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BHUTAN BEFORE THE BRITISH

a historical study

by

John A. Ardussi

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This thesis is based on original research undertaken in the Department of Asian Civilizations at the Australian National University.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John A. Ardussi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a distinct 'A'.

John A. Ardussi

ABSTRACT

Among South Asian countries, the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is perhaps the least well known, both in terms of its modern culture and its historical past. As a "buffer state" between the major cultures of India and Tibet, its history has remained largely unexplored by scholars of India and the West, and by those of Tibet. The increasing availability of authentic indigenous Bhutanese historical literature now makes such a study possible. This dissertation seeks to explore this literature and to present a diachronic account of Bhutanese history from about the 7th century A.D. to events immediately prior to the advent of relations with British India in the 1770's. The second chapter studies the available and potential sources for the study of Bhutan's history. Chapters three and four briefly deal with the spread of Buddhist culture from Tibet, and with various traditional conceptions of Bhutanese historiography. Chapter five describes the founding of the earliest unified national government during the 17th century, a hereditary ecclesiastic monarchy. In chapters six and seven are related the events which led to the abandonment of hereditary monarchy in favour of a system of rule by incarnate Lamas. The difficulties attending this attempted alteration of the government's constitutional basis dominated political events from 1694 to 1744, and these are related in chapter eight. Early contact with Manchu officialdom during the half century before 1744 is also discussed. The fundamental change in foreign policy attitudes towards the north which emerged at this time culminated in a more open and politically mature government during the decades before about 1770. Chapter nine describes these developments, and attempts to depict the political situation which existed in Bhutan at the time of the earliest British Indian missions. Throughout this study, the major emphasis is placed on indigenous, Bhutanese perspectives.

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Among the modern nations of South Asia the kingdom of Bhutan can claim a rather interesting record. It has been the last to significantly modify traditional policies of political and cultural isolation, the last to undertake a program of "modernization", the last to join the United Nations and other world bodies. In an earlier period of its history, it resisted more successfully than any of its Himalayan neighbours the pressures of European colonial penetration. And it remains the last South Asian country to be adequately studied for its historic past.

Aside from the usual assortment of popular works, and semi-official writings by British Indian officers published during the last century, modern academic study of Bhutan has tended to concentrate on recent diplomatic history and political analysis. A preliminary geo-ecological study by Pradyumna Karan and associates is exceptional.¹ The modern bias of existing research can be explained by the relative inaccessibility of indigenous historical source materials, a traditional isolationist policy closely restricting foreign entry, and the greater "relevance" of modern events. There is also the fact that the present Royal Government of Bhutan has existed as such only since 1907, and that its recent entry into world affairs under Indian guidance has attracted special attention to relations between these two countries. This relationship, finally, is the modern sequel to British Indian policies implemented from the 1770's, for which English-language archival material is fairly abundant.

Among recent studies of Indo-Bhutanese diplomatic history, perhaps the most thorough is that of Kapileshwar Labh.² A more specialized social scientific analysis by V.J. Belfiglio has examined India's relations with Nepal, Bhutan, and the (former) Kingdom of Sikkim with a view to deriving a relational political theory with wider descriptive applicability.³ The

principal inadequacy of these and similar studies, however, is that they largely ignore the other half of the political equation, namely Bhutan's relationship with Tibet, now the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. Historically, this has been far more intense and influential than the connection with India. It is also more complex and less well understood. Nevertheless, useful social scientific study of Bhutan must inevitably take into account relational patterns which emerge from the country's own history. The twin "isolationist" and "balance of power" principles which Rose has distilled from a study of traditional Nepalese foreign policy⁴ will find closer counterparts in Bhutan, I think, than theories which ignore the essential fact of the country's long history as a "buffer" region between more powerful states to the north and south. Ultimately, however, Bhutan's pattern of foreign relations has been a unique response to the demands and stresses of its own history.

The present study, therefore, has a very different end in view, namely to describe and analyse the broader history of Bhutan before the period of British involvement, specifically the period to 1763, and to do so as far as possible on the basis of indigenous historical sources. These are far more numerous than was once thought to be the case, and already sufficient such material is available to construct a moderately detailed account of the country from about 1600 down to the early 20th century, within the constraints of traditional Bhutanese historiography. The constraints are mainly religious, a function of the country's historical dominance by Mahāyāna Buddhist elites, originally Tibetan in origin, and a normative world view according to which the proper role of historical research was both subjective and morally prescriptive. "History" in Bhutan has tended to fix upon the lives of virtuous leaders and their exemplary deeds, while both its writing and publication were essentially monastic enterprises. Consequently hagiography was cultivated as a high

literary art, and its best examples certainly rival or surpass anything written in the genre by Tibetan monks and yogins. The problems of reducing such material to the requirements of "objective" and morally neutral history, the accepted Western model, will be discussed elsewhere.

The time interval covered by the present study is readily explained. It begins with the earliest recorded information about the Bhutan region, datable to the 7th century A.D. An earlier account by J.C. White which sought to place certain historical events in the 7th century B.C. is now known to be based on folk lore from eastern Bhutan, committed to writing probably in the 17th century.⁵ In 1763 the Thirteenth Sde-srid or "Deb Rāja" retired from office, and his reign forms a landmark in the country's history. Within three years a preliminary skirmish between Bhutanese soldiers and a British Indian exploratory party had taken place⁶ and in 1773 the war over Cooch Bihar ensued. Since it is our deliberate intent to avoid a study of Anglo-Bhutanese relations, 1763 has been adopted as a terminal date.

Since many of the literary sources used here have only recently become accessible to scholars outside Bhutan, special attention has been given to a description of their general character and historical value. An attempt has further been made to note the existence of currently inaccessible historical works and, where known, the names of their authors and titles. Numerous old manuscripts are now being reproduced in Bhutan in photo-reprint form, in addition to which modern Bhutanese scholars are becoming increasingly active in compiling new studies of their country's past. These are encouraging signs, and we may expect that in the near future foreign scholars will be much better informed about Bhutan's history than is possible even now. To that extent, at least, the present study is still exploratory.

Owing to the character of our source material, the research presented here inevitably possesses a "Tibetological" appearance, and in fact the first thousand years of modern Bhutan's recorded history are virtually a record of settlement and missionizing from the north. These processes ultimately imposed a very Tibetan character upon the elite culture of Bhutan, and its first leader of national stature, Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, was himself a Tibetan ecclesiastic exile.⁷ However, it would be a gross historical error to freely equate the two cultures, whatever the superficial resemblances of their literary records. The problem is one of information. Reliable and detailed ethnographic studies of modern Bhutan have never been published, consequently the writing of social history would be absurd at this point. In any case extrapolation from the present to the past is a risky practice, and will not be attempted here.

The history attempted here presents as far as possible an indigenous diachronic perspective, one which emerges from the sources themselves rather than as interpreted by some external theory or framework. In a few instances I have in fact virtually paraphrased original passages, to convey something of the flavour of the native scholar's vision of events, for that also is part of the history. On the other hand critical analysis of important matters has not been neglected, and a special effort has been made to elucidate and explore certain patterns and themes. An obvious and important theme is the complex and often contradictory relationship between Tibet and Bhutan. Another is the evolution of the 17th century state's constitutional basis, from an ecclesiastic monarchy to a complicated reincarnate structure which has so far defied adequate description, and which continued to be modified even after 1763. Although the new monarchy declared in 1907 legally replaced the older ecclesiastic government, sometimes called the "Zhabs-drung system", an understanding of the latter's constitutional vicissitudes will help explain why the change was perhaps

inevitable. Finally, monarchy itself has ancient roots in Bhutan, possibly as an indigenous institution, but also as a theory idealized in scripture and tradition by the country's two principal religious sects, the 'Brug-pa and Rnying-ma-pa.

* * * * *

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Individually, thanks are owing to Professor A.L. Basham, Head of The Department of Asian Civilizations, for patient supervision and advice on the progress of this research, as well as to Dr J.T.F. Jordens, who also assisted with my supervision, and Dr. S.A.A. Rizvi of the same Department for contributions of time and information. During initial phases of this research, advice, information, and other contributions have been readily forthcoming from Professors A. Gargano, L. Petech, L.E. Rose, R.A. Stein, G. Tucci, and T.V. Wylie, as well as from Mr Hugh Richardson of Fife, Scotland, and Mr E.G. Smith of New Delhi. The last in particular supplied copies of several rare Tibetan works, bibliographic and other information, and a MS outline for several chapters of a book he has been writing on the history of Bhutan. Similarly, Professor David Snellgrove and Mr Philip Denwood of the University of London (S.O.A.S.) generously allowed copies

of several rare MSS and microfilms from their private collections to be prepared for my use, as did Professor Tucci and Mr Richardson.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Pradyumna P. Karan, Bhutan: A Physical and Cultural Geography, Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1967.
- ² Kapileshwar Labh, India and Bhutan, New Delhi, Sindhu Publications Ltd., 1974.
- ³ V.J. Belfiglio, "Indian Cultural Similarities and Dissimilarities with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal," Indo-Asian Culture 20, pt. 4 (1971), pp. 48-58, and the same author's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation The Foreign Relations of India with Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal between 1947-1967, University of Oklahoma, 1970.
- ⁴ Leo E. Rose, "Sino-Indian Rivalry and the Himalayan Border States," Orbis 5 (1961), pp. 204-209, and L.E. Rose, Nepal: Strategy for Survival (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 276-91.
- ⁵ J.C. White, Sikkim & Bhutan (N.Y.: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909), p. 99.
- ⁶ A.R. Field, "A Note Concerning early Anglo-Bhutanese Relations," East & West 13 (1962), p. 341.
- ⁷ The system of transcription from Tibetan used throughout this study is that described in T.V. Wylie, "A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 22 (1959), pp. 261-67.

Chapter II: Sources for the Study of Bhutanese History to 1763

The principal sources for the study of the history of Bhutan before 1763 comprise mainly individual hagiographies (rnam-thar) and biographical collectanea (gser-'phreng) of monks and yogis belonging to the family and incarnation lineages which gained prominence there between the 13th and 17th centuries. From ca. 1616 onwards, following the establishment of the Southern 'Brug-pa sect as the leading religio-political entity in the country, these documents are predominantly Bhutanese in origin, whereas Tibetan materials are the more numerous before that date. For the 18th century Chinese sources are also of some use, while during the last quarter of that century, though beyond the period of this study, Indian land and taxation records from the southern Bhutanese frontier areas become increasingly available.¹ Since there have been virtually no published studies examining or making use of the materials upon which this study is based,² some general comments concerning their scope, quantity, and reliability are desirable.

A. Language of the local sources

The literary culture of Tibet arose within religious institutions, and throughout history remained largely their prerogative. Nevertheless, the Tibetan finds from Tun-huang confirm that written Tibetan was also used very early for keeping administrative records of a non-religious character. Although literacy among lay government officials was probably relatively high in more recent centuries, there is no real way to judge the pattern and extend of written language skills for the more remote past. In any event, we may assume that from the time of the introduction of writing from India (ca. A.D. 632) to the end of the Royal Dynastic Period of

Tibetan history, with the assassination of king Glang Dar-ma (A.D. 842), knowledge of writing remained confined to a relatively small circle of royal officials, clerks and officers, and to the budding community of monastic scholars officially engaged to study and translate Buddhist canonical texts.³

Since, as is apparent, Bhutan's literate culture developed entirely as an offshoot of Tibetan models, it is not surprising to find that the standard language for religious historical writing has always been what is usually termed Classical or Literary Tibetan.⁴ As in Tibet, the vernacular dialects do not appear to have been used until very recently for government records, though research into Bhutanese archives may eventually show otherwise. Moreover, it would also seem that the traditional pattern of literacy in Bhutan has paralleled the Tibetan in being largely confined to the upper levels of the clergy and dominant families. Thus, there is a great degree of uniformity between the traditional sources of Tibetan history and that of Bhutan. In terms of language and style alone, it is usually impossible to distinguish between them.

B. Scope and reliability of local sources

Aside from biographical literature, the only Bhutanese histories as such are religious histories (chos-'byung), whose aim, as the name implies, is to chronicle the rise and fulfilment of the Buddhist faith. Political, military, and social matters tend to be ignored except as they relate in some way to the fortunes of the religion. There is also a certain quantity of minor documents in the form of registers of temple contents, consecratory catalogues, travel diaries of revered Lamas, and incarnation genealogies ('khrungs-rabs), often containing dates. The quantity of such material in Bhutan is very little known as yet, except

by indirect reference from other sources. Taxation records have in a few cases been partially preserved through incorporation into documents recording ceremonial donations (mang-'gyed) by Bhutanese rulers. The content of government archives is unknown.

The principal historical sources are biographies. The founding of centralized rule after 1616 brought to Bhutan a kind of government in which religious and secular administration were theoretically combined under one authority, wielded by Buddhist ecclesiastic heads of state claiming divine ruling sanctions. The heads of state originally succeeded by heredity, and later by reincarnation, normally delegating secular authority to a civil administrator (Sde-srid). A third position of leadership was the abbotship of the state monastery, its incumbents generally known by the title Rje Mkhon-po. All three positions were originally monastic, and were filled by monks. Thus, since Bhutan continued the Tibetan custom of compiling biographies of its heads of state and monastery, such sources should theoretically provide us with a connected account of the country's leadership and general course of political events.

In practice, however, there are gaps in the record. There were periods during which no functioning ecclesiastic head of state existed or was unanimously recognized. For a variety of reasons, furthermore, monastic affiliations of the successive Sde-srid tended to become increasingly nominal; the religious trappings of the office itself came less and less to accurately mirror its incumbent's background and training. For such Sde-srid, civilians in all but their robes and titles, biographies were generally not written.

Perhaps the most complete set of biographical records are those of the successive Rje Mkhon-po. Eleven men held the office for varying periods between 1651 and 1763, and it may be that individual biographies were prepared for all of them. Only for the First, Fifth, Eighth, and

Eleventh incumbents have I encountered no references to such works in the available literature, at the time of this writing. However, some biographies known to exist, e.g. of the Third and Sixth, have not yet become accessible from Bhutan. On the other hand two biographies of the Seventh Rje Mkhan-po are known to have been written, both by Shākya-rin-chen (1710-59), and are now available in photo-reprint editions.

In addition to biographies for the heads of state, Sde-srid, and Rje Mkhan-po, biographical materials were also compiled for a number of other leading religious personalities. Some of these works are of great importance for historical research. Further such secondary biographical writings are known only by their titles and reputation, though examples may eventually come to light. References and descriptions of all these sources, accessible and potential, will be given in due course.

Our sources are thus fundamentally religious in orientation, and consequently most of the comments made by Tucci and other scholars with respect to the aims and limitations of traditional Tibetan historiography also apply in the case of Bhutan.⁵ But since religion and the state were theoretically as one, the texts do provide a more or less connected and accurate account of the progression of events and personalities at the centres of power and administration. Beyond that, further generalization about the quality or reliability of the source material is not possible. For the study of political and institutional history, much depends on the innate historical sense of the individual authors, their relationship to the subjects of their writing, and their conception of the ultimate purpose of their work.

In particular, as compared, for instance, with Tibetan biographies of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, there is often wanting a critical attention to accurate dating.⁶ Unfortunately, this becomes particularly noticeable for periods of great political stress, or when ecclesiastic leadership was

weak or absent. Consequently, such chronological lapses should be attributed less to carelessness of the biographers and more to the factually inadequate state of the MS diaries of their subjects, from which they had often to work. The precise dates of coronation ceremonies during the early 18th century, for example, are often not given at all, or at best in only fragmentary form. This defect can be partly surmounted by correlation with events of precisely known date, such as the death of important Lamas, the great earthquake during the spring of 1714, and cross-references from Tibetan and Chinese texts of established reliability. Modern Bhutanese scholarship is also becoming increasingly concerned with accurately reconstructing its historical past, but as a general rule, where discrepancies exist, I have preferred to rely on the older contemporary materials themselves.

Perhaps the main problems in assessing the reliability of our sources, particularly those relating to the 17th century, derive from the complicated religious and political ties between Tibet and Bhutan which came to a crucial focus at that time. The Bhutanese government founded after 1616 was largely the creation of Tibetan exiles. Mongol inroads into Tibet in the early 13th century provoked the earliest reliably-documented exodus of Tibetan refugees into the region now known as Bhutan, but traditions of earlier such population movements date from the 9th century as well. Another influx of Tibetan exiles occurred in the context of events resulting in the establishment in Tibet of central rule by the Dalai Lamas in 1642. Several of the most important Bhutanese historical sources for the 17th century were in fact the work of refugee Tibetan historians.

This creates the problem of distinguishing between authentically Tibetan and Bhutanese sources, between those reflecting basically Tibetan assumptions and prejudices and those mirroring more traditional Bhutanese

attitudes. A related difficulty is that of assessing how the rise and manifestations of Bhutanese regionalism, and later of nationalist feeling, have influenced indigenous historiography. Written Bhutanese historical sources, of the types described earlier, become very numerous from the 17th century onwards. It could be argued that this fact reflects the extent to which the region had become conscious of its separate identity, and more particularly of the desire to make that awakened consciousness more widely known. An alternative argument might propose that the flourishing of native Bhutanese literary scholarship from the 17th century reflects the extent to which Tibetan monastic, political, and social models had come to be accepted and actively promoted about that time. A corollary to this argument would hold that, since the literate tradition was itself of Tibetan origin, the paucity of Bhutanese written records before the 17th century indicates a relatively low level of adherence to these models during the preceding centuries.

Neither argument is wholly persuasive, and both hinge upon an overly simplistic distinction between "Tibet" and "Bhutan", between things Tibetan and Bhutanese. Bhutan as a more or less unified political entity did not exist before the 17th century, but regionally distinctive cultural traits are clearly much older. Traditional Tibetan attitudes towards the region (and later the country) reveal a marked ambiguity. On the one hand there were religious ties of great age and sanctity. Prophecies attributed to the revered 8th century Indian yogin Padmasambhava pointed to certain shrines and valleys in Bhutan as havens of refuge for pious Tibetan Buddhists during the Era of Defilement. The consequences of this prophetic tradition for Bhutan's history were profound, as we shall see.

On the other hand, there persists a strong theme in Tibetan literature of revulsion against Bhutanese culture, climate, and social manners. This

was partly racist and partly linguistic. Although this prejudice did not prevent the emigration of Tibetan peoples into Bhutan, its perpetuation via the Buddhist literary medium has had a discernible effect on native Bhutanese historiography.

Given the obvious antiquity of this tradition of Tibetan racialism and cultural chauvinism, it cannot have failed to evoke some response in kind. Not surprisingly, we find expressed in Bhutanese culture a rather comparable ambiguity vis-à-vis Tibet. Tibet was the font of Buddhist learning, the homeland of time-honoured shrines, and other sites of pilgrimage. Moreover, notwithstanding initial hostilities which must have faced Tibetan émigrés in Bhutan over the centuries, the fact is that virtually all the country's dominant families have come to trace their ancestry to eminent Tibetan religious and political notables. Exalted Tibetan ancestry, if sufficiently remote, was apparently an asset rather than a liability.

We shall see, however, that there were attempts to counteract the image of Bhutanese provincialism. For instance, one finds subtle examples of "revisionist" religious historiography, particularly in dealing with the more ancient past; legendary Tibetan saints were given a more "Bhutanese" character, ancient historical records of Bhutan were "rediscovered", etc. In the 17th century itself there occurred documented instances of revolt against expatriate Tibetan rulership, and it would be uncritical to conclude, ex silentio, that such events were the first of their kind. It is the absence of a strong literary tradition before that time which precludes our better understanding of the origin and pattern of Bhutanese regional sentiments.

There is a related factor which introduces a further potential for bias in our sources. Although the ravages of sectarian factionalism were as significant for Bhutan as Tibet, the image of Buddhist society idealized

by religious thinkers and writers of both countries was basically antisectionarian and transnational. The political consequences of this will become apparent in subsequent chapters, but such idealism has also left its mark on traditional historical scholarship. There is a tendency to either ignore the complex reality of sectarian differences as a source of political disharmony between Tibet and Bhutan, or to treat it simplistically as all-explanatory. The existence of genuine grievances becomes clouded over by the Buddhist historical assumption which holds that lapses from scripturally-prescribed ideals of elite behaviour are owing to the fruition of evil karma. Controversial rulers become caricaturised, the reembodiments of notorious villains from the legendary past.

Students of Tibetan history have long been accustomed to recognizing such features of indigenous scholarship and handling them accordingly. The problem is more vexing for the present study, however, where the records of two countries sharing similar historical and religious presuppositions must be compared. Strikingly different interpretations of the same event are not infrequent. Needless to say, solutions will not be found by naively fixing upon one or the other as "true". Proper use of the critical method is essential. Every written source has had to be assessed with an eye to the varieties of potential bias mentioned above.

Finally, information on pre-17th century Bhutan comes almost exclusively from Tibetan sources. Although Bhutan is rich in oral traditions of its legendary past, little of this has found its way into print, and what there is has been filtered through a mesh of monastic and political attitudes thoroughly imbued with Tibetan Buddhist presuppositions. Eventually the unvarnished oral traditions will become more readily accessible, and future scholarship, based on field research, will need to concern itself with these in particular. A proper study of Bhutan's oral traditions will

eventually have an important function in correcting the inherent limitations of the written records upon which the present study is based.

C. Description of the Principal Sources

Materials in Literary Tibetan

The vast majority of the sources used in this study are written in Literary Tibetan, and comprise manuscripts and xylographs deriving from Tibet and Bhutan. Most of these works have been consulted in the form of photo-offset reprints published in India and Bhutan in recent years under the aegis of the U.S. Library of Congress South Asia book procurement program. In the early years of the procurement program only a few texts specially connected with Bhutan's history and culture became available, but that number has increased markedly during 1975 and particularly 1976, apparently with the official cooperation of the Royal Government of Bhutan. It seems likely, therefore, that further new sources for the period covered in the present study will become available in the near future, and should ultimately provide the basis for a more thorough and detailed study than is presently possible.

Reproductions of a collection of important xylographs and MSS filmed privately in Bhutan by Philip Denwood and David Snellgrove of the University of London (S.O.A.S.) were also graciously made available for my use. These will be cited respectively as deriving from the "Denwood collection" and the "Snellgrove collection".⁷ Reproductions of a small number of additional items have been obtained from other locations, principally the Toyo Bunko, and will be so indicated.

Only the most important sources are examined here, and these are grouped as nearly as possible within the broad periods of Bhutanese history provisionally adopted for the present research.

1. Historical and Legendary Foundations: 7th - 9th Centuries A.D.

Bhutan's earliest recorded history coincides with the initial spread of Buddhism and politico-military influence from Tibet. There are no extant contemporary sources and what little is known of the period derives largely from the standard Tibetan histories of later centuries. There is, in addition, a fairly extensive fund of apocryphal (gter-ma) literature describing events of this time, connected with the cult of Padmasambhava.⁸ The life and activities of this semi-legendary Indian yogin are related in numerous gter-ma hagiographies, all, of course, written long after the events they purport to relate. In addition to the well-known Padma thang yig "discovered" by O-rgyan-gling-pa in 1352,⁹ I have relied mainly on the Mun sel sgron me biography discovered by Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521)¹⁰ and the Rnam thar zangs gling ma discovered by Myang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124-1192).¹¹

The extent to which our knowledge of early Bhutanese history derives ultimately from such apocryphal literature is only now becoming thoroughly apparent. Until full comparative studies of this mass of material are attempted, we must treat their historical component essentially as folk lore circulating at the time of "discovery". By comparing variant versions of the same events, discovered (i.e. written) at different times, it should eventually be possible to better distinguish between obviously mythical elements and those with some claim to historical reliability.

2. The Growth and Spread of Religious Institutions from Tibet 10th - 16th Centuries

The paucity of contemporary Bhutanese written sources for this long period prevents us from accurately characterizing the course of events there, other than as seen from the limited perspective of Tibetan missionary

accounts and Bhutanese works of later times. The most important events from the viewpoint of Bhutan's subsequent history were the advent of three persons whose rebirths, descendants, or alleged descendants,¹² eventually rose to positions of religious and political dominance throughout the country. The earliest of these was the eastern Tibetan yogin Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po (1184?-1251?), who, according to local tradition, came to Bhutan during the early 13th century.¹³ The major source for his life and activities in Bhutan is the apocryphal "autobiography", in fact written by the man recognized to be Pha-jo's reincarnation, Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan alias Mi-pham Tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin (1574-1643/4), in about 1624.¹⁴ The text, however, is presented in the form of an autobiography, concealed by Pha-jo himself as a "hidden text" (gter-ma) to be rediscovered on a prophesied occasion for the spiritual welfare of later generations.¹⁵ Internal inconsistencies and the general style of the language make it obvious that the text cannot date from the 13th century in its present form, and it is probably an original work of the 17th century, based on oral traditions circulating at the time. Nevertheless, it is one of the more valuable sources for the period, containing traditional information on the early political and social patterns of the country.

The second individual was the Bhutanese Rnying-ma-pa yogin Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521), famous in Tibet and throughout the Himalayan regions as a rediscoverer of hidden religious and prophetic treatises. The present line of Bhutanese kings claims descent from him, but his rebirths and descendants were also prominent during earlier periods, notably in eastern Bhutan. The 22-volume collection of his textual rediscoveries and related writings, recently reprinted in Bhutan, contains an edited autobiography dating from the 16th century,¹⁶ a 'khrun-gs-rabs of his rebirths written in 1873 by the Pad-gling Gsung-sprul VIII Kun-bzang-bstan-

pa'i-nyi-ma,¹⁷ and a supplement to the 'khrungs-rabs written in 1975 by Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che.¹⁸ There is, in addition, a short account of his life in the Gter ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar of 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas (1813-1899),¹⁹ which has been repeated verbatim in a recent study by Khetsun Sangpo²⁰ and in another work by Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che.²¹ The 'Brug gyi rgyal rabs by Dge-slong Gnyer-chen bgres-pa, a recent MS history of Bhutan said to trace the connections between Padma-gling-pa and the present line of Bhutanese kings,²² has not become available to me.

The third person from this period vital to Bhutan's later history was the so-called "Mad 'Brug-pa" ('Brug-smyon) Kun-dga'-legs-pa (1455-1529?), popularly known as 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, also a Tibetan.²³ A member of a branch of the Rgya lineage of Rwa-lung, the principal 'Brug-pa monastery in Tibet, his descendants in Bhutan were thus collateral to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's lineage of the Rgya which founded a centralized Bhutanese state in the 17th century. The largest source on his life is a four-volume treatise, arranged as an autobiography, printed from wood blocks kept in the small Dre'u-lhas hermitage near Lhun-rtse and Mtsho-sna in southeast Tibet.²⁴ Two other biographical accounts have recently become available from Bhutan. The oldest of these, mainly a collection of scatological anecdotes concerning 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' affairs in western Bhutan and called, appropriately enough, a "secret biography" (gsang-ba'i-rnam-thar), was written in Bhutan during the 17th century by his grandson Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan.²⁵ The other is a modern work by Dge-bshes Brag-phug Dge-'dun-rin-chen, first published in 1966 in a limited edition. I have seen only the revised version of 1971.²⁶ It is a serious attempt by a modern Bhutanese scholar to assemble from earlier histories and oral accounts all the traditions relevant to 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' life and activities with special reference to Bhutan. Other monks of Dre'u-lhas and Bhutan are said to have compiled studies on 'Brug-pa Kun-legs which have so far not become available.²⁷

From the 10th to the 16th century, a vast number of other Tibetan monks and yogins visited the Bhutan region as missionaries, visionaries, and pilgrims. Some also came seeking refuge from the political strife associated with Mongol raids into Tibet during the early 13th century. In this long period, during which Bhutan had an amorphous regional identity but no political unity, probably thousands of monks and ordinary settlers moved freely through the mountainous frontiers. Almost our only records of these movements are found in biographies of a few of the more important Tibetan religious figures of the times. Less is known of those who established permanent residence in Bhutan, while considerably more information is available concerning those who returned to Tibet and left written accounts of their travels.

The Lha-nang-pa or Lha-pa branch of the Bka'-brgyud-pa sect is known to have acquired hermitages and property in Bhutan and the Chumbi valley at least as early as the 11th century. The most detailed available source on this sect, the anonymous Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud pa byon tshul mdor bsdus, written in 1431, is almost wholly concerned with Tibetan matters, but contains a few valuable notes on its early Bhutan mission.²⁸ A version of this text was used by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho in compiling the biography of Dalai Lama VI in about 1700, the differences being largely orthographic.²⁹ The Lha-pa were thoroughly suppressed in Bhutan during the 17th century, so that the survival of local sources on their activities seems unlikely. Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho's inability to reconstruct a full Lha-pa genealogy for Dalai Lama VI shows that already by 1700 older records were scant. Nevertheless, the exiled Lha-pa leaders gained protection from the Fifth Dalai Lama, adopted Dge-lugs-pa religious practices, and retained a degree of independent power at Gye-re (Dbus) and in Chumbi. There is thus some possibility that additional historical material emanating from Tibet may eventually come to light.

The 'Ba'-ra-ba branch of the Bka'-brgyud-pa sect had important ties with Bhutan from the time of its founder Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1310?-1391?). Several older biographies of him appear to have now been lost, and we must rely chiefly on his rnam-mgur (ca. 1500)³⁰ and the four-volume 'Ba' ra bka' brgyud gser 'phreng chen mo recently reprinted in India.³¹ In spite of their valuable historical information, the texts in this collection suffer from sketchiness in dating and a general vagueness concerning events in Bhutan.

The oldest 'Brug-pa missions in Bhutan appear to have been founded in the early 13th century by Rin-chen-grags-pa-dpal-ldan of the Ldan-ma clan, which was originally of eastern Tibetan origin. His Bhutanese lineage is locally renowned as the 'Obs-mtsho-ba, and was extremely important in later history. Our knowledge of the lineage's early foundation depends on a single biography, the life of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (1647-1732), an authoritative and very important text written by the 18th century Bhutanese historian Shākya-rin-chen Dri-med-legs-pa'i-blo-gros.³²

The principal 'Brug-pa missions in Bhutan, founded by members of the Rgya lineage of Rwa-lung, are described briefly in the Rwa lung bka' brgyud gser 'phreng, a synthetic work in many versions containing biographies of the various hierarchs by several writers. The first two volumes of a projected four-volume reprint from the Punakha edition of 1771-72 have recently appeared in India,³³ which can now be supplemented by the hagiographical writings of Padma-dkar-po (1527-92)³⁴ and the biography of Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (1428-76).³⁵

The Rnying-ma-pa, next to the 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa, has been the most influential Buddhist sect in Bhutan. The Spa-gro and Bum-thang districts have been renowned centres of pilgrimage and textual "discovery" since the time of the early Tibetan kings. No comprehensive indigenous

studies of Rnying-ma-pa activity in Bhutan appear to have ever been written, however, and it has not been feasible for this study to examine extensively the virtual flood of reprinted Rnying-ma-pa texts now appearing in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Generally, I have relied on such recent works as the Rnying ma'i chos 'byung by Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che.³⁶ and the two relevant volumes of Khetsun Sangpo's Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism,³⁷ both of which in turn are heavily dependent on some of the better Tibetan synthetic studies such as 'Jigs-med-gling-pa's dkar-chag to the Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum (18th century),³⁸ and the researches of 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (19th century).³⁹ These are the standard respected sources, along with the Gter ston brgya rtse'i rnam thar.

Special Rnying-ma-pa works of particular importance for pre-17th century Bhutan include the biography of Thang-stong-rgyal-po (d. 1485) by 'Gyur-med-bde-chen,⁴⁰ the autobiography and certain gter-ma MSS of Padma-gling-pa, and the brief geographical guide to Bum-thang written in 1355 by Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa Dri-med-'od-zer (1308-63), for which two editions are now accessible.⁴¹

The Karma-pa, Sa-skyapa and Ngor-pa sects all had small but important missions in Bhutan before the 17th century. The only available Karma-pa history of any real value for our purposes has been that written by Si-tu Paṇ-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1700-1774), completed by his disciple 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab in 1775.⁴² The shorter but better-known account of the Black Hat Karma-pas by Karma-nges-don-bstan-rgyas-pa (1891)⁴³ has been studied by Hugh Richardson,⁴⁴ but has little information about Bhutan.

For the Sa-skyapa we are practically limited to scattered bits of information from various Bhutanese texts, and the comprehensive Sa-skyapa history by 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams (b. 1576).⁴⁵

The Rgya bod yig tshang (1434)⁴⁶ contains an important section on the southward spread of Sa-skya hegemony during the 14th century.

3. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the Founding of a Centralized Bhutanese State: 1616-1651

The main source on the life of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1594-1651) is the massive biography by Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho (1610-1684).⁴⁷ The author was a Tibetan refugee from the persecution of Karma-pa monks after 1642. The text is largely an elaboration of an abbreviated MS diary kept by the subject, but written in a highly convoluted and poetic style. It is particularly important for several old letters which it reproduces, detailing the causes of the split within the Tibetan 'Brug-pa church and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's subsequent flight to Bhutan. The fifth (Ca) section constitutes a separate, abbreviated biography, evidently intended for inclusion in a gser-'phreng, but also contains important information excluded for some reason from the longer work.

Another biography of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was written in the 18th century by Shākya-rin-chen, but adds little to Gtsang Mkhan-chen's study, and was meant for inclusion in a gser 'phreng.⁴⁸ The supplement to the life of Padma-dkar-po by Yon-tan-mtha'-yas (1724-1783), said to develop the arguments supporting Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's claim to be the legitimate Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen rebirth,⁴⁹ has for some reason not been included in the author's recently reprinted Collected Works,⁵⁰ and has therefore not been accessible.

For the opposing arguments to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's claim we have mainly the biography of Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po (1546-1615), written by his disciple Ngag-dbang-sangs-rgyas-rdo-rje.⁵¹ It is,

unfortunately, a rather dishonest work, practically ignoring its subject's highly controversial involvement in the celebrated dispute. Somewhat more informative is the autobiography of Lha-rtse-ba's immediate rebirth, Kundga'-lhun-grub (1617-1676), an opponent of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal during his later years.⁵² The full biography of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's Tibetan rival Dpag-bsam-dbang-po (1593-1641) is available in India,⁵³ but has not become accessible for our use.

Of general works relevant to this period the main source is the Lho'i chos 'byung, a comprehensive religious history of Bhutan by Rje Mkhan-po Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (1700-1767), written between the years 1731 and 1759.⁵⁴ Its general character has already been described by Petech,⁵⁵ to which should be added the fact of its heavy reliance on Gtsang Mkhan-chen's life of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. As a synthetic work, many of its chronological errors are now known to have been taken over uncritically from earlier sources on which it was based. Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal was a renowned Bhutanese scholar-historian of the 18th century, and the author of numerous biographies, many of which are as yet unavailable from Bhutan. A collected edition of his writings probably once existed.

The important secondary Tibetan works for this period are the autobiographies of the First Panchen Lama⁵⁶ and the Fifth Dalai Lama,⁵⁷ along with the biography of Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen VI Mi-pham-dbang-po (1642-1717) authored by the subject's elder brother.⁵⁸

4. Experiment with Monarchy I: 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje and the

Early Regency - 1651-1680

The period witnessed a consolidation of the machinery of government under regental domination and an aggressively defensive foreign policy aimed at territorial expansion and the countering of Tibetan interference.

Owing to the official concealment of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's death, his biography remains the primary contemporary source, the last dated entry in which is 1674. In addition to the Lho'i chos 'byung, the other outstanding source is the large and well-documented biography of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638-1696), written by Rje Mkhan-po VI Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub (1673-1730).⁵⁹ The subject was a descendant of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and thus a distant relative of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, while the author may have been related to one of the subject's consorts as well as his mother, both ladies of the Cang Sgang-kha lineage. It is the authoritative local source for history of the period 1651-1696, as well as for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' lineage of the Rgya, known locally as the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa. The "official" Rdo-rje-gdan-pa history, covering events up to and including the life of Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, was authored by Gtsang Mkhan-chen and constitutes the supplementary sixth (Cha) section of the life of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.⁶⁰

On Bhutan's developing foreign policy we have the biography of Rje Mkhan-po IV Dam-chos-pad-dkar (1636-1708), envoy to Nepal ca. 1672.⁶¹ The principal author was Rgyal-sras II Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1689-1714), a student of the subject and subsequent Bhutanese head of state. It is a fairly reliable study, but almost totally lacking in chronological data.

5. Experiment with Monarchy II: The Reign of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas 1680-1694

The life of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas and the Lho'i chos 'byung are again the principal sources. An indispensable document for the growing family feuds during this period is Shākya-rin-chen's life of his teacher 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, which we have already mentioned. The same author's biography of Rje Mkhan-po VII Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las

(1671-1746)⁶² provides important sidelights here, and, of course, for the early 18th century. It is typical of Shākya-rin-chen's minor historical pieces in lacking detailed chronological information, but the passage of seasons is usually noted and can generally be correlated with dates from other sources.

Other minor works important for this period include the autobiography of the famous artisan Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho (1646-1719), completed by a student Ban-chung Dharma.⁶³ Another biography of Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, by Shākya-rin-chen,⁶⁴ adds nothing substantial and has therefore not been referred to. The biography of the Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub (1645-1726)⁶⁵ by Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal provides important information on Rnying-ma-pa relations with the Bhutan government, but its chronology and arrangement of material are faulty. Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal is also known to have written a rnam-thar of Rje Mkhan-po III Pad-dkar-lhun-grub (1640-1699),⁶⁶ but which has not become available outside Bhutan.

The autobiography of the Second Panchen Lama Blo-bzang-ye-shes-dpal-bzang-po (1663-1737) is of value for establishing the chronology of border negotiations between Tibet and Bhutan.⁶⁷ The three supplementary volumes to the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography, written by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, were unavailable for the present study.⁶⁸

6. The Period of Regental Supremacy: 1694-1744

This politically complex period of Bhutan's history witnessed the elaboration of conflicting theories of incarnate succession to the position of head of state. Instability and strife attending these events led to Tibetan intervention and to Bhutan's earliest dealings with Chinese imperial representatives.

Documentation for this period is substantial, but heavily dependent on the works of two authors, Shākya-rin-chen and Yon-tan-mtha'-yas. In addition to studies already mentioned, the former author's autobiography deserves special mention for its wealth of detail.⁶⁹ To him also we owe biographies of Rgyal-sras II Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan⁷⁰ and of Phyogs-las Sprul-sku I Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1708-1734?).⁷¹ Both are deficient in chronological data and penetrating political insights, but otherwise appear trustworthy. Supplementing the life of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal is the biography of his confidant Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar (1680-1758/9).⁷² As it was written by Phyogs-las Sprul-sku II Shākya-bstan-'dzin (1735?-1778), the subject's disciple and constant attendant, it is partly autobiographical and of considerable historical value.

Finally, Shākya -rin-chen has written two separate biographies of Rgyal-sras II Mi-pham-dbang-po (1709-1738). Neither colophon is dated but were probably composed about 1752 or shortly thereafter. As usual, chronology is indicated largely by the passage of seasons. The shorter version⁷³ purports to be a summary of the longer work,⁷⁴ but in fact contains important bits of independent information.

In addition to the Lho'i chos 'byung, Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal wrote several minor biographies relevant to the period which we need not describe. Other inaccessible historical works by him, in addition to those already noted, may eventually come to light.

Rje Mkhan-po XIII Yon-tan-mtha'-yas (1724-1784) was the second historian whose biographical studies are of primary importance for the 18th century. He and his brother Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho wrote the concluding chapters to Shākya-rin-chen's autobiography, while independently Yon-tan-mtha'-yas wrote the biography of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal.⁷⁵ The colophon of this work is undated, but we know from the author's biography that it was written during 1769. In spite of many

chronological flaws it is one of the main sources for the period, and has been used by Petech.⁷⁶

Several important known works for the early 18th century, though so far unavailable outside Bhutan, should nevertheless be noted at this point. Phyogs-las Sprul-sku I Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal is famous for having written a bulky biography of his guru Grub-dbang Ye-shes-dngos-grub (1642-1728?),⁷⁷ whose family from the Shar district produced several noted Lamas of the period. The same author also wrote a biography of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan.⁷⁸ Both were composed during the years 1731-32. Regrettably, no life of Zhabs-drung II 'Jigs-med-grags-pa I (1725-1761) has yet come to light, but the gap is partially filled by the biography by one Byang-chub-nor-bu of Zhabs-drung IV 'Jigs-med-grags-pa II (1791-1830?),⁷⁹ of which section two (Kha) briefly describes the lives of his Bhutanese predecessors.

Tibetan sources for this period include the biography of Dalai Lama VII Bskal-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1703-1757),⁸⁰ and the biography of Pho-lha-nas Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyas (1689-1747) by Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal (1697-1763).⁸¹ For this author we now also have an autobiography, the so-called Bka' blon rtogs brjod,⁸² which effectively replaces Ch. 36 of the MS history of the chiefs of Stag-lung studied earlier by Petech.⁸³

7. The Reign of Chos-rgyal Shes-rab-dbang-phyug: 1744-1763

In addition to texts already mentioned, the special sources for this period are mainly the biography of Shes-rab-dbang-phyug by Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, written during 1765-66 with the collaboration of his brother Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho (d. 1771),⁸⁴ and the biography of Yon-tan-mtha'-yas himself, written by Rje Mkhan-po XVIII 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan (1745-1803).⁸⁵ The importance of the first text for our understanding of 18th

century political history cannot be overestimated, as it draws upon numerous state documents which probably no longer survive in the original.

Yon-tan-mtha'-yas belonged to a family from Mtshams-brag (near Tagana) descended from the Skyu-ra clan which had founded 'Bri-gung monastery in Tibet during the 12th century. His local lineage produced numerous men of political and ecclesiastic fame. One of his elder brothers Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho served as Rje Mkhan-po XII (r. 1770-71); he himself became Rje Mkhan-po XIII (r. 1771-75), while his nephew Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan (d. 1803?) eventually served as Sde-srid XXI (r. 1792-98). One would expect, therefore, that other important family records for the 18th and 19th centuries may eventually come to light.

Materials in Other Languages

1. Chinese

Chinese sources are of little value for the study of Bhutanese history until after about 1730, when Tibetan intrusion into the country's affairs brought Bhutan's politics to the attention of the Ambans (Chu-tsang-ta-ch'en) in Lhasa, and ultimately of emperors Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung themselves.⁸⁶ Consequently, such materials are of rather more importance for periods beyond the scope of the present work and have therefore not been as systematically explored as the Tibetan and Bhutanese texts.

We must distinguish between official (imperial) and unofficial works. Of the former I have consulted only the Ta-ch'ing li-ch'ao shih-lu,⁸⁷ the relevant sections being the Shih-tsung shih-lu and the Kao-tsung shih-lu. Their value for Tibetan historical studies has been assessed by Petech and Zahiruddin Ahmad.⁸⁸ Supplementing this source to a degree is the Huang-ch'ao fan-pu yao-lüeh of Ch'i Yun-shih (1751-1815),⁸⁹ which selectively quotes from the relevant memorials and edicts. The other

unofficial works consulted here are the Wei-tsang t'ung-chih⁹⁰ and the Hsi-tsang-chih (ca. 1737) by Chiao Ying-ch'i.⁹¹

2. English

An unpublished English translation of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal's Lho'i chos 'byung has played a hitherto unmentioned but interesting role in the Western interpretation of Bhutan's history. It was apparently commissioned by Charles Bell, British Resident in Sikkim during the early 20th century. The translation was completed in 1918 by the respected Sikkimese scholar Dawasamdub Kazi.⁹²

Bell cites the work extensively in his various books on Tibet, though without specifically acknowledging the translation as the work of the Kazi.⁹³ Already in 1909, a former British Resident in Sikkim, J.C. White, had published a few short extracts from the same text in his Sikkim and Bhutan. Although White listed the "Lho-cho-jung" among the authorities consulted for his study, he merely attributed (wrongly) the translated paragraphs to a "Tibetan chronicler", without actually naming the text in question.⁹⁴ It is curious to observe the virtual identity of wording between certain passages translated by (or for) White and those of Dawasamdub, prepared for Bell nine years later. Either Dawasamdub made use of White's published translations at the appropriate points, which seems implausible, or else the translation presented to Bell in 1918 is, at least in part, older than the immediate evidence suggests.⁹⁵ In any case, in recent years the brief passages published by White and Bell have been often cited by scholars writing about Bhutan.⁹⁶

Dawasamdub's translation of the Lho'i chos 'byung is actually a paraphrased summary of the original, and not a complete translation as such.⁹⁷ Moreover, the translation is erroneous in places, and much

interesting information has been omitted. Strictly speaking, it has not been used as a source for the present study, but some of Dawasamdup's marginal notes are of interest.

3. Miscellaneous

Since at least the 17th century, Bhutan has had documented relations with the Assamese and Koch rulers of the plains. A study of Assam and Cooch Bihar government archives, as well as of traditional histories of the area, would no doubt reveal useful information. However, no attempt has been made to utilise such material here, except through secondary sources. Similarly, Nepalese government archives may eventually yield materials relevant to our subject. They have not been consulted in the course of this research.

Certain aspects of Bhutan's relations with the neighbouring state of Sikkim are treated in the MS "History of Sikkim" compiled in 1908 by Their Highnesses the Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal, and the Maharani Yeshey Dolma.⁹⁸ The Tibetan original⁹⁹ of this text has not become available, and its worth must be judged on the basis of the translation alone. The user must also bear in mind the known political motive for its compilation. In addition, a comparison of the "History of Sikkim" with relevant Tibetan and Bhutanese sources for the 17th and early 18th centuries shows the work to contain numerous chronological and organizational errors. Unfortunately, almost none of the earlier histories and biographies on which it was based have yet become available. The text has therefore been used here with great caution. Selections from this MS have been published by J.F. Rock.¹⁰⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹ Cf., for instance, Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission 35, pt. 1 (1964), p. 96; Ibid., 37 (1966), p. 181.

² The only scholar to have so far systematically published from these materials is Professor Luciano Petech, "The Rulers of Bhutan c. 1650-1750," Oriens Extremus 19 (1972), pp. 203-13. This brief but very valuable article has been of great help as a research guide. Some useful information has also been published by Dr. D.I. Lauf in a series of articles entitled "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Geschichte und Kunst einiger lamaistischer Tempel und Klöster in Bhutan," pts. I, II, III, in various issues of Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich since 1972. Lauf's treatment of his textual sources is not critical. His work is of value primarily in being based on personal field research.

³ For the periodization of Tibetan history, I have followed T.V. Wylie, "The Tibetan Tradition of Geography," Bulletin of Tibetology (Gangtok) 2, pt. 1 (March, 1965), pp. 17-25.

⁴ Bhutan preserves a tradition that the introduction of writing to the country dates from a visit to Bum-thang by Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs, a semi-legendary Tibetan scholar of the 9th century. An autograph MS of him is claimed to be still extant with the royal family (Dept. of Education, His Majesty's Government of Bhutan, History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan [Thimphu, rev. ed. 1974], pp. 5-6). I have found no references to any native literature before the 15th century, however, and the MS in question is probably a text of the gter-ma genre. Nevertheless, the modern Bhutanese cursive script (locally termed 'Brug pa'i mgyogs yig') displays a number of archaic features linking it with Tibetan scripts on MSS discovered at Tun-huang, dating from the 11th century or earlier.

⁵ Giuseppe Tucci, "The Validity of Tibetan Historical Tradition," India Antiqua (The Hague, 1947), pp. 318-319; A.I. Vostrikov, Tibetan Historical Literature (Calcutta, 1970), pp. 59-61.

⁶ The Bhutanese lunar calendar is based on the same sexagenary system as the Tibetan, commencing with A.D. 1027 as the first year of the first cycle. Some modern works have compromised with Western systems in adopting a continuous, instead of a cyclical, system of counting. However, there is evidence to suggest that traditional Bhutanese calendrical calculations have diverged slightly from the Tibetan since the 17th century. For the present, therefore, it would not be advisable to convert to exact Western months and days in accord with the important new tables of Dieter Schuh (Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Tibetischen Kalenderrechnung, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973).

Rather I have followed the more conservative practice of merely listing the lunar month and day, if given in the texts, and the year according to the conversion tables compiled by Baron A. von Stäel-Holstein, ("On the Sexagenary Cycle of the Tibetans", Monumenta Serica I [1935-36], pp. 277-314). Hereafter, references to numbered months of a year should be interpreted as designating the relevant Tibetan or Bhutanese lunar month of the local year, converted to the nearly-equivalent Western year. It should be kept in mind that local New Years fall in February or March. Thus, for example, a date "6th month 1720" will correspond to ca. July-August of the Iron-Mouse year of ca. Feb. 1720 - ca. Jan. 1721. Since New Year dates are not yet accurately known, 11th and 12th months will be given as falling within a range, e.g. 1720-21, or simply "winter 1720-21".

⁷ My thanks are also due to Ms. Gabrielle Yablonsky, who arranged for the reproduction and posting of these copies from London.

⁸ For a learned assessment of the nature and historical value of

texts in the gter-ma genre, cf. A.I. Vostrikov, Tibetan Historical Literature, pp. 27-57.

⁹ The full title is O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa padma bka'i thang yig. I have used a microfilm from the Toyo Bunko (#358C-2631) of the 1896 Rgyal-rtse-tshong-khang edition. It has been translated by G.C. Toussaint in Le Dict de Padma (Padma thang-yig) (Paris, 1933).

¹⁰ The full title is O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me, in 456 folia (contained in The Rediscovered Teachings of the Great Padma-glin-pa, Thimphu, 1976, vol. 21).

¹¹ The full title is Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba - rnam thar zangs gling ma, in 127 folia. This MS may have been subject to more recent revision, however, as it concludes with a gsol-'debs written by Ratna-gling-pa (1403-78). I have used the reprint from an anonymous work titled The Life of Lady Ye-śes-mtsho-rgyal rediscovered by Stag-śam Nus-ldan-rdo-rje with two Hagiographies of Padma-sambhava from the Terma Finds and Visions of Nān-ral Ni-ma-'od-zer and A-'dzom 'Brug-pa Gro-'dul-dpa'-bo-rdo-rje (Tashijong, Palampur, Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1972).

¹² It is well known that many Tibetan families of later centuries attempted to trace their genealogies from the early kings of Tibet, or from other famous personalities of the early history. The truth of such claims can only occasionally be documented, but public acceptance of the ascription would have been useful to an upwardly mobile family (R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization [London: Faber & Faber, 1972], p. 195). The same practice was prevalent in Bhutan, where claims of famous Tibetan ancestry were characteristic of numerous important family lineages of the 17th and 18th centuries.

¹³ For these tentative dates, cf. below, Ch. IV.

¹⁴ Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa thugs rje'i chu rgyun (published by Mkhan-po Ye-shes-chos-dar, Varanasi, 1971, in 35 folios plus a supplemental folio numbered bse-ru. I wish to thank Mr. E. Gene Smith for procuring a copy of this book for me).

¹⁵ The account of the biography's composition, its concealment, and subsequent rediscovery, is on ff.32.b, 34.b-35.a.

¹⁶ Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar 'od zer kun mdzes nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba skal ldan spro ba skye ba'i tshul du bris pa, in 253 folios (in The Rediscovered Teachings of the Great Padma-glin-pa, Thimphu, 1976, vol. 14). The editor, a personal disciple named Rgyal-ba Don-grub, is difficult to identify otherwise.

¹⁷ Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1843-91), Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog, in 45 folios (in The Rediscovered Teachings..., vol. 14).

¹⁸ Rgyal-khams-pa Bdud-'joms-'jigs-bral Ye-shes-rdo-rje (b. 1904), Pad gling 'khrungs rabs rtogs brjod dad pa'i me tog gi kha skong mos pa'i ze'u 'bru, in 15 folios, written at E'i-gtsug-lag-khang in Nepal (The Rediscovered Teachings..., vol. 14).

¹⁹ The full title is Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus bkod pa rin chen bai dūrya'i phreng ba, (ff. 107.b-110.a). I have used the dbu-med MS from Padma-bkod in 277 folios, reprinted by the Tibetan Nyingmapa Monastery at Tezu (Arunachal Pradesh) in 1973 under the title Gter ston brgya rtse'i rnam thar. The printed version in the Rin chen gter mdzod has not been available for my use.

²⁰ Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973), vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 594-98.

²¹ Bdud-'joms-'jigs-bral Ye-shes-rdo-rje, Gangs ljongs rgyal bstan yongs rdzogs kyi phyi mo snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang g.yul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs (Kalimpong: Mani Printing Works, 1964), ff. 278.a-280.b; this text to be cited hereafter as Rnying ma'i chos 'byung.

²² This information according to a letter from E. Gene Smith of 31 May, 1974.

²³ On the tradition of religious madmen in Tibet, cf. Lokesh Chandra (ed.) The Life of the Saint of Gtsaṅ (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1969), Introduction by E. Gene Smith; cf. also John Ardussi & Lawrence Epstein, "The Saintly Madman in Tibet," in John Fisher (ed.), Himalayan Anthropology (The Hague: Mouton, 1977 [in press]).

²⁴ The first and longest volume has the title Rnal 'byor pa'i ming can kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar byung tshul lhug par smras pa zhib mo'i rtsing mo ha le ho le sna zin spu zin nas bkod pa, and has recently been translated by R.A. Stein (Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs le yogin [Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1972]). Vol. 2 has a separate title: Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar gsung 'bum rgya mtsho las dad pa'i ku shas chu thigs tsam blangs pa ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i zil mngar (in 81 folios). The shorter third and fourth volumes also have individual titles. For the present study I have used a microfilm of the British Library woodblock print (#19999s10). Hereafter, this source will be referred to as the Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, vol. 1-4.

The date of this particular set of printing blocks is problematic. Stein (Vie et chants, pp. 24-26) has suggested either 1592 or 1652, while a learned reviewer of Stein's work, Jamyang Namgyal, has argued for 1892

(Kailash 1, no. 1 [1973], p. 98). In any case, MS copies of at least the first volume are known to have been in circulation in Tibet during the late 18th century (cf. the autobiography of 'Jigs-med-gling-pa [1730-99], Yul lho rgyud du byung ba'i rdzogs chen pa rang byung rdo rje mkhyen brtse'i 'od zer gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.55.b, 129.a, where it is quoted).

²⁵ Rdo-rje-gdan-pa Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, alias Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan, 'Gro ba'i mgon po kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar mon spa gro sogs kyī mdzad spyod rnams, in 65 folios (anonymously reprinted at Delhi in 1973).

²⁶ 'Gro ba'i mgon po chos rje kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar rgya mtsho'i snying po mthong ba don ldan, in 82 folios (Kalimpong: Mani Printing Works, 1971). The author sometimes signs himself Geshe Chaphu.

²⁷ Jamyang Namgyal, loc. cit.

²⁸ I have used the unique 33-folio dbu-med MS from the Toyo Bunko (#504-3047), which appears to be a fairly recent copy. The original was written at Gye-re monastery near Skyor-mo-lung (Dbus). The colophon bears a slightly different title: Grub pa mchog brnyes kha rag gnyos gyi rgyud rim par byon pa'i rnam thar mdor bsdus.

²⁹ Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, Thams cad mkhyen pa drug pa blo bzang rin chen tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i thun mong phyi'i rnam par thar pa du kū la'i 'phro 'thud rab gsal gser gyi snye ma glegs bam dang po, in 514 folios (cf. ff.54.a-62.a). I have used a microfilm of the print from the Toyo Bunko (#97A-1068).

³⁰ Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, an dbu-can print in 222 folios (reprinted in Urgyan Dorje, The Rnam-thar and Mgur-'bum of 'Ba'-ra-ba with his Sgrub-pa-nams-su-blañ-ba'i-lag-len-dgos-'dod-'byuñ-ba'i-gter-mdzod, New Delhi, 1976). On the history of this text, cf. below, Ch. IV, fn. 47.

31 Ngawang Gyaltzen & Ngawang Lungtok, Bka' brgyud gser phreng chen mo (Biographies of Eminent Gurus in the Transmission Lineage of Teachings of the 'Ba'-ra Dkar-brgyud-pa Sect), Dehradun, 1970. The separate texts in this collection, some in MS form, are the work of a number of different authors.

32 Rje Mkhan-po IX Shākya-rin-chen (1710-59), Skū bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i rol mo, a woodblock print in 234 folios. It is known from the author's biography to have been written during the years 1733-35 at Punakha. I have used a copy from the Denwood Collection; the work has for some reason not been included in the recent reprint of Shākya-rin-chen's collected works.

33 Rwa luñ Dkar brgyud gser 'phreñ (Brief lives of the successive masters in the transmission lineage of the Bar 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa of Rwa-luñ), Palampur (Himachal Pradesh), 1975. Numerous editions of this collection were once available, on which cf. Lokesh Chandra (ed.), Life of the Saint of Gtsañ, Introduction by E. Gene Smith, pp. 32-36.

34 Collected Works (gsuñ-'bum) of Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973 (reprinted from the 1920-28 Tibetan edition of 'Brug monastery). Vols. 3 and 4 contain Padma-dkar-po's autobiography and other hagiographical writings.

35 A-wa-dhū-ti-pa Rin-chen-rnam-rgyal, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i mdzad pa rmad du byung ba ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thigs pa (1479), in 31 folios (reprinted in Kunzang Tobgey, Collected Works (Gsuñ-'bum) of Rgyal-dbañ Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor, Thimphu, 1976, vol. 1).

36 Cf. above, fn. 21.

37 Cf. above, fn. 20. Vols. 3 and 4 contain Rnying-ma-pa biographies.

38 De bzhin gshegs pas legs par gsungs pa'i gsung rab rgya mtsho'i snying por gyur pa rig pa 'dzin pa'i sde snod dam snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin

po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'dzam gling mtha'i gru khyab pa'i rgyan, in 336 folios (reprinted in Rñing ma'i rgyud 'bum, Thimphu, 1973-74, vol. 34).

39 I have consulted primarily his Gangs can bod kyi yul du byon pa'i gsang sngags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs mdor bsdud ngo mtshar padmo'i dga' tshal in 104 folios, and the same author's Gangs can gyi yul du byon pa'i lo paṇ rnam kyi mtshan tho rags rim tshigs bcad du bsdebs pa ma hā paṇḍi ta shī la ratna'i gsung in 238 folios, both from vol. 11 of the Rdzong-sar edition of the author's Collected Works (reprinted in S.W. Tashigangpa, Mkhyen-brtse on the History of the Dharma, Leh, 1972).

40 Dpal grub pa'i dbang phyug brtson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal nor bu'i me long, in 174 folios. I have used a print from the microfilm collection of the University of Washington (Seattle), Far Eastern Library.

41 Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal. I have consulted both the Toyo Bunko example (#5-151) and a reprint from the A-'dzom 'Brug-pa Chos-sgar woodblocks, contained in Sanje Dorje, Miscellaneous Writings (Gsuñ-thor-bu) of Kun-mkhyen Kloñ-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer, Delhi, 1973, vol. 1.

42 Bsgrub rgyud karma kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rab 'byams nor bu zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba in 2 vols. I have used the reprint from the Spal-spungs edition of Si-tu's Collected Works, reproduced by D. Gyaltsan & Kesang Legshay (History of the Karma Bka'-brgyud-pa Sect, New Delhi, 1972).

43 Chos rje karma pa sku 'phreng rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus dpag bsam khri shing (reprinted in Topden Tsering, Brief Biographies of the Successive Embodiments of the Black Hat Karmapa Lamas, New Delhi, 1973).

44 Hugh Richardson, "The Karma-pa Sect. A Historical Note pt. I,"
J.R.A.S. 1958 (pt. 3 & 4), p.141

45 The full title is 'Dzam gling byang phyogs kyi thub pa'i rgyal tshab chen po dpal ldan sa skya pa'i gdung rabs rin po che ji ltar byon pa'i tshul gyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar rin po che'i bang mdzod dgos 'dod kun 'byung, in 334 folios; it was written in 1629 (reprinted by Tashi Dorji, A History of the 'Khon Lineage of Prince-abbots of Sa-skya, Dolanji [Himachal Pradesh], Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1975).

An important supplement to this text, continuing it through the 18th century, is said to exist, but has not become accessible.

46 Shākya'i-dge-bsnyen Shrī-bhu-ti-bhadra, Rgya bod kyi yig tshang mkhas pa dga' byed chen mo. I have used mainly the dbu-can MS in 357 folia belonging to the University of Washington (Seattle), Far Eastern Library.

47 Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, in 5 parts (Ka - Ca) and a supplement (Cha). I have used the reprint by Topden Tshering entitled The Detailed Biography of the First Ṭabs-drūṅ Rin-po-che of Bhutan Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal (Nag-dbañ-bdud-'joms-rdo-rje) (Dolanji, 1974, from the Punakha woodblocks of ca. 1797-1802). This text to be cited hereafter as Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs.

48 Shākya-rin-chen Dri-med-legs-pa'i-blo-gros, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi 'phreng ba lta bu las dpal ldan bla ma mthu chen chos kyi rgyal po ngag dbang rnam par rgyal ba'i skabs, in 45 folios (reprinted by Kunzang Topgey, The Collected Works of Śākya-rin-chen, the Ninth Rje Mkhan-po of Bhutan, Thimphu, 1976, vol. 1). The colophon is undated, but was written at the author's hermitage of Śrī Nālanda (founded 1753).

49 Lokesh Chandra (ed.) Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), pp. 3-4 for reference.

50 Thimphu, 1976, in two volumes. The supplement, apparently, was traditionally printed in Bhutanese editions of the Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng and the Collected Works of Padma-dkar-po.

51 Ngag-dbang-sangs-rgyas-rdo-rje, Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa rab bsngags snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs brgya pa, in 88 folios, covering the years 1546-1609, and a concluding part by the same author entitled Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa rab bsngags snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs brgya pa'i 'phros cung zad gleng ba ngo mtshar 'phrul gyi sgo 'phar, in 60 folios. The two parts were reprinted by 'Brug-chen gdung-sras Ngag-dbang-bde-chen-'gyur-med-pa at Sukhia Pokhari (West Bengal) during 1969-70.

52 Kun-dga'-lhun-grub, Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang strong dga' ba'i dal gtam, in 125 folios; the 35-folio supplement by Mi-pham Yar-'phel-dbang-po contains nothing of relevance. Both texts are from the anonymous reprint The Collected Works (Gsun-'bum) of Bde-chen-chos-'khor Yons-'dzin II Kun-dga'-lhun-grub, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973, vol. 1 (no others have appeared).

53 Lokesh Chandra (ed.) Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1970), introduction by E. Gene Smith, p. 16. fn.

54 The full title is Lho'i chos 'byung bstan pa rin po che'i 'phro mthud 'jam mgon smon mtha'i 'phreng ba - gtso bor skyabs mgon rin po che rgyal sras ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar kun gyi go bde gsal bar bkod pa bcas, in 151 folios. I have used a microfilm of the example at the Toyo Bunko (#508-3053) and another microfilm from the University of

Washington (Seattle), Far Eastern Library. Both are from the same set of woodblocks.

55 L. Petech, "The Rulers of Bhutan," p. 203.

56 Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul gsal bar ston pa nor bu'i phreng ba (reprinted by Nawang Gelek Demo, The Autobiography of the First Panchen Lama Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan, New Delhi, 1969).

57 Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, Za hor gyi bande ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i 'di snang 'phrul pa'i rol rtsed rtogs brjod gyi tshul du bkod pa du k̄u la'i gos bzang, in 3 volumes, covering the years 1617-81 (I have used microfilms from the Toyo Bunko: #92-1053, 93-1054, 94-1055).

58 Skyabs-'gro-pa Ma-ñi-ka (Nor-bu), Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa kun tu bzang po'i yon tan gyi me long, an dbu-med MS in 122 folios (anonymously reprinted in Biographies of the Successive Embodiments of the Rgyal-dbañ-'brug-chen, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1974, vol. 4 [the only volume so far published]).

59 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa bskal bzang legs bris 'dod pa'i re skong dpag bsam gyi snye ma, a woodblock print in 383 folios, completed in 1720 at Byang-chub-chos-gling. The printing blocks were carved under the patronage of Sde-srid IX Ngag-dbang-'jam-dpal-rgya-mtsho (r. ca. 1719-1729) but completed after his death. I have used a reproduction from the Denwood Collection.

60 Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho, Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs kyi yan lag rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dpal rdo rje gdan pa'i rnam par thar pa, in 34 folios (cf. above, fn. 47).

61 Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan & Bstan-'dzin-don-grub (1680-1728), Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa thugs rje chen po'i dri bsung, an dbu-can MS in 51 folios (reprinted in

the anonymous Masterpieces of Bhutanese Biographical Literature, New Delhi, 1970).

62 Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing bsdu pa, an dbu-can MS in 39 folios written at the behest of the 'Brug-pa Kun-legs sprul-sku 'Gro-'dul-rdo-rje, sometime during the years 1753-59 (reprinted in the author's Collected Works, vol. 2). This work is actually a summary of a longer biography by the same author, entitled Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing, in 147 folios (reprinted in Collected Works, vol. 3). In spite of its greater bulk, however, the larger work is mostly filled out with songs and verse epistles, but contains some substantial information not included in the summary. Consequently, all references to this text, unless otherwise noted, are to the briefer version.

63 Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i sgo rab tu 'byed pa'i dge ba'i lde mig, in 107 folios (reprinted in Kunsang Tobgay, Autobiographies of Gtsoñ Mkhan-chen and Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Thimphu, 1975, 2 vols.).

64 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa rgyal sras kun tu dga'i zlos gar, in 56 folios (reprinted in the author's Collected Works, vol. 1).

65 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i mchod sdong, an dbu-can MS in 123 folios (reprinted by Kunsang Topgay in Biographies of Two Bhutanese Lamas of the Padma-glin-pa Tradition, Thimphu, 1975). The colophon is undated, but we know from the author's biography that it was written during the summer of 1745 at Sgang-steng.

66 It was written during the summer of 1744 at Tashichhodzong, at the behest of Gzims-dpon Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho, according to the author's biography (f.60.b).

67 Blo-bzang-ye-shes-dpal-bzang-po, Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, in 400 folios, covering the years 1663-1732 (I have used a microfilm from the Toyo Bunko, #112-1270). A supplement, covering the years 1732-37 was written by Panchen Lama III Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan-ye-shes: Rdo rje 'chang chen po paṇ chen thams cad mkhyen pa blo bzang ye shes dpal bzang po'i sku gsung thugs kyi mdzad pa ma lus pa gsal bar byed pa'i rnam par thar pa 'od dkar can gyi 'phreng ba'i smad cha, in 139 folios (reprinted by Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, Collected Works of the Third Panchen Lama of Tashilhunpo, New Delhi, 1975, vol. 3).

68 On these three volumes, cf. Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 31-32.

69 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam dam pa'i chos kyi gandi'i sgra dbyangs snyan pa'i yan lag rgya mtsho, in 13 independently-numbered sections (Ka-Pa); sections 10-13 are a supplement, written by Yon-tan-mtha'-yas and his brother Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho. I have used a print from the Denwood Collection, and a slightly different version reprinted in the anonymous Autobiography and Selected Writings of Shākya-rin-chen, the Ninth Rje Mkhan-po of Bhutan, Delhi, 1974, vol. 1. All folio references will be from the latter.

70 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam yongs 'du'i snye ma, an dbu-can MS in 126 folios (reprinted by Kunsang Topgey, The Lives of Three Bhutanese Religious Masters, Thimphu, 1976).

71 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa skal bzang 'jug sgo, an dbu-can MS in 23 folios (reprinted in the author's Collected Works, vol. 2).

72 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, Byang chub sems dpa' ngag dbang pad dkar gyi rtogs pa brjod pa drang srong dgyes pa'i glu dbyangs gzhan phan bdud rtsi'i rlabs 'phreng, an dbu-can MS in 70 folios (reprinted in Lives of Three Bhutanese Religious Masters). The colophon is undated.

73 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa skal bzang rna rgyan, an dbu-can MS in 31 folios (reprinted in the author's Collected Works, vol. 2).

74 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po ngag gi dbang phyug bstan 'dzin mi pham 'jigs med thub bstan dbang po'i sde'i rtogs pa brjod pa dbyangs can rgyud mang, an dbu-can MS in 83 folios (reprinted by Kunsang Topgey in The Biographies of Śes-rab-'byun-gnas and Others, Thimphu, 1976).

75 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pāṇḍi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa sgyu ma chen po'i yar stabs, a woodblock print in 110 folios printed at Dpal-ri-rdo-rje-gdan. I have used a copy from the Denwood Collection.

76 L. Petch, "The Rulers of Bhutan," p. 203.

77 Cf. Phyogs-las II Shākya-bstan-'dzin, Byang chub sems dpa' ngag dbang pad dkar gyi rtogs pa brjod pa..., f.52.b, where the title is given as Mtshungs med ye shes dngos grub zhabs kyi rtogs brjod baidurya'i mchod sdong ngo mtshar 'od brgya. A gsung-'bum of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's works once existed.

78 Cf. Shākya-rin-chen, Sku bzhi'i dbyang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa..., f.219.a, where the title is given as Rnam par thar pa'i rgya mtsho ngo mtshar gyi rba rlabs g.yo ba.

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Byang-chub-nor-bu, Dpal ldan bla ma thams cad mkhyen gzigs chen po ngag dbang 'jigs med grags pa'i rnam par thar pa byang chen spyod pa rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gtam - snyan pa'i yan lag 'bum ldan rdzogs ldan dga' char sbyin pa'i chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, an dbu-can MS in 4 sections (Ka - Nga), of which the first three constitute the biography proper. According to the colophon to Ga, the work was written in an Iron-Sheep year, probably 1831. The fourth section has a separate title Rnam thar chen mo'i 'phros rnam dgar dge ba'i mdzad 'phrin kun bzang sprin phung, and is basically a dge-tho or list of pious deeds. I have used a microfilm duplicate from a film in the Snellgrove Collection. Unfortunately, substantially more than half of this film is blurred beyond use, only pts. 1 and 2 being legible nearly throughout.

80

Lcang-skya II Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-86), Rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen gzigs rdo rje 'chang blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa mdo tsam brjod pa dpag bsam rin po che'i snye ma, in 558 folios. I have used a microfilm of the Toyo Bunko example (#98-1070) from vol. 1 (Ka) of the subject's Collected Works.

81

Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam, in 395 folios. I have consulted a microfilm of the Toyo Bunko example of the Zhol-par-khang block print, as well as the 2-vol. MS version (427 folios) from the Stog Palace Library, Ladakh, reprinted by the Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang (Darjeeling, 1974), under the cover title Mi Dbañ Rtogs Brjod. The MS version, in addition to being much more legible than the print, contains a few interesting textual interpolations; otherwise the differences are negligible.

82

Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dirghayurindraja'i byung ba brjod pa zol med ngag gi rol mo, a woodblock print in 69 folios from the Lhasa Zhol Par-khang (reprinted in Rare Tibetan Historical and Literary Texts from the

Library of Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, New Delhi, 1974, first series). The title Bka'-blon-rtogs-brjod appears on the margins.

83 L. Petech, China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), p. 4. I would like to thank Professors Tucci, Petech, and Gargano of I.S.M.E.O. for permitting and arranging to supply me with a microfilm of this work, the full title of which is Dpal stag lung ga zi'i gdung rabs zam ma chad par byon pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar nor bu'i do shal skye dgu'i yid 'phrog, an dbu-med MS in 449 folios.

A few additional particulars about this text can now be added to Petech's notes. The author was the 28th Stag-lung hierarch Ngag-dbang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (b. 1788?), who also wrote under the aliases Bkra-shis-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan-grags-pa-rnam-rgyal-dpal-bzang and Dpal-ldan-sku-bzhi'i-bdag-nyid-ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-dpal-'byor. The first twenty chapters, it now appears, are a virtual verbatim copy of the Chos 'byung ngo mtshar rgya mtsho history written by the Stag-lung Rje-btsun Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1571-1625/6) beginning in 1609. The supplements by Ngag-dbang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma were compiled over a number of years (cf. the reprint by Khams-sprul Don-brgyud-nyi-ma, Chos 'byung ngo mtshar rgya mtsho, Palampur, Tibetan Craft Community, 1972, 2 vols.). The last supplement, Ch. 36 on the life of Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, is merely an abbreviated version of the subject's own Bka' blon rtogs brjod, with some letters added to the end. It is dated bong-bu (1831). A comparison of both texts reveals the Bka' blon rtogs brjod to be more complete, and consequently the Stag-lung history will not be cited in our study.

84 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga rab tu gsal ba'i gtam mu tig do shal, a woodblock print in 95 folios, constituting the final section (Nge) of the author's gsung-'bum. I have used the reprint in Masterpieces of Bhutanese Biographical Literature, New Delhi, 1970.

85 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi gsang gsum mi zad rgyan gyi 'khor lor rnam par rol pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa skal bzang mos pa'i padmo rgyas byed ye shes 'od stong 'phro ba'i nyi ma, a woodblock print in 136 folios, constituting section two (Āh) of the subject's gsung-'bum. I wish to thank Hugh Richardson for allowing me to obtain a xerox print from his personal copy, and to thank Michael Aris for making the necessary arrangements.

86 The Wei-tsang t'ung-chih (ch. 15, folio 9.a), however, records that a survey of Bhutanese land was conducted during the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-905), and that its then ruler submitted to the empire and was in turn granted a seal and patent. From what we know of political conditions in Bhutan during those centuries this assertion seems highly dubious. I can find nothing to corroborate it in the T'ang-shu.

87 大清歷朝實錄 Tokyo, 1937.

88 L. Petech, China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century, pp. 5-6; Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century, pp.

9-12.

89 皇朝藩部要略

90 衛藏通志. Taiwan, Wen-hai Publishing Co., 1965

(Chung-kuo pien-chiang ts'ung-shu, ser. 2, vol. 15).

91 西藏誌. Taiwan, Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co., 1968

(Chung-kuo fang-chih ts'ung-shu, ser. 1, sec. 6, vol. 32). For this text I have followed the chapter-numbering system adopted by Petech (op.cit., p. 7).

92 The MS, now located in the British Library (press mark 19999hl7) contains 204 pages of typescript translation and notes. The cover title reads "A Complete Translation of the Lhohi-Chös hByung: (Religious History of Bhutan. by Dousamdub Kazi, Headmaster State B.B. School." It is a substantial piece of work, and it is therefore curious that no correspondence

concerning it is to be found either in the Bell papers at the British Library (OMP 5674) or the (India Office) Commonwealth Relations Library (Eur. MSS.F.80), which otherwise contain a number of letters from Bell's translators on the texts they had been commissioned to prepare.

⁹³ Charles Bell, The People of Tibet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), pp. 55, 145, etc.; Charles Bell, The Religion of Tibet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), pp. 125, 213-14.

⁹⁴ J. Claude White, C.I.E., Sikkim and Bhutan (N.Y. & London: Edward Arnold, 1909), p. 103.

⁹⁵ Cf. for instance the passages translated in White (Ibid., pp. 102-103), as compared with the MS "Lhohi-Chös hByung", pp. 61, 80-82, etc.

⁹⁶ E.g. V.H. Coelho, Sikkim and Bhutan (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1971), pp. 61-63; Nagendra Singh, Bhutan (New Delhi, Thomson Press Ltd., 1972), pp. 21, 23; Nirmala Das, The Dragon Country (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1974), p. 16.

⁹⁷ Bell customarily instructed his translators to summarize rather than translate literally, usually at the rate of four Tibetan folios to one foolscap page of English typescript. The MS translation of the Lho'i chos 'byung is thus less abbreviated than most.

⁹⁸ I have used a microfilm copy of the typescript in the (India Office) Commonwealth Relations Library. The translation contains 291 pages, with a 45-page supplement entitled "The Pedigree of the Kazis of Sikkim and the History of their Ancestors, as they came by degrees to be appointed Ministers to the Maharajas of Sikkim".

⁹⁹ Correspondence from the Bell papers (I.O.L., Eur. F.80: 5.a28.a-e) reveals that the original Tibetan version was actually written by the Yangthang Kazi and Barmiok Lama, probably at the behest of J.C. White. It was intended by the Sikkim royal family to supplement and correct

numerous errors committed by Risley in writing his Gazetteer of Sikkim in 1894. In its later chapters it marshalls various evidence to support Sikkim's plea for a greater degree of independence from British India.

100 Joseph F. Rock, "Excerpts from a History of Sikkim," Anthropos 48 (1953), pp. 925-48.

Ch. III: Historical and Legendary Foundations: 7th - 9th Centuries A.D.

The written history of Bhutan commences only from the 7th century A.D. But there is not a single event or date before the end of the 12th century to be known from unequivocally reliable historical documents. Our information about this six-hundred year period comes from oral traditions, committed to writing somewhat later, and from apocryphal treatises of the gter-ma genre appearing principally from the 13th century onwards.

According to modern Bhutanese conceptions, Bhutan, like Tibet, was originally covered by a great sea. After the time of the Buddha, this sea or ocean evaporated, and in due course there arose the land features, plants and animals, and finally lineages of humans.¹ The early indigenous inhabitants, before the spread of Buddhism from Tibet, are said to have been called Mon or Monm (in the modern vernacular), while the country itself was designated Lho - "South" - or Lho-mon.²

These beliefs, of course, are grounded in Tibetan traditions, and are part of the extensive corpus of folk lore and Buddhist legends shared between the two countries. That the term Mon or Mon-yul ("Mon country") was anciently attached to the Bhutan region seems hinted at in Tibetan documents of the 11th century and earlier unearthed at Tun-huang, in which, in a couple of very obscure passages, a place called Mon or Mon-ka is mentioned in association with tigers.³ By at least the 14th century, the Bhutan region was being referred to in a number of ways in Tibetan sources. One commonly encounters the terms Mon, or even simply Lho. But these terms were not specific to Bhutan. Lho may have been an ancient designation for territory south of the Gtsang-po river in the districts of Central Tibet, comparable to the useage of Byang or "North". The distribution of place names with Lho and Byang as elements along the entire range of the Himalayas suggests that this was so.

The term Mon has been much discussed both as to its meaning and geographical significance. People and places so designated have been found all along the southern fringe of the Himalayas, from as far east as Byar to Ladakh in the west.⁴ Attempts have been made to connect the Mon of Tibet with the Man of China and the Mon of Southeast Asia, but without convincing success. F.W. Thomas alleged to have found Mon people in the Nam-speaking region of Chinese Turkestan,⁵ a theory rightly refuted by Shafer⁶ but resuscitated by T.S. Murty⁷, who was unaware of Shafer's critique. The problem is one for ethno-linguistic, not historical research, and will not be entered into here. If an identifiable ethnic division of Mon-pa people did exist they were not confined to the area of modern Bhutan. The Gurkha soldiers who invaded Tibet in 1788 were, according to monks resident in Skyid-grong, Mon-pas.⁸ More importantly, the tracts east of Bhutan have long been known as Mon-yul, or Shar-mon, and the terms Mon Phag-ri and Lho-brag Mon, occurring as late as the 18th century, demonstrate well enough that the term does not and probably never did specifically refer to what is now Bhutan.

Tibetan usage of the name Lho-mon, on the other hand, seems always to have been restricted to the general Bhutan region, occasionally taking in the Chumbi valley and Sikkim as well. An even more specific designator for Bhutan was the term Lho-kha-bzhi, along with its variants Lho-mon-kha-bzhi, Kha-bzhi-lho, and Kha-bzhi-lho'i-rgyal-khams. But these terms did not become common until perhaps the 13th or 14th centuries. Their significance will therefore be discussed in the following chapter. By the 9th century, at least, Tibetans did not yet recognize the existence of any significant political state in the Bhutan region, in contrast with the Kathmandu valley, for example. It was an area, not a country.

Regardless of the obscurity surrounding the composition of its early population, it seems likely that at least the accessible northern portions

of what is now Bhutan were incorporated into the outer reaches of the expanding empire of Srong-btsan-sgam-po (r. 627-49). According to the Tibetan histories of later centuries, at the time when Srong-btsan-sgam-po was constructing the Ra-sa-'phrul-snang temple to house the Buddha image brought from Nepal by his royal bride Bhr̥kūtī, the work was obstructed by a demoness opposed to the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet. In order to subdue this demoness and pacify the country, the king is alleged to have erected twelve temples in Central Tibet and along the frontiers of the empire, to hold down her body and limbs, since "the ground of Tibet was like (the body of) a she-devil that had fallen on her back."⁹ In addition to the four temples in Tibet proper, there were erected four to hold down the frontiers (mtha'-'dul) and four additional temples to hold down the territory at the remote extremes or perhaps beyond the frontier (yang-'dul), these points being identified with the arms, legs, knees and elbows of the demoness. According to one version of the legend, two of these last four were in Bhutan, the Spa-gro Skyer-chu-lha-khang in the west and the Bum-thang Rtsi-lung-lha-khang in east-central Bhutan.¹⁰ Having constructed these, he was able to complete the Ra-sa-'phrul-snang without further hindrance. Since this is alleged to have occurred after the arrival at the Tibetan court of the Chinese princess Wen-ch'eng Kung-chu, but before the completion of the Ra-sa-'phrul-snang, the date of ca. 640-642 could be tentatively suggested for the Bhutanese temples.¹¹

The story, of course, embodies a political myth of the founding of his empire, but its implied southern extent harmonizes readily with accounts from the Tun-huang documents and Chinese sources of the period.¹² Moreover, in some accounts it is specifically stated that both Klo-pas and Mon-pas from the south were among the subjects of Srong-btsan-sgam-po, and that the Buddhist-inspired laws promulgated by him held sway in those parts of his empire.¹³ Furthermore, it is maintained in all the sources

that the two temples were already in existence during the 8th century, when they were allegedly visited by Padmasambhava. King Khri-srong-lde-btsan (r. 754-797) is said to have restored them at the latter's behest.¹⁴ The modern temples in these locations are not so ancient, however, having been refurbished and enlarged many times.

Naturally, the temples may originally have been little more than frontier outposts or garrisons, but there is no information to indicate whether they were permanently manned or otherwise. In fact, there is no further information at all about the Bhutan area from Tibetan or Chinese sources for the more than one hundred years until the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan. This stands in marked contrast to the active foreign and military policies pursued by Srong-btsan-sgam-po and the other intervening kings with respect to China, Nepal, and regions to the northwest of Tibet, and we can only assume that the silence of the sources reflects a lack of conflict and the general insignificance of the area from the Tibetan point of view. The region may well have been inhabited largely by tribals and acephalous peasant communities, for the earliest meaningful reference to kings in Bhutan comes in connection with the visits of Padmasambhava during the reign of Khri-srong-lde-btsan. This interpretation potentially conflicts with Bhutanese traditions only in that the Indian kings in Bhutan encountered by Padmasambhava are alleged to have been ensconced in the country for several generations. But we shall see shortly that the latter tradition is based mainly on gter-ma texts dating from the 14th century, and is probably spurious.

On the subject of the origin of kings and ruling lines generally in Bhutan during this early period, a great deal of more specific information is available, both from Tibetan and Bhutanese semi-historical accounts of later date. Fundamentally, the Bhutanese Buddhist tradition has been

that, in addition to the aboriginal population, the country came very early under the control of resident Indian kings or princes. Then, by the 9th century, the Indian rulers are alleged to have been replaced by others of local or Tibetan origin.

There is, however, an eastern Bhutanese legend according to which the earliest kings of Bhutan were descended from the heavens. In former times, the people of the four divisions of Bum-thang (bum-thang-sde-bzhi) are said to have gotten together and made a prayer to the gods. In the company of rainbows and other auspicious omens, the gods responded by causing the seed of a divine boy child to enter the womb of a woman from U-ra named Bsod-nams-dpal-sgron. At the time of his birth a voice emanated from the sky declaring that many generations of rulers (dpon) would appear in his family descent. In keeping with this prophecy, he was given the name Lha-mgon-dpal-chen, and during his long rule his subjects in Bum-thang-sde-bzhi are said to have lived in peace and happiness. From him derived many lines of petty monarchs in eastern Bhutan known as the gdung-chos-rje ("ancestral religious lords"). Their secular authority, such as it may have been, was lost to the 'Brug-pa hierarchs during the 17th century, but their descendants are said to be present in the country to the present day.¹⁵

Bhutanese traditions pay special attention to a group of immigrant Tibetan rulers who allegedly arrived during the 8th and 9th centuries, and who claimed to be royal princes of the early ruling line of Tibet. Their importance relates to two factors. Firstly, they are supposed to have given rise to a number of distinguished family lineages in the eastern part of the country, though with certain exceptions their power and importance was largely eclipsed during the 17th century. More importantly, perhaps, the traditions served to connect Bhutan's own obscure early history to the better known events and personages involved in the early

spread of Buddhism in Tibet itself. Of course, the idealized image of certain of the old Tibetan monarchs as divine rulers of a Buddhist "golden age" resulted from much later "revisionist" Buddhist historiography. But it was precisely owing to their rather mythical quality that Bhutanese of subsequent centuries could assert such royalist ties, whether through incarnation or lineal descent, without in any way compromising their own sense of regional identity or political independence. The historian must therefore keep in mind the fact that both Bhutanese and Tibetan religious scholars have participated in this re-writing of the early history, not probably to consciously deceive or fabricate, but to glorify and embellish for religious and personal reasons. Thus, while the kernel of the stories may contain some truth, everything else is suspect.

The same is true of the accounts of Bhutan's alleged Indian rulers. Such traditions may be quite old, but in their written form they first appear in apocryphal treatises "rediscovered" during the 14th century and later, having originally been "hidden" in Bhutan and Tibet during the 8th century by the Indian yogin Padmasambhava and his attendants. If we accept, as we must, that such texts were written ab eventu, then they can be judiciously utilized as sources of legitimate information. However, we shall see in comparing the apocryphal accounts of Indian kings of Bhutan that the stories have been greatly transformed and elaborated even since the 14th century. So that however ancient the traditions of kingship may be in eastern Bhutan, the apocryphal versions are surely mythical. Our critical scrutiny of revealed Lamaist history is not just a modern, Western approach. It is significant that the better Tibetan and Bhutanese scholars who tried to make sense of this literature, such as Tāranātha (b. 1575) and Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (1700-67), also treated ancient prophecy in this manner, more as legend than certain fact.

In Bhutan, as in Tibet, the tales of early kings and the spread of Buddhism have merged with the story of Padmasambhava's advent from India during the 8th century. Almost everything modern Bhutanese know or believe to be true of their early history is related in some way to this man's career. While the general consensus of current scholarship appears to accept the historicity of Padmasambhava, much uncertainty surrounds his alleged career, the dates of his missions, and the duration of his residence in Tibet.¹⁶ His connection with Bhutan is even more obscure, peripheral as it was to the main thrust of Tibetan legend-making.

