lasted well into the eighteenth century. For instance, Yon tan rgya mtsho has surmised that one of the main reasons for the major 1723 rebellion of Gūūshi's grandson Lubsang-Danzin (which included monks from Dgon lung and neighboring monasteries), was the Manchu killing of Lubsang-Danzin's close ally and descendant of the Skyid shod ruling family, Sde pa stag rtse Lha rgyal rab brtan in 1720.¹⁰³

See also the use in note 22 above. For a more specialized use of the term see Zhang Yisun 张怡菽, ed., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (The Great Chinese-Tibetan Dictionary) (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2008), 2242.

⁹⁸ Rong po grub chen I Skal ldan rgya mtsho, "Biography of Dewa Chöjé Tendzin Lozang Gyatso," 250.

⁹⁹ *sku'i dbon po*.

¹⁰⁰ *T. mi sde*.

¹⁰¹ *T. lha sde*.

¹⁰² Thu'u bkwan III Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, "Dgon lung gi dkar chag," 770/69b.4-770/69b.6.

¹⁰³ Yon tan rgya mtsho, "Skyid shod sde pa'i skor," 37. However, see also Paul Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," in *Buddhism Between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 185; and, see especially KATŌ Naoto, "Accession to the Throne of Yung-Cheng and Lobdzang Danjin's Rebellion," in *Proceedings of the 35th Permanent International Altaistic Conference, September 12-17, 1992, Taipei, China* (Di 35 jie shijie

The historic ties between Dgon lung and their Oirat patrons are further reflected by the fact that the monastery housed the remains of Dashibaatar (1632-1714), the ruler of Kökenuur, Gūushi's youngest son and father to Lubsang-Danzin. The Franciscan missionary Giovanni Battista (1669-1725)¹⁰⁴ composed a map and report of his activity in 1714 or 1715, and there he notes that “days ago the cremated bones of the above-mentioned Khan were carried for burial to the tomb of the Tatar Kings, a tomb situated on the borders of his kingdom between Chuang-lang 莊浪 and Xining in the midst of the high and steep mountains.”¹⁰⁵ The map drawn by Battista indicates the general area where his remains were interred (denoted as “sepolcri dei Re Tartari ne monti,” “tombs of the Tartar kings in the mountains”),¹⁰⁶ namely Dpa'i ris.



Detail of a part of Battista's map. Chuang-lang (Pinyin: Zhuanglang) is present-day Yongdeng County, Gansu Province. The map, with south on top and north on bottom, shows the Mongol tombs to be in the mountains of the Dpa'i ris region to the northeast of Xining garrison ("Sining wei") across the Xining River (Huangshui 湟水).

a'ertai xuehui huiyi jilu), ed. Ch'ieh Hsien Ch'en (Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies Materials, United Daily News Cultural Foundation, 1993), 192.

¹⁰⁴ He was active in Shaanxi, Gansu, and Ili for about fifteen years. B. Szcześniak, "The Description and Map of Kansu by Giovanni Battista Maoletti de Serravalle," *Monumenta Serica* 18 (1959): 294–95.

¹⁰⁵ Szcześniak, 302–3. This map was brought to my attention by Rachael Griffiths (Oxford University) during her presentation at the 2016 IATS conference in Bergen, Norway. I would also like to thank Max Oidtmann (Georgetown University) for sharing with me this article in particular.

¹⁰⁶ Translation by Szcześniak. Szcześniak, 298.

A memorial from the Qing general Nian Gengyao 年羹尧 (d. 1726) explains that “Dgon lung ... formerly established good relations with [Dashibaatar’s son] Lubsang-Danzin[,] Arabten Ombu [Alabudanemubu 阿拉布坦俄木布], and so forth. The corpse of Lubsang-Danzin’s father, Dashibaatar, is placed inside the monastery.”¹⁰⁷ Nian further notes that, in the lead-up to the Lubsang-Danzin rebellion or shortly after it began, the remains of Dashibaatar were carried away from Dgon lung lest they be destroyed during the ensuing violence between Qing troops and the locals (both monks and non-monks) who fought against the Qing.