The basic story upon which all the main sources agree is that when king Khri-srong-lde-btsan was desirous of importing Buddhism to Tibet, he had the Indian pandit Śāntirakṣita brought from India. The occurrence of certain evil omens following his arrival, however, convinced the pandit that Tibet was not yet ready for the propagation of pure Mahāyāna, whereupon he suggested to the Tibetan king that the Indian Tantric magician-saint Padmasambhava be invited also. This was done, and Padmasambhava arrived in due course at the Tibetan court from the semi-legendary land of Uddiyāna (Swat), via Nepal. Along the way he subdued through his magical powers the malignant demons and local spirits that had opposed the introduction of Buddhism, binding them to an oath thenceforward to serve as protectors of the Buddhist faith and institutions. The central event of his career in Tibet was his preparation, in conjunction with Śāntirakṣita, of the plans for Bsam-yas, Tibet's first monastery, founded perhaps in A.D. 775.¹⁷

Following this, he is believed to have been instrumental in assembling Indian pandits and Tibetan scholars at the monastery for the purpose of translating the Buddhist canon into Tibetan, a project which intermittently occupied his attention for many years. The paper for this massive undertaking is said to have been brought from Bhutan (Mon) at the behest of

king Khri-srong-lde-btsan, according to the apocryphal Padma-thang-yig (1352), the hagiography of Padmasambhava best-known to students of Tibet in the West.¹⁸ In the 15th century Mun-sel-sgron-me biography discovered by Padma-gling-pa at Bsam-yas, however, the information is more explicit. There we are told that the paper was sent to Tibet by one Sindhu Rāja (Sindhu ra-dza), king of Bhutan (Mon-yul), an individual equated elsewhere in Padma-gling-pa's gter-ma discoveries with an Indian king of Bum-thang styled Lcags-mkhar Rgyal-po.¹⁹

The balance of Padmasambhava's career in Tibet and the Himalayan regions is clouded in obscurity. The main sources agree that he travelled through the country, subduing local demons, meditating and empowering various places with mantras of magical sanctity. In these place he concealed Buddhist scriptures and other religious texts for which the Tibetan world was not yet "ready", but also to safeguard their preservation for the prophesied time when Tibet would be invaded by Mongol and Chinese hordes, its monasteries sacked and its libraries burned. In this capacity he went to Bhutan, where, according to the brief references in the Padma-thang-yig, he spent three months meditating at Mon-kha-sna-ring-seng-ge-rdzongs-gsum, four months at Spa-gro Stag-tshang, and three at Mon Sgom-brag-phug.²⁰ In addition to these major meditation sites, he is also said to have hidden texts at Stag-tshang Seng-phug, Spa-gro Gnam-thang-dkar-po, Skyer-chu-lha-khang, Bum-thang Rtsi-lung, Bum-thang Dge-gnas and elsewhere.²¹ There is no standard list of these, and later Bhutanese sources have considerably expanded the account from their point of view.

In the basic story, Padmasambhava also acquired a number of female Tantric consorts. His Indian consort Maṇḍaravā is of little importance for Tibet or Bhutan.²² In a Bird year he received the Tibetan consort Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal, princess of Mkhar-chen.²³ Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal became an accomplished Tantric adept in her own right and accompanied Padmasambhava

in his travels through Tibet. It was she who is supposed to have written and concealed the Rnam-thar-zangs-gling-ma biography of Padmasambhava discovered by Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124-1192), and also the Padma-thang-yig discovered by O-rgyan-gling-pa (b. 1323).²⁴ She may well have written others. In the gter-ma discoveries of later generations she has been elevated into a major cult figure and apocryphal biographies of her are attributed to Padma-gling-pa and Stag-sham Nus-ldan-rdo-rje (b. 1655).²⁵

His other major consort was the Bhutanese princess Mon-mo Bkra-shis-khye-'dren.²⁶ This lady is a far more shadowy figure than even Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal. She is mentioned not at all in the Rnam-thar-zangs-gling-ma of Nyi-ma-'od-zer, and she appears in only a minor role in the Padma-thang-yig, though nothing is said of her parentage.²⁷ Surprisingly, she receives only brief mention in the Mun-sel-sgron-me biography of Padmasambhava discovered by Padma-gling-pa.²⁸ Our earliest significant information on her comes from Stag-sham Nus-ldan-rdo-rje's 17th century biography of Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal, of whom she is said to have been a female acolyte.

According to this account Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal was the youngest daughter of Dpal-gyi-dbang-phyug, king of Mkharrchen. This king was a recent convert to Buddhism, as his ancestors had all been Bon-po. Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal early in her life showed an inclination for a religious career, and in allowing this request her father narrowly avoided war with the neighbouring kings of Mkharrchu and Zur-mkharr, who had been her suitors. At the age of thirteen she was given to Padmasambhava, who trained her in meditation and Buddhist Tantric practices. After some years had passed, and Padmasambhava had temporarily left the country, she and several of her followers travelled to Bhutan, where she undertook a course of meditation and austerities at Mon-gyi-sengge-rdzong-gsum in the mountains north of

Lhun-rtse-rdzong (northeast of Bum-thang). While engaged in meditation a young girl named Khi-'dren appeared and offered her some honey to eat.

Then for several months the local spirits sought to tempt her from her faith. First they produced apparitions of luscious food. Next they appeared in the form of handsome youths who fondled and attempted to seduce her, but she resisted all of these temptations. In anger the demons summoned frightful storms and earthquakes; hail and diseases plagued the country and Bhutan was covered in darkness. These, too, she repelled through the force of her contemplative repose. Now the people of the area rose up against her, as they believed Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal to be responsible for the sickness and natural disasters afflicting them. But their weapons were useless against her yogic powers.

Finally, the girl Khi-'dren again came upon her and offered her milk, but this time stayed in attendance upon the yoginī. At this point the local spirits realized their defeat, submitted to her, and vowed to become protectors of the holy Dharma. Knowing of this, the people of the region also confessed their faith in her, including Ham-ras the king of Bhutan (Mon). As a gift of devotion, the king offered to Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal his thirteen year-old daughter to be her disciple. The princess, it now was realized, was none other than the girl Khi-'dren. She was initiated by Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal and given the new name of Bkra-shis-khye-'dren.

Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal and her small group of devotees next travelled westwards to Spa-gro Stag-tshang. There, three of her companions fell ill, but she cured them through her skill in yogic and herbal medicine. After this sojourn in Bhutan, the group returned to Tibet where they met Padmasambhava once more. The girl Bkra-shis-khye-'dren was recognized to be a *ḍākiṇī* and she also became his Tantric consort. In subsequent years

Bkra-shis-khye-'dren herself became a noted Tantric adept and acquired disciples of her own, principally the Nepalese princess Kālasiddi. The latter also became a consort of Padmasambhava.²⁹

To see the evolution of the tradition through the successive layers of apocryphal revelation, the above story must be compared with the 17th century Bhutanese discovery of the life of Sindha-ra-dza or Sindhu Rāja,³⁰ a text which would appear in its present form to embody certain legends of the Indo-Bhutanese borderland.³¹ Versions of this legend have already been related by Mehra and Olschak.³² Briefly, in the days of Padmasambhava, a royal prince of Bum-thang was banished for various reasons, and established a new kingdom somewhere along the Indo-Bhutanese frontier. He took the title Sindhu Rāja.³³ But owing to a war with another Indian king named Sna'u-che he fled once more back to Bum-thang, where he reestablished his kingdom and ruled from a palace called Lcags-mkhar-sgo-med.

Later Sna'u-che declared war on one of Sindhu Rāja's sons, Stag-lha-me-'bar, whose death prompted renewed fighting between Sindhu Rāja and Sna'u-che. But owing to his ruthlessness, Sindhu Rāja managed to offend the local deity of Bum-thang, Shel-ging-dkar-po. In anger, Shel-ging-dkar-po and his host of lesser spirits caused psychic injury to befall the king, and no medicines seemed able to avert his impending death. Then Padmasambhava was summoned from India, and through the power of his meditations the saint was able to subdue the spirits, and Sindhu Rāja was brought back to full health. To achieve this, however, Padmasambhava had required the use of a Tantric consort, the girl selected being Sindhu Rāja's own daughter Ma-gcig 'Bum-ldan. Following the war, Padmasambhava mediated a peace settlement on the Indian frontier, at a place called Maa'-thang, which thereafter became the official border between the kingdoms of Sna'u-che and Sindhu Rāja. Thereafter he departed for Tibet in the

company of his new female attendant, the king's daughter, laid the foundations for Bsam-yas monastery, and pursued his well-known career of teaching and conversion.

In comparing this story with the version of Nus-ldan-rdo-rje above, a number of striking structural and thematic similarities become obvious. They both share the elements of struggle with local spirits and eventual victory through meditation, the miraculous healing of disease, and the pious gift of the king's daughter as a token of his faith. In the earlier version, however, Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal performs the major role later filled by Padmasambhava. The war with India is an added element in the more recent story. The name of the Bhutanese king also fluctuates through the accounts. In the various gter-ma texts of Padma-gling-pa we read of Sindhu-ra-dza, king of Bhutan (Mon-yul),³⁴ the Indian king Sen-mda' of Mkhan-pa-lung (northeast of Bum-thang),³⁵ and of Senta-rā-ja, king of Lcags-mkhar in Bum-thang.³⁶ In Nus-ldan-rdo-rje's MSS he is named Ham-ras, whereas in the 17th century Bhutanese story just related his name fluctuates between Sindha-ra-dza, Simddhi-ra-tsa, and Sindha-ra-tsha.

We are clearly faced with another example of the episodic, evolutionary folk myth so common in the Tibetan-speaking world, the most elaborate example of which is probably the epic of Ge-sar of Gling. Around the bare names and obscure hints of the earliest traditions of Padmasambhava there have accreted sequential layers of thematic reworking. In the present instance, the legends of Padmasambhava, Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal, and Mon-mo Bkra-shis-khye-'dren have been combined in Bhutan with an old tradition of Indian kings in the eastern parts of the country; Sen-mda' ra-ja has become Sindhu-rāja "King of India."

But in rejecting the truth of the whole, we cannot necessarily reject the truth of the individual parts. The belief in earlier Indian kings is

persistent. In one of the 15th century gter-ma texts we read that Ku-re-lung (the river valley south of Lhun-rtse) and the Mon region in general consisted largely of Indian settlements. Their houses were of cane, thatch and wood, as was that of the king, though on a more palatial scale. The area is described as the then border between India and Tibet, a trading centre between them, in which the residents practised a mixture of Indian and Tibetan customs.³⁷ This description is clearly meant to be taken seriously, though whether it refers to conditions in the 15th century, or to the 8th as it pretends, cannot be said in the absence of firmer evidence.

The traditions of the Tibetan royal princes who settled in Bhutan are generally better known than their Indian counterparts, and more authentically articulated in the literature. The first of these, Khyi-kha-ra-thod, is connected with the cycle of Padmasambhava legends and is certainly mythical. Nevertheless, his story is important in that it illustrates what was to be a major theme in the Tibetan literature of the Rnying-ma-pa sect concerning Bhutan, Sikkim, and other mountainous lands along the southern borders - the theory of the Hidden Lands (sbas yul). This "theory" as I have termed it is an intimate part of the prophetic genre of literature centering around the cult of Padmasambhava. Its origins are obscure, but it may have been inspired by the prophetic passages of such late Sanskrit texts as the Mañjuśrīmūlatāntṛa, and by the millennial and chronological preoccupations of the Kālacakra Tantra, introduced into Tibet in 1027. In any case, the shock of Mongol militarism in Tibet during the early 13th century appears to have been the catalyst from which there derived a steadily increasing proliferation of prophecies of the impending destruction of Buddhism in the country, and of its supports in the monasteries and lay patronage. The majority of such prophecies are contained in the gter-ma literature, where they are attributed to Padmasambhava. The theory is that Padmasambhava and his close associates, such as Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal, had not only hidden

for safekeeping the sacred texts of Buddhism, but had also hidden or sealed up spiritually sanctified secret valleys, mostly deep in the mountains along the southern fringes of Tibet. At the prophesied future time, when the Mongol and Chinese armies have reduced the state of Buddhist culture to near extinction, pre-ordained "treasure-finders" (gter-ston) will arise who will flee with their followers to these Hidden Lands, unseal them and the sacred scriptures concealed therein, and maintain Buddhist teachings and practices beyond the reach of the barbarian soldiers.

There are many variations to this scenario, but its influence breached all sectarian boundaries. Though inadequately studied in Western literature, the millennial prophetic traditions have had a significant impact on Tibetan and Bhutanese history even up to the 20th century.³⁸ Many of the important Tibetan monks and yogis who established missions in Bhutan after the 12th century did so in the express belief that the warfare and sectarian strife which they witnessed in the homeland signalled the culmination of the prophesied time for fleeing to the Hidden Lands.³⁹

After the founding of Bsam-yas monastery, according to the story of Khya-kha-ra-thod, the royal queen Tshe-spong-bza' Dmar-rgyan and several ministers opposed to the teaching of Buddhism in Tibet arranged to have the translator Vairotsana expelled from the country. Angered at this, king Khri-srong-lde-btsan declined to have further sexual relations with Dmar-rgyan, spending his nights with the other three queens. Thus excluded, she resided in her private chambers for three years of seclusion, attended upon only by one of the royal ministers of her own family. In consequence of her unrelieved lust, she began secretly to engage in unnatural intercourse with goats and dogs. In due course a boy was born, but this birth was kept secret from the king. After nine years had passed the rumour finally reached his ears, whereupon he demanded that the

hitherto unseen boy be brought to the court for crowning as the intended heir to the throne. In public display the child was observed to have a goat-like head and the muzzle of a dog, his true paternity being thus revealed. This child, prince Mu-rum-btsan-po, was thereafter known as Khyi-kha-ra-thod ("Dog-face Goat-head").

Convinced that the ugly child was an evil omen foreshadowing the destruction of Tibet, Khri-srong-lde-btsan banished him to the southern frontier, along with the disloyal ministers and the relations and subjects of Dmar-rgyan. For thirteen years the exiles lived in Lho-brag, just inside the Tibetan borders. Then a Tibetan army was sent against them, and they fled into Bhutan, where they reestablished themselves in Mkhan-pa-lung, a Hidden Land in the northeast of the country.⁴⁰ At that time, we are told, Mkhan-pa-lung was inhabited largely by Indian peoples and was regarded as the boundary between India and Tibet, and the new king Khyi-kha-ra-thod became wealthy through control of the border trade.

After sixty-one years of exile, Khyi-kha-ra-thod conceived the idea of invading Tibet and destroying Bsam-yas monastery, to avenge himself and his mother, who was still being kept in confinement. During these years Khri-srong-lde-btsan had died and his son Mu-tig-btsan-po had become king. As the army approached, Padmasambhava, who had remained as the court priest, recognized the impending danger through his yogic foresight. The army was dispersed by sorcery, but in view of the threat of further invasions, Padmasambhava magically transported himself to Mkhan-pa-lung, disguised his appearance, and insinuated himself into the confidence of Khyi-kha-ra-thod, who believed him to be a powerful sorcerer and enemy of Padmasambhava. The two of them had the great Bya-khyung temple built, a rival in magnificence even to Bsam-yas in Tibet. But as Khyi-kha-ra-thod continued in his hostility towards Tibet, Padmasambhava revealed his true identity, and, in punishment for his unswerving animosity, swept up the

unrepentent king and all his subjects in a great wind, depositing them in the Bum-thang region. Then Padmasambhava returned to Mkhan-pa-lung where he concealed all of their former wealth. Finally, he placed a magical seal on the land so that no one should ever find the place until the prophesied time in the future when it would again be reopened as a hidden land for the preservation of Buddhism. Since the spell prevented Khyi-kha-ra-thod from regaining his lost kingdom, he established a new residence at Stang-gi-khyi-tshums near Bum-thang, where he and his descendants continued.⁴¹

The families of Khyi-tshums along the Stang river in Bum-thang are not the only alleged descendants of this enigmatic Tibetan "prince." It has been recently discovered that the Dpon-bzang, a minor clan in the Skyid-mo-lung district of northern Nepal, also claim him as their ancestor.⁴² In one version of the genealogy of the Rnam-rgyal Dynasty of Sikkim (1642-1974) Khri-srong-lde-btsan's son Mu-rug-btsan-po (of which Mu-rum-btsan-po is but a spelling variant) is said to have been the ancestral founder. In another version the kings of Sikkim are said to have sprung from descendants of Gnyan-chen-dpal-dbyangs, son of Padmasambhava and Lha-lcam Khrom-rgyan, daughter of Khri-srong-lde-btsan's wife Dmar-rgyan. The Sikkimese accounts, however, do not equate Mu-rug-btsan-po with Khyi-kha-ra-thod.⁴³

The only support from Tibetan historical sources for the legends related above is a tradition according to which prince Mu-rug-btsan-po was exiled to Lho-brag for having killed one of his father's ministers.⁴⁴ In another version of equal validity, however, it was his younger brother Mu-tig-btsan-po who was exiled for the deed.⁴⁵ In still other legends it is said that Mu-rug-btsan-po was exiled to the north.⁴⁶ The infidelity of Tshe-spong-bza' Dmar-rgyan is also known from the standard Tibetan histories, but it did not take the form of bestiality and no child is known

to have resulted from it. The confusion in the Tibetan histories as to the number and names of Khri-srong-lde-btsan's sons has clearly been exploited by various family lines of later centuries to provide them with royal ancestry from the Golden Age of the Tibetan kings.

There is another Bhutanese family line claiming descent from Khri-srong-lde-btsan, through a bastard son (sras zur-pa) named Lde-chung-don-grub. Although there is no evidence from any Tibetan source to support the existence of such a person, the family rose to great prominence in Bhutan during the 17th and 18th centuries. According to their records, Lde-chung-don-grub was given the authority to rule over Lho-brag-ya-bo-gsum by his father, Khri-srong-lde-btsan. Two family lines in Lho-brag derived from him, the Lde-mal and the Lde-chung, the latter of which became known as the La-yags Chos-rgyal. At an unspecified time in the past, perhaps during the 13th or 14th century, three brothers from this family all named Rdo-rje (rdo rje spun gsum) emigrated southwards to the Bum-thang valley in Bhutan. The eldest, La-ba-rdo-rje, settled at Mtshams-pa'i-sa, and the youngest, Spre'u-rdo-rje, at Stang (or Stangs). The middle brother, Khye'u-rdo-rje, dwelled at Ngang and Ngur-pa'i-sa. By various means the three brothers were able to establish themselves as lords (dpon) in their respective areas. In the 16th century a certain Gdung Lha-thar was born into the Ngang-pa lineage of Khye'u-rdo-rje. He became a disciple of Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan, the son of Padma-gling-pa, and was a renowned yogin in his own right. In accord with a prophecy of Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan, Lha-thar moved westward to Bon-sbi (or Bon-sbis) in the Mang-sde valley, where he acquired numerous estates and client families.⁴⁷

The dominant position of his descendants became secure through mergers by marriage and incarnation with the Padma-gling-pa rebirths and their descendants, and with the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa branch of the house of

Rgya. Padma-gling-pa's mother was said to have been a descendant of the branch of the family at Bum-thang derived from La-ba-rdo-rje. The abbot of Sgang-steng monastery, Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub (1645-1726), was both the great-grandson of Gdung Lha-dar and the rebirth of Padma-'phrin-las (1564-1642?), the grandson of Padma-gling-pa. His scholarship and loyalty earned him the position of tutor to one of the 'Brug-pa incarnations, an event which marked the rise of this family to political prominence within the 'Brug-pa government. The merger with the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa came at the beginning of the 18th century, when Rgyal-sras Mi-pham-dbang-po (1709-1738), a near relative of Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub, was declared to be the rebirth of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638-1696). When Mi-pham-dbang-po became the Tenth Sde-srid (secular ruler of the country) in 1729, his younger brother Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu (1717-1735) was crowned as the Fourth rgyal-tshab (successor to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal), by which act the supreme secular and religious authority of Bhutan was concentrated in the hands of members of this family.⁴⁸ Mi-pham-dbang-po was popularly known as the rebirth of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, in addition to being a lineal descendant.⁴⁹

There were many other notable religious and political figures in this family line during the 17th and 18th centuries, though its political fortunes declined somewhat after Mi-pham-dbang-po's death. Nevertheless, whatever credibility can be allowed to their claimed descent from Khri-srong-lde-btsan, it does not appear to have been a major factor in their rise to social prominence in Bhutan.

The last of the Tibetan royal princes alleged to have taken up residence in Bhutan was Lha-sras Gtsang-ma, the eldest son of Khri-lde-srong-btsan Sad-na-legs (r. ca. 799-815/17). Of all the exiled Tibetan princes, the historicity of Lha-sras Gtsang-ma is the least questionable,

since the main features of his story from Tibetan sources harmonize fairly closely with Bhutanese accounts. The differences, however, are sufficient to suggest that the traditions of him have been reworked to conform to the "revisionist" Buddhist historiography mentioned earlier.

Later Tibetan sources agree that, on the death of king Khri-lde-srong-btsan Sad-na-legs ca. 815/17, the eldest son Gtsang-ma was passed over, as was the next eldest brother Glang Dar-ma, in favor of Khri-gtsug-lde-btsan Ral-pa-can.⁵⁰ Gtsang-ma is said to have taken Buddhist vows and apparently specifically declined to occupy the throne, to which, as the eldest son, he was entitled. Glang Dar-ma, on the other hand, was deliberately passed over by the ministers on account of character weaknesses, variously described as harshness, foolishness, or ugliness. Towards the end of Ral-pa-can's rule, certain ministers who favoured the Bon-po creed became greatly displeased with the hold that Buddhism had on the ruling family. Ral-pa-can had been strongly pro-Buddhist, as was his trusted minister Bran-ka Dpal-gyi-yon-tan; Gtsang-ma had become a monk, or at least taken Buddhist vows. A plot was therefore conceived to remove these people from power through assassination or exile.

For tactical reasons it was decided to eliminate Lha-sras Gtsang-ma and the Buddhist minister first, so that, having next killed the king, there would be no further pro-Buddhist claimants to the throne. According to the fullest accounts of these events contained in the Rgyal-rabs-gsal-ba'i-me-long (1478 - this version was followed by the Deb-ther-dmar-po-gsar-ma) and the Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, soothsayers were bribed at the behest of the anti-Buddhist minister Dba's Stag-sna-ba to tell the king that if Gtsang-ma were allowed to remain in Tibet, the royal rule would be destroyed, and that he should be sent into exile.⁵¹ Accordingly, the royal prince was exiled to the southern frontier where,

most sources allege, he was assassinated by one or several of the Tibetan queens. Shortly after this, the pro-Buddhist minister Bran-ka Dpal-gyi-yon-tan and king Ral-pa-can were both killed, whereupon the remaining son who favoured the Bon-po, Glang Dar-ma, was installed on the throne as Khri 'U-dum-btsan Dar-ma. With his assassination in 842, the Tibetan empire went into a decline from which it never recovered and the rule of the Yar-klung dynasty of kings came to an end.

Other than the central story, our information on Lha-sras Gtsang-ma from Tibetan sources is somewhat limited. In one of the oldest Tibetan histories, the Bod kyi rgyal rabs of the Sa-skya scholar Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147-1216), an older verse chronicle of the ancient kings is cited in which it is said that Gtsang-ma (or Rtsang-ma, as his name is spelled here) was born in an Iron (lcags) year.⁵² In the 13th century history composed by Ne'u Pandi-ta Smon-lam-blo-gros, another version of the same or a related verse chronicle is quoted, the parallel passage of which reads, "the eldest of the three [sons] was Gtsang-ma [born in the year] Iron-male-Dragon."⁵³ This would put his birth in A.D. 800, which is consistent with the account of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, where Glang Dar-ma's birth is given as 803 and that of Ral-pa-can as 806. Neither author discusses the source of the chronicle they have worked from, but it is clearly old and worthy of careful notice.

That Gtsang-ma did not ascend to the throne is insisted upon by all the available records.⁵⁴ The reason, however, is not so clear. Two passages in the Bod kyi rgyal rabs mention his fate as follows: "The eldest of the three sons [of Khri-lde-srong-btsan], Khri Btsan-ma, was exiled to Bum-thang in the South (lho bum thang) where he was poisoned to death by 'Brom-bza' Legs-rje and Sna-nam-bza' Me-rje-the'u." The second passage, the one from the old verse chronicle, reads: "The eldest of the

three brothers was Rtsang-ma, born in an Iron year. Without taking the ruling power (rgyal srid ma bzung) he was poisoned in Bum-thang of Lho-brag by 'Bro-bza' Legs-rje and Sna-nam Mang-mo-rje; but his ruling line still resides there."⁵⁵

For the sake of comparison, we shall cite the two passages about Gtsang-ma from the work of Ne'u Pandi-ta mentioned above. "Khri-lde-srong-btsan took the throne. The eldest of his three sons, Khri Gtsang-ma, was exiled to Lho-mon. There he was poisoned to death by 'Bro-bza' Legs-rje-pa [and] Gnan-nam-pa. I have heard it said that his family descendants were the kings of Ya-rtse." The second passage is from the verse chronicle related to the one used by Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan: "The eldest of the three [sons] was Gtsang-ma [born in the year] Iron-male-Dragon. He did not take the ruling power, and died in Bum-thang of Lho-brag."⁵⁶

Before analysing these texts and their discrepancies, it will be useful to note what two later Tibetan historians say about Gtsang-ma. In the history of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston (1322), there is only the briefest statement that the one son Gtsang-ma had taken religious vows, and had been exiled to Gro-mo (i.e. the Chumbi valley). I have already recounted the considerably more elaborate stories found in the Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long and the Deb ther dmar po gsar ma (15th-16th century). In the verse chronicle which the Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston (1565) elaborates by way of commentary, the event is presented as a dramatic moment in religious history:

"Lha-sras Gtsang-ma...was exiled to Mon-yul. At the point where the monks, scholars, and translators had conducted him to the edge of the Gtsang-po river, he said,

'All of the king's ministers have consulted on it,

So I am going to the frontier, powerless to remain.

What means have I against my exile, through I am
without blame?

Oh monks, peaceful in mind, I beg you turn back
from here.

My mind is made up. Let the boat's lines be cast away!
Saying thus, he went to Kho-thing in Lho-brag,
Where, it is said, he was poisoned to death,
by Sna-nam-bza' Mang-rje."⁵⁷

The first point to be noticed in these accounts is the diachronic escalation in the amount of information. Parallel to this is the development of the theory, first mentioned by Bu-ston, that his failure to assume the throne was related to his adherence to Buddhism, so that in the Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston he appears virtually as a martyr to that faith. There is also some confusion in the spelling of his name. In the two earliest passages, those cited by Grags-pa-rgyal-mthsan, he is known either as Khri Btsan-ma or Rtsang-ma. In the latter instance the original orthography may have been Rtsad-pa, as Professor Tucci suggests in his earlier translation of this passage.⁵⁸ This raises the suspicion that the switch to the form Gtsang-ma ("The Pure") may be connected in some way with the legend of his Buddhist convictions. As the eldest son and intended heir to the throne, the name Khri Btsan-ma should then be interpreted rather as a title. As I have argued, the syllable khri ("throne") must be taken here as indicating his foreshadowed status, and not that he actually occupied the throne, while the syllable btsan was generic to all the males of the Tibetan royal line.

That his exile to the south resulted from a commitment to Buddhism is a tradition of dubious validity. Firstly, it is unsupported by the oldest sources, at least one of which could reasonably be expected to have recorded a detail of such interest. Secondly, there is the fact that the

clans of his assassins, the Sna-nam and the 'Bro (of which 'Brom is but a variant spelling), generally functioned as supporters of Buddhism during the period.⁵⁹ More importantly, they were the enemies of the Dba's, the clan to which the minister who engineered his exile belonged. On both counts, it would be difficult to understand their collaboration. Finally, there is the important fact that the Bhutanese tradition does not regard Lha-sras Gtsang-ma as having been a Buddhist at all, but rather as a supporter of the Bon-po creed. The story is totally reversed. The Bhutanese suggest that on account of his favouritism towards the Bon-po, the pro-Buddhist ministers of Tibet exiled him to the frontier. One of the lines of his descendants at Nub-chu-stod-chu in Mang-sde was in fact referred to as the Bon-brgyud-chos-rje.⁶⁰

If Lha-sras Gtsang-ma was a supporter of Bon it would help to explain the involvement of the Sna-nam and the 'Bro in his alleged assassination, but we are still left with the problems of the date and location of his exile. The question of the precise date is of more interest for the study of the history of Tibet than Bhutan, since it is connected with the rise to the throne of the controversial Tibetan king Khri 'U-dum-btsan Dar-ma. If Lha-sras Gtsang-ma was a Bon-po, then his exile may have been engineered to pave the way for his younger brother Ral-pa-can, a known supporter of Buddhism, to become king, which would put it ca. 815/17 while he was in his teens. On the other hand, the later Tibetan texts, the only ones specific on the matter, connect both his exile and assassination with the assassination of Ral-pa-can and the enthroning of Glang Dar-ma in 841. But since this connection is alleged in context with the belief that Gtsang-ma was a supporter of Buddhism, there is considerable room for doubt as to its veracity. Moreover, if his assassination occurred only a few months or at the most one or two years after his exile, this seems too short a period for him to have

established a family and ruling line. Of course, there is also the possibility that no such assassination ever really took place. The names of the two Tibetan queens who are supposed to have arranged or personally committed the deed are not otherwise known from Tibetan sources. The problem will remain an enigma until access is had to further and more authentic Bhutanese accounts, which will probably shed more light on the matter.

The Tibetan sources are virtually unanimous in asserting that the location of his exile was somewhere in what is now the state of Bhutan, variously designated as Lho or Lho-mon. Some of the earliest texts specifically mention Bum-thang. The two passages cited earlier, which treat Bum-thang as a division of the Lho-brag district of Tibet, are not necessarily erroneous in that ascription, since the Bum-thang valley is only about twenty miles west of the Lho-brag river which flows southwards into Bhutan, and the area could well have been under loose Tibetan jurisdiction at the time when the chronicles were compiled. Bu-ston's mention of Gro-mo, just to the west of modern Bhutan, is anomalous, but in his time, and definitely during earlier centuries, Gro-mo probably lay within the large amorphous territory known in Tibetan as Lho. The Bhutanese traditions say that Lha-sras Gtsang-ma went to Bkra-shis-sgang in southeastern Bhutan, but he could have come there via Lho-brag and Bum-thang.⁶¹

That Lha-sras Gtsang-ma gave rise to family and ruling lines in Bhutan is supported by both Tibetan and Bhutanese documents, although there were Tibetan groups outside the confines of modern Bhutan who also claimed him as their ancestor.⁶² There is no particular reason to doubt the tradition, even though we have no documents from the period confirming it. As is well known, the breakup of the Tibetan empire after 842 resulted in a dispersal of the various branches of the royal family. Descendants

of Glang Dar-ma's son 'Od-srungs took up residence in the far west of Tibet, and various petty ruling lineages traditionally derived from them. Another branch of the same family went to Khams in eastern Tibet. These two divisions are referred to in later Tibetan histories as the Upper Laws (stod khrims) and the Lower Laws (smad khrims).⁶³ There were numerous families in Tibet who in subsequent centuries claimed to be descended from the kings of old Tibet, though often with little documentary evidence.⁶⁴ In any case, the tradition of Lha-sras Gtsang-ma and his descendant rulers in Bhutan accords well with the general pattern of events of this period and should probably be accepted as at least tentatively legitimate. Nor is it contradicted by other sources.⁶⁵ His descendants are specifically mentioned by the great Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa saint Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer (1308-1363), who resided for a time at Bum-thang ca. 1355.⁶⁶

The detailed records on the Bhutanese petty princes who derived from Lha-sras Gtsang-ma are not available to me. Modern sources, however, state that his ancestral house in Bkra-shis-sgang was called 'Jam-mkhar, and that the successive rulers in this lineage were addressed with the titles mkho-che and dpon-che.⁶⁷ I have mentioned that a branch of his line later established itself at Nub-chu-stod-chu in Mang-sde, one of the four traditional territorial divisions of Bum-thang (Bum-thang-sde-bzhi). Their authority never spread to western Bhutan, and none of his descendants appears to have gained prominent office in the central government of the country during the 17th or 18th centuries. The nature and extent of their influence in eastern Bhutan will almost certainly become clearer as further authoritative texts become available and the oral traditions can be consulted.

So far this chapter has been largely concerned with tracing the traditions of Bhutanese families with princely origins. But there were

other early migrant influxes of Tibetan people from more humble backgrounds, and in western Bhutan before the 17th century these were of more importance than the former. However, documentary evidence for these migrations is very scanty, and none is of contemporary antiquity. The Lho'i chos 'byung says that during the reign of Ral-pa-can, a massive Tibetan army was assembled and sent to drive out all the Indian rulers and their subjects from Bhutan. Many of the soldiers, however, allegedly did not return to Tibet, staying on instead to found family and clan settlements.⁶⁸ Referred to as Mi-log ("Non-returners") in Bhutanese texts, the 9th century Tibetan settlers are believed to have gradually displaced or absorbed the older strata of inhabitants, filiating in turn to produce new branch lines and to settle other valleys.

This traditional ethnohistory no doubt contains a kernel of truth, but the arrival in Bhutan of immigrant Tibetans in consequence of a single great war is probably fictitious. No such invasion, nor even a reasonable motive for one, is supported by Tibetan or Chinese sources. It is more probable that a southward migration of Tibetan peoples took place gradually over a much longer period, perhaps intensifying during the 9th century on account of the recurrent warfare between Tibet and China. Moreover, the name Mi-log itself is probably nothing more than a folk etymological transformation of some other ethnic designation. In various parts of Padma-gling-pa's writings, the oldest extant literature from Bhutan, the term is found in the forms Man-log, Men-log, and Min-log (always with the nasal). In these texts, the people so described appear to have inhabited districts near modern Wangdiphodrang. We need not question their Tibetan ancestry, but the form Mi-log appears to be late, and as its etymological gloss is the basis for the invasion story, it must be treated as mythical.

By the time literary sources begin to appear, the early ethnic picture of western Bhutan has already become quite obscure. A slogan, which also became current in Tibet, mentions two principal divisions, the Wang and the Dgung. "The fighting between Wang and Dgung" (wang dgung 'thab pa) was often cited by later historians of both countries to characterize the situation in Bhutan before the spread of Buddhism. The Dgung are little known, but the Wang people (allegedly of Tibetan ancestry) seem from very early times to have formed a group of eight villages or communities known as the "eight tsho-chen of the Wang", inhabiting the central Thim and Thed valleys, which in their lower reaches become the Sankosh and Raidak river valleys of India. The Wang tsho-chen, in their most frequent spellings, were Dkar-sbis, Lcang, Ka-wang, Sbed-med, Stod-wang, Smad-wang, Bar-pa, and Stod-pa.⁶⁹ The last four, however, are of infrequent occurrence in later literature. Other common village or habitational names from early times included the Sdong, Has (or Had), Sgod-phrug, Stag, and Gzig.

Based on field study, Michael Aris claims that none of these names represented family or lineage titles,⁷⁰ and certainly none of them can easily be connected with the old Tibetan clan names, a further argument against the Lho'i chos 'byung's assertion of a single mass migration. The use of the term tsho-chen, on the other hand, and the apparent migratory pattern of their inhabitants, lends support to a thesis of early nomadic livelihood,⁷¹ perhaps of the sa-ma-'brog pattern described by Ekvali.⁷²

Whatever the original structure of western Bhutan's ethnic divisions, the territory controlled by these named units increased considerably in later centuries, and arrangements between their leaders or headmen, referred to generally by the titles spyi-dpon, stong-dpon, zhal-ngo, and rgad-po, formed the nucleus of whatever political organization may have

existed before the 17th century. Even after that date, the heads of these territorial units or their leading families customarily received special treatment at the hands of the government, at least on ceremonial occasions, which suggests that their local influence and latent power were not so easily displaced by central rule.⁷³

* * * * *

Thus, the general picture of the country's foundation period, as it emerges from Tibetan and Bhutanese sources of later date, is straightforward in broad outline but obscure in many details. The country is believed to have been populated during the 7th century by Mon-pa and Indic people, but both of obscure ethnic affiliation. The Spa-gro and Bum-thang valleys may have come briefly or intermittently under the sway of the Yar-klung kings of Tibet between the 7th and 9th centuries, even though later Bhutanese histories take little notice of it.

In fact, however, the rise of the powerful and expansive Yar-klung dynasty of Tibetan kings had important indirect consequences for Bhutan. But in the retrospective view of Bhutanese religious scholars this complex influence has been telescoped into a more simplistic interpretation, by way of a cycle of myths and traditions focusing on a single individual, the Indian Tantric saint Padmasambhava. His coming to Bhutan was seen from a local perspective as the catalyst for significant developments in both religion and government. His very presence in the country, modern Bhutanese texts suggest, provided the impetus for the rise of many indigenous men of learning and skill, who subsequently became kings and ministers in their respective districts.⁷⁴

Similarly, the political picture of Bhutan at the end of the 9th century reveals one relatively distinctive characteristic, together with a host of uncertainties as to specifics. What is apparent is a certain cleavage between east and west. In the west were settlements of local

and immigrant Tibetan stock, with the latter, whether of military or nomadic background, moving gradually into positions of increasing, though fragmented and localized, dominance. On the other hand, eastern Bhutan (Shar-phyogs in Bhutanese sources) has preserved traditions of early monarchies. Legends of kings (Rgyal-po) in Bhutan always pertain to Shar-phyogs and not the western valleys. The early kings, moreover, were believed to have been of Indian origin, being later displaced by local rulers (Gdung Chos-rje)⁷⁵ and immigrant kings from Tibet, some of whom claimed to be refugee princes of the royal line.

In spite of the achievements attributed to him by the later scholastic tradition, however, Padmasambhava's immediate legacy in Bhutan was clearly temporary and incomplete. The factor which eventually unified the two halves of the country during the 17th and 18th centuries was a powerful Buddhist institution, of Tibetan origin, in which political and religious authority were concentrated in the hands of descendants and incarnations of a single aristocratic family, the Rgya of Rwa-lung. But this presupposed a long history of missionary activity in which the leaders of powerful family units and villages were converted, chapels and monasteries founded and maintained with their support, and ties cemented between individual sects and specific patron groups. The gradual development of this process between the 10th and 16th centuries will be the subject of the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.5.b-6.a; cf. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, pp. 37-38 for Tibetan references.

² Dept. of Education, His Majesty's Government of Bhutan, Dpal ldan 'brug gzhung / 'brug gi lo rgyus / sde srid khri rabs dang rgyal rabs (Thimphu, rev. ed. of 1974), p. 1. This little school textbook, in Dzongkha dialect, will hereafter be referred to by its added English title History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan.

³ J. Bacot, F.W. Thomas et Ch. Toussaint, Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1940-46), pp. 140, 163, 165.

⁴ G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, Roma, 1949, p. 6.

⁵ F.W. Thomas, NAM (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 150-55, 362.

⁶ R. Shafer, review of F.W. Thomas' Nam in Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 13 (1950), pp. 244-49.

⁷ T.S. Murty, "A Re-appraisal of the Mon-legend in Himalayan Tradition," Central Asiatic Journal 13 (1969), p. 297. Murty also uncritically accepts the fiction that Srong-btsan-sgam-po's Mong wife was a Mon-pa (p. 291).

⁸ Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje (1772-1838), Rje btsun bla ma dam pa rdo rje 'chang kun mkhyen chos rje o rgyan ngag dbang ye shes dpal bzang po'i rnam thar dpag bsam ljon shing, ff.122.a-26.a (reprinted in Ngawang Gyaltzen & Ngawang Lungtok, Bka' brgyud gser phreng chen mo, Dehradun, vol. 3).

⁹ E. Obermiller (trans.), History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung) by Bu-ston (Heidelberg, 1932), vol. 2, p. 184.

¹⁰ Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, ff.39.b-41.a; B.I. Kuznetsov, (ed.), Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966),

ff.59.b-60.a, etc. The number, names, and locations of the various temples vary widely in the different sources. In some cases the two Bhutanese temples are reduced to a single one with the geographically impossible name Bum-thang Spa-gro-skyer-chu-lha-khang (e.g. A. Ferrari, Mk'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet [Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958], p. 140). The various gter-ma texts of Padma-gling-pa contradict one another. For example, the O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me (ff.214.b-215.a) supports Bum-thang Rtsi-lung-lha-khang as the second temple, whereas the Lung bstan kun gsal me long (a portion of the Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho discovered by Padma-gling-pa in 1484, and contained in vol. 1 of the Rediscovered Teachings..., Thimphu, 1975), f.17.b, has the Byams-pa-lha-khang. For the modern Bhutanese interpretations, cf. Michael Aris, "'The admonition of the thunderbolt cannon-ball' and its place in the Bhutanese New Year festival," B.S.O.A.S. 39, pt. 3 (1976), pp. 602-3, and D.I. Lauf, "Vorläufiger Bericht...I," Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich 1972, pp. 80-82, 87-88, and D.I. Lauf, "Vorläufiger Bericht...III," Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich 1975, pp. 64-65.

¹¹ History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 2-3 attributes them to the impossibly early date of A.D. 600; Srong-btsan-sgam-po was born in 609.

¹² For the latest study of the Tibetan materials, cf. Dbang-phyug-bde-ldan Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs (An Advanced Political History of Tibet) (Kalimpong: Shakabpa House, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 146-57; for the Chinese, cf. Paul Pelliot, Histoire ancienne du Tibet (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1961), pp. 2-6, 82-84.

¹³ Lokesh Chandra (ed.) Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, f.22.b; Ne'u Paṇḍi-ta Smon-lam-blo-gros (fl. 13th century), Sngon gyi gtam me tog

phreng ba, ff.18.b, 24.b (reprinted in T. Tsepel Taikhang, Rare Tibetan Historical and Literary Texts from the Library of Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, New Delhi, 1974).

¹⁴ Padma-gling-pa, O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me, ff.214.b-215.a.

¹⁵ History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ In his critical little study of the life of Padmasambhava written in 1610, Tāranātha cautiously refrains from suggesting any dates. He merely notes the different traditions which would have Padmasambhava in Tibet for three, six, twelve, eighteen, fifty, and one hundred years, as well as the varied accounts of his alleged miracles and exploits. "There are," he writes, "foolish people who fabricate or add to stories in order to inspire in others an increase of faith. And the majority of people are so stupid that it is very likely that such stories could inspire them to greater faith, false and trivial though they be." Compared to such books as those, "the work of demons", his own short study is a hundred times more impressive, so he claims (Tāranātha, Slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa gsal bar byed pa'i yi ge yid ches gsum ldan: slob dpon padma'i rnam thar rgya gar lugs, ff.19.b, 53.b-55a [reprinted in Tseten Dorji, Accounts of the Lives or Manifestations of Gu-ru Rin-po-che from the Discoveries of Stag-śam Nus-ldan-rdo-rje and Mchog-gyur-glin-pa and the Slob-dpon-padma'i-rnam-thar-rgya-gar-lugs of Tāranātha, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973]).

¹⁷ This would appear to be the only firmly established event in his career. Tucci has persuasively argued for A.D. 775 (G. Tucci, Minor Buddhist Texts [Roma: ISMEO, 1958], pp. 26-31); other scholars have more recently suggested ca. 779 (David Snellgrove & Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet [London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1968], p. 275).

The various apocryphal treatises, of course, hopelessly contradict both themselves and each other, the main reason for Tāranātha's polemic.

¹⁸ Padma thang yig, f.172.a. For an analysis of this text's importance and limitations, cf. Vostrikov, Tibetan Historical Literature, pp. 32-49. 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas (1813-99) attests to this text's high reputation among Rnying-ma-pa scholars in using it as the basis for his Gter ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar.

¹⁹ O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs...mun sel sgron me, f.288.a.

²⁰ Padma thang yig, ff.214.a-b. Bhutanese traditions concerning the date of Padmasambhava's arrival in their country are quite dubious, and are further confused by the need to reconcile his involvement in unrelated myth cycles. According to information collected by Nirmala Das (The Dragon Country, pp. 4-5), Padmasambhava is said to have visited that country on two occasions, in 807 and 809. Modern Bhutanese almanacs date his arrival in Bhutan to 750, travelling thence to Tibet in 762 (Anon. Me nyes pa 'byung ba bzhi ldan me pho 'brug lo'i zla tho byed grub zung 'brel bde skyid rdzogs ldan - almanac for the year me-'brug [1976], f.4.b; the 1973 almanac has the identical information).

Das' dates are plausible, of course, though she cites no source for her information. The almanacs, however, are clearly in error for the first date. Padmasambhava may have gone to Tibet in A.D. 762, but from Uḍḍiyāna and Nepal, not Bhutan. Both versions have gone astray in assuming the validity of the Bhutanese tradition according to which Padmasambhava came to the country directly from India, at the instance of Lcags-mkhar Rgyal-po of Bum-thang, whose story will be noted in a moment. Das' informant apparently chooses to resolve the contradiction between this legend and the standard gter-ma by postulating two visits.

²¹ Padma thang yig, ff.194.b-196.b; 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, Gter ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar, ff.19.b-20.a; O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs...mun sel sgron me, ff.329.a, 341.b, 369.a; Mnga'-bdag Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer, Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba - rnam thar zangs gling ma, ff.80.a-b (reprinted in the anonymously edited Life of Lady Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal re-discovered by Stag-sham Nus-ldan-rdo-rje with two Hagiographies of Padma-sambhava from the terma finds and visions of Nan-ral Ni-ma-'od-zer and A-'dzom 'Brug-pa 'Gro-'dul-dpa'-bo-rdo-rje, Palampur [Himachal Pradesh], Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1972).

²² In the biography of Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal discovered by Stag-sham Nus-ldan-rdo-rje (Bod kyi jo mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi mdzad tshul rnam par thar pa mngon byung rgyud mang dri za'i glu phreng - jo mo'i rnam thar skabs don brygad pa, ff.142.b-143.a), she is said to have received certain special teachings from Maṇḍaravā which were subsequently hidden in Tibet, but this is a very minor transmission.

²³ Originally, it seems, Mkhār-chen Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal was believed to have been one of Khri-srong-lde-btsan's queens (Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, f.98.b). The tradition which has her as the consort of Padmasambhava probably arose first among the Rnying-ma-pa. The Gter ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar (ff.29.a-30.a) has resolved the difficulty by suggesting that she was first the wife of the king, but was later given to Padmasambhava as a gift of faith. The two traditions do not harmonize well.

²⁴ Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs...rnam thar zangs gling ma, f.118.b; Padma thang yig, ff.252.a-b.

²⁵ The Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa (ff.54), a marvelous example of Tibetan narrative fiction, has nothing to do with

her activities in Bhutan, in spite of its having been discovered by Padma-gling-pa at Lho-brag (it forms part of the Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho compendium, reprinted in Rediscovered Teachings..., vol. 1). The work by Nus-ldan-rdo-rje (cf. above, fn.22) is reprinted in the anonymous volume from Palampur (cf. above, fn. 21).

Nus-ldan-rdo-rje's date of birth is from a 'khrungs-rabs studied by 'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (Gangs can gyi yul du byon pa'i lo pan rnam kyi mtshan tho..., ff.134.b-135.a). The death date is not given, but his immediate rebirth, Padma-rab-rgyas-rol-pa-rtsal, was born in 1709.

26 Her name appears in a variety of forms: Bkra-shis-spyi-'dren, Bkra-shis-khi-'dren, Bkra-shis-khyi-'dren, Bkra-shis-khyer-sgron.

27 Padma thang yig, ff.227.b-228.b.

28 O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs...mun sel sgron me, ff.385.b-386.b.

29 Nus-ldan-rdo-rje, Bod kyi jo mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi mdzad tshul rnam par thar pa...jo mo'i rnam thar skabs don brgyad pa, ff.7.a-83.a, 107.a-136.a. I have condensed the story greatly. In some sources Mkhar-chen Dpal-gyi-dbang-phyug appears as a translator at Bsam-yas.

30 The text followed here is a recent anonymous Bhutanese photo-offset reprint in 30 folia, and is obviously part of a larger gter-ma compendium. The cover title is Rgyal po sindha ra dza'i rnam thar, but the colophon (f.30.a) reveals the name of the full compendium as one Lung bstan gsal ba'i me long. The Library of Congress catalogue classifies it as a treatise of Padma-gling-pa, but this is erroneous. The text (ff.1.b, 30.b) purports to have been dictated by Padmasambhava to the translator Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs, who in turn hid it at Lcags-mkhar Rdo-rje-rtsegs-pa in Bum-thang, where it was to be rediscovered by a rebirth of Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs. The prophecy of its subsequent discovery predicts the fall of Sa-skya

hegemony, the rise of Phag-mo-gru, a time when "most of Dbus and Gtsang will have taken refuge in Mon", the reduction of the Bum-thang royal line to the status of commoners, and finally an invasion of Bum-thang by 20,000 Tibetan troops. These events point to the 17th century. Moreover, Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs is not included in the 'khrungs-rabs of Padma-gling-pa, but rather in that of the Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che, which began with Padma-'phrin-las (1564-1642?), the grandson of Padma-gling-pa. The existence of Bhutanese gter-ma treatises by Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs in the 17th century is indicated in a passage of the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography where, in 1668, he met the Pad-gling Thugs-sras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-'gyur-med-rdo-rje (1641-ca. 1702) and received from him a MS "written" by Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs (Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, Za hor gyi bande ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i 'di snang 'phrul pa'i rol rtsed rtogs brjod gyi tshul du bkod pa du kũ la'i gos bzang, vol. 2, f.56.b). We shall see that Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs' legendary ties with Bhutan were quite complex.

³¹ Rgyal po sindha ra dza'i rnam thar, f.4.a-b claims Sindha-ra-dza to have been the middlemost of seven sons of king Sing-ga-la of Bum-thang, but it is obvious from the prologue to the story that we are really dealing with an Indian legend of the Assam region. Sing-ga-la must be the legendary king Saṅkal of Koch, who figures in the Riyāzu-s-Salātīn (1786-88) and earlier in Firishta's history of Islamic rule in India (1609) (Abdus Salam, trans. Riyāzu-s-Salātīn, Delhi, 1975², pp. 54-56; John Briggs, trans., History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India, Calcutta: Editions Indian, 1966³, vol. 1, pp. lv-lvii). Edward Gait naively dated Saṅkal's legendary reign to the 7th century B.C. (Sir Edward Gait, A History of Assam, Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1963³, pp. 19-20), undoubtedly the unstated source of J.C. White's notion that the recorded history of Bhutan commenced at that period. White (Sikhim

& Bhutan, p. xix) had access to a "History of the Sindhu Raja" lent to him by the Tongsa Dpon-slob Urgyen Wangchuck. It is intriguing that, aside from our Bhutanese MS, the legends of Saṅkal are preserved only in Muslim sources, and not Assamese (P.C. Choudhury, History of the Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D., Gauhati, 1966², pp. 117-118). Barring the unlikely possibility of much more recent forgery, one wonders whether the legend of Sindhu Rāja doesn't in fact reflect traditions of Indian refugees to Bhutan in the wake of Muslim inroads into Assam in the 13th century, possibly even of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī's aborted invasion of "Tibet" in 1205-06 (on which cf. the following chapter).

³² G.N. Mehra, Bhutan (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1974), pp. 82-85 (from unpublished translation by Michael Aris); Blanche C. Olschak, Bhutan (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp. 26-28.

³³ His original princely name had been Rgyal-bu Kun-'dzoms (Kun-'joms?).

³⁴ O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs...mun sel sgron me, f.288.a.

³⁵ Sbas yul 'bras mo gshong dang mkhan pa lung gi gnas yig, f.34.b. (A portion of the Klong gsal gsang ba snying bcud kyi chos sde smad cha, contained in his Rediscovered Teachings..., Thimphu, 1975, vol. 17).

³⁶ Sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs kyi gnas yig padma gling pa'i gter ma, f.10.a (also from the Klong gsal gsang ba snying bcud kyi chos sde smad cha; cf. the previous note).

³⁷ Ibid., ff.6.a-7.a.

³⁸ For example, in 1717, in the aftermath of the invasion of Bhutan by the Tibetan forces under Lha-bzang Khan, the third re-embodiment of Padma-gling-pa, Ngag-dbang-kun-bzang-rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1680-1723), took refuge with his followers in the Hidden Land of Mkhan-pa-lung in northeast Bhutan. The prophecies were cited as the justification for their action

(Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsäl dad pa'i me tog (1873), f.32.b. Popular poems connecting the theme of the prophecies with the Tibetan revolution of 1959 are often met with in the Tibetan-language press of India.

39 Cf. below, Ch. 4.

40 Sbas yul mkhan pa ljongs kyi gnas yig..., ff.3.b-4.b.

41 Ibid, ff.6.a-10.a.

42 Michael Aris, "Report on the University of California Expedition to Kutang and Nubri in Northern Nepal in Autumn 1973," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 2, pt. 2 (June, 1975): 73.

43 Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal, K.C.I.E., and Maharani Yeshay Dolma, "History of Sikkim," pp. 17-20.

44 Dalai Lama V Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, Gangs can gyi sa la spyod pa'i mtho ris kyi rgyal blon gtso bor brjod pa'i deb ther rdzogs ldan gzhon nu'i dga' ston dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs, f.40.b. (I have used a microfilm of the 1942 'Bras-spungs print of this text from the Toyo Bunko [#349-2609]).

45 Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, f.122.b.

46 G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), pp. 735, 742.

47 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i mchod sdong, ff.22.a-26.a. Cf. also the longer version of the life of Mi-pham-dbang-po by Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po ngag gi dbang phyug bstan 'dzin mi pham 'jigs med thub bstan dbang po'i sde'i rtogs pa brjod pa dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.5.b-6.b. The Lho'i chos 'byung (ff.67.a-b) also contains a short note on this family's descent.

48 Cf. below, Ch. 8.

49 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa skal bzang rna rgyan, f.2.a.

50 There are different traditions as to which was the elder, Glang Dar-ma or Ral-pa-can.

51 Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long, ff.92.b-93.a; Deb ther dmar po gsar ma, ff.29.a-31.a (translated by Tucci, Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma [Roma: ISMEO, 1971], p. 131); Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, ff.131.a, 134.b.

52 f.199.a: gsum gyi gcen po rtsang ma lcags pho dbyug //. The text is appended to Tucci, op.cit., p. 131.

53 Sngon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba, f.12.a: gsum gyi gcen po gtsang ma lcags pho 'brug //. The word dbyug in Professor Tucci's text is clearly a copyist's error for 'brug, correctly given in this version. The mistake reflects an earlier dbu-med edition, the two terms having a similar appearance in that script.

54 Erik Haarh, nevertheless, has speculated that Gtsang-ma did serve. "What really took place seems to have been that gTsañ-ma, as a Buddhist monk, waived his right to the throne, but took the actual government into his hands on behalf of his younger brother Ral-pa-can, who was, or became, incapable of exercising it. At the same time gTsañ-ma for many years, until he was poisoned, protected the king against the fate which had long been intended for him by the Bon-po." (Haarh, The Yar-lun Dynasty [Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad's Forlag, 1969], p. 339). This little scenario, quite without foundation, is constructed solely on the evidence that in certain texts Gtsang-ma is referred to as Khri Gtsang-ma, and in the belief that only incumbent kings were entitled to the title khri "throne" (Ibid, pp. 67-68). This conviction is far bolder than the more cautious

reasoning of Tucci ("The Validity of Tibetan Historical Tradition," p. 310, fn. 8), and is invalidated by some of Haarh's own evidence, as he acknowledges. The difficulty might be gotten around if we suppose that the title khri could also apply to the heir apparent, the king's eldest son while he was still in power, in effect the "throne prince."

55 Tucci, Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma, pp. 129, 131 for the texts. My translations differ slightly from those of Tucci ("The Validity of Tibetan Historical Tradition," pp. 310-315).

56 On account of the great rarity of this work, the two passages are given here. (f.6.a-b): khri lde strong btsan gyis rgyal sa bzung / de'i sras gsum gyi che ba khri gtsang ma lho mon gyi phyogs su bcugs / 'bro gza' (sic. bza') legs rje pa / gnan nam pas dug gi[ls] bkrongs / de'i sras rgyud ni ya rtse rgyal po yin no zhes thos so /. (f.12.a): gsum gyi gcen po gtsang ma lcags pho 'brug / rgyal srid ma bzung lho brag bum thang 'das /.

57 E. Obermiller, History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung) by Bu-ston, vol. 2, p. 197; Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, f.134.b.

58 Tucci, "Validity of Tibetan Historical Tradition," p. 314.

59 Hugh Richardson, "Who was Yum-brtan?" Études Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), p. 435.

60 History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 9-10.

61 Ibid.

62 Lokesh Chandra (ed.), A 15th Century Tibetan Compendium of Knowledge (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1969), Introduction by E. Gene Smith, p. 8.

63 Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, Ja, f.142.a.

64 The matter has been the subject of a little treatise by the eminent Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa scholar Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu

(1698-1755), Rgyal ba'i bstan pa rin po che byang phyogs su 'byung ba'i rtsa lag / bod rje lha btsan po'i gdung rabs tshigs nyung don gsal yid kyi me long (1752) (reprinted by T. Tsepal Taikhang in Rare Tibetan Historical and Literary Texts...). It is interesting that the descendants of Lha-sras Gtsang-ma are nowhere mentioned by this writer. It is possible, but unlikely on account of his political position and many contacts with ranking Bhutanese administrators, that he was unaware of the family tradition. The omission may have been politically motivated.

⁶⁵ Still, there is the problematic passage of Ne'u Pandi-ta cited earlier, which says that his descendants became the kings of Ya-rtse (also spelled Ya-tse). The only well-known Ya-rtse in the Tibetan-speaking world is the one southwest of Jumla in central Nepal, which Tucci has identified with the modern village of Sijā. It was formerly the capital of the Malla kings, having been shifted there from Spu-rangs in western Tibet (G. Tucci, Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal [Roma: ISMEO, 1956], pp. 112-116). Furthermore, it was at this Ya-rtse that some of the descendants of Glang Dar-ma's son 'Od-srungs settled and maintained a line of kings, before the Mallas. This raises our suspicions that the text followed here by Ne'u Pandi-ta may have confused these two lines, and this seems confirmed by the passage which follows next on the decline of the royal dynasty in Tibet. There (f.7.b) we read that "after Ral-pa-can was killed, Glang Dar-ma became king. But as he did not know how to mend or patch up the kingdom, the royal line became split into two parts, his and Gtsang-ma's. The Upper Laws and the Lower Laws both held sway in Mnga'-ris." This is clearly an entirely different tradition from the usual one in which the terms Upper and Lower Laws are taken to refer to the two sons of Dpal-'khor-btsan, a descendant of 'Od-srungs. Nor does this version mention anything of Glang Dar-ma's other son Yum-brtan.

It is somewhat surprising that Ne'u Paṇḍi-ta does not comment on these passages, as they conflict with the verse history which he also gives on f.13.a, where the more traditional account is found. If Gtsang-ma had been exiled to Bhutan, it is difficult to understand how his descendants could have established themselves in western Nepal. However, there is another little district known as Ya-rtse referred to in some of the Karma-pa histories, which appears to be located somewhat eastwards of Lho-brag. There is some temptation to take this Ya-rtse as the one intended by Ne'u Paṇḍi-ta's chronicle, but for the moment I am more inclined to believe otherwise.

66 Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer, Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal, f.23.b (this text written in 1355 at Thar-pa-gling monastery in Bum-thang).

67 History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 9-10.

68 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.6.b; Nirmala Das (Dragon Country, p. 7) claims that the Lho'i chos 'byung gives the date A.D. 824 for this war. But this is incorrect; no date is given in the text.

69 Michael Aris, "'The admonition of the thunderbolt cannon-ball' and its place in the Bhutanese New Year festival," B.S.O.A.S. 39, pt. 3 (1976), p. 625, fn. for the names and their variant spellings.

70 Ibid.

71 An intriguing parallel to the tsho-chen structure of early Bhutan can be found in the story of Dngul-chu Dharmabhadra's (1772-1851) nomadic ancestry in the Bzhad district of western Gtsang. There were three territorial divisions: Khams, Dol, and Sger. Sger was further divided into eight tsho-chen, four in the north and four in the south, each led by a dpon-po who in turn selected one from among them to serve as overall leader (blon-po). In this instance, headship was normally by hereditary male descent, but this had to be periodically reconfirmed by elders of the

individual tsho-chen (Dbyangs-can-grub-pa'i-rdo-rje, Dus gsum rgyal ba kun kyi spyi gzugs bka' drin gsum ldan rje btsun bla ma thams cad mkhyen pa dharma bha dra dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa zhwa ser bstan pa'i mdzes rgyan, ff.17.b-18.a [reprinted in Ngawang Gelek Demo, The Life of Dngul-chu Dharmathadra, New Delhi, 1970]).

A geometric, particularly octadic, arrangement of tsho-chen appears thus to have been common in nomadic communities of Tibetan ancestry. In addition to the Wang tsho-chen-brgyad one also finds reference in Bhutanese texts to a Shar tsho-chen-brgyad, presumably an old octadic cluster of the Wangdiphodrang (Shar) region. For the Spa-gro valley (Spa-lung) we similarly find a cluster designated tsho-dar-brgyad (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.a). Field research in Bhutan may eventually clarify the sense of these arrangements.

⁷² R.B. Ekvall, Fields on the Hoof (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), pp. 21-23; cf. also his comments on filiation among nomadic groups (Ibid., pp. 28-29).

⁷³ Instances during the 18th century of headmen of the Wang tsho-chen being singled out for special ceremonial honours are numerous; one also finds references to a special ritual of annual fealty-pledging by these men to the central government (cf. for instance Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga rab tu gsal ba'i gtam mu tig do shal, ff.47.b, 68.b). Cf. now also Michael Aris' study on the ceremonial role of the Wang tsho-chen-brgyad soldiers (dpa'-rtsal-pa) in modern Bhutanese New Year rituals (M. Aris, op.cit., pp. 615-19).

⁷⁴ History of Deb Rajas, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁵ This use of the term chos-rje, I suspect, did not have the strong religious sense which it would have had in Tibet. My impressionist feeling

from reading accounts by Tibetan visitors to Bhutan before the 17th century is that terms such as chos-rje, dge-slong, slob-dpon, and several others had lost much of their originally Buddhist connotations, being instead the practical equivalents of "chieftain" or "headman". The existence of married dge-slong functioning virtually as soldiers or village chiefs is attested in various texts.

Ch. IV: The Growth and Spread of Religious Institutions from Tibet10th - 16th Centuries

The political hiatus which fell upon central Tibet from the end of Yar-klung dynasty in the mid-9th century endured for some two hundred years. Along the western fringes of the old empire the descendants of Glang Dar-ma maintained a recognizable ruling line, though fractious family disputes and a poverty of political leadership kept Buddhist intellectual and literary culture in a moribund state. The reign of Ye-shes-'od, king of Gu-ge, marked a turning point, however, and within a few decades the study and propagation of Mahāyāna began again to flourish through more solidly based royal patronage than was apparently ever possible under the old dynasty. The principal figure of this Buddhist restoration was Rin-chen-bzang-po (958-1055), a Tibetan scholar of great enterprise who spent many years in northwestern India in the study of Sanskrit and the acquisition of Buddhist instruction. A new school of translation arose through his efforts. This revival of Buddhism culminated in the invitation to Tibet of the great Indian pandit from Vikramaśīla, Atīśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna. His teaching career in Tibet lasted only from his arrival in 1042 until his death in 1054, but sparked a movement towards a more academic approach to Mahāyāna that coalesced into a sect referred to in the later literature as Bka'-gdams-pa.

But Buddhist learning and contemplative practices were reaching the country through other channels also. The older traditions dating from the period of the ancient royal dynasty had been primarily kept alive in eastern Tibet, and these, too, spread westwards at this time, forming a loose movement which came to be called the Rnying-ma-pa. Simultaneously, individual religious seekers from central and southern Tibet were searching out Buddhist traditions southwards, in northern India and Nepal. These

men (and a few women) returned from their travels with an amazing variety of Sanskrit texts, Buddhist or quasi-Buddhist yogic contemplative systems, and an enormous amount of new-found prestige which brought them disciples and in a few cases the patronage of wealthy local families. Later scholastic systematizers have subsumed this movement under the rubric Bka'-brgyud-pa, but it was never really a unified sect and in fact comprised a number of individual "sub-sects" centered around and taking their names from their founder Lama or his principal seat of instruction (gdan-sa).

In the apparent absence of powerful laymen with the political acumen or military will to initiate a movement towards centralized rule, a new pattern of sociopolitical organization arose centered about these charismatic Lamas and their gdan-sa. Local landlords or petty rulers (sde-pa, dpon, sde-dpon, etc.), often from the same family or clan, attached themselves to the Lamas as patrons (yon-bdag), offering them hermitages and estates (mchod-gzhis) for the support of their religious activities. A reciprocal relationship can be observed whereby the chief patron families increased in secular power and influence through their connections with the Lama and his gdan-sa. At the same time, the latter acquired a corporate character of its own and in many instances considerable wealth and religious prestige, which transcended mere local boundaries. Where the Lama and his principal patrons were of the same family, a variety of systems evolved to link succession to the headship of the religious corporation with the descendants in the lay branch of the lineage. If the Lama was expected to remain celibate, succession was usually through a nephew (dbon-po), but if celibacy was not insisted upon, spiritual authority could be invested in the Lama's own son, giving rise to a kind of incipient ecclesiastic hereditary monarchy.¹ Some of the more celebrated families whose rising political

fortunes were connected with an instructional gdan-sa were the 'Khon of Sa-skya, the Ga-zi of Byang Stag-lung, the Rlangs of Phag-mo-gru, separate branches of the Rgya clan at Rwa-lung, Gnas-rnying and 'Ba'-ra Don-grub-sdings, the Skyu-ra of 'Bri-gung, and the Gnyos of Kha-rag and Lha-nang, and later of Gye-re.

Thus, in the absence or ineffectiveness of more conventional methods, the spread of sectarian religion became the means for expansion of political authority, and wideranging missionary activity was the specific tool. Accordingly, the pattern of a accumulating mchod-gzhis did not necessarily correspond to geographical criteria, but could be found in widely remote areas, wherever successful missions could be established, and this contributed to the curious chequerboard pattern of regional political authority which characterized Tibetan society up to 1959. If the regional mchod-gzhis were of any size or economic importance, branch monasteries (bu-dgon, lag-dgon) were usually founded with the cooperation of influential patron families of the area. In addition to the resources of the mchod-gzhis, income derived principally from voluntary tithes (yon), and since for the gdan-sa the latter seem to have been of more importance than the former, frequent personal visits were required by the head Lama or his principal disciples.

At the same time, increase in wealth resulting from the accumulation of mchod-gzhis necessitated the fortification of the various gdan-sa, and the ancestral family house (mkhar) or palace (pho-brang) was occasionally combined in a single fortified structural complex (rdzong) along with the head monastery (ma-dgon) and the presiding Lama's personal administrative apparatus (bla-brang), but this pattern was not universal, and the rdzong often contained merely the gdan-sa and the administrative offices. In Bhutan, the fortification of monasteries may have begun during the 13th century, but all the rdzongs of modern note were created out of

political and military needs arising from the attempt to establish centralized government after 1616.² The period from the rise of Sa-skya supremacy in 1247 to the establishment of unified Dge-lugs-pa rule in Tibet in 1642 has been aptly termed the "Sectarian Hegemonic" by Wylie, for political and religious power were inextricably combined.³

The processes by which a powerful gdan-sa and its parallel lay aristocratic establishment could become elevated into what we might term regional autonomous hegemons (gzhung) are imperfectly known from the literature. Historically, there have been only a few establishments designated gzhung in Tibet, but their basic characteristic from the perceived view of the subject families appears to have been the right to levy involuntary taxes in kind (khral) and corvee labour ('u-lag), together with an obligation to maintain a certain minimal level of peace. Political independence in the modern Western sense, however, was a possible but not a necessary characteristic, for even after the creation of unified Yellow Hat Dge-lugs-pa rule in Tibet, the Sa-skya gzhung, at least, retained its taxation privileges subject to the theoretical right of the superior body to intervene.⁴

The competition to establish sectarian missions and acquire donatory estates extended to the southern frontiers of Tibet also, and the available history of Bhutan from the 10th through the 16th centuries is largely a record of this process. In the process of firmly orienting the country's religious culture to Tibetan patterns, the long period of missionary activity influenced Bhutanese history in several ways. Close personal ties between individual sects and local patron chieftains almost certainly contributed to the rise of a kind of native aristocracy, though the extreme social stratification of later centuries in Central Tibet never fully took root in Bhutan. The complicated honorific speech patterns of

colloquial Lhasa Tibetan are but poorly reflected in the predominant western Bhutanese dialect, while at least one aristocratic Tibetan Lama of later times, Rab-'byams-pa Bsam-grub-rgyal-po (1606-1666), is on record as having chastised his Bhutanese disciples for their failure to address superiors with honorifics and for their inattention to class distinctions generally.⁵ The period under consideration also saw the advent to the country of most of the important Tibetan missionary Lamas to whom upper crust families of post-16th century Bhutan claimed prideful ancestry.

The missionary movement was also important in influencing the growth of geo-political patterns in Bhutan, and this, too, is a parallel to the situation in Tibet. Many of the administrative centres of modern times, almost all rdzongs founded in the 17th century by Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, were originally located on the sites of pre-existing chapels and hermitages. To a lesser extent, a similar effect on the pattern of rural settlement can be documented. The village of Dge-dgon-kha, north of Thimphu, is specifically said to have grown up about the Bde-chen-sdings (more commonly Bde-chen-phug) monastery founded in 1345/46 by the 'Brug-pa Lama 'Jam-dbyangs-kun-dga'-seng-ge, but such details as this are unhappily infrequent in the literature.⁶

The missionary impulse was not the only inspirational cause for Tibetan exploration and settlement in Bhutan during this period, however. Although they do not appear to have penetrated as far south as Bhutan proper, Mongol military inroads into Tibet during the 13th century apparently stimulated an outward migration of peasantry into the more remote frontier areas. While this cannot be readily documented, the rise and proliferation of apocalyptic prophecies linking Mongol militancy in Central Tibet with the theme of refuge in the Hidden Lands of the border almost certainly reflects broader social disruptions than their purely Buddhist format suggests. And although the prophecies are rooted

in the cult of Padmasambhava, their influence was never restricted merely to monks and yogins of the Rnying-ma-pa order.

Practically in the same year that Mongol armies first threatened Central Tibet, another horde of barbarian soldiers is believed to have made its presence felt in the south. To the court historians of Delhi we owe our rather detailed knowledge of Muḥammad Bakhtiyār Khaljī's ill-fated expedition against Tibet in A.D. 1205/06, for this Turkish adventurer and conqueror of Bengal was apparently unable to penetrate much beyond the mountains of southeastern Bhutan. But if there is any truth in the account of his invasion northwards from the Gauhati area, how much of his defeat can be attributed to Bhutanese soldiers with their traditional bamboo armour and weapons and how much to the treachery of the Kāmarūpa king and his forces we cannot say. Unfortunately, literate Buddhist missionaries from Tibet had not yet reached this part of Bhutan, and the event consequently cannot be confirmed from written Bhutanese or Tibetan sources.⁷ In any case, knowledge of a militant Islamic presence in India had definitely spread to the Tibetan-speaking world by this time, and must have contributed to the fear of external threats to Buddhism articulated in the prophetic literature.

Economic and social conditions of the Bhutan region during this period can only be vaguely reconstructed on the basis of available documents, which, as we have seen, are not primarily concerned with such matters. The remarkable little versified treatise of the Tibetan saint Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer, describing conditions he observed in the Hidden Land of Bum-thang in 1355, is therefore uniquely important. Allowing for the customary hyperbole and religious motivation for its composition, some intriguing facts emerge.⁸ After a folk etymology of the name Bum-thang ("Jar Plain") and a geographic description of the mountains and rivers, Klong-chen-pa relates something of the people's

livelihood, the standard of living and so forth. The population is described as rather extensive, with many small villages and settlements. In addition to a natural wealth of fruit trees and medicinal plants, the cultivation of rice, millet and other grains was widespread, along with tea in the southern parts.⁹ There was a flourishing trade in silk, cotton, wool, honey, and madder, and the people are described as very skilled in the manufacturing arts.¹⁰ The majority of houses were apparently constructed of bamboo thatch, but the best had open-ended pitched roofs of wood, and there were many of these.¹¹ The populace is described as settled and law-abiding, with little strife, thievery or other crimes, and no banditry along the roads, a situation attributed by the author to the blessings of Padmasambhava.¹² The regional administration was centered at Rgyal-blon-sa in lower Mang-sde, probably in the vicinity of modern Krong-gsar (Tongsa) Rdzong. Rgyal-blon-sa contained a palace of the former kings (unnamed) and a settlement for the homes of the ministers.¹³

The prosperous tranquility which Klong-chen-pa thus ascribes to eastern Bhutan contrasts markedly with what we are told elsewhere about the western part of the country, however. Although written long after the events, and certainly exaggerated, it is of some interest to cite a well-respected 17th century Tibetan refugee scholar's description of the near-anarchy said to have prevailed in Bhutan before the coming of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po in the 13th century.¹⁴

"After the manner of the proverbial big fish eating the little fish, vicious men rose up to fight and kill one another. Escorts were needed to go from the upper part of a village to the lower. The rich robbed the poor of their wealth and homes, and forced them into involuntary servitude. Inter-family rivalry, fighting and injury, went on unabated; 'The Wang fighting the Dgung' and the 'The many fighting the few' were common sayings, as enemy factions reduced the country to splinters. What was given to a Lama in the daytime was stolen again at night, while holy men in retreat in the mountains and forests were attacked by robbers. Visiting yogins from

India were seized and sold into slavery, religious images were destroyed and made into women's ornaments. By these and other kinds of barbaric behaviour were the holy sites in this Hidden Land destroyed. On account of this, the local spirits rose up against the people, bringing strife and death, so that they took to placating them with offerings of meat and blood. All of these things characterized this land in that era of strife and the Five Defilements."

Actually, we shall see that the settlement of disputes and the subjection of local spirits were two of the common themes in accounts of visiting Tibetan missionaries, while references to animal slaughter for religious worship and attempts to suppress it are found as late as the 18th century, reminding us that the spread of Buddhism was more gradual and less complete than later apologists would have us believe.¹⁵

Through the centuries, however, such Tibetan descriptions of Bhutanese social conditions have been tinged with condescension and prejudice, and must not be accepted uncritically. The people are frequently described as beast-like, irreligious, bellicose, uncultured and thieving. The land itself was viewed as uninviting and wild, and, like the plains of India, was feared for its marauding animals and rumoured feverish jungles. When 'Jam-dbyangs Kun-dga'-seng-ge set out on a teaching mission to Bhutan in 1345, his Tibetan disciples recited a typical list of such opinions in an attempt to postpone his departure.¹⁶

"The regions of Bhutan are humid, feverish and perilous; there are many wild animals and wild men. You will be weakened by poison and fever; your life will be thus endangered. It is a frightful and awesomely wild country. The place is known for its humidity which debilitates the body. It is a place full of poisonous snakes, bees and leeches; a place where feverish poisons and wild beasts threaten; a place difficult to travel through, it is said."

It is hard to imagine more contradictory descriptions than these, and the near-total contrast between Klong-chen-pa's personal observations and the unfavourable comments just cited underscores the caution required in historical reconstruction from this kind of evidence.

From more indirect indications, however, it is possible to infer something of the region's developing economic ties with other areas. We know that there was no real political unity during the centuries under consideration, but from the apparent growth and regularization of external trade it seems reasonable to conclude that governmental mechanisms for its control existed. The establishment of permanent frontier trademarts during this period is strongly indicated by the appearance and growing usage of the name Lho-kha-bzhi in Tibetan writings to refer to the Bhutan region. "Lho" we have already seen as a more ancient designation for the southern border districts of Central Tibet, often, but not always, indicating the area of modern Bhutan. The "four kha" (kha-bzhi) are usually identified with Gdung-bsam-kha (modern Dewangiri) in the east, Dpag-bsam-kha (modern Buxa) in the south, (B)rda-gling-kha in the west (near modern Kalimpong), and Stag-rtse-kha in the north, with Spungs-thang or Spu-na-kha as the centre point.¹⁷

The earliest mention of the name Lho-kha-bzhi occurs in connection with the religious missions of Gnyos Lo-tsā-ba Yon-tan-grags (b. 973). According to this account, in return for certain initiations, an Indian teacher known as Āryadeva bestowed on Gnyos Lo-tsā-ba control over the road to India through the Chumbi valley, and over all the Indian monasteries and estates of Lho-kha-bzhi.¹⁸ Unfortunately, this Āryadeva and his properties are not otherwise known to us, and as the earliest text containing the story was written in 1431 we cannot be certain that Lho-kha-bzhi was the actual name used at the time in question. It was definitely in use during the 14th century, however, and implies a certain degree of territorial coherence for the area roughly corresponding to what is now western and southeastern Bhutan. In the absence of contrary information, moreover, we can presume that Bhutan's importance as an entrepôt for the carrying trade between India and Tibet was becoming

well established. According to 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, whose account may be taken to refer to the early 16th century, the Bhutanese were fond of distant trading ventures. The products which they brought to Tibet included cotton, paper, wooden ladles, and Guinea papper, the last of which must have originated in Assam.¹⁹

The strategic situation of Bhutan for a developing Indo-Tibetan commercial trade is the probable reason for the only known effort during this period to subject the region to Tibetan political control. This occurred near the end of Sa-skyia supremacy in Tibet during the middle of the 14th century, when Dpon-yig 'Phags-pa-dpal-bzang (b. 1318), nominally in service to the Sa-skyia hierarch but in fact functioning virtually as an independent agent engineered the slaughter of a group of western Bhutanese chiefs at Phag-ri. According to the Rgya bod yig tshang, the only source recording the event, 'Phags-pa-dpal-bzang induced some 160 chiefs (mi-drag) and "teachers" (slob-dpon) from Spa-gro, Has and elsewhere in Bhutan to gather there for a feast. Having arrived, however, the Sa-skyia soldiers killed them all and buried their heads and limbs beneath the paving stones of the temple to the protective deities.²⁰ As a result of this bloody episode the Chumbi valley, the Stag-lung region of southern Tibet and the Bhutanese districts of Spa-gro and Has are said to have come under his control. Following this he is supposed to have constructed trade marts and the Rgyal-gyi-rdzong at Phag-ri, appointing his younger brother 'Phags-pa-rin-chen (b. 1320) as its first district governor (rdzong-dpon).

Whatever truth there may be in this alleged extension of Tibetan control over western Bhutan, it cannot have persisted beyond the collapse of Sa-skyia hegemony in 1358 and there is no record of its reintroduction by succeeding Tibetan governments. But control of the Phag-ri trade mart

persisted as a source of local contention well into the 18th century.

* * * * *

The earliest and most persistent Tibetan missionary efforts were those initiated by the various Bka'-brgyud-pa sectarian lineages, and of these the available information suggests that the Lha-nang-pa or Lha-pa sect was the first to obtain a foothold in Bhutan. The hereditary heads of this sect belonged to the ancient Gnyos clan claiming descent from the deity Bya-thul-dkar-po.²¹ They seem initially to have adhered to Rnying-ma-pa traditions, but by the 12th century had forged a durable relationship of subordinacy to the 'Bri-gung Bka'-brgyud-pa. Gnyos Lo-tsa-ba Yon-tan-grags had been a travelling companion of Mar-pa (1012-1097) in his search for Sanskrit manuscripts and Buddhist initiations in Nepal and India, and his acquisition of the Chumbi valley trade route and Indian estates in Bhutan mentioned above can be tentatively dated to 1040,²² though his principal gdan-sa was at Kha-rag in central Tibet. Nothing further is known of the Lha-pa mission to Bhutan until the time of Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa (1164/5-1224), who constructed the Lha-nang monastery in Tibet from which the sect takes its name.²³ At the behest of the 'Bri-gung Chos-rje he founded a number of other monasteries, including Bcal-kha at Spa-gro in western Bhutan, probably in 1203. He is said to have remained there for twelve years as the residing Lama, after which he returned to Tibet.²⁴

Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa was a scholar of some note, but none of his writings appear to have survived. Three biographies are said to have once existed but these, also, seem to be no longer extant.²⁵ Consequently it is very difficult to establish his career and the tradition of his descendants in Bhutan with any accuracy. The Vaidūrya-ser-po (1698) says that he had three sons, the second or third of which was named Smyos

(i.e. Gnyos) Mgar, or Mgar Lcags-kyi-rdo-rje. The two younger brothers are supposed to have been sent by Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa to found Sum-'phrang monastery at Bum-thang. Much later in this lineage the Bhutanese gter-ston Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521) was born as the eldest of nine brothers. The youngest, Dbon-po O-rgyan-bzang-po, migrated eastwards to the Mtsho-sna region where he founded O-rgyan-gling. The Sixth Dalai Lama Tshangs-dbyangs-rgya-mtsho (1683-1706) was eventually born into this line, but neither his nor Padma-gling-pa's biography contains any certain information on the ancestry after Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa, and we may presume that the lineage did not produce any noted religious personages during the more than two centuries for which the texts are silent.²⁶ The name Gnyos Mgar and the later traditions of Padma-gling-pa suggest that the family may have become hereditary blacksmiths.

The western branch of the Lha-pa based at Bcal-kha maintained itself in a modestly flourishing state, but seems to have shifted its main regional headquarters to Phag-ri Rin-chen-sgang, founded in 1243-44 by 'Dam-pa-ri-pa (1200-1263) to replace Bcal-kha, which had been destroyed by earthquake.²⁷ Rin-chen-sgang itself was badly damaged by fire ca. 1293 while Rin-po-che Gzi-brjid-rgyal-po (1277-1329) was serving there as resident teacher, but the two monasteries were subsequently restored. Both Gzi-brjid-rgyal-po and his younger brother Slob-dpon Bsod-nams-rgyal-po (b. 1278) are known to have had numerous Bhutanese disciples.²⁸

The protracted enmity between the Lha-pa and 'Brug-pa sects, which began in Tibet during the 13th century, characterized their relations in Bhutan as well, but by the time Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po reached Bhutan ca. 1225, the Lha-pa were already firmly established in the country and in the Chumbi valley to the west.²⁹ In addition to Bcal-kha, the main Bhutanese Lha-pa hermitages at this time were Lcang-lung, Si-lu Rdo-khang-zhabs-lug, Sbed-smad Lto-khar-rdzong, and Spa-gro Hum-ral-kha,

all in the western part of the country.³⁰ 'Brug-pa sources, the only ones available, would have us believe that the struggle between the two sects involved open competition in the performance of magic and miracles for the support of the local family heads (spyi-dpon). Attempts were made to sack each other's monasteries, and Bcal-kha is said to have been burnt down during the struggles. But an oppressive taxation policy of the Lha-pa apparently aided Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po in gaining support among the various headmen, and the implication is that the Lha-pa were virtually driven from the country.³¹ Actually, however, the sect maintained a strong presence in Bhutan until well into the 17th century, for they were the most formidable enemies of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in the skirmishes which began after 1616. The Lho'i chos 'byung alleges that they were finally eliminated from Bhutan by 1655, but even this may be an optimistic assessment.³² There were still the many branches of the Gnyos clan in eastern Bhutan which have flourished right up to the 20th century, and some of these had perhaps maintained their original connection with the sect.

In any case, competition between the two sects gradually turned in favour of the 'Brug-pa. For one thing, by 1567, if not earlier, Phag-ri Rin-chen-sgang had come under some measure of 'Brug-pa influence, and the Lha-pa hold on the trade corridor past western Bhutan into India was thereby diminished.³³ Moreover, by that time also the Lha-pa convents in Tibet had dropped their Bka'-brgyud-pa affiliation and been virtually absorbed by the Yellow Hat church.³⁴ The combined loss of financial resources and traditional sectarian inspiration seems to have been the main cause for the decline in prestige which the sect suffered. But their strength in Chumbi was never totally eliminated, since agricultural estates under their control are mentioned as late as the 20th century.³⁵

The most extensive and complex missionary establishment in Bhutan was that of the 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa. The sect began with Gling-ras-pa Padma-rdo-rje (1128-1188), whose small hermitage at Rwa-lung was later expanded to become the sect's principal Tibetan monastery. But the main inspirational source was his disciple Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras Ye-shes-rdo-rje (1161-1211), a descendant of the Rgya clan and alleged reemodiment of the Indian Buddhist sage Nāropa. The Rgya have ancient roots, and traditionally claim as ancestors Lha-dga' and Klu-dga', two Chinese warrior brothers who are supposed to have escorted the Buddha image brought to Tibet by the Chinese bride of king Srong-btsan-sgam-po in the 7th century.³⁶ By the 12th century the clan had divided into numerous separate family lineages mainly in the province of Gtsang. It was into one of these at Khu-le, a nomadic district in the vicinity of Rwa-lung, that Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras was born. One of the greatest contemplatives and teachers of his times, Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras inherited Rwa-lung from his guru, enlarged it substantially, and was renowned for the number of his important disciples. "The students in his lineage came to extend as far as an eagle (could fly) in eighteen days travel; so that, like the wind, the saying became known to everyone that 'half the people are 'Brug-pa, half the 'Brug-pa are beggars, and half the beggars are Tantric adepts.'" ³⁷ He personally founded the monasteries of 'Brug Se-ba-byang-chub-chos-gling and Klong-rdol in Dbus, and these, along with Rwa-lung and Stag-lung Chos-rdzong, became the four principal monasteries of the sect in Tibet.³⁸

Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras' three main disciples each gave rise to a distinctive branch of the 'Brug-pa sect, known respectively as the Upper 'Brug (stod-'brug), Central 'Brug (bar 'brug) and Lower 'Brug (smad 'brug). The Smad 'Brug began with Lo-ras-pa Dbang-phyug-brtson-'grus (1187-1250), whose career, as we shall see, brought him to Bhutan and areas of southeast Tibet, although his teaching

lineage was not subsequently as extensive as the other two branches. The Bar 'Brug represented the main branch of the sect centered at Rwa-lung, and until the end of the 15th century this monastery and the other principal hermitages and estates of the 'Brug-pa remained under the immediate control of that branch of the Rgya clan to which Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras belonged. The Stod 'Brug originated with Rgod-tshang-pa Mgon-po-rdo-rje (1189-1258), and his teachings gave rise to a whole host of minor subsects of which only one, the 'Ba'-ra Bka'-brgyud-pa, was of any real significance for Bhutan.³⁹

The 'Ba'-ra Bka'-brgyud-pa began with Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1310?-1391?), who founded the 'Ba'-ra Don-grub-sdings gdan-sa in Shangs (Gtsang) in an unknown year.⁴⁰ He was born into a branch of the Rgya clan centered at Chabs-li-grong in Shangs. His grandfather Nye-gnas Kun-dga'-'bum had served as gsol-dpon to Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras, and later distinguished himself in a military capacity in service to the landed nobility of Shangs, for which he seems to have been rewarded with hereditary estates and ruling privileges in his local district. His elder son, Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang's father, inherited the position of Lord (dpon), whereas the younger son became a gsol-dpon to the Sa-skya Bdag-nyid-chen-po.⁴¹ A close association between this sect and the Sa-skya-pa persisted for many generations. Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang was the eldest of four brothers, of which two others were also of some importance for the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. The name of the fourth son is not known, and there was also a sister whose fate is not mentioned.

Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang was one of the more important Bka'-brgyud-pa Lamas of his era, and was a student of Bu-ston (1290-1364) and Karma-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje (1284-1339), among other notables. He was a prolific writer of commentaries on canonical literature, as well as of more

independent treatises on ritual.⁴² His recognition as the reemodiment of Yang-mgon-pa Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1213-1258), first proposed by the latter's disciple Yon-tan-rgyal, came to be generally accepted.⁴³

According to the versions of his life by Che-mchog-rdo-rje,⁴⁴ Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga'-dpal-ldan (1408-1475),⁴⁵ and Gzhon-nu-dpal,⁴⁶ Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang made two trips to Bhutan, where he died at the age of 82. The most authentic tradition, however, from the collected edition of his spiritual songs and autobiography (rnam-mgur), shows that he travelled to the country on at least five separate occasions.⁴⁷ The course of events which brought 'Ba'-ra-ba to Bhutan was only partly related to religious considerations, however. During the final phase of the struggle for political supremacy in Tibet between the Sa-skya-pa and Phag-mo-gru-pa forces, armies from Dbus entered the Shangs district, engendering disorder and alarm. As minor allies of the Sa-skya-pa, the 'Ba'-ra-ba family may have become involved in the fighting, but the ultimate triumph of the Phag-mo-gru-pa could only have signalled troubled times for the 'Ba'-ra-ba sect, at least for the immediate future. Before these events, however, Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang had already paid a brief visit to Spa-gro, at the behest of Slob-dpon Kun-dga' and his nephew Slob-dpon Sa-mkhar-rdo-rje, the hereditary headmen or chiefs of Yul-gsar.⁴⁸ After a month or so, during which he visited the ancient shrines at Skyer-chu-lha-khang and Stag-tshang-seng-ge-phug, he returned to Shangs, but it would appear that some of his Tibetan students remained in Bhutan to continue his mission.

Some five years after his return to Tibet, ca. 1362, he again returned to Bhutan.⁴⁹ According to the sources, this visit was prompted by the warfare mentioned above, persistent invitations on the part of his Bhutanese patrons, and certain dreams which indicated it as the proper course of action. Travelling via Phag-ri, he was met by his former host

Slob-dpon Sa-mkhar-rdo-rje and his brother Slob-dpon Khro-rgyal, who escorted his entourage on to Yul-gsar. During his three year sojourn in the country on this occasion, several hermitages came under his personal control or influence, all in the immediate vicinity of Spa-gro. The first of these, 'Chi-bar-kha, was acquired according to the oral will of the dying resident Lama 'Phags-pa-rdor-rgyal, whose funeral rites Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang performed.⁵⁰ In the same year his patrons from Yul-gsar gave him land for a new monastery as well as providing the expenses and labour for its construction. Christened 'Brang-rgyas-kha upon its completion a year later, it became the principal seat of the 'Ba'-ra-ba sect in western Bhutan until their expulsion from the country in the 17th century. In the meantime Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang had travelled and lectured widely in the area, establishing relationships with the Lamas of Snyal-phu'i-dgon-pa and Brdo-mchod-rten. During his three year residency in Bhutan, he is said to have settled three major conflicts, but his major accomplishment was the mediation of a dispute between his two chief patrons, the Slob-dpon of Yul-gsar and Gyang-gsar in Spa-gro, which is said to have been instigated by enemies who feared that the combined power of these two men would enable them to reduce all of Bhutan beneath their control.⁵¹

From this point until his death, the chronology of 'Ba'-ra-ba's career is difficult to establish. At the persistent invitations of his Tibetan disciples, he is known to have returned to Don-grub-sdings in the company of certain Bhutanese students, where he resided for some years. A short visit to 'Brang-rgyas-kha was paid at the personal behest of Slob-dpon Khro-rgyal, who came to Tibet to meet him.⁵² Sometime later he travelled again to Bhutan along with the Gnas-rnying stong-dpon of Nang-chos-dgon-pa in Tibet. The Gnas-rnying-pa was another Bka'-brgyud-pa sect that had acquired estates and patrons in Bhutan, and apparently certain

disputes had erupted between their respective followers. Fearing the threat of military reprisals from Tibet, the two factions came to some sort of truce, whereupon the Gnas-rnying stong-dpon left the country. Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang stayed on, however, paying further visits to Spa-gro and 'Brang-rgyas-kha. It was at this period that he was invited to Dgon-yul in the Thed (Punakha) valley, where he acquired a following in the Gshong-chen-kha monastery, the second major 'Ba'-ra-ba establishment in western Bhutan. One of the Gnas-rnying-pa teachers and his disciples had been imprisoned there, and Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang personally intervened to effect their release, thereby averting once again a threatened military invasion from Tibet.⁵³

His last major trip to Bhutan followed several years further residence in Shangs. On this occasion he visited the Sgang-kha-lha-khang in Spa-gro where he negotiated a peace treaty between rival sectarian factions. He also travelled once more to Dgon-yul, but the principal event of this trip was the extension of his mission into eastern Bhutan. There, he gave sermons at Tsha-tsha-sgang, Kun-bzang-gling and Lang-khu-rtog-kha, where he mediated further disturbances and preached against the use of blood offerings. After returning to Tibet via Spa-gro, he was once again in Bhutan when he died, at the end of his 82nd year.⁵⁴

Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang had a number of Tibetan disciples who also attended upon him in Bhutan, but little is known of their lives. We have short biographical sketches of Thugs-sras Nam-mkha'-seng-ge⁵⁵ and of Klong-chen-ras-pa Rin-chen-tshul-khrims,⁵⁶ but these are not very informative. His next younger brother Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan is said to have served for a time as abbot of Don-grub-sdings, but later acquired a consort, giving rise to a family line at Chab-rdzong. The abbots of this Tibetan lineage were apparently not celibate. Another younger brother, Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug, became a fully ordained monk, and on the

death of 'Ba'-ra-ba succeeded to his teaching chair at Gshong-chen-kha and 'Brang-rgyas-kha in Bhutan, where he eventually died.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the Bhutanese mission of this sect appears to have entered a gradual decline lasting for some decades, or so the absence of supporting literature would suggest. Eighty years after the death of 'Ba'-ra-ba, the Tibetan Don-grub-sdings gdan-sa was in a state of decay, the instructional syllabus (yig-cha) had become contaminated by outside sectarian traditions, and the monastery of 'Brang-rgyas-kha abandoned to the elements.⁵⁸

Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan had two grandsons by his son Kun-dga'-shes-rab, the elder of whom, Mnyam-med Nam-mkha'i-mtshan-can, was a yogin of some repute in Bhutan. Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang (1475-1530), the youngest son of the other brother, was recognized in his youth to be the reembodiment of Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang, and was responsible for a revival of 'Ba'-ra-ba interests in both Tibet and Bhutan.

Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang was born and educated in Tibet. At about the age of 18, he received word that his father 'Khrul-zhig Dpal-ldan-rgyal-mtshan had passed away in Bhutan, and went there to supervise the funeral services. His chief host on this occasion was one Slob-dpon Bod, a descendant of the Gyang-gsar-ba spyi-dpon Slob-dpon Khro-rgyal who had been the leading patron of 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang a century earlier. Upon his arrival Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang found the district in armed turmoil and the old monastery of 'Brang-rgyas-kha in total wreckage. A threat to hand the monastery over to their Bar 'Brug-pa rivals enabled him to effect a reconciliation of the warring parties, following which 'Brang-rgyas-kha was completely restored on the old foundations. After a three year residence, Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang returned to Don-grub-sdings ca. 1494, leaving his disciple Tshul-khrims-dpal-bzangs to serve as abbot.⁵⁹

Several years later, ca. 1497, he was once more invited to Bhutan to quell the sectarian strife which had emerged at the expiration of the earlier treaty. On this occasion a new twelve-year peace agreement was negotiated and signed. Another important event of this visit was the preparation of wood blocks for printing the collected spiritual songs and autobiography of 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang.⁶⁰ At the completion of this project he returned to Tibet, never to return.

In the absence of an authoritative gser-'phreng for the Bhutanese Lamas of this sect, it is difficult to estimate the real extent of 'Ba'-ra-ba influence and property holdings in pre-17th century Bhutan. They would seem to have been one of the chief rivals to the rise of Lho 'Brug-pa hegemony in the period after the arrival of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in 1616, but almost no information is available on their activities in the country from the time of Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang's death in 1530 until the expulsion of the 'Ba'-ra-ba from Bhutan during the civil war of 1634. Even before then, competition between the two sects must have been keen, but is seldom explicitly recorded in the literature. Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang's threat to turn 'Brang-rgyas-kha over to the Bar 'Brug-pa is an enticing exception. We know also that he had some influence at Phag-ri and Thim-phu, and with the 'Obs-mtsho family in Dgon-yul, who served as his patrons on several occasions, and where he supervised certain restorations.⁶¹ Karma-gsal-byed (ca. 1610-1658), the rebirth of Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang, was resident in Bhutan for a number of years and is credited with a futile attempt to mediate the dispute between Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the king of Gtsang. Though he himself had once been imprisoned by the latter, the 'Brug-pa retainers proved totally implacable and Karma-gsal-byed was forced to return to Tibet in the face of armed assaults against his life.⁶²

Even then, a determined and courageous attempt to sustain the Bhutanese interests of the sect was made by his disciple Grub-mchog Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan (1601-1687), but caught between the opposing armies of Bhutan and Tibet the monasteries were abandoned for the last time.⁶³ Thereafter, the 'Ba'-ra-ba turned their attention westwards to the Chumbi valley, the Nepalese border regions, and to Sikkim, where they received patronage from Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal (1604-1654), founder of the Rnam-rgyal dynasty.

Practically speaking, our knowledge of the Smad 'Brug missions to Bhutan is limited to the activities of Lo-ras-pa Dbang-phyug-brtson-'grus, since the collected biographies for the disciples in his teaching lineage appear not to have been written or otherwise preserved. Lo-ras-pa was born into a wealthy family of the Lo-nan branch of the Bcung clan at Ngamshod in Central Tibet (Dbus). His early religious training was in Rnying-ma-pa traditions, but at the age of seventeen he became a devotee of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras and attended upon him intermittently until the latter's death in 1211. Thereafter he travelled widely in the nomadic and wilderness regions of central and northern Tibet, earning a reputation as an eccentric hermit and saintly madman (smyon-pa).⁶⁴ He founded Dbu-ri-dgon-pa sometime before 1238.

In that year news of Mongol incursions into Tibet and the threat of further warfare were sufficient to direct his wanderings southwards to Lho-brag and later across the frontier into Bhutan. At Bum-thang he is said to have addressed a crowd of 2,800 monks (grwa-pa), but this figure is certainly exaggerated and is inconsistent with the allegation that the Buddhist Dharma had not previously spread to this area, and that the people who received his teachings were "beast-like" (dud 'gro dang 'dra ba), "wild and temperamental" (rgod gtum po).⁶⁵

After a three year residence in Bhutan, Lo-ras-pa returned to Tibet and founded the Dkar-po-chos-lung monastery in 1241 at Rong-chung (Gtsang).⁶⁶ In the following year he travelled once more to Lho-brag, and then to Bum-thang at the behest of the Sa-phug-pa Lama. His main achievement during this trip was the founding of Thar-pa-gling, a monastery of great sanctity in subsequent centuries. More of the "beast-like" Mon-pas are said to have been converted to Buddhism and taken vows of abstinence during this mission, but the chronology of the visit is uncertain. We know that he was in Lho-brag ca. 1247, where he organized a major restoration of the ancient Mkho-mthing temple that had been destroyed in consequence of civil disorder.⁶⁷ During the years 1248/49 he founded the Dben-dgon hermitage near Seng-ge-ri in the mountainous regions northeast of Bum-thang, where he died in the following year. Though his mission in Bhutan seems to have been confined to the east, his renown is said to have attracted devotees from Spa-gro as well. But his importance for the country was apparently shortlived. In spite of the numerous hermitages founded by him, Lo-ras-pa lived primarily as a solitary contemplative, and in the absence of an acknowledged lineage of rebirths or alternate administrative apparatus, the Smad 'Brug as a separate entity foundered and eventually merged with other 'Brug-pa traditions. By 1355, if not earlier, Thar-pa-gling had become an important centre of Rnying-ma-pa instruction in Bum-thang.⁶⁸

From the viewpoint of later Bhutanese history, the most important and extensive of the 'Brug-pa missions were those deriving from the Bar 'Brug of Rwa-lung. A distinction must be made here between the official tours led by successive abbots, and informally established missions inaugurated by individual enterprise. The Bhutanese hermitages and properties acquired in the former way must have been under the loose jurisdiction of Rwa-lung administration, though virtually no information is available in

the literature to suggest how this was arranged. The unofficial missions, on the other hand, were at all times independent of higher supervision, being effectively governed by the family descendants of their respective founders. Through the centuries these families of Tibetan extraction acquired a fundamentally Bhutanese identity and regional loyalty, and it was eventually due as much to their support and entrenched authority in the country, as to influence of the official missions, that Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was successful in establishing a centralized 'Brug-pa government in Bhutan after 1616.

The earliest of the independent Bar 'Brug-pa establishments in Bhutan was 'Obs-mtsho in the Dgon-pa-yul district north of Punakha, founded as an independent affiliate monastery of Rwa-lung ca. 1211 by Gter-khung-pa Rin-chen-grags-pa-dpal-ldan.⁶⁹ According to the records of this family,⁷⁰ the original progenitor was one Lde-ma Lde-ma, who guarded the Jo-bo image of the Buddha brought from China in the train of Wen-ch'eng Kung-chu, Chinese bride of king Srong-btsan-sgam-po.⁷¹ During the 8th century, a certain Lde-ma Btsan-mang (i.e. Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs) is alleged to have guided Padmasambhava in his travels through Tibet and the border regions, and the traditions further credit him with unusual scholarly gifts.⁷² Much later the family established itself at Rta-thang in Myang-stod (Gtsang). During the 12th century, a Ldan-ma descendant Rta-thang-pa Dpal-ldan-shes-rab was one of the principal teachers of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras, upon whom he conferred upāsaka vows.⁷³ It was his son, Rin-chen-grags-pa-dpal-ldan, who founded 'Obs-mtsho.

Rin-chen-grags-pa-dpal-ldan was born near Rwa-lung at Sgo-mo-gter-khung (whence his epithet Gter-khung-pa) in an unknown year. Miraculous recovery from a youthful illness encouraged him to turn to a life of religion, and he took early ordination from his father's own disciple,

Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras. At the latter's direction, he underwent a course of contemplative austerities, the successful completion of which confirmed his future as a great yogin.⁷⁴ After a sojourn in eastern Tibet, and as Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras had prophesied that his field of conversion would be in the south, he went to Bhutan where he founded his first mission at Dpal-sdings, ca. 1209/10.⁷⁵ He returned to Rwa-lung briefly for the death services of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras in 1211, then travelled once more to Bhutan where he founded the convents of Bde-chen-chos-sdings and 'Obs-mtsho. Having arranged for his cousin, Bla-ma Dbon, to be installed as the new head of 'Obs-mtsho, Gter-khung-pa set off for further contemplative wanderings, but died shortly thereafter.

At this point the gdan-sa is said to have split into two divisions, and for several generations we have only a list of the abbots. It seems that celibacy was practised, and that the abbacy was passed on to nephews, but the precise family descent is unclear. Expansions to 'Obs-mtsho are credited to the third and fourth abbots, and in subsequent years branch monasteries in the near vicinity were established at Yon-tan-rdzong, Wang-ri-kha and Rtsig-ri (later called Rnam-rgyal-rtse). The seventh abbot, 'Jam-dbyangs-bsod-nams-rgyal-po, is said to have taken a Tantric consort and given birth to a son, Ye-shes-rin-chen, but the tradition of celibacy apparently came to an official end during the reign of his successor Seng-ge-rgyal-mtshan, who, in the absence of further nephews, took a casual wife (lam gyi grogs) in order to preserve the family line. We have no gdan-rabs for the abbatial lineage beyond this point, but the main branch of the family line deriving from Seng-ge-rgyal-mtshan (14th century) is well established.⁷⁶

Before the 17th century the 'Obs-mtsho family's influence seems to have been mostly confined to the Dgon-yul district, as was the missionary concern of the monastery itself. We have seen that 'Ba'-ra-ba Nam-mkha'-

dpal-bzang (1475-1530) was active there for a time, but it is clear that the 'Obs-mtsho descendants were primarily patrons of the Bar 'Brug of Rwa-lung. Brief notices of intercourse between the two establishments are recorded during the tenure at Rwa-lung of Dbon-ras Dar-ma-seng-ge (1177/8-1237),⁷⁷ of 'Jam-dbyangs-kun-dga'-seng-ge in 1342,⁷⁸ and Padma-dkar-po in 1543.⁷⁹ 'Obs-mtsho-ba Chos-rje Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang is said to have married into the family of Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (1428-1476),⁸⁰ establishing an affinal relationship with the Rgya family of the parent monastery in Tibet.

Although not particularly noted for their missionary activities, the 'Obs-mtsho family rose to great political influence during the 17th century as a result of their assistance to Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in establishing a centralized 'Brug-pa government in Bhutan. 'Obs-mtsho-ba Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas (1591-1656) had entered Rwa-lung monastery in 1601, and was conferred the joint positions of dbu-mdzad (chant master) and phyag-mdzod (treasurer) in 1610. Afterwards, in Bhutan, these functions evolved into the office of Sde-srid-phyag-mdzod (Deb Rāja), of which he was the first incumbent.⁸¹ Two generations later, 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (1647-1732) was deputed as special envoy of the Bhutan government to Sde-dge in eastern Tibet and later to Ladakh. A kind of nationalist revolt against the refugee Tibetan government and its supporters at the end of the 17th century, however, toppled the family from its position of political prominence, a setback from which it seems never to have recovered.⁸²

A second, and more important, independent Bar 'Brug-pa mission was created by Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po (1184?-1251?),⁸³ the Farchoo Doopgein Shepton of Ashley Eden and other 19th century British Indian writers.⁸⁴ As mentioned earlier, the extant materials for his life are not contemporary, the oldest written source, the apocryphal autobiography,

having been written only in 1623. Legend-making during the intervening centuries has made this text not particularly reliable as a historical document. But the principal events of his career are clear enough, and though not confirmed by any Tibetan records before the 16th century, there is no particular reason to doubt their general authenticity.

Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po was born at Bkra-shis-sgang in Khams as the youngest son of a merchant of the Rgya clan named Zla-bzang. His childhood name was Don-grub-rgyal-mtshan, and though he exhibited certain signs foreshadowing his life as a yogin, a cruel streak in his character prevented his father from encouraging this pursuit. The youth, however, refusing to take a wife and become a merchant, was eventually allowed to begin religious studies with a Rnying-ma-pa Lama named Thar-pa-gling-pa. The latter gave him the initiatory name of Thar-pa-rgyal-mtshan, bestowed the upāsaka and bodhisattva vows, and introduced him to the fundamental contemplative exercises of the Rnying-ma-pa tradition.⁸⁵ He first heard the name of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras during idle conversation with a band of travelling merchants from central Tibet. Immediately, we are told, a profound realization came to him that this person must be his true karmically ordained teacher. Against the wishes of his parents, but with the blessing and some prophecies of his aged Rnying-ma-pa Lama, he set off on pilgrimage in the company of a trading caravan for Lhasa.

After more than a year of travelling he arrived at the monastery of 'Brug, only to discover that Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras had recently died, and that the latter's nephew Sangs-rgyas Dbon-ras Dar-ma-seng-ge (1177/8-1237) was then at the head of the abbatial see. The prophecies of Thar-pa-gling-pa now became clear to him, that he would never meet Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras, and that Dar-ma-seng-ge was to be his principal guru. This also conformed with a prophecy said to have been given to Dar-ma-seng-ge by Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras, just before his death.⁸⁶ Following Dar-ma-seng-ge's

instructions, he undertook a course of study and contemplation in the fundamental 'Brug-pa teachings, spending time at 'Brug, Bye-dkar, Klong-rdol and eventually at Rwa-lung. At the latter place, three or four years after their initial meeting, Dar-ma-seng-ge bestowed upon him the new initiatory name of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po.⁸⁷ Some four years later, Dar-ma-seng-ge had a prophetic dream which indicated that the time was then ripe for his disciple Pha-jo to leave for Bhutan (Kha-bzhi), his preordained field of conversion.

In accord with the wishes and final instructions of Dar-ma-seng-ge, Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po set out for the south, entering Bhutan via Jo-mo-lha-ri and Spa-gro ca. 1225.⁸⁸ After several months of meditations at various locations in western Bhutan, he travelled to Gling-bzhi on the northern border, where he gained his first patrons on account of having saved the life of one of the local headmen (stong-dpon). About this time also he acquired a consort named Ma-gcig Bsod-nams-dpal-'dren, and after some months she gave birth to a daughter. Already, his growing reputation as a powerful yogin had come to the attention of the Lha-pa monks, who began to ridicule him for his non-celibate ways. But as he acquired an even larger following through miraculous feats, the petty gossip turned to active intervention and violent conflict. By this time, ca. 1230, Pha-jo had established his principal gdan-sa at Rta-mgo Rdo-rje-gdan and Lcags-ri Rdo-rje-gdan along the banks of the Thim river, a few miles north of Thimphu.⁸⁹

The details of his combat with the Lha-pa monks need not concern us much. In the autobiography of Pha-jo they are presented mostly in the form of tests in sorcery and magic. Bcal-kha monastery was burned down through the power of Pha-jo's yogic wizardry, but no amount of magic brought the Lha-pa any success against Rta-mgo.⁹⁰ At this time, too, the heads (spyi-dpon) of the various districts began to desert their former Lha-pa

priests. At first only the Stag, Gzig and Dgung had the courage to side with Pha-jo, but later the Gdung, Sgod-phrug, Has, Lcang, Wang, Dkar-sbis and Sdong headmen converted their allegiance as well. The excessive taxes levied by the Lha-pa monks were replaced by a mere religious tithe, while the hated corvée-transport tax ('u-lag) was ended altogether.⁹¹ As further proof of his total victory, it is said that emissaries from king Bha-nan-la of Kāmarūpa arrived at this time with rich gifts of gold, silver, talking parrots and Benares cotton.⁹²

Before Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po's death at the age of 68, he had assigned each of his four sons certain districts as their respective administrative domains.⁹³ Gdung, Has, Sdong and the passes leading into the Shar district were assigned to Gsang-bdag Gar-ston and his wife A-chog. Dgung, Lcang and the border passes were given to Nyi-ma. Dbang-phyug received Thed, Dgon and Mgar-sa, while the fourth son, Dam-pa, was given the principal gdan-sa of Rta-mgo and was to have served as the successor to Pha-jo himself (pha-tshab). Although Dam-pa was originally expected to become a celibate monk, he secretly acquired a wife who gave birth to a son Kun-bzang-rdo-rje, alias 'Brog-pa Kun-bzangs. The union was subsequently discovered by Pha-jo, who approved of it after the fact.⁹⁴ It was Dam-pa, also, who wrote down Pha-jo's life story as dictated by him, and concealed it at Thugs-rje-brag for the benefit of future generations, according to the colophon.⁹⁵

It is difficult to assess how much this traditional account of Pha-jo owes to folk lore and legend-making. Contrary to expectations, his name is never mentioned in the Tibetan version of the life of his teacher Sangs-rgyas Dbon-ras Dar-ma-seng-ge, compiled by contemporary disciples.⁹⁶ He first appears in Tibetan sources in the history of Buddhism written by Padma-dkar-po (1575), who merely states that the disciple "'Gro-mgon-zhig-po gained control over Lho-kha-bzhi,"⁹⁷ while scarcely greater mention of

him is found in the life of Dar-ma-seng-ge authored in Bhutan during the 18th century by Shākya-rin-chen.⁹⁸ Clearly, his traditions were not remembered in the records of the parent sect, and it is therefore all the more important to see the "discovery" of the gter-ma autobiography in 1623 in the context of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's struggle to establish a centralized 'Brug-pa government in Bhutan at about the same time. The descendants of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po are generally said to have supported this effort, and their earlier merger through the expediency of incarnation with the family of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (whose career will be dealt with in a moment) meant that there were direct lineal descendants in Bhutan of the latter's branch of the Rgya family of Rwa-lung who, as distant relatives of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, could at the same time foster the political interests of the numerous family lines deriving from Pha-jo. Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin (1574-1643/4), who discovered the gter-ma autobiography, was both the grandson of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and the alleged rebirth of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po himself. He also wrote the "secret biography" (gsang-ba'i rnam-thar) of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, which is apparently the oldest written account of the latter's extensive mission and family line in Bhutan, subjects hardly mentioned in the Tibetan sources on his life.

Whatever the underlying facts of the family origins may have been, these two gter-ma discoveries in the early 17th century were clearly important in articulating and promoting a tradition of distinguished ancestry for the descendants of Pha-jo, thereby furthering their chances for important office in the emerging state founded by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The success of this effort can be clearly seen if one studies the ancestry of ranking officials during the first few decades or so of the new government. Although the very highest positions eluded this lineage for

the most part (only one of the first four Sde-srid being of Pha-jo ancestry), fully half of the first ten abbots of the state church (Rje Mkhan-po) claimed affinal descent from one or another of Pha-jo's sons. In addition, there were numerous other leading monks, such as 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan mentioned earlier, who were related to Pha-jo families by marriage. Whereas Bhutanese scholastic tradition has chosen to emphasize Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po's role in promoting the early spread of 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa Buddhism in the country, he was at least as important for the number of family lines, mostly in western Bhutan, to which he gave rise.

The last of the important unofficial Bar 'Brug-pa lineages to be established in Bhutan derives from Kun-dga'-legs-pa'i-dpal-'byor-bzang-po, more commonly known as 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (1455-1529?).⁹⁹ The fame of this enigmatic Tibetan yogin arises primarily from his participation in a peculiar spiritual movement whose practitioners, popularly called "madmen" (smyon-pa) or "mad yogins" (grub-thob smyon-pa), thrived only on the fringes of traditional monastic Buddhist culture. The movement found its inspiration in the lives of the great Buddhist siddhācāryas of India, and in the career of its earliest and most famous Tibetan member, Mi-lar-as-pa (1040-1123). Flourishing especially during the 15th and 16th centuries, these "mad yogins", or saintly madmen as I shall call them, adopted a radical approach to proselytizing which included an element of social protest against ingrown and selfrighteous pretences of the learned academies, a feature which brought them into some disrepute in more conservative religious circles. In emphasizing the Mādhyamika philosophical thesis of the ultimate unity of Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra, moreover, they taught a kind of non-dualism through lecture, mime, and song which permitted them, as enlightened adepts, to indulge publicly in behaviour

and instructional discourse ranging from the humorous and quixotic to the most gross and obscene.¹⁰⁰

Apart from these generalities, the lifestyles of the saintly madmen differed considerably. Gtsang-smyon-pa Sangs-rgyas-rgyal-mtshan (1452-1507) had a passion for literature and a biographer's gift for intriguing and detailed narrative.¹⁰¹ Precisely the opposite is true of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, whose affected dislike of literary pedagogy resulted in his never writing anything. A statement attributed to him at the beginning of the second volume of his "autobiography" suggests clearly enough why so little is precisely known of his life.¹⁰²

"An account of the course of my life's history, factual and correct, from my birth, my daily activities, and ultimately to my death and farewell ceremonies, would be an ordinary piece of writing indeed. Apart from dry statements of the type which I use to exhort my pupils towards the Dharma in reply to their questions, and the everyday undertakings of my religious life, there is little need to write of the trivia of my career: what food I ate this morning, where I defecated this evening, etc.; though, of course, I can't prevent high Lamas or my patrons from writing down every idle remark I might make in my travels about the country..."

Unfortunately for the historian, the four-volume Tibetan print of his "autobiography" and collected pronouncements consists precisely of such anecdotes, compiled haphazardly from the contributions of many patrons, and is so infected by his disregard for such mundane trivia as precise dates that no sequential chronology of his life will probably ever be feasible.¹⁰³ For the same reasons, however, the historicity of his legendary exploits in Bhutan cannot be questioned simply on the grounds of their virtual absence from the Tibetan collection, which might as well reflect the prejudices of the editor, or the limited geographical range of his information.

In Bhutan, moreover, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' importance assumed a political dimension when, in the late 17th century, one of his descendants was

nominated to the highest position in government. This occurred when the male line deriving from Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal of the Rgya family had died out and the decision was made to confer political supremacy on a descendant of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, who represented a collateral branch of the same family, but which had formerly been excluded from meaningful participation in the governance of the parent establishment of Rwa-lung. Since hereditary lineage was the controlling principle of succession to rulership of the Bhutanese polity during the 17th century, it is not too surprising that local scholars have studied the family traditions of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs with more critical historical interest than their Tibetan counterparts. Allowing for these acknowledged weaknesses and contrasts between the sources, the broad outlines of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' career are still fairly well known, and the importance of his family and lineage for later Bhutanese history requires that these be studied in some detail.¹⁰⁴

'Brug-pa Kun-legs was born into a branch of the Rgya family which inherited from Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras the principal Bar 'Brug-pa monasteries and estates of 'Brug, Rwa-lung and Klong-rdol. The more southerly properties of Stag-lung Chos-rdzong and Mdo-mkhar came under their control during the reign of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras' nephew Dar-ma-seng-ge. For four generations after Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras, the occupancy of the golden throne of the gdan-sa passed from celibate uncle to nephew.¹⁰⁵ The fifth hierarch Seng-ge-rin-chen (1258-1313) had no nephews, and we are told that "it became necessary for him to perform the ritual of producing a son upon a woman of Shangs."¹⁰⁶ During the next six generations the principle of celibacy was not adhered to, and the throne of the hierarch passed from father to son. The same period saw a dramatic growth in the family's political and religious authority. The seventh hierarch, Seng-ge-rgyal-po

(1289-1326), is said to have become the spiritual preceptor of the last Mongol emperor of China, Toyon Temür, who gave him a certificate of control over 1,900 households.¹⁰⁷ His son 'Jam-dbyangs Kun-dga'-seng-ge (1314-1347) was also a noted student of Tantric literature and the recipient of a great quantity of gifts from the Mongol princes Yisün Temür Temür Böke.¹⁰⁸ His writings and those of his father were bound in gold. After this highpoint in their power and prestige, however, the monastic corporation entered a period of uncertainty and discord, roughly contemporary with the culmination of political strife between the Sa-skyapa and the Phag-mo-gru-pa. Perhaps related to these events in some way, a struggle developed for control of Rwa-lung, and though the family heir 'Jam-dbyangs Blo-gros-seng-ge (1345-1390) was eventually victorious, we are told that because of the great harm which befell the gdan-sa, virtually all the monastic properties were lost at that time.¹⁰⁹

During the following two hundred fifty years the Bar 'Brug establishment gradually regained property and prestige, but a complicating element intruded during the 15th century, when it was declared by some of his disciples that the 14th hierarch Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (1428-1476) was the reembodiment of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras and ultimately of the Bodhisattwa Avalokiteśvara. Previously, the principle of the immediate rebirth (yang-srid) had not been resorted to by the Bar 'Brug-pa sect in determining succession to the throne of the gdan-sa, though the practice was by then well established in various forms among the Karma-pa, 'Bri-gung-pa, 'Ba'-ra Bka'-brgyud-pa and other sectarian groups. With this event, the potential was created that, should the next embodiment be discovered in a different family, the long-accumulated power and wealth of the Rgya family might be dissipated or lost entirely.¹¹⁰

So long as Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor was alive, however, the threat was merely latent, but the tensions it created may account in part

for intensified rivalries between branches of the family which became apparent at this time. At the same period the virtual collapse of Phag-mo-gru hegemony in 1434 left little more than a shadow of centralized rule in Tibet, freeing numerous districts and fiefdoms to vie through a complex of shifting alliances for independence and political advantage. The two hundred year-old establishment of the Rgya at Rwa-lung could not remain immune to these divisive events, for though the Rgya were of the 'Brug-pa sect and therefore closely associated religiously with the Phag-mo-gru-pa, they found themselves aligned politically and territorially with the princes of Rin-spungs, principal architects of the latter's demise.

It is in this confused state of affairs that the misfortunes of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' immediate family must be seen. His grandfather Drung Rdo-rje-rab-rgyas (often simply Drung Rdor-ba) was the youngest brother of Nam-mkha'-dpal-bzang and Shes-rab-bzang-po, who served successive terms on the abbatial see at Rwa-lung. He himself seems to have resided primarily at 'Brug, perhaps in some minor teaching capacity, as a reliquary was erected there on his death in 1450, though no official biography of him was ever compiled and little else is known of his life.¹¹¹ His father Rin-chen-bzang-po held the position of civil administrator (nang-so), probably at 'Brug. The Nang-so of Rwa-lung during the period was Lha'i-dbang-po, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' paternal uncle and brother of Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor.

'Brug-pa Kun-legs was born in the vicinity of 'Brug at Skyid-shod in 1455. His comfortable aristocratic boyhood came to an end at the age of thirteen, however, when the internecine rivalries mentioned above induced Lha'i-dbang-po to have his father assassinated. For six years 'Brug-pa Kun-legs served as a menial at the Rin-spungs court, after which he decided to leave for Dbus to take up a religious life.¹¹² He studied with

a number of the more important Bka'-brgyud-pa teachers of his day, but his religious inclinations were eclectic and by no means confined to the standard texts of his own sect.¹¹³ Although in subsequent years his wanderings brought him again to 'Brug and Rwa-lung, it is clear from statements attributed to him that the painful memory of his father's fate prevented any true reconciliation with the authorities of the Bar 'Brug establishment. Effectively from the time of his grandfather, the Rgya family persisted in two collateral branches, his own being excluded from the privileges of significant power until the reunification of the family in Bhutan nearly two hundred years later.¹¹⁴

We cannot be certain of the dates or precise motives of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' visits to Bhutan. Stray references to his activities there in the Tibetan collection of his tales are insufficient for historical purposes, and largely ignore the traditions preserved in Bhutanese sources. In one episode he is said to have travelled to Bum-thang in eastern Bhutan, where he beguiled a group of young girls and the local ruler's queen with humorous songs. The king, however, arranged poisoned food for him, as a test of his yogic powers. Successfully overcoming this, he threatened the king into erecting the small monastery of Srib-s-lha-khang, appointed one of his followers to administer it, and conscripted some thirty Bhutanese youths (mon pa'i 'thus btsun) to become its first acolytes. According to Tibetan legend, this represented the earliest spread of 'Brug-pa teachings into eastern Bhutan,¹¹⁵ although it contradicts the Bhutanese sources which maintain that the eastward limit of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' mission was at Mang-sde (modern Tongsa).¹¹⁶

The crucial event of his career from the Bhutanese point of view was his establishment of a family in the country. According to this tradition, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs first came to the country in consequence of a prophecy

of the goddess Dud-sol-lha-mo, which stated that his descendants would prove of great benefit in spreading the 'Brug-pa religion. He was commanded to shoot an arrow southwards from Tibet which would serve to guide him to his destined residence. Following the arrow's course, he travelled through Spa-gro and other places, eventually arriving at the village of 'Gram-'og-ma in the Stod valley between Punakha and Thimphu. Finding that the arrow had been discovered and placed in the chapel of a wealthy villager named Stod-pa Tshe-dbang, a descendant of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, and believing that the man's childless wife was his prophesied consort, he promptly had intercourse with her in the husband's presence. The enraged husband threatened him with a knife, but 'Brug-pa Kun-legs performed certain magical feats which convinced him that he was a Buddhist saint. The mollified husband, regretting his hasty wrath, then donated both his wife and lodgings to him by way of religious offerings. In due course the woman Nor-bu-'dzom gave birth to a son who received the name Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin.¹¹⁷

Following this episode, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs travelled to the nearby village of Log-thang-skya-mo where his yogic skills brought a dying man passage to heaven. As a gift of faith, the man's family gave him Log-thang-skya-mo as his mchod-gzhis. A reliquary stupa constructed in memory of the deceased elder, and said to have been personally consecrated by 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, was later enclosed within a small monastery built on the location, named Khyi-'bur-lha-khang or Khyi-med-lha-khang, and is still famous as the principal 'Brug-pa Kun-legs convent in Bhutan.¹¹⁸

In subsequent adventures he travelled to various parts of the country subduing harmful spirits, bestowing obscene religious instructions after his quixotic fashion and deflowering beautiful "Tantric consorts," though the historical traditions have not preserved any record of offspring

from these casual liaisons. The principal sites in western Bhutan connected with these episodes include Lus-'tsho-sgang, Phangs-yangs (or Phang-ya), Wa-chen, Kun-bzang-gling and Sgor-phug in Shar, Dwags Wang-kha, Yul-gsar-mchod-rten, Byi-li-sgang, Dkar-sbis-mchod-rten, Bsam-sdings-kha and Brag-'og-nang in the Punakha district, Sgang-kha in the Thim valley, and other locations in Spa-gro. There are several humorous encounters recorded in Bhutan between 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal (1465-1540), the pious hierarch of Rwa-lung who so frequently appears as the butt of his practical jokes.¹¹⁹

The duration of his stay in Bhutan is uncertain, but it is apparent that he spent most of his life in Tibet. We know that he died at the Lam-'phar-dgon-pa in Stod-lung, where the majority of his relics were preserved by Zhing-skyong-'brug-grags, his son by liaison with an earlier Tibetan wife Tshe-dbang-'dzom.¹²⁰

Whether or not future historical research can establish his career with greater precision, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' importance in the Tibetan-speaking world derived mainly from the cultic character of his following, especially among the laity and peasantry. The popular devotion which attached to his legendary personality continued, if not intensified, about his successive Tibetan incarnations, and to a lesser extent his family descendants in Bhutan.¹²¹ In being recognized as the immediate rebirths of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po and his son Gsang-bdag Gar-ston, 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' first two descendants also acquired much of the prestige attached to these pioneer saints of Bhutanese history, further enhancing the family's following in later centuries. The political potential of this cult was clearly obvious to Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in his struggle to gain a foothold in the country after 1616, and we shall see in a subsequent chapter that, despite some opposition from his followers,

one of his first actions after fleeing there from Tibet was to cultivate cordial relations with the family and devotees of this saintly madman.

Much obscurity surrounds the life of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' son Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin. We have already noted his birth at Stod-pa-lung. The various traditions suggest that his youth was spent in peasant occupations at Kho-thang in the Shar district.¹²² As a child he is said to have met the Rwa-lung hierarch Ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-grags-pa (1517-1554), during the latter's travels in Bhutan, but the crisis which turned him to a life of religion occurred when he accidentally cut off the tail of one of his own work oxen. Overcome by the suffering he had caused, Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin fled the fields and, without returning home, proceeded to Rwa-lung in Tibet where he entered the monastery. In later years he became a hermit contemplative under the tutelage of Ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-grags-pa, and wandered back to Bhutan. At the age of 50 he is said to have refurbished Rta-mgo Rdo-rje-gdan, the old monastery of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po which had subsequently been abandoned and become overgrown by jungle.¹²³ The restoration of Rta-mgo cannot yet be accurately dated, but ca. 1570 is not an unreasonable guess. It is probably at this time also that he was recognized to be the rebirth of Pha-jo's son, Gsang-bdag Gar-ston. As a result of the establishment of control by 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' branch of the Rgya family over the Rta-mgo complex of temples and monasteries (principally Rta-mgo Rdo-rje-gdan and Lcags-ri Rdo-rje-gdan), this lineage came to be known as the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa.

Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin had a daughter and a son. The girl, Rdo-ba'i-steng-'jim-pa, became a nun at Rta-mgo and is credited with having composed numerous yogic songs. Practically upon his birth in 1574, the son was recognized to be the rebirth of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po himself and was given the name of Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan. At the age of 17 the youth was taken by his father to Rwa-lung where he was initiated by

Mi-pham-chos-kyi-rgyal-po and given the new name of Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin. Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin passed away in the same year.¹²⁴ Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan also became a yogin of considerable renown, and studied with many of the leading Bka'-brgyud-pa teachers. In his early years he travelled in Tibet on extensive pilgrimages in the company of Grub-chen Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub.¹²⁵ We have no date for his return to Bhutan, but he was resident there ca. 1616 when, under the name of Pha-jo Rin-po-che, he submitted the Rta-mgo complex to the authority of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and pledged perpetual support for his cause against Tibet.¹²⁶ He passed away during the winter of 1643/4 at the age of seventy.

Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan's first son was Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-rgya-mtsho (d. 1681), who was initiated by Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal under the name of Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan and given control over the properties confiscated at Spa-gro from the 'Ba'-ra-ba monks, primarily 'Brang-rgyas-kha. A subsequent son and daughter were born to him by Dam-chos-bstan-'dzin (1606-1660), a descendant of Pha-jo who had formerly been a consort of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.¹²⁷ The daughter, Rin-chen-dpal-'dzom (1634-1708), became a nun at Rta-mgo and was famous for her great beauty and religious learning. She played a limited role in politics during her later life, which will be dealt with in a later chapter. Her younger brother, Ngag-dbang Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638-1696), became one of the key figures of 17th century Bhutanese history. Revered posthumously as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, and the rebirth of Khri-srong-lde-btsan, he was perhaps the closest of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's Bhutanese disciples, and was elevated to head of state in 1680 when the latter's male line died out. He was posthumously recognized as the first Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che when Rgyal-sras Mi-pham-dbang-po (1709-1738) was determined to be his immediate rebirth. Another line of incarnations whose seat was at Rta-mgo Rdo-rje-gdan began with Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' daughter Lha-lcam Kun-Legs

(1691-1732/3). With her death the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa family line of Bhutanese descendants from 'Brug-pa Kun-legs came to an end,¹²⁸ but the two incarnation lineages have apparently persisted down to modern times.¹²⁹

Clearly, the informal Bar 'Brug-pa missions in pre-17th century Bhutan were of major importance in orienting the country towards the sectarian tradition which ultimately became its official church, and to which the modern state owes its vernacular name. Free from the monastic strictures of the parent convent in Tibet, they gave rise to prominent and in some cases extensive family lines, whose support, based on long-entrenched prestige and local authority, was probably an indispensable element in the establishment of centralized 'Brug-pa government during the 17th century. But the importance of the numerous branch convents founded during formal tours by successive Rwa-lung hierarchs must not be minimized, for it was through these that Bhutanese monks were primarily brought into the mainstream of Tibetan monastic Buddhism, and introduced to the workings of ecclesiastic government eventually established in Bhutan. Until the 17th century, moreover, it was common for locally recruited students to undertake advanced studies in Tibet before returning to teaching posts in Bhutan, and in most such cases, the point of initial entry into the monastic system was probably one of the official branch convents.

The earliest official Bar 'Brug-pa missionary activity in the south appears to date from the reign of the third Rwa-lung hierarch, Chos-rje Gzhon-nu-seng-ge (r. 1237-1266), but he does not seem to have travelled beyond the Lho-brag frontier into Bhutan proper.¹³⁰ The available information suggests that the first significant missionary attempts only date from the reign of 'Jam-dbyangs Kun-dga'-seng-ge, who visited Bhutan on at least four occasions between ca. 1331 and 1346. Among his students during the first tour was an unidentified king of Lho-kha-bzhi, but civil

strife in Bhutan during subsequent years prompted his supporters there to appeal for personal mediation, and in 1338 he travelled to Phag-ri where, as usual in our sources, he is said to have restored peace through inspired teaching and the performance of miracles.¹³¹ His last and most extensive tour of Bhutan, begun in the autumn of 1345, brought him to Bde-chen-phug, Sgang-kha and Dge-brag in the Thim-phu valley. This visit is principally remembered in the later histories for his having subdued and coerced the wrathful local spirit of Bde-chen-phug, Jag-pa-me-len, into becoming a protective divinity of Buddhism.¹³² He returned to Tibet during the summer of 1346, after extending his mission to Spa-gro and Phag-ri.¹³³

The most intense phase of Bar 'Brug-pa activity in Bhutan began in the middle of the 15th century during the reign of the 14th hierarch Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (1428-1476), and appears to reflect the growing importance of the region as a source of patronage. It was also at this time that the earliest official missions into eastern Bhutan began. At the behest of the 'Brug-pa monks of Lho-kha-bzhi, Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor first travelled to Bhutan in 1449, spending some months at Punakha, Bde-chen-phug, and Rin-spungs in Spa-gro. He was again in the Spa-gro region during the three year period 1456-1458, during which time he is said to have pacified certain sectarian conflicts.¹³⁴ In 1466 he visited eastern Bhutan at the behest of the Lama of Bsam-gtan-gling monastery in Bum-thang, which would appear to be the first tour on the part of a Rwa-lung hierarch to that part of the country. The mission there became more firmly established in 1470, when, under his patronage and directions, the (Rnying-ma-pa) Bsam-gtan-gling Lama constructed the hermitage of Chos-rje-brag at Bum-thang.¹³⁵

The reign of the 15th Rwa-lung hierarch Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal (1465-1540) represents the most productive period of Bar 'Brug-pa missionary

activity in Bhutan. Widely renowned as the rebirth of Sangs-rgyas Dbon-ras Dar-ma-seng-ge, Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal was one of the most respected teachers of the sect, and was active in the founding of branch missions in both Tibet and Bhutan. During the period 1496-1531 he travelled in the south on at least nine separate occasions. During his fifth visit of ca. 1519 he is said to have founded the monasteries of 'Brug 'Phrin-las-sgang, Glong-rdzogs-the-gchen-chos-'khor, Pus-mo-rab-brtan-chos-'khor, 'Bras-la Bsam-gtan-chos-'khor and Bsam-gtan-rtse-mo in the districts of Spa-gro and Punakha.¹³⁶ During his seventh visit of ca. 1527/28 he founded the temple of 'Brug-chos-sdings in Spa-gro, completed work on 'Brug 'Phrin-las-sgang at Punakha, and initiated construction of a number of monasteries and temples at Thim-phu, including 'Brug Pho-brang-sdings (Spang-ri-zam-gdong) and 'Brug Rab-brtan-sgang.¹³⁷ He was again in Bhutan ca. 1530/31 during which time the frescos at 'Brug-chos-sdings and the monastery and related buildings at Spang-ri-zam-gdong were completed. He also founded new chapels at Rdo-rgyab and 'Brug Chos-skyong-pho-brang near modern Wangdiphodrang.¹³⁸

The record of Bar 'Brug-pa missionary activity during subsequent decades is not well documented in presently available materials.¹³⁹ Ngag-gi-dbang-phyug-grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1517-1554), son of Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal, is said to have travelled to Bhutan on a number of occasions and founded two hermitages there, but no dates or other information on these is to be found in his brief biography.¹⁴⁰ The potential for conflict posed by the introduction of the principle of immediate rebirth for succession to the gdan-sa, mentioned earlier, had by this time materialized. The rebirth of Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor was discovered in 'Jam-dbyangs-chos-grags (1478-1523), a son of the myriarch of Bya, while the next rebirth, Padma-dkar-po (1527-1592), was born into an insignificant priestly family in Kong-po. Although the Rgya family acquiesced in these

recognitions, they apparently refused to invest the hierarchs with control over the extensive monastic properties which had been their exclusive preserve for more than three centuries. The Bhutan missions, it would seem, were part of the estates they were unwilling to relinquish, which may explain why Padma-dkar-po paid only a single brief visit there in 1590, and had refused an earlier invitation in 1564.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, biographies for the two generations in the family line between Ngag-gi-dbang-phyug-grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1594-1651) are not readily available, though the latter's father Mi-pham-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1567-1619) is known to have been active in Bhutan both before and after the climactic events of 1616.¹⁴² Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's flight to Bhutan in that year, as a result of persecution by the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, will be examined in more detail in the following chapter. The date traditionally marks the rise of the modern state of Bhutan independent of Tibetan authority.

So far, this chapter has been mainly concerned with tracing the development of various 'Brug-pa missions to Bhutan. But other Bka'-brgyud-pa sects were also represented there in a lesser capacity, and their minor involvement in political events during subsequent centuries requires that something be said of their origins. The Lha-nang-pa, as a branch of the 'Bri-gung-pa sect, has already been discussed, but still another affiliate mission of the 'Bri-gung-pa in southwestern Bhutan was begun during the 13th century by Grub-thob Dbu-thon-sangs-rgyas, a member of the Skyu-ra clan which had been in possession of 'Bri-gung since its founding. At the behest of the 'Bri-gung hierarch Gcung rin-po-che Rdo-rje-grags-pa (1211-1279), Dbu-thon-sangs-rgyas travelled to the south in search of disciples, eventually arriving at the Dar-dkar pass some twenty miles south of Thim-phu. His son, born to a local woman who performed as a casual Tantric consort, assisted the father in his religious enterprise,

and together they founded the hermitage of Mtshams-nang or Mtshams-brag. The lineage was not celibate, and several lines of descendants are traced to these two men, though the available records do not document them in detail. The original connection with 'Bri-gung was apparently lost at an early period, but the heads (zhal-ngo) of the Bhutanese branch of the Skyu-ra clan accumulated property in the vicinity of Mthsams-brag and Me-ltems-grong, and by the 17th century seem to have gained some measure of local dominance in the Dar-dkar district. Although their independent authority ended when Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal captured Dar-dkar rdzong ca. 1647 and incorporated the district into his emerging state, the family continued to produce local administrators and Lamas of high reputation. Perhaps the most famous notable of this lineage was Yon-tan-mtha'-yas (1724-1783), the Thirteenth Rje Mkhan-po and one of Bhutan's greatest scholars.¹⁴³

Another of the minor Bka'-brgyud-pa sects with Bhutanese interests was the Gnas-rnying-pa, an ancient religious lineage of Gtsang whose parent monastery had also been founded by a branch of the Rgya clan. Though affiliated at an early period with the Stod 'Brug, they were not on particularly amicable terms with the 'Ba'-ra-ba sect, as we have seen, and by the middle of the 16th century their teaching traditions and property interests had been absorbed by the Dge-lugs-pa church.¹⁴⁴ Rahul and Nirmala Das both give 1361 as the initial date of Gnas-rnying-pa penetration into Bhutan. They are said to have acquired monasteries in Thim-phu and Punakha, but neither author cites any references for this information.¹⁴⁵ Gnas-rnying-pa influence in the country must have been moderately extensive, however, as they are included among the principal rival sects driven out of Bhutan about the middle of the 17th century by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.¹⁴⁶ Their activities in the country will certainly become clearer when the known historical sources become more widely available.¹⁴⁷

The Karma-pa was one of the few Tibetan sects with ancient ties to Bhutan not purged from the country during the 17th century. Perhaps this was because they had not been particularly active in founding branch monasteries there during the preceding centuries, and therefore were not viewed as a potential political threat. Another reason must have been the fact that, since Karma-pa missionary activity in the south of Tibet had historically concentrated on the Klo-pa and Mon territories near Mtsho-sna, their interests in Bhutan were mostly in the east, well away from the main scenes of battle. Whatever the precise reasons, the high regard which the successive hierarchs enjoyed during their occasional visits to the country, and their political neutrality during the bitter fighting of the 18th century, apparently were sufficient to enable them to mediate a settlement to the Tibeto-Bhutanese war of 1730, as we shall see in a later chapter.

Karma-pa missions to the southeast borderlands began with the first Black Hat (Zhwa-nag) hierarch Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa (1110-1193), who made converts among the Klo-pas and the kings of Mon at Ga-thung ca. 1148, but the earliest datable mission to Bhutan proper would seem to be the visit to Spa-gro ca. 1326 by G.yung-ston-pa Rdo-rje-dpal, a disciple of Zhwa-dmar I Grags-pa-sengge (1238-1349).¹⁴⁸ A strengthening of ties with eastern Bhutan occurred during the careers of Zhwa-nag VII Chos-grags-rgya-mtsho (1454-1506) and Zhwa-dmar IV Chos-grags-ye-shes (1453-1524), both of whom cultivated cordial relations with the Bhutanese Rnying-ma-pa gter-ston Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521). Chos-grags-ye-shes visited Bum-thang in 1480 and founded what would seem to be the first Karma-pa convent in Bhutan, the temple of Lhun-grub-chos-sde. During a subsequent visit in 1482/83 the temple was enlarged and provided with images.¹⁴⁹ His immediate rebirth, Zhwa-dmar V Dkon-mchog-yan-lag (1525-1583), was liberally patronized during a tour of the temple environs a hundred years

later, in 1582.¹⁵⁰ In 1502 Padma-gling-pa was invited to Lhasa by Chos-grags-rgya-mtsho where they engaged in friendly discussions on religious matters.¹⁵¹

In an era when the Rnying-ma-pa were struggling to defend the very integrity of their traditions, the patronage by two of Tibet's most highly revered incarnates for a rustic gter-ston from the cultural frontier would not have gone unnoticed, or unrepaid. The popularity of the Karma-pa in that part of Bhutan during later centuries must be interpreted in part as a consequence of these early ties with Padma-gling-pa, whose family and incarnations, as we shall see, came to dominate the region by the 17th century.¹⁵²

The Sa-skyapa was another sect with minor interests in Bhutan which managed to survive the warfare of the 17th century intact, but its circumstances were different from the Karma-pa. Sa-skyapa (and Ngor-pa) monasteries were apparently first established only in the 15th century, and were confined to western Bhutan. Their known hermitages by the 17th century included Spyi-zhing and Glang-dkar in the Thim-phu area, Ri-tshogs near Punakha and Phang-ye in Shar, the last of which was the local Sa-skyapa headquarters under the administration of a spyi-bla, probably appointed directly from Sa-skyapa.¹⁵³ Unfortunately, almost nothing from the once voluminous hagiographical literature of this sect is readily available, so that our understanding of the circumstances surrounding its early missions to Bhutan must await better sources.¹⁵⁴

The continuity of Sa-skyapa missions in Bhutan after 1616 was the result of an early pledge of submission to the authority of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and long-standing cordial relations between them and the 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa.¹⁵⁵ 'Brug-pa Kun-legs performed some friendly services for the Phang-ye hermitage during the early 16th century,¹⁵⁶ while both Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and his father had been favourite

disciples of the Sa-skyā hierarchs even before departing for Bhutan. The Sa-skyā hierarch Sngags-'chang Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rin-chen (1517-1584) and his infant son Grags-pa-blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1563-1617) had already paid a formal visit to Bhutan ca. 1570, but the details of this tour are poorly known.¹⁵⁷

By the 17th century, then, bonds of loyalty and religious harmony had become very firm between the two sects, and the massacre of Bhutanese leaders by the Rgyal-rtse princes, agents of Sa-skyā during the 14th century, had by now apparently been forgotten or forgiven. Sa-skyā prestige, neutrality, and willingness to mediate in the Tibeto-Bhutanese wars of the 17th and 18th centuries, combined with these other factors, enabled its Bhutanese missions to retain their special teaching and tithing arrangements with the parent Tibetan monastery up to the 20th century.¹⁵⁸

Eastern Bhutan, especially Bum-thang, has always been a stronghold of the Rnying-ma-pa sect. In earlier times the same could also have been said of Spa-gro in the west. But there the zealous missionary activity of Bka-'brgyud-pa and reformist sects appears to have won for them a much larger share of patronage by the 16th century. And although the Rnying-ma-pa was by far the oldest of Tibetan sects with interests in Bhutan, these had historically been of a rather different kind, and were not fundamentally concerned with the acquisition of branch monasteries and mchod-gzhis. Since the time of Padmasambhava, Spa-gro, Bum-thang and the other border temples of the old Tibetan empire had been endowed with special sanctity for the Rnying-ma-pa yogins who were his spiritual heirs. Legends of their hidden religious treasures attracted would-be gter-ston in search of ancient manuscripts, not simply students and patrons.

There are a number of gter-ston from the 11th century and perhaps earlier credited with discoveries in Bhutan, but Rnying-ma-pa records from that period are largely inadequate for historical research, and there is

occasional confusion as to whether the rediscovered texts were Bon-po or genuinely "Buddhist". Early names connected with Spa-gro include Ku-sa-sman-pa,¹⁵⁹ Ra-shag-chen-po,¹⁶⁰ Rgya-ston Brtson-'grus-seng-ge,¹⁶¹ Bal-po A-hum-'bar,¹⁶² La-stod Dmar-po,¹⁶³ and Sar-ban-phyogs-med, the last of whom was a native Bhutanese.¹⁶⁴ Manuscript discoveries at Bum-thang are credited to such early gter-ston as Bon-po Brag-rtsal,¹⁶⁵ Khyung-po Dpal-dge,¹⁶⁶ and A-jo Dbal-po.¹⁶⁷ There may also have been uninterrupted transmissions of Rnying-ma-pa oral traditions (bka'-ma) in Bhutan since the time of Padmasambhava, but definite information is not yet available. It is more generally stated that these were reintroduced from eastern Tibet, principally by Dam-pa Bde-gshegs (1122-1192) of Kah-thog and his followers, whose mission in Bhutan has also been fairly influential since the 12th century.¹⁶⁸

The 14th century was a period of great enterprise and growth for the Rnying-ma-pa. It witnessed a new and systematic elaboration of its philosophical principles, whose persuasiveness is attested to in part by the opposition they engendered among the opposing sects, while in Bhutan there began a more intense phase of missionary and monastic activity centered about Bum-thang. Both of these events focused largely upon the work of a single man, the Tibetan saint Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer (1308-1363).¹⁶⁹ His early career was characterized by the energetic pursuit of a vast range of textual studies from all of the important sectarian streams. But his alleged political support for the 'Bri-gung-pa hierarchs brought him into conflict with Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan of Phag-mo-gru, which resulted in a kind of self-imposed exile in Bhutan for a number of years preceding the Phag-mo-gru-pa overthrow of Sa-skya hegemony in 1359.¹⁷⁰ During Klong-chen-pa's residence in the country he carried out an active program of teaching and conversion, as far west as Spa-gro. His name is associated in Bhutan with the foundation of eight major

hermitages, but the principal residence was Thar-pa-gling in Bum-thang, the old monastery of Lo-ras-pa.¹⁷¹ An important event of this period was his composition in 1355 of the little verse treatise on the Hidden Land of Bum-thang to which we have referred earlier. Shortly after this he returned to Tibet where, following a reconciliation with Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan and a period of residence at the Phag-mo-gru court, he died in 1363.

Klong-chen-pa's significance for the subsequent history of the Rnying-ma-pa sect in Bhutan was decisive. His new monasteries, particularly those in the east, became important centres for a growing revivification of its teachings. Moreover, at a time of increasing sectarian militarism in Tibet, the publication of his little tract praising the virtues of the Hidden Land of Bum-thang must have attracted renewed attention to the valley's ancient ties with the traditions of Padmasambhava.

"In these days, through the maliciousness of men,
The Buddha's teachings are near to decline in Central Tibet;
Demon armies from the borders have raised strife in the centre,
So that enlightenment is best cultivated in places such as this.

But the jeweled doors to the Hidden Lands of the frontier
Will not long remain closed; soon they will be opened,
For the border armies of the Mongols are newly arrived,
A thought which causes me great sorrow.

Before this happens, faithful men, desirous of liberation,
Should renounce any fond attachment for their native lands;
To devote their lives to cultivating true wisdom,
The time has arrived for travel to the Hidden Lands of the frontier."¹⁷²

Whether directly inspired by these lines or similar sentiments, the decades after Klong-chen-pa's visit brought increasing numbers of famous Tibetan gter-ston to Bhutan, especially Bum-thang. Rdo-rje-gling-pa (1346-1406) travelled there in his late teens and obtained mental revelations (dgongs-gter) from Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal at Byams-pa'i-lha-khang. His son Gnubs-chen Rnam-'phrul-chos-dbyings-pa also established a mission at Spagro, but was in residence at Ma-ni-dgon-pa at Bum-thang in 1452 where he was a tutor to Padma-gling-pa in his childhood. His later descendants

were further active at O-rgyan-chos-gling in Bum-thang, and, during the 18th century, at Dangs-chu in Shar.¹⁷³ Klong-chen-pa himself gave rise to a family line who maintained his teachings in Bhutan. His son 'Jam-dbyangs Grags-pa-'od-zer (1346-1409) and a daughter were born to a Tantric consort named Skyid-pa-yag, the sister of his principal Bhutanese disciple Bsod-nams-'bum. Grags-pa-'od-zer spent his early years studying in Tibet, but returned to Bhutan on several occasions, where he founded the Glang-mthil hermitage in the east. His sons Sangs-rgyas-dbon-po and Zla-ba-grags-pa were also prominent teachers, and the latter founded Bsam-gtan-gling monastery at Bum-thang, in the early decades of the 15th century.¹⁷⁴

The great Tibetan saint and bridge-builder Thang-stong-rgyal-po (d. 1485) also travelled to Bhutan during the 15th century.¹⁷⁵ In 1433-34 he began a tour through the western part of the country, visiting Phag-ri, Spa-gro, Stag-tshang, Thed and Has. He is said to have constructed hermitages and iron bridges at Lcang-yul Ra-ba-kha, Snyal Phag-mo-grong, Rta-mchog-sgang, 'U-'dul-rdo-dkar, Bag-grong and elsewhere. The iron for his famous iron bridge at Chu-bo-ri in Tibet, completed in 1435, is said to have been obtained from Bhutanese patrons during this visit.¹⁷⁶ During 1437 he travelled to eastern Bhutan, visiting Bum-thang and Ku-ru-lung. He was again in the Spa-gro area ca. 1447.¹⁷⁷

The renewal of Rnying-ma-pa activity in eastern Bhutan deriving from Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer culminated with gter-ston Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521), perhaps the earliest native Bhutanese religious figure of any sect to gain widespread prominence throughout the Tibetan-speaking world. Padma-gling-pa was born at Chal-lung in the Chos-'khor district of Bum-thang into a branch of the Gnyos lineage claiming descent from Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa (1164/5-1224), although his immediate family appears to have no longer maintained Lha-pa Bka'-lbrgyud-pa traditions. As a child he was placed as an apprentice blacksmith to his grandfather Mgar-ba Yon-

tan-byang-chub at Ma-ni-dgon-pa. He continued in this profession until the death of the grandfather in 1473 and his aunt Don-'grub-bzang-mo in 1475.¹⁷⁸

At the age of 27 (1476), according to the autobiography, a stranger appeared at the door of Ma-ni-dgon-pa begging for food. In return for his hospitality, he gave Padma-gling-pa a small paper scroll, then disappeared as mysteriously as he had come. The scroll contained a prophecy directing Padma-gling-pa to a deep pool called Me-'bar-mtsho along the upper reaches of the Stangs river near Seng-ge-sna-ring-brag. Following the instructions, he travelled to Me-'bar-mtsho, where, at the appointed time, he received a chest of ancient religious texts from the hands of a *dākinī*.¹⁷⁹ This was the first of Padma-gling-pa's voluminous manuscript discoveries, the revelation of which occurred at various times throughout his life and brought him on numerous occasions to Lho-brag and Bsam-yas in Tibet, and to various hermitages in central and eastern Bhutan. The question of the authenticity of such discoveries is irrelevant from a historical perspective, except to note that his contemporaries were well aware of their potential for fraudulent personal aggrandizement. The autobiography suggests that, although his fame rapidly spread beyond the borders of Bhutan, there were critics even in Bum-thang who doubted the validity of the texts.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, he received patronage and support from numerous influential Tibetan religious and political figures, including the Bya-pa myriarch Bkra-shis-dar-rgyas and the Karma-pa hierarchs mentioned earlier.¹⁸¹ Sectarian jealousy generated by such successes is the probable explanation for an attempt on his life in 1511.¹⁸²

It is not necessary for our purposes to recount Padma-gling-pa's life in detail. In any case, the autobiography in its present form, first edited by a personal disciple Rgyal-ba Don-grub, has probably been augmented on successive occasions with legendary material, and a close

comparison with the colophons of the numerous gter-ma will be needed to sort these out.¹⁸³ What is worthy of note is the wide range of his mission, and the large number of important contemporary religious figures who received initiation into his collection of revelations. His earliest hermitage of Padma-gling in Bum-thang (from which his name is derived) was originally a bamboo structure built by some of his attendants in 1477, though subsequently enlarged. The principal Bhutanese monastery, however, was Gtam-zhing-lhun-grub-chos-gling, constructed during the years 1501-05.¹⁸⁴ During the course of many visits, and on account of the discovery of several gter-ma there, the hereditary nobility of Lha-lung in the Lho-brag valley also became his formal patrons, and the foundation of the northern seat and winter residence of the Padma-gling-pa rebirths at Lha-lung Theg-mchog-rab-rgyas-gling and Gu-ru-lha-khang dates from this time. Other new hermitages acquired by Padma-gling-pa in Bhutan included Bde-skyid-gling (1490) and Bde-chen-gling (ca. 1508) in the Bum-thang area, and Kun-bzang-gling at Ku-re-stod in the far northeast.

At some point during his early years, the theory became widely accepted that Padma-gling-pa was the rebirth of Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer. There was apparently initial resistance to this on the part of the latter's followers and descendants, but this was overcome and from 1500 or thereabouts the former monasteries and estates of Klong-chen-pa came under the control of his religious establishment.¹⁸⁵ Through this ascribed connection with Klong-chen-pa he also inherited the latter's illustrious line of recognized former existences going back to Lha-gcig Padma-gsal, pious daughter of the Tibetan king Khri-srong-lde-btsan.¹⁸⁶ At the same time, Klong-chen-pa's philosophical treatises and the gter-ma of Padma-gling-pa became the fundamental curriculum of the sect, and this combination of revered teachings and revelation was in no small way responsible for its subsequent prestige throughout Bhutan and Tibet. A similar accommodation

with the Bhutanese descendants of Rdo-rje-gling-pa brought Padma-gling-pa a certain measure of control over their hereditary seat of O-rgyan-chos-gling in Bum-thang; the infant rebirth of Rdo-rje-gling-pa, Sprul-sku Mchog-ldan-mgon-po (b. ca. 1518), was appointed the successor (rgyal-tshab) to Padma-gling-pa at Padma-gling upon the latter's death in 1521.¹⁸⁷

By the time of his death, much of the Rnying-ma-pa mission in eastern Bhutan and Lha-lung in Tibet had become subordinate to the Padma-gling-pa establishment. Its influence in western Bhutan was apparently not as strong, being practically limited to the former monasteries of Klong-chen-pa at Spa-gro and Shar Kun-bzang-gling. But this was strengthened during the 16th century when Padma-gling-pa's grandson Padma-'phrin-las (1564-1642?) was commissioned to build several monasteries in Shar, including Sgang-steng Gsang-sngags-chos-gling, which subsequently became one of the principal teaching monasteries of the sect.¹⁸⁸

The religious (and political) influence of the sect were further increased through the three incarnation lines to which Padma-gling-pa gave rise. The first Speech Incarnation of Padma-gling-pa himself (Pad-gling gsung-sprul rin-po-che), Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-grags-pa-dpal-bzang (1536-1597), was born in western Bhutan and installed at an early age at Padma-gling. During the course of his career he studied with some of the leading incarnates of Tibet, including Zhwa-dmar V Dkon-mchog-yan-lag (1525-1583) and Sprul-sku Sna-tshogs-rang-grol (1494-1570), the rebirth of gter-ston Ratna-gling-pa,¹⁸⁹ and upon Sna-tshogs-rang-grol's death he inherited the teaching post of his monastery of Dar-rgyas-chos-sdings in Central Tibet (Dbus).¹⁹⁰ During his lifetime and that of his next rebirth, Pad-gling Gsung-sprul III Kun-mkhyen Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje (1598-1669), close religious ties were cultivated with Gsang-bdag 'Phrin-las-lhun-grub (1611-1662) and his son Rig-'dzin Gter-bdag-gling-pa (1646-1714), which later evolved into the reciprocal teaching arrangements between Padma-gling

and the Tibetan monastery of Smin-grol-gling which persisted up to modern times.¹⁹¹ Cordial relations with the Lhasa authorities were also established in 1650, and following the successful revolt against the Dzungars in 1720 it became customary for the successive Pad-gling incarnates to receive their tonsuring ceremony from the Dalai Lamas.¹⁹² Examples of such maneuvering for ever greater religious and political advantage are too numerous to mention, but by the end of the 18th century branch convents of the Padma-gling-pa sub-sect were to be found in various parts of central Tibet and as far east as Spo-bo.

A second line of reincarnating Lamas, the Thugs-sras Rin-po-che, began with Padma-gling-pa's son Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan, while a third, the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che, derived from Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan's son Padma-'phrin-las. These two lines were both known as Yongs-'dzin or tutors to the Speech Incarnations, and though of somewhat lesser spiritual prestige, there were occasions when they served key roles in the central government of Bhutan after 1616. We have already noted the example of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub in that capacity, and others will probably emerge as more biographical materials for the Bhutanese Padma-gling-pa establishment become available.¹⁹³

At this point we can see very clearly that the Padma-gling-pa branch of the Rnying-ma-pa was in a uniquely advantageous position by the beginning of 17th century Bhutanese history. It was the one sectarian tradition in the country whose roots were entirely local, and whose pattern of growth was the exact opposite of the others we have studied. For followers of Padma-gling-pa traditions, Bhutanese monasteries were the very source of spiritual instruction, not merely the southern outposts of larger Tibetan sects. Its monks did not have to endure the thinly disguised prejudices of visiting Tibetan Lamas; on the contrary, its own hierarchs were themselves avidly sought out as visiting teachers to the great Rnying-ma-

pa monasteries of central Tibet. Although such considerations as these are not commonly articulated in literature before 1616, by the end of the 17th century and with the rise of explicit regional sentiments they appear more frequently.

There was never any question, then, of expelling the Rnying-ma-pa from Bhutan during the turbulent events after 1616. On the contrary, we shall see that although the problem which faced Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in the east was basically one of acquiring political paramountcy in matters of secular loyalty and taxations, this could not be achieved by simple military intervention. The Rnying-ma-pa was predominant in the east, whereas the stronghold of the 'Brug-pa church was in western Bhutan, a sectarian division of the country which interestingly compares with the cleavage in ancient political traditions noted in an earlier chapter.¹⁹⁴ What was required to achieve administrative unification, and what gradually developed, was a far-reaching accommodation to Rnying-ma-pa religious beliefs and the tolerance of a significant degree of autonomy on the part of Padma-gling-pa's incarnate successors. Although the 'Brug-pa church in Tibet had been greatly influenced by Rnying-ma-pa ideas long before the 17th century, this developed even further in Bhutan and is no doubt a partial reflection of the political necessities at this time.

Courtly deference to the Padma-gling-pa hierarchs began with Rgyal-sras Padma-'phrin-las, who attended upon Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje at Punakha and was treated with great respect by the First Sde-srid.¹⁹⁵ His rebirth Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub received a specific commitment from Bstan-'dzin-'brug-grags, at the time of the latter's promotion to Sde-srid in 1656, that the 'Brug-pa establishment would provide the Padma-gling-pa hierarchs with whatever estates and material necessities they required, a pledge which was later reiterated by the third Sde-srid Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa. At a meeting with the latter in

1674, Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub was conspicuously seated on a throne of equal height.¹⁹⁶ At this time, also, the 'Brug-pa government was made fully aware of the anomalous administrative arrangement of the Padma-gling-pa monasteries whereby shared facilities and a common treasury prevailed across the newly emerging national boundary, between the Bhutanese gdan-sa at Padma-gling and the winter seat at Lha-lung in Tibet.¹⁹⁷ Except for periods of open warfare between Bhutan and the Lhasa government during the last half of the 17th century, and the Dzungar persecutions of 1717-18, this arrangement was never interfered with until the 1959 Chinese intervention.

The accommodation was also pursued by the more subtle path of merger through incarnation. We have already seen that Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub was the scion of an important eastern Bhutanese family lineage claiming descent from the Tibetan king Khri-srong-lde-btsan. When his nephews Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu and Mi-pham-dbang-po were recognized as the respective Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che of the two branches of the Rgya family in Bhutan, Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub, as their tutor, acquired the highest effective political influence in the central government of any Padma-gling-pa hierarch to that date. A similar merger attempt had occurred even earlier when 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho (1665-1701), a fifth generation descendant of Padma-gling-pa, was recognized as the immediate rebirth of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' grandson Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin.¹⁹⁸

* * * * *

By the end of the 16th century, then, seven hundred years of missionary activity had seen all of the major Tibetan sects acquire Bhutanese properties and patronage to one degree or another. Expectedly, shifting alignments and the carryover of old grudges from Tibet had brought sectarian strife as well, and this may also have been exacerbated by local

political stresses vaguely hinted at in the literature, although strongly localized patterns of political power had apparently prevented the rise of any single dominant sectarian group. The Bar 'Brug-pa may have had a numerical advantage in terms of the number of branch monasteries, but this is by no means certain even for western Bhutan. In the east it was in a decidedly inferior position vis-à-vis the Rnying-ma-pa establishment of Padma-gling-pa, a status, however, common to the other Bka'-brgyud-pa sects also.

Of economic conditions during these centuries almost nothing definite is known. From the frequency in the use of the term Lho-kha-bzhi after the 14th century we have inferred that a regularized pattern of trade with India and Tibet had developed, but how or by whom this was controlled is uncertain. Both Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po and Padma-gling-pa are credited with having established formal relations with the kings of Kāmarūpa, but this, too, may imply little more than a negotiation of trade arrangements, and the mutual recognition of territorial rights.¹⁹⁹

The opinion is occasionally expressed in modern writings on Bhutan that its geography, characterized by numerous southward-flowing river valleys separated by lofty mountain ranges and difficult passes, was responsible during earlier centuries for isolating its inhabitants into largely autonomous and mutually hostile settlements or districts. It is further supposed that this characteristic of the terrain, along with competition for control of the strategic passes of the caravan routes, produced a situation of near perpetual internecine strife.²⁰⁰ Certainly, the relative isolation of population centres is not in doubt, as the number of surviving regional dialects attests.²⁰¹ We have also noted a certain cleavage between the eastern and western halves of the country with regard to sectarian allegiances and ancient political traditions.

Similarly, the sources referred to earlier do suggest a degree of competition for control of the Phag-ri trade mart, for example, although the Chumbi valley has for long been administered by Tibetan rather than Bhutanese chiefs.

In general, however, the available records for pre-17th century Bhutan tend to suggest that this negative assessment has been unduly exaggerated. Its origins, in fact, are probably to be found in the prejudiced opinions of Tibetan missionaries, such as those noted above, which later came to be incorporated into a Buddhist thesis of Bhutanese social evolution according to which the introduction of religion promoted a change from warfare and anarchy to peace and civilized intercourse. That is certainly the interpretation of the Lho'i chos 'byung, from where it appears to have made its way into Western literature. But it is worth restating that the Bhutanese author of this work was merely repeating, verbatim, the colourful description of pre-Buddhist Bhutan originally penned by a Tibetan refugee scholar of the 17th century. Even allowing for the intrusion of poetic licence, Klong-chen-pa's first-hand description of the well-established agricultural prosperity and peaceful social conditions prevailing in eastern Bhutan during the 14th century is so strikingly contrary to this view, yet so similar to the modern situation, as to demand a reconsideration of these pious Buddhist traditions.

The sources surveyed in this chapter suggest a rather different conclusion, that the introduction of sectarian Buddhism tended to promote rather than diminish family rivalries, both by the import of traditional religious factionalism and by the establishment of missions whose accumulating wealth and prestige attracted the competition of would-be patrons. A clear parallel can be seen with the course of events in Tibet, where the same process had begun much earlier and culminated in the 13th century with the establishment of centralized ecclesiastic government under the

aegis of the Sa-skye sect. The introduction of sectarian Buddhism, on the other hand, tended to break down traditional isolation even as it heightened the potential for conflict. The duties of a head Lama required continuous travel in the company of students, and usually armed retainers. And whereas the requirements of a settled agricultural economy tended to discourage travel and promote insularity, entry into the monkhood offered previously unavailable opportunities for mobility and increasing social sophistication.

It is not surprising, then, that the final impetus for the establishment of unified civil government in 17th century Bhutan emerged from sectarian disputes, or that the new government's organizational principles were basically ecclesiastic. But the internal pace of sectarian growth did not in itself determine the final outcome in Bhutan. The rise of Sa-skye government in Tibet ultimately resulted from the external support of a Mongol military presence. In Bhutan, as we shall see in the next chapter, the elevation of the 'Brug-pa mission into an autonomous gzhung was the ultimate outcome of sectarian warfare in Tibet.

FOOTNOTES

¹ For more detailed analysis of Tibetan socio-political developments from the 11th century, cf. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, pp. 70-77; Hugh Richardson and David Snellgrove, Cultural History of Tibet, pp. 112-115, 129-139; Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, Tibet - a Political History (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 54-60. The locus classicus on Rin-chen-bzang-po is still G. Tucci, Indo-Tibetica (Roma: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1933), vol. 2.

² Some recent writers allege that the concept of combining monasteries within defensive fortifications, what they call the "Dzong System," was first introduced to Bhutan by the Lha-nang-pa monks (Rahul, Modern Bhutan, p. 19; Nagendra Singh, Bhutan, p. 19; Nirmala Das, The Dragon Country, p. 60), but there is no definite textual support for this claim, which may or may not be true. Archaeological research will be needed to clarify the development and chronology of Bhutanese habitational patterns.

³ Turrell Wylie, "Mar-pā's Tower: Notes on Local Hegemons in Tibet," History of Religions 3, no. 1 (1963): p. 279 and lecture notes (Wylie, seminar on the History of Tibet, University of Washington, 1966).

⁴ I introduce this definition of gzhung guardedly and with the understanding that "regional" and "autonomous" must remain ambiguous for the moment. The elements involved in the emergence of a gzhung (often translated as "government") deserve much more thorough historical and theoretical study, but it is worth pointing out that powerful factors external to the normative growth and functioning of the system of gdan-sa described above were crucial to the establishment of Sa-skya government in 1247, unified Dge-lugs-pa rule in 1642, and the 'Brug-gzhung (Bhutan government) after 1616. In the first two cases, Mongol military

interference was of causal importance (Shakabpa, Ibid., pp. 61-72; Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century [Rome: ISMEO, 1970], pp. 84-162). The circumstances in the third instance are more complex, and will be dealt with in Ch. V.

An inadequate, strictly synchronic, analytical methodology which led Cassinelli and Ekvall (A Tibetan Principality, pp. 19, 24, 33, etc.) to attribute sovereign independence to the concept of gzhung has been correctly exposed and rejected by Melvyn Goldstein ("The Balance between Centralization and Decentralization in the Traditional Tibetan Political System," Central Asiatic Journal 15, pt. 3 [1971]: pp. 170-71). It is worth adding that Rwa-lung is occasionally referred to as a gzhung in some Tibetan sources, though its political authority was never as extensive even as that of Sa-skya, and was never recognized as a "national" government in any sense. Retention of the designation by certain sub-national Tibetan administrative units after the 17th century may represent little more than a traditional courtesy.

⁵ Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i mchod sdong, ff.33.b-34.a. On Tibetan social structure of recent centuries, cf. Melvyn Goldstein, "Serfdom and Mobility: an Examination of the Institution of "Human Lease" in traditional Tibetan Society," Journal of Asian Studies 30, pt. 3 (May, 1971): pp. 521-34; Luciano Petech, Aristocracy and Government in Tibet - 1728-1959 (Rome: ISMEO, 1973), esp. pp. 15-21.

⁶ Ngag-dbang-shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan, Rje btsun dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa skal bzang dad pa'i 'dod 'jo dpag bsam yongs 'du'i 'khri shing, f.5.a (this is the biography of Rje Mkhan-po XVI Rje-btsun Shes-rab-seng-ge [1724- ca. 1794]; I have followed a reproduction of a xylograph in the Denwood collection).

7 For details and an early discussion of the problems in the traditional accounts of this adventure, cf. Major H.G. Raverty (trans.), Tabakat-i-Nasiri (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1970² [1881], vol. 1, pp. 560-573. I am fairly persuaded by the arguments of N. Bhattasali that the alleged course of Muhammad's expedition would have taken him through the vicinity of modern Dewangiri into Bhutan, rather than into Tibet or Sikkim ("Muhammad Bakhtyar's Expedition to Tibet," Indian Historical Quarterly 9, pt. 2 [1933]: pp. 48-62). For one thing, earlier studies of this problem have rather naively assumed that "Tibbat" of the Tabakat-i-Nasiri corresponds geographically and directionally to the modern usage of "Tibet". But that is hardly certain, since the term "Tibbat" was of Central Asiatic origin and never used in India, or even in Tibet for that matter, and it is fairly obvious from the Persian source that Muhammad Bakhtiyār had scarcely any inkling of how to reach "Tibbat" from Bengal. And since neither Sikkim nor Bhutan had a separate political existence during the period, it is perfectly possible that the expedition might have taken any northerly route that was convenient.

But still there are problems. Minhājuddīn Sirāj has exaggerated excessively at several points, such as the number and character of Muhammad's supposedly Tibetan foes. These, he alleges, included 50,000 horsemen, versus the Indian army of 10,000 cavalry. It is completely impossible that such a large army of Tibetans (let alone Bhutanese) could ever have been assembled at that time, as there was no central government and no standing army. Moreover, such a massive invasion of the Himalayas would not have gone unnoticed by the monastic chroniclers, but not a sure word of it is to be found in any source, and we can only conclude that the true facts of this episode must be far less impressive and momentous than Minhājuddīn Sirāj would have us believe. (Unfortunately,

certain modern scholars, who should know better, have not treated the Persian sources for this invasion with all the caution which is clearly warranted; Cf. Rahul, Modern Bhutan, pp. 18-19, who has been misled by the term "Tibbat", and N.N. Acharyya, History of Medieval Assam [Gauhati: Dutta Baruah & Co., 1966], pp. 136-137, who frequently mistakes obvious hyperbole for legitimate reportage).

⁸ The text is structurally an introduction to a praiseful description of the monastery of Thar-pa-gling, which he founded at Bum-thang before composing the verses. Cf. below, p. 143.

⁹ Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal, ff.24.a. It is interesting to compare this passage with a description of the practice of agriculture in eastern Bhutan from the gter-ma of Padma-gling-pa (Sbas yul 'bras mo gshong dang mkhan pa lung gi gnas yig, ff.47.a-b [Rediscovered Teachings..., vol. 17]).

¹⁰ Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal, ff.23.b, 24.b.

¹¹ Ibid., f.24.b. For photographs and descriptions of modern Bhutanese homes with this kind of architecture, cf. Pradyumna P. Karan, Bhutan - A Physical and Cultural Geography (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 52-53; Philip Denwood, "Bhutanese Architecture", Asian Affairs new series 2, pt. 1 (Feb. 1971), pp. 25-28. The obvious continuity of this constructional style over more than six hundred years is worth remarking, and is a favourable comment on Klong-chen-pa's veracity.

¹² Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal, ff.24.b, 25.b.

¹³ Ibid., f.24.a.

¹⁴ Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho (1610-1684), Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas

pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.2.b-4.b. The passage has been copied verbatim in Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.7.a-b. Mention of the political "analogy of the fishes" demonstrates the debt which Tibetan academics owed (indirectly via canonical translations) to Indian scholastic traditions, and must not here be taken as an instance of direct cultural borrowing. (On mātsyanyāya, cf. J.W. Spellman, Political Theory of Ancient India [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964], pp. 4-8).

¹⁵ For instances during the career of 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1310?-1391?), cf. Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, ff.121.a-b, 187.b-188.b. The practice was prohibited, or at least officially condemned, in the law code for Bhutan promulgated by Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in the 17th century (the relevant passages are cited in Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.112.a-113.a), but a further attempt at suppression is attributed to G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje (1721-1769), one of the rebirths of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs (Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism [Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973], vol. 4, pp. 365-367).

¹⁶ Bsam-rgyal Kha-che, 'Jam dbyangs kun dga' seng ge'i rnam par thar pa, ff.34.a-b (Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, vol. 2, pt. Wa). Cf. also Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, ff.191.a-b, etc.

¹⁷ There are apparently divergent lists of the "four kha." The earliest which I have been able to locate, which is not very early, is the one given here from 'Jigs-med-gling-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje Mkhyen-brtse-'od-zer (1730-1799/1800), Lho phyogs rgya gar gyi gtam brtag pa brgyad kyi me long, f.32.a (contained in his Gtam gyi tshogs theg pa'i rgya mtsho, from vol. 4 of his gsung 'bum [Sonam T. Kazi, ed., The Collected Works of

Kun-mkhyen 'Jigs-med-gling-pa, Gangtok, 1971]). It is, moreover, supported by a recent Bhutanese work of Thinley Norbu (Bdud 'dul g.yul las rnam par rgyal ba'i mchod rten chen mo'i dkar chag mdor bsdus pa'i tshul gyis bkod pa nor bu baidūrya'i do shal [English title: Account of the Great Chaitya of Thimbu], Thimbu, 1974, pp. 71-72). Michael Aris, however, has recently written that texts available to him more commonly supply Shar Kha-gling-kha and Lho Gha-ti-kha for the eastern and southern directions ("The Admonition of the Thunderbolt Cannon-ball' and its place in the Bhutanese New Year Festival", BSOAS 39, pt. 3 [1976], p. 627, fn.). Gha-ti-kha (Cooch Bihar) I am inclined to regard as a more recent interpolation, however, since Bhutanese domination of that part of northern Bengal was largely a post-16th century phenomenon. Similarly, Kha-gling-kha is rather too far to the east to have been one of the earliest trade marts, in my opinion, and may have been suggested by more modern writers with an eye to political boundaries. Lho-kha-bzhi, however, did not originally designate a political unit, even though the term is currently used as a poetic name for Bhutan in the local literature.

¹⁸ Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud byon tshul mdor bsdus (1431), f.4.a-b; cf. also the parallel version in Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, Thams cad mkhyen pa drug pa blo bzang rin chen tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i thun mong phyi'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.56.a-57.b where Āryadeva's donation is related in somewhat greater detail.

¹⁹ Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, vol. 2, f.33.a.

²⁰ Shākya'i-dge-bsnyen Shri-bhu-ti-bhadra, Rgya bod kyi yig tshang mkhas pa dga' byed chen mo (1434), ff.227.a-b (the corresponding pages in the Toyo Bunko MS [#520-3066] are ff.179.a-193.b). The date of this slaughter appears to have been 1352 (G. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, vol. 2, p. 663).

21 Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud byon tshul mdor bsdus, f.1.b. For the genealogy of the Gnyos clan, cf. below, Appendix B.

22 Gnyos Lo-tsa-ba's date of birth can be known from the Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud byon tshul mdor bsdus (f.2.b), which states that he was 56 years old when Mar-pa was 17. Folio 4.a suggests that the gift of Lho-kha-bzhi occurred a few years after their return from India ca. 1035.

23 Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa is known by a number of aliases, including Gzi-brjid-dpal, Rdo-rje-gzi-brjid, and Sangs-rgyas-ras-chen. Lha-nang, or Byang Lha-thel Rin-chen-gling, was founded in 1219 (Kha rag gnyos khyi rgyud byon tshul mdor bsdus, f.14.a).

24 Ibid., ff.13.a-14.a.

25 Ibid., f.14.b. Lengthy biographies are attributed to Dge-ba'i-bshes-gnyen Gnyags Ye-shes-rdo-rje and one Ston 'Jam-ma. A third is credited to "'bar ba rgyal mtshan che chung gnyis", which can only mean Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang and his rebirth Nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1475-1530). No such work is to be found in the collected works of Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang, however, and it is difficult to understand why 'Ba'-ra-ba monks would have composed a life of him in any case.

26 Lokesh Chandra (ed.), Vaidūrya ser po (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1960), pt. 2, pp. 396-400. The form Smyos ("Crazy") is preferred in this text, which explains the name by a folk etymology (pp. 397-98), but Gnyos is the usual spelling. In his biography of Dalai Lama VI, Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho cites certain old records of the Chos-rje Sum-'phrang-pa hermitage, which in turn cite a gter-ma version of the Lha-nang-pa lineage. The lineage, however, is not particularly trustworthy, as the Sde-srid himself acknowledges (Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, Thams cad mkhyen pa drug pa blo bzang rin chen tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i thun mong phyi'i rnam par thar..., ff.62.a-b).

²⁷ The Rgya bod yig tshang (f.325.a-b) says that Rin-chen-sgang was built by Rgyal-ba Lha-nang-pa's nephew Lha Rin-chen-rgyal-po, but the account of Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud byon tshul mdor bsdus (ff.16.b) is probably to be preferred, according to which the construction was undertaken by 'Dam-pa-ri-pa, Lha Rin-chen-rgyal-po's disciple. 'Dam-pa-ri-pa also built the Gye-re hermitage at Stod-lung during the years 1243-46 (Ibid.).

²⁸ Ibid., ff.22.a, 23.a, 24.a.

²⁹ The original cause of this disharmony is never clearly stated. 'Brug monastery was once sacked by Lha-pa forces during the abbatial tenure of Spos-skya-pa Sengge-rin-chen (1242-1297), perhaps in 1262/63, as suggested in the biography of Rdo-rje-gling-pa Sengge-shes-rab (1238-1280) (Grags-pa-seng-ge, Rdo rje gling pa sengge shes rab kyi rnam thar, f.9.b [Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, pt. Tsa]; on the sacking of 'Brug, cf. Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Gdan sa chen po ra lung gi khyad par 'phags pa cung zad brjod pa ngo mtshar gyi gter, ff.6.b-7.b [Collected Works (Gsun-'ibum) of Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973), vol. 4, pt. 5]).

³⁰ Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa thugs rje'i chu rgyun (1623), ff.14.b, 24.b-26.b.

³¹ Ibid., f.24.a-b. The taxes (per village?), which may be exaggerated here, are said to have amounted to an annual levy of 100 loads each of rice, sugar, cotton cloth, silk, and iron, as well as a triannual transport obligation ('u-lag).

³² Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.a.

³³ Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar (1574), ff.114.a-115.b [Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, vol. 3, pt. 8 (Nya)].