As we read in Nian Gengyao’s memorial to the Qianlong emperor, it is the very fact that Dgon lung held and protected the corpse of this Oirat ruler that caused the Qianlong emperor so much fury:

Dgon lung is very large, and since former times it harbored the bandit masses. Moreover, the corpse of Dashibaatar had previously been carried away. Seeing this it is clear that from early on [it] shared intentions with the rebelling bandit Lubsang-Danzin. (Vermillion rescript: This is most clear! They attacked us. What more is there to say?) Therefore, fire was set to Dgon lung, and it burned to the ground. (Vermillion rescript: Most reasonable! There still could be evil, disorderly people who take shelter there in the future. Just kill the monks and burn down the temples. Eliminate [any] talk of the Mongols that resides in the minds [of the people]. If something needs to be rectified then rectify it.)¹⁰⁸

Dgon lung never recovered from this devastation. When it did rebuild, it did so with a new, imperially prescribed name: Youning si, “the Monastery that Protects the Peace,” clearly indicating its position vis-à-vis the Qing.¹⁰⁹ Even though the monastery would regrow its population, boasting as many as 3,000 monks at the end of

¹⁰⁷ Nian Gengyao, *Nian Gengyao Man Han zouzhe yi bian* 年羹尧满汉奏折译编 (Collected and Translated Manchu and Chinese Memorials of Nian Gengyao), trans. Ji Yonghai, Li Pansheng, and Xie Zhining (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1995), 69. My thanks to Wu Lan (Mount Holyoke) for bringing this source to my attention. Katō, working from the Manchu materials, has previously written about this. KATŌ Naoto, “Warrior Lamas: The Role of Lamas in Lobjang Danjin’s Uprising in Kokonor, 1723-1724,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, no. 62 (2004): 29–43.

¹⁰⁸ Nian, *Nian Gengyao Man Han zou zhe yi bian*. See also KATŌ Naoto, “Warrior Lamas.”

¹⁰⁹ Chab ’gag rta mgrin, *Bod yig rdo ring zhib ’jug: Zangwen beiwen yanjiu* 藏文碑文研究 (Research on Tibetan-language Steles) (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2012), 297–98.

the nineteenth century, and even though its lamas in the eighteenth century—Sum pa mkhan po, Thu'u bkwan III, and Lcang skya III—were extremely prolific and renowned throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world, the monastery itself was eclipsed by other monasteries, such as the young Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, which had escaped the destruction of Nian Gengyao and yet retained as its principle patron a descendant of Gūūshi Khan.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

In a recent, long and detailed article based on Mongolian and Manchu routine memorials of the Court of Colonial Affairs (Ch. Lifanyuan 理藩院), Kung Ling-wei describes the process by which the most important Dge lugs monasteries ceased to be those dominated by Tibetans in Taozhou 洮州 and Minzhou 岷州 close to China Proper (near Co ne) and became instead those dominated by a mixture of Monguors, Mongols, and Tibetans farther to the west in what is today Qinghai Province. He asks,

why, after all, did the Qing court depreciate the Tibetan monasteries of Taozhou and Minzhou, which held an illustrious status during the Ming dynasty, and instead contribute to the fame and power of Qinghai monasteries? The answer clearly has to do with the rise in the seventeenth century of Khoshud Mongols who were faithful to the Dge lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism.¹¹¹

In other words, the reason for the switch from enfeebling Tibetan lamas and militarizing Tibetan monasteries¹¹² in what is today south-central Gansu Province to patronizing the monasteries located in the vicinity of Xining is that the Qing court's main Inner Asian nemesis—the Oirat—had established a presence in the latter location. By the

¹¹⁰ Nietupski, "The 'Reverend Chinese' (Gyanakapa Tsang)," 186.