34 Ibid.

35 Cf. below, Ch. VI, fn. 76.

36 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Gdan sa chen po ra lung gi khyad par 'phags pa cung zad brjod pa..., ff.12.b-13.a; on the early history of the Rgya family, cf. also R.A. Stein, Vie et chants de 'Brug-pa Kun-legs le yogin, pp. 10-11.

37 Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang-chos kyi-nyi-ma (1737-1802), Grub mtha' thams cad kyi khungs dang 'dod tshul ston pa legs bshad shel gyi me long (1801), Ch. 4, f.12.b (Ngawang Gelek Demo [ed.], Collected Works of Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-nyi-ma, New Delhi, 1969, vol. 2); Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, f.290.b.

38 In a few sources the original structure at Rwa-lung is also credited to Gtsang-pa Rgyas-ras, but this is incorrect. These four monasteries are collectively referred to as the gdan sa ya bzhi (but in some places it appears that Mdo-mkhar monastery has replaced Klong-gdol in the list). On the acquisition of Stag-lung Chos-rdzong (near Yar'brog-g.yu-mtsho) ca. 1205, cf. Shākya-rin-chen Dri-med-legs-pa'i-blo-gros, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi 'phreng ba lta bu las dbon ras dar ma seng ge'i skabs, f.9.b.

39 The best and most complete study of 'Brug-pa sectarian filiation is contained in the anonymously edited Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng: A Golden Rosary of Lives of Eminent Gurus, Leh (Ladakh), 1970 (Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod, vol. 3), Introduction, pp. 6-8.

One Bhutanese family lineage of some importance derived from the Mahāsiddha Spyil-dkar-ba, a disciple of Rgod-tshang-pa originally affiliated with the 'Bri-gung-pa sub-sect. By the 16th century or earlier this lineage was established at Gzar-chen-kha in the Spa-gro district. Rje Mkhan-po IV Dam-chos-pad-dkar(1636-1708) was born into this line (cf.

Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa thugs rje chen po'i dri bsung, ff.3.a-4.a. for its early history). As a branch monastery of the Stod 'Brug, however, Gzar-chen-kha was not notably active in missionary work, and by the 17th century was little more than a family estate. It underwent several restorations during the 17th and 18th centuries.

⁴⁰ The problems associated with establishing the dates of 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang are briefly set out in the anonymous Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng: A Golden Rosary..., introduction, p. 10.

⁴¹ Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, ff.1.b-2.b.

⁴² The fourteen volume Collected Works has been recently reprinted: Ngawang Gyaltsen & Ngawang Lungtok, A Tibetan Encyclopedia of Buddhist Scholasticism, Dehradun, 1970. An early index to his writings is contained in the biography of him by Che-mchog-rdo-rje, Chos rje rin po che 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar byin brlabs char bebs, ff.68.a-71.b (Ngawang Gyaltsen & Ngawang Lungtok, Bka' brgyud gser 'phreng chen mo, Dehradun, 1970, vol. 2).

⁴³ Ibid., f.81.a-b.

⁴⁴ Ibid., ff.82.b-85.a, 92.b-95.a, 103.a-104.b.

⁴⁵ Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga'-dpal-ldan, Chos rgyal 'bar (sic.) ra ba'i rnam par thar pa, ff.233.b-234.a, 239.a-240.b (reprinted in Anon., Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng: A Golden Rosary...).

⁴⁶ George N. Roerich, trans., The Blue Annals (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1953), vol. 2, p. 692.

⁴⁷ The Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa was completed by the 'Ba'-ra sprul-sku Nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang (1475-1530) ca. 1500 in Bhutan, where it was

first issued at 'Brang-rgyas-kha (Nam-mkha'-rdo-rje [1486-1553], Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa sprul sku nam mkha' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba, f.29.b [Ngawang Gyaltzen & Ngawang Lungtok, Bka' brgyud gser phreng chen mo, vol. 2]. A later blockprint from this text was prepared at Lan-dhe (Lhan-sde) in the Mang-yul district of western Tibet by Nam-mkha'-rdo-rje in 1540 (Chos-rgyal-lhun-grub, Shākya'i dge slong rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po nam mkha' rdo rje'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar gsal ba'i me long, f.48.a [contained in Ngawang Gyaltzen & Ngawang Lungtok, op.cit.]). Both prints are extant; a copy of the Bhutanese version is in the Tibet House Library, New Delhi.

48 The spelling Sang-dkar-rdo-rje is also found in places.

49 The various biographies contain only the most rudimentary dating. However, his return to Tibet from this trip occurred not long before 1368, according to an indication by Che-mchog-rdo-rje (op.cit., f.98.a), and was of three year's duration (Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba...rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, f.125.a).

50 Ibid., ff.119.a-120.a; Che-mchog-rdo-rje, op. cit., ff.93.b-94.a, where the spelling Phyi-bar-kha is found.

51 Rje btsun 'ba' ra ba...rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa, f.125.a.

52 Ibid., ff.168.b-171.a.

53 Ibid., f.177.a-b.

54 Ibid., f.192.b, where two contradictory death dates are given; the chronology of Che-mchog-rdo-rje (op.cit., ff.103.a-104.b) is also confused.

55 Anon., Thugs sras nam mkha' seng ge'i rnam par thar pa bsdus pa, f.3.a (Bka' brgyud gser 'phreng chen mo, vol. 2).

56 Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga'-dpal-ldan (1409-1475?), Rje btsun klong chen

ras pa rin chen tshul khirms kyi rnam par thar pa yon tan gyi 'phreng ba,
f.247.b (Golden Rosary of Lives of Eminent Masters, pt. 17 [Ma]).

57 Anon., Thugs sras nam mkha' seng ge'i rnam par thar pa bsdus pa,
ff.6.a-b.

58 Nam-mkha'-rdo-rje, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa sprul sku nam mkha'
rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung nor
bu'i phreng ba, ff.8.a, 21.a.

59 Ibid., ff.8.b-11.b, 20.b-21.a.

60 Cf. above, fn. 47.

61 Khungs-btsun Gu-ge'i-bla-ma Nam-mkha'-dpal-'byor & Nam-mkha'-
rdo-rje, eds., Shākya'i dge slong nam mkha' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i
mgur bum, ff.3.a-4.b, 14.b-15.b, 20.b, 23.b, 32.b, 33.a (reprinted by
Urgyan Dorje, Rare Dkar-brgyud-pa Texts from Himachal Pradesh, New Delhi,
1976, pt. 5); the 'Obs-mtsho-ba, however, were primarily patrons of the
Bar 'Brug-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa.

62 Rin-chen-bstan-pa'i-gsal-byed (1658-1696), Dpal ldan bla ma dam
pa karma gsal byed kyi rnam thar dad pa'i gsal 'debs, ff.5.b-7.a (Bka'
brgyud gser phreng chen mo, vol. 3).

63 Rin-chen-bstan-pa'i-gsal-byed, Grub thob chen po dkon mchog rgyal
mtshan gyis (sic.) rnam thar mdor bsdus ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i chu brgyun
(sic.), ff.11.a-13.b (Bka' brgyud gser phreng chen mo, vol. 3).

64 Shī-la (= Dge-sbyong Tshul-khirms?), Chos rje lo ras pa'i rnam
thar, ff.3.b, 16.b (Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, vol. 2, pt. Na);
Rgod-tshang-ras-pa Sna-tshogs-rang-grol (1494-1570), Chos rje lo ras pa'i
rnam par thar pa bdud rtsi'i phreng ba, ff.2.b-5.a, 42.a-43.a (in Khams-
sprul Don-brgyud-nyi-ma, Bka'-brgyud-pa Hagiographies, Palampur [Himachal
Pradesh], Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1972, vol. 2, pt. 2).

65 Rgod-tshang-ras-pa, Chos rje lo ras pa'i rnam par thar pa bdud
rtsi'i phreng ba, ff.67.b-68.a; Shī-la, Chos rje lo ras pa'i rnam thar,
ff.24.b, 26.b.

- 66 Shi-la, loc. cit.; George N. Roerich, Blue Annals, pp. 675-76.
 67 Shi-la, op. cit., f.26.b; Rgod-tshang-ras-pa, op. cit., f.71.a-b.

68 An incarnation lineage of Lo-ras-pa seems to have existed, although authoritative information has yet to become available. One of Pho-lha-nas' elder brothers, during the late 17th or early 18th century, was recognized as the rebirth of one Sras-thog Lama, a rebirth of Lo-ras-pa (Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam, f.29.a-b).

69 Dgon-pa-yul is generally abbreviated Dgon-yul in the literature, and adjoins the district known as Mgar-sa (or, Sgar-sa). Mgar-sa is some 20 miles northwest of Punakha, along the Mo-chu.

70 Lho'i chos 'byung (f.72.b) briefly notes the origins of this family, but the principal source is the biography of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (1647-1732) (Rje Mkhan-po IX Shākya-rin-chen, Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i rol mo, ff.13.a-19.b; I am grateful to Philip Denwood for supplying me with a copy of this text).

71 The form Lde-ma is derived by folk etymology from Ldan-ma, i.e. of the Ldan clan, whose early homeland was along the 'Bri-chu river of eastern Tibet/western China (R.A. Stein, Les tribus anciennes des marches Sino-Tibétaines, pp. 47, 72-75); the role of escort to the Jo-bo image, of course, is more frequently ascribed to Lha-dga' and Klu-dga', ancestors of the Rgya clan.

72 In the 'Obs-mtsho family records of Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (f.14.a) his literary gifts are described as a special yogic accomplishment, but very little of substance is known about Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs (the usual spelling) from either Bhutanese or Tibetan traditions. In the Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston (Ja, f.125.a) he is mentioned as one of the lo tsa

ba rgan gsum at Bsam-yas under the tutelage of Padmasambhava, but in the earlier Padma thang yig (f.177.a, 188.b) he appears as only a minor translator. He is probably better known in Tibet as an ancestor of the princes of Rgyal-rtse (Rgya bod yig tshang, f.223.a), but in Bhutanese legends Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs is a man of somewhat greater importance. We have already noted that the introduction of writing to Bhutan is credited to him (cf. above, Ch. 2), and that he "compiled" the short biography of Sindha-raja, an apocryphal text (gter-ma) rediscovered by one of his own rebirths.

73 Skü bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.14.b; Blue Annals, pp. 664-65.

74 The name 'Obs-mtsho derives from his contemplations on this occasion, before a poisonous lake (dug mtsho) or poisonous pit (dug 'obs) (Skü bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.15.a-b).

75 This would appear to have been the earliest Bar 'Brug-pa mission to Bhutan, some fifteen years before the arrival of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, whom the traditions usually credit with this introduction.

76 For the 'Obs-mtsho genealogy, cf. below, Appendix B.

77 Shākya-rin-chen, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi 'phreng ba lta bu las dbon ras dar ma seng ge'i skabs, f.5.b; Dge-slong Rin-chen-seng-ge, 'Brug ra lung gi chos rje sangs rgyas dbon ras (dar ma seng ge) kyi rnam thar, f.5.a.

78 Bsam-rgyal Kha-che, 'Jam dbyangs kun dga' seng ge'i rnam par thar pa, f.28.a.

79 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar, ff.34.b-35.a. One wonders if the 'Obs-mtsho-ba Lama Grags-pa mentioned on this occasion might not be Rje-btsun

Grags-pa-rin-po-che, the great-grandfather of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo (1591-1656).

⁸⁰ Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.19.a. This sister (lcam) of Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor does not appear to be mentioned elsewhere in the biographical literature, and her name is unknown.

⁸¹ Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.92.a-93.a. The term Deb Rāja, used in British Indian documents for this office, and by Bhutanese when writing in English, is not, contrary to Singh (Bhutan, p. 24), derived from Sanskrit deva or devatā. "Deb", in fact, is but a contracted pronunciation of Tibetan Sde-pa (ruler, administrator), a widely occurring contraction in Bhutanese spoken dialects whereby the vowel of a second unstressed syllable is often dropped.

⁸² On these developments, cf. below Ch. 6-8. Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, however, gave rise to an incarnation lineage known as the Byams-mgon Rin-po-che, from which several Rje Mkhan-po of the 18th and 19th centuries were selected. A 'khrungs-rabs for this lineage has yet to become available. The Byams-mgon Rin-po-che, I believe, are still very influential in 20th century affairs of the church.

⁸³ In the biography by Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin (f.2.b), an Earth-Dragon year is given for his birth. As this could only correspond to 1208, the date is too late since it conflicts with the universally held tradition that Pha-jo was a young man when his intended guru Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras died in 1211. Perhaps conscious of this inconsistency, the Lho'i chos 'byung (ff.10.b-11a) has omitted any dates and merely notes his death at the age of 68. Recently, Nirmala Das (Dragon Country, pp. 8-9) has suggested the date 1251 for his death, based apparently on unnamed Bhutanese oral sources. This would put his birth in 1184 (Wood-Dragon),

which accords reasonably enough with parallel information, and I have therefore tentatively accepted 1184-1251 for heuristic purposes.

Variant forms of his name in the literature include 'Gro-mgon-zhig-po and 'Gro-sgom-zhig-po.

84 The name Farchoo Doopgein Shepton actually appears to be a corruption of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom (-zhig-po) and Zhabs-drung (Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal), and reflects the total confusion between these two men in the oral history recorded by Eden during his mission to Bhutan of 1863-64 (Political Missions to Bhutan, pp. 108-110). Strictly speaking, then, no such person as Farchoo Doopgein Shepton ever existed, but so little original research has been published on these subjects that, as late as 1972, in a work commemorating Bhutan's entry into the United Nations, Nagendra Singh has devoted a section to his life (Bhutan, pp. 25-27).

85 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa thugs rje'i chu rgyun, ff.1.b-3.b.

86 The prophecy is contained in a number of Bhutanese historical sources (e.g. Lho'i chos 'byung, f.8.b), but, as is so common in such cases, cannot be traced in the collected works of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras himself.

87 In misreading White's account of these events (Sikkim & Bhutan, p. 100), Nirmala Das has mistakenly equated Sangs-rgyas Dbon (Sangyeon) with Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po (Fajo-Duk-Gom-Shigpa) (Dragon Country, p. 9). I have given here a rather lengthy version of his life since there have been no other published accounts based on original materials.

88 The date is based on a close approximation from the number of elapsed years mentioned in the biography, and assumes a birth date of 1184.

89 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., ff.15.b-16.a, 21.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.9.a-b. On Rta-mgo and Lcags-ri, cf. D.I. Lauf, "Vorläufiger Bericht...II," Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich (1973), pp. 47-52.

- 90 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., ff.23.b-24.b.
- 91 Ibid., ff.23.b, 25.a-26.a.
- 92 Ibid., f.29.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.10.b. Bha-nan-la is not readily identifiable in Assamese sources.
- 93 The sons' offices are described as bla ma dpon (Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., f.25.b).
- 94 Ibid., ff.25.b, 30.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.10.a-b; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 11.
- 95 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., ff.32.b, 34.b.
- 96 Dge-slong Rin-chen-seng-ge, 'Brug ra lung gi chos rje sangs rgyas dbon ras kyi rnam thar (in 26 folios; Rwa lung Dkar-brgyud Gser-'phren).
Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, ff.302.a-b.
- 97 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, ff.302.a-b.
- 98 Shākya-rin-chen, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi 'phreng ba lta bu las dbon ras dar ma seng ge'i skabs, f.22.b.
- 99 There is still some doubt concerning the precise dates of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs. Gene Smith has recently indicated 1455-1529, but without naming his source (Lokesh Chandra, ed., The Life of the Saint of Gtsaṅ, New Delhi, I.A.I.C., 1969, Introduction, p. 3). I feel certain that he based himself on two recent Tibetan works published in India, by T.G. Dhongthog and Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che, for it was with reference to these that he supplied Stein with the dates 1455-1529, in a written communication (Stein, Vie et chants, p. 17). But this was inaccurate, for neither work gives a death date. Dhongthog simply writes that he was born in the Wood-Pig year of 1455 (Important Events in Tibetan History, Delhi: Ala Press, 1968, pp. 27-28), while Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che (Rnying ma'i chos 'byung, p. 798) says that 'Brug-pa Kun-legs was aged 53 at the beginning of the 9th rab-byung, and that he was born in a Wood-Pig year. This also corresponds to 1455.

No source available to me, however, indicates a date of death, except Dge-bshes Brag-phug's recent study (f.79.b) which doubtfully notes a tradition according to which he died at the age of 115 in the Iron-Horse year of 1570. The date Earth-Ox (1529?), on the other hand, is also that of a gsol-'debs to 'Brug-pa Kun-legs by one Rdo-rje, at the end of vol. 1 (Ka) of the autobiography (f.167.a). If, however, this Rdo-rje is to be understood as the rebirth of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs who edited the main collection, as Stein suggests (Ibid., p. 26), then some other Earth-Ox year must be meant, perhaps 1589. There is also the possibility of contradiction if the date 1529 is accepted for his death, for in volume 2 (Kha) of the Autobiography (ff.10.b-13.b), an event in his life is recorded as taking place at the 'Bras-spungs Dga'-ldan-pho-brang, the construction of which, however, most authorities date to 1530 or later. For these reasons, I prefer to regard 1529, which Jamyang Namgyal describes as the traditional date of his death (review of Stein, Vie et chants, in Kailash 1, no. 1 [1973]: p. 95), as still tentative.

¹⁰⁰ For references to literature on this phenomenon, cf. above, Ch. 2.

¹⁰¹ He is principally known for his authorship of the life and collected songs of Mi-la-ras-pa, although this fact was for long unknown, owing to his use of an alias in the colophon (Ariane Macdonald attributes the recognition of his true identity to simultaneous discoveries by H. Guenther, Garma Chang, and R.A. Stein [*Histoire et philologie tibétaines*", Annuaire 1969/70, École pratique des hautes études IV^e section, sciences historiques et philologiques (Paris, 1970), p. 667]). For a partial bibliography of the hagiographical literature produced under his inspiration, cf. Lokesh Chandra, ed., Life of the Saint of Gtsaṅ, Appendix II, pp. 23-31.

102 Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, vol. 2 (Kha), ff.1.b-2.a.

103 I use the term "autobiography" to designate the four-volume collection of his life and songs printed at Dre'u-lhas (near Lhun-rtse in southeastern Tibet), since it is largely narrated in the first person. But this may also represent nothing more than a literary device introduced by the editor, Mon-ban Smyon-pa (for a discussion, cf. R.A. Stein, Vie et chants, pp. 24-25).

104 The reader should refer to Stein's translation of vol. 1 of the Autobiography for his career in Tibet, with which we are only indirectly concerned here. Professor Stein has also provided an introduction to his family background and the ancestry of the Rgya clan, based mostly on secondary Tibetan sources (Vie et chants, pp. 8-12). Since the publication of this study, however, the gser-'phreng for the Bar 'Brug sect and other primary sources have become available, revealing a major division in the sources concerning the clan's early filiation. The traditions followed by Stein and incorporated into his genealogical chart of the family (Ibid., facing p. 10), I now believe to be partly in error. For a discussion of the textual discrepancies, and a corrected genealogy, cf. below, Appendix B.

105 Early heads of the sect were commonly designated Rin-po-che gdan-sa-ba, Gdan-sa-ba, or merely Gdan-sa in the literature. The title Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen became current in the 15th century when the hereditary principle of succession was challenged by supporters of incarnate succession. This title is still used by the Tibetan branch (Byang 'Brug) of the Bar 'Brug (the abbatial lineage is given by E. Gene Smith, Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, Foreward, pp. 3-4).

On the "uncle-nephew" (khu-dbon) principle of succession, cf. Snellgrove & Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, p. 136; R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, pp. 106-107.

106 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, f.303.b. For the numbering of the early hierarchs, I have followed the Dpal rgyal dbang 'brug pa'i gdan rabs mdor bsdus ngo mtshar gser gyi lde mig of Ven. Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-chos-grags (English cover title: History of the Drukpa Kargyudpa Tradition, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1974). But as this represents the Northern (Tibetan) 'Brug-pa tradition, it is reliable only down to the 15th century, when, with the introduction of the principle of reincarnate succession, it begins to conflict with an alternate gdan-rabs adhered to by the Rgya family and by the Southern 'Brug-pa in Bhutanese sources. After the 15th century, meetings between the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnates and the Rgya family heads (Gdung-brgyud Rin-po-che) seem to have been characterized by complicated protocol and seating arrangements, no doubt to placate injured feelings and avoid open fighting.

107 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, f.304.a. This patronage obviously would have preceeded Toγon Temür's accession to the throne as Shun-ti in 1333. The main Tibetan spiritual preceptor of this emperor is commonly believed to have been Zhwa-nag IV Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1340-1383) (Hugh Richardson, "The Karma-pa Sect - a historical note, pt. 1," JRAS 1958 [pt. 3/4]: pp. 146-47).

108 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, f.304.a.

109 Ibid., f.304.b.

110 The course of events leading precisely to this disaster in the family fortunes has been briefly described by Gene Smith (Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, Introduction, pp. 2-4).

111 A-wa-dhū-ti-pa Rin-chen-rnam-rgyal, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i mdzad pa rmad du byung ba ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thigs pa (1479), f.9.a.

112 Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, Ka, ff.3.b-4.a.

113 The rare biography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' principal teacher Lha-btsun Kun-dga'-chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho (1432-1505), by Grub-dbang Rin-po-che

G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje (1721-1769), has recently become available in India. Lha-btsun must have been the main inspirational source for 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' "mad" tendencies, but the picture which emerges from this text of Lha-btsun's own yogic madness illustrates a more pathological extreme of the movement (G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje, Rje 'brug smyon kun dga' legs pa'i rtsa ba'i bla ma - grub pa'i dbang phyug lha btsun kun dga' chos kyi rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa mdo tsam brjod pa rmad byung yon tan rgya mtsho'i 'jigs zab skal bzang dga' ba bskyed pa'i 'dod 'jo (1768), ff.19.a-b, 25.b, 40.b, 45.b, etc. [reprinted in Chopal Lama, Lives of Lha-btsun Kun-dga'-chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho and Rdo-rje-gsañ-ba-rtsal, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1974]).

114 The Rwa-lung Dbon Rin-po-che once offered 'Brug-pa Kun-legs the headship of the Bhutanese branch monastery of Bde-chen-phug, but the post was declined (Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, Ka, ff.74.a-b; Stein has erroneously located this monastery in Tibet [Vie et chants, p. 201, fn.]).

115 Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, Kha, ff.27.a-28.b. We have already seen, however, that both 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang and Lo-ras-pa were in eastern Bhutan before this time. Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor's mission had also spread there during 1466, well before this date.

116 Brag-phug Dge-bshes Dge-'dun-rin-chen, 'Gro ba'i mgon po chos rje kun dga' legs pa'i rnam thar, ff.64.a-b. The first five chapters of this text are devoted to 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' Tibetan adventure, based mostly on the four volume Autobiography from Dre'u-lhas. Chapters six and seven, based on his own researches and the life by Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, concern Bhutan. Apparently mindful of the contradiction between Bhutanese traditions and the Dre'u-lhas collection, the author has relegated the story of Srib-s-lha-khang to one of the Tibet chapters (ff.45.a-47.a).

117 Ibid., ff.48.b-54.b; the woman occasionally bears the name of Dpal-bzang-bu-khrid. For parallel versions of the story, cf. Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.14.b-22.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.54.b-55.a.

118 Brag-phug Dge-bshes, op. cit., ff.58.a-59.a; Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., ff.25.a. Michael Peissel visited this hermitage (Lords and Lamas of Bhutan, p. 85) and obtained photographs, two of which have been published by Stein (Vie et chants, facing pp. 14-15).

119 E.g., Brag-phug Dge-bshes, op. cit., ff.70.a-72.a.

120 Autobiography of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, Ka, ff.166.a-b; Brag-phug Dge-bshes, op.cit., ff.79.b; Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, op.cit., f.51.a. This Stod-lung, in Tibet, must be distinguished from the Stod-pa-lung in Bhutan where Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin was born.

The question of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' non-Bhutanese descendants raises certain difficulties. Brief references to a family line from Zhing-skyong 'Brug-grags have been noted but cannot yet be substantiated. Rig-'dzin Padma-'phrin-las (1641-1718), one of the hierarchs of Rdo-rje-brag assassinated by the Dzungars, is said to have been a descendant of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs through his mother, but this tradition also is vague (Rdo-rje-brag Rig-'dzin Padma-'phrin-las, 'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar dad pa'i phreng ba, f.205.a [Reprinted by S.W. Tashigangpa, Leh, 1972]. Other such claims will no doubt emerge.

121 The 'Brug-pa Kun-legs incarnations (Grub-dbang Rin-po-che) appear in the hagiographical literature from time to time, but materials have not yet become available for reconstructing names and dates for the entire series (a partial listing in Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 4, pp. 365-67). They seem to have been particularly revered by women (including nuns), no doubt as fertility

figures (Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po's mother is said to have conceived him as a result of a personal encounter with the saint; similar examples could be cited). Shākya-rin-chen, who accompanied one of the Grub-dbang-Rin-po-che's from Bhutan to Tibet in 1740, notes the considerable female adulation he received along the way (Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i gtam dam pa'i chos kyi gandi'i sgra dbyangs snyan pa'i yan lag rgya mtsho, Nya, ff.4.a, 6.a-b. I am told that special reverence by women is also a feature of his cult in Bhutan, where there is a popular tradition which holds that during his visits he managed to impregnate all the women of the country. In Bhutan, also, nude 'Brug-pa Kun-legs dances are said to be performed at certain seasons of the year (oral information from Gabrielle Yablonsky).

122 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.55.a; Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ltan-rgya-mtsho, Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs kyi yan lag rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dpal rdo rje gdan pa'i rnam par thar pa, f.6.b; cf. also the biography of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (1700-1767) by Rje Mkhan-po XIII Yon-tan-mtha'-yas (Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa sgyu ma chen po'i yar stabs, ff.13.b-14.a).

123 Gtsang Mkhan-chen, op.cit., ff.7.b-8.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.55.a; Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub, op.cit., f.10.b.

124 Gtsang Mkhan-chen, op.cit., ff.12.a-13.b; Lho'i chos 'byung (f.55.a) and the biography of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (f.14.a) place these events in his 19th year.

125 Gtsang Mkhan-chen, op.cit., f.16.b.

126 Gtsang Mkhan-chen, op.cit., f.21.a; Gtsang Mkhan-chen, Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.13.b-14.a. It was at Rta-mgo

that Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal first performed sorcery to avert the invading Tibetan armies (Ibid., ff.22.a-31.a).

¹²⁷ For these dates and details, cf. Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam thar, ff.12.b-15.b, 138.b. On the career of Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan, cf. also Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.55.a-57.b. A recognized rebirth of Pha-jo Rta-mgrin-rgyal-mtshan was discovered in 'Brugs-grags-rgya-mtsho (1665-1701), a fifth generation descendant of Padma-gling-pa. After pursuing a teaching career in eastern Bhutan, however, he was assassinated at Sgang-steng Gsang-sngags-chos-gling, probably for political reasons (cf. below, Ch. 8). He is the reputed author of an as yet unavailable biography of Rje-btsun Gsang-sngags-rgya-mtsho (Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.60.a-b; Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.14.a-15.a).

¹²⁸ For the career of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, cf. below, Ch. 7. The early incarnations of Lha-lcam Kun-legs were apparently all female, but males became predominant at a subsequent period (for brief notes on Lha-lcam Kun-legs, cf. Lho'i chos 'byung, f.58.a, and Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub, op.cit., f.109.a).

¹²⁹ From the 18th century, when the male line of both branches of the Rgya family died out, there were two separate lineages of incarnate Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che contending for the office of Rgyal-tshab (successor to Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal), known collectively in the literature as the Mchog-gnyis-rin-po-che. In addition to the line deriving from Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, a second derived from 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, son of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Struggles for political supremacy between these two lines and their supporters, and between the two recognized lineages of rebirths from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself, account in great measure for the political unrest which prevailed during the 18th century, and will be examined in detail in Ch. 8 and 9 below.

130 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, f.302.b; Nyi-ma-seng-ge (1251-1287), Chos rje gzhon nu seng ge'i rnam thar, ff.10.b-11.a (Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, pt. Ba). The visit can be dated to 1255, according to the life of Nyi-ma-seng-ge who accompanied him (Rgya'i-sgom-pa Dge-slong Shākya-rin-chen, Byang sems nyi ma seng ge'i rnam thar, f.4.a [Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, pt. Ma]).

131 Bsam-rgyal Kha-che, 'Jam dbyangs kun dga' seng ge'i rnam par thar pa, ff.12.a-15.b, 16.a, 18.a, 19.a-21.a.

132 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa skal bzang 'jug ngo, f.2.a; cf. also Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, pp. 98-99. 'Jam-dbyangs Kun-dga'-seng-ge's son Blo-gros-sengge (1345-1390) was also born in Bhutan during this tour, at Zab-gsal in the Mgar-sa region (Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i gtam..., Kha, f.17). We have already noted that this son's ascent to the gdan-sa of Rwa-lung came to be contested by other parties, and one wonders if his having a Bhutanese mother might not account for this in part.

133 Bsam-rgyal Kha-che, op.cit., ff.34.a-37.a.

134 A-wa-dhū-ti-pa Rin-chen-rnam-rgyal, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i mdzad pa rmad du byung ba ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thigs pa, ff.8.b-9.a, 10.a-b.

135 Ibid., ff.15.b, 18.a.

136 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa ngag dbang chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar 'od brgya pa (1549), ff.28.b-29.a (from the Collected Works of Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, vol. 3, pt. 2); his earlier visits were in 1496 (Ibid., f.19.b), 1501/02 (ff.21.b-22.a), 1504 (f.22.b) and 1504/05 (f.23.a).

137 Ibid., ff.35.b-36.a.

138 Ibid., ff.39.b-40.a.

139 Volumes 3 and 4 of the reprint edition of the Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng have not yet been issued, so that a number of the later biographies are unavailable. Some of these, however, can be found in the Collected Works of Padma-dkar-po.

140 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Rgyal sras gcung rin po che'i rnam par thar pa snyan dngags kyi bung ba rnam par rtse ba, f.10.b (in Collected Works of Padma-dkar-po, vol. 3, pt. 5).

141 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar, ff.94.b; Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po (1546-1615), Dpal 'brug pa thams cad mkhyen pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa rgya mtsho lta bu'i 'phros cha shas tsam brjod pa dad pa'i rba rlabs, f.49.a.

142 A biography of Mi-pham-chos-rgyal (1543-1604) is to be found in vol. 3 of the Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, which has yet to be reprinted in India. Surprisingly, considering his importance to the Bhutanese branch of the sect, no biography is commonly known to exist for Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father, Mi-pham-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1567-1619). Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, however, is said to have composed a verse biography for his father (or, a verse to be appended to such a biography; the passage is ambiguous), but this elusive text has so far not become available (cf. Gtsang Mkhan-chen, Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa..., Nga, ff.87.b-88.a).

143 On the history of this family, cf. Ma-ti (i.e. Shākya-rin-chen Dri-med-legs-pa'i blo-gros), Rgyal kun brtse ba'i spyi gzugs sems dpa' chen po gsung dbang sprin dbyangs kyi rtogs pa brjod pa rig 'dzin kun tu dga' ba'i zlos gar, ff.6.b-17.a (the biography of Mtshams-brag Bla-ma Ngag-dbang-'brug-pa [1682-1748], reprinted by Kunsang Topgay in Biographies

of Two Bhutanese Lamas of the Padma-glin-pa Tradition, Thimphu, 1975; also contained in Shākya-rin-chen's Collected Works, vol. 2); the history is repeated, with additions, in the biography of Yon-tan-mtha'-yas (Rje Mkhan-po XVIII 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan [1745-1803], Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi gsang gsum mi zad rgyan gyi 'khor lor rnam par rol pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa skal bzang mos pa'i padma rgyas byed ye shes 'od stong 'phro ba'i nyi ma, ff.12.b-18.a). On the capture of Dar-dkar-nang, cf. Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.43.b, 48.b, and Gtsang Mkhan-chen, op.cit., Nga, f.144.b. The date of this event is variously given in the sources (cf. below, Ch. 5).

144 Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar, f.114.b.

145 Rahul, Modern Bhutan, p. 92; Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, p. 10.

146 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.a.

147 A gser-'phreng is said to exist in India for this sect. Shakabpa has also had access to a Nyang stod gnas rnying gi gdan rabs rin po che'i gter mdzod (Zhwa-sgab-pa, Dbang-phyug-bde-ldan, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 2, p. 615). Neither text has yet become available through reprints, and further sources may well exist.

148 Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, Bsgrub rgyud karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rab 'byams nor bu zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba, I, ff.4.b, 138.b (Ga-thung is probably a place in the Mtsho-sna area near Rta-dbang). The Blue Annals (p. 478), however, explicitly states that Zhwa-nag I visited Spa-gro, but no dates or other information are given. A bulky biography of him (Rnam thar gser gling ma) in 18 chapters is said to have been composed by his disciple Sgang Lo-tsa-ba, however (Si-tu Pan-chen, op.cit., f.22.a), and the difficulty might be cleared up should this rare text ever become available.

149 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo, op.cit., I, ff.301.b-303.b, summarizing from the Rtogs brjod utpala'i do shal autobiography of Chos-grags-ye-shes (Ibid., f.311.b), probably no longer extant. The first visit (under the date 1479, however) is also described in the autobiography of Padma-gling-pa (Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar 'od zer kun mdzes nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba skal ldan spro ba skye ba'i tshul du bris pa, ff.38.b-39.b. Competition among Bhutanese Lamas seeking the Karma-pa hierarch's favour on this occasion resulted in some armed skirmishes between their patrons, according to Padma-gling-pa.

150 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo, op.cit., II, ff.66.a-b.

151 Ibid., I, ff.293.a; Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.144.b-147.a.

152 Perhaps the best introduction to Rnying-ma-pa history in a Western language is E. Gene Smith's preface to Sonam T. Kazi, The Autobiographical Reminiscences of Ngag-dbang-dpal-bzang - Late Abbot of Kah-thog Monastery, Gangtok, 1969, which I have relied on at various points for dates and matters of general interpretation.

153 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.89.a-91.a; Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga rab tu gsäl ba'i gtam mu tig do shal, ff.41.b, 45.b. Alternate spellings of Phang-ye in the literature include Phang-ya, Phang-yang(s), and Phang-yed.

154 Rahul (Modern Bhutan, p. 92) and Nirmala Das (Dragon Country, p. 9) attribute the earliest Sa-skyä missions to one "Thinle Rabgye" ('Phrin-las-rab-rgyas?) who, according to Rahul, came to Bhutan in 1452. Das gives the impossibly early date of 1152 for this. Neither author cites any reference for their information, unfortunately.

155 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.89.a-91.a.

156 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa, f.50.b.

157 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams (b. 1576),

'Dzam gling byang phyogs kyi thub pa'i rgyal tshab chen po dpal ldan sa
skya pa'i gdung rabs rin po che ji ltar byon pa'i tshul gyi rnam par thar
pa ngo mtshar rin po che'i bang mdzod dgos 'dod kun 'byung (1629), ff.275.b-
 277.b, 313.a. The same author has composed a biography of Ngag-dbang-kun-
 dga'-rin-chen (Ngo mtshar rgya mtsho), his grandfather, which might be
 expected to provide more information on the visit, but this has not
 become available.

158 Cassinelli & Ekvall, A Tibetan Principality, p. 409, 31 (map.).

159 Gter ston brgya rtse'i rnam thar, ff.43.b-44.b; he also used the
 alias of Kun-spangs-zla-'od and may be identical to Khu-tsha Zla-'od
 (b. 1024). Khu-tsha Zla-'od, however, is reckoned by the Bon-po as an
 important gter-ston of their own traditions (Samten G. Karmay, The
Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon [London: Oxford
 University Press, 1972], pp. 145-48).

160 Ibid., f.59.a-b.

161 Ibid., f.123.a-b.

162 Ibid., f.131.a.

163 Ibid., f.133.b-134.a.

164 Ibid., f.125.a.

165 Ibid., f.51.a-b.

166 Ibid., ff.55.a-56.a.

167 Ibid., f.131.a-b.

168 Rnying ma'i chos 'byung, ff.207.b-208.a; Lho'i chos 'byung,
 ff.86.a-91.b; Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rje btsun sku bzhi'i dbang phyug
bstan 'dzin don grub kyi rnam par thar pa rgyal sras klu dbang rol mtsho
 (1729), f.5.a-b. Dam-pa Bde-gshegs functioned under a number of aliases,
 including Bla-ma Shar-pa Spobs-pa-mtha'-yas and Shes-rab-seng-ge. The

names of some ten Kaḥ-thog-pa disciples of Padma-gling-pa are known (Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.245.b-246.a), but no connected account of the sect's activities in Bhutan appears to be available.

169 On his contributions to the elaboration of Rnying-ma-pa philosophical thought, cf. E. Gene Smith, op.cit., pp. 4-5 and footnotes.

170 The sources all agree that mystic foreknowledge of the events of 1359 prompted his exile, but the precise date is not given. Klong-chen-pa's biography is certainly still extant, but has been inaccessible to me. Perhaps the best summary of his career from Tibetan sources, and one which has been repeatedly cribbed by more recent authors, is contained in 'Jigs-med-gling-pa's introduction to the Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum (De bzhin gshegs pas legs par gsungs pa'i gsung rab rgya mtsho'i snying por gyur pa rig pa 'dzin pa'i sde snod dam snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'dzam gling mtha'i gru khyab pa'i rgyan, ff.116.b-136.a; it is repeated, verbatim, in Rnying ma'i chos 'byung, ff.115.b-134.b, and by Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 3, pp. 465-97); Gter ston brgya rtza'i rnam thar, ff.84.b-87.b is also a useful account. For Klong-chen-pa's activities in Bhutan, however, the most informative sources are the autobiography of Padma-gling-pa and his 'khrungs-rabs (Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.19.b-24.a; Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog, ff.6.b-12.b).

171 These eight monasteries, collectively known as the dgon gnas gling brgyad, are Bam-rin Thar-pa-gling, Shing-mkhar Bde-chen-gling, Stangs O-rgyan-gling, Ku-re-stod Kun-bzang-gling, Rngan-lung 'Bras-bchang-gling, Kho-thang Padma-gling, Man-log Kun-bzang-gling, and Spa-gro Bsam-gtan-gling (Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, op.cit., f.10.b). We have already

noted that the original monastery of Bum-thang Thar-pa-gling had been the creation of Lo-ras-pa. It is therefore unclear whether Klong-chen-pa's monastery of that name was constructed on the same foundations, or whether it was an entirely separate edifice. Field research will be necessary to clarify these matters.

172 Bum thang lha'i sbas yul gyi bkod pa me tog skyed tshal, f.25.b;

compare this with the prophecy discovered by Padma-gling-pa in the Lung bstan kun gsal me long (f.11.b): sa skya'i gtsug lag dmag gis so mkhar byed / stod med (sic.) bar gsum phag gis dbang du bsdud / mi mgo bran byed jab dang chom rkun dar. / mi gsod pa la mngon bstod dpa' rtags 'dogs / dbus gtsang phal cher lho mon tsa kong 'bros /.

173 Gter ston brgya rtza'i rnam thar, ff.100.a-103.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.92.a; Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, f.25.b.

174 Ibid., ff.22.a-24.a; Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, f.10.b; Khetsun Sangpo, op.cit., vol. 3, pp. 558-59, 573-75.

175 The dates of Thang-stong-rgyal-po, and the tradition of his 125-year life span, have created as many problems for Tibetan scholars as Western, and the question has still to be settled authoritatively. The best summary of the Tibetan arguments is that of 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhjen-brtse'i-dbang-po & 'Jam-dbyangs Blo-gter-dbang-po (Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster gyi sgrub thabs dbang chog man ngag dang bcas pa, f.8.a, and Tshe sgrub nye brgyud kyi sgrub thabs 'chi med grub pa'i zhal lung, ff.9.a, 11.b, from volumes 1 and 13, respectively, of the Sgrub thabs kun btus [reprinted by G.T.K. Lodoy, N. Gyaltsen, & N. Lungtok, Dehradun, 1970]. A recent discussion by E. Gene Smith has elucidated some, but not all, of the problems (T.Y. Tashigang, Shangs-pa gser-'phreng - A Golden Rosary of Lives of Masters of the Shangs-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa Schools, Leh, 1970, Introduction, p. 4). For a number of reasons too cumbersome to set

out here, however, I am inclined to accept 1485 for his death, and the date of his birth as uncertain.

176 Lo-chen 'Gyur-med-bde-chen (b. 1540?), Dpal grub pa'i dbang phyug brtson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal nor bu'i me long, ff.81.b-86.b. For some of the traditions connected with Thang-stong-rgyal-po, cf. R.A. Stein, Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), pp. 219-21, 513-19, and Tibetan Civilization, pp. 276-77. For a symbolic interpretation of his bridge-building as the compassionate act of a Bodhisattva, cf. Lo-chen 'Gyur-med-bde-chen, op.cit., f.45.a.

177 Ibid., ff.99.b-100.b.

178 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.24.b-27.b.. Supplementary sources on the life of Padma-gling-pa consulted here include Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog, ff.13.a-23.b; Gter ston brgya rtso'i rnam thar, ff.107.b-110.a; and Rnying ma'i chos 'byung, ff.278.a-280.b.

179 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.29.a-30.a; Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, ff.14.a-b. A somewhat different oral version of this account has been given by Blanche Olschak (Bhutan - Land of Hidden Treasures [London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1971], pp. 36-38).

180 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.35.b, 39.b, 132.b-133.b. The problem of the authenticity of the Pad-gling gter-chos was later to trouble the great Sanskrit grammarian Si-tu Paṅ-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1700-1774), whose suspicions were raised by frequently corrupt grammar of the Sanskrit passages. Insight into their "deeper religious meaning", however, eventually led him to drop these superficial objections (cf. his autobiography, Ta'i si tur 'bod pa karma bstan pa'i

nyin byed kyi rang tshul drangs por brjod pa dri bral shel gyi me long,
ff.49.a-50.a [reprinted in Lokesh Chandra, The Autobiography and Diaries
of Si-tu Pan-chen, New Delhi, I.A.I.C., 1968].

181 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.99.a-b.

182 Ibid., ff.178.a-179.a.

183 Ibid., ff.252.a-253.a. Among other texts, Rgyal-ba Don-grub edited the Mun sel sgron me biography of Padmasambhava discovered by Padma-gling-pa. One wonders if this Rgyal-ba Don-grub, of whom a biography is said to exist, might not be identical with Dpal Don-grub, alias Sna-tshogs-rang-grol (1494-1570), one of Padma-gling-pa's two main disciples. However, the other disciple, Dbu-mdzad Don-grub-dpal-'bar, might also be the person in question (Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, ff.22.b, 25.b-26.a).

Whatever vicissitudes Padma-gling-pa's 'Od zer kun mdzes autobiography may have suffered during the 16th and early 17th centuries, evidence suggests that the dbu-can MS version reprinted at Thimphu in 1976 is not radically different from printed (par-ma) versions circulating ca. 1700. In his study of the life of Dalai Lama VI, Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho quotes a long passage from folio 101.a of one such print, which corresponds to ff.113.b-114.a of the Thimphu reprint (from MSS preserved at Sgang-steng). The differences are very slight indeed, mainly in punctuation and use of particles (Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, Thams cad mkhyen pa drug pa blo bzang rin chen tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i thun mong phyi'i rnam par thar pa du k̄u la'i 'phro 'thud rab gsal gser gyi snye ma glegs bam dang po, f.74.a-b). This points to the existence of a printed version in about 224 folia, current in the 17th century (but of unknown production date), not very different from the Sgang-steng MS now available. Lauf has examined an incomplete set of printing blocks at Kun-bzang-brag (near Bum-thang) for

Padma-gling-pa's gsung-'bum, perhaps the set in question ("Vorläufiger Bericht...III," Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich, 1975, pt. 2, p. 71).

184 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.140.b-154.a.

The variant spellings Gtam-shing-o and Gtam-gzhis-o are also found.

185 Ibid., ff.132.b-133.b. His identity as the rebirth of Klong-chen-pa is openly indicated in the Nang gi lung bstan gsal ba'i sgron me prophecy contained in the Klong gsal gsang ba snying bcud collection (discovered by Padma-gling-pa at Me-'bar-mtsho in 1476) and in the Lung bstan kun sel me long prophecy contained in the Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho collection (discovered at Lho-brag in 1484), among other pre-1500 texts. Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (op.cit., f.68.a-b) was dubious of Padma-gling-pa's ascribed incarnate connection with Klong-chen-pa, however.

186 Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, ff.4.a-12.b. Lha-gcig Padma-gsal appears in a number of Rnying-ma-pa pseudo-historical works, but is almost certainly a mythical figure. Relics associated with her were to be found at Brag-dmar-ke'u-tshang in Tibet (Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.60.b; A. Ferrari, Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet, p. 116). The chronology of the intervening rebirths between her and Klong-chen-pa, moreover, is still confused owing to overlapping dates in the traditional lists. Padma-las-'brel-rtsal, for instance, is universally regarded as having been born in the Iron-Hare year of 1291, dying at age 25 (1319). But Klong-chen-pa was born in 1308. The problem is more theological than historical, except insofar as it affects our dating of Padma-gling-pa himself.

Padma-gling-pa's dates have been debated more than once. Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (op.cit., ff.69.a, 72.a) says he was born in an Iron-Dog year (1490) and died in a Snake year at age 72, the inconsistency of which he

ignores. Tucci (Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 259) also accepted 1490. Khetsun Sangpo (Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, v.3, p. 598), following Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che, gives 1445-1521. The problem arises in part from Tibetan scholars' overreliance on the Padma thang yig, whose date (1352) makes it an unreliable guide. There is no good reason not to accept the dates from the autobiography itself (1450-1521). Lauf (op.cit., p. 72) has recently suggested 1450-1513, but did not have access to the autobiography.

187 Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, f.242.b.

188 Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, f.26.b. The dates of Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan are not currently known from the available literature. Those of Padma-'phrin-las are given in the life of Sgang-steng Sprul-sku Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub (Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.14.b-17.b).

189 Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 3, pp. 723-24.

190 Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, f.26.a.

191 Rgyal-khams-pa 'Jigs-bral-ye-shes-rdo-rje, Pad gling 'khrungs rabs rtogs brjod dad pa'i me tog gi kha skong mos pa'i ze'u 'bru (1975), f.5.a. Cf. also Khetsun Sangpo, op.cit., vol. 3, pp. 281-337. Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-grags-pa-dpal-bzang's dates are too early, however, and the connection with Smin-grol-gling probably only dates from Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje.

192 Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod, ff.34.b, 37.a.41.b; Pad gling 'khrungs rabs rtogs brjod...kha skong, f.9.a; Dalai Lama V Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, Za hor gyi bande ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i 'di snang 'phrul pa'i rol rtsed rtogs brjod gyi tshul du bkod pa du k̄u la'i gos bzang, vol. 1, ff.151.b-152.a.

193 A number of such texts are mentioned in the literature, but which are so far unavailable. These include a biography of Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub's guru Rab-'byams-pa Bsam-rgyal-rgyal-po (1606-1666), alias Bla-ma'i-drung, and a biography of Padma-'phrin-las by Kun-mkhyen Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje. There is also mentioned a printed edition of the Collected Works of Thugs-sras V Kun-bzang-bstan-'dzin-'gyur-med-rdo-rje.

194 It should be remembered that the Wangchuck kings of present day Bhutan claim descent from Padma-gling-pa through the Lamas of Gdong-dkar, a monastery whose clientship to the Padma-gling-pa establishment dates back to the 16th century (cf. History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 73-74).

195 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa..., f.16.b.

196 Ibid., ff.35.b-46.a.

197 Ibid., ff.45.a-b. As usual, the administrative details of this historically intriguing arrangement are not spelled out for us. As in Europe, ultramontanism in the Himalayas had noteworthy political consequences which would be worth a separate study.

198 These mergers are presented in graphic form in the genealogical charts appended to this study.

199 Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, Pha 'brug sgom zhig po'i rnam par thar pa thugs rje'i chu rgyun, f.29.b; Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar, ff.163.b-164.a (dated 1507/08). Cooch Bihar is usually known as Kā-ma-tā or Karma-dhā in pre-17th century sources, afterwards as Gha-ti-kha. Names of the rulers, unfortunately, are seldom given for the earlier periods, and cannot be correlated easily with any of the Kōch rulers known from Indian sources.

200 E.g. George L. Harris, et al., Area Handbook for Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973²), pp. 351-53.

201 A list of fifteen identifiable dialects, compiled from Bhutanese government sources, is supplied by Nagendra Singh (Bhutan, pp. 65-67).

Ch.V: Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the Founding of a Centralized
Bhutanese State: 1616-1651

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was born in late autumn of 1594 in the palace of the Rgya family at 'Brug, monastic seat of the Bar 'Brug-pa sect near Lhasa.¹ His mother, Bsod-nams-dpal-gyi-bu-khrid, known also by her honorific style of Yum Rnam-sras-ma, was the daughter of the Sde-pa Skyid-shod-pa, head of the most prominent of the landed aristocratic families in the Lhasa region at that time. His father Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1567-1619) was in the direct male family line of the Rgya of Rwa-lung, and was duly installed as hierarch of Rwa-lung when his own father Mi-pham-chos-rgyal retired from the position in 1596. As the sole legitimate son, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was himself future heir to this throne, in accord with the Rwa-lung principle of hereditary succession maintained since the 15th century, and received the customary title of Rgyal-sras (Jinaputra) at the celebrations for his birth.

In preparation for his future role as hierarch of the Bar 'Brug-pa sect, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's formal education began at an early age with a number of important 'Brug-pa Lamas, including his father and grandfather. At age eight he underwent the customary tonsuring ceremonies administered by Mi-pham-chos-rgyal and was conferred preliminary (dge-bsnyen) monastic vows and the initiatory name of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.²

During the five years following this event, and while continuing his studies, he travelled in the entourage of his father, whose function it was as hierarch to circulate between the main and outlying branch monasteries, giving initiations and religious instruction. From Lhasa

they travelled eastward as far as Bya-yul and the pilgrimage centre of Tsā-ri, thence returning at a leisurely pace through Dbus and Gtsang, arriving finally at Rwa-lung in about 1606. Of course, the hagiographies written decades after these events tell us much more than this. The young prince and his father were everywhere greeted by crowds of admirers and devotees. Religious gifts and prayers for their welfare were showered in abundance by high and low alike, while in his studies and behaviour Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal proved to be as intelligent and saintly as his father and other teachers could have wished.³

Moreover the great 'Brug-pa scholar Padma-dkar-po, fourth incarnate embodiment of Gtsang-pa Rgyas-ras and revered emanation of Avalokiteśvara, had passed away in 1592, two years before Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's birth. So many people already believed, and his father and close attendants were certain, that he had now taken rebirth in the body of this youth. For the first time since the death of Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (d. 1476), they claimed, the heir to the Rgya monastic patrimony of Rwa-lung and the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnation were one and the same.⁴ But this claim, as we shall see in a moment, had already been rejected by an influential party of individuals outside the family.

Having returned to Rwa-lung, Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma stepped down from the hereditary throne in favour of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, now thirteen or fourteen years of age. For his installation in 1607⁵ an elaborate ceremony was staged. According to eye-witness accounts later compiled in Bhutan the presiding guest of honour was the Sa-skya Bdag-nyid-chen-mo Bsod-nams-dbang-po, who bestowed on Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal a further religious name and submitted some special prayers for the occasion.⁶ At this time also he received his other well-known name of Bdud-'joms-

rdo-rje. But monks and emissaries were also present representing 'Brug-pa monasteries throughout Tibet, from Tsā-ri to Ladakh, while notables from Bhutan included, among others, Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, the grandson of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs. There were also representatives of much of the landed nobility of Central Tibet, including the Sne'u-gdong-pa, Gong-dkar-ba, Skyid-shod-pa, Shun-pa, 'Phyongs-rgyas-pa, Bya-pa, and so forth. There is no need to recount the events in detail. What is important to note is that the installation was reputedly an elaborate occasion, and that it was apparently done with the intention on the part of the Rgya family that the ceremony marked a formal acknowledgment that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was the true rebirth of Padma-dkar-po. But there are grounds for doubting that this claim was made expressly clear at the time, for within ten years it was being openly repudiated by at least some of the above nobility.

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's mother died sometime during his youth, and of his father we know very little for the period after 1607. Bhutanese tradition alleges that he travelled in the south and founded some hermitages, first at Yar-'brog and then in eastern Bhutan around Bum-thang and Gzhong-khar. He is also widely believed to have taken various tantric consorts during this period, the bastard offspring from whom and their importance for the subsequent history of the country will be mentioned in due course.⁷

Between 1607 and 1612 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was the reigning hierarch of Rwa-lung. Already by this time he had become associated with certain people who were later to accompany him to Bhutan and eventually assist him in founding a new ecclesiastic state. Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas of the Bhutanese 'Obs-mtsho family, as mentioned earlier, acquired the joint positions of dbu-mdzad and phyag-mdzod at Rwa-lung

in 1610, perhaps at the behest of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal personally. There was also Drung Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan (d. 1672), a Tibetan monk born at Chos-rdzong who had held the post of mchod-dpon under first Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and now held it under the son.⁸ We should also mention Lha-dbang-blo-gros (1550-1633/4), one of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's teachers since his childhood and a disciple of Padma-dkar-po renowned for his studies and writings on calendrical matters and the Kālacakra Tantra.⁹

These five years were primarily a time of study for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. According to the biography he mastered a prodigious amount of canonical and commentatorial literature on theology and metaphysics, Tantric theory and practice, rituals and evocations, as well as the practical arts of astronomy, medicine, painting and sculpture. His main teachers in these subjects were Lha-dbang-blo-gros and the Sa-skya hierarch Bsod-nams-dbang-po, along with Stag-rtse-pa Pad-dkar-dbang-po, a venerable and respected 'Brug-pa scholar of the period. He is also said to have carried out liturgical and disciplinary reforms at Rwa-lung during these years, composing a Bca'-yig-chen-mo or code of monastic practice later adopted in Bhutan, and a famous little treatise urging diligence and unflagging moral exertion in pursuit of spiritual goals.¹⁰ By about 1612, we are told, the young hierarch had gained a considerable reputation in Tibet not only for his scholarship and piety, but also for deeply secret magical powers gained through constant evocations and ritual service to the protective deity Bya-ro-gdong-can (Kākāsyakarmanātha).

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal might thus have had a long and illustrious career in Tibet had it not been for a series of unrelated political events at this time which, taken together, effectively altered the course of his life. The nominal spiritual sovereigns of Central Tibet were

still the hierarchs of Phag-mo-gru, whose ecclesiastic empire had been built up rapidly after the defeat of their Sa-skya rivals in 1358. But the Gtsang nobility had long since ceased to pay much attention to their political authority, based as it was at Sne'u-gdong, too far to the east and lacking any real military might. The Rin-spungs princes had dominated Gtsang since 1434 and the 'Brug-pa sect, following the persecutions at their hands during 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' youth noted earlier, apparently had reached a suitable accomodation. Unlike Phag-mo-gru, however, the Rin-spungs-pa was a lay dynasty, never it seems able to command total allegiance from many of the ancient monastic-based nobility. And when their rule was destroyed in 1565 by the forces of another line of secular princes headed by Tshe-brtan-rdo-rje, the 'Brug-pa were quick to accede to this changed state of affairs.¹¹ The new rulers retained the old Rin-spungs capital of Bsam-'grub-rtse (modern Shigatse), but styled themselves Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, the so-called "Kings of Gtsang".

From the beginning the Kings of Gtsang were generous patrons of all the prominent sects with nearby headquarters, and not just of the Karma-pa as is sometimes claimed. Sa-skya, 'Brug-pa and Jo-nang-pa monastic leaders were frequently summoned to their court for consultations or rituals. But from the moment of their accession to power in Gtsang the main ambition of these kings was the conquest of Dbus, and this contest soon crystallized at the sectarian level into a parallel struggle between the Karma-pa and the Dge-lugs-pa, "Reds" and "Yellows". Naturally, civil disorders became more severe as warfare between the two provinces increased in frequency, and by the first decade of the 17th century Mongol armies, long absent from Tibet, were once again being called in as support on both sides. By 1612 Gtsang-pa forces

had won victories everywhere. The fierce campaigns and attendant strife during that year and the next, bringing them near complete supremacy through all of Central Tibet, became known to later history as the "Anarchy of Mouse and Ox".¹²

In 1612 there was also strife in Bhutan, for in that year the first Panchen Lama Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan was invited by some local Lamas, probably of the Lha-pa sect, to exorcise the spirit of one of their ministers who had taken rebirth as a demon. Following this, he toured briefly through the western valleys of Spa-gro, Thim-phu, and as far south as Dar-dkar. In common with other eminent 17th century Tibetan Lamas the Panchen Lama claimed adherence to an essentially non-sectarian (ris-med) monastic ideal, and was therefore distressed to find that in Bhutan, as in Tibet, partisan jealousies were rife. "Throughout Lho-mon," he wrote, "each place has its religious system and Lama with his own interpretation regarded as better than the others". The bickerings he calmed as best he could, by religious instruction and impartial distributions of gifts. Returning to Central Tibet about the winter of that year he noted again the prevailing civil disorders, "perpetrated," it seemed to him, "by men who took genuine pleasure in causing others to suffer." The scene inspired him to compose a song on the sorrows of Saṃsāra.¹³

For the Tibetan 'Brug-pas, however, a more serious disturbance was culminating at this time, the dispute over recognition of the true rebirth of Padma-dkar-po. In the year before Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's birth a bastard son had been born to the old Mi-dbang of 'Phyongs-rgyas, Bsod-nams-stobs-kyi-rgyal-po (d. 1594), and a group of high 'Brug-pa Lamas and patrons with close ties of family and loyalty to the 'Phyongs-rgyas nobility were quick to produce prophecies

and other omens supporting the child's claim to be the legitimate reembodiment. Nor was this claim withdrawn after the appearance of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. On the contrary, the dispute was never resolved and ultimately led to a permanent split in the sect which still persists in a Bhutanese and a Tibetan branch, respectively the Southern and Northern 'Brug-pa. Disputes between the supporters of rival candidates to prestigious lineages of incarnating Lamas probably occurred from the very inception of this peculiar Tibetan institution centuries earlier, and by the 17th century a variety of standard techniques for their resolution had been worked out. What is therefore unusual in the present instance is not the existence of such a dispute but the fact that it had remained unresolved for so long a time, and for this some possible explanations must be offered.

As I noted in an earlier chapter, the traditional pattern of succession to the Rwa-lung gdan-sa since Gtsang-pa Rgyas-ras' death in 1211 had been hereditary, either a son or a nephew of the hierarch succeeding him at a time normally designated by the retiring hierarch himself. The Rgya family of Rwa-lung had thereby maintained more or less continuous control over the monasteries and estates belonging to the Bar 'Brug-pa sect since the beginning. Nevertheless, the growing popularity of the institution of incarnate succession proved irresistible here, too, and in the 15th century the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen series of rebirths deriving from Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras began to be recognized, with the fourteenth Rwa-lung hierarch Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor. But as he was also a nephew in the Rgya family line, his recognition posed no immediate threat to the existing hereditary scheme. After his death in 1476, however, and as there were no other male children of the family born at a time suitable for being recognized as his

immediate rebirth (yang-srid), the Third Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnate 'Jam-dbyangs-chos-grags was discovered in the offspring from a different aristocratic family. The same circumstances recurred with the Fourth Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen Padma-dkar-po. Although during the more than 100 years since 1476 the Rgya lineage had strongly resisted relinquishing any formal authority over 'Brug-pa properties to these incarnates, it is clear that much of the prestige and patronage customarily enjoyed by the Rgya had gravitated to the corporate lineage of Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnations in its own right. In effect, a rift in the structure of monastic authority had developed to the detriment of the Rgya family, and to Rwa-lung as the spiritual centre of the sect.

The new geographical centre of Bar 'Brug-pa activity had in fact shifted to the south and east. 'Jam-dbyangs-chos-grags was a son of the Bya myriarch, while Padma-dkar-po was born in Kong-po. Each had had new monasteries constructed in the Byar region to serve as their spiritual seats, replacing, to some extent, the older centres of Rwa-lung and 'Brug, whose administrative control they were denied. In particular, Padma dkar-po's remarkable scholarship and spiritual reputation brought him increased patronage and a series of new subsidiary 'Brug-pa monasteries such as Bde-chen-chos-'khor and Grwa-nang-sding-po-che in Dbus.¹⁴ From these, also, subordinate 'Brug-pa incarnation lines were to arise, such as the Zhabs-drung and Yongs-'dzin of Bde-chen-chos-'khor and the Khams-sprul in eastern Tibet, none of which owed any particular debt to either Rwa-lung or the Rgya family except from a sense of historical courtesy.

The Rgya, however, were not entirely powerless to resist these changes. Their own hierarchs at Rwa-lung since 1476 were not insignificant men, and had been particularly active in spreading 'Brug-pa

influence and opening new monasteries in Bhutan. At 'Brug and Rwa-lung, moreover, they held possession of virtually all the treasured 'Brug-pa artifacts accumulated since the times of Gling-ras-pa and Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras. By far the most sacred of these 'Brug-pa relics was a small image of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in his manifestation known as Khasarpaṇa, which had emerged "spontaneously" (rang-byon) from the first vertebra of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras' cremated remains. This image was considered the very embodiment of Avalokiteśvara and was believed to have prophetic power concerning the welfare of the 'Brug-pa sect. Originally kept tightly guarded owing to attempts at its theft, a more liberal policy adopted during the mid-13th century by Spos-skya-pa Sengge-rin-chen permitted mass public viewing. However, when 'Brug monastery was sacked by rival Lha-pa monks the statue is said to have gone into a sleeping trance, and was taken to Rwa-lung for safer keeping.¹⁵

Images with the gift of prophecy were not rare in Tibet,¹⁶ but as this particular one watched out for 'Brug-pa interests it was customarily consulted in meditation by Rwa-lung hierarchs seeking spiritual guidance during times of difficulty. Accordingly, when Padma-dkar-po was discovered as the rebirth of 'Jam-dbyangs-chos-grags, only provisional recognition could be granted until it was confirmed by contemplation before the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa icon at Rwa-lung. When a positive prophecy was obtained from the image he was formally installed.¹⁷ The same procedure should have been followed when the 'Phyongs-rgyas child Dpag-bsam-dbang-po (1493-1641) was nominated as the rebirth of Padma-dkar-po, and in fact the texts supporting his claim maintain that it was. Those supporting the Rgya candidate Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, however, say that the procedure was not followed, or at least that the image

delivered a negative response. They further maintain that the principal supporter of the 'Phyongs-rgyas child's candidacy, Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po (1546-1615), had concealed the very death of Padma-dkar-po and had kept it a secret from Rwa-lung until Dpag-bsam-dbang-po had been born and provisionally recognized, thereby depriving the Rgya of their traditional right to participate fully in the search for a rebirth.¹⁸ The latter, of course, would only have supported their own scion Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and Lha-rtse-ba, apparently sensing an impasse, proceeded to have the 'Phyongs-rgyas candidate installed in 1597 at Bkra-shis-mthong-smon without approval from Rwa-lung. But although this installation was supported by many monks and patron families, including, naturally, the 'Phyongs-rgyas nobility, the vital confirming prophecy from the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa image was not forthcoming. Almost certainly the Rgya denied Lha-rtse-ba permission to conduct his own contemplative investigation, treating both the image itself and the right to consult it as a family prerogative. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa was finally prevailed upon to mediate this bitter feud sometime after 1612, the right to possession of the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa became a central point of contention.

Had the question of the prophetic icon been the only issue separating the two factions some compromise might still have been possible, since other accepted means of divination in such cases were theoretically available. Failing in that, it might have been possible to recognize both children as simultaneous reembodiments of the one man, a possibility well-established in scriptural theory¹⁹ and already commonly practised among the Rnying-ma-pa and, according to Snellgrove and Richardson, among the 'Bri-gung-pa.²⁰ Some, perhaps all, of these

possibilities were actually mooted in the course of protracted negotiations which must have been taking place from 1594.

In the first instance these were conducted by proxy or privately among 'Brug-pa leaders themselves, civil authorities entering the picture only during the 17th century. Unfortunately there are no written accounts of their progress, least of all by disinterested third parties. Our sources are nearly as limited as those available to Gtsang Mkhan-chen, who compiled an after-the-fact account in about 1674, highly biased in favour of the Rgya position.²¹ For the other side available records are even fewer, though equally as dogmatic and uncompromising.²² It seems certain that one attempt at negotiation had been undertaken by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's grandfather Mi-pham-chos-rgyal, probably in 1603, the year before his death. The meeting was arranged by the Bya-pa myriarch but Lha-rtse-ba and his supporters remained adamant and are said to have thoroughly insulted Mi-pham-chos-rgyal.²³ For it had been the Rwa-lung hierarch Mi-pham-chos-rgyal who, years before, had meditated before the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa icon and received the prophecy denying the 'Phyong-rgyas child's claim.²⁴ Another attempt at mediation by the Bya-pa myriarch ca.1605, is said to have ended in bitter tumult when it was discovered that cushions for the Rgya people has been secretly stuffed with padding inferior in quality to that of the 'Phyong-rgyas candidate.²⁵

The Gtsang civil authorities seem to have first become involved in the feud during the reign of Karma Bstan-srung-dbang-po (d. 1611) as Sde-pa Gtsang-pa. The Kings of Gtsang were by this time on the ascendant in Central Tibet, and as Rwa-lung was within their jurisdiction, whereas 'Phyongs-rgyas was not, the Rgya people may have felt that such an appeal for mediation would work in their favour.

This proved to be a mistaken hope. The Kings of Gtsang, still fighting for supremacy in Dbus, may have been loath to needlessly offend powerful noble families on the perimeter of that province. The Rgya had no independent military strength. So the appeal before Bstan-srung-dbang-po failed when the powerful Lhun-rtse Sde-pa, said to be in league with Lha-rtse-ba's faction, intervened on behalf of Dpag-bsam-dbang-po.²⁶ When Karma Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal (r. 1611-1621) succeeded Bstan-srung-dbang-po as Sde-pa Gtsang-pa the appeal was renewed with even greater vigour. Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal vacillated, obviously still hoping to reach a compromise rather than be forced into making a final determination. But the dispute had by this time persisted for too long. The candidate incarnates were now young men able to argue their own case and the sectarian fissure had widened through years of slander and gossip into an unbridgeable gulf.

Moreover both sides had watertight cases, based on alleged prophecies from Padma-dkar-po before his death, and, in the case of the Rgya, one from Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras himself. The prophecies produced by the Rgya family proved clearly to their minds that the rebirth was to have appeared in the family line.²⁷ This ruled out even the possibility of recognizing multiple simultaneous rebirths. Moreover, they claimed, Padma-dkar-po had given Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma three personal belongings just before his death which the true child incarnation was to select from a group of others. But when Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was finally summoned by Lha-rtse-ba to give Rwa-lung assent to Dpag-bsam-dbang-po's recognition in 1596, the child supposedly ignored the proper items, and even cried at the sight of Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma.²⁸ Lha-rtse-ba, however, insisted he had received a dream revelation from Padma-dkar-po only days after his death, but months before Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's birth, foretelling the

rebirth at 'Phyongs-rgyas. This prophecy, too, was unequivocal in meaning.²⁹

The Rgya family rejoined viciously. Lha-rtse-ba, they said, had suppressed Padma-dkar-po's written will containing the true prophecies, inventing one of his own. They further claimed that he deceitfully arranged other false omens so as to fool even the 'Phyongs-rgyas family, and had purchased the support of other aristocrats. Nor was it to be forgotten, they reminded, that Lha-rtse-ba himself had been born at 'Phyongs-rgyas, that he belonged to the same Za-hor clan as the 'Phyongs-rgyas nobility, and that his father had been a minor official at the 'Phyongs-rgyas court.³⁰ Besides, the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa image had from the outset revealed the validity of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's claim, and the falsity of the other.³¹ They did not blame the now-deceased 'Phyongs-rgyas Mi-dbang for his ignorance of Padma-dkar-po's prophecies. The sole distinct cause of all the trouble was the unscrupulous rapacity of Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po.

That was the status of the dispute during the early years of Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal's rule in Gtsang. There were further charges which we need not review here. Almost certainly the debate increased in intensity until its peak in about 1615, but the precise course of events is uncertain. There are no definite dates and the available information does not permit any firm historical judgments of the issues or personalities. Charitably, it is possible to suggest that owing to the increasing independence of the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnation line from Rwa-lung a genuine rupture in communications and traditional consultative procedures had occurred at Padma-dkar-po's death, and that the misunderstandings arising from this event merely fanned the flames of some deeper resentments. Lha-rtse-ba himself died in 1615,

but whether he was as saintly and innocent of venal motives as his biographer would have us believe,³² or as corrupt as the Bhutanese texts claim, cannot be said. It is tantalizing to note that the Jonang-pa scholar Tāranātha, privy to Gtsang-pa court proceedings but aloof from the present dispute, remarked on his passing that, like the minister Mgar, he had died from the cut of his own sword.³³

With the death of Lha-rtse-ba the controversy entered a new phase. For reasons which are not entirely obvious the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa appears to have become more favourable towards Dpag-bsam-dbang-po and correspondingly antagonistic towards the Rwa-lung people. Perhaps the 'Phyongs-rgyas family had a more formidable range of aristocratic allies than is made explicit.³⁴ It is also suggested more than once that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's personal relations with Karma Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal were not good. At an interview with the latter in 1614 at Bsam-'grub-rtse palace Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had offended the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa by a rather imperious breach of protocol, refusing to dismount his horse before entering the fort.³⁵ A rumour also came to be circulated in Bhutan according to which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's mother had originally been the wife of Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal, later abandoning him in favour of Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. But this was probably unfounded gossip.³⁶ A definite source of disharmony was Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's reputed mastery of sorcery and destructive magic. The importance of this must not be discounted. It was widely believed that Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po's death resulted from karmic retribution inflicted upon him by Buddhist protective deities loyal to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and that evil omens threatening the Gtsang-pa court were due to the same cause.³⁷ When the 'Phyongs-rgyas Sde-pa Ngag-dbang-bsod-nams-grags-pa was murdered in 1615 by a crazed Indian yogin the Rgya sources took credit for that also.³⁸

At this point we must presume that the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa found himself in a very difficult situation. Mediation of the dispute was virtually impossible. Only one child could be recognized as the true rebirth, but to decide in favour of either side demanded that a civil authority declare, in effect, the illegitimacy of sacred prophecy. This, I believe, was the crux of the matter, and why a clear decision was so long postponed. Here an unfortunate incident occurred which proved the undoing of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, by providing Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal with an excuse to evade the real issue and persecute the Rwa-lung people for extraneous reasons. Sometime during 1615 or early 1616 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was preparing to cross the Gtsang-po river in coracles when a fight broke out over possession of the boats between his retainers and those of the Dpa'-bo Rin-po-che Gtsug-lag-rgya-mtsho (1568-1630), in the course of which one or two were injured or perhaps drowned.³⁹ The Lho-brag Dpa'-bo Rin-po-che were a minor Karma-pa incarnation lineage but as the Gtsang-pa Kings were their leading patrons the incident was bound to have repercussions on the 'Brug-pa dispute. The Dpa'-bo Rin-po-che demanded excessive retribution (mi-stong) for the alleged deaths and Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal sought to enforce the claim. Sensing the fortuity of this opportunity he further required that the Rgya relinquish possession of the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa image. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal refused and returned to Rwa-lung, where he is said to have begun practising sorcery once more against Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal.⁴⁰

At this point, while the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa was perhaps preparing military action against Rwa-lung, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had a dream in which a large crow, an emanation of Bya-ro-gdong-can, appeared to guide him southwards to a place called Spang-ri-zam-pa in Bhutan.

Perusing further the prophecies of Padmasambhava he read of the time when Mongol armies would invade Tibet, when righteous monks were urged to take refuge along the southern frontier. He now realized, the Bhutanese texts tell us, that this time had arrived. All his tribulations in Tibet were nothing more than divine omens serving to lead him at this moment to refuge in Bhutan, the land karmically ordained for his conquest and conversion to the 'Brug-pa faith.⁴¹ Accordingly, with the protection of a band of Bhutanese soldiers from 'Obs-mtsho, he and his close followers secretly left Rwa-lung for the south, taking with them the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa and other of their sacred family treasures. The flight to Bhutan in 1616 marks the traditional date of the country's modern beginnings as an independent state.

Although Bhutanese legends insist otherwise, it is fairly clear from the course of events both before and after 1616 that the flight to Bhutan was not originally intended as a permanent move. Even though he never did so, it is certain that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had every intention of returning to Tibet, once a settlement could be reached with the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa. He had left representatives (sku-tshab) at Rwa-lung, and it was only in 1647 that these were finally withdrawn. In Bhutan he could negotiate from a position of strength. 'Brug-pa patrons in the western valleys had had close relations with the Rgya hierarchs of Rwa-lung. The leading families, though claiming Tibetan ancestry, were independent of Tibetan authority. Padma-dkar-po had never toured in their districts, while 'Phyongs-rgyas was remote and of no interest. Moreover, there were few passes giving easy access into Bhutan from Tibet, and we have seen earlier that Tibetans since early times had disparaged its alleged uncomfortable climate and vicious

inhabitants. From this geographical stronghold, it seems apparent, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal planned to consolidate his position, reach an agreement with the Gtsang authorities, and return to Rwa-lung. This temporary and essentially defensive character of his original residence in Bhutan, I hope to demonstrate, goes far towards explaining the vicissitudes its government passed through in subsequent decades and beyond.

Reaction of the Gtsang authorities to his secret departure from Tibet was swift, once it became known. Negotiations had apparently still been proceeding at Bsam-'grub-rtse, but now the emissaries had to travel a greater distance with their letters, and over rougher roads. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biographer has preserved the text of two of his letters to the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, from which some interesting conclusions can be drawn.⁴² From these we learn that Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal's first tactic was to combine flattery with a show of force. Being now dominant over much of the province of Dbus, he immediately seized control of 'Brug monastery and its estates near Lhasa. Rwa-lung he seems to have left temporarily alone, but by threatening further retaliatory measures he left its future status in doubt. At the same time he professed the purest faith and good will on his part and that of his predecessors towards the 'Brug-pa Lamas, and was at a loss to understand Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's recalcitrance. And especially was he annoyed that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was performing sorcery against him. Was this not a direct violation of Buddhist scripture?

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's reply was uncompromising. He rejected the notion that the Kings of Gtsang had always been loyal patrons of the 'Brug-pa. Far from it. Padma-dkar-po had once saved the life of the very first Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, Karma Tshe-brtan, for which he had

been ill-repaid.⁴³ The alleged patronage by Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal and his father had also been illiberal and superficial. 'Brug-pa monasteries had several times been seized and presented to the Karma-pa, while the preposterous compensation demanded on behalf of the Dpa'-bo Rin-po-che, he asserted, was conclusive proof of their favouritism. Prophecies clearly showed that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was the true rebirth of Padma-dkar-po, and as long as the Gtsang-pa maintained otherwise it was useless to even suggest that they reestablish a proper relation of patron and Lama (mchod-yon). On the matter of practising sorcery against enemies of the Dharma, he continued, the entire Ye-shes-kyi-mgon-po class of Tantras was devoted to the subject; to question his, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's, propriety in this action was to impeach the words of Shākyamuni himself. Therefore, he concluded, if the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa wished to declare war then he should do so. But Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal professed to have the support of the people of Bhutan (Lho-kha-bzhi) and Cooch Bihar, and was confident of victory.

If the insolence of this letter genuinely reflects the tone of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's replies to the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa it is not surprising that war quickly ensued, and in 1618 the first of many Tibetan invasions of Bhutan began.⁴⁴ At this time Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's position in Bhutan was probably not very secure. Almost certainly he could not call on the support of Cooch Bihar at this period of his residency there. His main supporters were the 'Obs-mtsho people of the Dgon or Mgar-sa district in the mountains northwest of Punakha, whose history and connections with Rwa-lung we have traced in an earlier chapter. He was also supported by the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa branch of the Rgya family who traced their ancestry to 'Brug-pa Kun-legs. The local head of this branch of the family, Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, had reputedly been a patron of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal

since the time of his installation at Rwa-lung years earlier, and had quickly offered facilities and temporary residence to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal at Rta-mgo.⁴⁵ There is no reason to doubt this statement, and as Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin was by then widely believed to be the rebirth of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was probably able to call on the support of families claiming Pha-jo ancestry as well. These may have included some of the people of Dkar-sbis, also in the far northwest, and other families loosely described as being of the ancient Wang extraction.⁴⁶ The monasteries or hermitages in Bhutan loyal to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal by the beginning of the war included besides Rta-mgo, 'Phrin-las-sgang, 'Brug-chos-sdings, and Spang-ri-zam-pa, founded by his grandfather.⁴⁷

The war itself apparently only lasted a few weeks. Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal, more preoccupied with consolidating his victories over Dge-lugs-pa supporters in Central Tibet, probably did not send many troops and had no personal role in the struggle. The main fighting took place at 'Brug-chos-sdings and Hūm-ral-kha in the Paro (Spa-gro) valley, and at Spang-ri-zam-pa north of modern Thimphu (Thim-phug; Thim-phu).⁴⁸ Following brief attacks at these places, the Tibetan forces are said to have been dispersed by terrifying spectacles of armed demons, conjured up by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's sorcery. Retreating to a place called Rtse-po-thang they built a small fort, but soon this too was abandoned and the army fully routed. According to the Bhutanese account only one Tibetan, the general La-dgu-nas, was actually killed in the war. His arms, head and heart are said to have been suspended from a banner and conveyed to Lcags-ri monastery where they came to be used in rituals of destructive magic during later wars with Tibet.⁴⁹

The war is remembered in Bhutan as a great victory and vindication of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's position. True to his word, and with the aid of loyal Buddhist protective deities, his sorcery produced ultimate victory. For soon the Gtsang-pa court became terrorized by evil omens and infectious disease, as a result of which Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal and his wife perished in 1621.⁵⁰ The cave at Rta-mgo from which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's sorcery was practised, the famous Bdud-'dul-phug ("Demon-destroying Cave"), became the first of many shrines celebrating Bhutanese victories over Tibet, while the so-called Nga Bcu-drug-ma verse composed by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal to commemorate the triumph came later to be embodied in an official state seal, according to Professor Rahul.⁵¹

The years from 1618 to 1623 are not well documented in our sources. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biographer was only a boy in Tibet at the time and his hearsay account is full of fancy and pious scriptural allusions. Apparently at the conclusion of the war Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal returned once more to Rta-mgo. It was at this time that Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin bestowed the monastery, its buildings, estates and patrons on Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, pledging eternal support of the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa family. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal accepted these but did not remain at Rta-mgo. Instead he appointed Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin as his representative (sku-tshab) there while continuing to travel through parts of western Bhutan in the company of his retainers.⁵²

The purpose of these travels were the usual ones of Tibetan sectarian hierarchs: to collect alms and patrons, perform public rituals, bestow initiations and teachings. There was no talk yet of constructing a new monastic seat, and we must see these events in the context of a temporary residence away from the scene of his troubles in

Tibet. For a time his camp shifted back to Bde-chen-phug and Spang-ri-zam-pa, where he performed evocations and rites of thanksgiving to subdue the residing divinity Jag-pa-me-len, binding him by oath to become a protector of the Dharma.⁵³ Gtsang Mkhan-chen's description of his camp during these times is vivid, if slightly fanciful.⁵⁴

"His encampment was beautiful, in shape like a village of the moon come into being on earth. Round as excellent crockery, the inner and outer enclosures were guarded securely by protectors of the Dharma and by valiant warriors of awesome appearance. Guard dogs, mastiffs of the lion family, barked to the ten directions with fierce and angry cries. There was also the music of conch and cymbals, a pervasive din of ritual songs, the chanting of many monks, the general hubbub of a great marketplace. In an unceasing parade worshippers approached with pomp and spectacle to bow and pay homage with gifts of jewels and other wealth...."

In 1619 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father died somewhere in Tibet. In the following year his body was secretly brought to Bhutan and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal began to construct a memorial reliquary at Rdor-gdan-lcags-ri near Rta-mgo. The memorial, the Silver Stūpa (Dngul-'bum-mchod-rten), was completed and consecrated in 1623. As part of the construction, however, the monasteries there were enlarged and fortified, his earliest known defensive work in the country.⁵⁵

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had now been in Bhutan for seven years. There had been only one war with Tibet but there is good reason to believe that his appeals for justice to the Gtsang-pa court were continuing, particularly as a new Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, Karma Bstan-skyong-dbang-po (r. 1621-1642), was now on the throne. Nor were the early years in Bhutan as generally peaceful as appears from the texts. Vigorous competition for patronage with the Lha-pa, Gnas-rnying-pa and 'Ba'-ra-ba monks must have already begun, though a few more years were apparently to pass before this culminated in open warfare.

Nevertheless, a decision had to be made for the future, and we are told that it was during a three-year contemplative retreat of 1623-1625 that this decision was made.⁵⁶

To prepare for this Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal brought his old teacher Lha-dbang-blo-gros from Tibet and installed him as abbot at Lcags-ri. Other appointments to the usual monastic positions were made from among his disciples at this time, possibly the first since his departure from Tibet. The monastic code he had written in Tibet was now applied in Bhutan. He appointed a representative (sku-tshab) to serve his interests at Rwa-lung and began his retreat at Lcags-ri Bdud-'dul-phug.⁵⁷

The purpose of the contemplative retreat is apparent enough, though its description is amply adorned with scriptural sentiments. Should he follow the life style of such famous 'Brug-pa contemplatives of the past as Mi-la-ras-pa and Lo-ras-pa, wandering and meditating as lonely mountain hermits; or should he, like the great Sa-skya hierarch 'Phags-pa, found a new religious state? He put the question to the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa for prophetic guidance. His deceased father Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma also appeared to him in dreams. In both cases the advice was the same. He should found a new religious state ruled according to the time-honoured Tibetan ecclesiastic principle of combining religion and secular government in a single administrative apparatus (chos-srid-gnyis-ldan).⁵⁸

Thus the eleventh month of the Wood-Ox year (1625/26), when he emerged from his long retreat, should be taken as the point of beginning for this new government in Lho-mon (the terms 'Brug-gzhung and 'Brug-yul had yet to be coined) according to traditional conceptions. Of course, we may doubt that the decision to found a new government in

Bhutan was arrived at quite so precipitously, or in just this way. The karmic model of historical causation to which Tibetan and Bhutanese historians adhered, everywhere colours their interpretation of events. Gtsang Mkhan-chen relates that the emergence from retreat and decision to "assume the lion throne" as spiritual ruler of Bhutan were celebrated with rites of thanksgiving to the protective deities, who in turn indicated their approval by filling the sky with a rainbow.⁵⁹

It seems useful therefore to accept the winter of 1625 as the beginning of this new phase in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's career, what we may call the period of state-building, which lasted until his death in 1651.

The Process of State-Buidling: 1625-1651

Whatever the decision of 1625 may have been, nothing dramatic captures our attention to suggest any sudden change of policy or initiatives. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal continued to travel with his entourage of tents and retainers. Appeals to Gtsang still persisted and there was clearly no thought at this point of abandoning his claims to possession of Rwa-lung and other Tibetan estates. One can detect perhaps some increase in intensity of his movements, but it is hard to judge. Indigenous sources for this period of Bhutan's history are still very inadequate. The account of a visit to Bhutan at this time by two Portuguese Jesuit priests is therefore particularly valuable in that it confirms much of what we have learned from local sources. Fathers Stephen Cacella and John Cabral of the small and ill-fated Hugli mission spent most of 1627 in Bhutan which they reached via the usual route from Cooch Bihar through Buxa Duar. Their original plan

had been to travel directly on to Shigatse in order to establish a mission, but as this was the seat of the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, the Bhutanese ruler, whom they refer to as the Droma Raja (Dharmarāja), was reluctant to allow their immediate departure, since the two rulers were in a state of war. The atmosphere of their first meeting with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, the "Droma Raja", calls to mind Gtsang Mkhan-chen's description of his court cited earlier.⁶⁰

"A hundred young lamas, from twelve to twenty years of age, in double file came to welcome us, whilst three smaller ones walked in the middle carrying burning perfumes, which is a royal homage. Thus they conducted us to our lodging, a well-made tent lined with Chinese silk and adorned with a canopy. After a little while we were summoned into the king's presence and ushered into another tent also richly ornamented with silks. The king was seated on a raised seat draped with red silk and embroidered with gold. Close to him on his right, on a similar platform, stood a statue of his father, in front of which a lamp always burnt. There were also two raised seats for us, whilst none of the lamas, however high in rank, had any seat except the mats that covered the floor. The reception was very kind and in reply to the usual questions as to where we came from and who we were, I [Cacella] told him that we were 'Portuguese' for the name of Franguis, by which the Portuguese are known throughout the East, was unknown to them, because foreigners never enter these mountain regions and no one could remember having ever seen or heard of their passage."

Cacella's description is mirrored closely by that of an unknown Bhutanese court scribe, who wrote, "At this time there came from a country named Purdhu-kha, across the great ocean, certain...men of unusual demeanor, the likes of whom had never been seen before, who were messengers of the king of that country; and they had travelled by boat for twelve months across the great ocean, passing through the nearby place named Goa, and the demon countries called A-bzir-ya (?) and A-zir-ka (Africa)...."⁶¹

But a language barrier hampered extensive discussions at the first encounter, and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal immediately assigned to the two

Fathers a Lama from Tsaparang in western Tibet to instruct them in the Tibetan language.⁶² While the lessons were in progress, Cacella and Cabral travelled for two months in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's entourage before reaching his residence and hermitage in the mountains, the description of which confirms that it must have been the Lcags-ri and Rta-mgo complex.

"The rocky soil really rendered the place unfit for habitation, but it had been chosen by the king with a view to protecting himself against another prince, the greatest of Potente, who lived at eight days' distance and with whom he had been at war for some years. His name was Demba Cemba. The cause of their quarrel was that the Droma Rajah had refused to give him a bone of the body of his dead father, for which he had been urgently prayed. On account of this same war the Droma Rajah did not reside in his town of Ralum, which was only at five days' distance."⁶³

Here, then, was an outsider's impression of the state of war existing between Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa or "Demba Cemba". The "bone of the body of his dead father" can hardly have been anything other than the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa image, our priests being apparently ignorant of the Tibetan notion of immediate reembodiment. A final selection from Cacella's impressions of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal proves his perception of the situation then existing in Bhutan to have been far more accurate than Wessels could have known.⁶⁴

"He is called Droma Rajah, is thirty-three years of age, and is at once king and great-lama of this realm of Cambirasi, which is the first of the kingdoms of Potente in this region, and is very large and populous. He enjoys great regard for his gentleness, and not less for his abstinence from rice, flesh and fish, for he lives only on milk and fruits. At one time he passed three years in solitude living in a hut on a large projecting rock of a mountain without seeing or receiving anybody. With the aid of two ropes he drew up the necessary food to his inaccessible dwelling-place....

"He enjoyed a great reputation as a scholar, and as such he was greatly respected by all the other great-lamas; for the same reason he always retained about him lamas from distant countries. The fact that the missionaries met him in tents here among the mountains

was explained by the fact that people used to invite him to visit their districts, on which occasion he received great gifts of horses, cattle, rice, clothes and other articles, which formed his chief source of income."

It was only with some difficulty that the two Fathers were able finally to leave Bhutan for the court of the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, of whom once again Cacella provides us with a valuable portrait, and where he learned more of this hierarch's troubles with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. As a comment on the latter's supposed religious tolerance, it is worth remarking that before departing for Tibet the priests were offered a site in the Paro valley for a Christian church, which they apparently declined.⁶⁵ The Bhutanese texts say nothing of this. They do relate that the Portuguese Fathers brought with them gifts of "guns, cannons and gun powder", and that they offered, should Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal become involved in a war, "to summon a great army from our own kingdom."⁶⁶ The Portuguese letters neglect to mention this latter offer, shrewdly declined out of concern for the "the potential for harm by barbarian generals." "Besides," continued the scribe, "up to that time guns had not spread [to Bhutan]; and being unfamiliar with them, just to hear their loud noise would inspire fear and terror among the enemy."⁶⁷ The gift of guns, obviously, was not rejected.

It was about the time of the Portuguese visit or a bit earlier that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal must have begun to actively pursue his plan to spread the local authority of the 'Brug-pa church. According to Gtsang Mkhan-chen, he sent out a number of military parties to other districts of the country, erecting flags and banners to signal his intention to lay new territorial and spiritual claims, for the two were the same.⁶⁸ But this statement must be compared with the same author's contention that the original plan of the new state was that it be non-sectarian (ris-med), i.e. impartially tolerant of different sectarian creeds.⁶⁹

Here there were the seeds of conflict. We have seen from an earlier discussion that numerous other Tibetan sects had, by the beginning of the 17th century, staked out territorial and sectarian claims in western Bhutan. Chief among these were the Lha-pa, 'Ba'-ra-ba, Gnäs-rnying-pa, Sa-skyä-pa, Ngor-pa, and various branches of the Rnying-ma-pa, principally Padma-gling-pa, Kah-thog-pa and Lcags-zam-pa (followers of Thang-stong-rgyal-po). The administrative arrangements of these sectarian outposts by 1625 are practically unknown, but almost certainly they escaped any uniform framework. Many must have been independent in all but name, but a few, including the 'Brug-pa, definitely retained close ties with the parent monasteries. Rivalry and competition for patronage must therefore have been keen, and the brief glimpse of the situation prevailing in 1612 provided by the First Panchen Lama confirms this.

The river valleys of western Bhutan were by this time well settled. Planned irrigation was practised widely. Wheat, rice and fruit were probably grown in sufficient quantity for local consumption and some export to Tibet. That much is known from occasional references in Tibetan works and from the descriptions of Cacella and Cabral who visited the Paro valley. Although their estimate of the valley's population was widely inflated, its overall prosperity and stable character seem certain enough.⁷⁰ But the country was not wealthy. A concerted attempt by one religious sect to gain pronounced supremacy over the others was bound, if too successful, to have unsettling repercussions. And to the extent that the disadvantaged sects had close ties with Tibet there was the strong possibility of provoking intervention from the north.

That, very simplistically put, is the sequence of events which seems in fact to have occurred. Precisely what was involved in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's "concerted attempt" is practically ignored in our

sources, but we will have to return to that question later. Gtsang Mkhan-chen, and Bhutanese historians generally, claim that his increasing success in attracting patrons and wealth aroused the jealousy of other Lamas, leading first to local quarrels and finally to war with Tibet.⁷¹ The quarrels, naturally, created a need for defensive measures, and in 1629 we find him laying the foundations of the first of many fortified monasteries in Bhutan, Gsang-sngags-zab-don at Srin-mo-mdo-kha (Simtoka), about five miles south of modern Thimphu.⁷² We are told that much of the labour for this was performed by expatriate Tibetan monks and that the enterprise was constantly harassed by armed assaults of local opponents.⁷³ Poison-tipped arrows and catapults were used in the fighting in addition to efforts at diverting water and food supplies from his camp. But these were successfully countered with the material assistance of the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa people, and by the time the monastery structure and twelve outbuildings were completed about a year later local resistance had temporarily dissipated. A consecration celebration was supervised by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and Lha-dbang-blo-gros, but several more years were needed to complete the monastery's images and paintings.

The forces in opposition to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal during this period are inadequately described in our sources. Gtsang Mkhan-chen and later historians generally refer to them as a coalition of five Lamas (bla-ma-khag-lnga) without further elaboration.⁷⁴ From a variety of passages we know that this coalition mainly consisted of Lha-pa, Gnas-rnying-pa and 'Ba'-ra-ba monks. The other two are not named, but may have been of these sects also.

According to the traditional account the coalition Lamas became frustrated at their inability to prevent the construction of Gsang-

sngags-zab-don and other successes of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, whereupon they appealed to the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa for military intervention. In the interim, however, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been performing destructive sorcery against both the coalition and the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa with telling effect. Evil omens appearing at the Gtsang-pa court brought the advice of Taranātha and other Tibetan advisors that peace be negotiated, even as the coalition was pleading for war. From the Portuguese letters we know that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had representatives at Shigatse in 1628.⁷⁵ Probably they were there all the while, and some negotiations towards a treaty appear to have taken place. The Sa-skyā hierarch Mthu-stobs-dbang-po and his retinue actually came to Bhutan with the intention of acting as intermediary, and a letter from some of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's agents to the Gtsang-pa court mentioning the issues in dispute has been preserved in his biography.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, talks apparently broke down and a Tibetan invasion of Bhutan took place in 1634. The Bhutanese believe that the Tibetan offer to negotiate had never been more than a strategic ploy from the beginning.

The invasionary force of 1634 was larger and more elaborate than that of 1619 and a fair amount of planning must have preceded it. Possibly five Tibetan divisions (dmag-kha) were involved altogether. Four of these were concentrated on Paro and Mgar-sa, and both Lcags-ri and Gsang-sngags-zab-don were subjected to attack. A fifth column is also said to have entered through Bum-thang, east of the central dividing mountains.⁷⁷ The purpose of this last column is something of an anomaly, but may indicate that the strength of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's following in that part of the country was much stronger by 1634 than the Bhutanese sources have described, or that the Tibetans believed it to be so.

In any case the only noteworthy Tibetan accomplishment of the war was the capture and looting of Gsang-sngags-zab-don. But the victory

was incomplete. The most sacred possession, the Rang-byon Khasarpaṇa icon, had earlier been removed for safekeeping and was not taken by the Gtsang-pa forces. And at the very moment of success disaster struck. For while the monastery was being plundered a quantity of gunpowder went off, and the burning wreckage is said to have collapsed on the invading soldiers and killed them to a man.⁷⁸ The remainder of the Tibetan force, supposedly unfamiliar with firearms, panicked at this misfortune and was routed back through Mgar-sa and out of the country, though some were imprisoned.⁷⁹

Thus the Bhutanese claim ultimate victory in the war of 1634 as in the earlier one of 1619. Moreover, it was during this campaign also that the 'Ba'-ra-ba monks were evicted from their stronghold at Mgar-sa, reducing the strength of the coalition by one.⁸⁰ But closer analysis suggests that the triumph was largely notional. The destruction of Gsang-sngags-zab-don, possibly the invasion's principal objective all along, left Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal once more without a permanent fortified seat of government. And although it was soon replaced by more formidable structures, this original seat was not rebuilt until twenty years after his death. Nor is it certain that the dispersal of the Tibetan and allied Bhutanese armies was complete. What is more likely is that a stalemate ensued, and that sporadic fighting continued until 1639, when the third and last war with Gtsang began.

To replace the loss of Gsang-sngags-zab-don, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal undertook the founding of two new monastic fortresses in the years 1637 and 1638. In these imposing structures, Spungs-thang Bde-ba-can and Dbang-'dus-pho-brang, the theory of uniting monastic and governmental headquarters in a single fortified building became fully formulated for the first time. By far the most striking features of the Bhutanese landscape, they are arguably Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's greatest permanent

contribution to the country's peace. Their architectural precedents were no doubt Tibetan but the need for combining state monastery and administrative centre within a single fortified enclosure, along with certain uniquely Bhutanese constructional practices, gives them a character of their own. The dual function is reflected further in their official designation as chos-rdzong ("religious fortress"), though by custom the abbreviated form rdzong is mostly used. Descriptions of these fortresses can be found in a number of recent publications and need not detain us.⁸¹ We may note merely Gtsang Mkhan-chen's account of their original conception and function: they were to be located at naturally-occurring strong points within enemy territory, such as the confluence of two rivers, at places which were known residences of powerful local spirits bound to protect the Buddhist Dharma; and they were to combine monastic and civil headquarters administered jointly in accord with the principle of "dual government" mentioned above.⁸²

The rdzong at Spungs-thang or Spu-nag-kha (hereafter Punakha) was founded on the 8th day of the 8th month of the Fire-Ox year (autumn 1637) in the upper Thed valley at the confluence of the rivers Mo-chu and Pho-chu. The structure as originally laid out included an assembly hall ('du-khang) for 600 monks, shrines for the worship of Avalokiteśvara and Prajñā-pāramitā, cells for resident monks and yogins, and maṇḍala rooms for ordinary rituals and the all-important destructive rites against enemies. The enclosing wall had a single large pillared entryway and several tiers of battlements, beyond which were planted fruit and vegetable gardens.⁸³ Of the labour and organization which went into its construction we have virtually no information. Almost certainly it involved the conscription of hundreds of peasants, possibly

also of slaves from lowland areas along the Indian frontier.⁸⁴ But already by the time Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biographer was writing, some thirty-five years later, legends of divine assistance in the project had become widespread. River spirits reputedly washed up supplies of pine logs even as mountain spirits brought quantities of marble and stone, the whole project being thereby quickly completed by troops of protective deities under Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's direction.⁸⁵

In similar fashion Dbang-'dus-pho-brang (hereafter Wangdiphodrang) was begun in the following year, some twelve miles downstream from Punakha at the confluence of the rivers Thed-chu (Sankosh) and Dangs-chu. The location was selected owing to its proximity to the ancient Khyi-'bur-lha-khang of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, its auspicious triangular shape, and because the river produced a sound "like a thousand dragons uttering the mantra hūm."⁸⁶ The original size of Wangdiphodrang is not stated in our sources but was probably substantially the same as at the present day. Here also little contemporary information is available.

Although silent about their construction, the sources unanimously state that the possession of Punakha and Wangdiphodrang fortresses was decisive in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's bid for supremacy in Bhutan.⁸⁷ One 18th century text even claims that this supremacy was already complete in the year of Wangdiphodrang's construction.⁸⁸ But that was not quite the case, for a third and final war with Gtsang was fought in 1639.

The issues in this campaign were much the same as in the war of 1634. The coalition opposed to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had probably all the while been seeking a renewal of Gtsang-pa military intervention, but why this should finally have occurred in 1639 is not made clear. The matter is further complicated by the allegation of Gtsang Mkhan-chen that the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa had determined on negotiating peace even

before launching his armies. He also states that the Tibetan generals were instructed to avoid as much killing and destruction as possible, and to be alert for an opportunity at peaceful reconciliation.⁸⁹ This would suggest that the invasion was intended largely to gain a more favourable bargaining position for the proposed peace negotiations, which may in fact have been in progress while the war was proceeding. An appreciation of other threats to Gtsang-pa supremacy in Tibet at the time lends weight to this hypothesis and partly explains the timing of the war itself.

It is difficult to date with any precision the period of maximum Gtsang-pa authority in Central Tibet. But in Lhasa, and perhaps Dbus province generally, their position vis-à-vis the Dge-lugs-pa sect and its supporters was becoming increasingly defensive. Already by 1638 several military defeats had been inflicted upon Gtsang-pa armies by Mongol Dge-lugs-pa patrons allied with the Qoshot prince Gushri Khan. And, although their ultimate defeat and overthrow in 1642 could not have been foreseen, the future of Gtsang-pa rule must have appeared dubious.⁹⁰ In the event, it probably became imperative for the Gtsang authorities to resolve as many petty feuds as possible, thereby freeing forces and supplies to engage the greater menace from north and east. The 1640 treaty between Gtsang and Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal of Ladakh has been interpreted in this manner by Petech, and I would suggest that the Bhutan war of 1639 and the treaty which followed be similarly viewed.⁹¹

Finally, the course of other events had served to defuse the controversy over the legitimate rebirth of Padma-dkar-po. Whatever sense of aristocratic solidarity the Kings of Gtsang may have once displayed towards 'Phyongs-rgyas quickly ended when Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617-1682), son of the 'Phyongs-rgyas Sde-pa, was

recognized as the Fifth Dalai Lama. War with the Dge-lugs-pa thereafter meant war with 'Phyongs-rgyas, and in about 1625 the Dalai Lama's father is said to have been imprisoned, possibly murdered, at the behest of the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa Karma Bstan-skyong-dbang-po.⁹² The recognized Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnation Dpag-bsam-dbang-po was now politically valueless to Gtsang, and the way was open to make peace with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in return for Bhutan's support, or at least neutrality, in the war against the Mongol-Yellow Hat alliance.⁹³

Seen from this light the outcome of the 1639 campaign was a foregone conclusion in all but detail. Tibetan forces under Sde-pa Go-lung-pa launched a few desultory attacks, but without inflicting any damage, it seems. As usual, the Bhutanese claim to have driven the attackers off through sorcery, and some deaths were caused.⁹⁴ But right away the Sa-skya hierarch Mthu-stobs-dbang-po was again employed as intermediary, and intense negotiations by proxy resulted in a treaty, signed probably in 1640.

The terms of this treaty are not clearly laid out in the available Bhutanese sources. Possibly some uncomfortable compromises had to be made, for although they write of total victory and vindication of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's position, the facts suggest otherwise. Basically, the Gtsang authorities must have relinquished any territorial or jurisdictional claims to Bhutan (Lho-kha-bzhi), and to have recognized Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal as supreme in the area. From the letters which preceded the settlement it appears that Gtsang had originally demanded Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's tolerance of Lha-pa and Gnas-rnying-pa autonomy.⁹⁵ But this was unacceptable owing to their mutual centuries-old hatreds. Accordingly, the demand was apparently withdrawn and implied or explicit permission to subdue or expel those sects from the country without Gtsang-pa interference was granted.

For his part Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal agreed to cease practising sorcery against Gtsang, and he further agreed to a Lama-Patron relationship (mchod-yon) with Karma Bstan-skyong-dbang-po.⁹⁶ That is all that is officially admitted. But much more is implied, for against the wishes of Gtsang, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had refused either to come to Tibet for the peace talks or even after their conclusion. The excuses were given that he was in meditation at the time, and, confidentially to his followers, that the deity Bya-ro-gdong-can had warned him against it.⁹⁷ Moreover, although the Tibetan Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen Dpag-bsam-dbang-po is said to have had to pay proper respect and acknowledgment to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal following the settlement, conspicuous by its absence is any undertaking from Gtsang openly recognizing Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's claimed incarnate status or right to reoccupy Rwa-lung.⁹⁸ So it appears that, since Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was unwilling to return to Tibet for the negotiations (risking capture or worse), the price to be paid for his recognition as sovereign in Bhutan would be that he stay there.

This was a victory of sorts. And had Gtsang retained political supremacy in Tibet the peace of 1640 might well have developed in a more genuinely cordial direction. But that was not to be, for in 1642 the Gtsang-pa armies were totally defeated by Gushri Khan, who thereupon conferred complete spiritual dominion in Tibet upon the Fifth Dalai Lama. Supported by Mongol armies, the Dga'-ldan-pho-brang government of the Yellow Hat Dge-lugs-pa sect became established as the new paramount authority, a status it nominally retained until 1959.⁹⁹ From 1642 Bhutan was faced once more with political and military uncertainty vis-à-vis the superior might of Tibet.

In the meantime Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had moved rapidly to consolidate his position. Districts and forts throughout western Bhutan

were seized and their occupants given the option of submission or expulsion. Forces under his authority also reached far into eastern Bhutan, probably for the first time. In 1641 Rdo-sngon-rdzong in the Thim valley was taken. Once a palace of Pha-jo descendants, it appears to have come later under the control of the Lha-pa sect, but was now reconverted to the 'Brug-pa.¹⁰⁰ Soon it would be enlarged under the direction of Phyag-mdzod-pa A'u Drung and became the second seat of 'Brug-pa government in Bhutan with the new name of Bkra-shis-chos-rdzong (hereafter Tashichhodzong).¹⁰¹ Almost certainly at this time any Lha-pa and Gnas-rnying-pa leaders remaining in Bhutan left the country for Tibet.

Tribute to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was of two kinds, spiritual and temporal. In the former category congratulatory missions are said to have been sent even by the Dge-lugs-pa in Tibet,¹⁰² although that is difficult to confirm. Other messengers arrived from the Sa-skya hierarch and the Black Hat Karma-pa Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje, who allegedly offered to cease taking rebirth in the interests of harmony among the Bka'-brgyud-pa sects.¹⁰³ Perhaps most important was a personal mission from the Pad-gling Gsung-sprul Rin-po-che Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje, reigning hierarch of the extensive Padma-gling-pa establishment in Bhutan and Tibet, who had himself once received patronage from Karma Bstan-skyong-dbang-po.¹⁰⁴ Pleasantries and initiations are said to have been exchanged, but discussions of a more political nature must also have taken place. Religious delegations of lesser importance also arrived during this period.

Regarding the arrival of tribute missions from district princelings and foreign heads of state, it must be stated from the outset that the available sources hopelessly cloud the subject with extravagant and

pious verbiage. This is unfortunate. Some of the missions, including those from the kings of Nepal and Cooch Bihar, were obviously of a congratulatory nature only, with no implication of submission to a superior power. Nor can they be confirmed from documents of those states. Others, from districts within Bhutan, must have implied acknowledgment of temporal superiority, in which case they should be interpreted as the antecedents of a regular system of tax collection. Since we have no information relating to traditional taxation and tributary customs in the country before the establishment of 'Brug-pa government it is useless to speculate about what alterations or innovations may have been formulated at this time. Irregular tithes (yon) must have been paid for centuries by local monasteries and patrons to their respective Tibetan or Bhutanese clergy, and in the case of the Sa-skya hermitages we know that these continued to be paid even up to the 20th century. On the other hand it can be presumed that the various dominant families had been accustomed to exacting agricultural taxes and other tolls from peasants within their reach, and that the submission of these families to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's authority involved a transference of some or all of those privileges to him. We are told that a survey of villages and hamlets for taxation purposes was made during these early years,¹⁰⁵ but no such documents have become available for the 17th century. Thus, anything more than the most superficial account of early economic matters will be impossible until better sources become available.

A brief list by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biographer of the districts inside the country sending congratulatory tribute or taxes within a year or so of 1640 gives some idea of the extent of territory coming within his grasp, although too much reliance on its accuracy should not be allowed at this point. From the east (Shar-phyogs) was collected

during the first month of an unstated year taxes or tribute described as stong-'bul and brgya-'bul from Kha-ling, Me-rag-sa-steng, and Gdung-bsam (Dewangiri), consisting of items made of gold, silver, bronze, brass and crystal, bolts of cotton, wool and silks, and quantities of aloe and lac.¹⁰⁶ On the tenth month of that year he received more bolts of cloth and several thousands of ma-tam coins as brgya-'bul from A-sdang, Rus-kha, Rtse-rag-dum-bu and Dar-dkar, as well as from districts in or near India called Bye-ma and Rā-dza. In the following eighth month he received similar contributions of gold, silver, tea, silks, woollens, salt, virgin wool, etc. from Paro, Phag-ri, and Cooch Bihar. Finally, during the tenth month there were contributed from nomadic pastoralist districts such as 'Broq Gling-bzhi, Phi-yags-la, Lung-nag-gangs-kyi-ra-ba and Dgon large amounts of salt, wool, and butter.¹⁰⁷

In short, for a time everything seemed to be moving in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's favour. Bhutan was assuming much the shape that it has at the present day. The nucleus of the kingdom, the two valleys of Thed and Thim and their respective fortresses of Punakha and Tashichhodzong, were more or less firmly under his control. From Wangdiphodrang he dominated the Shar district of western Bhutan and passes to the east. Shar-phyogs, the east proper, had yet to be fully subjugated, but some taxes and tribute were already flowing from deep in that direction. 'Obs-mtsho, Dkar-sbis, and probably other prominent families and villages of Dgon (Mgar-sa) had been 'Brug-pa patrons since 1616 or earlier, and would continue to provide critical security along the northwestern frontier sensitive to invasion from the north. Possibly the annual custom of shifting the monastic and administrative seat between Punakha and Tashichhodzong, the winter and summer capitals, can be dated from this period.¹⁰⁸

Even his arch-rival in Tibet, Dpag-bsam-dbang-po, had died in 1641. For years Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been performing sorcery against this hapless incarnation, and when the death became known he claimed credit for having caused it, and celebrations were held. For he had sworn that this must happen, as an omen from the protective deities vindicating his own claim as the true rebirth: "Whichever of us is the reembodiment of Padma-dkar-po will remain living, and see for yourselves if the false one doesn't die. Ye-shes-mgon-po will surely discriminate thus between the true and the false."¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, from the time of the Dge-lugs-pa ascendancy in Tibet in 1642, forces were at work laying the foundation for disharmony and ultimately of war with the fledgling 'Brug-pa state in Bhutan. While Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was consolidating his spiritual and temporal supremacy in the south, the Fifth Dalai Lama and his retainers were similarly occupied in Tibet. Whether from fear of the Mongols or perceived political expediency, the landed nobility and lesser sectarian hierarchs of Tibet began rapidly to acknowledge Dge-lugs-pa supremacy and the exalted status of the Dalai Lama within the emerging Yellow Hat government. Almost every week brought new parties of emissaries offering submission and respectful tribute to his camp, first at Shigatse and later at Lhasa. The process would continue, on a reduced scale, for several years.¹¹⁰

The Karma-pa hierarchs, as is known, were initially reluctant to pay homage. Many of their patrons and retainers who survived the main destruction of Gtsang-pa power took refuge where they could, sensing, with good reason, the threat of further persecution or worse. A large body of these resided temporarily in the southern districts of Lho-brag where they resisted Dge-lugs-pa attempts to conciliate. They

soon fled eastwards before approaching Mongol and Tibetan armies, eventually to be crushed in the fight at Kong-po.¹¹¹ But the flight from Lho-brag had not been quick enough to quell Dge-lugs-pa fears of a Karma-pa counteroffensive in the area which, according to the rumours, was being reequipped from as far south as Kāmarūpa.¹¹² Even after these proved to be without serious foundation, the south was to bear close watching. Rather than risk capture, many Karma-pas took refuge in Bhutan during this period, among whom were numbered Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's future biographer, Gtsang Mkhan-chen, and other members of his family who had not been killed in the fighting. For the Mongol victories marking the rise of Yellow Hat supremacy in Tibet seemed to him as clear signs of the culmination of Padmasambhava's prophecies, directing true men of religion to refuge in the Hidden Lands.¹¹³

Other events at this time were also foreshadowing a strong possibility of conflict with Bhutan. Already in 1642 the lineal heir (gdung-brgyud) of the Lha-pa had paid his personal respects to the Fifth Dalai Lama, one of the first sectarian heads to do so. Furious at the abuses he claimed to have suffered at the hands of the 'Brug-pa, and now in forced exile in Tibet, he urged a policy of war against Bhutan.¹¹⁴ But the Dalai Lama, at least, mindful of the difficulties war in Bhutan had caused during the times of Gtsang-pa government, was initially resistant to the idea.

Nevertheless, a small invasion did take place, in 1644. The Fifth Dalai Lama seems to have regarded it as an extension of the expedition against rebellious Karma-pa troops in Lho-brag, and not as a deliberate attack on Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.¹¹⁵ This explanation is plausible for a number of reasons. The mixed Tibetan-Mongol army which penetrated Bhutan during the incident only numbered about 700 men, and their

disastrous defeat suggests either an incredible error in tactics and planning or a naive expectation that no substantial resistance would be met. Actually, it is not certain that the areas of modern Bhutan south of Lho-brag were then more than nominally a part of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's expanding territories, and it is unlikely that Tibet would have recognized such a claim in any case without a fight. The Bhutanese, however, connect this invasion with another one near Tashichhodzong in the west, at a place called Ka-wang-rdzong. The Dge-lugs-pa troops are said to have successfully occupied this fort for a time, only surrendering it and suing for peace when defeat appeared certain.¹¹⁶

Whatever Tibetan motives and misconceptions of Bhutanese power may have been before the invasion, the reality of clear defeat was certain to alter future thinking on issues relating to Bhutan. The Dalai Lama admits to the capture of several of his generals including Nang-so Dngos-'grub, 'Brong-rtse-nas and 'Dus-byung-nas, and also acknowledges that the bulk of the chastened troops were allowed to return in peace. This tallies with Bhutanese sources which, however, add that thousands of pieces of armour, rifles, tents, horses and mules were captured in the fighting.¹¹⁷ The defeat of 1644, Shakabpa has concluded, "shattered the myth of an invincible Mongol army and, in the future, Mongols were unwilling to fight in the humid southern regions."¹¹⁸ Actually Mongols were to invade Bhutan on several later occasions, though in larger numbers and with better preparation.

The full motives for the Mongol-Tibetan invasion of 1644 can only be guessed at, and should probably be viewed in a wider context as one of numerous campaigns to consolidate and extend the victory of 1642 over Gtsang. Almost certainly the new Lhasa government did not yet recognize the legitimacy of what must have appeared then as an arriviste independent Tibetan principality aggressively promoting the

cause of a rival Buddhist sect. The sectarian issue would come to dominate their relations even more in later years, when the theological underpinnings of their respective constitutional bases became fully elaborated and openly contradictory.¹¹⁹

But the possibility of sheer undisciplined militancy should not be ruled out as a cause for the 1644 encounter. It appears from the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography that he had for years been advancing more cautious policies than his aggressively militant regent Bsod-nams-chos-'phel.¹²⁰ The climactic struggle of 1642 had come about largely through his machinations, against the wishes and without the knowledge of the Dalai Lama. There seems more than a measure of truth in the Bhutanese assessment that successive victories in Tibet had engendered arrogant overconfidence in the Yellow Hat troops, from which there arose the reckless scheme to take all of the south under their control.¹²¹ To these causes for war could now be added a further one, the desire for revenge.

Accordingly, hostilities between Tibet and Bhutan did not end with the peaceful return of Tibetan troops in 1644. Lingered warfare seems to have continued for another two years until a final settlement was reached in 1646 through mediation of the Sa-skya hierarch and the Tibetan Rnying-ma-pa yogin Rig-'dzin-snying-po. The full terms of this agreement are not to be found in the available sources. A number of important negotiators were sent down from Tibet, including some officials of the Northern 'Brug-pa sect, and a formal acknowledgment of defeat took place before the throne of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal at Punakha.¹²² The imprisoned Tibetan generals were released at this time, but the captured armaments were kept. In particular the weapons belonging to Gtsang Mda'-dpon Bkras-sgang-nas and Nang-so Dngos-grub were singled

out as souvenirs of victory for display in the Punakha mgon-khang which had been built in 1645 by the renowned architect Sprul-sku Rdzing (d.ca. 1674) to commemorate the first Bhutanese defeat of the Yellow Hats.¹²³ Now in 1646 the mgon-khang was christened G.yul-rgyal-mgon-khang-chen-mo ("Great Shrine of the Protective Lord Victorious over Enemies") and a series of annual celebrations was inaugurated involving rites and dances to guarantee the destruction of future enemies.

The humiliating surrender in Bhutan provoked intense bitterness on the part of the Tibetan rulers who quickly became the subject of some derogatory ditties circulating among the Bhutanese.¹²⁴ Retaliation was not long in coming. At the New Year celebrations for 1647 the new Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnation Mi-pham-dbang-po (1642-1717) was presented before the Dalai Lama for his tonsuring ceremonies, by his tutor Kun-dga'-lhun-grub (1617-1676), the Second Bde-chen-chos-'khor Yongs-'dzin and rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's old enemy Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po. For a time, at least, the Dge-lugs-pa troubles with Bhutan were to be of great benefit to the Northern 'Brug-pa church. Their common enmity with Bhutan made them natural allies, while some Yellow Hat favouritism towards the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnates had probably carried over since the days of the previous embodiment Dpag-bsam-dbang-po, who had been a relative of the Fifth Dalai Lama. But the sudden friendship between the Northern 'Brug-pa and Dge-lugs-pa officials was only one of convenience, and was to endure only so long as it was politically useful to the superior power.

In 1647 its political value was high, and the New Year meeting was apparently conducted with much pomp and flourish.¹²⁵ Tibetan nobles and Mongol grandees attended the child's enthronement and presented him

with gifts, as did the two Tibetan regents Bsod-nams-chos-'phel and Gushri Khan (Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal). The latter's son Dalai Khungteji was also among the well-wishers. The Northern 'Brug-pa at this time submitted formal acknowledgment of Dge-lugs-pa supremacy (mchod-yon), supposedly in harmony with an arrangement once existing between Padma-dkar-po and the Third Dalai Lama Bsod-nams-rgya-mtsho.¹²⁶ The document embodying this submission in turn granted the title of jasak upon the child Mi-pham-dbang-po and formal authority to take control of all 'Brug-pa properties in Tibet, including 'Brug and Rwa-lung.¹²⁷ The Tibetan 'Brug-pas were told that the confiscation of these properties and transfer of control to them was on account of evil deeds of the 'Brug-pa in Bhutan. Kun-dga'-lhun-grub could scarcely contain his elation at this turn of events; "I laughed to myself at the fact that the ignorant boasters had now come to such an end through their own bad behaviour."¹²⁸

So was ended for the foreseeable future any thought Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal might still have entertained of regaining possession of his ancestral seat. Shortly after the New Year meeting the Tibetan general Nang-so Dngos-grub, fresh from his imprisonment in Bhutan, was dispatched by the Tibetan government to seize control of Rwa-lung and turn it over to Mi-pham-dbang-po's retainers. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's agent at Rwa-lung, 'Brug-rnam-rgyal, was turned out of the place and fled back to Bhutan.¹²⁹

Meanwhile the fighting of 1644-46 had apparently convinced Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal of the need for greater caution and better security arrangements for districts under his claim. War with the Dge-lugs-pa may not have appeared inevitable to him after the Gtsang-pa overthrow in 1642, or at least so soon after. Now, however, there was to be no

question. Already in 1645 he had founded another landmark fortress of the present day, the Rin-chen-spungs rdzong at Paro. This was now the westernmost of his fortresses, and must have afforded easier domination over the rich agricultural lands in the valley which the Jesuit visitors had described in such glowing terms in 1627. The certainty of his domination was further ensured by consecrating the Paro temple and fortress in accord with the Rnying-ma-pa dgongs-'dus rituals introduced in Bhutan at this time by Rig-'dzin-snying-po. The Tshes-bcu ("Tenth Day") ceremonials honouring Padmasambhava were also inaugurated on this occasion.¹³⁰ Both are principally concerned with the propitiation of protective deities and the eradication of enemies of the Dharma, and survive to the present day as important religious ceremonies.

Measures to strengthen frontier defences were continued after 1646 also. In the critical northwest region there were founded at this time the fortresses of Mgar-sa Bkra-shis-mthong-smon and Gling-bzhi G.yul-rgyal-rdzong to guard the passes from Tibet into the upper Thed and Thim valleys. The construction of these two forts was probably the work of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, who was later to distinguish himself as the Third Sde-srid.¹³¹

About this time also a vigorous campaign was begun to rid the country of thieves and robbers, and of recalcitrant peasants who had supported the Dge-lugs-pa during their invasion. An offensive in the south near Dar-dkar-nang (hereafter Tagana) is said to have pacified that area, probably resulting in the resettlement of many families in districts adjacent to Cooch Bihar. A similar offensive at Gling-bzhi and Mgar-sa drove entire villages of people across the frontier into Tibet. Their confiscated lands were given to new settlers of proven

loyalty from valleys further south.¹³² Almost certainly this manner of pacification had been going on for many years, even though our sources are largely silent about it. Nevertheless, the existence of exiled Bhutanese peasants, herdsmen, and some "aristocrats" along Tibet's southern fringes will have to be kept in mind if the sources of later border frictions and warfare are to be properly appreciated.¹³³

In fact full scale war with Tibet broke out once more, in 1648.¹³⁴ Again this began with an invasion launched from Tibet by Bsod-nams-chos-'phel, but now of more sizable dimensions. The Dalai Lama offers no motives for the episode and I am inclined to view it as inspired mainly out of a desire for revenge and to regain face after earlier defeats. In this, however, the Tibetans were to be disappointed. About the summer of that year the Gtsang regiments laid siege to Paro (H̄um-ral), apparently with catapults and firearms. After a few months, however, the assault was broken precipitously and the attackers fled back to Phag-ri, once more leaving behind large stores of weapons, tents and supplies.¹³⁵ News of this rout reached the Dbus regiments who were simultaneously besieging Punakha. Panic set in there, too, and in their disorderly retreat many soldiers were killed and most of the Tibetan commanders captured.

Other than the date, the Tibetan and Bhutanese descriptions of this war differ only in the latter's jubilant elaboration of the results. The defeat was clear and the Tibetans admit it. Some Bhutanese sources claim that their victory had been prophesied even by Tibetan oracles before the armies were ever sent.¹³⁶ In any case the war is remembered in Bhutan largely for the special celebration rituals inaugurated at Punakha and the construction of a permanent memorial there, the Bye-ba-mchod-rten, as tribute to the lives of their

soldiers who died in the fighting.¹³⁷ Sometime later, perhaps in the following year, the captured Tibetan leaders were freed to return to Tibet.

In the aftermath of this war Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal continued, as before, the process of pacifying the countryside and taking new areas under his control. And having decisively driven back two, possibly three, expeditionary forces from Tibet, he seems to have now turned his attention more fully towards the south and east. Sometime during 1650 a force under the gzhung-mgron-gnyer 'Brug-rnam-rgyal, his former agent at Rwa-lung, was sent out to Tagana. Following a brief struggle with its unnamed occupants the fortress and its surroundings were taken.¹³⁸ This area of southwestern Bhutan had been the scene of earlier pacification attempts by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, but its remoteness from government fortresses had apparently encouraged occupation by evacuees from interior Bhutan and various bands of marauders. After the capture of Tagana, however, the surrounding tracts all came under Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's domination. Tagana (more properly Dar-dkar Bkra-shis-yang-rtse) also controlled an ancient trade route to India, and was soon to become the main administrative centre of the area. By the mid-18th century, if not earlier, one of its major functions would be to oversee the collection of taxes from Indian estates under Bhutanese control.¹³⁹

The subjugation of eastern Bhutan, Shar-phyogs, is a matter about which very little is presently understood. One or two manuscripts treating the subject circulate in Bhutan but are not easily available outside the country.¹⁴⁰ We have seen from an earlier discussion that the region claimed a long history of petty kings and Rnying-ma-pa religious influence, compared with which the 'Brug-pa and other Bka'-

brgyud-pa Buddhist sects were in an inferior position. Generally speaking also, traditional linkages with Tibet of religion, family, and political influence appear to have been weaker in Shar-phyogs than the west, excepting perhaps Bum-thang and other isolated districts in the northeast. These considerations, together with the known fact of assiduously cultivated friendship between Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's emerging polity and the various Padma-gling-pa hierarchs, go far towards explaining why sectarian (as opposed to civil) warfare was less characteristic of 'Brug-pa subjugation of the east than the west. At the same time, the monastic emphasis of our historical sources explains why, in the absence of sectarian warfare, information on the process of subjugation is largely ignored. Little happened of interest to the religion.

Nevertheless, the fact of weak sectarian resistance to this expansion should not be interpreted to indicate that eastern pacification was comparatively peaceful. On the contrary, there are many hints and plain statements in the literature suggesting the opposite. Only the details of this are missing. But indications are everywhere abundant that the integration of Shar-phyogs with the rest of Bhutan, both administratively and religiously, was a slow process. As an instance of this integrative backwardness is the fact that up to 1763, the period covered in this study, only two occupants of the position of Sde-srid and none of Rje Mkhan-po were natives of Shar-phyogs. The two exceptions, the Tenth and Eleventh Sde-srid, were both of a single family which prided itself on its Tibetan ancestry.

Expansion into Shar-phyogs was accomplished by religious missions and military exploits. The few early missions have already been dealt with in Ch. IV and to this there needs to be added for the early 17th

century only that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father, Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, is connected with the history of several families and monasteries of the east, but particularly with Bkra-shis-sgang (hereafter Tashigang), which was to become a 'Brug-pa administrative rdzong in the 1660's. As far as can be determined, however, concerted 'Brug-pa missionary efforts began only after the campaigns for political domination got under way in about 1650. This is just the reverse of the familiar pattern of government following the church, and probably marks some change in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's intentions about this time. The characteristic features of an ecclesiastic state were beginning to emerge from those of a monastic domain.

Of the military campaigns themselves hardly anything can yet be said. Gtsang Mkhan-chen merely notes that, about the same time as the raid on Tagana, his forces were also successful in reducing the main districts of eastern Bhutan, namely Bum-thang (northeast central), Kha-ling (east) and Khyen (southeast).¹⁴¹ To this the Lho'i chos 'byung adds that by 1651 he was also in control of Ku-ru-lung (northeast) and Mang-'dus (east central), altogether a total of four large populated valleys and eighteen minor ones,¹⁴² as well as of prominent Indian landholders and their cultivators at Gdung-bsam-kha (Dewangiri) and Kha-ling, in the vicinity of Tashigang. The distinction between "Indian" and "Bhutanese" peasants in those areas can hardly have been sharp at this period.¹⁴³

The man commissioned to lead the 'Brug-pa offensive into Shar-phyogs was Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa (1613-1681), a Tibetan monk who early in his life had thrown in his lot with Bhutan, where he shed his monastic robes in favour of a sword. Starting from Dar-rgyas-dgon-pa in the Shar district of Wangdiphodrang his conquests progressed rapidly eastwards, until by

1655 all the strongholds of various independent princelings as far as Kha-ling were brought under 'Brug-pa authority.¹⁴⁴ The long career of this remarkable man will be described more fully in the next chapter. Here we need only note that already by 1651 he had conquered the Mang-'dus valley and built the fortress of Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse from which, under the later name of Krong-gsar (hereafter Tongsa), all of Shar-phyogs was to be administered up to the 20th century.

By 1650, then, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was at the very peak of his successful career. Prevented from regaining status and properties in Tibet, first by the Kings of Gtsang and later by the Yellow Hat government at Lhasa, he had proceeded to carve out a 'Brug-pa state along the southern frontier of the old empire of the early kings of Tibet. He had successfully defended his independence in several wars, all the while extending the limits of his territory by conversion and force, so that he now controlled an area from the Himalayan barrier in the north to the terai jungles in the south, while to eastwards and westwards his boundaries were still being actively extended.

But the process of state-building involved more than simple territorial expansion. Attention to matters of social welfare and the economy was essential if peace and security were to prevail, and these were not ignored. Here the historian is faced with the same problem of inadequate source descriptions as for the military effort. We have only bare and incomplete lists of his deeds, with little attempt to explain precisely how, why, or when various enterprises were begun, the reasoning behind them, difficulties encountered, regional variations, expenditures, etc. The two instances of improvements to irrigation and communications are typical examples. For these Gstang Mkhan-chen simply states that "to places where formerly there had been no water, or where water had been scarce, water was brought and

the fields made fertile; he built bridges over bridgeless rivers and roads among the roadless mountains."¹⁴⁵ For the moment it will be necessary to put aside the question of proper historical method for analyzing such claims in order to note briefly what some of his alleged accomplishments were. It will be enough to keep in mind, though, that in every instance such accomplishments and innovations were well in keeping with the principles and practices of enlightened ecclesiastic administration of earlier Tibetan governments, and that later Bhutanese writers everywhere assume their preexistence.

Broadly speaking, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's innovations for social and material improvement can be resolved into those for the promotion of law and order, the promotion of trade and commerce, and the promotion of spiritual welfare.¹⁴⁶ A brief analysis of the theoretical foundation of the 'Brug-pa ecclesiastic state which was emerging at this time will help to explain the interconnections between these categories.¹⁴⁷ The church and monasteries were the basis of everything, the source of law and its final arbiter. The territorial state existed exclusively to support them, and its administration was but a branch of monastic obligation. The head of state was a Bodhisattva, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, who was both a physical embodiment of Avalokiteśvara as well as the immediate rebirth of Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras. His authority to rule was further legitimized, as we have seen, by his status as patrilineal heir to Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras' branch of the Rgya clan of Rwa-lung. Thus, the head of family, head of state, and head of the church were one and the same, while state law was but an elaboration of monastic law, both being grounded in scriptural ordinances ascribed to Śākyamuni.

The head of state, by virtue of his Bodhisattva vows and his being a living embodiment of Avalokiteśvara, was further constrained by the

requirement that he behave in accord with the Ten Duties of the Tathāgata and the Ten Perfections, such as charity, good conduct, courage, etc.¹⁴⁸ From this aspect of the theory derived the monastery's obligations to its dependent patrons and peasants, or, at the more developed level, the state's obligations to its citizens. But whereas at the simplest level, what I have for convenience called the monastic domain, the theory of the Bodhisattva-hierarch was sufficient, at the later and more complex level of ecclesiastic state a more elaborate formulation was felt to be necessary. The church hierarch when functioning as head of state was conceived of as acting in the role of Dharmarāja (Tib. Chos-rgyal). And since, finally, the status of church hierarch as Dharmarāja grew out of and presupposed that of the church hierarch as Bodhisattva, the former's code of obligations was but an elaboration of the other and was derived theoretically from the same scriptural sources.

Such was the conceptual foundation of the Bhutan government or 'Brug-gzhung. There were further ramifications which will have to be considered at a later point, but enough has been said to illustrate the historical and theoretical context of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's innovations in social matters to view them from the Bhutanese perspective. Very briefly, law and order were promoted by a series of edicts and moral prescriptions promulgated in the form of a legal code (khrims-yig) and administered by the fledgling bureaucracy of the district rdzongs. The basis of the code was the famous "Thirteen Prescripts" (zhal-lce-bcu-gsum) attributed to Srong-btsan-sgam-po of the ancient Tibetan monarchy, modified for Bhutanese conditions with what might be called statutes, edicts regulating the behaviour of officials, the treatment to be accorded monks, administrative guidelines for the assessment and

collection of taxes, and so forth.¹⁴⁹ Monastic discipline it has already been noted was to be enforced through a separate document, the Bca'-yig-chen-mo compiled at Rwa-lung and first applied in Bhutan at Lcags-ri in 1623.

Taxation of the peasants and nomadic families, potentially the most volatile administrative issue, was to be guided by the scriptural principle that public wealth be devoted to the public good. Since state administration was in theory an extension of monastic administration, taxes collected by the state were to be only so much as might be needed to support the monkhood in modest comfort and to promote general public welfare by relief measures for the poor and weak, and by the construction of stupas and other religious edifices.¹⁵⁰ In addition, a census of tax-paying households was conducted and a monk tax (btsun-khral) levied, whereby the middle son of families with three or more sons was conscripted to enter the state monastery.¹⁵¹ This tax was probably levied only at irregular intervals.

How fairly law and order were actually maintained during Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's last years, or even how far into the countryside his laws were applied, we cannot say for certain. Gtsang Mkhan-chen, writing in about 1674, claimed that by these laws

"he suppressed all robbery, banditry, and other malicious ways including disrespectfulness, lack of compassion, ungratefulness and indifference for fear and injury caused to others. By these the entire country became peaceful and wealthy; it was peaceful like the proverbial Era of Good Fortune. For foreigners travelling from one district to another on missions of trade there was freedom from enemies, as also for pilgrims, women adorned with jewelry, children, and even for the elderly, who could carry their wealth as they pleased. All of our old people, those still clear of mind and knowledgeable of the past [before the introduction of law], speak truthfully of their gratitude for these."¹⁵²

Flourishing trade and commerce depended partly on equity of taxation and the maintenance of law and order. But beyond that, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal is said to have opened up many trade marts on the frontiers with India, Nepal and Tibet.¹⁵³ The Jesuit travellers in 1627 already testified to the fact that the country was "well provided with Chinese merchandise such as silk, gold and porcelain...", and that trade between Bhutan and Kashmir via western Tibet was abundant.¹⁵⁴ The trade marts, no doubt the Lho kha bzhi of Buxa, Dewangiri, Stag-rtse-kha, and Brda-gling-kha, "with Punakha in the centre," and probably supplemented by now with Cooch Bihar and Kha-ling, had been flourishing in some degree for generations. But by the promotion of communications and stable social intercourse we may believe that such trade as had traditionally existed could now become more voluminous and plentiful. The frontier trade was very likely by this time being regulated by agents (drung-pa) stationed at the trade marts, as was the case in later days, and probably some tax on imports was being collected.

The promotion of spiritual welfare, of course, was fundamental to everything. This could be accomplished in part by the construction and endowment of monasteries, conscription of monks, and the enforcement of monastic discipline. Institutional religion also required facilities for study and instruction as well as workshops to perpetuate traditional Lamaist crafts such as sculpture and carving, production of books, casting of icons, painting, etc. The transmission of textual learning was partly undertaken by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself. We know that he personally composed several commentatorial works on logic and ritual practice, as well as some prayers and minor pieces which have been incorporated in later collections. It is likely

that a collected edition of his works was once available, and may still be so, since little is yet known of the range of indigenous Bhutanese scholastic literature. A knowledgeable scholar of the 18th century tells us that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had written many treatises, filling several volumes.¹⁵⁵ Two important literary projects attributed to his reign were a new edition of Vinaya translations, allegedly arranged on more scientific principles than that of Bu-ston, and a collected edition of the works of Padma-dkar-po, the "Omniscient" scholar whose voluminous ritual and scholastic writings still form the basis of 'Brug-pa liturgy and philosophy.¹⁵⁶ It was only in later years, however, that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's intention of founding a college for higher academic studies (Mtshan-nyid-bshad-grwa) could be accomplished.¹⁵⁷

The traditional Lamaist crafts, particularly painting and sculpture, were especially dear to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. He himself was an acknowledged master of them, for which he had reputedly exhibited uncanny talent even as a young boy.¹⁵⁸ Our observant Jesuit Fathers reported on this feature of his character also:¹⁵⁹

"...in his leisure moments he made some images, one of which he showed us, an image of the face of God... carved in white sandal wood, small but excellently made. He was also very accomplished in the art of painting; when Cacella showed him a picture of the archangel Raphael, he wished to make a copy of it and set to work at once."

Although indigenous Bhutanese craftsmen were known for their fine workmanship even in earlier days, the casting of icons and clay sculpting required special training largely unavailable in Bhutan before Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's time. Even after 1616 the first workshops were only informally set up whenever a special need arose, and skilled Newar artisans were inticed to Bhutan from Nepal and Tibet, probably with

offers of generous salaries. For the workshop founded in 1620 to erect the Silver Stupa for Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma we know the names of the Newar craftsmen Ma-ni, Ma-yang, Dza-ti-pha-la, A-mi-pha-la and Mangala-bkra-shis, the last of whom was an acknowledged master blacksmith.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, when the famous ngon-khang at Punakha was being built Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal summoned from Tibet Sprul-sku Rdzing as chief artisan, who had already gained recognition for his work under the Karma-pa hierarch Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje.¹⁶¹ Beginning from these ad hoc efforts, more permanent workshops became established and numerous Bhutanese craftsmen of later fame got their initial training in this manner.¹⁶²

The intricate skills of mural, Thang-ka, and mandala painting had been transmitted to Bhutan through several channels by 1650. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself supervised the painting and gilding of thousands of clay statues for the Bye-ba-mchod-rten and is said to have got eyestrain in consequence.¹⁶³ But more formal tuition in painting began with Gtsang Mkhan-chen and Sprul-sku Mi-pham-chos-'phel, both of whom had been renowned in Tibet for their mastery of the Sman-ris and Mkhyen-ris styles. There were other teachers and many students. Gtsang Mkhan-chen's most famous trainee was Byang-chub-sems-dpa' Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho (1646-1719) who also learned from him the technique of fabricating massive appliqué temple hangings (gos-thang-chen-po) for which Bhutan is still famous.¹⁶⁴ Instruction in the household crafts for public consumption and export was also promoted at Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's behest and standards of quality were inspected at the trade marts.¹⁶⁵

This discussion does not exhaust the list of accomplishments attributed to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, but for sheer industry and range of imaginative interests one would probably have to go back to

T'ai Si-tu Byang-chub-rgyal-mtshan (1302-1364), founder of the Phag-mo-gru Hegemony, to find a man of comparable qualities in Tibetan history.¹⁶⁶ In due course field studies and more plentiful textual sources will no doubt add greatly to our understanding of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's life and work. Had he lived to personally consolidate his attainments some of the misfortunes which befell the country in later years might have been averted. Unfortunately this was not to be, and in 1650 an event occurred which would irrevocably alter the course of Bhutan's history.

Sometime towards the end of that year Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal received various prophetic visions from Padmasambhava and others encouraging him to enter firm meditative retreat. By such meditations, it was said, he could surely generate sufficient magical power to drive back and destroy once and for all the Tibetan and other armies that were constantly menacing his land from the borders. Accordingly, in the third month of the Iron-Hare year (1651) he entered a fast contemplative retreat, a retreat from which he never emerged.¹⁶⁷

The fact is that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal died at or about this date. This we know from later sources which admit to it openly, but at the time it was known only to a small clique of his most trusted attendants. The fiction was officially circulated, and quite obviously widely believed, that the interim arrangements for administering the state during his retreat would cease upon his emergence and that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was all the while watching out over Bhutan's welfare from the security of his sealed chambers. The cause of his death is not clearly known. The Fifth Dalai Lama claims to have learned of his illness in early 1651 from spies stationed at Phag-ri, who reported that the Bhutanese leaders were themselves uncertain about it, but

that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had in any case entered some kind of coma and had been hurriedly taken in secret to Punakha. The Dalai Lama attributed the illness to destructive magic undertaken by the Tibetan government.¹⁶⁸ A later Bhutanese source claims that his food had been poisoned.¹⁶⁹

How long the secret of his death was maintained, and the official fiction to explain his absence, we do not know. One author states that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself had ordered that, in the event of his death, the secret should be maintained for twelve years.¹⁷⁰ For many years during his retreat it was the custom for young acolytes being admitted to the state monastery to receive their tonsuring and name-giving ceremonies from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal through a small slot in his cell. The last such occurrence for which I have found any specific notice was in 1662, when 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was tonsured, but it seems certain that the fact of his "permanent retreat" was not officially admitted for many decades.¹⁷¹ The peculiarities of the mystery were still being discussed at Sde-dge in eastern Tibet in the late 17th century, while the final rites for his cremation and death (dgongs-rdzogs) were not publicly performed until 1754.¹⁷²

The reason for concealing his sickness and death is fairly clear, but the solution to the problem would tax the ingenuity of Bhutanese administrators for long into the future. The reason was that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had left no eligible heir to the throne. Nor had any constitutional principle been worked out to accommodate such a disastrous situation, one which had not occurred in the Rgya family line since perhaps the 13th century.¹⁷³ We have already seen that patrilineal or "uncle-nephew" succession had remained the unchallenged principle at Rwa-lung for centuries, and that it was partly to defend this principle

that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had originally fled to Bhutan in 1616.

Thus the need to produce a son had been crucial all along, and about the time he had determined to found a new government in Bhutan in 1625 he also took a tantric consort. But after some four years this lady, Dam-chos-bstan-'dzin (1606-1660), had only given birth to a daughter, following which he "divorced" or abandoned her for another woman.¹⁷⁴

The new wife, Rgyal-yum Gos-dkar-sgrol-ma (1603-1684), dutifully gave birth to a son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje in 1631, but for reasons to be discussed in the following chapter the boy was later found to be unfit to ascend the throne.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, however, having produced his intended heir, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal took the bhikṣu vows of final ordination from Lha-dbang-blo-gros, probably the latter's last official act before his death in 1633/4.¹⁷⁶ Thus, by the time 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's impediment became apparent the course of events had made it impossible for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal to take a further wife, as the prohibition against marriage for fully ordained monks had been religiously insisted upon by Padma-dkar-po and probably also in the Bca'-yig-chen-mo which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself had promulgated.

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Here we may leave the story in order to make a few final comments on some of the significant points of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's career and his place in the history of Lamaist governments generally. There can be no gainsaying the fact of his remarkable personality and accomplishments, that he was, as Petech concludes, "a true nation builder...practically unknown outside Bhutan..."¹⁷⁷ Certainly he was fundamentally Tibetan in his outlook and everywhere built upon Tibetan precedents. The **student** of South Asian history generally will find

little to connect him in any way with the broader course of events in India at this period, however strong the Indic element of some of his subjects might have been. He was throughout a refugee Tibetan prince looking back to his homeland, first with the intention of returning, later as a source of Lamaist crafts and scholarship and always from fear of invasion. The monuments he constructed and festivities he inaugurated were similarly oriented. Either they defended against or commemorated victory over, invasion from the north. This overriding feature of Bhutan's national history would be an enduring legacy of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, only to be altered when the encroachment of British Indian power brought new problems in the 1770's.

But the relationship with Tibet was not single-faceted. At a time of crisis in Tibet and in spite of many odds, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had successfully fashioned and defended a new country with a workable and attractive constitutional theory. The concept of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, taking human embodiment as head of state would prove to be a powerful one. E. Gene Smith has written that it was this theory, originally conceived for the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnations, which was later adopted and applied to the Fifth Dalai Lama and his successors.¹⁷⁸ This is a remarkable thesis, and if substantiated a great deal of thinking on Tibetan history will require reexamination. There were, however, two other lessons which the events of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's life would have for the Yellow Hat rulers of Tibet.

The first of these was the need for some absolute and irrevocable technique to resolve situations of contested rebirths. The Dalai Lamas were the first national rulers of Tibet whose succession functioned on the principle of yang-srid. The need for secrecy and security would

be vital. Already during the Fifth Dalai Lama's time we find indications of an urgent fear that the controversy which tore apart the 'Brug-pa church might be repeated again. The first case arose with the recognition of the Sixth Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen,¹⁷⁹ a second with that of the Second Panchen Lama.¹⁸⁰

The other lesson would be the value to a politically ambitious regent of concealing the death of an incumbent Lama head of state under the pretence of extended meditative retreat. The case of Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho concealing the Fifth Dalai Lama's decease for thirteen years is well known to students of Tibetan history and has always been something of a puzzle.¹⁸¹ I would suggest that the precedent for this action be seen in the events surrounding the death of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in Bhutan.

It is true that the cases were not entirely comparable. The principle of succession still advocated in Bhutan was lineal descent, not incarnation. Contrary to some recent accounts, the principle of incarnate succession was strongly resisted in Bhutan, and would be for nearly fifty years after Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. How this resistance was to be maintained in the face of numerous obstacles while continuing to build the country on Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's foundations will be described in the following two chapters.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho, Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, pt. 3 (Ga), f.13.a; hereafter this source will be referred to as Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs.

² Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, (Ga), f.24.a-b. The full form of the initiatory name was Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin-rnam-par-rgyal-ba-'jigs-med-grags-pa-phyogs-thams-cad-las-rnam-par-rgyal-ba-dpal-bzang-po.

³ The full narrative of the tour, with much pious elaboration, is at Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.38.a-56.b.

⁴ For the family's early belief in his incarnate status, cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.14.b-17.b. Even keeping in mind the fact that Gtsang Mkhan-chen's narrative was not written until ca. 1674, there is no particular reason to doubt the early date for his preliminary recognition; the Lho'i chos 'byung, f.15.a, also accepts that the recognition was accorded at age three or four.

⁵ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.56.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.18.a, says at age 13 (1606).

⁶ Gtsang Mkhan-chen's sources for the events were Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself and later oral accounts of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.59.b); the installation services are described at ff.57.a-64.b of the same text. On the emissaries from Bhutan, cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, 60.a-b and Gtsang Mkhan-chen, Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs kyi yan lag rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dpal rdo rje gdan pa'i rnam par thar pa, f.16.a.

⁷ Hermitages in eastern Bhutan specifically connected with him include Chu-smad-chos-kyi-snying-po (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa..., f.27.a) and Theg-chen-

rtse'i-chos-sde (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., f.125.b); there were probably others (cf. Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.11.b-12.a). On his bastard offspring, cf. below, pp. 294-95, 300.

⁸ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.74.b.

⁹ Lha-dbang-blo-gros (Suresamati) authored a supplement to the rnam-thar of Padma-dkar-po which has yet to become available. It was his system of calendar reckoning, based on earlier work of Padma-dkar-po, which was later adopted in Bhutan and, for a time, in Ladakh. As disciple of Padma-dkar-po he served in the capacity of sngags-grwa-slob-dpon (preceptor of Tantric studies) and later assisted in preparing Padma-dkar-po's funerary reliquary at Rwa-lung (Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po, Dpal 'brug pa thams cad mkhyen pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa rgya mtsho lta bu'i 'phros cha shas tsam brjod pa dad pa'i rba rlabs, ff.24.b-25.a, 73.a). For his dates, compare the passages at Lho'i chos 'byung, f.34.b., Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.90.b-91.a, and Zla-tho, f.6.a. On his contributions to the study of Tibetan astronomy and the calendar, cf. A.I. Vostrikov, Tibetan Historical Literature, pp. 112-117. After spending some years in Mnga'-ris he travelled to Bhutan ca. 1623, where he died in 1633/4.

¹⁰ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.65.a-95.a. The treatise bore the title Brtson 'grus bskul ba'i zhal gdams (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.19.b); for the text cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.109.a-111.a.

¹¹ W.D. Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 73-90. For the rapid falling out between Rin-spungs and the 'Brug-pa during 1566/67, cf. Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar, ff.101.b-102.a.

¹² Zhwa-sgab-pa, Dbang-phyug-bde-ldan, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 361; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.95.a-b; Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, pp. 57-59. The formula byi-glang-bde-gzar designates the years 1612 and 1613.

¹³ Pan-chen Lama I Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1567-1662), Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul gsar bar ston pa nor bu'i phreng ba, ff.51.b-53.b.

¹⁴ Cf. the earlier discussions of these events in E. Gene Smith's introductions to the Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po (pp. 2-4) and to Ngawang Gelek Demo's edition of the Life of Pan-chen Lama I (pp. 1-4). Cf. also 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, Gangs can bod kyi yul du byon pa'i gsang sngags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs mdor bsdus ngo mtshar padmo'i dga' tshal, ff.67.b-68.b.

¹⁵ The early history of the image is traced in Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Gdan sa chen po ra lung gi khyad par 'phags pa cung zad brjod pa ngo mtshar gyi gter, ff.6.b-8.a (Collected Works, vol. 4).

¹⁶ Alfonsa Ferrari, Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet (Rome: I.S.M.E.O., 1958), pp. 39, 42, 48-49 and footnotes contain several examples.

¹⁷ Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po, Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar..., ff.20.b-21.a.

¹⁸ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.19.b-20.a; Ibid., Nga, f.101.a. For Lha-rtse-ba's account of the events, cf. the biography by his disciple Ngag-dbang-sangs-rgyas-rdo-rje, Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa rab bsngags snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs brgya pa, f.46.a.

¹⁹ The earliest instances of the practice are obscure but are provided for by the wide-spread theory of unlimited simultaneous

embodiments of Avalokiteśvara, accepted apparently by all the sects.

In Karma-pa histories one occasionally finds reference to the aspectual seats of this sect, i.e. of body, speech, mind, learning and deeds

(rje dus mkhyen gyi sku gsung thugs yon tan 'phrin las kyi gdan sa

lnga...) but the practice was not prominent (Si-tu Pañ-chen Chos-kyi-

'byung-gnas & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, Sgrub rgyud karma kam tshang

brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., vol. 1, f.319.a.) Among the

Rnying-ma-pa it was taken to absurd lengths in later years, however

(Lokesh Chandra, ed., Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture,

Introduction by E. Gene Smith, pp. 73-74).

²⁰ Cultural History of Tibet, p. 137.

²¹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.19.b-20.b. Gtsang Mkhan-chen, of course, was only a child when the events took place, but in addition to oral sources had access to numerous documents preserved in Bhutan, some of which are incorporated in the text. In addition he used the life of Lha-rtse-ba written by Sangs-rgyas-rdo-rje, which is extant, and another life of him entitled Rin spungs zla bzang which is not available.

²² In addition to the life of Lha-rtse-ba, I have used the life of Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen VI Mi-pham-dbang-po (1642-1717) written by his elder brother Skyabs-'gro-pa Ma-ñi-ka, which contains brief lives of his previous embodiments. The short verse biography of 'Brug-chen Dpag-bsam-dbang-po by Sangs-rgyas-rdo-rje, reprinted in the same collection (Biographies of the Successive Embodiments..., Darjeeling, 1974, vol. 4) is of little value for historical purposes. The main rnam-thar of Dpag-bsam-dbang-po, which E. Gene Smith describes as "an extraordinary source for the history of Tibet during the decades immediately before the establishment of the Dga'-ldan-pho-bran", was inaccessible for consultation (introduction to Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia..., p. 16, fn.).

23 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, 104.b.

24 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, 103.a.

25 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.46.b-47.a.

26 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.104.b.

27 The prophecies are presented in numerous sources: Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.14.b-16.a, 18.a; Ibid., Nga, f.191.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.16.b, 18.a.

28 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.19.b-20.b; Ibid., Nga, ff.102.a, 103.b-104.a; for this date, cf. Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa rab bsngags snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs brgya pa, f.46.a.

29 For the revelation, cf. Skyabs-'gro-pa Ma-ni-ka, Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa kun tu bzang po'i yon tan gyi me long, ff.34.a-b and Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa..., f.38.a.

30 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.101.b-102.b, 103.b, 104.b, 107.a; Lha-rtse-ba's ancestry and family at Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.3.b-4.b.

31 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.14.b.

32 Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.41.b-42.a, 47.b. This biography, it should be repeated, practically whitewashes the entire affair, simply ignoring it wherever possible.

33 Tāranātha Kun-dga'-snying-po (b. 1575), Rgyal kham pa tā ra nā thas bdag nyid kyi rnam thar nges par brjod pa'i deb gter shin tu zhib mo ma bcos lhug pa'i rtogs brjod, f.207.a (I have used a microfilm of the Toyo Bunko example, #372-2666). On the Tibetan minister Mgar Khri-'bring-btsan-brod who committed suicide in A.D. 699 following his conviction for treason, cf. Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 32.

34 There are hints of this in Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.122.a and Nga, f.101.b.

³⁵ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.120.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.21.a; Zhwa-sgab-pa (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 362) puts the event in 1615, but seems incorrect.

³⁶ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.14.a claims that as wife of Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal she gave birth to a daughter A-lce Drung, then fell out with him over his abuse of the 'Brug-pa monks. Attractive as this scandalous morsel must have been to the Bhutanese, it is chronologically impossible. Gtsang-pa records studied by Tucci (Tibetan Painted scrolls, p. 697-8) confirm that Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal was born in 1586; Zhwa-sgab-pa (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 361) suggests the date 1598, based on other documents. In any case the man would have been too young to father a child as early as 1593. Bhutanese dates for Gtsang-pa rulers are generally incorrect by at least 10 years whenever they are given.

³⁷ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.122.a-123.a; Ibid., Ca, f.4.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.19.b-20.a.

³⁸ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.123.a; for the date, cf. Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa..., f.37.a, where his death is attributed to illness, however.

³⁹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, f.121.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.21.a-b. The incident is also recounted by the Karma-pa historians Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas and 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab (Sgrub rgyud karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., vol. 2, f.126.b), who insist that one or two of their retainers were drowned; the 'Brug-pa sources maintain that none were. The Karma-pa source also dates the event to the 8th month of 1618 (sa-rta), an inexplicable anomaly. The 'Brug-pa have relied on a detailed, MS diary kept by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal throughout his life, and are unlikely to be mistaken on this point. The matter is worth further investigation.

⁴⁰ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.124.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.22.a.

⁴¹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.124.a-b; Ibid., Nga, 5.a, 8.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.23.a-b.

⁴² The first of these, datable to ca. 1616/18 on the basis of content, is printed verbatim at Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca, ff.5.a-7.b; extracts only are found at Ibid., Nga, ff.17.b-18.a and Lho'i chos 'byung, f.24.b.

⁴³ On this celebrated event of 1566 cf. Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, pp. 358-59.

⁴⁴ Tāranātha is the only contemporary writer supplying the precise date (Rgyal khams pa tā ra nā thas bdag nyid kyi rnam thar..., f.216.a); modern Bhutanese almanacs also accept it (Zla-tho, f.6.b.).

⁴⁵ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.13.a-14.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., f.17.a.; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs kyi yan lag rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dpal rdo rje gdan pa'i rnam par thar pa, ff.4.a-5.a, 21.a-22.a.

⁴⁶ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., f.230.a; there were many Wang people who did not support him at this time, however, as is apparent from several passages.

⁴⁷ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.12.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.23.b.

⁴⁸ Hereafter, the major place names in Bhutan will be given according to the system of phonetic transcription used in the Bhutan government journal Kuhsel; lesser known names will be retained in the proper orthography.

⁴⁹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.18.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.25.b-26.b. There are no Tibetan accounts of the fighting other than the cryptic allusion of Tāranātha (Rgyal khams pa tā ra nā thas bdag nyid kyi rnam thar..., f.216.a).

50 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.29.b-31.a. Bhutanese sources say the deaths were concealed for some 3 years, and there are hints of this also in Tibetan sources. Taranātha's generally favourable epitaph to Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal is found under events of 1623 (Rgyal kham pa tā ra nā thas bdag nyid kyi rnam thar..., ff.252.a-253.b); he accepts that his death was caused by witchcraft and sorcery, but avoids naming the offending Lamas.

51 Modern Bhutan, pp. 24-25 contain a loose translation; for the original text cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.31.a-b. Rahul's claim that it was written after 1639, however, is mistaken.

52 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.21.a-b.

53 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.20.a-b. For some notes on this important protective deity of Bhutan, cf. René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1956), p. 310 and Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, p. 99; the history and rites of Jag-pa-me-len are given in some detail at Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.142.a-143.b.

54 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.19.a-b.

55 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.43.b-44.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.29.a; a brief recent description of Lcags-ri ("Cherri") can be found in Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, p. 95.

56 The events of the retreat are detailed in Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.52.b-61.b, 65.b-67.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.29.b.

57 Lha-dbang-blo-gros is said to have been residing at Se-brag-g.ya-lung near Ti-se (Western Tibet) before his appointment to Bhutan (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.80.b). The sku-tshab dispatched to Rwa-lung at this time, I suspect, was 'Brug-rnam-pa or 'Brug-rnam-rgyal of 'Obs-mtsho, brother of the First Sde-srid. He was driven out of Rwa-lung in 1647 by officers of the Fifth Dalai Lama, as we shall see.

58 There have been two recent articles on this important political concept: Nirmal C. Sinha, "Chhos Srid Gnyis Ldan," Bulletin of Tibetology 5, pt. 3 (1968): 13-27; Phuntsog Wangyal, "The Influence of Religion on Tibetan Politics," The Tibet Journal 1, pt. 1 (1975): 78-86. Neither study approaches the subject from a thorough historical or conceptual framework, however.

59 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.67.a-68.a; Rahul's claim (Modern Bhutan, p. 119) that in 1616 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal "proclaims Bhutan a theocracy and himself its supreme spiritual head and ruler with the title of Shabdung" is fanciful.

60 C. Wessels, S.J., Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603-1721, The Hague, 1924, p. 138; the translations from Portuguese are those of Wessels.

61 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.96.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.35.a.

62 It is tempting to identify this tutor with Lha-dbang-blo-gros. Cacella merely says that he was a "Lamba de Chaparangué muy querido do Rei, que entendia algua cousa, mas muy pouco, do indostan...." (Wessels, p. 323).

63 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, p. 139.

64 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, pp. 138-39. Wessels hesitated to accept Cacella's estimation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's age as certain, but it was precisely correct. There are other such instances. Cacella stated that there were few temples in the country (Wessels, p. 148), a statement which Wessels questioned on the basis of Bogle's impressions of 1773. But Cacella was again correct; Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's monastery-fortresses had not yet been built, a fact which Wessels could not have known. The reference to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's sparse diet confirms local accounts (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, 72.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.19.a.

On the term Cambirasi, which has troubled Wessels and other writers, I am inclined to interpret it as a corruption of Lho-kha-bzhi or simply Kha-bzhi (locally pronounced "khapshi").

65 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, pp. 152-53.

66 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.96.b.

67 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.96.b-97.a. Wessels

claims, rather naively, that the priests were unarmed (p. 137). The Bhutanese sources are unlikely to be mistaken on this point, however.

68 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.84.b-85.a.

69 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.85.a-b.

70 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, pp. 132-33 for the population estimate on Mar. 25 as 500,000. One wonders if this could have been a festival season. On the question of Bhutan's population, cf. below, Appendix A, "The Coronation Document of 1747"

71 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.85.a-b.

72 For the date and details cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca. f.17.b; Ibid., Nga, f.86.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.33.a; Nirmala Das (Dragon Country, p. 64) gives the erroneous date of 1627.

73 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.86.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.33.a-b.

74 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.93.a.

75 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, p. 153.

76 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca. ff.20.a-28.a and Ibid., Nga, ff.105.a-109.b for the text of the letter; see also Ibid., Nga, f.93.b. The arrangement of the materials in Gtsang Mkhan-chen's account leaves some doubt in my mind whether the letter pertained to the war of 1634 or that of 1639; the issues were the same in any case.

77 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.34.a; as a rule, this 18th source century contains greater detail on the wars than Gtsang Mkhan-chen, but the origin of the additional information is not made explicit.

78 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.94.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.34.a-b. Almost certainly the gunpowder had been left by the Portuguese 7 years earlier; this is made clear by the Bhutanese authors who connect the two events in their narrative, notwithstanding the time difference.

79 I have seen no studies on the introduction of firearms to Tibet but they were definitely in use before 1634. Both spears and guns were used by Mongol cavalry and possibly Tibetan soldiers during the fighting in Lhasa of 1621 (Pan-chen Lama I, Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul gsal bar ston pa nor bu'i phreng ba, f.66.a-b), though perhaps they were still rare at this time.

80 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.35.a-b names the local 'Ba'-ra-ba stronghold Ma-ra-ti-ka or Mar-tig-kha: "At this time the Lama of Dgon Mar-tig-kha was one Shangs 'Ba'-ra-ba; and as he had been one of those earlier in opposition to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal he fled when the latter approached, whereupon Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal took up residence there." The name Mar-tig-kha is not found in other writings, but I take this event to refer to the expulsion of Grub-mchog Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan (1601-1687) and his followers from Gshong-chen-kha and other 'Ba'-ra-ba hermitages north of Punakha, as dramatically described in his rnam-thar by Rin-chen-bstan-pa'i-gsal-byed (Grub thob chen po dkon mchog rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i chu brgyud, ff.11.a-13.b). Nearly two centuries later 'Ba'-ra-ba monks of Tibet and Sikkim still looked back on their early Bhutan mission as having been chiefly responsible for the introduction of Buddhism and peaceful prosperity to the country, and believed their expulsion to have been an act of sectarian bigotry (cf.

the long disquisition by Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje in his rnam-thar of Lho-pa Ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho [1755-1831], Rje btsun bla ma dam pa grub mchog ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtsho'i rnam thar nor bu'i 'od snang, ff.70.b-71.b [Ngawang Gyaltzen and Ngawang Lungtok, Biographies of eminent gurus in the transmission lineage of teachings of the 'Ba'-ra Dkar-brgyud-pa sect, Dehradun, 1970, vol. 41).

81 For historical and architectural details cf. Philip Denwood, "Bhutanese Architecture," pp. 25-32, and legendary accounts in Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, pp. 70-74; photographs in G.N. Mehra, Bhutan, passim, and Pradyumna Karan; Bhutan, pp. 54-64.

82 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.97.a; the term lugs gnyis zung 'jug used here is synonymous with chos srid gnyis ldan.

83 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.98.b.

84 On the existence of slavery in Bhutan at this time cf. Wessels, Early Jesuit travellers, p. 150; also the general comments of Mehra, Bhutan, p. 99. The origin of the practice of capturing slaves from the Indian lowlands is obscure but obviously predates the 17th century; its existence is confirmed by an edict from the 18th century law code proscribing the capture and traffic in slaves (chug-khol) (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.110.b); but the same text (f.112.a) also requires that disaffected runaways be returned to their rightful owners.

85 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.97.b-98.a.

86 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.98.b-99.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.36.a-37.a.

87 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.99.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.37.a.

88 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., f.16.b.

89 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.99.b-100.a.

90 Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century (Rome: I.S.M.E.O, 1970), pp. 84-162; Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 102-111 cover the story of the wars between Dbus and Gtsang culminating in the establishment of Yellow Hat supremacy in Tibet.

91 L. Petech, A Study on the Chronicle of Ladakh, pp. 146-147.

92 Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 404.

Dpag-bsam-dbang-po, son of an earlier 'Phyongs-rgyas hierarch, was therefore also a relative of the Fifth Dalai Lama, but the degree of relation is not completely certain. A modern 'Brug-pa source says that he was a nephew (tsha-bo) of the Dalai Lama, but this is impossible (Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-chos-grags, A Brief Account of the Spiritual Succession to the Headship of the Exalted Drukpa Kargyudpa Tradition [Darjeeling, 1974], p. 38). E. Gene Smith, who has had access to the rnam-thar, maintains that they were cousins (Lokesh Chandra, ed., Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture [New Delhi: I.A.I.C., 1970], Introduction, p. 16). My own research suggests that the relationship was more distant; Dpag-bsam-dbang-po was perhaps a second generation uncle to the Dalai Lama.

93 Perhaps hinting at this is a passage in the autobiography of Dpag-bsam-dbang-po's tutor, Bde-chen-chos-'khor Yongs-'dzin II Kun-dga'-lhun-grub (1617-1676), who says that Dpag-bsam-dbang-po had been practically indifferent to the dispute's outcome all along (Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang srong dga' ba'i dal gtam, ff.22.a-b [Anon., The Collected Works (Gsuñ-'bum) of Bde-chen-chos-'khor Yoñs-'dzin II Kun-dga'-lhun-grub, Darjeeling, 1973, vol. 11).

94 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.100.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.37.b-38.a.

95 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.109.a.

- 96 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.100.a, 111.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.38.a.
- 97 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca, f.28.a; Ibid., Nga, ff.108.a-b, 111.b.
- 98 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca, f.28.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.38.b.
- 99 On the event and its immediate consequences, cf. Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations, pp. 134-152 and Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 111.
- 100 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.112.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.38.a-b. On the basis of unstated sources, Rahul definitely claims that the place had been a Lha-pa stronghold (Modern Bhutan, p. 23); this is merely hinted at in sources available to me.
- 101 On the career of Phyag-mdzod-pa A'u Drung, alias Bstan-'dzin-dpal-'bar (1621-1685), cf. Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., f.184.a-b. His is an excellent example of the way in which a man from humble beginnings (herdsman) could be promoted by merit to high position in the Bhutan government; such an occurrence would have been much rarer in post-1642 Tibet in my estimation.
- 102 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.112.b.
- 103 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.112.b-113.a; Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal allegedly declined this unusual offer, if in fact it ever was made.
- 104 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.113.a; Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog, f.30.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi phreng ba lta bu las dpal ldan bla ma mthu chen chos kyi rgyal po ngag dbang rnam par rgyal ba'i skabs, f.37.a.
- 105 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.122.a.

106 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, 113.b

107 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.113.b-114.a. The gift from Cooch Bihar cannot be confirmed from Indian sources; Phag-ri, it should be noted, is no longer within Bhutan, but may have been under its sway more strongly at the time. It will be observed that the districts mentioned in these 4 sets of missions are to the east, south, west and north respectively of central Bhutan, and imply a territorial extent somewhat larger than at present.

108 The origin of the practice cannot be precisely dated. Michael Aris claims that it was undertaken "according to the annual migration of the Wang..." ("Admonition of the Thunderbolt Cannon-ball," p. 616), but the custom of having dual capitals had been widespread in Tibet for centuries, including areas (e.g. Sa-skya) where seasonal changes in climate can be ruled out as a cause. I suspect that the origin should be sought in the monastic calendar of periodic retreat and travel taken over from Indian Buddhist practice, where climate was a factor.

(Etienne Lamotte, Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien, Louvain, pp. 64-65).

Migration of the Wang people of Bhutan between Thed and Thim may underlie its local adaptation.

109 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.111.a-b.

110 This comment is based on a reading of the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama (Za hor gyi bande ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i 'di snang 'phrul pa'i rol rtsed rtogs brjod kyi tshul du bkod pa du kū la'i gos bzang, vol. 1, ff.106.a-170.b); cf. also Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, pp. 424-28. The political institution of mchod-yon, a kind of tributary relationship, has been examined by various writers in the context of ties between lay patron and Lama; but to my knowledge there has been no study of its very frequent occurrence between two Lamas,

where it probably marked by formal acknowledgment a differential in relative status. Its practical workings require much more study.

111 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1., ff.110.b, 114.a-115.a, 124.b; Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 111-112.

112 Karma-pa historians totally reject this notion as vindictive gossip (Si-tu Paṅ-chen Chos-kyi-'byungs-gnas & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, Bsgrub rgyud karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., vol. 1, ff.155.b-156.a).

113 Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho, Bstan pa 'dzin pa'i skyes bu thams cad kyi rnam par thar pa la gus shing rjes su 'jug pa'i rtogs brjod pha rol tu phyin pa dang gzungs dang ting nge 'dzin gyi sgo mang po rim par phye ba'i gtam, Stod-cha, ff.269.a-272.a; on his impressionistic account of the flood of Tibetan refugees into Bhutan during this time cf. Ibid., Smad-cha, ff.284.b-288.b; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.115.b-116.a.

114 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.111.a.

115 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.124.b.

116 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.114.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.40.a. The locational discrepancy might be resolved if another Ka-wang-rdzong could be located near Bum-thang, but the sources available to me in fact equate it either with Tashichhodzong or Rdo-sngon-rdzong.

117 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.124.b; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.114.a, and 122.a for the date; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.40.a.

118 Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 112.

119 Please see the last two paragraphs of this chapter.

120 Bsod-nams-chos-'phel, alias Bsod-nams-rab-brtan, is customarily known in Bhutanese sources as Nang-so A'u; he had yet other aliases (Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod gyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 425, fn.); for his

deception of the Dalai Lama resulting in the events of 1642 cf. Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 105-110. He was apparently not well liked in Tibet, and was positively hated by the Bhutanese who claim credit for causing his death by sorcery in 1658 along with that of Gushri Khan in 1655 (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.145.a). Even when news of his death was revealed in Lhasa after more than a year of its being kept secret (Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 118: "because of the unstable conditions in the country") the Fifth Dalai Lama reveals that there was little enthusiasm among the monks for his memorial services (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.273.b). Predictably, a generous assessment of his career is found in the rnam-thar of 'Brug-chen Mi-pham-dbang-po (Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, f. 69.a-b). That he was a turncoat who had once sided with the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa is played down in Yellow Hat sources, but scathingly alleged in Bhutan (Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.38.b.-39.a).

¹²¹ Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.39.b-40.a.

¹²² Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.41.b-42.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.31.a-b; the date is given at Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, 133.b.

¹²³ On the early career of Sprul-sku Rdzing cf. Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.86.b-88.b. He was a Tibetan master architect and sculptor brought to Bhutan at the behest of Gtsang Mkhan-chen.

¹²⁴ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.42.a-b. Shakabpa (Tibet, p. 113) claims that one term of the treaty of 1646 was that Bhutanese rice, formerly sent as offerings to the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, was thereafter to be sent to the new Lhasa government. In the context of events this would be hard to believe, and in fact turns out to be false. Shakabpa has misread the passages in the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography where the 'Brug-pa in question are the Northern 'Brug-pa, and Lho refers to Nyang-stod Lho in

Gtsang (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.135.b-136.a); the passage is admittedly confusing.

125 Cf. Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia, introduction by E. Gene Smith, pp. 16-18. For the events I have followed mainly the biography of Mi-pham-dbang-po (Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.53.b-55.b) and the autobiography of Kun-dga'-lhun-grub (Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod, ff.93.a-95.a); no doubt in light of the treachery perpetrated against 'Brug-chen Mi-pham-dbang-po by the Yellow Hats over the Ladakh treaty of 1684 (on which see the following chapter), the event is practically covered up in the Fifth Dalai Lama's rnam-thar (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.136.b-137.a, where the date is given).

126 Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, f.55.a.

127 Ibid.

128 Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod, f.93.a.

129 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.42.a-b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.32.a. 'Brug-rnam-rgyal, probably the brother of the First Deb Raja, was appointed government steward (gzhung-mgron-gnyer) on his return to Bhutan, and later led the attack to capture Dar-dkar in S.W. Bhutan. The Bhutanese believe that in his flight from Rwa-lung he managed to sneak out even further precious images and other objects from the place.

130 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.133.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.42.b. Rig-'dzin-snying-po, alias Karma-rig-'dzin, was the 6th reembodiment of the famous Tibetan gter-ston Sangs-rgyas-gling-pa (1340-1396); his career in Bhutan also connects him with a major restoration of Stag-tshang and Skyer-chu-lha-khang at this time, and is worth closer study (a brief account of his life in Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 3, pp. 546-47 is based on very late sources).

131 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.43.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.115.b.

132 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.120.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.43.b.

133 Two aristocratic Tibetan families of the 18th-20th centuries apparently derived originally from monks or laymen driven out of Bhutan during these wars. One of these, the Pha-lha family, is said to derive its name from Pha-jo-lha-khang monastery in western Bhutan to which its ancestor had belonged before his exile (L. Petech, Aristocracy and Government in Tibet 1728-1959 [Rome: I.S.M.E.O., 1973], p. 79). The other was Skyid-sbug, the family of Pho-lha-nas' wife. Of these two Bell wrote in a confidential memoir for the British Government, "The founder of the family was a Bhutanese Lama from the Pa-cho Lha-Kang, which is a monastery near Tra-shi Chö-dzong. He along with Ker-ri Lha-pa and the ancestor of the Kyi-pu family was driven out of Bhutan by the first Dharma Raja, Nga-wang Nam-gye." (C.A. Bell, Report on the Government of Tibet, Calcutta, 1906, p. 29 [Foreign Office Confidential Print 9735*]). This leads me to connect their exile with the capture of Rdo-sngon-rdzong (1641) or that of Ka-wang-rdzong (1644); other such instances may come to light.

134 The Bhutanese almanac (Zla-tho, f.7.a) and the Fifth Dalai Lama (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.140.b-141.a) both support the date 1648 (sa-byi) for this invasion; other Bhutanese sources have 1649 (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.44.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.47.a). I am inclined to follow the Dalai Lama's dates wherever possible; possibly a treaty was signed in 1649.

135 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.140.b-141.a; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.136.a.

136 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.46.b-47.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.43.b-44.a.

137 On the Bye-ba-mchod-rten, see the elaborate description at Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.137.a-139.a; Michael Aris says that the rituals inaugurated here later became incorporated into the Bhutanese New Year celebrations ("Admonition of the thunderbolt cannon-ball," p. 612).

138 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.48.b.

139 In 1747 there were 1,667 tax-paying households (khral-pa) under its jurisdiction, many of which were probably ethnically Indian (Rje Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga rab tu gsal ba'i gtam mu tig do shal, f.40.a); Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.a, says there were 8 traditional districts (yul-gling-chen-po) of Tagana but their names are not given.

140 One of these, an 18th century text titled Dpal 'brug par lung bstan lha'i gdung brgyud kyi bstan pa'i ring lugs lho mon kha bzhi las nyi ma shar phyogs su byung zhing rgyas pa'i lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long, is currently being studied by Michael Aris for his Ph.D. dissertation at S.O.A.S.; two other works on the traditional families of Shar-phyogs could be expected to contain information (titles at History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 9).

141 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.144.b. Some connection between the Khyen (or Mkhyen) and the now apparently extinct Khyen people of Assam seems obvious; Khyen-kha is still said to be a recognizably distinct language of S.E. Bhutan.

142 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.a.

143 Bhutanese texts use the term Shar-phyogs Bhanga-la (roughly "East Bengal") rather loosely for the Indian districts south of Shar-phyogs (e.g. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.144.b).

144 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.115.a; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.145.b.

145 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.145.b-146.a.

146 The student of Tibetan forms of government, and probably those of other countries where Buddhist theories underlie constitutional structure, will recognize that these categories are not mutually exclusive. In the Mahāyāna world order, at least, the linkage between monastic and social welfare is fundamental (e.g. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.119.a: "Now as the happiness of sentient beings is dependent on the teachings of the Buddha, whereas the teachings of the Buddha too are dependent on the happiness of the world..."). A theory could probably be developed to demonstrate a close correlation between general stability and prosperity in such a society and the manner and degree to which its ruling class interrelates with the monastic hierarchy; Bhutan is a case in point, although the argument cannot be developed here. For India a start along these lines has been made by Trevor Ling, "Buddhism in Bengal, a changing concept of salvation?" in Eric J. Sharpe & John R. Hinnells, Man and his salvation, Studies in memory of S.G.F. Brandon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), pp. 171-87.

147 The following analysis is basically a condensation of theoretical arguments expounded inter alia by Gtsang Mkhan-chen in Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.112.a-157.a. The continuity between this thesis of Bhutanese government and earlier Tibetan models is further argued by a number of writers (e.g. Rje Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga..., ff.16.b-17.a., who treats Ngag-

dbang-rnam-rgyal's government as a natural successor to those of Sa-skyā, Phag-mo-gru, and the Rgyal-dbang Karma-pa).

The connection between Gtsang Mkhan-chen's formulation and that adopted for the Dalai Lamas has been briefly noted by E. Gene Smith (see below, this chapter, fn. 178) but deserves closer study. The theoretical foundation of Yellow Hat rule has been partly analyzed by Zahiruddin Ahmad ("The Historical Status of China in Tibet," Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia 9, pt. 1/2 [1972-73]: 99-107), with whom I would disagree only on some factual matters and on the status assigned the hypothetical Dharmarāja.

Of course, discrepancies between the "theory" and its "practice" are of more theological than historical interest, and cannot be examined here.

¹⁴⁸ On the Ten Pāramitās see A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959 paperback), p. 276 and Edward Conze, Buddhist Thought in India (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1962), pp. 211-17.

¹⁴⁹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.119.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.103.a-104.b. The Zhal-lce bcu-gsum had also been the basis of Sa-skyā and Phag-mo-gru law codes (it should be remembered that, by Tibetan Buddhist traditions, Srong-btsan-sgam-po was the first human embodiment of Avalokiteśvara to rule in Tibet).

The date of promulgation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's legal code is uncertain. It appears that such codes were normally preserved only in MS, being constantly amended by subsequent rulers. Lho'i chos 'byung (ff.105.a-114.b) contains the full Bhutanese code as current ca. 1759 (partially and very loosely translated in Rahul, Modern Bhutan, pp. 135-46), substantial portions of which may date from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself. I have refrained from studying the document here owing to the

uncertain date of its various parts, the availability of Rahul's translation, and the fact that it is currently being thoroughly examined by Michael Aris.

Belfiglio's notion that Bhutan had no formal code of laws until the very modern period is simply uninformed (Valentine J. Belfiglio, "The Structure of National Law-Making Authority in Bhutan," Asian Studies [Quezon City], 12, pt. 1, pp. 77-87); both civil courts and appeal procedures are provided for in the document.

150 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.147.a-b, 122.b-123a.

151 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.122.a.

152 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.146.a-b.

153 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.146.a.

154 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, p. 150.

155 Shākya-rin-chen, Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i rol mo, f.91.b; cf. also Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.118.b, 139.a.

156 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.120.b-121.b; this edition of the Vinaya is not readily accessible, so far as I am aware. For the various Bhutanese and Tibetan editions of the collected works of Padma-dkar-po cf. Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, Introduction by E. Gene Smith, pp. 7-8. For lists of other hagiographical and canonical texts prepared in printed editions at Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's behest cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.76.a-79.a and Ibid., Ga, ff.35.a-36.a.

157 The Mtshan-nyid-bshad-grwa was originally to have been begun by Gtsang Mkhan-chen (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.134.b-135.a) and many lectures were in fact given. But Gtsang Mkhan-chen was a hermit, basically; his autobiography is largely filled with a record of his

dreams and contemplative visions. So about 1645 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal brought down another Tibetan scholar whom he had known as a youth, one Khu-khu slob-dpon from Gser-mdog-can monastery in Gtsang, and a few Bhutanese students did receive their Dge-bshes degree in this way (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.39.a-b). But proper facilities for scholastic studies were not really established until the efforts of the Second Sde-srid Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra (r. 1656-1667), and further improvements continued to be made through the 18th century. The importance of these for Bhutan, as we shall see, was to eliminate as far as possible any need for sending students to Tibet.