¹¹¹ Kung Ling-wei 孔令偉, "Tao Min Zangchuan fo si ru Qing zhi xingshuai ji qi baihou de Menggu yinsu--yi 'Neige daku dang' yu 'Lifanyuan Man-Mengwen tiben' wei hexin 洮岷藏傳佛寺入清之興衰及其背後的蒙古因素--以《內閣大庫檔》與《理藩院滿蒙文題本》為核心 (The Development of Tibetan Monasteries in Amdo and the Mongolian Factors during Ming-Qing Dynasties: Study on Tibetan Monks in the Manchu-Mongolian Routine Memorials of Lifanyuan)," *Zhongyang yanyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 中央研院歷史語言研究所集刊 86, no. 4 (February 2015): 883–84. My thanks to Kung for sharing with me this tremendous piece of scholarship.

¹¹² OTOSAKA Tomoko 乙坂智子, "A Study of Hong-hua-si Temple Regarding the Relationship between the dGe-lugs-pa and the Ming Dynasty."

eighteenth century the Qing court had even institutionalized a hierarchy of twelve influential “Peking Lamas” (Beijing-based lamas who served the court), at the top of which we find the Lcang skya Khutugtu, and among which we find as many as seven lamas who are based in what is today Qinghai Province.¹¹³ As many as six of these lamas hailed from monasteries in Dpa’ ris in particular.¹¹⁴

This article reveals some of the details of this process and period of transition. The Qing was drawn to the area in question (Dpa’ ris and Kökennur) because the Oirats were drawn there. The Oirats were drawn there because of the roles played by Central Tibetan lamas, particularly Sde ba chos rje, in Amdo who had important connections to Dgon lung Monastery in Dpa’ ris. Thus an important, historical network was established that connected the Oirats from the Ili Valley, the Skyid shod family from the Lhasa valley, and Dgon lung Monastery and its own network of related monasteries in Amdo. Moreover, what the above history shows us is how the Monguors and Dgon lung Monastery—in the first fifty years of the monastery’s existence alone—made themselves instrumental nodes in the developing network of Inner Asian affairs.

Dgon lung Monastery began when local religious and political leaders took advantage of the visit to the region in 1584 of the Third

¹¹³ One of the first scholars to discuss the system of “Peking Lamas” is Robert James Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia* (Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1959), 26 and 160; See also Xiangyun Wang, “Tibetan Buddhism at the Court of Qing: The Life and Work of lCang-skya Rol-pa’i-rdo-rje (1717-1786)” (Harvard University, 1995), 160. Wang identifies his source for understanding the system: *Jiaqing Da Qing huidian* as compiled in the book *Qingdai lifanyuan ziliao jilu* (Collected Materials Concerning the Department of Colonial Affairs of the Qing Dynasty). See also Kung Ling-wei 孔令偉, “Tao Min Zangchuan fo si ru Qing zhi xingshuai ji qi baihou de Menggu yinsu,” 882–83. The system also listed two other lamas who were stationed in Dolonnuur. The seven Peking lamas hailing from Qinghai are Lcang skya, Smin grol Nomun-qan, Galdan Shiretu (Gser khri), Stong ’khor, ’Od gser, A gya, and Thu’u bkwan. It is not exactly clear where the ’Od gser lineage was based. However, Sum pa mkhan po appears to include a “’od ser” among a list of “great lamas of Dgon lung.” See Sum pa mkhan po’s autobiography: *Gsung ’bum* (Collected Works), Sata-pitaka (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975), vol. 8, p. 483/57a.4.

¹¹⁴ This is the aforementioned seven minus Galdan Shiretu. He came to be installed as a lama at Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil, although this lineage also has historical contacts with and influence throughout the Kökenuur region and Dpa’ ris, too. By the mid-Qing the main monastery of Stong ’khor was Stong ’khor dga’ ldan chos ’khor gling in what is today Huangyuan County; however, this lineage also was very active at Mchod rten thang and at other monasteries in Dpa’ ris. I also count A kya of Sku ’bum among the six because of the plausible connection between this incarnation lineage and the Monguor A kya clan. However, see Joachim Günter Karsten, “A Study on the Sku-’bum/T’a-Erh Ssu Monastery in Ching-Hai” (Thesis, University of Auckland, 1996), 107 n. 8.