158 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ga, ff.17.b, 76.b-78.b; his innate ability in painting as a child had been seen as yet another omen that he was the true rebirth of Padma-dkar-po, who had also been famous for his religious paintings and who wrote brief texts on the subject.

159 Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, p. 139.

160 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.45.a-b; the entire amount of silver expended on the project (792 khal-srang) is said to have been supplied by king Padma (i.e. Prāṇ) Nārāyaṇ of Cooch Bihar (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.28.b), apparently unconfirmable from Indian materials.

161 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.117.b.

162 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.115.a-b gives further details and names.

163 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.137.a-139.a.

164 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.115.b; Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho alias Sangs-rgyas-grags-pa, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i sgo rab tu 'byed par byed pa'i dge ba'i lde mig, ff.23.a, 31.b-32.a. Apparently the huge temple appliques were never actually produced during Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's time, though; Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho began his first one in 1689, and others followed. Those now

on display for festival occasions are probably of more recent manufacture. Cf. the photographs in Mehra, Bhutan, facing p. 33, and Blanche Olschak Bhutan - Land of Hidden Treasures, nos. 10-11. In Tibet, the production of massive appliques was notable among the Karma-pa and some of the wealthier Rnying-ma-pa establishments.

165 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.146.a.

166 Cf. Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 73-82 and Snellgrove and Richardson, Cultural History of Tibet, pp. 152-54; a casual comparison between their alleged reforms and innovations shows many striking parallels.

167 For the prophecies, cf. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ca, ff.40.a-41.a; Ibid., Nga, f.141.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.49.b.

168 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.154.a. The Dalai Lama does not state unambiguously that his death immediately followed, only that the illness was extremely serious. It should be kept in mind, however, that this text was not composed in its final form until the 1690's, and later editors could have interpolated information at this point.

169 Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje bstun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa thugs rje chen po'i dri bsung, f.10.a.

170 Ibid., f.10.b.

171 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa skal bzang 'jug ngo, f.3.b; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.31.a-b.

172 Ibid., f.87.a, for Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's discussion of the secret with the Sde-dge hierarch Bsod-nams-phun-tshogs (d. 1714); for the death rites, cf. Rje Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa sgyu ma chen po'i gar stabs, f.69.a.

173 A glance at the genealogical chart of the Rgya family of Rwa-lung (cf. below, Appendix B) shows that Rwa-lung hierarchs derived from two brothers of Gtsang-pa Rgyas-ras, Lha-gnyan and Lha-'bum. But the early descendants of Lha-'bum are not well documented in the sources, some of which avoid the difficulty altogether by combining the two lines of descent into one. It occurs to me that some break in the family line from Lha-gnyan may have occurred during this period, necessitating the concoction of a second one in order to maintain the appearance of legitimacy, but this is just speculation.

174 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.65.a. Nothing further is known of this daughter; perhaps she died in childbirth. After leaving Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, Dam-chos-bstan-'dzin reputedly had some adventures in Mnga'-ris and the Gar-zha country of western Tibet, then reemerged into the spotlight of Bhutanese history a few years later, as we shall see in the following chapter.

175 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.87.b-88.a.

176 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.89.a-90.a.

177 Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 204.

178 Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po, Introduction, p. 2.

179 On the Dalai Lama's decisive resolution of the debate over Dpag-bsam-dbang-po's (d. 1641) rebirth, again involving a prince of 'Phyongs-rgyas, cf. Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.133.a-b.

180 On the Dalai Lama's actions to guard against the possibility of such a dispute occurring in this instance, cf. Ibid., vol. 2, f.17.a-b.

181 Cf. Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 125-28 for the traditional treatment of this episode. Zahiruddin Ahmad's intricate argument to prove that concealment of the Dalai Lama's death was not a deliberate plot by Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho seems to me naive and unsupportable. Moreover

it ignores the combined weight of numerous Tibetan sources which believe otherwise (Zahiruddin Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 44-52).

Ch. VI:

Experiment with Monarchy I'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje and the Early Regency - 1651-1680

Shortly before entering his final retreat, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal summoned a formal gathering of selected officials and ministers to outline his plans for the country's future and interim administration, pending his reemergence. But being too ill to elaborate the issues himself, he merely indicated that the advice he would give to Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo would be authoritative and should thereafter be obeyed as if the command had come from him personally.¹ There followed the consultations with Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's entry into isolation. About three months later Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo convened a second meeting, larger than the first, to which all officials, monks, and village headmen were summoned. He informed them of what had transpired during the preceding six months or so, and what, on the basis of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's oral authority, the interim administrative arrangements were to be made.

Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo addressed the meeting. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, he explained, had entered firm retreat for the welfare of his subjects and at the prophetic behest of Padma-dkar-po, Padmasambhava, and others. But he had left certain testamentary instructions, and it was his express command that Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo oversee their unquestioned execution, lest disagreements adversely affect the success of his meditations. The Sde-srid assured his audience that he would recognize no higher authority than himself, and that, although some actions he might be constrained to take could appear wrong or bad, they would not contravene any of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's orders and would in the end be beneficial to the country as a whole.

This meeting established three clear principles, 1) the ultimate supremacy of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's authority, whether wielded directly or by nominated subordinates, 2) the interim character of his retreat and of the administration of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo, and 3) the absolute authority of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo during his tenure, subject only to contravention by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself. The importance of these points will become more obvious as a subsequent history is reviewed. For the moment it will be useful to compare them with what has been said earlier of Gtsang Mkhan-chen's elaboration of the country's constitutional basis in scripture and precedent.

The ultimate supremacy of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's authority derived from his hereditary position as patrilineal head of family and church, and his spiritual status as Bodhisattva. That much had been carried over from the system prevailing at Rwa-lung, and to these had now been added his new position as head of state in Bhutan. The titles used by the Rgya hierarchs had always varied somewhat. In early days Gdan-sa, Gdan-sa-pa, or Rje Gong-ma were common. Beginning perhaps in the 15th century, when it became desirable for the family to emphasize its spiritual supremacy over incarnate claimants, the more elaborate styles of Dbon Rin-po-che or Gdung-brgyud Rin-po-che were used more frequently.² The highly honorific title Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che seems to have been attached first to the 15th hierarch Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal and gradually replaced the others in frequency as the Rgya felt some need to enhance their prestige within the 'Brug-pa church at large. It was a title used by many of Tibet's hereditary religious nobility and virtually the only one adopted for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal after his enthronement at Rwa-lung.³ Practically speaking, in 17th century Bhutan Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che connoted Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal as head of church and state by virtue of family descent.

The Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che's structural supremacy did not prevent the delegation of some or most of his powers, however. From earlier times at Rwa-lung when siblings of the hierarch could command a larger share of actual power, and by long tradition arising from the hierarch's need for high spiritual prestige, monastic and secular administrative duties had customarily been performed by other officials. The potential to resume these duties always existed, but the tendency during non-critical periods had been for hierarchs to function as revered figure-heads, the theoretical source but not the common wielders of ruling power.⁴ There are no extant administrative codes for Rwa-lung, but enough of the hagiographical literature is available to see that the primary occupation of the hierarch was to tour his domain, to teach and initiate, and to perform spiritual exercises for the welfare of his subjects. Civil administrative matters had been chiefly the responsibility of a Nang-so or magistrate, customarily at Rwa-lung a brother of the hierarch who had taken preliminary monastic vows.

In Bhutan this system could not be maintained as it was. Firstly Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was sole representative of the family, so that greater concentration of authority was inevitable. Secondly he was by temperament inclined to take an active hand in secular affairs. Lastly, the defensive and originally temporary character of his exile, combined with the requirements of ruling large and diverse new territories, necessitated a restructuring of administrative duties and creation of new posts. An unacknowledged influence from traditional Bhutanese political patterns may have had further effect.

Here we can only concern ourselves with the highest positions of government, since available information on the middle and lower bureaucracy is scanty and imprecise. In any case real power was highly

centralized and any attempt to reconstruct a complete picture of the administration below its top ranks would falsely suggest structural formality where probably none existed. Only three positions really mattered. The first of these, the hereditary Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che, we have already discussed. The second was that of Sde-srid, who up to 1651 functioned as chief administrator and thereafter as a secular regent. The third position was that of presiding abbot of the state church or Rje Mkhan-po.⁵ In that form the position probably only dates from 1651, since the duties had previously been performed by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself with the aid of his personal attendant Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan and a few other close followers serving as preceptors (slob-dpon).

The position of Sde-srid or Sde-srid-phyag-mdzod is said to have been instituted by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in 1616, immediately upon his arrival in Bhutan.⁶ Its first incumbent was Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas (1591-1656) of the Bhutanese 'Obs-mtsho family, generally known on account of his long and distinguished service to the government as Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo. We have observed that Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas had been a monk at Rwa-lung since 1605, had served there since 1610 in the joint appointments of Dbu-mdzad (chant master) and Phyag-mdzod (treasurer), and had accompanied Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal to Bhutan. The Phyag-mdzod at Rwa-lung was apparently the highest monastic executive officer, responsible for finances and general operations. Typically in Tibetan monasteries the position was filled by monks from families of independent means and a tradition of administrative service. Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas, being a loyal follower of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and belonging to a large and influential Bhutanese family, was thus well suited for his new appointment in Bhutan.

In origin, then, the Bhutanese Sde-srid was a monastic officer, recruited from the monstic ranks, to whom were granted many secular

responsibilities formerly the preserve of a semi-independent Nang-so. The position of Nang-so was not established in Bhutan, while from a very early period the Sde-srid began to formally delegate their duties as chant master of the monastery and Phyag-mdzod of the gdan-sa, retaining instead a broader range of authority as chief administrator of state, and the right to resume any delegated powers should the need arise.

Nevertheless, the theoretical power of the Sde-srid was constrained by the fact of his appointive status.⁷ In Gtsang Mkhan-chen's formulation, he in effect functioned as a kind of alter ego of the church hierarch, performing all those responsibilities of the latter appropriate to him in his scripturally-based role of Dharmarāja, the idealized secular head of state. At any time the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che could resume responsibility to himself, or even dispense with a Sde-srid altogether, without violating constitutional theory. The reverse was not true. The Sde-srid was thus appointed by or at the behest of the head of state, held only so much power as the latter chose to grant, and could only be removed from office on his command.⁸ In fact there were few periods in which the position of Sde-srid stood vacant, i.e. was filled by the hierarch himself, and the first four occupants were all careful to justify their exercise of power by documents, alleged documents, or prophecies from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. For a variety of reasons to be explained in due course, however, the long-term tendency was for the position of Sde-srid to become more independently powerful and its occupants to preserve only a ceremonial pretence to monkhood.

We can now readily see that the position of hereditary Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che in Bhutan was all important. It was the logical outgrowth of the office of Rwa-lung hierarch, modified by the prestige and authority of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal personally. Although precedent allowed

hierarchs to delegate their power during long periods and remain aloof as exalted figureheads, replacement of the top delegated officials required their formal approval. In the ultimate analysis, all authority derived from the hierarch. His presence was therefore essential, and orderly succession to the position vital to the government's legitimate right to function. It is in this context that the true proportions of the crisis resulting from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's untimely death must be appreciated. The elaborate fiction of his retreat, the unknown monks who assumed his identity to tonsure acolytes through the slot in his meditative cell, all were part of a grand hoax to preserve official order until an acceptable means could be found to resolve the difficulty.

The solution obviously needed to involve Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. As sole legitimate hereditary heir (gdung-brgyud rin-po-che) he should naturally have succeeded as Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che upon his father's death or retirement.⁹ Typically, at Rwa-lung the reigning hierarch had gradually introduced his son (or nephew) to his future responsibilities through a kind of apprenticeship of education and controlled public exposure, until, the youth being of suitable age, the hierarch would formally retire and order the successor's installation. So far as is known, however, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal did not follow this precedent. Except during early childhood 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje seems to have remained perpetually secluded from the eye of the public, or the inquiring historian. There is, as Petech writes, "a sort of conspiracy of silence about him in our sources."¹⁰ Why was this so?

It is difficult to be certain, but from the stray references to 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje in the literature it appears that sometime during his boyhood he was stricken by disease, leaving him severely incapacitated for the remainder of his life. We know little further of the date or symptoms of his affliction. At the age of eight he is said to have

spoken briefly with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's ex-consort at Lcags-ri and to have bestowed a name on Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, her son by a second marriage.¹¹ A bit later he left there for Punakha to begin formal studies with his father's old attendant Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan.¹² It was during this period that the disease seems to have struck. The texts assert only that the affliction was a powerful one and that it was a type of "karmic stain" (grib), of the kind allotted to unfortunate beings during an Era of Defilement. Thereafter he lived on in a state of "profound and secret samādhi" until his death in about 1680.¹³ Not infrequently in Tibetan medical theory, diseases caused by grib were mental disorders. So also were gza'-nad afflictions, of the kind which the Fifth Dalai Lama speculated might have stricken Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and we are told in one place that the boy's "samādhi" was like that of his father.¹⁴ We may speculate that he incurred a stroke, partially impairing his speech and movements; it is certainly possible that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been similarly afflicted.

In any case the boy's impairment was obviously sufficiently debilitating to prevent him in fact, or out of superstitious fear, from being installed as Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's successor. The theory of the hereditary Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che was thus held in abeyance from the very beginning of 'Brug-pa government. The illness or death of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the incapacity of his son left the country for nearly thirty years without a functioning head of state, and the three successive Sde-srid during the period to 1680 were obliged to maintain the fiction of the father's meditative retreat while searching for some solution to the crisis. We are not told whether Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's dying instructions to Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo contained guidance on this matter, and nothing appears to have been done right away. Perhaps it

was hoped that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's affliction might improve with time. No doubt rituals were privately performed to bring this about, and Tibetan medical notions certainly allowed for the reversal of karmically-caused disease. In any case, we shall see that by the 1670's growing uncertainty provoked a more urgent quest for solutions. Former associates of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal were themselves aging; some had already died. The time was quickly approaching when those who remained would be less able to sustain the myth of his meditative retreat, or assert with much credibility their authority to rule. It was during the reign of Sde-srid III Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa that these forces finally brought the crisis of succession into the open, and the events of that time will be discussed when we review his career.

When Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo or Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas assumed full powers of regent in 1651, however, there were no rival claimants to his authority. At Rwa-lung he had been an able student, mastering astronomy and the Kālacakra with Lha-dbang-blo-gros. His skills in sorcery based on those studies were reputedly responsible for much of Bhutan's success in wars against Tibet before 1651.¹⁵ Although a monk who had taken intermediate vows (dge-tshul), it was only after 1651 that he found it necessary to resume any of his old teaching responsibilities in the monastery. From 1616 until that year he had chiefly served as an able and vigorous civil administrator. The construction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's great monastic fortresses was personally supervised by him. He is further credited with planning the military campaigns against Tibet and the coalition Lamas, as well as the initial 'Brug-pa raids into Shar-phyogs culminating in the subjugation of that region in 1655.¹⁶

Several of this Sde-srid's relatives were also serving the government by 1651, probably at his behest. His brother 'Brug-rnam-rgyal had been Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's representative at Rwa-lung until, being expelled in 1647, he was appointed to the post of government steward (Gzhung-mgron-gnyer) in Bhutan. In 1650 'Brug-rnam-rgyal coordinated the offensive against Tagana. Another relative Chos-rje Ral-pa-can or Dpal-ldan-'brug-rgyas had been appointed the first Phyag-mdzod at Punakha, probably upon its completion ca. 1638.¹⁷ The Sde-srid's nephew Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan (1630-1680?), who later became a hero in the 1675-79 war with Tibet, may have been among the Bhutanese soldiery by the time of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's retirement.¹⁸ Throughout the administration of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo the influence of 'Obs-mtsho people in the government became noticeably stronger.

Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo is principally renowned in Bhutan for his promulgation of an administrative and bureaucratic code, following Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's departure from the scene. A later Bhutanese author boldly claimed that it even became a model for administrators in Tibet, Mongolia and China.¹⁹ However that may be, the basic bureaucratic structure and guidelines regulating official behaviour instituted and enforced by him were incorporated into the legal code of Bhutan, where they shaped the general pattern of government activity prevailing until the declaration of monarchy in 1907. Many of their features are still maintained though often in merely ceremonial fashion. On the other hand, numerous elements of his administrative promulgation long predate 1651, while the bureaucratic structure itself tends to reflect the history of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's conquests more than any logically formulated scheme. Pieced together from tradition, scriptural sentiment and practical precedent, it proved to be a remarkably durable form of

administration whose only defect, if such it can be called, was an implicit assumption that the highest officials be honestly committed to making it work. Devised by a stern monk for monkish administrators sworn to Bodhisattva vows, it provided insufficiently for the possibility of a weak or absent head of state and an aggressively ambitious Sde-srid, a combination which was to plague Bhutan during much of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Here we can deal with the administrative set-up only in its basic outline. Bhutanese authors constantly assume the reader's familiarity with the system's more intricate details and consequently nowhere describe them with any thoroughness. Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's original promulgation was itself probably never printed as a self-contained document, and we must reconstruct his ideas from a variety of sources, taking due care to distinguish them from subsequent amendments and variations owing to casual or unforeseen causes. It must also be kept in mind that the system traditionally is believed to reflect Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's last advice before entering final retreat, though how much so is open to speculation.²⁰

The government consisted of two divisions housed within the same buildings, the monastic and state bureaucracies. At the apex of these two was the office of hereditary head of state, both the connecting link between them and the source of whatever authority they wielded. Symbolic of this arrangement was a system of prefixes, somewhat irregularly applied in practice, to designate the two divisions and the apex. Secular offices were "outer" (phyi), monastic ones "inner" (nang), and the apex was "peak" (rtse), the office of hereditary head of state itself being occasionally described as the Rtse-bla-brang or Zhabs-drung-rtse.²¹ Students of Tibetan governments will recognize parallels.

There were numerous peak officials, all appointed by the head of state himself to form a personal retinue outside the jurisdiction of other divisions of government. As such their offices formed no part of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's promulgation, but we can mention them here for convenience. Perhaps the foremost peak official was the Sku'i-rim-gro-pa or Rim-gro-pa, the personal attendant of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che and theoretically, it would appear, a kind of royal tutor. The first occupant of the position had been Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's long-time companion Drung Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan. Almost certainly he was one of those responsible for concealing Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's death, following which he apparently devoted much time in caring for the sickly Rgyal-sras 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. Originally he had also been charged by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal with many of the monastic teaching duties, but after 1651 these gradually devolved more and more onto the Rje Mkhan-po, and a falling out between Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan and the Third Sde-srid left the Sku'i-rim-gro-pa temporarily with even fewer official responsibilities of state.²² Practically speaking, peak officials had little power during the thirty-year hiatus before 1680, or at any later time during the absence of a hierarch from the throne.

Peak officials besides the Sku'i-rim-gro-pa included a gsol-dpon, one or several gzims-dpon and a ja-dpon, constituting the principal household officials, and a few functionaries of lesser importance.²³ There were in addition a group of men known as bka'-blon, best translated in this context as "royal advisors". The Sde-srid also consulted bka'-blon, but they were apparently distinct from those of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che. During the time of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and probably later, the bka'-blon seem to have been merely trusted confidants, having no statutory power, who might or might not occupy another official

position of state. Hence they probably played a comparable role to the bka'-blon of the Dalai Lamas before 1721.²⁴ Finally, peak officials must have had certain treasury responsibilities, but precise arrangements are unclear from the available literature.

The monastic bureaucracy after 1651 was headed by the office of Rje Mkhan-po, below which in rank were various "preceptors" (slob-dpon) whose number came eventually to be standardized at four. Other than the office of Rje Mkhan-po and its formal linkage with the state bureaucracy, the monastery's offices and hierarchy were established by long tradition and underwent no visible alterations after 1651. Therefore a brief description and history of the position of Rje Mkhan-po seems appropriate at this point.

The Rje Mkhan-po and his subordinate functionaries were customarily appointed from among the monkhood by reason of merit and prior service, frequently as a Slob-dpon.²⁵ Selection to the office normally originated at the nomination of a retiring incumbent or the head of state. The monks themselves formally acclaimed the final nomination, and although the possibility of their rejecting a candidate existed in theory, I have found no reference to any actual occurrence of this. In fact, men qualified by education and experience to serve in the post were not very numerous in early decades, and many expressed initial reluctance to accept nomination owing to the position's arduous responsibilities. The Sde-srid was normally consulted during the course of selection, though largely as a formality, and there were later instances when a Sde-srid's attempts to overtly interfere in the process elicited criticism from the monks.²⁶ Often the Rje Mkhan-po came from wealthy and respected families with a tradition of service to the government, and in some instances they were themselves recognized rebirths in minor Bhutanese incarnation lineages,²⁷ but typically they seem to have been men of common background

who had entered the church through the workings of the monk tax. Once appointed, they could in theory serve for life and there were numerous incumbents who actually died in office. The First Rje Mkhan-po Pad-dkar-'byung-gnas, a descendant of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, served for twenty-one years from 1651 to 1672.²⁸ Generally, though, they held office for less than ten years and in rare cases for only a few months. Retirement usually resulted from considerations of age and failing health.

The institutional contribution of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo properly speaking was to formalize the hierarchy of functionaries charged with administering the district fortresses, and to strictly enforce edicts regulating their duties and public behaviour. The basis of the state bureaucracy was the office of Sde-srid or Deb Rāja, whose full title we have seen was Sde-srid-phyag-mdzod. His formal charge, as expressed in a number of sources, was to safeguard the laws of the church (chos khrims skyong ba) and to administer and adjudicate the laws of the state (rgyal khrims gcod pa) on behalf of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che, whose theoretical appointee he was.²⁹

Government was administered primarily from six fortresses whose appointed heads constituted a second level in the state bureaucracy and who were directly responsible to the Sde-srid. The three of main importance were Punakha, Tashichhodzong and Wangdiphodrang, collectively referred to as the gdan-sa-gzhung-gsum.³⁰ Each of these was administered by a Rdzong-dpon, though the terms Rdzong-'dzin and Rdzong-bdag were occasionally used. Punakha and Tashichhodzong were the principal seats of government, the winter and summer capitals, owing to the fact that the state monastery shifted residence between them during those seasons. Consequently, these two as a unit were designated the gdan-sa-phan-tshun or "alternate monastic seats".³¹

Theoretically of equal rank with the three Rdzong-dpon, though in practice of lesser importance, were the heads of the three main outlying fortresses of the country, the Spyi-bla of Paro, Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse (hereafter Tongsa) and Tagana.³² As a unit the three offices were known as the phyogs-kyi-spyi-bla, roughly signifying "regional monastic superintendencies". The office of Spyi-bla (i.e. spyi'i-bla-ma) was originally monastic, and its roots go back to earlier centuries in Tibet when Spyi-bla had been appointed to broadly oversee sectarian matters and probably collect donations from affiliated hermitages in large outlying districts, where formal administration was politically impossible or economically unjustified.³³ The three Spyi-bla of Bhutan must therefore have originated after 1616 for the purpose of overseeing 'Brug-pa interests in unadministered areas of the east, south and west, and the first appointees were in fact monks.³⁴ By 1651, however, following military subjugation and the extension of direct political authority, the Spyi-bla ruled from rdzongs and their duties became virtually indistinguishable from those of the gzhung-gyi-rdzong-dpon of Punakha, Tashichhodzong and Wangdiphodrang. The formal subjection of the offices to central control is perhaps indicated in some way by the change of title from Spyi-bla to Dpon-slob, already in use by the time of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's promulgation.³⁵

In theory, it appears, appointment to these six positions was to have been made from suitable candidates in the monasteries by the Sde-srid, in consultation with the head of state. In fact, however, the absence of a functioning head of state between 1651 and 1680 resulted in many later appointments originating with the Sde-srid only, and the precedent very quickly became established that appointees should come from respected and probably well-to-do families, their monastic background being of secondary

importance. The Spyi-bla in particular tended to be appointed from dominant families of the area, though in times of political crisis the original practice of appointing highly revered monks was occasionally resuscitated.³⁶ In spite of the high prestige of these appointments, formal salaries were apparently largely nominal, so that candidates of independent financial means were preferred. The Rdzong-dpon and Spyi-bla were mainly responsible for adjudication of local disputes, maintenance of general peace, and the collection of taxes. The keeping of detailed district records and the peasants' right of appeal to higher authorities theoretically prevented these officials from arbitrarily increasing taxes or withholding portions for their personal gain, but numerous regulations in the legal code amply confirm a persistent inclination to augment the perquisites of office. A passage from the life of Dam-chos-pad-dkar, however, shows that branch heads of the state monastery stationed at the outlying rdzongs could overrule notoriously improper administrative actions.³⁷

The only other position in the state bureaucracy worth mentioning at this point is the Gzhung-mgron-gnyer or government steward, whose primary function was to audit and manage government stores.³⁸ Interestingly, though, in times of war the Gzhung-mgron-gnyer frequently received military commissions. There is some evidence to suggest that this officer's allegiance to the head of state bypassed the office of Sde-srid, bridging the formal bifurcation between monastic and secular branches of government.

Below the Sde-srid and his seven immediate subordinates came a large range of secretaries, clerks, horsemen, servants and retainers, whose lines of authority are indeterminate from the available literature and whose limited powers derived entirely from that of their immediate

superiors, to whom they owed their patronage and salary. Recent Bhutanese writing suggests that much of this bureaucracy was in existence at the time of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's promulgation or even earlier, and this is probably true.³⁹ The texts leave a strong impression that recruitment into government service was based to a great extent on merit and ability, but that patronage owing to family ties was not unimportant. Appointments to the higher positions were filled whenever vacancies arose, but ceremonies of formal installation and retirement were customarily held during the religious New Year festivities.

Five years after Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own passing, his trusted administrator Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo himself died, in office, during the summer of 1656. His principal fame in Bhutan was for his just and vigorous enforcement of law. Less well understood at this point but certainly of considerable importance were his measures to extend the geographical reach of 'Brug-pa rule, particularly eastwards. His reign may best be characterized as a period of consolidation, extending and enforcing the authority of the 'Brug-gzhung according to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's plan. So far as can be known, the fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's contemplative retreat was firmly maintained during Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's regency. The upper echelons in the state bureaucracy had yet to shed their basically monastic orientation for more secular interests, and it is indicative of such role ambiguity during the period that at the time of this Sde-srid's death he was giving religious lectures at Lcags-ri.⁴⁰

Shortly after the death of the First Sde-srid, La-sngon-pa Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra (1607-67) was appointed as his successor. He was widely believed to have been a bastard son of Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and therefore

a half-brother of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, to whom he bore a close physical resemblance.⁴¹ Nothing further is known of his family background. It is stated that he also had entered Rwa-lung monastery as a child, and was thus an early Tibetan associate of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, though the date of his arrival in Bhutan is not noted. He first rose to prominence in the position of Paro Spyi-bla, of which he was the original appointee.⁴² The building of 'Brug-rgyal-rdzong fortress guarding the passes from Tibet into the Paro valley is credited to him, as is also the reconstruction of the ancient hermitage of Padmasambhava at Stag-tshang. Both probably predate 1651 by a few years.⁴³

Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra served with great distinction during the eleven years until his death in 1667. A student of medicine himself, he was responsible for the enthusiastic promotion of medical studies and reputedly arranged large gifts of Bhutanese herbs to Tibetan physicians on two occasions.⁴⁴ He founded schools at the capital for study in the traditional Buddhist sciences and Lamaist crafts, while higher academic learning was promoted by him through the inauguration of formal classes and examination procedures, rewards being given to the most successful students.⁴⁵ Workshops for building the famous Bkra-shis-sgo-mangs and Tsan-dan-mchod-rten stūpa complexes at Punakha were opened by him in 1662 and 1665 respectively, though some years were to pass before these elaborate and expensive religious projects could be completed. More important, perhaps, was his grand project to prepare an edition of the Bka'-'gyur in one hundred volumes, printed in gold ink on indigo paper. Probably the first complete native Bka'-'gyur of Bhutan, the work began in 1666 and was only completed in 1674, after his death. Less expensive copies of the scripture on ordinary paper were also produced during his reign for distribution to other monasteries, but the golden Bka'-'gyur became one of the important treasures of Punakha.⁴⁶

Pious religious projects were the product of his later administration, however, for within months of his taking office another war broke out with Tibet. This was a major Tibetan offensive, probably the largest yet launched against Bhutan. Once again, though, its motives and timing are obscure. The Fifth Dalai Lama offers no explanation, and his own role in the affair was largely limited to bestowing long-life initiations on the Tibetan and Mongol soldiers before their departure, and the performance of other rituals designed to guarantee victory.⁴⁷ One gains the impression from his autobiography that the invasion was principally the work of his generals and regents, over whom he had little real control, although Bhutanese sources accuse the Dalai Lama of being the ultimate instigator. According to the Bhutanese the invasion was inspired purely for revenge at past defeats. Since the previous war of 1648-49, a popular slogan had become widespread according to which the massed armies of the thirteen myriarchies of Tibet were no match for the Bhutanese hierarchy alone, owing to his great occult powers. To disprove this, it was claimed, was the war's motive.⁴⁸ However, both sides acknowledged that Bhutanese sorcery against Tibet was an issue, and we have seen that Bhutan claimed credit for the death of Gushri Khan in 1655 in that fashion.⁴⁹ Whether Tibetans believed it is another matter, and the actual reasons for the war were probably more complex. Certainly revenge was one of them. Another factor, though one which cannot be so clearly pinpointed, was an apparent irredentist sentiment on the part of Tibet to resume all those regions which had once formed part of the legendary ancient empire of Srong-btsan-sgam-po, a kind of manifest destiny.⁵⁰ Finally, the Lha-pa were probably still warmongers at this time, while in the outcome an important Lama of the Tibetan Gnas-rnying-pa church was released after years of imprisonment in Bhutan, so that the interests of Gtsang leaders in the campaign may have been inspired with that end in view.

In any case, Tibetan preparations for the invasion had been careful. Already during the 3rd month of 1656 siege machinery was being readied under the supervision of the Shigatse sde-bdag Nang-so Nor-bu. The Bsam-yas and Gnas-chung oracles were consulted and both indicated that success would be forthcoming provided certain instructions were followed.⁵¹ With preparations complete, the campaign was launched at the beginning of the 8th month.⁵² Overall coordination of the invasion was in the hands of Nang-so Nor-bu and the Gtsang mda'-dpon Bkras-sgang-nas.⁵³ The Tibetan troops included Mongols and divisions from Khams and Kong-po, as well as from Dbus and Gtsang. There were also certain disaffected Bhutanese leaders who used the opportunity to side with Tibet against the 'Brug-pa government.⁵⁴

Gtsang Mkhan-chen, still maintaining the fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's meditative retreat, claims that the nine-month war brought only defeat to the Tibetans, owing to his magical power over the protective deities.⁵⁵ However that may be, right from the beginning the Tibetan offensive encountered difficulties. Nang-so Byang-ngos-pa found the mountains into Bhutan to be a greater impediment than expected, and excessive heat in the further valleys a threat to his troops' health. A note was sent back to Nang-so Nor-bu recommending that the invasion be postponed. This seems to have been done for a time, but the offensive was renewed about the beginning of 1657 in spite of indications that the Tibetan oracles no longer regarded the time for invasion as propitious. Of course, this may have been nothing more than a rationalization of the Dalai Lama to explain the defeat which eventually occurred. In any case Nang-so Nor-bu is blamed for rashly proceeding in the face of high odds.⁵⁶

Attacks were launched in western Bhutan against Paro (Hūm-ral-kha) and Mgar-sa (Dgon), and against Bum-thang in central Bhutan. The armies

advancing towards Bum-thang scarcely got beyond the frontier, however, while those attacking in the west were practically decimated by a variety of afflictions attributed to the hot climate. In the interim a major disagreement had broken out at Phag-ri between Nang-so Nor-bu and the Mongol leaders Dalai Batur and Ma-gcig Taiji over whether to continue the fighting or make peace. The matter was finally settled when Ma-gcig Taiji died, supposedly from fever contracted in Bhutan, though a rumour alleged his poisoning at the behest of Nang-so Nor-bu.⁵⁷

In any case Tibetan defeat was apparent and a treaty was negotiated by a number of ranking Tibetan Lamas sent from Lhasa, Tashilhunpo, Skyid-shod and Ngor. The Bhutanese suggest that the Sa-skyia hierarch Bsod-nams-dbang-phyug was largely responsible for the peace which followed.⁵⁸ Actually many people made an effort for the occasion and a treaty was signed with the chief Bhutanese negotiator A'u Drung at the head of the bridge at Paro. The First Panchen Lama had sent two of his own emissaries, Bsod-nams-phun-tshogs and Chos-'byor-legs-pa, along with rich gifts for the Bhutanese Sde-srid and the child Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che. Terms of peace are known only from the Panchen Lama, who says that the treaty was to have lasted for four or five years, that all prisoners captured on both sides were to be released, and that some two hundred additional prisoners from earlier engagements were to be set free at this time, including the Gnas-rnying Rje-btsun-drung.⁵⁹

Once more a combination of geographical, climatic and superstitious factors had combined to prevent a Tibetan conquest of the south. Gradually, it seems, the opinions of ordinary Tibetans as well as of the monks were converging to oppose any further such attempts, although this would not be the last. But the defeat of 1657 was a great embarrassment to Lhasa and not surprisingly a number of "hidden texts" were suddenly

discovered to explain it away.⁶⁰ For Bhutan it was a significant victory, the first in which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had played no active role, even though his spiritual presence was still believed to be presiding in some mysterious fashion. In any case success seems to have inspired the Bhutanese leaders with new confidence. Documents (spir-gtam) in existence during the mid-18th century allegedly contained the plans of Sde-srid Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra to bring all of Tibet and Khams under 'Brug-pa control through the medium of dissident Tibetan aristocrats, although nothing seems to have come of it.⁶¹ Whatever his abilities as a military leader, and unlike his successor, Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra was not a man of warlike sentiments. His regency, like that of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo, was respected mainly for its general peace and the just administration of law, and like the other was often cited in later times for its exemplary character. His last years in office, as we have seen, were largely devoted to pious religious works, and at the time of his death the country had been at peace for ten years.

The career of the Third Sde-srid Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa (1613-81) contrasts with that of his predecessor in practically every way.⁶² It was filled with strife almost from beginning to end, and though firmly loyal to the hierarchs of the church and dedicated to the cause of Bhutan, his ambition and rather ruthless indelicacy in diplomatic matters made his reign one of much controversy. He was personally responsible for the first serious attempts to resolve the lingering crisis resulting from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's absence from the hierarch's throne, while his military conquests extended 'Brug-pa dominions even beyond their modern limits. In bringing about these achievements, however, he offended many people, and thereby paved the way for his own fall from power.

Little is known of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's early life. He was a Tibetan of the Smin-'khyud family,⁶³ became a monk during his youth, and eventually

rose to the office of Dbu-mdzad, probably in one of the Bhutanese monasteries. He was an early associate of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, but how this came about or the events which brought him to Bhutan are not known. We have seen that at the time of Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo's promulgation of 1651 Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa was made Chos-rtse Spyi-bla, but as the construction of that fortress was his work his presence in Shar-phyogs must have predated 1651 by several years, probably in some lesser capacity.⁶⁴

As Chos-rtse Spyi-bla he proved himself to be much more than a mere "monastic superintendent" or district governor, however. The military conquest of all eastern Bhutan and its incorporation into the 'Brug-pa state by 1655 was largely his work. We have already alluded to this and not much more can be said for the moment, except to note certain eastern Bhutanese traditions according to which the men who assisted him in the effort of conquest were Dbu-mdzad Dam-chos-rab-rgyas of Tashigang and a certain Bla-ma Rnam-sras (d. 1657?), a native of eastern Bhutan believed to have been a bastard grandson of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma.⁶⁵ The subjugation of Shar-phyogs was by all accounts ruthless and those local princes who refused surrender were either put to the sword or banished. The leading opponents were the Chos-'khor dpon-po of Bum-thang and the king (rgyal-po) of Kha-ling named Bde-ba.

The subjugation was consolidated by construction of a series of fortresses and these also were the work of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa during this period. The traditional number was six (rdzong chen drug) or eight (Shar phyogs 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad) and include virtually all the major district centres which still persist as such to the present day. In addition to Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse or Tongsa itself, the rdzongs attributed to him include Tashigang, Bya-dkar, Lhun-rtse, Bkra-shis-g.yang-rtse, Gzhongs-dka', Gzhal-med-sgang, and Gdung-mtshams-mkhar.⁶⁶

Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, or Dam-chos-lhun-grub as he was alternately known, ruled Shar-phyogs with an iron hand. Even in much later times eastern Bhutan was characterized by a multiplicity of ethnic groups and separate languages, and no doubt firmness was necessary in an area which had not previously felt unified authority. Nevertheless, resentment against him persisted among the defeated eastern chiefs, and even the Rnying-ma-pa monks whom he favoured throughout his career nursed grudges against some of his more ruthless deeds, the karmic fruit of which was later to be cited as a cause of his final ignominy.⁶⁷

By 1667, however, his reputation as a strongman was renowned even in western Bhutan, and when the Second Sde-srid died in 1667 Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's name was put up for appointment. The original proposal came from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's old rim-gro-pa Drung Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan, who produced a document supporting the nomination purportedly written by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself.⁶⁸ For a time however Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa demurred, citing criticism then circulating at the capital that his rule in Shar-phyogs had superseded the instructions of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che and his son. He therefore requested an interview with the secluded hierarch in order to gain his personal approval.⁶⁹ The request must have entailed some strained moments for Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan, for almost certainly Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa had been uninformed till that moment of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's true condition, or of the impediment afflicting 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. We are not told if the proposed interview ever took place, but it is doubtful that the secret could have been withheld once he accepted the nomination. I suspect that the matter was one of the undisclosed sources of disagreement and bad feeling which are said to have arisen after 1667 between Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa and Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan, leading to the latter's final retirement from affairs of state.⁷⁰

In any case, the nomination was accepted and Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa was formally installed as Sde-srid in the 3rd month of 1667.⁷¹ His regency very quickly assumed many of the features of bold manoeuvring to which he had been accustomed as governor in Shar-phyogs. At the capital, however, his autocratic tendencies were bound to conflict eventually with the entrenched influence of the church and of other important officials whose ties of family and local support were stronger than his own. Perhaps it was his failure to consult adequately with such persons on important matters, rather than his enterprises themselves, which provoked their ire, for he was not an irreligious ruler and important monuments of the church were undertaken by him. In 1670 he completed the Bkra-shis-sgo-mangs stupas at Punakha and the golden Bka'-'gyur in 1674. Gsang-sngags-zab-don, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's original rdzong at Srin-mo-mdo-kha, was rebuilt at his direction in 1671 and new images were completed for its chapels three years later.⁷² Construction of the central tower residence for the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che at Punakha (Rtse'i gzim khang dbu rtse chen mo) was another of his pious enterprises, and he promoted the construction of prayer walls along major roadways and the printing of religious texts. The original manuscripts of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biography were probably prepared under his auspices.⁷³ So that in spite of the recurrent strife with Tibet that plagued his period of rule, it was still generally noted for the just administration of law, and in documents of the period he is regularly mentioned with the epithet Chos-rgyal - Dharmarāja.

But Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa was a monk ill-disposed by nature or habit to passive administration, and where eastward expansionism had been the main feature of his service as Chos-rtse Spyi-bla a similar attempt to extend 'Brug-pa possessions westward characterized his regency at the

seat of government. This is confirmed not only from the records of Tibetan Dge-lugs-pas, who tried various measures to prevent it, but from Bhutanese sources themselves. For the latter, of course, his measures were viewed as purely defensive or missionary efforts, and where they resulted in fighting the blame was located elsewhere. Naturally, the Lhasa government viewed things from quite a different perspective. There were other regional political forces then at work for which Bhutanese expansionism would have some relevance. For a moment we must stand back from our narrow perspective and the biased accounts of both sides in order to quickly review some of the broader sectarian and political patterns emerging in the Himalayas during the mid-17th century.

The southward spread of sectarian missions from the religious centres of Tibet was a continuing feature of the history of this time. Only weak political consequences resulted from most of these, however, compared with which 'Brug-pa developments in Bhutan must be seen as the major exception. Eastwards of Shar-phyogs lay the large expanse of forested tracts of what is now Arunachal Pradesh, then inhabited mostly by tribal peoples known as Mon-pa and Klo-pa. The Mon-pas were apparently seen as more "Tibetan" than the Klo-pas, who tended to inhabit warmer districts south of the Himalayan crest. Isolated references to petty Mon-pa kings ruling in the vicinity of Mtsho-sna and Sha-'ug-stag-sgo can be found in Karma-pa and Rnying-ma-pa records from the 12th century or so, and are probably the same as the Shar-Mon ("East Mon") of these and other documents. Control of the trade corridor connecting Tibet with the plains, now known as the "Tawang tract" and located roughly along the eastern Bhutanese frontier carved out by 1655, may explain the basis for whatever incipient economic power these "kings" might have possessed. Of this, however, reliable information has yet to come to light.

Generally speaking, climate, geography, and a passionate fear of the reputedly head-hunting Klo-pas had combined to discourage active Tibetan penetration for many centuries, and in the absence of Lamaist culture written information is almost nonexistent.⁷⁴ Irrespective of certain modern arguments, Tibetans generally treated the eastern Himalayan crest as the natural frontier of Tibet and seldom crossed it.⁷⁵ The Yellow Hats did not yet have the major interests in Tawang they were to acquire after 1680. Consequently Bhutanese expansionism as far as Tashigang was not directly countered by any significant state powers. The only important Tibetan cultural presence were Rnying-ma-pa missions, mostly of the Padma-gling-pa persuasion, for whom the 'Brug-pa government made special allowances.

The situation immediately west of Bhutan during the time of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's rule was very different and vastly more complex. Here also were Mon-pas, tribal peoples and local peasant lineages, but Tibetan penetration had been deeper and more intense. Tibetan agricultural settlement of the Gro-mo or Chumbi valley which separates modern Bhutan from Sikkim apparently predates Buddhist historiography, but the northern regional centre of Chumbi at Phag-ri had been the remote administrative outpost of successive Tibetan governments since the assertion of Sa-skya control in the mid-14th century. By location it was a natural trade mart and frontier post for Tibet, controlling major routes into Bhutan, Sikkim, and ultimately India. Agriculture in the valley was itself sufficiently prosperous to encourage annexation for purposes of tax-collection, a factor of considerable importance for the period after 1667, if not earlier.

For the same reasons Chumbi had since very early times attracted numerous missions, mainly Rnying-ma-pa, 'Ba'-ra-ba, 'Brug-pa and Lha-pa,

whose conflicts for dominance in the valley we have touched upon in an earlier chapter. But far from ending with consolidation of 'Brug-pa rule in Bhutan, these sectarian conflicts now became intensified through alignments with superior powers, the new state governments which were emerging in Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. Of later Rnying-ma-pa interests in Chumbi little has yet been written, but by about 1650 they and the 'Ba'-ra-ba were gravitating westwards in search of new patronage, to Sikkim, the lesser chieftainships in Gnas-nang, and others. Expelled from Bhutan, the Lha-pa managed to retain landholding rights at Kham-bu and elsewhere in Chumbi even up to 1959, but more importantly the event had propelled them for assistance solidly into the Dge-lugs-pa fold. Although the exiled Lha-pa hierarch Blo-bzang-bstan-pa-dar-rgyas died in 1669 without ever regaining his lost properties in Bhutan, his new status as protected client of the Fifth Dalai Lama had not been an unimportant cause for Tibetan invasions of the south.⁷⁶ Thus, the rise of new political powers in the mid-17th century served in part to refocus ancient hatreds and to invigorate them with greater militancy.

Sikkim was another centre of power for which Bhutanese expansionism was to be of more than casual interest. Practically isolated by mountain barriers on three sides, the region had for centuries been known to Tibetan monks and from prophecies of Padmasambhava as a Hidden Land, the Valley of Rice ('Bras-mo-ljongs). In 1642, the same year as the Fifth Dalai Lama's installation at Shigatse, Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal got himself installed at Yuksam Nor-bu-sgang as Chos-rgyal, thereby founding a hereditary princely line of Tibetan ancestry, by tradition the valley's first.⁷⁷ The original territories of this king were not very extensive, and power had to be shared with the heads of native Lepcha and Bhutia families who supplied ministers and consorts to the royal court.⁷⁸

But the date of his installation suggests some connection with the Mongol turmoil in Tibet, and the three Rnying-ma-pa Lamas who performed the coronation are said to have fled to Sikkim in fulfillment of prophecies relating to the Era of Defilement.⁷⁹

Thus, the Sikkim state was originally partisan to the Rnying-ma-pa and the early rulers, being lay princes, soon became patrons of Gter-bdag-gling-pa and his successors at Smin-grol-gling. This connection brought them into favour with the Fifth Dalai Lama. Absent in Sikkim was any political theory of state based on exalted spiritual claims, an additional factor in the state's cultivation of amicable ties with Lhasa. The contrast with Bhutan in this respect is quite striking, and the protectorate which Tibet secured over Sikkim in the early 18th century, as we shall see, was partly in response to Bhutanese territorial acquisitiveness.⁸⁰

The other expanding power whose actions were to have repercussions in the eastern Himalayan region during this period was the Mughal empire. There is no evidence to suggest that Bhutan ever had any direct dealings with the Mughals. Rather their presence was indirectly felt through the pressures they brought to bear on small Hindu states of upper Bengal, mainly Cooch Bihar. Intercourse between Bhutan and Cooch Bihar was probably of some antiquity, though little reliable information is available. It is said that during the vigorous reign of Nar Nārāyan (r. 1555-87) parts of Bhutan had become tributary to Cooch Bihar.⁸¹ Perhaps that is so, but his political authority cannot have been very far-reaching in that direction, so that when Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal began to extend his territories southwards some settlement between the two states must have been reached. The suggestion is that it was accomplished peacefully, perhaps in about 1619. The Bhutanese allege that, at the

behest of king Padma (i.e. Prāṇ) Nārāyaṇ, who had supposedly been on friendly terms with Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the king exchanged gifts and letters to certify their mutual friendship, and that thereafter the two men continued as patron and Lama.⁸²

However they may have come about, relations between Bhutan and Cooch Bihar seem to have begun amicably enough. It would appear that already during Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's rule the practice was adopted of stationing a Bhutanese agent at Cooch Bihar during parts of the year, to oversee trade.⁸³ The Jesuit travellers noted the existence of such persons during their stay there in 1627, but even by that time the Cooch Bihar dominions extended no further north than a place about two days travel south of the Bhutan foothills called Runate, while the Bhutanese who frequented the place were rather feared for their marauding habits.⁸⁴ High level relations between the two states seem to have languished after their promising start, and for several decades no further information is available.

That state of affairs changed rather quickly following Aurangzeb's usurpation of the Mughal throne in 1658, however, when imperial efforts were once more undertaken to subjugate Assam and upper Bengal. When the Bengal sūbahdār Mīr Jumla attacked Cooch Bihar in December of 1661, its king, Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ, fled to Bhutan for refuge. The Mughals were told by a captured Bhutanese that his country was ruled by a "Dharmrāja,... who is over one hundred and twenty years old. He is an ascetic, eats only plantains, drinks only milk, and indulges in no pleasures whatever. He is famous for his justice, and rules over a large people."⁸⁵ So the fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's contemplative retreat became known even to Mīr Jumla, albeit in garbled form. But when the latter's letter demanding Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ's return met with a polite refusal from the

"Dharmrāja" the issue could not be pursued, and of Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ's fate in Bhutan no further particulars are available.⁸⁶ Nothing of these events is mentioned in Bhutanese sources.

Nevertheless, Mughal pressure on Cooch Bihar did not cease with Mīr Jumla's death. Indeed, the town itself was renamed Alamgīrnagar, and became unwilling host to a permanent imperial police official. The long and lavish rule of Mīr Jumla's successor Shāista Khān (r. 1664-88) was to prove financially burdensome to many of the local Bengali zamīndārs and princes out of whose treasuries it was supported.⁸⁷ Faced with this situation, the Cooch Bihar kings were to be backed into a closer and more submissive relationship with the Bhutanese rulers, who, as we shall see, exploited their new advantage in various ways.

If the struggles between Tibet and Bhutan had been limited to purely territorial matters we could close our discussion of the broader impinging issues here. But the fundamentally religious orientation of the two governments meant that their "national" interests would be affected wherever Dge-lugs-pa and 'Brug-pa sectarian differences might arise, and these were not necessarily restricted by geography. The fact is that competition between these two sects was pursued in many places along the Himalayan chain far removed from Bhutan. Partly this was concerned with centres of pilgrimage, such as Mt. Ti-se and the revered meditation sites of Mi-la-ras-pa (d. 1123) in northern Nepal, though these places were of lesser interest to the Dge-lugs-pa. More important spheres of competition were the kingdoms in the Kathmandu valley and in Ladakh where possibilities for richer patronage were greater. Throughout the 1660's and beyond the Fifth Dalai Lama received royal delegations from the Malla kings of the Kathmandu valley, although so far as is known the Dge-lugs-pa had no important monasteries there.⁸⁸ Swayambhunath and

Bodhnath appear to have been less frequented by Dge-lugs-pa than Rnying-ma-pa and Bka'-brgyud-pa monks and yogis, and Lhasa's interests in the valley were probably more concerned with matters of diplomacy and trade.

The independent Nepalese state of Jumla ('Dzum-lang) was also cultivating close ties with Lhasa during this time. Nominally supreme among the Baisi Rājas of western Nepal, Jumla in the 17th century was apparently as much a power to be reckoned with as the kingdoms of the valley. In 1667 the Dalai Lama received royal Jumla emissaries who presented him with numerous gifts, including a pair of peacocks and an elephant's tusk "larger than any on even the many live elephants I saw in China."⁸⁹ Other such delegations came annually thereafter to Lhasa, often during the New Year celebrations.

Official Bhutanese interests in Kathmandu were of little consequence before Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's regency. No ties with Jumla can be traced at all. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal is said to have received a mission from Nepal upon his assumption of power, but the reference is vague.⁹⁰ Newari craftsmen were employed in various projects, and the existence of some trade has been noted. But Tibet's greater wealth and power, as well as its common frontier and important export interests in salt and wool, provided it with greater leverage in diplomatic manoeuvring with Nepal than the Bhutanese could command, and Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's efforts to gain a foothold in the valley, as we shall see, were comparatively unsuccessful.

Further west in Mustang (Glo-bo) Bhutan was to have more luck. This small principality controlling a trade route down the Kali Gandaki river had originally been pioneered by Ngor-pa monks in the 15th century, but at some point after that the royal family of Mustang began to patronise the 'Brug-pa as well.⁹¹ Throughout the 1680's and 90's the Glo-bo sku-skye

incarnations visited Bhutan and were appointed to official posts, usually as presiding abbot over the Bhutanese enclave at Ti-se in western Tibet, but occasionally within Bhutan proper. Probably this relationship with Mustang had begun several decades earlier, although confirming evidence is slight.⁹² Chos-rdzong is the one 'Brug-pa monastery in Mustang whose abbots are known to have been appointed from Bhutan by the late 17th century.⁹³ There may have been one or two others.

It was in Ladakh, however, that Dge-lugs-pa and 'Brug-pa interests were to come into most violent conflict. A definitive study of the complex political and sectarian features of this autonomous Tibetan principality has yet to be written and here we must limit ourselves to a few very general remarks.⁹⁴ A princely line claiming descent from the kings of ancient Tibet, the second dynasty of Ladakhi kings gradually carved out a large though sparsely settled dominion in western Tibet from the late 15th century, based, it would appear, on control of the expanding wool trade with Kashmir and nomadic produce in general. Indeed, a modern Ladakhi author writing of the period treats the possession of large herds of horses, sheep, goats and yaks as a virtual idiom for the state's wealth.⁹⁵ But geographic remoteness from central Tibet also contributed greatly to Ladakhi independence, so that under the reign of Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal (r. ca. 1600-42?) and following the treaty with Gtsang in 1640, Ladakh's territories reached as far east as the Mar-yum pass, and included the renowned pilgrimage centres of Lake Mānasarovar and Mt. Kailāsa (Ti-se).⁹⁶

Dge-lugs-pa monasteries had been founded in Ladakh since at least the early 15th century, and 'Brug-pa monasteries probably existed then also, though documentation is presently unavailable.⁹⁷ But Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal was a fond patron of the great Tibetan 'Brug-pa yogin Stag-tshang-ras-pa and from Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's reign onward, according to the opinion

of Lhasa, Ladakhi favouritism towards the 'Brug-pa came largely at the expense of the local Yellow Hats. By all accounts the Bhutanese 'Brug-pas also received patronage from Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal, although the early history of this connection is completely obscure. Surprisingly, Ladakhi sources themselves have little to say of it. A Bhutanese author of the 18th century tells us that a firm Lama-patron (mchod-yon) relationship had been formed between this king and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, to seal which a royal Ladakhi prince was sent to Bhutan and eventually became appointed a Rdzong-dpon at Wangdiphodrang.⁹⁸ However the relationship came about, by the latter part of the 17th century Bhutan was customarily sending out various monk administrators and official representatives (sku-tshab) to monasteries at Gnyen-po-ri-rdzong, Gad-rdzong, Rngud and Stag-sna.⁹⁹

From the period between Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's final conquest of Guge in 1630 and his death some twelve years later can probably also be dated Bhutanese acquisition of the administrative enclave at Mt. Ti-se, supervised by the religious post of Gangs-ri Rdor-'dzin and perhaps one or two lay officials.¹⁰⁰ The political importance of this enclave to Bhutan was probably related more to national prestige than economics, as the pilgrimage tolls it was authorized to collect are never mentioned as a significant source of state income. But as a diplomatic outpost within Ladakhi territory it provided Bhutan with ready access to the court of Ladakh and those of its dependencies where other 'Brug-pa monasteries were located, such as Zangs-dkar and Guge. During the later 17th century, at least, the Gangs-ri Rdor-'dzin were usually selected from the ranks of 'Brug-pa monks native to Guge and the Bhutanese legal code preserved in the Lho'i chos 'byung accords this official a hierarchical status second only to the Rdzong-dpon and Spyi-bla.¹⁰¹

Substantial 'Brug-pa influence in western Tibet coupled with defiant Ladakhi posturing were clearly not to the liking of Tibetan authorities. The possibility of even a military alliance between Bhutan and Ladakh may have occurred to the Lhasa government, though geography ruled against it. But the unsuccessful and increasingly unpopular wars against Bhutan were a strong argument for handling the Ladakhi situation through diplomatic means if possible, and the opportunity to attempt this came with the Fifth Dalai Lama's return from China late in 1653. Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's son Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal had succeeded his father to the throne of Ladakh upon his death in about 1642, but news of the change in government seems to have been suppressed for a time. When Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's revered 'Brug-pa Lama Stag-tshang-ras-pa died in Ladakh some ten years later Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal concealed that event from Lhasa also. In 1654, however, and with the Dalai Lama back in Tibet, a Ladakhi mission finally revealed the death and at the same time appealed for permission to have another ranking 'Brug-pa Lama sent to Ladakh.¹⁰²

This was the opening to interfere in Ladakhi affairs which Tibet needed, and the Dalai Lama exploited it cleverly. Ladakh had apparently become an arena of sectarian competition not only between the Dge-lugs-pa and the 'Brug-pa, but between the two antagonistic divisions of the 'Brug-pa themselves, the Tibetan and Bhutanese. By insisting as a pre-condition for the dispatch of a 'Brug-pa Lama that the Ladakhi rulers should swear support for the Dge-lugs-pa, and by making the Tibetan 'Brug-pa leaders pledge surety for Ladakhi compliance, both disputes could be turned to the advantage of Lhasa. The Dalai Lama's response was unambiguous, even threatening. In former times Yellow Hat monasteries had flourished in western Tibet, but since the advent of Stag-tshang-ras-pa, it was alleged, popular opinion had been swayed to the 'Brug-pa persuasion and the Dge-lugs-pa had accordingly suffered. Now, therefore,

the future well-being of 'Brug-pa interests in central Tibet would be contingent upon the Ladakhi king's active support for the local Yellow Hats, chiefly the monasteries of Khrig-se and Dpe-thub. It would be the duty of the proposed 'Brug-pa emissary to promote sectarian harmony generally, and between the 'Brug-pa and Yellow Hats in particular.¹⁰³

This was a noble ideal, though clearly the Dge-lugs-pa stood most to gain from it. The Tibetan 'Brug-pas, no doubt anxious to score a win over their Bhutanese rivals, agreed to the stipulations. Accordingly the Dalai Lama suggested that the Bde-chen-chos-'khor Yongs-'dzin Kun-dga'-lhun-grub himself serve as 'Brug-pa emissary to Ladakh, but he excused himself owing to pressing obligations in Tibet, so the Dpon-slob Grub-dbang Rin-po-che, respected for his abilities as a mediator, was sent instead.¹⁰⁴ This incarnate Lama was provided with rich gifts and detailed instructions by both the Dalai and Panchen Lamas and, with additional gifts for the Ladakhi king, and accompanied by the child incarnation of Stag-tshang-ras-pa, he set out for Ladakh with a large entourage, late in 1655.¹⁰⁵

One wonders whether the Tibetan 'Brug-pa leaders clearly perceived all the potential dangers of political involvement in Ladakh. No doubt they felt that, with the support of the Tibetan government, Bhutanese influence could be readily out manoeuvred to the advantage of themselves and Lhasa. As it turned out, they miscalculated both Tibetan intentions and their own ability to influence Ladakhi politics. The sincerity of Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal in swearing to maintain uninterrupted support to Dge-lugs-pa monasteries in his country may have been no more substantial than his unwilling oath of tribute to Aurangzeb, or that of Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal to Alī Mardān Khān of Kashmir at an earlier time.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, Ladakhi persecution of Yellow Hat monasteries after 1655 may be

greatly exaggerated in documents of the Dalai Lama's faction. The important point was that the Tibetan 'Brug-pas were unable to keep their part of the bargain, the substantial appearance of Ladakhi patronage to the Dge-lugs-pa.

The role of Bhutanese agents in this eventuality is unknown for the moment, but already by 1661 signs of Grub-dbang Rin-po-che's inadequacy as a peacemaker were becoming evident. In that year A-jo Khyi-gu, a minister of Bde-ldan-rnam-rgyal, delivered an undiplomatic notice to the Lhasa government to the effect that, as the Ladakhi part of the agreement had now been substantially complied with, it would behove the Tibetans to be more impartially respectful of 'Brug-pa interests in central Tibet.¹⁰⁷ The threat implied by such an impudent demand was precisely the sort of behaviour which the Tibetan 'Brug-pa emissary had been commissioned to prevent, and the Dalai Lama's response was resolute. An investigatory mission was sent to Ladakh, a 'Brug-pa monastery was temporarily seized and rumours of severe reprisals against the Tibetan 'Brug-pas were circulated, the calculated effect of which was a series of profuse apologies and promises of atonement from Ladakh and Kun-dga'-lhun-grub's people. Having achieved that, the Dalai Lama relented for a time, agreeing to forget the issue. But the dangerous plight to which the Tibetan 'Brug-pas' ambitions had brought them were by then readily obvious.¹⁰⁸ Even so the Ladakhis proved unmalleable and similar acts of cavalier effrontery to Tibetan authorities occurred in 1665 and 1667, the year of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's enthronement in Bhutan.¹⁰⁹ Thus, although the historical and political situations in Bhutan and Ladakh were really quite distinct, the sectarian issue united them in such a way as to magnify their common threat as perceived from Lhasa. To counter it, Tibetan authorities first attempted to exploit the bitter

split within the 'Brug-pa church itself, after which, as we shall see, they resorted once more to war.

In the early years of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's reign Bhutanese expansionism was pursued by an aggressive missionary policy, the immediate objectives being petty Mon-pa villages east of Tashigang and southeast of Sikkim near modern Darjeeling. The evidence suggests that much of this missionary effort was really the outgrowth of an age-old pattern of local feuds and conflicting territorial claims, to which the sectarian issues provided a mantle of sanctifying legitimacy. If the Bhutan government did not actually promote these frontier aggressions it is equally clear that it did little to hinder them. The state's very existence as an expanding religious power would have been sufficient to fortify the aggressive spirit of its more bellicose frontiersmen. This seems to have been a persistent feature of the Tibetan cultural region, and would be worth little note had not deeper political contrasts been involved. Combatants who might formerly have settled their differences locally could now turn for aid to Lhasa or Punakha. Inevitably the foreign policies of the larger states were affected.

Just within the eastern frontier of Bhutan at this time, probably near Tashigang, was a small locale known as Me-rag or Me-rag-sa(g)-steng. Already from about 1640 Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been able to levy tribute from this place.¹¹⁰ But the culmination of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's subjugation of Shar-phyogs in 1655 apparently inspired the Me-rag Lama and his supporters to seek outside assistance rather than submit to Bhutanese authority. Twice in that year the Me-rag Lama came to Lhasa for audience with the Dalai Lama, from whom he received religious initiations and teachings.¹¹¹ The Me-rag monks were probably Rnying-ma-pas but it is well known that, as a matter of state policy and personal

idiosyncrasy, the Fifth Dalai Lama had been openly supportive of Rnying-ma-pa interests in various parts of the country, and following Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje's visit to Lhasa in 1650 the Padma-gling-pa incarnates of eastern Bhutan and Lha-lung had been regularly feted there.¹¹² During the 8th and 9th months of 1667 the Me-rag Lama was again in Lhasa, his presence practically coinciding with a state visit by the Sikkim king.¹¹³ Nominally religious missions, in view of the war launched against Bhutan in the following year it is unlikely that the question of 'Brug-pa expansionism was not their underlying purpose.

The war of 1668 was actually touched off by alleged 'Brug-pa depredations in territories claimed by Sikkim between the lower Chumbi valley and Darjeeling. At the time in question these districts consisted largely of mountainous jungles, thinly populated by Indic tribesmen, Lepchas, Bhutias and Tibetan settlers, most or all of whom were loosely classed as Mon-pa in the Tibetan racial scheme. The population mixture between lower Sikkim and southwestern Bhutan seems to have been fairly uniform. Intermigration was frequent and ties of kinship were only then being interrupted by newly emerging national borders. The 'Ba'-ra-ba monk Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan had pioneered in the systematic spread of Buddhism in the area, following his expulsion from Bhutan in about 1634. With the cooperation of the first king of Sikkim Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal (r. 1642-54) he built a small hermitage at Sba-spung in what was then the Gnashang district of southeastern Sikkim, but competition from other Lamas and slackened royal patronage led him southwards to 'Dam-bzang (modern Damsang), some ten miles northeast of modern Kalimpong in the Darjeeling district.¹¹⁴ There he built another monastery named Mon-lug, and although the district was even then dominated by "Lho-Mon (i.e. Bhutanese) monks of crude behaviour" his monastery acquired a degree of prosperity and local importance.¹¹⁵

After many years at 'Dam-bzang he returned ca. 1660 to the 'Ba'-ra gdan-sa in Tibet. Three years later he travelled again to 'Dam-bzang, but in the interval certain 'Brug-pa Lamas from Bhutan had begun to encroach upon his territories while a petty chieftain named Mon-pa A-chog had risen to local prominence through depredations of a kind which incurred the wrath of both 'Brug-pa and 'Ba'-ra-ba patrons. "It was a time of great strife," Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan's biographer writes, and faced with the loss of patronage and the decline of his mission, this intrepid Tibetan yogin apparently abandoned 'Dam-bzang for friendlier districts to the north.¹¹⁶

Of Mon-pa A-chog little is known. His villages¹¹⁷ were notionally included within the territory of Sikkim but in the context of events this claim can have amounted to little. The Bhutanese government outpost in the area was then at Brda-gling-kha, approximately fifteen miles southeast of 'Dam-bzang, and when 'Brug-pa sectarian and territorial pressures became too great to withstand it was to the Fifth Dalai Lama that Mon-pa A-chog turned for assistance. In the 9th month of 1668 a meeting between the two men took place at Lhasa, and two months later Tibet invaded Bhutan on his behalf.

Actually, it was to support "Mon-pa A-chog and others" that the invasion was launched. The "others" apparently included the Me-rag Lama, for as far as is known the Tibetan armies only invaded through Mtsho-sna and Bum-thang. The fighting was probably minimal, and its confinement to eastern Bhutan probably explains the lack of any mention of it in Bhutanese sources. Although preceded by the customary consultation of state oracles, the Tibetan expedition once more found itself in difficulty. Rather than commit additional troops, the Dalai Lama turned to the negotiating table. Officials from Tashilhunpo and the Skyid-shod Taiji

represented Lhasa and, following much animated debate, a treaty of peace was signed in 1669 whose terminus ad quem was the Wood-Hare year of 1675.¹¹⁸

For a number of years after 1669 the texts are silent on the matter of border conflict, but it is unlikely that any genuine peace was achieved. The treaty's main object had apparently been maintenance of the status quo, but none of the affected governments were in a position to adequately enforce the provision, even if it had been their intent to do so. Territorial violations were already taking place before the treaty's date of expiry, at which point open warfare was resumed with even greater vigour.

In the meantime, however, Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa initiated a new policy to strengthen his position vis-à-vis Tibet. As it was clear by that point that Sikkim was aligning itself with Lhasa, Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa attempted to outflank the resistance on his western border by fostering closer diplomatic relations with Nepal. That is the only logical explanation for the timing of an official Bhutanese mission to Kathmandu which he dispatched ca. 1672. Of course, the envoy, Dam-chos-pad-dkar, was a respected monk.¹¹⁹ His title of Mtsho-chen Spyi-bla and the general outfit of the mission all lent suitable emphasis to its outwardly missionary purpose. But its real objective was certainly political, and was regarded as such by Dam-chos-pad-dkar himself.¹²⁰

With a retinue of twenty underlings Dam-chos-pad-dkar made his way through Brda-gling-kha and lower Sikkim to India, where they disguised themselves as beggars to avoid unwanted attention. Eventually they turned northwards and reached the remains of an old monastery called Bla-byang-dgon-pa on the outskirts of Kathmandu.¹²¹ Several weeks later, and after overcoming the resistance of certain royal ministers, an audience with the Kathmandu king was arranged. The name of the king is not supplied

in Bhutanese sources, but cannot have been anyone other than Pratāpamalla (r. 1641-74), one of the great lights of medieval Nepalese history, renowned for his liberal patronage to scholars and foreign dignitaries.¹²² The king was duly respectful to Dam-chos-pad-dkar and granted his request to found several 'Brug-pa monasteries in the valley, and in various ways insured a welcome residence in his kingdom. Following the meeting and a standard tour of the holy places of Swayambhunath, Bodhnath and Nayakot, Dam-chos-pad-dkar laid plans to establish a permanent Bhutanese mission. Bla-byang-dgon-pa was reconstructed and another monastery three days distant at Nam-mkha'-gling was founded, to head which 'Phrin-las-rgya-mtsho was summoned from Bhutan.¹²³

After about two years had passed news got back to Tibet that a 'Brug-pa mission had been established in Kathmandu. The Dge-lugs-pa immediately attempted to counteract this menace by bribing the Nepalese ministers with gold and other valuables. At all costs, they pleaded, 'Brug-pas should be kept out of their kingdom. According to Dam-chos-pad-dkar's biography the bribes were accepted and owing to the ministers' machinations to expel the 'Brug-pa mission the king, i.e. Pratāpamalla, was himself killed.¹²⁴ As the king's sons were all minors, effective power thereafter was held by the ministers themselves. An army was launched against Dam-chos-pad-dkar, which he and his followers barely managed to escape by fleeing westwards in the direction of Jumla. But there also the Bhutanese found Dge-lugs-pa influence well entrenched and returning in secret to Kathmandu they discovered that a kind of religious reaction had taken hold in the valley. The death of Pratāpamalla had left the court in the hands of staunchly Hindu administrators, and Buddhist missions were no longer being welcomed.¹²⁵ At the same time, the Yellow Hats were enforcing a strict ban on 'Brug-pa proselytizing in the Gnya'-nang district along

Nepal's northern border; "not even a dog" was to be allowed conversion to that sect.¹²⁶

Consequently the first substantial Bhutanese mission to Nepal terminated in disarray and failure. Frustrated by the influence of bigoted Hindu ministers and with pressure from Tibet increasing, Dam-chos-pad-dkar and his followers abandoned their Nepalese holdings and set out for home, probably in 1675. After a difficult journey and a short visit to the court of Cooch Bihar the party arrived at Punakha to an elaborate welcome, where Dam-chos-pad-dkar reported extensively to the Sde-srid on the proceedings of his aborted mission.¹²⁷

Unfortunately the record of this interview has not been preserved, and it is unclear whether the termination of Dam-chos-pad-dkar's unproductive mission to Nepal was directly related to the outbreak of fresh hostilities between Tibet and Bhutan over Chumbi in the year of his return. For the moment we must view the events as the diplomatic and militant expressions of a general policy of westward expansion. It is certainly possible that Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa had hoped to effect an alliance with Nepal against Tibet and Sikkim, but if so the hope went unfulfilled, and in consequence of its failure the mission's political motives have been omitted from the record.

The protracted war of 1675-79 represented the culmination of policy and territorial conflicts accumulating over several decades. Certainly, the complete story cannot be learned from the limited sources presently available. For Tibet, the ambition of reducing Bhutan to total subjection was giving way to a more realistic objective of domination and containment. Sectarian chauvinism on both sides could only be checked by stable political relations and the delimitation of administrative frontiers, coupled with tacit agreement on the limits of sectarian competition. But here Bhutan had certain natural advantages. The tract south of Mtsho-sna shared with eastern Bhutan a population of family

lineages derived from the old Gnyos clan from which, we have seen, both the Lha-pa and Padma-gling-pa sects had arisen. As an independent entity, however, the Lha-pa had been in a state of decline for at least a century whereas the Padma-gling-pa continued to expand and flourish. Although families claiming descent from Padma-gling-pa's brothers existed near Mtsho-sna the spiritual homeland of the sect was Bum-thang in eastern Bhutan and, to a lesser extent, Lha-lung in southern Tibet.

The Tibetan and Bhutanese governments well knew that political domination of Shar-phyogs and valleys to the east would be greatly facilitated by cooperation of the Padma-gling-pa hierarchs, who were therefore in the enviable if delicate position to receive favoured treatment from both.

Consequently the Padma-gling-pa winter properties in Lha-lung, over which control had been lost during earlier wars with Tibet, were restored to them by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1672.¹²⁸ To counteract this, the Bhutan government granted the hierarchs a winter headquarters in Bhutan ten years later.¹²⁹ Such high level diplomacy had limits, however. Sentiments of the local people were not so readily swayed. When Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub visited the Thugs-sras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-'gyur-med-rdo-rje at Lha-lung in 1669 his departure from Bhutan had to be kept secret from jealous patrons.¹³⁰

West of Bhutan, however, religious affiliations were more complex, and sectarian diplomacy less effective as a political tool than militant intervention. There were no established frontiers in the area, particularly in the lower Chumbi valley, and Sikkim was too weak to check Bhutanese expansion by itself. Consequently, when the armistice of 1669 expired and trouble between Mon-pa A-chog and Bhutan resurged, it was the Lhasa government which intervened. But the magnitude of this intervention clearly indicates that the issue over Mon-pa A-chog was but a single

factor in what, to the Tibetan view, constituted a complex 'Brug-pa menace along the entire southern frontier, from Mtsho-sna to Ladakh.

The hostilities began when the Dalai Lama learned early in 1675 that Bhutan was secretly preparing to launch an army against Mon-pa A-chog before the expiration of the 1669 treaty. To counter this a quick preemptory attack was made and Steng-gdung-rdzong, apparently a small Bhutanese outpost in lower Chumbi, was burnt down.¹³¹ This was intended to serve as an example "from father to son" of what would happen should Bhutanese depredations not cease, and negotiators were sent from Tashilhunpo, Lhasa and Bde-chen-chos-'khor to meet with their 'Brug-pa counterparts at Phag-ri. Negotiations got under way in earnest during the 6th month, but, according to the Dalai Lama, the Bhutanese were insistent in their claim to territories belonging to Mon-pa A-chog and Sikkim. For several months no further progress was made. A small rebellion against the Dge-lugs-pa at Mtsho-sna also occurred during this period, although its connection with events in Bhutan is uncertain. In any case, by the 9th month it was clear to the Lhasa negotiators that new treaty terms being demanded by Bhutan were totally unacceptable to themselves and other affected parties, and that stronger measures were required. Immediately the entire southern export trade in salt and wool was halted and a border patrol stationed to police the 300 mile frontier from Mtsho-sna to Shel-dkar north of Nepal.¹³² By government order, monasteries in central Tibet performed rituals during the 12th month aimed at victory over Bhutan.¹³³

While these rites were in progress in Tibet, a similar campaign of sorcery was commencing in Bhutan. To Bhutanese authorities the problem was seen from a very different perspective. Mon-pa A-chog was an irksome troublemaker who, though of no account on his own, had secured the help of Tibet and begun a campaign against Bhutan by attacking the fort at

Brda-gling-kha. Bhutanese armies under Mgron-gnyer Rdor-legs-pa and Phyang-mdzod-pa A'u Drung (d. 1694) had been sent out to suppress the revolt, but by the end of 1675 it was apparent that victory would not be easily won, and Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa appealed to the monks at Punakha to summon the aid of the protective deities.¹³⁴ This was agreed to and rituals were undertaken at the beginning of 1676. By the 3rd month of that year Brda-gling-kha was retaken. Mon-pa A-chog was captured and put to death. The rebellious Mon-pa villages in the area were brought under Bhutanese administration. The Bhutanese, believing victory had been won, recalled their armies and performed the customary rites of thanksgiving.¹³⁵

To Tibetan authorities, however, the captured Mon-pa villages were seen as the rightful property of Sikkim, and under pressure from the generals and the governor of Phag-ri, 'Or-pa Tshe-dbang, the Dalai Lama abandoned his earlier policy of negotiation for all out war.¹³⁶ To prepare for this the new Tibetan regent Blo-bzang-sbyin-pa needed several months, so that from about the 2nd to the 6th month of 1676 the frontier remained relatively quiet.¹³⁷ But this was only the calm before the storm.

It is unclear at what point Bhutanese rulers became aware of the impending invasion from Tibet. Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's actions during the spring and early summer suggest that the danger was not truly perceived until almost the last minute, for while Tibet was preparing for war the Bhutanese Sde-srid paid an elaborate state visit to eastern Bhutan in the company of the revered Lama Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, a great-grandson of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and the man whom Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa was grooming to succeed him as Sde-srid.¹³⁸ The invitation had come from the Chos-rtse Spyi-bla and patron families resident in that area, but it is clear that the Bhutan government saw the mission as an opportunity to

consolidate warm relations with the Padma-gling-pa adherents who still predominated in the east. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' visit was the first by a ranking 'Brug-pa monk administrator since Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and great effort was expended to ensure its success.

The mission departed from Wangdiphodrang in the 4th month, travelling light to avoid antagonizing people along the route with excessive corvée duties.¹³⁹ Everywhere along the way rituals were performed and requests for initiations granted. Reception committees at villages and monasteries treated the dignitaries well and staged programs of folk songs and dances. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas and his party travelled as far east as Bya-dkar-rdzong, then moved northwards to Thang-ka-sbi and Zhabs-rje-thang, a place famed for its relics of Padmasambhava. At Zhabs-rje-thang Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' party was overtaken by Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, who had left the capital somewhat later, and together they toured the sacred sites of Padma-gling-pa as far as Me-'bar-mtsho in the north. They then retraced their path through Bya-dkar to Tongsa where once more a grand celebration of dances, sporting contests, and ritual festivities was staged. The mission was proving highly successful, and loyal pilgrims from throughout Shar-phyogs travelled many miles to pay their respects.¹⁴⁰

It was apparently only a matter of days following the Sde-srid's return to Punakha that the Tibetan invasion began. Whatever political capital Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa might have gained from his tour of the east, it is difficult to believe he would have dallied for so many weeks had the dimensions of the invasionary force been foreseen. In the event there were also rebellious Bhutanese chieftains siding with Tibet in the war, and Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's agents should have informed him of this possibility. Very likely they did, and the state visit to Shar-phyogs may have had a more serious rationale than the monk historians, preoccupied with their account of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' pious deeds, have chosen to reveal.

Tibetan armies entered Bhutan by five routes, the largest coordinated attack yet launched against the country. General Skya-gur-nas marched with his forces from Phag-ri in the far west, while Sde-pa Skyid-shod-pa and the Gong-dkar Drung-yig Tsha-gur-nas advanced against Gling-bzhi in the northwest. But the bulk of the Tibetan armies in the western sector were concentrated on Paro, under the command of Dmag-dpon Sgam-po-nas, Bkra-shis-brtsegs-pa, Sgar-dpon Rdo-dgon-pa, and the renegade Bhutanese Dgon Lama Bde-mchog-mgon-po. The offensive against Bum-thang in east-central Bhutan was led by the Yar-'brog Sde-pa and Sde-pa Bsod-nams-dbang-rgyal, a bastard son of Sde-pa Skyid-shod-pa. These were joined by a disaffected Bhutanese chief from Bum-thang, Sde-pa Chos-'khor-pa.¹⁴¹ Lastly, eastern Bhutan was penetrated through Tashigang by forces under Lha-rgya-ras-pa, Rta-gdong-nas and the Sde-pa Bya-pa. Less is known of the leading Bhutanese opponents, or how their efforts were coordinated. One of the Bhutanese commanders was Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, who later served as Sde-srid V. But the real heroes of the resistance, we are told, were a nephew of the First Sde-srid named Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan (1630-1680?), and his son Ngag-dbang-phun-tshogs (d. 1718?).¹⁴² Both belonged to the 'Obs-mtsho family, members of which had served so prominently in government since Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's time. Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa himself commanded forces in both halves of the country.

The Bhutanese fought back with both sorcery and arms. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas and the monks of the state monastery were commissioned by Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa to perform black rites at Lcags-ri, and these were begun during the 11th month of 1676. Names and effigies of the enemy leaders were entered into a ritual device and the protective deities summoned to effect their destruction.¹⁴³ In the east, meanwhile, the Tibetans captured Bya-dkar fortress and threatened many other places. Fighting is said to

have raged as far as the Indian border at Dewangiri. But soon the Tibetan troops were dislodged from Bya-dkar by Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan's army. The recapture of Bya-dkar and the imprisonment of some of their leaders threw the Tibetans into distress, so that the remaining soldiers "dispersed in fright, like a heap of peas into which a stone had been thrown."¹⁴⁴

In the west the Tibetan offensive was for a time more successful. A rather biased Bhutanese source blames this on the poor leadership of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, although it may well be true. At a place called Bzang-po'i-logs Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's tactical errors are said to have resulted in the loss of many lives, his own being saved only by the brave intervention of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-phun-tshogs. Fighting had raged for about nine months when Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan returned in glory from his victory in the east and was promptly placed in command of Bhutanese resistance along the northwestern front. Gling-bzhi was retaken from the Tibetans, whose final stand at Spir-lcog on the disputed frontier ended in a thorough rout. Sgam-po-nas was killed outright while thirty officers (drung-'khor), including Bkra-shis-brtsegs-pa, were taken prisoner. Sixty petty officers (lding-dpon) and more than 300 other soldiers were also captured. The renegade Dgon Lama was killed in an attempted escape to Phag-ri.¹⁴⁵

From this point the course of the war cannot be readily followed in available sources. The Fifth Dalai Lama, who dutifully recorded the defeat of his armies in previous engagements, remains curiously silent about the present outcome, and we are forced to rely exclusively on the Bhutanese version of events, which is neither wholly objective nor consistent. Apparently the main contest was concluded by the middle of 1667, as a treaty was negotiated and signed in that year regarding the

administrative frontier in the west.¹⁴⁶ But sporadic fighting seems to have continued in the east for another year or so. A final treaty of peace and exchange of prisoners was eventually reached during the 12th month of the Earth-Horse year (ca. Jan.-Feb., 1679). Signatories to this included Sde-pa Skyid-shod-pa, the treasurer of Tashilhunpo, and the Sa-skya Zhab-drung Kun-dga'-bkra-shis for Tibet, and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, the Paro Spyi-bla Ngag-dbang-chos-grags and other officials for Bhutan.¹⁴⁷

Specific provisions of these treaties are not recounted in accessible documents, but clearly the Bhutanese had once more managed a substantial victory against formidable odds. In this the Dalai Lama's concessions to the Padma-gling-pa hierarchs seem to have borne little fruit. Indeed, the Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che actively participated in destructive rites against Tibet, for which he was highly rewarded by the Bhutan government.¹⁴⁸ The Speech incarnation was between rebirths at the time of the war, and as the Thugs-sras Rin-po-che's biography is not available it is unclear whether he cooperated with Tibet or kept discretely aloof from the fray. But the victory was decisive and the treaties of 1677 and 1679 appear to have established the common frontier between Bhutan and Tibet for long into the future. The border with Sikkim, on the other hand, was apparently not covered by the provisions and remained fluid for quite some time. According to Bhutanese historians the peace of 1679 endured for thirty-seven years without serious rupture.¹⁴⁹

The Tibetan government's reaction to the failure of its Bhutan policy must be gauged by deeds rather than words, since the defeat passes unnoticed in official published records. First of all, Blo-bzang-sbyin-pa, who had been made regent in time to coordinate the war effort in 1675, retired from the post in the year of final defeat. Superficially coincidental, in the context of events this is less certain.

A more delicate measure of the Fifth Dalai Lama aimed at counter-acting the 'Brug-pa menace along the southern frontier by refurbishing old Dge-lugs-pa monasteries and founding new ones in strategic locations. This was undertaken during 1681 in accord with prophecies of Padmasambhava discovered by the Dalai Lama's Rnying-ma-pa confidant Gter-bdag-gling-pa (1646-1714) of Smin-grol-gling.¹⁵⁰ Significantly, three of these monasteries were in the Mtsho-sna region, where Dge-lugs-pa activity had been relatively static since the time of the Second Dalai Lama. In that year the old Dga'-ldan-rnam-rgyal-lha-rtse hermitage at Rta-wang (or Rta-dbang) was enlarged to accomodate 112 monks and placed under the regional administration of the Mtsho-sna and Lhun-rtse fortresses. Me-rag Lama Blo-gros-rgya-mtsho was installed as its first abbot and a charter was issued authorizing the collection of taxes and corvée labour from peasants along the eastern frontier of Bhutan.¹⁵¹ A Dge-lugs-pa nunnery, Dga'-ldan-bkra-shis-gling, and the sngags-pa monastery of Dga'-ldan-'gro-don-gling were also founded in Mtsho-sna district at this time. From 1681, Bhutanese expansionism towards the northeast was effectively checked.

It was against Ladakh, however, that Lhasa avenged itself more successfully. The 'Brug-pa threat was the principal issue in the Tibet-Ladakhi war of 1679-84, although its connection with the struggle in Bhutan is made explicit only in a passage from the chronicles of Ladakh citing a letter to the Lhasa government from Bde-legs-rnam-rgyal, foreshadowing Ladakh's active support for Bhutan in its conflict with Tibet.¹⁵² To preempt a Ladakhi trust, Tibet launched a force in the 5th month of 1669 commanded by the Mongol leader Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang, a grandson of Gushri Khan.¹⁵³ The main objective was apparently to annihilate the 'Brug-pa menace in the west by annexing Ladakh's eastern possessions, stationing a military governor at the capital, and enforcing

patronage of the Dge-lugs-pa sect. The recently concluded treaty with Bhutan freed Tibet to concentrate on these goals.

The war ended in Tibetan victory, though not an easy one, and final Ladakhi surrender was only secured through mediation of the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnate Mi-pham-dbang-po. Upon this man modern Ladakhis lay the blame for their ultimate loss, though acknowledging that his involvement in the peace talks was a role forced upon him by Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang.¹⁵⁴ Evidently in reaching a settlement Tibet manipulated both the incarnate mediator and the Ladakhi king. In this the Tibetan 'Brug-pas paid the final price for their ready involvement in Ladakhi affairs twenty years earlier.

Out of their role in Ladakh, the Tibetan 'Brug-pas lost both face and credibility, along with their property interests in the principality.¹⁵⁵ Over Ladakh Tibet gained a protectorate and the right to receive a triennial tribute mission (lo-phyag). In addition, the annexed territories left the Bhutanese enclave at Mt. Ti-se surrounded by country under Tibetan administration.

We may finally note that when the Fifth Dalai Lama died in 1682, his rebirth was conveniently discovered among the descendants of Padma-gling-pa residing near Mtsho-sna. Thereafter Dge-lugs-pa influence among local Rnying-ma-pa adherents steadily gained ground, and for a time, at least, the 'Brug-pa menace was reduced in the eyes of Tibetan officialdom to a minor irritation, while Bhutan after 1679 became preoccupied with internal problems of its own.

The peace treaty of 1679 left Bhutan in direct control of a tract of territory basically conforming to the country's modern shape, but more extensive in the south and west. It is clear also that Tibet had now resigned itself to Bhutan's independence within the frontiers then

existing, although it was to be many years before amicable relations between the two states were established. Much of the credit for these accomplishments was due to Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's vigorous policies. It is therefore ironic that in 1680, at the very peak of his distinguished career, when he had finally brought the country to an honourable peace, a revolution broke out toppling him and his closest advisors from their positions of power.

To understand why this came about it is necessary to recall the constitutional uncertainty resulting from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's prolonged retreat and the impairment of his son. At the time of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's birth the intention had been to rear the son for eventual installation as head of state, customarily at about age thirteen, at which time Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal should have retired. By 1645, however, it had become apparent that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje would be unfit to succeed as Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che for the foreseeable future. That title was never denied him, only he was permanently sequestered from public view.¹⁵⁶ Hence the fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's retreat after 1651 enabled the government to function with a claim to legitimacy. The uncomfortable fact that, practically speaking, the Rgya family line had come to an end, and with it the government's mandate, was carefully concealed. Barring the unlikely event of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's recovery, some other principle of succession to head of state had to be devised.

The solution eventually adopted was one apparently propounded by the First Sde-srid and accepted by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself. The fact is, however, that the texts are not thoroughly precise on the matter. It was no doubt one of the subjects covered in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's testamentary instructions before his death, the successful concealment of which necessitated obfuscation of the succession issue. The solution

lay ready at hand in the collateral, so-called Rdo-rje-gdan-pa, line of the Rgya family of Rwa-lung descended from 'Brug-pa Kun-legs. This family we have seen was already well established in Bhutan before Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's arrival. Its ties by descent and incarnation with Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po lent added lustre. The head of the family, Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin, had devoted himself to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's welfare after 1616 and bestowed upon him the ancestral monastery of Rta-mgo. To install one of this man's sons as head of state, while not strictly in accord with the monolineal hereditary principle, involved only a reversion to the "uncle-nephew" principle for which ample precedent existed during earlier centuries at Rwa-lung. Uncle-nephew succession had in the past produced fissiparous tensions between rival family lineages at Rwa-lung, but here there was little alternative. All that was needed to prepare the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa for this role was genealogical certainty of their descent. It was provided in the biography of Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin written, significantly enough, by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own biographer Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho in about 1674. To certify the connection between both branches of the family, the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa biography was issued as an integral part of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own rnam-thar.¹⁵⁷

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' mother was the lady Chos-mdzad-ma Dam-chos-bstan-'dzin, a descendant of Pha-jo's son Nyi-ma. She had earlier been Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's first consort, but following their separation and her return from a sojourn in western Tibet Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal allowed her to become the wife of Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin. In due course she gave birth to a daughter Rje-btsun Drung Rin-chen-dpal-'dzom and, in 1638, to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas. After the death of the husband in 1644 the mother and her two children were taken under the personal care of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The boy was early given monastic training at

Rta-mgo and in 1645 was tonsured by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, from whom he received the name Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas.¹⁵⁸ This was a public ceremony at which the monks of the state monastery attended, and by custom of the occasion Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas should have received the vows of dge-tshul or second degree ordination. However, the Sde-srid suggested that, as the boy would be needed to produce sons to continue the family line, he be given lessons appropriate to a dge-tshul but that the conferring of vows be postponed for a time.¹⁵⁹ Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal assented to this exceptional procedure, in consequence of which Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas formally entered the state monastery and began a course of religious study with the First Rje Mkhan-po Pad-dkar-'byung-gnas and Bstan-'dzin-lhun-grub. There he resided, irregularly ordained, for twenty years.¹⁶⁰

This is the earliest clue we have of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal-intended resolution of the succession issue. Later, at the point of death, he had instructed the Sde-srid that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas be carefully attended to even as his own natural son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje.¹⁶¹ The Sde-srid also received a vision from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal intimating clearly that the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa youth would eventually succeed to the throne.¹⁶² Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, then under the tutorship of Drung Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan, had himself a dream revelation to the same effect.¹⁶³ Those events occurred in 1656, the year of the Second Sde-srid's installation. At that time the Sde-srid informed Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas confidentially that, owing to the firm samādhi of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, and in the absence of other legitimate offspring, the religious burdens of head of state must eventually be borne by him.¹⁶⁴ For several years following this Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas continued in the monastery, but studied with increased zeal and from a more elaborate syllabus.

It was with Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's installation as Sde-srid in 1667, however, that resolute action was begun to pave the way for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' eventual enthronement. This was typical of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's approach to government, but the issue was by then becoming acute in any case. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been in "retreat" for sixteen years. His son also was sequestered in "firm samādhi". Time and death were rapidly claiming the number of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's former companions who might believably assert the latter's sanction for their installation as Sde-srid.

Consequently when Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa became Sde-srid, almost his first official enterprise was to begin grooming Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas for his future office. Training in administration and a wider public exposure would be important in his apprenticeship. There was also the need that he father male descendants. The Second Sde-srid had earlier emphasized this point, though nothing had yet come of it,¹⁶⁵ besides which women were not allowed in the monasteries. In 1667, therefore, a public ceremony was held at which Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas officially left the monastery and was confirmed in the specially-created status of bla-lhag, roughly "Supernumerary Lama of State."¹⁶⁶ There was no precedent for such an appointment, but this was glossed over and for thirteen years Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas performed virtually as de-facto religious head of state and spiritual advisor to Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, whose protégé he was. Possibly the move precipitated the retirement from active state duty of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's old Rim-gro-pa Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan.¹⁶⁷

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' special status during the years 1667-80 is confirmed by the importance of his public activities. From 1668 he was responsible for much of the initiation and instruction of young monks.

When the Rje Mkhan-po died in 1672 he supervised the death rites and was principally consulted by the Sde-srid in selecting a new appointee.¹⁶⁸

In the same year he officiated at the death services for his two principal tutors Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan and Dbu-mdzad Bskang-rgyun-pa (1611-72), and a year or two later for the renowned architect Sprul-sku Rdzing.¹⁶⁹

In 1674 he consecrated the newly-completed golden Bka'-'gyur,¹⁷⁰ and in 1676, as we have seen, led an important state visit to eastern Bhutan.

In 1678 he began the study of Sanskrit with Gtsang Mkhan-chen at Sman-chu-nang.¹⁷¹

Up to that year, however, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had produced no male heirs. It is not even certain that he had yet taken a consort, although later events suggest it. Whatever the reason, in 1678 Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa determined to procure a wife for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's invalid son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. The lady, whose name we do not know, was a daughter of the Ngor Zhabs-drung Klu-sdings-pa, claiming descent from the venerable 'Khon lineage of Sa-skya. Probably she was Tibetan.¹⁷² In any case Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' sister Rje-btsun Drung was assigned as her female companion, and shortly after arrival at court the lady was installed as Royal Consort to the Zhabs-drung (zhabs drung rtse'i bdag mo).

This was a bizarre experiment, perhaps a measure of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's desperation, although the Second Rje Mkhan-po seems to have had a hand in it.¹⁷³ The boy who had entered "firm samādhi", who possibly was unable to speak or move, nevertheless fulfilled his husbandly duties and in the early autumn of 1680 at Tashichhodzong it was discovered that the Royal Consort was pregnant. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, now thoroughly schooled in Lamaist medicine, examined the lady and announced that the birth was due in four or five months.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, prophecies from Padmasambhava were discovered averring that the child would be a boy.¹⁷⁵

Obviously overjoyed at the unexpected turn of events, Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa indicated that he would formally retire from the post of Sde-srid on the occasion of the boy's birth celebrations, at which time Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas would be installed as Sde-srid. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's direct family line would not terminate after all and now, with the country at peace with Tibet, the way was clear to openly reveal Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's death. Whatever enmity and jealousy Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's bellicose career had engendered would count for little when measured against this crowning success.

Unfortunately, disaster struck in the worst possible fashion. The Royal Consort's child, born at the close of the year, was a girl.¹⁷⁶ Almost certainly it was this event which triggered the coup d'état forcing Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's resignation in that month. There were, however, other factors involved in the uprising, and Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa might possibly have weathered the storm of superstitious despair attending the birth had it not been for these. Later historians naturally sought karmic explanations of the disaster. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, having early in his exile summoned protective deities against the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, later reached an agreeable settlement with his former enemy. This, it was alleged, had confused the deities, who thereupon exacted wrathful justice in terminating the line of male descent.¹⁷⁷ As for Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, his dismissal was divine retribution for the petty chieftains he had killed in the subjugation of Shar-phyogs twenty-five years earlier.¹⁷⁸ There were also the unmentioned offences against Dam-chos-rgyal-mtshan forcing the latter's retirement. During Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's tour of Shar-phyogs in 1676 his underlings had engaged in numerous arrogant abuses against local people and monks, while he himself had performed the sacrilege of slaughtering sheep for his retainers in a monastery outbuilding.¹⁷⁹ In

that same year also there had been a small revolt against Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa at Wangdiphodrang which he put down with some brutality, and in doing so violated the monastery's sanctuary.¹⁸⁰

At the bottom of the revolt of 1680, however, was a conflict within the ruling class and an outburst of anti-Tibetan nationalism. The monastic historians generally maintain discreet silence about this. The fullest account is in the biography of one of the aggrieved parties, which must be kept in mind when weighing the facts. The conflict, it seems, was the culmination of a feud between the 'Obs-mtsho family and that of Dge-slong Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, both of whose ancestral homes were in the far north of the Thimphu valley. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was from the village of Dkar-sbis, one of the ancient tsho-chen which had supported Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po's mission in the 13th century and that of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal after 1616.¹⁹¹ Of his immediate family history little is known, but in 1660 we find him serving as Gnyer-chen at Punakha, at which time he sponsored the death rites for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' mother.¹⁸² Shortly thereafter he became Rdzong-dpon at Wangdiphodrang,¹⁸³ and then Phyang-mdzod-pa (i.e. Rdzong-dpon) at the Punakha gdan-sa, a position which he held for many years.¹⁸⁴ The service of other Dkar-sbis people in the administration by 1680 is likely, but not clearly noted in our sources.

However the feud between Dkar-sbis and 'Obs-mtsho began, it was exacerbated greatly during the reign of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa by his consistent favouritism towards the latter. In 1667 Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan of 'Obs-mtsho, a nephew of the First Sde-srid, was made royal advisor (bka' bgros la dbang ba'i mdun na 'don) to Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, and during the war of 1675-79 his rise to fame came partly at the expense of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's reputation.¹⁸⁵ The latter's mismanagement of the war effort on the western front cost many lives and his own capture by

Tibetan forces,¹⁸⁶ only to be salvaged by Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan and his nephew Ngag-dbang-phun-tshogs. The 'Obs-mtsho continued to rise in prominence while Dge-'dun-chos-'phel became more openly hostile. Severely rebuked for this by the Sde-srid, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel took revenge by murdering Ngag-dbang-'brug-grags, a brother of Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan serving as Gzims-dpon to 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje.¹⁸⁷

Whatever the contributing factors to Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's resignation, the immediate cause was an armed attack at Punakha led by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel.¹⁸⁸ At the appearance of the army Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa retreated into the private quarters of the hapless Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, but the rabble crowd pressed in and the royal chambers were sealed shut leaving Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa to face the enemy. Here the alleged abuses of his career were reviewed for all to hear. Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's ruling clique of expatriate Tibetans, they claimed, had brought nothing but misery to Bhutan. To fight their wars the people had been forced to construct forts by involuntary labour; to build stupas countless rocks had needed quarrying. This not only caused much hardship but disturbed the soil spirits.¹⁸⁹ For his part Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa accused his enemies of ungratefulness. Everything of value in Bhutan depended on the kind grace of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. To foolishly revolt against the country's aged Tibetan leaders, now that peace was finally at hand, was sure to bear karmic fruit in the destruction of the 'Brug-pa religion.¹⁹⁰

But his assailants were unrelenting, and in his indignation Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa abandoned his office and retired into contemplative isolation at Leags-ri. This confrontation took place during the 10th month¹⁹¹ and within a matter of days Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was elevated to the throne of Sde-srid. But not before a purge of 'Obs-mtsho ministers

and their families could be carried out. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's troops seized and imprisoned Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan and one of his younger sons named Don-grub. The wife and other sons fled their home. But they, too, were subsequently captured by artifice and put into chains. Exposed for a time in the courtyard of Wangdiphodrang to public abuse and maltreatment, the wife and sons were exiled to the Indian frontier. Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan, however, was imprisoned once more and shortly thereafter executed.¹⁹² The destruction of the 'Obs-mtsho as a powerful force in civil administration came thereby to an end, and the Dkar-sbis family of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel began to rise in its place.

Of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's illustrious fame little remained. Later historians condemned his ignominious punishment, but there were few at the time able or willing to openly support him.¹⁹³ Having gone into voluntary retirement at the end of 1680, he passed away during the 5th month of the following year. News of his decease was greeted in Lhasa by a three-day celebration and thanksgiving to the protective deities.¹⁹⁴

FOOTNOTES

¹ This discussion based on Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.49.b-50.a. and Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.49.b-51.b.

² Dbon Rin-po-che, roughly "Precious Nephew" and Gdung-brgyud Rin-po-che "Precious Lineal Heir" occur widely in Tibetan usage designed to add sanctity to lineal descent.

³ According to E. Gene Smith, the title Zhabs-drung "was used for descendants of the ancient religious aristocratic lineages such as the Rgya of 'Brug, the Ga-zi of Byan Stag-lun and the 'Khon of Sa-skya." Its usage parallels that of Rje-drung among secular aristocratic families. (L. Chandra, Life of the Saint of Gtsang, preface, p. 25, fn.). There were also Zhabs-drung in certain Bon-po lineages.

⁴ Compare this with Petech's analysis of the Dalai Lama's functions (China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century, pp. 236-7). A roughly similar arrangement characterized relations between the semi-hereditary Khri-chen (head of state) and Zhabs-pad (administrator) at Sa-skya during the 20th century, and probably earlier (Cassinelli & Ekvall, A Tibetan Principality, ch. 7).

⁵ Synonyms for Rje Mkhan-po in the literature include Gnas-brtan-chen-po, Gzhung Mkhan-po, and Mkhan Rin-po-che.

⁶ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.59.a.

⁷ The notion has found currency in popular writings on Bhutan that the office of Sde-srid was originally an "elective" position, an opinion voiced first in Bogle's report of his mission to Warren Hastings (Markham, ed., Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet...,

p. 192; but cf. his more correct formulation on p. 35). This is a gross misrepresentation unsustained by local interpretations. The First Sde-srid was directly appointed by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal; the next three were able to offer convincing evidence that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had once authorized their appointments. This was necessary since 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje was never formally installed as head of state and therefore had no power to appoint Sde-srid. The Fourth Sde-srid, who was simultaneously head of state, abdicated in favour of the Fifth, which amounted to a sort of appointment. Throughout the 18th century, as far as one can determine, successive Sde-srid were often able to coerce weak or puppet heads of state into granting official appointments. But there was never any question of the office having an "elective nature" (Rahul, Modern Bhutan, p. 28; Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, p. 18; Singh, Bhutan, p. 23, who imaginatively regards the supposed elections as "liberal tendencies".) Failure to distinguish between election and appointment makes nonsense of the real nature of the power struggles which plagued Bhutan during the first half of the 18th century.

The rise of the Sde-srid as an independent power in Bhutan during the 18th century resulted in a selection process with an "elective" element, but it was more oligarchic than liberal, and developed out of underlying economic and constitutional changes. Even then, the theoretical supremacy of the religious head of state was not challenged.

⁸ The theoretical origin of the office, and the wide fluctuation in power actually wielded by successive Sde-srid, explain in large measure the range of alternate epithets referring to incumbents in the literature. From Bengali custom British Indian officers acquired the habit of designating the head of state "Dharmarāja" and the Sde-srid "Deb Rāja". The Bhutanese themselves, however, tend to reserve the

style Chos-rgyal (i.e. Dharmarāja) for the most powerful or highly regarded Sde-srid. Others, depending on the extent of their authority and popular esteem, were merely referred to as Sde-srid, Sde-pa, Gong-sa, Gong-sa-gzhung, Khri Rin-po-che, Gong-sa Khri-rin-po-che, Sa-skyong, or Mi-dbang. Some of these terms are used rather pejoratively.

⁹ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.57.b.

¹⁰ Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan", p. 205.

¹¹ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.17.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.55.b.

¹² Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.75.a.

¹³ Ibid., f.61.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.54.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam yongs 'du'i snye ma, ff.19.a-b.

¹⁴ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.61.a.

¹⁵ Ibid., ff.58.b-59.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.92.b.

¹⁶ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.a.

¹⁷ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.201.a.

¹⁸ Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.33.a, 46.a-47.b.

¹⁹ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.92.b.

²⁰ History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan (pp. 19-21) describes the bureaucracy as being entirely the creation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, instituted just before his retreat. But this over simplifies the known state of events. It is clear that many of the offices in question were created as need arose after 1616, so that the government as such was

already functioning by 1651. Nevertheless, that year marks the date when preexisting arrangements and certain alterations were declared official. It is analytically useful to treat the whole of the government structure as originating in the 6th month of 1651.

²¹ Here administrative nomenclature merged somewhat with the architectural. The tower-like "keep" or dbu-rtse (modern pron. uchi) within the rdzong housed the private quarters of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che. During the 18th century, rival incarnate claimants to the office acquired separate bla-brang monasteries with their individual dbu-rtse.

²² Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.59.b-60.a

²³ I avoid translating such terms at this point. Frequently peak officials were designated Drung irrespective of any other office they might hold. The title must be distinguished from that of Drung-pa, a lower position in the state bureaucracy described elsewhere.

²⁴ On the evolution of this office in Tibet cf. Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 242-44. The Bhutanese bka'-'blon in no way constituted a regular ministerial or parliamentary "cabinet" and should therefore not be confused with various Tibetan functionaries designated bka'-'blon under reconstituted administrations after 1721.

²⁵ Rahul (Modern Bhutan, p. 94) claims that Rje Mkhan-po are automatically promoted to that post from the position of Rdo-rje-slob-dpon or Tantric Preceptor. Perhaps that is the modern practice, but during the 17th and 18th centuries it was only occasionally true. The Second Rje Mkhan-po Bsod-nams-'od-zer (r. 1672-89) was not even a member of the state monastery at the time of his appointment.

²⁶ Ngag-dbang-shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan, Rje btsun dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa skal bzang dad pa'i 'dod 'jo..., f.17.b; such instances were comparatively rare, however.

27 For instance the Seventeenth Rje Mkhan-po 'Jam-dpal-ye-shes-rdo-rje (r. 1794?-1797) was the rebirth of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan; the Eighteenth, 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan (r. 1797-1803), was the rebirth of Lha-dbang-blo-gros.

28 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.71.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.82.a; Zla-tho, f.6.b for the dates. Rahul (Modern Bhutan, pp. 94-5) claims that "The first three Je Khempos were Tibetan". This statement is erroneous. Instances of Tibetans serving as Rje Mkhan-po are extremely rare. Six of the first seven were descendants of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, while the eighth, Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu (r. 1737-44), was a Ladakhi prince who had resided in Bhutan since childhood.

29 Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, f.19.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.50.a, 103.a-b, 109.b.

30 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.319.b.

31 In the literature the phrase gdan-sa-phan-tshun occasionally and very loosely signifies the government itself. The terms Thed Gzhung and Thim Gzhung also commonly occur for the winter and summer capitals. Gzhung by itself designates in practice whichever seat is being occupied at the season in question, as does the term gsol-thab (i.e. gsol gyi thab-tshang) or "commissariat" which appears with increasing frequency in late 18th century texts.

Punakha, oldest and largest of the three rdzongs and religiously the most important, is by itself often described simply as the gdan-sa. For this reason, and apparently because the Sde-srid's powers as treasurer were normally delegated to the Punakha Rdzong-dpon, that official was often referred to by the alternate title Gdan-sa'i-phyag-mdzod. However,

treasury arrangements varied greatly over the course of time, and in the absence of clear source descriptions we cannot deal with them in any detail.

32 Their equality of rank is insisted upon in the legal code (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.109.b: bdag rkyen mthong srol khyad med), but being distant from the capital they were less frequently involved with state affairs in early times. Distance also promoted a tendency towards administrative autonomy, a trend which became pronounced during the 19th century.

The Spyi-bla of Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse and Dar-dkar-nang were customarily referred to as Chos-rtse Spyi-bla (later as Tongsa Dpon-slob) and Dar-dkar Spyi-bla. That of Paro was designated by convention either Paro Dpon-slob or Rin-spungs Spyi-bla.

33 There is a record of Padma-dkar-po appointing a certain Lho sgrub sde spyi bla from Rwa-lung in 1563, which suggests that Bhutanese 'Brug-pa monasteries had traditionally been supervised by a single monastic resident (Sems dpa' chen po padma dkar po'i rnam thar thugs rje chen po'i zlos gar, f.92.b); on the other hand, at his funeral, gifts were received from the spyi bla gong 'og of the South (Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po. Dpal 'brug pa thams cad mkhyen pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa rgya mtsho lta bu'i 'phros cha..., f.69.b). In 1597 we read of a spyi-bla of Me-rag (Tashigang district) in attendance upon Lha-rtse-ba (Mnyam med lha rtse ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa, f.49.b). Sa-skya interests in Bhutan continued to be administered up to the 20th century by a spyi-bla apparently appointed from Tibet.

34 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.50.a-b. The first Paro Spyi-bla was Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra, who became the Second Sde-srid; the first Chos-rtse Spyi-bla was Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa who served as Sde-srid III; the first Spyi-bla of Tagana was one Bstan-pa-'phrin-las.

35 Dpon-slob in British Indian records appears as Penlop, Penlow, or Pillo(w). The term was earlier used in Tibet rather differently. Rahul (Modern Bhutan, p. 68) offers a more dubious reason for the change.

36 E.g., at the time of Lha-bzang Khan's invasion of Bhutan in 1714, 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was reluctantly persuaded to accept appointment as Paro Spyi-bla; he retired when the trouble eased, after little more than a year in office (Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.176.b, 181.b).

37 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.110.a-111.a.

38 The first Gzhung-mgron-gnyer was a Bhutanese, O-lo-phyug-po, as were his immediate successors excepting the Sixth, 'Brug-rab-rgyas, a native of Mustang (Glo-bo) appointed to the office in 1686 (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.32.a, 93.b, 148.a, 185.b, 191.b).

39 History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 20-21. This text states that the bureaucracy as then existing was divided into two basic divisions, the Sde-srid and his immediate subordinates constituting a kind of ministerial assembly (lhan-brgyas gong-ma), and the numerous other functionaries constituting a "lower assembly" (lhan-brgyas 'og-ma), the implication being that the government followed formal consultative procedures. The contemporary literature suggests, however, that while consultation with trusted advisors and the Rje Mkhan-po was an important element of decision-making in the government, its form and procedures were arbitrary and variable. "Assemblies" (lhan-brgyas) of advisors were summoned only when unusual need arose, and the term is infrequently found in texts of our period.

40 Following construction of the main state monasteries, Lcags-ri continued as an official retreat to which the monks were periodically

required to retire for a time. Other retreats were built in later years, but owing to its historic ties with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal Lcags-ri retained its preeminence, and the custom arose for heads of state to lecture there for one or two weeks at the time of the annual shift of government to Tashichhodzong. As regent, Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo was performing this duty when he died. Petech ("Rulers of Bhutan," p. 208) follows a misleading passage in Lho'i chos 'byung (f.93.a) to suggest his retirement there in 1655. An earlier source is more authoritative (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.59.a-b).

Preliminary death rites officiated by members of his family were held for Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo at Lcags-ri immediately upon death (Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.27.b-28.a). For many years, however, the body was kept intact and adorned with robes of office (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.a-b); final cremation was only performed in 1681 (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.138.a).

⁴¹ Ibid., f.59.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.b; the name occurs also in the form Bstan-'dzin-'brug-grags. The sources seem to regard the family connection as an important justification for his appointment; he was apparently unrelated to Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's bastards in Shar-phyogs, however. The epithet La-sngon-pa is unidentifiable.

⁴² Lho'i chos 'byung, f.50.b; possibly he held this position at the time of its construction in 1645.

⁴³ History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 22. Nirmala Das' informants (Dragon Country, p. 78) tentatively date 'Brug-rgyal-rdzong ("Drukgyal Dzong") to 1649, which is plausible. Stag-tshang, however, she dates to 1684, during the reign of "Tenzi Rabgye, Penlop of Paro" (Ibid., p. 90), and relegates Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's presence there in 1646 to a mere visit.

It is true that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas initiated constructions there, but he never served as Paro Dpon-slob; her informants I believe have confused him with Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra. The 1646 "visit" by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, in company with Rig-'dzin-snying-po, was actually more than just that. The gter-ston discovered there several important hidden texts describing his past lives, while Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself performed several miracles. Almost certainly the foundation of the modern hermitage at Stag-tshang was begun then; its original construction, of course, is attributed to Padmasambhava.

⁴⁴ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.60.a.

⁴⁵ Ibid., f.60.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.93.b-94.b. The first teachers in the Mtshan-nyid-bshad-grwa were Slob-dpon Kun-shes, Dpon-slob Rgyal-bzang-pa, and Dge-bshes Mi-pham-dbang-phyug.

⁴⁶ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.147.a-148.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.60.b. The Bkra-shis-sgo-mang or Bde-gshegs-mchod-rten-brgyad had originally been one of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's undertakings, though only preliminary work was carried out before his death; it was finally completed in 1670.

⁴⁷ Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.250.b-251.b.

⁴⁸ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.b.

⁴⁹ Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.145.a-b; Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.256.b. Cf. above, Ch. V, fn. 120.

⁵⁰ Z. Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century, p. 143; a similar irredentist sentiment was used to explain Sikkim's status as a Tibetan dependency ("History of Sikkim," pp. 43-44).

⁵¹ Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.250.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.b, where it is claimed that war preparations had been entrusted by

the Fifth Dalai Lama to Sde-srid Sbyin-pa, i.e. Blo-bzang-sbyin-pa who served as Tibetan regent from 1675-79. In this statement, however, Lho'i chos 'byung has unaccountably blundered in confusing events in the war of 1656-57 with that of 1675-79. The original passages come from Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.98.b-108.a, where full dates and additional detail is found.

⁵² Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.251.b; on the date cf. also Panchen Lama I, Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul..., f.157.b and Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang srong dga' ba'i dal gnam, f.104.a: "In the Fire-Monkey year (1656) orders were issued for armies to enter Bhutan." Bhutanese sources generally only give the war's duration (9 months) and the year of the peace settlement (1657) (e.g. Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.145.a-b); Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.b claims, however, that the invasion began in 1657. Tibetan sources are more reliable in this instance, and we may believe that the war ended about the 5th or 6th month of 1657, the hot season in Bhutan.

⁵³ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.64.b. Nang-so Nor-bu is the Sde-pa Nor-bu of the Dalai Lama, who also gives Bkras-sgang-nas' personal name, Tshe-ring (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.247.a, 260.b). Names of the other Tibetan and Mongol leaders in the war according to the Dalai Lama (but not in Bhutanese sources) were Nang-so Dngos-grub, Nang-so Byang-ngos-pa (alias Dpon-tshang Byang-ngos-drung-'tsho), Ma-gcig Qung Taiji and one Dalai Batur.

⁵⁴ The Dalai Lama says that Chos-rje Nam-mkha'-rin-chen was killed by the Bhutanese Sde-srid during the course of this war along with 20 members of his family, for alleged conspiracy with Tibet (Za hor gyi

bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.260.b). Nam-mkha'-rin-chen had been the first Rdzong-dpon of Wangdiphodrang, but whether he still held that office during the war is uncertain. Bhutanese sources refer to this uncomfortable episode only indirectly; we are told that one of his confederates, Mgo-dkar-ba, the gnyer-pa of Spang-ri-zam-pa, was ordered killed by the Sde-srid, from which we must assume the rest (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.184 gong.b).

Shakabpa (Tibet, p. 118), however, accepts the assassination of Nam-mkha'-rin-chen as the war's principal cause from the outset, an allegation he repeats in the revised Tibetan edition of his study (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 443). But the sources do not justify such a conclusion. The most that can be said at this point is that he collaborated after the invasion was already begun.

55 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.144.b-145.a.

56 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.251.b-252.a, 256.a-b.

57 Ibid., f.256.b.

58 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.64.b.

59 Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul..., f.158.a-b.

60 The Dalai Lama discusses these at length, in very contemptuous language (Za hor byi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.259.b-260.b). Some of the prophecies, allegedly from Padmasambhava, indicated a conquest of Tibet by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The Dalai Lama judged them to be fake (zog-po gter-rdzus).

61 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.93.b. Petech ("Rulers of Bhutan," p. 208) claims that Bhutan supported a revolt in Gtsang during 1657, lasting for two years, but the sources cited by him do not appear to support the statement. The "documents" alleged by Lho'i chos 'byung may in fact have been nothing more than gter-ma prophecies.

62 Petech (loc. cit.) has earlier given his dates as 1613-80, but the death date needs revision. He retired in the 11th month (dgun-'bring) of the Iron-Monkey year (1680) at age 68, and died during the following 5th month (snron-zla), i.e. 1681 (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.115.b-116.a).

63 His family name appears in the form of Smon-skyid in the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography (Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 3, f.197.a); I have been unable to discover further background information on this Tibetan family.

64 A study of his variant titles before rising to Sde-srid in 1667 suggests that the appointment of 1651 might have been a mere de facto confirmation of a status acquired rather independently of 'Brug-pa control. He is described as the gnas-'dzin or gnas-gzhi of Dar-rgyas-dgon-pa (Wangdiphodrang district) and as the Mon sgrub-sde'i-spyi-bla (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.94.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.68.b, 115.a). The possibility should not be ruled out of earlier family ties with eastern Bhutan or southeastern Tibet.

Eastern Bhutanese traditions say that the conquest of Shar-phyogs was completed in 1655 after 7 years; we may suppose that it began ca. 1648 (Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.21.b.).

65 Ibid., ff.21.a-22.a. Bla-ma Rnam-sras was the son of Yam-'brog-pa (i.e. Yar-'brog-pa) Thugs-dam-pad-dkar, a 'Brug-pa Lama of Grwa-nang-sding-po-che born to Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma by an unknown wife. His brother Bla-ma Chos-skyong was the great-grandfather of Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1689-1714) who became Bhutanese head of state in the early 18th century (cf. below, chapter 8). Bla-ma Rnam-sras is said to have died during the war with Tibet following the conquest of Shar-phyogs, probably

in 1657; his rebirth was recognized in Bla-ma Chos-skyong's son 'Brug-phun-tshogs, the grandfather of Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan.

66 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.94.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.115.a-b; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 24. Gdung-mtshams-mkhar must designate the administrative structure at Dewangiri.

67 Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.47.b-48.a.

68 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.59.b-60.a.

69 Ibid., f.94.b.

70 Ibid., f.60.a.

71 The precise date in Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.68.b.

72 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.148.b-149.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.90.a-b.

73 Ibid., f.115.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.95.a.

74 Tibetans recognized several divisions of Klo-pa people, perhaps the most feared being the Mishmis below Tsa-ri near the great bend in the Brahmaputra river. Thang-stong-rgyal-po is believed to have lived among them for about two years ca. 1428. His return from there unharmed was regarded as a great miracle (Dpal grub pa'i dbang phyug brtson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.72.b-76.b). The Lag-lding-pa families of Sikkim believe their ancestral progenitor to be a man who magically flew there from the Klo-pa country in the 13th century, grasping an old woman's hand which had been severed from her body during the course of a Klo-pa cannibalistic rite ("Pedigree of the Kazis of Sikkim...", pp. 13-14). Many such traditions could be cited.

75 The subject is beyond the scope of this study, but a review of Tibetan literature suggests that, with the exception of the Tawang

tract, the McMahon Line follows fairly closely the southern limits of historic Tibet as understood by Tibetans themselves. Amateur linguistic arguments and imprecise understanding of Tawang's origin as a Tibetan enclave have unduly clouded the matter. Perhaps the most recent study to fall astray over these issues is that of Allen Whiting, whose basic arguments are seriously undermined by unwarranted assumptions about traditional allegiances in the region (The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975], pp. 1-169, esp. pp. 2-7, 103, 253, fn. 12).

⁷⁶ Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, f.83,b; Panchen Lama II Blo-bzang-ye-shes-dpal-bzang-po, Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, f.26.a-b. On Lha-pa properties in Chumbi during the 20th century, cf. Bell, Government of Tibet, p. 43.

⁷⁷ "History of Sikkim," pp. 37-38; also Ram Rahul, "Sikkim of History," International Studies 15, pt. 1 (1976), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ "History of Sikkim," pp. 39-40 details the original boundaries of the country. But both the western and southern frontiers (Dudh Kosi River and Titalia) are clearly gross overestimations for the time in question.

⁷⁹ The three Lamas were Lha-btsun Nam-mkha'-'jigs-med (b. 1597) (some of whose biographical materials have been reprinted in India), Kah-thog-pa Kun-tu-bzang-po, and Mnga'-bdag Phun-tshogs-rig-'dzin (b. 1591), a prince of Guge (of whom a rnam-thar is said to be extant).

⁸⁰ "History of Sikkim," p. 45 claims that the original protectorate was extended during the reign of Phun-tshogs-rnam-rgyal (i.e. before 1654) at the behest of Nam-mkha'-'jigs-med. Even if that is true (and the circumstances surrounding this History's compilation require that all such political statements be verified from other sources), active Tibetan interference in Sikkim's internal affairs was not so early as this.

⁸¹ W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. X (London: Trübner & Co., 1876), p. 412.

⁸² Lho'i chos 'byung, f.28.a-b. This was at the time Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal took possession of Skya-khra (modern Chapcha) and is connected by the Bhutanese with a gift of silver coins to build the reliquary stupa for Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. The diplomatic gifts sent by the Cooch Bihar king for the occasion included gold and silver coins, elephant tusks, and a Sanskrit MS of the Aṣṭasahasrikāprajñāpāramitā. In turn Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal sent consecrated scarves, a horse and bridle, and a laudatory poem.

The name Padma Nārāyaṇ is not found in Indian sources, however, and is probably an error for Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ (r. 1627-65), for whom Persian sources record the variant forms Bīm N., and Pem N. It is from one of these, similar in colloquial Bhutanese pronunciation to Padma, that the error must derive. However, Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ's regnal dates do not correlate with the Bhutanese date for this event. This also must be due to Bhutanese misinformation. Ignorance of affairs in Cooch Bihar reflects official Bhutanese disinterest in the place until ca. 1670.

⁸³ The terms used for this official were Rgya Drung-pa or Rgya Spyi-bla. By the 1680's there were two of them, one each for the eastern and western Duar trade marts. No doubt records of their dealings were kept, but none appear to survive in Bhutan.

⁸⁴ Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers, pp. 126, 130-31. There is room to doubt Wessels' equation (p. 135) of Runate with Rangamati. His informant, H.N. Chaudhuri, suggested a place called "Rangamati Ioygaon" N.W. of Alipur. This Rangamati was apparently unknown to Rennell, but can be found as a trade mart on the map facing p.i. of Bengal Frontier Trade 1917-18 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1918), where it is north of Buxa Duar but below the modern Bhutan frontier. However, the Jesuits travelled north through Runate to reach Buxa.

85 H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihār, Koch Hájó, and A'sám, in the 16th and 17th centuries....," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n.s. 41 (1872), p. 67; Abdus Salam, trans., Riyāzu-s-Salātīn (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyati-i Delli., 1975² [A.S.B., 1903]), pp. 215-26.

86 J.N. Sarkar, ed., The History of Bengal, vol. 2 (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1948), pp. 345-47, 376; J.N. Sarkar, The Life of Mir Jumla (Calcutta: Thacker, Sprink & Co., 1951), pp. 227-30. He is said to have returned to Cooch Bihar following Mir Jumla's departure for the war in Assam, and led a brief insurrection against the acting faujdar Isfandiyār Beg, but resubmitted to Mughal authority in 1664.

87 Sarkar, History of Bengal, vol. 2, pp. 373-77.

88 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, ff.27.b, 69.a, 84.b, 127.a, 149.a, 259.a; vol. 3, ff.47.b, 48.b, etc.

89 Ibid., vol. 2, f.36.a; cf. also Ibid., f.59.b, where gifts from Jumla in 1668 included muskets. Later missions are noted at Ibid., ff.84.b, 116.b, 151.a, 167.a, 242.a; vol. 3, ff. 140.b, etc.

90 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, ff.113.a-b.

91 David Snellgrove, Four Lamas of Dolpo (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1967), vol. 1, pp. 7-11; Michel Peissel, Mustang, The Forbidden Kingdom (N.Y.: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1967), pp. 251-56. A Glo-bo sku-skye, whose name is not recorded, served for a time as mgron-gnyer to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas before the latter was installed as Sde-srid IV. In 1678 he was appointed Gangs-ri Rdor-'dzin and died in that office in 1684. The previous incarnation of this man (name unknown also) is said to have served as an attendant (zhabs-phyi) to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.109.b, 173.b, 183.b). Unfortunately, no 'khrungs-rabs for this line of incarnations has turned up.

92 The Bhutanese monastic official appointed to Ti-se was variously known as the Gangs-ri Bla-ma, Gangs-ri Spyi-bla, or Gangs-ri Rdor-'dzin, about which more will be said later. For the appointments, cf. Ibid., ff. 126.b-127.a, 173.b, 183.b, 275.b, 292.a. In 1686 a Glo-bo-pa 'Brug-rabs-rgyas was appointed Gzhung-mgron-gnyer (Ibid., f.185.b) of Bhutan.

93 Ibid., f.309.a for the appointment of 1693. Chos-rdzong is probably the "Chudzong" of Peissel's map (Mustang, p. 109).

94 I have followed generally L. Petech, A Study of the Chronicles of Ladakh and his "Notes on Ladakhi History," Indian Historical Quarterly 24, no. 3 (1948), pp. 213-35; a later study, covering much the same ground but from a different point of view is Z. Ahmad, "Tibet and Ladakh: a History," St. Anthony's Papers No. 14 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), pp. 23-58. More recently we have a native Ladakhi work by Yoseb Gergan, Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1976), edited by the author's son S.S. Gergan. Gergan draws on many new inscriptions and texts, but his otherwise admirable effort is sadly marred by faulty and imprecise chronology.

95 Gergan, Bla dwags rgyal rabs, p. 348, 359, 360, etc.

96 Petech, Study of the Chronicles of Ladakh, pp. 146-47; Ahmad, "Tibet and Ladakh," pp. 44-45. I have tentatively reduced Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's death date by 3 years from that suggested by Petch, i.e. from 1645 to 1642, on the basis of a notice late in 1642 by Kun-dga'-lhun-grub (Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang srong dga' ba'i dal gdam, f.82.a). I am under the impression that the death was kept secret from the Tibetan government for a time, which probably accounts for the discrepancy with other sources. The elusive rnam-thar of Stag-tshang-ras-pa could probably settle the matter once it becomes accessible. By 1650 Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's rebirth had been discovered in Lho-rgyud-dmag-sde and entered into a Northern 'Brug-pa monastery (Ibid., f.100.a).

97 On the Dge-lugs-pa, cf. Petech, "Notes on Ladakhi History," p. 218 and G. Tucci, "Tibetan Notes," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 12 (1949), pp. 481-96.

98 Skü bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.127.a, 160.a. He is described as sku-mched-rgyal-po Bstan-'dzin, from which I conclude that he was either a younger brother or son of Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal. The temptation is to identify him with Bstan-'dzin-rnam-rgyal, a half-brother of Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal, sent to central Tibet on an unrelated political mission, but the date and circumstances are problematic (Petech, Chronicles of Ladakh, p. 137). On the other hand, Rgyal-po Bstan-'dzin-rnam-rgyal of Stod Mnga'-ris is listed as a wealthy Ladakhi patron sending gifts to the installation of Sde-srid IV Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas in 1680 (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.126.b-127.a). The difficulty seems insoluble without better sources.

99 Ibid., ff.109.b, 185.b, etc. Gergan (Bla dwags rgyal rabs, pp. 367-70), apparently using Stag-tshang-ras-pa's rnam-thar, hints that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (the term 'brug pa'i zhabs drung gdung brgyud only is used) had appointed one Bsam-gtan-rab-rgyas as Rdor-'dzin as early as 1624 (byi-lo), and that Gnyen-po-ri-rdzong was a 'Brug-pa monastery well before that date.

100 The full title was Gangs-ri-chen-po Ti-se'i-rdor-'dzin ("Vajradhara of the Great Snow Mountain Ti-se"). Rañul (Modern Bhutan, p. 29) also dates the institution to Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal's reign, but cites no source. He is correct in stating that the Bhutanese enclave continued up to 1959, as it was discussed by Chinese and Indian officials before the war of 1962 (Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China 1954-1959 - White Paper [Government of India: Ministry

of External Affairs, 1959], pp. 96-97). British Indian officials apparently only became aware of the enclave's existence in the 19th century; cf. Charles Sherring, Western Tibet and the Indian Borderland (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1974² [London, 1916]), pp. 277-79.

¹⁰¹ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.109.b. The same text (f.48.b) mentions a Tsa-ri Rdor-'dzin, suggesting a parallel Bhutanese office to the Gangs-ri Rdor-'dzin at Tsa-ri in S.E. Tibet. I can find no supporting information, however.

¹⁰² Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.65.b.

¹⁰³ Ibid., f.66.a; cf. also the documents cited in Petech, "Tibetan-Ladakhi-Moghul War of 1681-83," Indian Historical Quarterly 23, no. 3 (1947), pp. 172-73.

¹⁰⁴ Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang strong dga' ba'i dal gnam, ff.100.b-103.a. This Grub-dbang Rin-po-che, who died in Ladakh ca. 1665 (Ibid., f.109.b), cannot have been other than the Tibetan 'Brug-pa Kun-legs rebirth. Unfortunately his name is not given in any of the sources. He had been a disciple of Dpag-bsam-dbang-po and thereafter one of the three principal tutors of the latter's rebirth Mi-pham-dbang-po. In view of the historic importance of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs and his descendants in Bhutan, Tibetan control over the movements of his incarnate successors was a potentially powerful tool for interfering with Bhutanese affairs. The present circumstance was perhaps the first such instance, but by no means the last.

¹⁰⁵ Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.66.b-67.a; Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang strong dga' ba'i dal gnam, f.102.b; Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.243.a; Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul..., f.150.a-b.

¹⁰⁶ Ahmad, "Tibet and Ladakh," pp. 44-46; Petech, Chronicles of Ladakh, pp. 141-46, 151-54.

- 107 Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.75.a-b. One wonders if the original Ladakhi notice might not have mentioned the Bhutanese 'Brug-pas in addition to those of central Tibet (Dbus-gtsang); the source from which this information derives is prejudiced against Bhutan. Bhutanese materials do not mention this episode.
- 108 Ibid., f.76.a; Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, f.313.b; Yongs 'dzin dam pa'i rtogs brjod drang srong dga' ba'i dal gtam, ff.112.b-115.a.
- 109 Z. Ahmad, "New Light on the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War of 1679-84," East & West 18, no. 3-4 (1968), pp. 341-44, where the translations need revision, however.
- 110 Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.113.b.
- 111 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.238.b, 243.a.
- 112 On his Rnying-ma-pa affiliations, cf. Zhwa-sgab-pa, Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 458 and Gter ston brgya rtso, ff.245.b-247.b; visits of the Padma-gling-pa hierarchs are noted in Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 1, ff.151.b-52.a, 283.b, 310.a-b, 361.a; Ibid., vol. 2, ff.9.b, 41.a, etc.
- 113 Ibid., vol. 2, ff.36.b-38.b.
- 114 Rin-chen-bstan-pa'i-gsal-byed, Grub thob chen po dkon mchog rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar..., ff.14.a-15.a. Gnas-nang does not appear on the maps, but I take it to refer to the valley districts of the Rangpo or Rongphu river near Rhenak and Rongli. The modern village of Barapathang in the valley perhaps derives its name from the 'Ba'-ra-ba missions of the 17th century; cf. Pradyumna Karan's map "The Kingdom of Sikkim" supplemented to Annals of the Association of American Geographers 59, no. 1, 1969.
- 115 Grub thob chen po dkon mchog rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.15.a-17.b.

116 Ibid., ff.18.b-22.b.

117 In addition to the spelling Mon-pa A-chog, which I have adopted for convenience, one finds the variants A-(l)cog(s) and A-mchog. A text available to Zhwa-sgab-pa describes him as the headman of three Mon communities (mon sde tsho gsum gyi 'go 'dzin) situated between the Rong-chu and Rtas-gong-la (modern pron. Tagongla), the traditional eastern boundary of Sikkim (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 448, fn.).

118 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, ff.66.b, 70.b-71.a; the treaty date is noted in Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, f.27.a. Shakabpa (Tibet, p. 119) misconstrued the date to mean the Wood-Hare year of 1615. But there was no treaty in that year, and the error is corrected in his revised work (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, pp. 447-48). Unfortunately, it has since been perpetuated by Nirmala Das (Dragon Country, p. 21).

119 Dam-chos-pad-dkar (1636-1708), we have seen, belonged to the ancestral Stod 'Brug lineage of Gzar-chen-kha near Paro; his birth date is incorrectly given at Lho'i chos 'byung, f.76.a. He was a disciple of Rje Mkhan-po I. The date of his mission to Nepal is problematic as his rnam-thar is practically barren of chronological information. It does tell us that at the time of departure Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa had been Sde-srid for ca. 4 years, and that Pad-dkar-'byung-gnas was still living (Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar ra, ff.14.b-18.a). Hence, early 1672 seems a reasonable estimate.

120 Ibid., f.16.b. Precisely owing to its political function Dam-chos-pad-dkar resisted the appointment for a time.

121 Ibid., ff.19.a-b. The spelling Glang-byang-dgon-pa is also found (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa,

f.359.b); the previous history of this monastery is unknown to me.

122 D.R. Regmi, Medieval Nepal (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 65-69. Nepalese sources apparently preserve no record of this mission.

123 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, f.20.a-b. 'Phrin-las-rgya-mtsho, known also as Chos-mdzad Ras-chung-pa, was a disciple of Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan at the time of his summons to Nepal (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.57.b). His death at Skyabs-khya Rdo-kha-skyer in 1686 is recorded in Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.187.a.

124 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, f.20.b. This account harmonizes fairly well with Nepalese sources which show a long period of regental domination following Pratāpamalla's decease. His eldest son Nṛpendramalla was enthroned in 1674 at age 13, but was overshadowed by his vigorous minister Chikuṭi. Chikuṭi must be taken as the ringleader of anti-Buddhist sentiments who manipulated Pratāpamalla's death in Dam-chos-pad-dkar's account. The Nepalese, however, do not note the death as being contrived, but the recorded circumstances are sufficiently peculiar to raise doubts on that score; cf. Regmi, op.cit., pp. 93-97.

125 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, f.21.a.

126 Ibid., f.21.b. Gnya'-nang was for long a sensitive and hotly contested district between Tibet and Nepal. Pho-lha-nas' father Padma-rgyal-po became magistrate (khrims kyi kha lo ba) there ca. 1684, successfully holding the Nepalese in check for a time (Petech, China and Tibet, p. 27); the 'Brug-pa also suffered at his hands. Possession of Gnya'-nang became an issue in the Nepalese wars of 1788 and 1791-92.

127 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.22.b-24.a. Dam-chos-pad-dkar's subsequent career was devoted to the service of church and state. He served for a time as Lama at Chos-rje-brag near Bum-thang, refurbished the old 'Ba'-ra-ba monastery of 'Brang-rgyas-kha, served as Lama at Stag-tshang, and eventually was appointed Rje Mkhan-po IV in 1697. He was a noted artist and sculptor, and died in office in 1708. His death was concealed for 6 months, probably owing to his involvement with the troubled administration of Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (on which cf. below, ch. 8).

128 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, f.146.a-b; Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.48.b.

129 Cf. below, Ch. 7, p. 381.

130 Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.42.a-b.

131 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, ff.239.b.

132 Ibid., ff.256.a, 260.a-b, 267.b-268.a. Shakabpa (Tibet, p. 122) inexplicably gives Phag-ri as the western limit of the sealed border.

133 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 2, 275.b-276.b.

134 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.93.b.

135 Ibid., f.94.a-b. Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 122. Zhwa-sgab-pa (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 448, fn.) reveals that Mon-pa residents of modern Kalimpong still celebrate A-chog as an ancestral hero.

136 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 3, f.2.b.

137 Ibid., ff.12.b, 13.b, where dispatch of the Tibetan armies is noted. This is the Dalai Lama's final mention of the war. On Blo-bzang-sbyin-pa (Sde-srid Sbyin-pa in Bhutanese sources) cf. L. Petech, "The

Dalai Lamas and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study," T'oung Pao 47 (1959), pp. 379-80.

- 138 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.94.b.
- 139 Ibid., ff.95.a-97.b for the tour.
- 140 Ibid., f.96.b.
- 141 Ibid., f.98.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.51.a where the account, however, is erroneously confused with the war of 1657. Another east Bhutanese chieftain Gdung-nag-po was for a time believed to be in rebellion also. Later this proved untrue.
- 142 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.46.a.
- 143 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.99.a-101.b.
- 144 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.46.a-47.a.
- 145 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.52.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.102.a.
- 146 Ibid., ff.101.b-102.a, 249.b for the date.
- 147 Ibid., ff.107.b-108.a.
- 148 Ibid., f.99.b; Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.47.a.
- 149 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.52.a; Mtshung med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.108.a. Victory was commemorated by a 5-day festival inaugurated at this time, the so-called Mtha' bzhi'i g.yul las rnam par rgyal ba'i gtang rag.
- 150 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 3, ff.226.a-227.b.
- 151 A portion of this charter (wrongly dated, it appears) was produced in evidence by China during the 1960 border discussions with

India, to establish its claim to Tawang. A supplementary document issued by Dalai Lama VII in 1725 was also cited alleging Tawang's responsibility "for guarding our frontiers" (Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question [Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 1961], pp. CR-44-45). Overlooked in the rhetoric was the fact that it was the border with Bhutan, not India, which needed guarding during the 17th and 18th centuries, and that the narrow Tawang tract under Tibetan administration was created solely for that purpose. The Chinese attempt to extrapolate Tibetan sovereignty over N.E.F.A. from the Tawang anomaly owes much of its success to this misunderstanding.

¹⁵² A.H. Francke, Antiquities of Indian Tibet, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1926), pp. 42, 115. Growing Muslim influence in Ladakh was also a significant factor in the war. On the event, cf. Petech, "Tibetan-Ladakhi-Moghul War of 1681-83," pp. 169-99 and Z. Ahmad, "New Light...", pp. 340-61. The terminal date of the conflict has been debated; we may note a passage in the life of Gter-bdag-gling-pa cited in Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary, vol. 4, p. 312: lo 'dir (1684) la dwags chab 'og tu chud.

¹⁵³ Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 3, f.131.a for the date. On Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang, cf. the notes in Petech, "Tibetan-Ladakhi-Moghul War of 1681-83," p. 174 and Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.115.a-b.

¹⁵⁴ Gergan, Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter, pp. 440-41. Mi-pham-dbang-po's biographer also accuses Tibet of manipulating his subject and the Ladakhis (Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, ff.116.a-117.a).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., ff.118.a, 119.b-120.a; Ahmad, "New Light...", pp. 357-58. The 'Brug-pa property transfers resulting from the treaty require closer study; the subject is treated gingerly in the sources.

156 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.148.a, 161.a, 204.a, etc. for use of the title.

157 It constitutes part 6 (Cha) of the set. This part, interestingly enough, was commissioned by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' half-brother Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan (Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs kyi yan lag..., f.33.a-b); its separate date is uncertain. Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan died at Rdo-skyong-la near Paro in the spring of 1681; there is brief mention of a son of his named Dam-chos, but the reference is not confirmed from other sources (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.138.b).

158 Ibid., ff.24.b-29.b.

159 Ibid., f.30.a.

160 Ibid., f.34.b., etc.

161 Ibid., ff.52.a; cf. also ff.32.a-34.a.

162 Ibid., f.53.b.

163 Ibid., f.56.b-57.a.

164 Ibid., f.61.a.

165 Ibid., f.68.a.

166 Ibid., f.69.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.56.a.

167 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.59.b-60.a.

168 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.78.a-b, 82.a-83.b. Bsod-nams-'od-zer (1613-89), who served as Rje Mkhan-po from 1672 until his death, was a descendant of Pha-jo from Ka-spe (Dkar-sbis) Bse-lung. He was an early student of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and Lha-dbang-blo-gros, then received several appointments in Shar-lung, where he preached until 1672 (Ngag-dbang-dpal-ldan-bzang-po, Rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po bsod nams 'od zer gyi rnam thar snyan tshig 'dod 'jo 'khri shing, ff.3.b-17.a).

169 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.82.b-83.a, 88.a.

170 Ibid., f.88.b; Chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Nga, f.149.a.

171 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.109.b-110.a.

172 Ibid., f.109.a-b; several Ngor-pa monasteries existed in Bhutan, but Klu-sdings must refer to Ngor Klu-sdings in Tibet. Petech has taken this passage to refer to a consort of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas ("Rulers of Bhutan," p. 206), a doubtful interpretation since Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas never used the title Zhabs-drung.

173 Rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po bsod nams 'od zer gyi rnam thar, ff.18.b-19.a; the passages are obscure, however. On Bsod-nams-'od-zer's concerns with 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje and his anticipated son cf. Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.202.a-204.a.

174 Ibid., f.114.a.

175 Ibid., f.134.b.

176 Ibid., f.134.a-b; the precise date of Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje's birth is not mentioned in the sources, and the chronological sequence of events for 1680-81 may require slight revision from what I have given here.

177 Rje Mkhan-po XVIII 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi gsang gsum mi zad rgyan gyi 'khor lor rnam par rol pa'i rtogs pa brjod..., ff.122.b-123.a.

178 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.114.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.a.

179 Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.47.b-48.a.

180 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.114.b-115.a.

181 Michael Aris, "'The admonition of the thunderbolt cannon-ball'...", p. 625, fn.

- 182 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.65.b; a brief review of the mother's career is to be found on ff.64.b-65.b, 13.a-14.b, 23.a.
- 183 Ibid., f.70.a-b.
- 184 Ibid., ff.107.a-b, 115.a, 138.b, 148.a, 177/78.a, 201.a-b.
- 185 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.33.a, 46.a-47.b.
- 186 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.b.
- 187 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.48.a.
- 188 Ibid., ff.59.b-60.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.115.a.
- 189 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.61.b.
- 190 Ibid., f.61.a.
- 191 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.115.b-116.a for the date; the passage at Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.a is imprecise.
- 192 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.61.b-64.b.
- 193 A brief review of his career at Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.94.b-96.a.
- 194 Za hor gyi bande...rtogs brjod, vol. 3, f.197.a-b, where he is reported to have been assassinated owing to successful Tibetan sorcery.

Ch. VII:

Experiment with Monarchy II:

The Reign of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas

1680-1694

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was formally enthroned during the 11th month (dgun-'bring zla-ba) of the Iron-Monkey year, late winter of 1680.¹ Preparations had been elaborate and the ceremonial halls were colourfully decorated under the direction of the Rje Mkhan-po Bsod-nams-'od-zer. It was a magnificent coronation. Officials and other guests from throughout the country and beyond presented their offerings personally or through emissaries.

First in the strict hierarchy of well-wishers were the monks of the state monastery, followed by the Rdzong-dpon and Spyi-bla. Next came functionaries representing the lesser rdzongs such as Gling-bzhi, and then the monastic heads of important district hermitages and bla-brang. These were ceremonially led by the new hierarch's sister Rje-btsun Drung representing Rta-mgo, and his half-brother Sbyin-pa-rgyal-mtshan from Stag-tshang, but included other important Lamas of the time, such as Dpon-slob 'Phrin-las-dpal-'bar (1633-1700), Sprul-sku Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan (1630-1707), Dam-chos-pad-dkar, Chos-rje Ye-shes-dngos-grub (1642-1729?), Dpon-slob 'Brug-bstan-pa, Rnal-'byor Pad-dkar of Se-be-la, Chos-mdzad Ras-chung-pa (d. 1686) and Sngags-'chang Ngag-dbang-rdo-rje (b. 1632) of Mtshams-brag.² The leading Rnying-ma-pa, Sa-skya-pa, and Ngor-pa monasteries of Bhutan also presented gifts.

From outside the frontiers of Bhutan emissaries arrived with coronation gifts from Sa-skya proper and Ladakh. The presents from Bstan-'dzin-rnam-rgyal of Ladakh were particularly precious, and included several thousands of gold and silver coins, loads of saffron, a pearl

rosary, crystal, etc. Finally, a delegate from Cooch Bihar presented 1,700 gold and silver coins and other items as a gift of faith from Ghū Nārāyaṇ, daughter of the now deceased king Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ.³ An important event of the ceremony was a mass distribution (mang-'gyed) by the state of coins to each tax-paying household of the country, a ritual adopted from Tibetan practice which became institutionalized in Bhutan.⁴

The coronation of 1680 was thus characterized by an opulence of style and royal drama probably not witnessed in Bhutan since the time of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. This was partly owing to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' individuality. During the fourteen years of his rule he was a lavish and ambitious promoter of religious constructions and other pious works, though, mindful of the reasons for Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's forced retirement, he was careful to keep compulsory taxes reasonably light.⁵ A tendency towards public display, showmanship and festivity, sometimes quite exaggerated, was a recurrent trait among 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' lineal and incarnate descendants. Perhaps in memory of his "mad" forefather, or from some related psychological motivation, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas manifested the same inclination.

But his promotion of royal drama and church splendour probably had a more serious purpose as well. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was the first native-born Bhutanese ecclesiastic ruler of national stature. Though apparently sanctioned by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, his enthronement was anomalous in its reversion to uncle-nephew succession. No one in the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa lineage of the Rgya had ever held hereditary office in the Rwa-lung establishment since the assassination of 'Brug-pa Kun-legs' father more than two centuries earlier. Perhaps Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas felt some need at this time to prove his family's worth. As late as

1679 a number of Bhutanese ministers had opposed the suggestion of his enthronement, although no reasons for this are given.⁶ The coup which had unseated Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa revealed a deep distrust of expatriate Tibetan civil authorities. The unified state constructed by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal showed signs of disintegration owing to his long retreat. Family and district rivalries, kept in check by strong central ruler, were reemerging. To subdue such disruptive forces was probably the main task facing Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas after 1680.

The coronation of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas implied an alteration ad interim to the constitutional principle of hereditary Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che. The title was not abandoned, but was never applied to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas. The fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's retreat was still being officially maintained. It would appear that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje died in the year of his daughter's birth, but this also was kept secret from the public and the custom began of bringing regular food offerings to his sealed chambers.⁷ For as long as these secrets were kept the title of Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che was reserved for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's lineage of the Rgya. We must therefore conclude that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' position in the theoretical hierarchy was somewhat lower and spiritually less prestigious.

In fact, at the time of installation his official position was described as Rgyal-tshab.⁸ In other contexts the term has been translated as "regent". Later in Bhutan, when the fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's retreat was no longer being maintained, the term signified "spiritual successor" to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. But here the intention was that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas serve as "spiritual regent" to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, empowered to maintain the unbroken lineage of doctrines and initiations

of the 'Brug-pa church.⁹ In short, he was the legitimate interim religious head of state. With this constitutional modification there arose the precedent for simultaneous religious (Rgyal-tshab) and secular (Sde-srid) regencies, with the latter subservient to the former. But the principle was untested, for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas simultaneously held both offices. As such he was vested with full ruling powers of both church and state, symbolized at the coronation by presentation of the seven jewels of the monarch and the eight auspicious objects.¹⁰ Consequently there was no separate Sde-srid during his administration, although for consistency later lists count him as the fourth of that series.¹¹

The term of respectful address used of him throughout his career was Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che or "precious prince", a style used also of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. Both were princes of the royal line, one more so than the other, but the adoption of identical titles tended to blur any distinction between the two men's status in the hierarchy, probably by intention. This must be taken as part of the effort by royal officials at the time to strengthen popular acceptance of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' legitimate right to rule. The style Rgyal-sras was widely used in Tibet to designate lineal offspring of religious hierarchs. Padma-gling-pa's son Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan was commonly known as Rgyal-sras Zla-ba, and the incarnation line deriving from him as the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che. Tibet had many examples of reincarnate Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che lineages. In the case of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, however, Rin-po-che did not yet imply an incarnate status. Later it did, but during his lifetime attempts to reconstruct an incarnation lineage for him were officially discouraged.¹² The intention was that

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas should produce male heirs and be succeeded hereditarily.¹³ What honorific title would have been used of such heirs the monk historians do not inform us. The termination of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own male lineage had not yet been revealed, nor his own death, and the ambiguity in the sources obviously reflects uncertainty then prevailing.

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas turned to his duties with a firm hand. Generally speaking, his reign was not troubled by warfare. Relations with Tibet were still hostile and border conflicts did arise, but there were no invasions and in contrast with Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's troubled regency the years 1680-94 were ones of relative peace. Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa had given Bhutan its modern shape. It was left to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas as spiritual regent to consolidate and unify the country through religious enterprise and diplomacy. Partly this was accomplished by reinvigorating the monastic movement itself. Internal reforms, numerical expansion, the restoration of ancient village hermitages and their incorporation into the state church network, all were a part of this effort. Another aspect was the introduction or further elaboration of periodic religious festivals to include greater public participation and pageantry. Literally, under Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, the church was put on public show. Diplomacy meant increased official patronage for the lesser sects and the conferring of special honours and privileges on its closest patron families.

To strengthen the church Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas quickly undertook a program of expansion and reform. The disappearance of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had left Bhutan without a vigorous church leader thoroughly

schooled in doctrinal science or possessed of all the requisite initiations. The First Rje Mkhan-po was himself incompletely trained in that respect.¹⁴ Through such neglect and the wars with Tibet scholarly standards had apparently suffered and monastic discipline slackened. Recruitment into the monasteries had become unacceptably low.

In the spring of 1681, therefore, a new monk tax was levied from the central districts, the tsho-chen of ancient times. This was a resuscitation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's practice, which had become less frequently used. As before, the middle son of families with three sons was conscripted and a mass tonsuring ceremony held during the 5th month.¹⁵ With Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas in office, there was no need for this to be performed by someone hidden in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's private chambers. A further monk levy was held later in the year among families in the Paro area, and yet another early in 1682 bringing in, for the first time, conscripts from Shar-phyogs.¹⁶ It was through one of these levies that Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las (1671-1746), who later served as Rje Mkhan-po VII, entered the monastery.¹⁷

Equally as important for revitalizing the church were reforms in the liturgical calendar and a restructuring of the monastic syllabus. The calendar promulgated by Padma-dkar-po and refined by Lha-dbang-blo-gros had for some reason not been completely adopted in Bhutan before this time. In 1682, however, it was introduced as originally intended and in the following year the state monastery was formally divided into two colleges, instructional (bshad-grwa) and ritualist (sngags-grwa).¹⁸ Restoration of firm monastic discipline

was apparently a more difficult task, however, and it was not until 1689 that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas could insist that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's old Bca'-yig-chen-mo be strictly maintained.¹⁹ In particular, consumption of beer in the monasteries, except as prescribed in gana-cakra rites, was forbidden after 1690.²⁰ To reaffirm monastic discipline the practice was inaugurated during New Year celebrations of reciting the Bca'-yig-chen-mo before a full assemblage of the state monks, and it would appear that this innovation of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas has carried down to modern times.

It was in promoting religious construction that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' ambitions took their most visible shape. In this he was indefatigable. The record of his constructions dominates much of his biography. His crowning achievement was to have been a replica near Punakha of the great Sku-'bum stūpa of Gyantse, and Rnying-ma-pa agents were sent to Tibet in 1691 to prepare sketches and measurements.²¹ The grandiose project was never actually begun, but the scheme itself is worth noting as a measure of his ambition. It was only one of many such plans to recreate in Bhutan something of the splendour of the Tibetan church, and thus it probably reveals a touch of nationalist feeling. So also, perhaps, did his projects to promote a cult of reverence for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, such as the great silver and gold life-image of him consecrated in 1691²² and the numerous lesser images commissioned for monasteries in Shar-phyogs.²³

The restoration of many venerable Rnying-ma-pa and 'Brug-pa hermitages was a major preoccupation of his career. These included Rta-mchog-sgang and Skyer-chu-lha-khang near Paro,²⁴ 'Brang-rgyas-kha, Rgya-bar-lha-khang, and Lam-ri-sgang.²⁵ Many were given new names and

Phyag-mdzod-pa A'u Drung oversaw the work. Appropriately, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' own ancestral monastery of Rta-mgo was restored and enlarged during the years 1688-90,²⁶ as were several old hermitages connected with his great-grandfather 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, such as Khri-'bur-lha-khang.²⁷ There were many others, and Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' sister Rje-btsun Drung, who was herself now revered as an accomplished yoginī, frequently participated in their consecration rites. A particularly important project was the erection in 1691 of new temples and images at the gdan-sa-phan-tshun by Newari craftsmen from Bhatgaon.²⁸ Already ten years earlier Nepalese artisans had completed the great golden dome for the dbu-rtse at Punakha, a project begun by Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa but left incomplete by the revolution.²⁹ An enterprise highly regarded in Bhutan was Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' restoration of the Padmasambhava hermitage of Stag-tshang. Visiting it in 1691, he and his sister are alleged to have performed numerous miracles, and the task of preparing new images and frescos was assigned at that time to his chief artist Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho. These were completed in 1694 and consecrations held. Stag-tshang's modern shape probably dates from this time.³⁰ The beautiful bridge formerly at Wangdiphodrang was also built at Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' behest in 1684, probably by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel.³¹

The fabrication of massive appliqué hangings depicting scenes of church history, the Sixteen Arhants, figures of Padmasambhava, and former hierarchs of the 'Brug-pa church, had been one of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's fond schemes. But it was under Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' patronage that this style of artistry came to fruition.³² The great Gos-sku-mthong-grol-chen-mo hanging at Punakha was the most famous

of these. Fashioned by Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho over a period of three years, its consecration during the 3rd month of 1692 was an occasion of national celebration. It is said that two blind women, brought to the festivities from their homes many miles distant, regained their eyesight in its presence, and this miracle gained for the hanging a measure of faithful reverence to rival even the great Jo-bo image of Avalokiteśvara at Lhasa.³³

Such projects as these, aside from their purely religious inspiration, no doubt also served the broader purpose of building a sense of national spirit, a sense of unity. Lacking sociological data it is impossible to know to what degree marriage and lineage filiation functioned as unifying forces in early Bhutan. Much evidence suggests that many families of the country's central zone, what Karan calls the "Inner Himalayan Zone",³⁴ followed seasonal migration patterns, maintaining relatively fixed summer and winter residences. But even these movements appear to have been limited and traditional; broader mobility, we have suggested, was promoted mostly by the organized church. Still, poor communications, district loyalties and peasant conservatism appear to have effectively moderated even this influence towards national integration. A pattern continuing from earlier centuries is observable, whereby branch monasteries of the larger sects tended to disaffiliate administratively. Strong central control introduced by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and continued by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, clearly aimed at counteracting the tendency. At the same time, reconstruction of district monasteries at government expense was visible evidence that involuntary taxes were being expended for public welfare.

In fact, it is quite apparent that much of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' energy and leadership was directed to the task of national unification. Such an interpretation emerges most clearly from the course of his diplomatic undertakings. Of course, these also were partly religious in character, or at least articulated in religious phraseology. But during the period personal and family feuds were creating tensions which the Lamaist historians seldom discuss but poorly conceal. Strife between Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's people and the 'Obs-mtsho is the most visible example. Many passages from the literature suggest that it was not unique. In the absence of explicit source detail little more can be said of the causes and casual expressions of such petty feuding, but it is clear that their potential for creating civil disharmony was a motivating factor behind Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' policies. A review of his conciliatory moves indirectly suggests where the sources of latent distress were felt to lie.

One of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' first official acts following his enthronement was to sponsor festivities celebrating the birth of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's daughter. This took place during the 7th month of 1681 at Punakha and the girl, known otherwise by her official style Zhabs-drung Lcam, was given the name Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje. For the event presents were received from many quarters, notwithstanding the despair at her gender, which inspired someone to compose a verse lamenting the sad turn of karma.³⁵

One wonders what the political advantage of this public ceremony might have been. We must recall that the death of her father was being kept secret by custodians (gzims-'gags) of the Rtse Bla-brang, if not by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas himself. I find no hint at this time of

manoeuvres to pave the way for Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje's eventual installation, based on her legitimate descent from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, as head of state. But her peculiar destiny suggests that a faction in the government already anticipated such a move.³⁶ Can this faction supporting the main Rgya family line, which we might term "loyalist", have been in opposition to the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa ascendancy? This is a delicate and difficult question to answer. It cannot be ruled out that the anti-Tibetan uprising against Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa was also aimed in part at the remnants of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's family and its "loyalist" supporters, and that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' accession to power represented a compromise between the principles of Rgya descent and a demand for native Bhutanese rulership.

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas himself would seem to have been above such political manoeuvring. But practical considerations could not be ignored, and an event of 1682 demonstrates once more his desire to conciliate potentially volatile issues. Early in that year an arrangement with the Tibetan government was negotiated through Rnying-ma-pa intermediaries to bring 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's aged mother Khri-lcam Gos-dkar-sgrol-ma back to Bhutan.³⁷ This lady, we are now told, had gone to Tibet for some reason shortly after Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' birth in 1638. There she had been captured and imprisoned, perhaps by the Dalai Lama's government following its accession to power in 1642, and thus had remained in captivity for forty years. This is a strange tale, and one can only wonder at the silence of our sources on the original events leading to such ill fate. In a secret message passed to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas before her negotiated release, the lady indicated her bitterness at receiving no material support

from the various Bhutanese Sde-srid until Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' intercession on her behalf, in consequence of which she agreed to return.³⁸ The timing of her original departure from Bhutan suggests a connection with 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's debility, and we may suppose that unrevealed political pressures or supersitition had forced her into exile at that time.

In any case, her repatriation in elaborate ceremony and with full state honours in the spring of 1682 must have helped assuage any resentments harboured against Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas by the "loyalist" faction. Following an official welcome at Punakha Gos-dkar-sgrol-ma continued to reside happily at court, moving with the seasonal shifts of state monastery and government, until her death during the summer of 1684. A public funeral was held and thereafter, so far as is known, Gos-dkar-sgrol-ma ceased to be a factor in Bhutanese politics.³⁹

Another source of continuing disharmony needing Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' conciliatory attention was the 'Obs-mtsho family and its supporters. It is obvious from the sources that a great deal of public discontent had arisen over their brutal treatment during the brief hiatus of responsible government attending Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's forced retirement. The family's ties with western Bhutan were centuries old and its reputation especially high owing to the First Sde-srid's long and revered service to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Now secure in his position as head of state, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was able to restore some of their lost dignity. Consequently in 1684 the exiled wife of Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan and her sons were granted safe return from their miserable refuge on the Indian border.⁴⁰ Such

leniency was even then opposed by certain parties, but this opposition was ignored and, following a public reconciliation at Wangdiphodrang, the family's confiscated estates and wealth were formally restored to them. At the same time 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, another son of Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan who had been spared his family's earlier humiliations owing to his residence in the state monastery, was entered into the personal service of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas.⁴¹ This was not a secular appointment such as his father had held and so was unassailable by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, whose hatred for the 'Obs-mtsho followed him to the grave. Nevertheless Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was assigned a number of important religious duties, first as an artisan at Punakha and then in eastern Bhutan, and finally, as we shall see, he was given a diplomatic posting outside the country. For a time, at least, the feud between these two families was kept in rein.

The status of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's Dkar-sbis faction during these years is more difficult to discern. So far no detailed biographical sources describing his lineage's position in the country have come to light, but its power and influence was clearly significant. Far from being publicly chastened for his revolt against Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel retained the office of gdan-sa'i-phyag-mdzod-pa or Rdzong-dpon at Punakha until 1688, when he retired owing to advanced age and failing powers.⁴² At that time Dge-'dun-chos-'phel had wished to retire to his ancestral property near Se-ba-la in the Dgon district, but, fearful of a resurgence of strife with the 'Obs-mtsho, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas successfully encouraged or virtually ordered Dge-'dun-chos-'phel to reside at Wangdiphodrang for a time. This he did, but his involvement in political controversy, we shall see, was far from over.

A feature of government during Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' later years as head of state was the hold of Dkar-sbis people over the post of Paro Dpon-slob. How or why this came about is unclear, as the texts do not always reveal family or district affiliations of government personnel. Dkar-sbis Dge-slong Bsam-gtan-pad-dkar held the office from 1687 to 1689, then retired and was replaced by Dkar-sbis Dpon-slob Phun-tshogs, who was still serving in the position in 1693, when he was chastized by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas for levying excessive taxes from the villagers.⁴³ Family ties between these men and Dge-'dun-chos-'phel are not explicitly noted but seem likely, and we may presume that the persistence of Dkar-sbis domination in Paro owed something to Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' conciliatory tolerance. We shall see that it persisted well into the 18th century.

Measures to solidify the government's position in Shar-phyogs and further placate the Rnying-ma-pa were also actively pursued by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas after 1680. This was a complex enterprise, not easily definable according to modern analytical conceptions of statecraft. Church and state were one. Consequently religious and political objectives were thoroughly merged. The Tibet wars had demonstrated Shar-phyogs to be sensitive to invasion and internal disaffection. Movement of troops from west to east across the numerous high passes was time-consuming. Accordingly, in 1683 orders were given to rebuild Bya-dkar and stiffen its fortifications to make it into a district stronghold (btsan rdzong).⁴⁴ This was done, and a natural spring was tapped to provide it with water during times of siege.⁴⁵ Other rdzongs in eastern Bhutan were also fortified during this period and provided with new mgon-khang where the protective deities could be propitiated

and invoked against enemies. Supernatural forces had proved their worth in past encounters with Tibet, and their systematic exploitation was always an important aspect of Bhutan's defence policies.

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was especially solicitous of Rnying-ma-pa support. This was in part a tradition of his family, and in part a continuation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's measures to integrate Rnying-ma-pa elements into the ritual of church and court. Of particular importance were the Bhutanese Padma-gling-pa hierarchs. Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub, we have seen, had actively participated on the side of Bhutan during the previous war, and at Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' coronation he was accorded a place of special honour. Then he had taken a short religious course at Punakha, following which, in late summer of 1681, he obtained a formal audience with Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas. The seat of the Padma-gling-pa Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che in Bhutan was at Sgang-steng Gsang-sngags-chos-gling, just east of Wangdiphodrang, but the hierarchs lacked a local winter residence. It was politically undesirable to the Bhutan government that Padma-gling-pa ties with Tibet should remain as close as in the past. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas could not forbid this connection, but political and financial inducements could serve to lessen its importance. Consequently, at the 1681 meeting Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas assured the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che of his government's continued support for Rnying-ma-pa affairs, and lectured to him on sectarian tolerance and the unity of all religions, etc. More importantly, he granted to the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che the ancient monastery of Spyi'u-tog-kha for a new winter residence, along with the supporting estates of Legs-kha-sbi.⁴⁶ The gift was graciously accepted and by 1683 the old

monastery was completely rebuilt. Christened Phun-tshogs-rab-brtan-gling, it became thereafter one of the two main Padma-gling-pa monasteries near Wangdiphodrang.⁴⁷

The strengthening of loyalties to the government in Shar-phyogs required more than mere patronage for the Padma-gling-pa, of course. An active 'Brug-pa mission was also essential for the country's religious integration. The record of 'Brug-pa proselytizing in eastern Bhutan is a subject which awaits detailed study. The early mission associated with Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father was continued by his student Yar-'brog-pa Blo-ldan-pa and later by Ngag-dbang-bsam-gtan (1631-1709), who taught at Tongsa from 1658 to 1667 as a close associate of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa.⁴⁸ Another important mission was that of Dam-chos-pad-dkar, who was assigned to proselytize in Shar-phyogs following his return from Nepal, and who taught at Lo-ras-pa's old monastery and throughout eastern Bhutan well into Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' administration. During the latter's final years in office he assigned his father's rebirth 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho (1665-1701) to teach in Shar-phyogs. This man, we have seen, was a descendent of Padma-gling-pa as well as the recognized rebirth of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, and was therefore uniquely suited to promote close feeling between the Rnying-ma-pa and 'Brug-pa in eastern Bhutan.⁴⁹ His assignment by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas to that part of the country should be interpreted in this light.

By far the most visibly successful of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' measures to promote national solidarity took the form of a resuscitation of practices begun by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Principally these were two, the hierarch's formal tour of his domain and the

sponsoring of public festivities in conjunction with certain annual church ceremonies. The hierarch's tour was actually a monastic formality carried over from Rwa-lung. In Bhutan it served also as a device for exposing remote villagers to some of the pomp and splendour of government, and was elaborated into an occasion for festival gathering, sporting contests, and so forth. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had already made one such tour through Shar-phyogs in 1676 at the behest of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa. An even larger tour during the years 1692-93 was confined to western Bhutan, but included in its circuit all the outlying districts from Skyab-khya in the south to villages near Dgon in the north.⁵⁰ It was an elaborate event. More than one hundred government soldiers in full dress accompanied the tour, and at every important village religious initiations were given to crowds of local people, who in turn staged competitions of dance and song. There were demonstrations of marksmanship by the soldiers and everywhere a festival atmosphere prevailed. Throughout the tour Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was accompanied by his sister and his father's rebirth 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho, who shared with him the dais of the chief celebrants.

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' other innovation was to reorient the annual Tshes-bcu monastic celebration of Padmasambhava into a national festival for the entire community. We have seen that the Tshes-bcu or "Tenth Day" ceremonies had originally been introduced by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and by Rig-'dzin-snying-po, partly as a monastic event and partly to celebrate Bhutanese victory in the Tibet war of 1644-46.⁵¹ This originally Rnying-ma-pa celebration was traditionally performed on the tenth day of every lunar month, but from the time of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' installation in 1680 a more elaborate version was staged annually

during the 8th month (khnums-zla).⁵² As a public festival it may have subsumed older harvest season celebrations, variants of the A-lce Lha-mo folk dramas ascribed to Thang-stong-rgyal-po,⁵³ and indeed under Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' inspiration various Tibetan dance traditions of both the Lha-mo (secular) and 'Cham (monastic) variety were incorporated into Tshes-bcu.

This amalgamation of Tibetan and native Bhutanese dance traditions was a conscious policy. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had sent his Rnying-ma-pa intermediary U-rgyan-phun-tshogs to Gong-dkar, Sne'u-dong, Lho-brag, and other places in Tibet celebrated for their special traditions of costumed dance, to study them in detail.⁵⁴ This they did, and a manuscript elaborating technical aspects of music, costumery, and dance steps was compiled for instruction in Bhutan. The government underwrote manufacture of the expensive costumes and the first full performance took place at Tashichhodzong for the Tshes-bcu of 1690. It was a magnificent public spectacle of three days' duration. People came from far and near, dressed in their finest attire. Feasting, drinking, and folk dances alternated with a program of sporting events and Lamaist dances, culminating on the third day, when Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas emerged in the costumes of Padmasambhava himself to perform a special hierophant's dance of public consecration. Ceremonies formally concluded with prayers to Padmasambhava for continued victory over enemies, longevity of the monkhood, and the country's prosperity.⁵⁵ As became customary in Bhutan, the celebrations included a token gift of money to all the citizenry, with special rewards of swords and plaid jackets to the headmen of the eight tsho-chen of early Bhutan. Thus did Tshes-bcu, one of the most important national holidays of Bhutan, become

officially incorporated into the country's calendar. As a final note we should emphasize again the celebration's original Rnying-ma-pa inspiration. Once more, it is clear that the harmonization of 'Brug-pa and Rnying-ma-pa sectarian interests was a two-way process.⁵⁶

As far as can be construed from our sources, Bhutanese foreign policy under Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was also guided by a spirit of reconciliation rather than open belligerency. In fairness, it must be said that a similarly restrained attitude towards Bhutan appears to have prevailed in Lhasa during this period. No doubt the Bhutan war of 1675-79 had been costly to Tibet, following which the strife with Ladakh captured Tibet's attention until 1684. We must recall that from 1682 to 1696 the Fifth Dalai Lama's death was being kept secret by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, for much of which time he was pre-occupied with the turbulent affairs between China and Mongolia.⁵⁷ For these and more recondite reasons, border disputes which in the past had prompted Tibetan invasions into the Bhutanese heartland did not have that result during Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' fourteen-year reign. Throughout the period, fierce jurisdictional controversies between the two countries persisted relating to Chumbi and eastern Sikkim, and occasional fighting ensued. But the theatre of conflict was confined to the borders themselves, and it is apparent that both Bhutan and Tibet preferred to settle any differences through tough negotiation rather than war.

The treaty of 1679 had not established a fixed border for western Bhutan, the southern portion of which was not a direct concern of Tibet in any case. But disagreement about the middle sector overlooking Chumbi valley simmered throughout the years of the Ladakh war. A petty

chieftain of the district, Mon-pa A-'dzin, was caught between the encroachments of both Bhutan and Sikkim. To complicate matters the Tibetan government apparently regarded him as one of their own subjects, and three-way negotiations between low level officials of the concerned governments were entered into during the early 1680's. In 1685, however, Tibet took a more active interest in the area. Following his success in Ladakh, the chief Tibetan negotiator Mgron-gnyer Rgyal-thang-nas was dispatched to resolve the situation in Chumbi.⁵⁸

This was a poor choice as envoy. Bhutanese resentment over the subjugation of Ladakh, combined with Rgyal-thang-nas' arrogance, were not conducive to reasoned debate. Unfortunately the modern historian is not yet equipped with sufficient facts to pass judgment on the various claims or the behaviour of the disputants. Each side nursed grievances from previous encounters, while Mon-pa A-'dzin appears to have been playing off one side against the other for his own gain. Thus, while discussions were in progress, probably at Phag-ri, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas began a course of destructive sorcery during the autumn of 1685 aimed at Rgyal-thang-nas and his entire family.⁵⁹ Predictably, the protective deities came to his assistance and Mgron-gnyer Rgyal-thang-nas died of smallpox at Gyantse early in the following year. The news was received in Bhutan with a large festival of thanksgiving, during which the mgon-khang at Wangdiphodrang was renamed Gtang-rag-mgon-khang in commemoration of the event.⁶⁰

Of course, the border dispute did not end there. More fighting broke out in Chumbi and a large party of negotiators from both sides finally succeeded in hammering out a settlement early in 1687. The precise terms are unknown, but the Bhutanese claim that Mon-pa A-'dzin

had finally elected to side with Bhutan, and this may have been the turning point in the discussions. Sikkim's role in these events is quite obscure, and probably insignificant. The real issue had been between Tibet and Bhutan, and both countries dispatched over one hundred officials and retainers for the treaty-signing at Phag-ri.

As usual, the Sa-skya hierarch Kun-dga'-bkra-shis and the Panchen Lama's treasurer mediated for Tibet, whose principal negotiator was the Lhasa Gzhung-mgron-gnyer Chang-khyim-nas Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-

rgya-mtsho.⁶¹ Signatories for Bhutan included the new Tashichhodzong Rdzong-dpon Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu, the Paro Spyi-bla Ngag-dbang-dpal-'byor, several lesser Rdzong-dpon from the western valleys, and Drung-yig Rta-mgrin-dbang-rgyal (1646-1711).⁶²

Notwithstanding this treaty, strife in Chumbi valley persisted. The Bhutanese attribute it to stubborn aggressiveness and sectarian bigotry on the part of the Tibetan Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho who, it is alleged, was exploiting various means to stir up border residents and traders against Bhutan. Chang-khyim-nas himself reputedly began un-statesmanlike talks with Sikkimese peasants to undermine the terms of his own treaty, refusing to accept the boundary at Spyi-lding which had been reaffirmed by himself and others on several past occasions. The cause of the Zam-gsar people, who had been expelled from northwestern Bhutan for certain improprieties against the Bhutan government, was also taken up by Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho.⁶³ During earlier strife of 1682 Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas is said to have resisted suggestions from one of his frontier lieutenants to extend Bhutanese control past Spyi-lding into Sikkim proper, citing ethical reasons and personal antipathy to expansionist activity.⁶⁴ Nevertheless,

a substantial Bhutanese presence in the disputed areas by 1690 is acknowledged in all sources.

It was perhaps at this time that Pho-lha-nas' father Padma-rgyal-po, stationed as magistrate at Gnya'-nang, received orders from the Tibetan government to proceed against the Bhutanese "who had, like robbers, dispatched an army in secret to impress their authority over some 3,000 villagers of Sikkim and Chumbi."⁶⁵ The precise sequence of events at this time is uncertain. The Panchen Lama sent off negotiators during the 3rd month of 1690 for important talks on the frontier issue.⁶⁶ Bhutan lost some territory. During the same year Bhutanese emissaries to Bhatgaon were captured and robbed of their ambassadorial presents by the Gnas-nang "king" and his ministers, but a reconciliation with Gnas-nang was achieved in 1692, independently of Tibetan involvement it would appear, and in the following year Gnas-nang and Bhutan formally demarcated their border near 'Dam-bzang by the erection of a cairn.⁶⁷ The crisis in upper Chumbi apparently subsided for a time also. In 1692 the Sikkim king sent some friendly letters to the Bhutan government, and the latter, having threatened to call upon Bengal and Cooch Bihar for military aid, was able to intimidate Tibet into a temporary relaxation of hostilities.⁶⁸ The Panchen Lama records a minor truce with Bhutan for mid-1692, but negotiators continued to be dispatched to the south and at the time of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' retirement late in 1694 skirmishing was still in progress.⁶⁹

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' threat to summon the aid of Cooch Bihar against Tibet probably had more substance than a similar threat by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal seventy-five years earlier. Relations between

Cooch Bihar and Bhutan had remained cordial since the royal mission of Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ's daughter attended Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' coronation in 1680. Meanwhile, however, the expenses for Aurangzeb's ultimately ruinous campaigns in the Deccan were beginning to be passed on to other provinces, and the annual contribution of five lakhs which Shāista Khān remitted from 1682 was in turn levied forcibly from native Bengali princes.⁷⁰ Cooch Bihar was not exempt, and in that very year the king appealed to Bhutan for military assistance against the Mughal drive for increased revenue. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas readily assented and two modest Bhutanese forces were dispatched south under the Paro mgron-gnyer Bzhi-dar and 'Phrin-las-lhun-grub, the Rdzong-dpon of Brda-gling-kha. At the same time a permanent resident was assigned to Cooch Bihar to oversee Bhutanese interests.⁷¹

Bhutanese records are rather disingenuous about the outcome of this enterprise, however. We are told that the Mughal mahākumāra quickly fled to Nepal and, by implication, that some victory was achieved.⁷² But there were no Mughal royal princes in Bengal at the time, and it is very probable that the man in question was Shāista Khān's son Buzurg Ummed Khān, who was posted from Bengal to become sūbahdār of Bihar in 1682.⁷³ Actually, Cooch Bihari sources themselves admit that king Mahendra Nārāyaṇ (r. 1682?-95) lost considerable territory to the Mughals during this encounter,⁷⁴ and the pressure of such circumstances was apparently the spark for a revolt against him in 1683 by a rival from the collateral line of the Cooch Bihar royal family who held the ancestral palace of Baikunṭhpur.⁷⁵ In this revolt Bhutan was again summoned for assistance and Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, though less willing to become involved in a purely family dispute, eventually acquiesced.

An important consideration in his decision was Bhutan's own financial interests along the frontier tracts. Since the reign of Prāṇ Nārāyaṇ Bhutan had been granted permission to receive the annual taxes collected in Cooch Bihari territory between Buxa and Gnyar-tshang. It was therefore in Bhutan's best interest to support the main ruling line in Cooch Bihar, rather than the usurper, and this was done. At first the Bhutanese resident Gzims-dpon Nor-bu Drung (d. 1694) attempted to mediate, but as that proved fruitless a force was eventually sent down.⁷⁶

The outcome of the struggle is not recorded in Bhutanese sources, but the certain fact is that Cooch Bihar resubmitted once more to Mughal authority in 1685, following their defeat at the hands of Irādat Khān, another of Shāista Khān's sons. The important points to be noted are that this is the first recorded instance of direct Bhutanese intervention in the court politics of Cooch Bihar, that the intervention was by request of the king, and that support was lent to the traditional rulers rather than the collateral family line.⁷⁷ However weakened Cooch Bihar may have become after 1685, the value of Bhutanese support in any struggle between the contending families was clearly demonstrated at this time. Efforts to woo Bhutanese friendship thereafter proceeded apace, and in the spring of 1690 prince Rūp Nārāyaṇ of the rival Balrāmpur lineage paid a state visit to the court at Tashichhodzong. An elaborate reception was staged, with official dinners and masked dances, and exquisite gifts of gold, silver, bundles of silk and horses were exchanged.⁷⁸ The cordial ties cemented at this time were to be of some importance when Rūp Nārāyaṇ became king in the early 18th century.

Foreign relations under Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas were not confined to countries on the immediate perimeter, however. We have already observed that throughout his reign monastic appointments continued to be made to Mustang, Ladakh, and the enclave at Ti-se. Although biographical materials are not yet available to provide us with further detail, we may presume that friendly ties with principalities along the Himalayan fringe were kept up via Lama intermediaries, and that efforts by the Tibetan government to counteract them continued. Both Tibetan records and local traditions of Mustang suggest that during or shortly after his conquest of Ladakh, Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang led several attacks against that state,⁷⁹ and certainly by the mid-18th century both Mustang and Jumla were thoroughly subservient to Lhasa.⁸⁰ But not until twenty years after the treaty of 1684 did Bhutan dispatch an important diplomatic mission to Ladakh, and even then a veil of secrecy was necessary to prevent its obstruction by Tibetan district officials. The level of hostility with Tibet made the transit of Bhutanese ambassadors through northerly routes extremely hazardous. Unfrequented by-ways and disguises were necessarily resorted to.

In spite of such hardships, however, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was successful in opening new diplomatic relations with the autonomous principality of Sde-dge in eastern Tibet. The rise of Sde-dge as a centre of patronage for Lamaist scholarship was still in its infancy during the late 17th century, but already the fame of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's career and the story of his mysterious retreat had attracted the attention of its hierarchs. The story is told that a destructive earthquake had occurred during the reign of Sangs-rgyas-bstan-pa, whose ministers, relying on the interpretation of certain omens, urged him

to invite the Bhutanese hierarch to open a mission in Sde-dge.⁸¹ Accordingly, on two occasions Sangs-rgyas-bstan-pa sent emissaries to Bhutan with gifts, but it was not until the third such invitation in 1687 that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas decided to comply.⁸² Difficult relations with Tibet were no doubt partly responsible for the delay, and for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' own inability to make the long journey. Nevertheless, it was desirable that the emissary selected be a man of some importance, and after deliberate consideration Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas appointed Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan of the 'Obs-mtsho family.

Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (1647-1732), we have seen, was a near relative of the great Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo and son of Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa's minister Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan, who had been assassinated during the uprising of 1680. He himself had been conscripted into the state monastery through the monk tax in 1662, receiving his tonsuring from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's unknown stand-in, through the recess slot of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che's contemplative cell.⁸³ Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan became a favourite student of the First Rje Mkhan-po and by 1680 had already earned a substantial reputation for piety and scholarly abilities. By temperament, however, he was a man attracted greatly to the contemplative life, and had been provisionally nominated to succeed Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's disciple 'Khrul-zhig Pad-dkar as head of the old Se-ba-la monastery in the district of Dgon.⁸⁴ Following the uprising of 1680, however, Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan entered the personal retinue of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas.