Dalai Lama:¹¹⁵ a dozen of them arrived in Lhasa in 1603 to beseech the Dalai Lama's successor to establish the monastery that would become Dgon lung.¹¹⁶ Monks from Dgon lung began making their way to Central Tibet where they earned reputations as scholars and spiritual adepts.¹¹⁷ From this point on, important hierarchs from Central Tibet, such as Chu bzang Lama and Sde ba chos rje, would pay visits to Dgon lung among other places in Amdo.

As such, it is not implausible that a monk from Dgon lung or from one of Dgon lung's child monasteries was designated to lead Dpa' ris troops to Züngharia to ask for assistance from Gūüshi Khan—after all, Dgon lung was a Dge lugs outpost with legendary ties to Chinggis Khan.¹¹⁸ We have also seen that the Monguors were not shy about lending their military might to the major conflicts of Inner Asia, as when troops from Dpa' ris participated in Gūüshi Khan's conquest of the King of Be ri in Khams. Such Monguor participation in the military conflicts of Inner Asian history would continue throughout the Ming and Qing Dynasties.¹¹⁹

Finally, that Dgon lung developed such strong relations with two of the leading hierarchs from Central Tibet—Chu bzang, who served as the monastery's abbot for a decade, and Sde ba chos rje, who passed away there and whose relics were enshrined there—hierarchs who, moreover, had given religious teachings and political counsel to Gūüshi Khan and Baatur Khung-taiji, meant that Dgon lung rose in status especially in the eyes of the new Oirat rulers of Kökenuur and Tibet. It is at least partially due to this that Dgon lung as well as its branch monasteries of Chu bzang and Gser khog are almost always included in lists of “the three great monasteries of Mdo smad” or the

¹¹⁵ Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung baiDUrya ser po*, 340; Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Vaidūrya-ser-po* (A History of the Dge-lugs-pa Monasteries of Tibet), ed. Lokesh Chandra, Śata-pitaka, 12 (1, 2) (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1960), 266.

¹¹⁶ Brag dgon zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos byung*, 54.28. The chronicle of Dgon lung says the year was 1602.

¹¹⁷ One of the earliest examples of this is that of 'Dan ma Tshul khirms rgya mtsho (1578-1663/1665), on which see Sullivan, “The First Generation of Dge lugs Evangelists in Amdo: The Case of 'Dan ma Tshul khirms rgya mtsho (1578-1663/65),” under review.

¹¹⁸ The Monguor rulers also would have been increasingly concerned about the anti-Ming uprising led by Li Zicheng 李自成. Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 57.27; Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 132; Yang Yingju, *Xining fu xin zhi* 西宁府新志 (New Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture), (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1988), 24.

¹¹⁹ Louis Schram's three-volume study of the Monguors cites many of these instances.

“four great monasteries of the north.”¹²⁰ This also helps to explain why today Dgon lung is relatively unknown apart from its association with its incarnate lamas, particularly Lcang skya: after the demise of the Skyid shod family and the repression and incorporation of Oirat power into the Qing, Dgon lung’s own unique position as intermediary between these mid-seventeenth century powers was overshadowed by a new story, that of the expanding dominion of the Dge lugs school and its relationship with the Qing Empire.

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¹²⁰ On the “three great monasteries of Mdo smad” see Shes rab dar rgyas, *Rje ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan Biography*, 76b.1; Thu’u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, “Dgon lung gi dkar chag,” 717/38a.3. On the “four great monasteries of the North” see Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor, *Autobiography of Sumba Kanbo*, 205–6; Françoise Robin, “A Brief History of Amdo,” trans. Nigel Ritchie (n.d.). Gser khog Monastery is occasionally dropped from the list of four to be replaced with either Bya khyung or Sku ’bum.

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