The feud between Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and the 'Obs-mtsho may well have influenced Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' choice of Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan to serve as emissary to Sde-dge, although his personal qualities were

perhaps of prime importance. By his appointment it was perhaps felt that the 'Obs-mtsho could be rewarded for past services to the state, while his absence from the country on official business would temporarily remove him from any personal danger.

Whatever the precise motives for his selection, Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's expedition to Sde-dge marked the beginning of a new aspect of Bhutanese foreign relations and the first important event in the career of one of the country's most remarkable personalities. After attending to family matters a farewell celebration was held at Tashichhodzong. The mission formally departed through the northwest at Gling-bzhi during the 7th month of the Earth-Dragon year of 1688, with eighteen pack animals of supplies and gifts and eight assistants and Khams-pa guides.⁸⁵

The peace treaty with Tibet of 1687 had either lapsed or become unenforceable, as the entire passage through Tibetan territory had to be made in secrecy. Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan barely escaped detection by tax officials shortly after crossing the Tibetan frontier. A desire to visit Rwa-lung had to be repressed owing to the political tensions. Rapidly they travelled along the northerly route past Ri-bo-che in Khams and the great city of Chamdo, beyond which secrecy was no longer necessary and transit permits (lam-yig) could be obtained. Visiting monasteries and fortresses along the way, the emissaries finally reached the royal palace at Lcags-ra-dgon and enjoyed their first audience with Sangs-rgyas-bstan-pa.⁸⁶

For the duration of the Bhutanese mission Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan and his companions received gracious treatment from the Sde-dge hierarch and other members of the royal family. He observed with great interest

the sectarian tolerance of his hosts, their lack of prejudices over religious issues and their generous patronage for holy men from all parts of the Tibetan world. He had an audience with the royal prince Bsod-nams-phun-tshogs (d. 1714) who questioned him intently on matters of Bhutanese history and tradition, the mystery of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's extended retreat, the country's temperate weather, etc. He visited the famed gter-ston Nyi-ma-grags-pa whose 15-volume collected works and prophetic discoveries contained prophecies foretelling the two major incarnation lines deriving from Avalokiteśvara, the Dalai Lamas and the 'Brug-pa hierarchs.⁸⁷

Altogether Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's mission remained in Sde-dge for seven years, and although a complete record of his experiences is not yet accessible, what we have provides a most valuable insight into the principality's political and social life during the late 17th century. We know that Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan established cordial relationships with hierarchs of the important Rnying-ma-pa monasteries of Kah-thog and Rdzogs-chen, but it is unstated whether he founded the 'Brug-pa monasteries in Sde-dge as his ambassadorial commission had urged. No doubt he did, and future research into new sources will certainly provide a fuller history of this intriguing chapter of Bhutan's foreign relations. Rahul states that Bhutanese Lamas continued to undertake religious education at Rdzogs-chen even up to 1959,⁸⁸ the diplomatic groundwork for which should therefore be credited to Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's mission of 1688-95.

At this point we must return once more to the subject with which our discussion of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' career began, the question of orderly succession to the position of Bhutanese head of state. His

enthronement, as I have suggested, may well have represented a compromise between contending factions of patron families, a "loyalist" group supporting the family line of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and a "nationalist" opposition demanding greater authority for native Bhutanese lineages. However, this is not yet an adequate interpretation. The course of the feud between Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's people and the 'Obs-mtsho demonstrates no clear-cut correlation between these issues. In fact, the family and district feuds must have been an independent feature of the contemporary political scene, predating to a degree Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's advent to Bhutan in 1616. This will become more evident when events of the early 18th century are reviewed.

The evolution of the refugee 'Brug-pa church in Bhutan from a mere monastic domain into a full ecclesiastic state required that mechanisms be developed to resolve such feuds satisfactorily. Gtsang Mkhan-chen's formulation shows that high spiritual sanctity attaching to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's lineage was intended to have provided the authority matrix for this purpose. However, the latter's extended retreat, the (concealed) termination of his male descent line, and the consequent (though officially temporary) reversion to the collateral Rdo-rje-gdan-pa "nephew" line of the Rgya, probably combined to weaken popular acceptance of the government's authority and faith in its scriptural and prophetic sanctions. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was not recognized as an incarnate Bodhisattva during his lifetime. His authority rested solely upon his locally exalted agnatic descent from 'Brug-pa Kun-legs, his parents' connections with Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, revelations from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and his own personal qualities. The theory of hereditary Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che was in abeyance during his tenure as First Rgyal-

tshab, the title adopted to accomodate his somewhat anomalous position in government.

Consequently, to make secure the principle of hereditary Rdo-rje-gdan-pa rule it was essential that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas father a male heir to the throne. Had that been done, something of the spiritual reverence attaching to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal would probably have devolved upon Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' own lineage. There emerges from the literature of the period an almost Sibylline preoccupation with the status of his descent. He himself regarded his tensure as provisional, contingent upon the appearance of a son.⁸⁹ Every human effort was taken to guarantee male offspring, but it was in the hands of the gods, and karma, to reveal Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' allotted fate and with it that of the government itself.

We do not know how many wives or official consorts Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had during his career. His installation as bla-lhag in 1667 was partly engineered to allow access to women outside the monastic environment, and perhaps his first consort was acquired about that time. It is only in 1686, however, that we are informed of his first divorce. The unfortunate lady was one Dbang-'dus-lha-mo, born into a lineage of the Dkar-sbis. She was brought to court and installed as consort (bdag-mo) in an unstated year, and in due course gave birth to two or three infants, including a son (sras lcam sring gnyis tsam).⁹⁰ But they apparently all died in childbirth or shortly after. Saddened at these events, in 1686 the lady "abandoned the lusts of the body" and entered contemplative retirement. A verse lamenting the childrens' tragic fate was written,⁹¹ and Dbang-'dus-lha-mo, though separated from Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, apparently remained faithful to her ex-husband and

was still living at the time of his funeral, which she attended.⁹²

Some of her jewellery was later included in his tomb.⁹³

We next hear of his consorts late in 1688, when the Second Rje Mkhan-po Bsod-nams-'od-zer was nearing death. This man had been devotedly attached to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and his son, was a firm supporter of the principle of lineal succession, and now, at the point of passing away, urgently stressed the need for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas to father sons for the future welfare of the Dharma and citizens of the country.⁹⁴ The fact that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje had only produced a daughter was a most distressing circumstance. He advised the ministers of state that the same fate should not be allowed to occur in the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa lineage. He himself had taken steps to guarantee against it, but the omens were disturbing. Already, he claimed, some three consorts (jo-mo gsum tsam) for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had been procured, but without favourable issue. Further measures and much prayer would be required. One of the ministers present, Rta-mgrin-dbang-rgyal, requested Bsod-nams-'od-zer that he himself, a pious adherent of the 'Brug-pa faith, should assent to take rebirth as Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' son. Bsod-nams-'od-zer regretfully replied that his yogic insight did not reveal whether such would be the case, though he wished it might be so.⁹⁵

Thus by 1689, the year of Bsod-nams-'od-zer's death, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had already had at least three consorts in residence at the various gdan-sa, probably simultaneously, although their names are not revealed. In 1690 he took yet another wife. This lady was of the same lineage as his mother, i.e. the Sgang-kha, claiming ancestry from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po.⁹⁶ The marriage ceremony was timed to coincide with the consecration rites for the elaborate restoration of

Rta-mgo, the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa ancestral monastery. The nuptial was sanctified with a prayer by Pad-dkar-lhun-grub (1640-99), soon to be installed as Rje Mkhan-po III. The restoration and enlargement of Rta-mgo had been undertaken to fulfill a wish expressed earlier by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and no doubt the timing of the marriage had a certain magical rationale.⁹⁷ Later in 1690, when the new mural paintings at Rta-mgo were separately consecrated, another private service was held by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' closest disciples and advisors to pray for his continued male line.⁹⁸

During the middle of 1691 the new wife gave birth to a child at Rta-mgo. It was a daughter. Nevertheless an elaborate birth celebration was held at the gdan-sa-phan-tshun. Her birth name was 'Gu-ru-bu-khrid, but at the celebrations she received the official style of Lha-lcam Kun-legs, and the mother and daughter were put under the care of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' own court physician Bsam-gtan-pad-dkar.⁹⁹ Lha-lcam Kun-legs (1691-1732/3) continued to reside at Rta-mgo under the close protection of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' sister Rin-chen-dpal-'dzom. She is said to have been a most precocious child, well-mannered, and lovely to behold. From Rin-chen-dpal-'dzom she received early education and religious initiations, and in later years came to be revered as a rebirth of Padmasambhava's famous consort Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal.¹⁰⁰

By autumn of 1693 Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was thinking seriously of retirement. But still he had fathered no successors, and although he yet had hopes and dream revelations that a son would come, it was becoming necessary to seriously consider the future of the government.¹⁰¹ There were now no males of any lineage with an acceptable claim to succeed as Rgyal-tshab. Were he to retire it would have been necessary to once more

appoint a Sde-srid, but the persistent factional struggles had apparently not abated and no candidates were available who were acceptable to all parties. The thought of reverting once more to a situation of rule by a Sde-srid in the absence of functioning head of state was apparently unacceptable. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was still officially living in spiritual retreat but had given no prophetic revelations of his will. Therefore retirement was impossible for the time being.

Nevertheless, at the New Year ceremonies for 1694 Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas suddenly found that his eyesight was beginning to fail, that he could not lead the recitations and prayers. Assistants were needed for this and related services and shortly thereafter Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas determined to enter a period of retreat. For the period of his absence he assigned all religious duties to the Rje Mkhan-po Pad-dkar-lhun-grub, and his secular responsibilities were entrusted to Lama Dpal-bzang-dngos-grub and Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' faithful attendant Gzims-dpon Nor-bu Drung, the man who had previously been delegated to Cooch Bihar.¹⁰² Leaving them with some final instructions on matters of state, he departed from the capital in a crowd of well-wishers for Tashichhodzong, where he recuperated in meditation until autumn. Although the retirement was to have been only temporary, in his absence from court there was an uprising against him and ultimately Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was forced to abdicate. The person behind the revolt was none other than Dge-slong Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, the man who had led the earlier uprising against Sde-srid Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa in 1667.

The cause of this latest uprising is not immediately obvious, and we must try to reconstruct the events of 1694 in some detail. Following

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' departure from the capital, it soon became evident that his illness was more severe than originally believed. A curtain of secrecy was raised by his attendants, and important ministers of state were denied permission to confer with him. This gave rise to gossip and wild rumours at court. It was speculated by some that he might even have died.¹⁰³ Already Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and his son had entered close retreat, never to reemerge. Would there now be a third? Such must have been the thoughts of officials and monks alike when, in the early 10th month (smin-drug zla-ba), a message was secretly passed from his chambers that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was near death. Word of this spread rapidly, for the following morning an army surrounded Tashichhodzong and attempted unsuccessfully to force entry. It is stated that this was led by retainers of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel who, however, appears to have himself remained at a discreet distance at Brdo-mchod-rten near Paro.¹⁰⁴

What was the purpose of the revolution? A comparison of the various sources suggests that Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, who had paved the way for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' own accession to power in 1680, was now determined to wrest for himself the throne of Sde-srid. This was apparently a personal struggle. There were Dkar-sbis people who did not support his effort and the whole community of ministers and leading chiefs was rife with factional differences. Civil order evaporated and disturbances of all kinds erupted.

"The fire of hatred was set to the dry kindling of ministerial factions, and fanned by the winds of jealousy the conflagration spread and consumed us all in sorrow."

Such was the view of one monk, at least.¹⁰⁵ There were even revolts directed against the burgeoning Rnying-ma-pa influence in the government. The ancient and futile doctrinal squabble over "new" versus "old" Tantric practices resurged and the Bhutanese Padma-gling-pa hierarch Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub had to flee for safety to Wangdiphodrang.¹⁰⁶ Hence, believing that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was about to die, Dkar-sbis Dge-'dun-chos-'phel stepped into the breach and demanded his formal abdication. This he did in the interests of national peace.¹⁰⁷

But the issue of succession was not yet clearly resolved. Even though Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had abdicated his responsibilities as Sde-srid in favour of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, there had been no agreement upon who should occupy the notionally superior office of Rgyal-tshab. Some urged Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas himself to resume the position. Even Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, faced with a difficult political situation, sent his new Gzims-dpon 'Brug-rgyal-mtshan to request that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas return to government in the reduced capacity of spiritual head. But sickness, perhaps also wounded pride, made that impossible. He suggested the compromise that the royal princess (yum-sras) take up the throne in some fashion, should she be willing and able.¹⁰⁸

Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was not sanguine about the outcome of such a startling proposal. Nevertheless, Gzims-dpon Nor-bu Drung, who had for a few months served as Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' acting Sde-srid, was dispatched to negotiate the issues in dispute. But after two days on the road Nor-bu was assassinated by Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's men. The latter rejected Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' criticism of this action. On the other hand, neither Dge-'dun-chos-'phel nor the royal princess were

happy at the thought of her enthronement and petitioned Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas to reconsider. This he refused to do, and on New Year's day of the Wood-Pig year (1695) Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas left Tashichhodzong for the last time, and with a body of retainers and disciples retired to Rta-mgo.¹⁰⁹

Having now taken personal charge at the seat of government, Dge-'dun-chos-'phel had no option but to proceed with the girl's installation, and consequently the order was given that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's teenage daughter Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje be enthroned as religious hierarch (bstan-pa'i-gtso-bo).¹¹⁰ Neither the Rje Mkhan-po nor the main body of monks had assented to this move, nor even been consulted, as far as we can learn. Were they even aware of precisely what was happening? A later historian relates that, at her enthronement, Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje was attired in mens' clothing as a disguise.¹¹¹ But it is difficult to believe that it could have been a well-kept secret. It is a question to which we shall have to return. The idea of a woman head of state, even of royal blood, must have seemed a novel farce to the chiefs and ministers. The monks, however, saw the event in a much darker light, and, as is so common in Bhutanese church histories, only indirect hints at such a foreboding manifestation of karma dared be committed to print. By their very silence and circumlocution can we measure the depth of superstitious unease.¹¹²

Throughout 1695 Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas meditated and pondered on his country's troubled future. The ministerial factions were still disunited. But safely out of the political picture, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas received condolence missions from all sides in the struggle, and even began to recover his health. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel also sent gifts

and supplies of food, having no further wish to persecute him. The new Sde-srid's Gzims-dpon 'Brug-rgyal-mtshan was given the task of mending injured feelings and restoring order, and personally intervened to quell the outbreaks of violence directed at the Rnying-ma-pa monks.¹¹³ Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, who had just returned in disguise via Lhasa from his mission to Sde-dge, was profoundly depressed at the inauspicious turn of events, and was one of those attending upon Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas during his last days at Rta-mgo.¹¹⁴

It was during his meditations of 1695 that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas finally suggested an answer to Bhutan's persistent constitutional dilemma. Those privy to this discussion included his father's rebirth 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' sister, the illustrious artisan Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Rta-mgrin-dbang-rgyal, and Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' future biographer and the man who was eventually to become Rje Mkhan-po VI in 1724. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' proposal was that, in the interests of civil and monastic stability, recourse should now be had to succession by immediate rebirth. In such a time of strife, he reasoned, only a reincarnate (mchog-sprul) head of state could restore peace to the land, for what other answer was there?¹¹⁵

Unfortunately, Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas did not clearly indicate which incarnation line ought to be elevated to the supreme position. There were some who prayed that his own incarnation would appear soon, and questioned Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas for clues of when and where they ought to seek out the proper child.¹¹⁶ In fact, the 'Brug-pa incarnation who was to succeed Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had already been born, although it was to be several more years before the boy was

officially recognized. Meanwhile Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' illness suddenly returned with greater force, and about the beginning of 1696 a plague of smallpox erupted and claimed many lives. There were evil planetary aspects, and the monks of the state church had to take up temporary quarters at Gsang-sngags-zab-don monastery. The historians, naturally, viewed these calamities as connected with the coup of 1694. Purification rites were undertaken by both the state and the monastery, but while they were under way Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas died at Rta-mgo during the 4th month of 1696.¹¹⁷

Thus terminated the second male lineage of the Rgya clan of Rwa-lung. There were no others, and although female succession was tried for a time it could not by its nature be a permanent solution. In fact Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' testamentary statements had already conceded the point by suggesting the need for rule by exalted incarnations (mchog sprul). Had he been able to father male successors the family rivalries might also have been calmed. But failing in that, there appeared a vacuum of power into which the most powerful of the civil chiefs boldly stepped. Dkar-sbis Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's involvement in these events was one of much controversy. Rahul maintains that he had all along been the "power behind the throne".¹¹⁸ More accurately, perhaps, he was one of several powers waiting in the wings, for even later writers admitted that there were two sides to the debate and that right and wrong could not be so easily ascribed.¹¹⁹

Following the termination of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' male line there began a long period of instability in Bhutanese ruling circles, during which the theory of incarnate succession to the throne of hierarch was gradually formulated. Even at this time the fiction of

Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's long retreat was being maintained, or was at least so thoroughly cloaked in superstitious awe, that the first incarnate head of state was not of him but of his son. Then there arose incarnate contenders from the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa line, and finally two viable incarnation lineages from Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself.

The principle of lineal succession to the gdan-sa, in defence of which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had originally fled to Bhutan, had now failed. But there was no person of comparable authority or charisma to guide the country towards a stable principle of incarnate succession. Until 1744 there were only strong men to vie for the seat of Sde-srid, some out of pious motives, but all of limited accomplishment and insecure following. This most trying half-century in Bhutan's history will be described in the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The precise date is given in Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.132.b; the description of the coronation fills all of ch. 11 (ff.121.a-132.b) of this text.

² Dates of these men have been reconstructed from various sources. Brief biographical sketches of 'Phrin-las-dpal-'bar, Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan, Dam-chos-pad-dkar, and Ye-shes-dngos-grub are contained in Ibid, ff.365.a-367.b.

³ Ibid., f.127.b. Of Ghū Nārāyaṇ I find no information in Indian sources. Her emissary's name appears as Ha-ri-shab-dhar-ba in this passage.

⁴ Among the 'Brug-pa, an elaborate mang-'gyed was held in 1593 at Gsang-sngags-chos-gling in Byar for the death rites of Padma-dkar-po (Lha-rtse-ba Ngag-dbang-bzang-po, Dpal 'brug pa thams cad mkhyen pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa rgya mtsho lta bu'i 'phros cha..., ff.69.b-70.b), for which a detailed list of recipients was kept in a MS dgongs rdzogs bsgrubs pa'i deb chen mo. Similarly, at Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' coronation in 1680 a detailed list of tax-paying households (dpya khral 'bul sdud kyi grangs tho) was consulted for the gift-giving. A similar coronation document of 1747 has been preserved in the biography of Sde-srid XIII (cf. below, Appendix A).

In Tibet mang-'gyed distributions to the monasteries were frequent, but less so to the peasantry. One in 1648 by Panchen Lama I was confined to his native district of Lhan (Chos smra ba'i dge slong blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul..., f.136.b). The Second Panchen Lama sponsored a large mang-'gyed among the peasantry of Bzhad

in 1704 (Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.217.b-218.a) and another in Lhan in 1721 (Ibid., f.305.b). The Seventh Dalai Lama sponsored numerous mang-'gyed after coming to power in 1751.

The origins and important socio-political functions of this method of recirculating wealth have not been studied, to my knowledge. The detailed mang-'gyed documents of Bhutan, of which only one complete and several incomplete examples are accessible, provide an extraordinary amount of information on population numbers, habitational patterns, court hierarchy, etc.

⁵ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.306.b.

⁶ Ibid., f.113.b.

⁷ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.54.b.

⁸ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.124.b, 132.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.54.b, 56.a, where his position as Rgyal-tshab is reckoned as beginning in 1667; i.e. when he was appointed bla-lhag. This, I believe, represents an interpolation on the part of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, an attempt to smooth out one of the uncomfortable wrinkles of the earlier history.

⁹ Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.54.b, 56.a.

¹⁰ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.129.a-131.a; this coronation ritual, of course, was indirectly transmitted to Bhutan from ancient India via Tibet (for Indian precedents, cf. J.Gonda, Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966], pp. 37-39).

- 11 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.a; Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan", pp. 208-209.
- 12 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.23.a. Such speculation had begun already in 1641, but was discouraged by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself. Nevertheless, a full incarnation lineage had already been elaborated for Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas by the time his biography was written in 1720.
- 13 Ibid., f.327.a.
- 14 Ibid., f.69.a-b.
- 15 Ibid., ff.133.b-134.a.
- 16 Ibid., ff.143.a, 146.a-b.
- 17 Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing bsduṣ pa, ff.3.b-4.a.
- 18 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.154.a-157.a.
- 19 Ibid., ff.206.a-207.b.
- 20 Ibid., ff.236.a-237.b.
- 21 Ibid., ff.236.a, 246.b-247.a; on the Sku-'bum stūpa of Gyantse, cf. G. Tucci, Indo-Tibetica (Roma: Reale Accademia d'Italia, 1941), vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 168-300.
- 22 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.244.b-245.a.
- 23 Ibid., ff.211.a-b.
- 24 Ibid., ff.166.a-168.a.
- 25 Ibid., ff.168.a-b.
- 26 Ibid., ff.208.a, 216.b-229.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.56.b.

- 27 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.197.a-b, 211.b.
- 28 Ibid., f.253.b.
- 29 Ibid., f.138.a.
- 30 Ibid., ff.289.a, 301.a-302.b; Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.54.a-b. Cf. also D.I. Lauf, "Vorläufiger Bericht...I", Ethnologische Zeitschrift Zürich 2(1972), p. 88, where the date is wrong, however.
- 31 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.b; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.180.b-181.a. Cf. the photograph in Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, facing p. 57 and her drawing on p. 73.
- 32 A fairly detailed history of this genre of Lamaist artistry is given in Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.188.b-191.a.
- 33 Ibid., ff.257.a-261.b; a full description of the project, the quantity of materials expended, etc., is provided by Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho (Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.49.b-50.b). Some 300 large reams of precious cloth went into its manufacture.
- 34 P. Karan, Bhutan, p. 49.
- 35 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.134.a.
- 36 Cf. below, ch. 8.
- 37 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.146.b-148.a, 159.b-160.a.

38

Ibid., 147.a. Her return to Bhutan was arranged as an exchange of prisoners with the Tibetan government. Bhutan delivered back to Tibet the Bo-dong 'Chi-med Sprul-sku, who had taken refuge with the Rnying-ma-pa Gdong-dkar Lamas of eastern Bhutan owing to some disaffection with Tibetan officials. An army had pursued him to Tashigang, but he escaped into Bhutan, and Tibet sued for his return. Bhutan demanded as compensation the release of Gos-dkar-sgrol-ma, but her place of imprisonment is never told us.

The 'Chi-med Sprul-sku was apparently one of the two (che chung) Sbyor-ra Sprul-sku lineages of Lo-ro district claiming incarnate descent from the great Tibetan scholar Pho-dong-pa Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1376-1451) and ultimately from the ancient translator Vairotsana; a third Pho-dong-pa incarnation lineage was the Rdo-rje-phag-mo of Yar-'brog Bsam-sdings ('Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, Gangs can bod kyi yul du byon pa'i gsang sngags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs mdor bsdu..., f.88.b). Historical records of these lineages are not accessible for comparison here. The Gdong-dkar Sprul-sku lineage of Bhutan (e.g. Rig-'dzin Ngag-dbang-shes-rab, fl. 17th century) also claimed incarnate descent from Vairotsana, but their ties with the Pho-dong-pa of Tibet are otherwise obscure. They were lineal descendants of Padma-gling-pa.

39

Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.176.a. Her immediate rebirth, however, apparently male, was discovered shortly after 1684 in a family of Sbed-smad, and was entered into the state monastery. I am uncertain if this incarnation line continued to be recognized, however.

- ⁴⁰ Ibid., ff.181.a-b; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.70.a-b.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., ff.71.a, 72.a, 73.b-75.b.
- ⁴² Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.201.a-b.
- ⁴³ Ibid., ff.194.b, 230.b, 306.b.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., f.163.a.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., f.163.b; cf. Nirmala Das, Dragon Country, p. 82, where the date is wrong, however. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas is in various places credited with unusual powers as a water witch.
- ⁴⁶ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.134.b-137.b.
- ⁴⁷ Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.50.a-54.b.
- ⁴⁸ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.211.b.-212.b. Ngag-dbang-bsam-gtan went by the alias Sgrub-pa'i-khyu-mchog A-pha Sgrub-chen.
- ⁴⁹ Cf. above, ch. 4, fn.127, and Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.361.a-364.b.
- ⁵⁰ Full description of the tour is in Ibid., ff.264.a-274.a.
- ⁵¹ Cf. above, ch. 4, fn.130.
- ⁵² Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.193.b-194.a.
- ⁵³ R.A. Stein, Recherches sur l'épopée at le barde au Tibet, pp. 513-15.
- ⁵⁴ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.237.b.

⁵⁵ Ibid., ff.238.a-241.b. Another special Tshes-bcu, to be held during the Monkey (5th) month, was also inaugurated by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, in 1692 (Ibid., f.256.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.56.b); it seems to have been a less colourful occasion, however.

⁵⁶ The special fusion of 'Brug-pa and Rnying-ma-pa sectarian traditions in Bhutan was also commented upon during the 19th century by 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (Gangs can bod kyi yul du byon pa'i gsang sngags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs mdor bsdus, f.4.a-b).

⁵⁷ Z. Ahmad, Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 230-301.

⁵⁸ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.187.b; Rgyal-thang-nas' role in Ladakh is also mentioned in the biography of Mi-pham-dbang-po (Rgyal dbang a dzi tendra'i rnam par thar pa, f.116.b).

⁵⁹ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.188.a.

⁶⁰ Ibid., f.188.a-b.

⁶¹ Ibid., f.191.a-b; Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, f.101.b.

On Chang-khyim-nas, cf. Petech, Aristocracy and Government, pp. 105-106.

⁶² Rta-mgrin-dbang-rgyal was regarded as the rebirth of a disciple of the Karma-pa Zhwa-nag X Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje. He may have been Tibetan by birth. He became a notable literary figure in Bhutan, the author of a commentary on the Kāvyaḍarśa among other works. His skills as poet and secretary (Drung-yig) were exploited on numerous occasions to draft diplomatic correspondence and treaties with Tibet, and he was one of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' closest advisors and friends (cf. Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.369.b-371.a).

63 Ibid., ff.247.b-249.b

64 Ibid., ff.149.b-150.b.

65 Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam (1733), f.26.a; Pho-lha-nas' father is said to have received much grateful praise and rewards from the peasantry for this action against Bhutan, but Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal's opinions about Bhutanese matters must be treated with great caution.

66 Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, f.113.b.

67 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.253.b, 291.b, 309.a-310.a.

68 Ibid., ff.249.b-251.a, 294.a.

69 Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.131.b, 138.a, 139.a-141.a, 142.a, 148.a.

70 Jadunath Sarkar, ed., History of Bengal, vol. 2, pp. 373-77; H.K. Sherwani & P.M. Joshi, History of Medieval Deccan (Hyderabad: Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 603-604.

71 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.149.a-b.

72 Ibid.

73 Jadunath Sarkar, op. cit., p. 375.

74 W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. 10, p. 410.

It must be noted that the chronology of Cooch Bihari kings for this period is not uniformly established in materials available to me. Mughal sources generally have Mod Nārāyaṇ ruling as late as 1685.

Bhutanese sources are of no help, merely referring to the "Bihar rāja". A brief genealogy of the ruling families, but lacking dates, has been preserved in one text (Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.162.b-163.a).

⁷⁵ Ibid., f.161.b; the rebel's name is given: Kung-ku-ri Jo-ki-dhe-wa, a minister of the king. This should identify him with Jag Deo, whose Baikunthpur lineage served as hereditary prime ministers in Cooch Bihar. Hunter's sources, however, place his revolt at the end of Mahendra Nārāyaṇ's reign. More recent researches from Cooch Bihari sources will need consulting before the inconsistencies can be resolved.

⁷⁶ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.161.b-162.a. Gnyar-tshang, unfortunately, cannot be readily identified on the maps; we may suppose that it was several miles south of Buxa. Nor-bu Drung's title alternates between Gzims-dpon and Phyag-mdzod-pa in the various passages.

⁷⁷ Rahul (Modern Bhutan, p. 33) states that Bhutan frequently supported the Baikunthpur line in the factional politics of Cooch Bihar. The Bhutanese sources used by me, however, suggest otherwise, or at least for the 17th century.

⁷⁸ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.231.b-232.a. Rūp Nārāyaṇ reigned 1695-1714 according to Hunter (op. cit., p. 426), or 1704-14 (Rahul, Modern Bhutan, pp. 33-34). The Balrampur lineage, the third of royal descent, served Cooch Bihar as hereditary commanders-in-chief. From Rūp Nārāyaṇ's reign, however, they successfully retained the king's throne for themselves.

79 Cf. the documents cited in Petech, "Tibetan-Ladakhi-Moghol War of 1681-83", p. 172, and M. Peissel, Mustang, p. 255: "...from the north Lo Mantang's solid walls repelled repeated attacks by the noted Tibetan warlord **bandit** Sopo Gaden Sewan." Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang, however, was a fluently bilingual Mongol.

80 Lhasa's protectorate over these two kingdoms, i.e. the right to issue seals of office and confirm the appointment of rulers, was gained by mediating the dispute of 1754, and was complete in 1757 (Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, Rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen gzigs rdo rje 'chang blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa..., ff.480.a-b, 521.b; cf. also Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 151). Within a few decades, however, Gorkha pressure on Jumla loosened Lhasa's hold on the principality.

81 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.72.b-73.a. On the early history of Sde-dge, cf. J.F. Kolmas, ed., Genealogy of the Kings of Derge (Prague: Oriental Institute in Academia, 1968), introduction.

82 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.72.b-73.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.199.a.

83 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.30.a-31.a.

84 Ibid., ff.48.a-50.b, 59.a. Rnam-rgyal-rtse monastery at Se-ba-la, or Se'u-la (Siula on Karan's large map, ca. 5 miles north of Punakha) was the old Rtsig-ri branch monastery of the 'Obs-mtsho since early times. In about 1715 Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan built the hermitage of Chos-'khor-rdo-rje-gdan near Se-ba-la, and both monasteries are closely associated with his activities.

In the sources Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan is customarily referred to as Byams-mgon Rin-po-che or Se-ba-la Byams-mgon; in the rnam-thar of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas he is referred to as Chos-rje Dpal-'byor-pa.

85 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.73.b., 76.b-81.a.

86 Ibid., ff.81.b-86.b.

87 Ibid., 86.b-88.a, 90.a-91.b; one would expect to find some of Nyi-ma-grags-pa's gter-ma in the Rin-chen-gter-mdzod, now being reprinted in India from a Sikkimese MS.

88 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.96.a; Rahul, Modern Bhutan, p. 95.

89 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.327.a.

90 Ibid., f.187.a-b.

91 Ibid.; the verse was perhaps written by the author of the rnam-thar.

92 Ibid., f.340.a-b.

93 Ibid., f.348.a.

94 Ibid., ff.203.b-204.a.

95 Ibid., f.204.a-b.

96 Ibid., f.229.b.

97 Ibid., f.230.a.

98 Ibid., f.244.a.

99 Ibid., ff.251.b-253.a.

100 Ibid., ff.352.a-354.b.

101 Ibid., f.311.a-b.

102 Ibid., ff.312.a-b, 321.a-322.b.

103 Ibid., f.325.b.; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing bsdus pa, ff.8.a-b.

104 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.325.b-326.a; Phyogs-las Rin-po-che II Shākya-bstan-'dzin (1735?-78), Byang chub sems dpa' ngag dbang pad dkar gyi rtogs pa brjod pa drang srong dgyes pa'i glu dbyangs gzhan phan bdud rtsi'i rlabs 'phreng, f.9.a (this is the biography of Bya-chu-dkar-mo Bla-ma Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar (1680-1758/9), reprinted in Kunsang Topgey, The Lives of Three Bhutanese Religious Masters, Thimphu, 1976.

105 Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa..., ff.55.b-56.a.

106 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.73.b-75.a.

107 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.327.b.

108 Ibid., f.327.a. That yum-sras refers to Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje is made clear by a passage on f.327.b, where the more accurate term zhabs-drung yum-sras is found. One might have expected Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas to propose his own sister's or daughter's enthronement, but the restricted usage of zhabs-drung for members of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's lineage argues against such an interpretation of these ambiguous passages.

109 Ibid., ff.327.a-329.b.

110 Ibid., f.328.a.

111 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.61.b.

112 A similar superstitious silence pervades documents contemporary with the war with the British and the Bogle mission to Bhutan of 1772-74, which are mentioned in only the most allusive fashion.

113 Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.73.b-75.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.329.b-330.a.

114 Ibid., f.331.b; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.99.a-105.b.

115 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.330.b. A biography of Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub (1673-1730) was written ca. 1735 by Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa..., f.44.a.) but has not become accessible from Bhutan; one would expect it to contain useful information on the complex political events in which he was so intimately involved.

116 Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.334.a.

117 Ibid., f.335.a, 344.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa..., ff.8.a-9.a.

118 Rahul, Modern Bhutan, p. 27.

119 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.b.

Ch. VIII: Period of Regental Supremacy:1694 - 1744

The brief career of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's granddaughter Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje as religious hierarch of Bhutan was thoroughly unremarkable. It passes virtually unnoticed in the contemporary sources, and practically nothing is known of her early life. Even the date of her installation is not told, and she seems to have led an effaced existence, apparently in residence at the Lcags-ri hermitage. It was there, about the end of 1696, that Dam-chos-pad-dkar met her.¹ At her urging and that of the retiring Rje Mkhan-po Pad-dkar-lhun-grub, Dam-chos-pad-dkar agreed to accept appointment as Rje Mkhan IV. Early the following year his installation took place at Punakha, but shortly after arriving at Tashichhodzong for the summer session Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje died of smallpox.²

The Lho'i chos 'byung claims that during her period of rule she was disguised as a man, and that her untimely death was an omen from the deities that incarnate Lamas, rather than lineal descendants, should thereafter rule Bhutan.³ In Dam-chos-pad-dkar's biography also she is styled Rgyal-sras or "prince", which lends credence to this story. Nevertheless, her gender had certainly been revealed years earlier, at the time of her birth celebrations, and we must probably accept that, whatever her robes of office, it was unwillingness to contemplate female rulership which lay at the bottom of such statements. It is true that for thirty-six years after Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' death the ancestral Rdo-rje-gdan-pa monastery of Rta-mgo was headed by females, first by his sister Rje-btsun Drung (d. 1708) and later by his daughter Lha-lcam Kun-legs (d. 1732/3).⁴ But that was purely a family matter and there were no known attempts to elevate these famous yoginīs of Bhutanese history to positions of national authority. Upon appointment Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje was notionally bstan-pa'i-

gtso-bo, "religious head", but she was clearly no more than a pawn of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel and later lists do not include her among the legitimate successors (rgyal-tshab) of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Her death during the summer of 1697 marked the tragic end of Rgya supremacy in Bhutan.

From 1697 until 1907 Bhutan was theoretically ruled by incarnate successors of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Inevitably, the switch from lineal to incarnate succession meant the introduction of new or altered patterns of power. The Sde-srid, who had until 1697 functioned theoretically as civil administrators appointed by the Rgya hierarchs, thereafter became true regents, ruling with full powers of state during the minority of incarnate successors. In consequence, they gained open access to financial resources of the government which previously had been closed to them. No doubt it became the accepted ideal that Sde-srid should relinquish full power upon the formal installation of heads of state, and that Sde-srid should be appointed by the heads of state. But circumstance and human nature conspired to frustrate harmonious adherence to such a system. Practically speaking, there were few periods during these 210 years of the country's history in which religious heads of state were in total and undisputed control of the government.

Until the Thirteenth Sde-srid was installed in 1744, there was no agreement on who the head of state should be even as a structural entity, on which incarnation lineage should be elevated to the supreme position. The five Rgyal-tshab officially installed between 1697 and 1744 represented three separate lines of immediate rebirth. Virtually they were puppets, their candidacies being engineered by rival families and powerful district chieftains. For such ambitious chieftains the path to appointment as Sde-srid lay through heavy-handed promotion of an incarnate candidate for head of state. But in the absence of any agreement on which lineage of incarnate Lamas should have the right to rule, to say nothing of agreement

about recognition of genuine rebirths at the outset, it is not surprising that we find the decades following Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' abdication filled with strife. The young incarnations themselves generally opposed such crude exploitation of the religion, but were powerless to prevent it. Two died of poisoning, a third of starvation and grief. Another, lacking a powerful protector, was murdered even before the possibility of his installation. In this chapter, therefore, we can attempt little more than to sort out the various factions and outline briefly the history of their rise and fall.

The competition began when Dkar-sbis Dge-'dun-chos-'phel usurped the throne of Sde-srid in 1694, forcing Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas into retirement. Even if she had lived, Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje's rule would probably not have lasted for long. Well before her death, incarnate rivals were being groomed for potential installation as head of state. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas himself may have nurtured the thought of ultimately promoting the rebirth of his father. We have already noticed the early career of 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho (1665-1701), the recognized rebirth of Mi-pham-tshe-dbang-bstan-'dzin and ultimately of Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po.⁵ He was also a fifth-generation descendant of Padma-gling-pa and had, in his youth, begun religious study at Paro. After entering the state monastery in 1681, at Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' behest 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho taught in various parts of eastern Bhutan, and then returned to accompany Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas on his tours through the country. During the grand tour of western Bhutan in 1692-93 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho was given a prominent place among the chief celebrants, and it is reasonable to suppose that Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' attention to this man had deeper political motives. When Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas died, 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho once more left on a mission to Shar-phyogs, even visiting Kāmarūpa.⁶ Finally, however, he returned to Punakha, and was in residence at the capital during the months of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's climactic downfall.

But Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' suggestion of 1694 that future Bhutanese hierarchs should be incarnate Lamas had apparently opened a floodgate of pretenders to the throne. Early in 1697 the Tibetan regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho publicly revealed his concealment of the Fifth Dalai Lama's death.⁷ This had been suspected for some time, and no doubt the news generated new cynicism in Bhutan concerning Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own mythical retreat, for in that year we learn that numerous alleged rebirths of the Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che had already been brought to the government's attention.⁸ Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was anxious to locate and install a religious head of state, if only to lend legitimacy to his own continued service as Sde-srid. Since his accession to power there had been border conflicts with Tibet. An eight-year peace treaty signed in 1695 apparently had not endured even as many months, and in 1696 further negotiations were taking place.⁹ But it was still politically impossible to officially acknowledge Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's decease. An alternative was needed.

In 1697 word reached Punakha that an unusual child had been born in eastern Bhutan, one worthy of further investigation as to his possible incarnate affiliations. In consultation with Dam-chos-pad-dkar the Sde-srid ordered that this be done, and when two preliminary examiners reported favourably a third party was dispatched to investigate more thoroughly.¹⁰ It was 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho who was charged with the mission, and his tests revealed the child to be the rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's son, 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's own death had not been admitted till now, but this difficulty was somehow got around and the child was brought to Punakha for final examination and confirmation. In official ceremony, before the assembled body of monks, Dam-chos-pad-dkar confirmed 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho's recognition. Dge-'dun-chos-'phel expressed great delight, and the boy, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, was entered into the state monastery with the intention of his eventual installation.¹¹

As the immediate rebirth of Rgyal-sras 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1689-1714) inherited the official style of Rgyal-sras, and he is enumerated in the sources as the Second Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che of his particular lineage. But Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan was, or was claimed to be, a descendant of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's own father, Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, through a bastard lineage in the Tashigang district. His father was one Skyes-chen Dbon-po-rdo-rje, a second-generation nephew of Bla-ma Rnam-sras who, as described in an earlier chapter, served as an adjutant to Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa in his subjugation of Shar-phyogs.¹² At this beginning phase of incarnate rule in Bhutan, perhaps, such a family tie with the former ruling lineage was still of some value in winning political acceptance. During Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's lifetime, though precisely when is uncertain, a full incarnation lineage was reconstructed. In this it was formulated that Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's previous embodiments included the famed Indian Tantric wizard Tilopa, Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras' guru Gling-ras-pa, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's father Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, and of course the prince 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje himself. The celestial founder of the series was not Avalokiteśvara, but rather the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra.¹³

This was a formidable array of religious support for his claim to spiritual headship, and for a number of years no rival incarnate candidates for the position were openly acknowledged. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan was placed under the tutelage of 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho and the Rje Mkhan-po Dam-chos-pad-dkar, and for about three years travelled between the two capitals undergoing preliminary studies.

But Dge-'dun-chos-'phel did not live to see his protégé enthroned. His bloody purge of 'Obs-mtsho people in 1680 had exacerbated bitter resentment between the two families and their supporters. After Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan's exiled family was publicly repatriated in 1684 rivalry had persisted, but when Dge-'dun-chos-'phel became Sde-srid in 1694 he was in a stronger

position to persecute his enemies. From that year, he systematically pursued a policy of harassment of the 'Obs-mtsho people. On the occasion of a disputed marriage contract between members of the two families he imprisoned 'Obs-mtsho-ba Chos-rje Phun-tshogs, a respected Lama, on trumped up charges. Then Chos-rje Phun-tshogs' son 'Brug-dar-rgyal was imprisoned on some pretext. The conflict reached a crisis at the New Year celebrations of 1700 when a plot by the 'Obs-mtsho people to remove Dge-'dun-chos-'phel from the throne was discovered.¹⁴

Ngag-dbang-rab-brtan's son Bla-ma Bstan-'dzin was apparently the chief conspirator, but, when the fighting broke out according to plan, he lost his nerve and rather than physically remove (or kill) the Sde-srid he fled back to his home district. Without its leader the revolt was soon put down with much bloodshed. Once more the 'Obs-mtsho people were driven into exile, while Bla-ma Bstan-'dzin and his nephew were imprisoned at Punakha, and shortly thereafter killed by assassins.¹⁵ The revered 'Obs-mtsho monk Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan left the state monastery in fear of his life, taking up retreat in a small hermitage in the mountains above Wangdiphodrang.

With the monk historians away from the scene of battle we have no eye-witness accounts of what happened next. But it seems clear that the struggles at Punakha continued and within a few months, probably early in 1701, Dkar-sbis Dge-'dun-chos-'phel was killed. One source alleges that his defeat was the work of a certain Dpon-slob Dam-chos-pa and of the Phajo rebirth 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's teacher.¹⁶ This is difficult to confirm, but we do know that 'Brug-grags-rgya-mtsho left Punakha hurriedly at this time for Shar-phyogs, and that he was assassinated at the Padma-gling-pa monastery of Sgang-steng (near Wangdiphodrang) during the 5th month of 1701.¹⁷ This was regarded as a political

act, and whatever movement there might have been to install the Pha-jo incarnations as heads of state must have collapsed as a result.

Amidst the litter of bodies outside the temple Dam-chos-pad-dkar mediated the dispute and it was arranged that Drung-yig Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring should be elevated to the post of Sde-srid VI.¹⁸ Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring was a man of considerable wealth and government experience. In 1692 he had served as a mgron-gnyer at Paro, and in the following year was Bhutan's chief representative in demarcating the frontier with Gnas-nang.¹⁹ Apparently he had then entered the personal service of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas as a secretary (Drung-yig), but eventually was nominated Rdzong-dpon of Wangdiphodrang, his office at the time of appointment to Sde-srid. He was popular with the monks, who regarded him as a man of upright and moral character.²⁰ Although a Dkar-sbis native he was apparently not a partisan of Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's faction, and in fact a modern text credits him with the former Sde-srid's execution.²¹ But this seems rather out of character, and is not supported by the contemporary literature. In the absence of a reigning head of state, it is unclear on what authority his appointment was officially certified. Probably Dam-chos-pad-dkar was acting on behalf of the future hierarch Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan.

Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring set about immediately to ameliorate Dge-'dun-chos-'phel's legacy of bitter factionalism. The Padma-gling-pa Rgyal-sbras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub, who attended the coronation and presented gifts, was assured of the government's active support for Rnying-ma-pa enterprises.²² The exiled 'Obs-mtsho people were once again officially absolved of wrongdoing and repatriated to what was left of their formerly splendid estate, now in near ruins from the fighting.²³

Almost immediately the new Sde-srid arranged to have Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan enthroned at Punakha. This took place during the New Year events

when the boy was fourteen years old, probably 1702 or the year following. It is said to have been a spectacular coronation, with many delegations from throughout the country in attendance.²⁴

Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan was not a commanding personality. He seems to have been rather a recluse, and his first two years or so in office were spent largely in religious study and meditative retreat. When the pious Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring died in about 1704, probably of natural causes, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan and the Rje Mkhan-po performed the cremation ceremonies.²⁵ The next Sde-srid, Dbu-mdzad Dpal-'byor, was a virtual nonentity about whose nominal three-year reign almost nothing is known. It is only in the historical works of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal that his name is even mentioned,²⁶ and he seems to have shared effective power with Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan. It was the latter who, at the request of the king Nyi-ma-rnam-rgyal (1691-1729), appointed an official emissary to Ladakh in 1705.²⁷ The man selected was none other than 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, Bhutan's earlier delegate to Sde-dge. This was a long and arduous mission, lasting until 1712, during which Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan once again served Bhutan's interests admirably as monk and diplomat, travelling as far as Lahore, where he spent nine days searching for the ruins of ancient Buddhist monuments.²⁸

In about 1707 Dbu-mdzad Dpal-'byor became ill and resigned the position of Sde-srid for retirement at Lcags-ri.²⁹ For a brief period, it would appear, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan himself assumed full powers of government.³⁰ But whatever his merits as a spiritual leader, the young man was a political innocent. His father had only recently died, leaving Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan without secure support among the powerful lay chieftains. Rje Mkhan-po Dam-chos-pad-dkar, the one respected statesman who might have offered wise counsel, was old and nearing death. And when another factional feud broke out late in 1706 the youth was lured into a foolish mistake,

one which cost him his position as head of state and ultimately his life.

The feud was between the rival Rdzong-dpon of Punakha and Tashichhodzong, Bstan-pa-dbang-phyug and 'Brug-rab-rgyas. The cause of this division is not revealed, but almost certainly it involved competition for nomination to the post of Sde-srid. During the winter residence at Punakha Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan had severely rebuked both men for their conduct. The monks supported his action, but this solved nothing and when the court shifted to Tashichhodzong in the following summer 'Brug-rab-rgyas made his move. We are told that Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan was now strongly under the influence of his mother, who in turn was seduced through lavish gifts and honeyed speech into urging 'Brug-rab-rgyas' appointment.³¹ Trusting in the latter's earnest profession of faith and support, but against the advice of other ministers, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan nevertheless proceeded to install 'Brug-rab-rgyas as Sde-srid VIII, probably in the summer of 1707.³²

This turned out to be a serious mistake. The new Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas, known also as Wang Pha-jo,³³ was an ambitious, even ruthless, civil administrator. In many respects his character and actions are reminiscent of those of the Third Sde-srid Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa. He was not an irreligious man, and for ten years following his retirement in 1719 he devoted much of his energy to pious works and religious study, even taking full ordination as a bhikṣu in 1728.³⁴ But his conception of government placed severe restraints on the church's formal powers to operate in the secular sphere, in consequence of which the monk historians were not inclined to view his career with particular favour. Charitably, we may suppose that 'Brug-rab-rgyas was searching for some more permanent and stable pattern of rule in which the Sde-srid would hold greater formal authority. A revised legal code which he wrote and published in 1724 might clarify such attitudes,

should it still be extant.³⁵ He was, as Petech writes, "the most forceful personality of this period of Bhutanese history."³⁶ A member of the Wang Srin-mo-nang lineage of the Thed valley, claiming descent from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, he and his near relatives held prominent positions in government for at least thirty years after 1707.

'Brug-rab-rgyas' antipathy to Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan became open in the very year of his installation as Sde-srid. Immediately upon gaining the office 'Brug-rab-rgyas set out to exterminate the faction supporting the Punakha Rdzong-dpon Bstan-pa-dbang-phyug. Bstan-pa-dbang-phyug fled to the mountains, and throughout the autumn months the Sde-srid's retainers hunted him down. There were fights and bloodshed involving innocent peasants, owing to which, we are told, Bstan-pa-dbang-phyug voluntarily surrendered.³⁷ But when execution appeared imminent the Rdzong-dpon sought sanctuary with Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, and this was granted. The Sde-srid reacted violently, ignoring the hierarch's interference in civil matters, and almost certainly Bstan-pa-dbang-phyug was assassinated at this time.³⁸ Thereafter 'Brug-rab-rgyas' animosity to the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che and his supporters became increasingly bitter. His opposition extended also to Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's incarnate lineage, and from about 1708 the Sde-srid began to seek an alternative line of rebirths to rule the country, one more amenable to secular domination.

Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan continued on the throne of hierarch, but his ineffectual position vis-à-vis the Sde-srid began to take its toll. When Dam-chos-pad-dkar finally passed away near the end of 1708 Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan decided to enter a three-year contemplative retreat at Lcags-ri. His absence from the court, naturally, gave the Sde-srid a free hand in matters of state policy. The new Rje Mkhan-po Bzod-pa-'phrin-las (1648-1732) had a long reign (r. 1708-24), but he was an effaced personality and

no biography of him is available to shed further light on political events of this period.³⁹ It was during this period of meditation that Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan composed the life of his teacher Dam-chos-pad-dkar, and other works which once were included in a set of his collected writings.⁴⁰

When Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan emerged from his retreat early in 1712 he resumed his teaching duties. His students at this time included the Ladakhi prince Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu (1689-1746), brought to Bhutan by Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan whose mission to Ladakh had just concluded.⁴¹ Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's biographer writes that Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan was not well when the two met. Moreover, the Sde-srid's autocratic ways had borne fruit in the rise of an open opposition. The elite families were becoming increasingly polarized, and acts of public disrespect to Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan increased.⁴² Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan wished to retire, and the discovery and recognition of a new incarnate pretender at this time provided the opportunity.

Sprul-sku Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1708-1734?) was the son of a wealthy landlord of Tagana in southwestern Bhutan.⁴³ He was given the name Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan at birth, but from early childhood, it is alleged, the infant had openly and clearly recited the name of his previous human embodiment, Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. There had been many such claimed rebirths in the past, but for some reason the Sde-srid decided to investigate this one more closely. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, it is said, was delighted to hear the news and concurred with the decision to bring the child to court for tests.⁴⁴ This was done and the boy, having successfully passed the usual investigation, was tonsured and given preliminary vows by an aged disciple of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, Bzod-pa-pad-dkar, and entered into the monastery at Wangdiphodrang.⁴⁵

Almost immediately, the Sde-srid's faction laid plans to remove the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che from the hierarch's throne. There was clearly

violence involved in this, although the sources are not openly explicit. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, who had wished to retire in any case, is now said to have adopted the attitude of a true Bodhisattva, abdicating his position to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.⁴⁶ He retreated with a small party of attendants to Wangdiphodrang where he resided through most of 1713. Actually he was a virtual prisoner, as several attempts to murder him were made by agents of 'Brug-rab-rgyas.⁴⁷ The danger of his position eventually forced Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan to flee the fortress in secrecy for some other refuge.

This occurred during the 10th month, and for several days Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan managed to elude his assailants. But soon he was tracked by dogs to a place not far from Wangdiphodrang and placed under heavy guard in the mountain retreat of G.yung-drung-skyid.⁴⁸ His other servants having already been killed, Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan himself was given poisoned water and died on the 27th day of the 12th month of the Water-Snake year (early 1714).⁴⁹ Within a matter of weeks the Sde-srid arranged to have Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal installed at Punakha. The Rje Mkhan-po officiated and all the monks acclaimed him as the legitimate ruler.⁵⁰

Obviously, the recognition and installation of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was bound to raise serious constitutional questions. The contemporary sources practically ignore the difficulty, and we must therefore speculate. The death of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had not been publicly admitted; consequently the appearance of a rebirth was impossible. On the other hand 'Brug-rab-rgyas' recognition and coronation of the boy were faits accomplis, so that any vocal opposition could only have been construed as politically directed at the Sde-srid himself. In view of the latter's well-known methods of handling dissidents we need not wonder that protest remained largely mute. Nevertheless the existence of opposition is a known fact. Throughout Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's life there were various

parties who, while not denying his status as a reborn Bodhisattva, even an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, yet refuted the claim that he was the rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The issue finally came to a crisis in 1729, as we shall see.

As if in confirmation of divine displeasure at these cynical political assaults against the spiritual fibre of Bhutan, the year 1714 witnessed a pair of devastating calamities. Almost in the very month of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's coronation a severe earthquake rocked the entire country, causing much destruction.⁵¹ Numerous temples and homes were ruined or severely damaged, and many people were killed. The historian Shākya-rin-chen, then a mere child of four, had one leg crushed in an earth slide and suffered a limp for the remainder of his life. His mother died in the event, sorrow at which eventually became a factor in his turning to a life of religion.⁵²

The second crisis of 1714 was a major invasion by Tibetan armies, the first in some thirty-seven years. It is difficult to say what prompted such a war at this time. The Tibetan ruler since 1705 had been Lha-bzang (Lajang) Khan, a lineal descendant of the Qoshot Mongol chieftain Gushri Khan who in 1642 had placed the Fifth Dalai Lama in power. Lha-bzang Khan's manipulation of the Sixth Dalai Lama and his acquisition of patronage from the K'ang-hsi emperor to rule Tibet as a virtual "king" have been thoroughly studied by Petech and need not detain us.⁵³ We need only note that by 1714 his position in the country was somewhat precarious in the absence of total support from the traditional Tibetan nobility, and that he was, like the Bhutanese Sde-srid, virtually a self-made monarch. There were other likenesses.

The issues giving rise to the war were probably complex. Relations between the two countries had been strained for several years. When Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan departed on his mission to Ladakh in 1705 he had been

supplied transit permits (lam-yig) by Tibetan district officials, but on his return in 1711 no treaty of peace was in effect. And when, while en route, the Tibetan government learned that the Ladakhi prince Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu had been sent to Bhutan without its permission, an order was issued to detain Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan as hostage at Phag-ri.⁵⁴ But after eight months of imprisonment, during which time the two governments refused to make concessions and Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's health steadily deteriorated, an escape plot was hatched by an official of Paro. However, to prevent the outbreak of war, the Sa-skye treasurer mediated a treaty which was signed during the 3rd month of 1712, and Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was permitted to return.⁵⁵ It is unclear what concessions Bhutan had to make in this episode. The Ladakhi prince was allowed to remain in Bhutan, where he eventually rose to the post of Rje Mkhon-po VIII in 1737. On the other hand many of Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's ambassadorial gifts from Ladakh to the Bhutanese Sde-srid had been stolen during his imprisonment, and that, perhaps, was regarded as sufficient compensation.

But there were other issues in dispute during this period which may have had greater importance. Tibetan dissatisfaction with Lha-bzang Khan's rule, especially among the Rnying-ma-pa monks, had produced the usual reaction in such instances. Prophecies were discovered from Padmasambhava "predicting" the rise of a Mongol devil named Lha-bzang, who would cause untold harm to the religion. We must accept that peasant superstition, fortified by such prophecies, posed the threat of popular uprising. Significantly, the gter-ston most noted for discovering prophecies critical of Lha-bzang Khan's rule was Rong-pa gter-ston U-rgyan-bdud-'dul-gling-pa, alias Rdo-rje-gro-lod-rtsal, a temporary resident in Bhutan during the years 1700-ca. 1712. Later he was captured and imprisoned by the Tibetan ruler,⁵⁶ but it is not impossible that resentment against Bhutan carried over from the prophet's unhampered activities there. A similar situation

led 'Brug-rab-rgyas to execute gter-ston 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje (d. 1728?), a Khams-pa saint attached to Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan who had several times discovered prophecies alluding to the Sde-srid's evil deeds.⁵⁷

Tibetan sources, however, claim that the principal cause of war was competition for influence and territory near Rta-dbang, the enclave established more than thirty years earlier to check eastward Bhutanese expansion. There are no contemporary eastern Bhutanese sources to confirm or deny this, but the allegation is not unreasonable. The death of the Sixth Dalai Lama (1706), whose family had been prominent in the district, may have tempted the Bhutanese Sde-srid to reassert earlier territorial claims. There are also fragmentary accounts of warm relations between monastic heads of Mtsho-sna and important Bhutanese monks during these years. Thus, when Lha-bzang threatened 'Brug-rab-rgyas to observe the old treaty line, and the latter confidently rejected Tibetan interference,⁵⁸ war was perhaps inevitable. But it is hardly likely that Lha-bzang Khan was motivated by the pious concern for his subjects' welfare attributed to him by the Tibetan historian Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal.⁵⁹ A more honest assessment was penned by the old Bhutanese artisan Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, who wrote that⁶⁰

"...the local chieftains of Bhutan and Tibet gave way to their mountainous egos; low class and evil men raised ceaseless havoc with the weapons of misery, so that everyone, high and low alike, was driven helplessly from his home."

It is unnecessary to describe the events of this short but bloody war in great detail. The Tibetan forces entered Bhutan during the 8th month by three routes, Tashigang in the east, Bum-thang in the centre, and Paro in the west.⁶¹ Obviously, the alleged contest over Rta-dbang was only partly at issue here. The fortunes of the Bum-thang division, in which the future Tibetan leader Pho-lha-nas played a leading and brilliant role, have already been described by Petech.⁶² Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal's colourful

account leaves no doubt as to the amount of destruction and looting which accompanied its progress down the Bum-thang valley, successfully countering resistance and putting villages to the flames.⁶³ Passing through the ancient sites of Thang-ka-sbi and Zhabs-rjes-thang the army reached the fortress of Bya-dkar where the combined Bhutanese armies of Tongsa and Bya-dkar were ensconced. But in spite of artillery attack (me'i-'khrul-'khor) the defenders held their ground, and Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' fortifications at Bya-dkar built thirty years earlier now proved their worth.

Of the eastern division under Baring Taiji nothing is known. Lha-bzang Khan himself led the assault against Paro, which, though brief, was none the less productive of misery and death. Fighting raged as far south as Has Rdzong, and the zeal with which the monks took up arms and killed to defend their homeland and monasteries was depressing even to Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan.⁶⁴ Food became scarce and the normal offerings before the shrines of Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che could not be spared. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal took refuge at Lcags-ri,⁶⁵ while the Padma-gling-pa Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che was commissioned by the Sde-srid to perform bzlog rituals against the Tibetan attackers.⁶⁶ During the course of the war the Sde-srid convinced the unwilling Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan to serve as Paro Spyi-bla, no doubt as a measure to inspire his men with the faith of their religion. Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan accepted, but in fact spent the entire time meditating in the palace keep.⁶⁷

Almost as quickly as it had begun the war terminated. The Panchen Lama claims to have dispatched mediators to arrange a treaty,⁶⁸ but in fact Lha-bzang Khan's assault appears to have been effectively repulsed and a retreat was ordered. In so doing, his more successful divisions in eastern Bhutan were ordered to evacuate as well. The Bhutanese sources do not mention a treaty, merely the dispersal of the Tibetan armies.⁶⁹

Although Pho-lha-nas was well rewarded by Lha-bzang Khan for his heroic actions in eastern Bhutan, defeat clearly did not sit well with the Khan himself.⁷⁰ He is said to have subsequently taken punitive action against the Sikkimese who had been summoned, but had failed, to supply matériel and other assistance in the war effort against Bhutan.⁷¹ The excuse given for this neglect in the Sikkim chronicle seems rather lame, and more likely astute and self-interested motives were responsible.

The years following the unsuccessful Tibetan invasion were fairly peaceful. The country was much preoccupied with reconstruction after the earthquake and the war. The Sde-srid himself was perhaps thinking of eventual retirement and sponsored the building of a new hermitage at Tashichhodzong named Zab-don-lhun-rtse, providing it with a gilt dome. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal and Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan both officiated at its consecration and a vast distribution of gifts (mang-'gyed) to the monks and peasantry concluded the ceremonies.⁷²

At this time also a new incarnate pretender to the throne of hierarch appeared on the scene, although no obvious moves were made by family and supporters to betray their ultimate intentions. The boy was Mi-pham-dbang-po (1709-1738), born into the Bon-sbi lineage of Padma-gling-pa adherents near Tongsa and claiming lineal descent from king Khri-srong-lde-btsan of the ancient Tibetan monarchy. Their family background has been reviewed in an earlier chapter,⁷³ and the brother of the boy's grandfather was in fact the Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub. It was a sizable and influential lineage in the districts of Tongsa and westwards, but the sources unfortunately do not provide us with a thorough genealogy of the contemporary generations.

Known as Ngag-dbang-chos-rgyal from childhood, various parties during the years 1712-14 claimed him to be the rebirth of the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas.⁷⁴ Finally, in about 1715, the Rta-mgo

monks insisted that he be brought before Lha-lcam Kun-legs for confirmation. Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub initially resisted this suggestion, but eventually acquiesced.⁷⁵ At Rta-mgo, Lha-lcam Kun-legs and other aged disciples of Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas confirmed the preliminary recognition. A meeting with the Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas went off smoothly at Tashichhodzong,⁷⁶ the hierarch Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal bestowed a new name upon the boy,⁷⁷ and he was duly enrolled in the state 'Brug-pa monastery, where he resided for about nine years.

As the officially recognized rebirth of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, Mi-pham-dbang-po became styled the Second Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che of his particular lineage. By 1720, but probably somewhat earlier, his lineage of former rebirths was reconstructed to include Khri-srong-lde-bstan himself, in addition to such famed Rnying-ma-pa luminaries as Myang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124-92), Guru Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug (1212-70), and Mnga'-ris Rig-'dzin Padma-dbang-rgyal (1487-1542), all of whom had had at least limited ties with sacred sites in Lho-brag and eastern Bhutan.⁷⁸ The celestial founder of the lineage was regarded as the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, owing to the firmly-held Tibetan tradition which treated Khri-srong-lde-btsan as his embodiment. There were thus two lineages of Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che from this point in time, with pretensions to the hierarch's throne of Bhutan. Due care must be taken to keep them distinct. In both instances the original posthumously-recognized Bhutanese embodiments were royal princes (rgyal-sras) of the Rgya lineage of Rwa-lung.

In the late autumn of an unknown year, but probably 1719, Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas retired to his hermitage of Zab-don-lhun-rtse.⁷⁹ Increasingly during his later years in office his temper seems to have mellowed somewhat, and during the ten years of his retirement he devoted increasing attention to religious study and the compilation of his legal code. Nevertheless, it was one of his nephews Dge-bshes Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho, a widely respected monk, who was appointed as his successor.⁸⁰

Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho had entered the monkhood as a child, was a scholar of some repute, and by temperament was a far milder ruler than his controversial uncle. His brother Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las (1671-1746) was also a respected 'Brug-pa teacher who had spent several years proselytizing in Shar-phyogs. When Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho became Sde-srid, Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las was summoned back to the court and given appointments in western Bhutan, and eventually was nominated Rje Mkhan-po VII during the winter of 1729-30.⁸¹ Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho himself had been a teacher of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal from the time the latter was recognized as a Zhabs-drung sprul-sku at Wangdiphodrang, and was thus, as his uncle before him, a strong supporter of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's incarnate claim to the throne of hierarchy.⁸² In spite of his retirement, however, 'Brug-rab-rgyas retained a strong hand in political affairs, and the crisis he precipitated over the question of legitimate rulership ultimately brought his own ruin and that of his nephew as well.

The early years of Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho's rule were quiet and prosperous, and we must pass quickly to the events leading up to the civil war of 1729-35. In 1724 the Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub was near retirement, and permission was requested of the government to remove Mi-pham-dbang-po from the state monastery and appoint him rgyal-tshab at the Rnying-ma-pa monastery of Sgang-steng.⁸³ There was some question over the propriety of a 'Brug-pa Lama assuming the headship of a Rnying-ma-pa establishment, but historical precedents were cited to counter the objections and the Sde-srid acquiesced. It was while on his way to Sgang-steng that Mi-pham-dbang-po met the Rje Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub (r. 1724-1729/30) and received the initiatory name of Ngag-dbang-bstan-'dzin-mi-pham-dbang-po, by which he is best known. Shortly afterwards the installation took place in a colourful ceremony,⁸⁴ and for five years Mi-pham-dbang-po served as head of Sgang-steng and Phuntshogs-rab-brtan-gling monasteries.

Possibly connected with Mi-pham-dbang-po's removal from the state monastery was a movement to recognize his younger brother Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu (1717-1735) as Rgyal-sras III, the reemodiment of Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan and ultimately of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje.⁸⁵ Such recognition would have confirmed both 'Brug-pa Rgyal-sras lineages as occurring simultaneously in the one family. Clearly, a bid for political power was involved in these manoeuvrings. The main proponents of the claim were a paternal uncle named Dpal-'byor and another member of his family known only as Bla-ma dbon-sras, or dbon-sras Dam-pa Tshe-ring-dbang-chen.⁸⁶

Little is known of the early life of Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu as no biography has yet come to light. We know that he entered Sgang-steng monastery, and it is claimed that while still a small child he recited the name of Tilopa and stated that he was the son of Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.⁸⁷ Tshe-ring-dbang-chen had become Gzims-dpon to Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub in 1724, and it was he also who appealed to the Sde-srid to have Mi-pham-dbang-po removed to Sgang-steng. When Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub died in 1726 Tshe-ring-dbang-chen became an attendant of Mi-pham-dbang-po, and probably also of the younger brother.⁸⁸

The old Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas was apparently as yet unconcerned with Mi-pham-dbang-po's regal pretensions, no incarnation from his lineage having yet been installed as head of state. But he remained implacably hostile to Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's line of Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che into which Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu had now been born, and it was apparently from about 1724 or shortly thereafter that his antipathy became increasingly open. Having engineered the death of Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan in 1714, he was now determined to exterminate the reemodiment.⁸⁹

In 1725 another incarnate pretender to the hierarch's throne was born, 'Jigs-med-grags-pa (1725-1761).⁹⁰ The boy was born in Central Tibet,

probably at Grwa-nang.⁹¹ His place of birth and later events in his life suggest that his family may have been patrons of the Tibetan 'Brug-pa, a complicating element in the political events of this period which requires further study. His biography also has yet to become available, and consequently it is uncertain who performed his recognition, or when the information reached Bhutan. For the moment we know only that his claim to be a rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was being discussed before Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho was ejected from office in 1729, and that it became an issue during the civil war. To this event we must now turn our attention.

The Bhutanese civil war of 1729-35 was the bitter culmination of factional splintering and theological uncertainty over the constitutional question of the legitimate head of state. The mysterious demise of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, the fiction of his long retreat, and the temporary reversion to Rdo-rje-gdan-pa rule had served to maintain a degree of peace for many decades. But introduction of the principle of incarnate succession raised as many difficulties as it was intended to resolve. Had Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself originally advocated succession by immediate rebirth this uncertainty and strife might have been avoided. Throughout his life, he had fought to be recognized as the legitimate rebirth of Padma-dkar-po. At the same time, however, the Rgya lineage of Rwa-lung had always supported the principle of lineal descent. These attitudes, of course, were inconsistent, and ultimately the war of 1729-35 can be traced from this fact. The Bhutanese people might well have expected Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal to take rebirth once again, having struggled so long and created a new state to support his claim. Nevertheless, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal opted for succession by lineal descent, and the long concealment of his death was a desperate gamble to conform to his will. In retrospect it was a gamble which failed, a failure which left to men of lesser stature the

task of constitutional reconstruction. Inability to agree on how that should be done, and no small amount of baser motives, finally brought about a collapse of central authority.

For our purpose there is no need to pass judgment on the personalities responsible for the events of this time. It will be enough simply to follow the conflict as closely as possible, and to describe the manner in which stability was eventually restored. There is still considerable uncertainty over the precise sequence of events during these years, and the publication of additional source material will probably entail certain revisions. The monk historians' persistent reluctance to openly describe political contests, along with inadequate dating, are the chief obstacles to be overcome.

Open fighting broke out at Punakha during the winter of 1728 or very early in the following spring. Of course, there were karmic omens that trouble was imminent. The roof of Zab-don-lhun-rtse had blown off during a winter storm, which was interpreted as a bad sign for the old Sde-srid's faction.⁹² By the spring of 1729 many ministers loyal to the reigning hierarch Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal had been killed, presumably by the supporters and family of Rgyal-sras III Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu.⁹³

Owing to the outbreak of war it apparently became unsafe for the two brothers to remain at Sgang-steng. Since about January the Tibetan Black and Red Hat Karma-pa hierarchs had begun an extensive tour of eastern Bhutan, and their presence in the country provided Mi-pham-dbang-po with a motive to leave Sgang-steng for more tranquil districts in Shar-phyogs. Slipping away in secrecy with only a few companions, he travelled quickly eastwards to intercept the two hierarchs at Thang-ka-sbi.⁹⁴

It is unclear what prompted the Tibetan Karma-pa Lamas to visit Bhutan at this very period. Possibly it was coincidental, and certainly they were warmly greeted at every temple and village through which they passed.

But from the 5th month of 1729 we know that they were in almost constant communication by courier with the Tibetan ruler Pho-lha-nas, and the fact of Tibetan intervention in the war the following year leads one to suspect that their mission was at least partially political.⁹⁵ In any case, Mi-pham-dbang-po met the Lamas at Thang-ka-sbi, and it was from them that he received the initiatory name of Rin-chen-'phrin-las-rab-rgyas, the only style by which he is known in Tibetan and Chinese documents, but not otherwise used in Bhutanese texts.⁹⁶

While Mi-pham-dbang-po was safely away from the scene of conflict the forces opposed to the old Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas began to gain the upper hand. Faced with impending defeat 'Brug-rab-rgyas made the desperate move of appealing to the Tibetan government to intervene on his behalf. If Pho-lha-nas' biographer Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal can be believed, Pho-lha-nas treated this ironic request, from the man who had defeated Lha-bzang Khan fifteen years earlier, with thorough skepticism. His reply was non-committal,⁹⁷ but the appeal at least alerted him to the serious events transpiring in Bhutan at this time, and we may assume that his anxious communications with the Karma-pa Lamas throughout the year were for the purpose of collecting information.

In any case the fighting and killing intensified. 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, Bhutan's elder statesman, tried twice to mediate the dispute but without success.⁹⁸ 'Brug-rab-rgyas was still ensconced at Zab-don-lhun-rtse outside Tashichhodzong, but by the time Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal reached there for the summer residence fighting had broken out there also. It was impossible to remain, and the old Sde-srid, with Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal in his entourage, fled in secrecy towards the Indian border. But they reached only as far as Has Rdzong, southwest of Paro, before being captured and taken back to the Paro fortress. There Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was confined with his attendants in the keep, and observed

helplessly from the window as 'Brug-rab-rgyas and two of his nephews were thrown into the river to drown.⁹⁹

'Brug-rab-rgyas' protégé was now without powerful support among the patron families, and those who had previously doubted his incarnate claim in silence began to do so openly. Attempts upon Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's life thereafter became frequent. When Mi-pham-dbang-po returned from eastern Bhutan at about this same time there were threats to his life as well.¹⁰⁰ But following the death of the old Sde-srid a measure of peace was restored, and about the middle of 1729 the Bon-sbis people installed their two scions as heads of state in a joint coronation ceremony at Punakha.

This was a unique and somewhat puzzling coronation. The biographies describe the two brother incarnations (mchog gi sprul sku rin po che rnam pa gnyis) as being jointly installed as the spiritual successors of Nāropa (Nā ro ta pa'i rgyal tshab),¹⁰¹ which implies that they were both to serve as Rgyal-tshab. And, in fact, Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho is said to have personally supervised the event and confirmed them in their office.¹⁰² Other texts, however, describe their heirarchical arrangement as being one of mchod-yon, Lama and Patron, the younger brother functioning as head of state (Rgyal-tshab) and the elder, Mi-pham-dbang-po, as Sde-srid.¹⁰³ It is this arrangement which is given in the Lho'i chos 'byung, which also relates that Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho, the old Sde-srid's nephew, was himself killed during the war.¹⁰⁴ Another text states only that he was imprisoned following the murder of his uncle.¹⁰⁵ We may perhaps reconcile the contradictions by suggesting that Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho was coerced into formalizing the coronation by his presence, and was later imprisoned and executed.

Whatever the precise relationship between the two young rulers at the time of their installation, Mi-pham-dbang-po in fact functioned as Sde-srid

while the younger brother, a sickly boy scarcely ever seen in public, served as Rgyal-tshab. In the sources Mi-pham-dbang-po is customarily designated Rgyal-sras Khri Rin-po-che or Rgyal-sras Gong-ma Mchog-sprul Rin-po-che, and his brother simply as Rgyal-sras Mchog-sprul Rin-po-che. As brothers they also shared the fraternal epithets Bla-ma Sku-mched, Rje Sku-mched, and Rgyal-sras Sku-mched, the last of which was also used by Manchu officials in Tibet.¹⁰⁶

With the first onslaught of violence temporarily over, the new rulers and their supporters moved quickly to restore peace. It was necessary to take the deposed head of state, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, under government protection, to prevent his residence at Paro from becoming the nucleus of further rebellion. Mi-pham-dbang-po and the Rje Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub consulted on the matter and ordered Lama Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar, who had been Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's Rim-gro-pa since 1714, to proceed to Paro, attend upon his guru, and await further orders.¹⁰⁷ At the same time other leading ecclesiastic figures were brought into the new government's service and 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was designated principal tutor of the incarnate brothers.¹⁰⁸ Immediately the old statesman complied and came to court, where he bestowed dge-bsnyen and dge-tshul vows upon the younger brother, Rgyal-tshab Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu.¹⁰⁹ The fact that the boy received preliminary ordination only after his installation as head of state seems a clear indication of the precipitous onset of the revolution, and supports the conclusion that a rash move by 'Brug-rab-rgyas had forced the Bon-sbi lineage to make their bid for power ahead of plan.

Later in the year Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was summoned back to Punakha in disgrace. There was no alternative to compliance, and his small party, consisting of Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar and a few others, left Paro for the capital, fearful of the unknown fate which lay before them. At 'Phrin-las-sgang, one stage west of Tashichhodzong, Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar urged his

mentor to reconsider the omens proving him to be the rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal.¹¹⁰ Might he not instead be the rebirth of the Third Rje Mkhan-po Pad-dkar-lhun-grub, as some had suggested? If so, to admit it publicly would instantly free him from his difficulties. No longer a contender for the ruling throne, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal might then retire in safety. But Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was convinced of his status as a true incarnation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and refused to allow the possibility of error. The return to Punakha was therefore unpleasant. The two hierarchs, Mi-pham-dbang-po in particular, treated Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal with respect and kindness. But Mi-pham-dbang-po's domineering ministers were in practical control of government, and Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was forced to remain isolated in filthy quarters within the palace.¹¹¹ For more than two years thereafter Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal moved with the court between Punakha and Tashichhodzong under Mi-pham-dbang-po's personal protection, but as a virtual prisoner of state.

During the winter months of 1729, the seeds of a new revolution were maturing in the Paro area. The Dkar-sbis (Ka-spe) Lama 'Brug-don-grub, or Don-grub-rgyal-po, was the dominant figure in this uprising. For reasons which are not readily obvious, he had been a strong opponent of the Bon-sbi faction and the two Rgyal-sras incarnations. His group represented a third force in the struggles of this time, partisan neither to the new rulers nor to the old Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas. Although eventually Don-grub-rgyal-po became a sponsor of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, this does not seem to have been his initial position. Whatever the precise motives, his revolt became open during the winter, and as Dkar-sbis people had long been prominent in the Paro area, when their insurrection began to fail Don-grub-rgyal-po seized power in Paro Rdzong. Practically speaking, this amounted to effective secession from the state, and for about four years control of the Paro district was lost to the Punakha government.

In order to consolidate his insecure position at Paro, Don-grub-rgyal-po appealed to the Tibetan ruler Pho-lha-nas for assistance against Mi-pham-dbang-po.¹¹² According to his biographer, Pho-lha-nas distrusted Don-grub-rgyal-po's motives and declined immediate support. Pho-lha-nas' frontier lieutenants, however, allegedly unaware of the Tibetan government's decision not to interfere in the war, viewed the prevailing anarchy as a perfect opportunity to reduce Bhutan to Tibetan control, and unilaterally dispatched troops to support the Dkar-sbis faction. But when Bhutanese government troops began to gain the upper hand, the Tibetan mercenaries cornered at Paro and 'Brug-rgyal-rdzong themselves appealed to Pho-lha-nas for help. This he could not refuse, and early in 1730 Pho-lha-nas reluctantly mounted a new Tibetan campaign against Bhutan.¹¹³

There is ample reason to distrust the details of this justification for Tibetan intervention, the official version in Tibetan and Chinese sources. There had been renewed border frictions between the two countries since 1725,¹¹⁴ and we know that Pho-lha-nas was in communication with the Karma-pa Lamas from mid-1729. There is every reason to suspect that the Tibetan government's long-cherished design to gain a tighter hold on Bhutan was shared by Pho-lha-nas also. Tibetan armies had never fared well against united Bhutanese resistance; divided, the country would be more easily dominated. Before invasion, however, information on the factional issue was required, to insure that the interests of the ultimate victors and those of Tibet would coincide. By this line of reasoning, however, support for the Dkar-sbis people appears anomalous, and may well have been the work of Tibetan soldiery anticipating Pho-lha-nas' orders. But we shall see that the Tibetan intervention very quickly dropped its pro-Dkar-sbis posture and assumed a more neutral character.

The troops assembled by Pho-lha-nas were mainly Tibetan, but also included a small body of Mongol soldiers. The three generals (mda'-dpon)

of Central Tibet along with 'Brong-dkar-rtse-pa Bstan-'dzin Noyan were placed in command. The Karma-pa historians confirm that the generals included Ram-pa-ba Dayan Taiji and Lcang-lo-can-pa.¹¹⁵ In addition, the Tibetan cabinet minister Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Pho-lha-nas' biographer, was stationed at Gyantse with a Chinese official named Ga-lo-ye to prepare for eventual treaty negotiations.¹¹⁶ Clearly, this was not a minor military expedition.

By the time the major Tibetan force entered Bhutan in the summer months of 1730, the fighting at Paro had already spread as far east as Tashichhodzong. Consequently the heads of state and the monks could not occupy the traditional summer capital and were forced to return to Punakha.¹¹⁷ Immediately, however, Tibetan troops appeared there also and temporary government headquarters had to be established down the valley at Wangdiphodrang. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, still under Mi-pham-dbang-po's protection, also took refuge at Wangdiphodrang, and for the balance of the summer customary monastic activities were conducted under great strain.¹¹⁸ The young Shākya-rin-chen at this time was summoned into the entourage of Rgyal-tshab Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu and later in the year received from him the initiatory name by which he is commonly known,¹¹⁹ but normal religious events were practically at a standstill.

Of the fighting at Paro we have little direct information. According to Shākya-rin-chen destruction at Thimphu was extensive. Stūpas were destroyed and the main temple itself badly damaged. Defeated monks and pious villagers were conscripted by the enemy to perform manual labour, while the work animals themselves were slaughtered in the ongoing struggle; "it was as if the hot breath of the Mongols touched everywhere."¹²⁰

Fighting raged for several months. Late in the summer Mi-pham-dbang-po left Wangdiphodrang for government headquarters at Tashichhodzong, but was once more turned back.¹²¹ Paro was now completely in the hands of Don-

grub-rgyal-po¹²² and we must conclude that government authority had here reached its lowest ebb. The only alternatives were defeat or compromise, and Pho-lha-nas or his delegated officers, now well-informed of the progress of events, ordered the Tibetan troops to hold their positions so that negotiations could proceed. It was probably at this time that Tsher-ring-dbang-rgyal dispatched the officials Spol-gong Darqan and Sman-thang-pa from Gyantse to the two enemy camps.¹²³

The Karma-pa hierarchs, meanwhile, had left Shar-phyogs for Tibet during the 6th month, virtually at the time of the main Tibetan invasion. But far from appealing to Pho-lha-nas to stop the war, as his biographer maintains, it seems that the men were themselves following strict instructions, and were soon ordered to return south for the negotiations. This they did, reaching Phag-ri at the beginning of the 8th month of 1730.¹²⁴ Their temporary passage through Tibet was apparently arranged to brief them on their negotiating assignment, and to guarantee their safety during the fighting itself.

Of the complex negotiations which took place next we have only the Karma-pa history to guide us. Unfortunately, it tells only of the meetings themselves and nothing of the issues. Letters from Pho-lha-nas to the Karma-pa Lamas were now frequent as they passed with Tibetan and Bhutanese escorts through 'Brug-rgyal-rdzong and on to Paro. There they held meetings with the Tibetan generals, Dkar-sbis 'Brug-don-grub, the Bhutanese secretary Bstan-'dzin-smon-lam, and general Blo-bzang, who was probably a Bhutanese commander. These meetings went on for about two months, and Sikkimese ministers also paid their respects on the two Karma-pa hierarchs during this period.¹²⁵

Finally, on the 25th day of the 9th month there was a preliminary evacuation of Tibetan troops. A last dispatch from Pho-lha-nas arrived on the 10th day of the 10th month, and four days later a treaty was signed

at Stag-gong-rgyal, a small fort on the summit of the 'Bras-la pass between Thimphu and Paro. This was witnessed and sealed by all participants and immediate orders were issued for the dispersal of troops.¹²⁶

Although precise terms of the treaty are not revealed, much can be construed from the events immediately following. Firstly, the Karma-pa hierarchs remained in Bhutan for a further five months, ostensibly for religious purposes but in fact probably to oversee the restoration of order and compliance with the treaty provisions. Mi-pham-dbang-po and his younger brother remained at the head of government, but their Gzims-dpon (or uncle, in Tibetan documents) Tshe-ring-dbang-chen was dispatched to Tibet.¹²⁷ According to Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal he was taken to Lhasa as a hostage (mi-gtar), along with a party of Lamas from Sgang-steng and a delegation from the Dkar-sbis, including Don-grub-rgyal-po. There they were further interrogated on the causes of the dispute, and one or several memorials were drafted by Pho-lha-nas and the Manchu Amban for submission to the emperor, on behalf of Mi-pham-dbang-po and Dkar-sbis Don-grub-rgyal-po.¹²⁸

The texts of these memorials are not available, but Yung-cheng's edict in response of 19 March, 1731, reveals clearly that the two parties had agreed to accept His Majesty's imperial reforms as proclaimed by Pho-lha-nas, to obey imperial orders, maintain the peace, observe respective territorial boundaries, and faithfully adhere to Buddhist law. Both Rgyal-sras Rin-chen-'phrin-las-rab-rgyas (i.e. Mi-pham-dbang-po) and Dkar-sbis Don-grub Lama were rewarded in anticipation of their obedience, the latter in particular since he had agreed to resubmit to central Bhutanese authority.¹²⁹ For his brilliant service in establishing this peace, the emperor further ordered that Pho-lha-nas be promoted to the rank of Beile.¹³⁰ The Bhutanese submissions were treated by Chinese officials as a formal

offering of tribute and subject status,¹³¹ an interpretation held by the Panchen Lama as well.¹³²

But were the Bhutanese themselves seriously prepared to accept Chinese suzerainty at this time, and had Pho-lha-nas' intervention substantially contributed to an enduring constitutional settlement? Apparently not, for while the memorials were being drafted in Lhasa a curious ceremony took place at Punakha during the 11th month of 1730. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, still under Mi-pham-dbang-po's personal protection, was summoned at the latter's behest and reinstalled on the throne of hierarch.¹³³ For the remaining four months of the Karma-pa Lamas' presence in Bhutan Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal continued in this status, receiving much deferential treatment from the Sde-srid and presiding at several monastic assemblages. He led certain rites during the 11th month,¹³⁴ was a prominent officiant at the colourful New Year festivities,¹³⁵ was sought out by Mi-pham-dbang-po for counsel and initiations,¹³⁶ and was commissioned to head the summer monastic session at Tashichhodzong in 1731.¹³⁷

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's reinstatement had been one of the terms agreed to in the treaty of peace. But to what end? He had no powerful lay support at the time, as far as the sources reveal. The Tibetan cabinet minister Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal's account of this war had from the outset traced its origins to a contest between rival incarnations of Nāropa (i.e. of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal), and nowhere reveals an awareness of the theoretical claims of the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che lineages.¹³⁸ In order to accept the Tibetan version we would have to conclude that one of the Bhutanese factions was supporting the candidacy of 'Jigs-med-grags-pa, but there is no evidence that this boy's status was an important issue in the war. Moreover, the fact is that the reigning Bhutanese Rgyal-tshab Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu is never mentioned in Tibetan or Chinese documents. Thus, the existence of three, possibly

four, incarnate Lamas with legitimate claims to rulership was simply not understood, and Pho-lha-nas, relying on misinformation, had reimposed on the country a ruler whom no-one wanted. This ironic conclusion seems incapable. The grand peace which had earned him praise and promotion from China was an illusion, and within months a new Tibetan invasion of the south became necessary.

The departure of the Karma-pa hierarchs from Bhutan towards the end of the 3rd month of 1731 left Bhutan in an uneasy state. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal continued to occupy his former throne, apparently in conjunction with the young Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu. This would not be the last time that two incarnate hierarchs served as Rgyal-tshab simultaneously. The old statesman 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was summoned to court to officiate for the bhikṣu ordination of Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu and Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal assisted as las-kyi-slob-dpon.¹³⁹ The incarnate hierarchs themselves, at least, remained on friendly terms, in spite of the mounting political pressures to keep them apart.¹⁴⁰ Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal took advantage of his few months of resurrected prominence to compose biographies of his guru Ye-shes-dngos-grub and of Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan.¹⁴¹

Very quickly, however, the political situation deteriorated beyond Mi-pham-dbang-po's control. Not surprisingly, the interminable "pointless affairs of state" inspired in him a wish to retire.¹⁴² This was impossible, however, or at least the ministers who dominated his movements refused to allow it. In any case, by late winter the false peace had disintegrated and the country once more divided into warring camps.¹⁴³ As usual, accounts of the fighting are vague. Sometime during the spring months of 1732 a large body of Tibetan troops reappeared. The Dkar-sbis faction, which had not complied with its promised surrender, is said to have summoned the Tibetans this time also, and Paro remained outside government control. In fact the entire Dgon district north of Punakha went over to the Dkar-sbis

side in this struggle, and uncooperative monks were allegedly forced to perform manual labour and pay taxes.¹⁴⁴ Once again, the government was unable to proceed to Tashichhodzong and had to set up temporary quarters at Wangdiphodrang, the monks taking refuge in the hill retreat of G.yung-drung-skyid where Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan had been murdered eighteen years earlier.¹⁴⁵

The Tibetan historian Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal reduces his country's involvement on this second occasion to a question of "mediation" (dbyen-zlums) between Dkar-sbis and the Punakha government, a far from honest assessment.¹⁴⁶ It was not until the 5th month of 1732 that Punakha could be safely reoccupied, and a month or two beyond that before the Tibetan troops finally retreated, "unable to accomplish anything further."¹⁴⁷ The expedition is probably to be identified with an unsuccessful mediation attempt vaguely recorded in unofficial Chinese sources.¹⁴⁸ But in fact Mi-pham-dbang-po's position in the country seems to have become considerably weakened in consequence. Whether this was due simply to military setbacks or declining political support is not made clear, but his reverses made Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's own situation increasingly dangerous. There were threats on his life, perhaps by Bon-sbi supporters accurately perceiving that his continued survival under Mi-pham-dbang-po's protection was a major cause of their difficulty.¹⁴⁹

The government had meanwhile returned to Tashichhodzong late in the summer, and it was at this time that Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, under extreme pressure, took a desperate step. Mi-pham-dbang-po's party had just left there for Wangdiphodrang, before proceeding on to the winter capital. But instead of following the entourage, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal decided to flee the court for safe refuge elsewhere. It was at moonset on the night of the 9th day of the 11th month when he and his attendant Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar let down a long rope from an upper level of the Rdzong. This they descended

quickly and headed off northward into the night.¹⁵⁰ His first instinct was to seek asylum at the old hermitage of Lcags-ri, but his small party was quickly intercepted by troops loyal to the Dkar-sbis faction, and they were taken instead to Paro by a circuituous northerly route via Mgar-sa. At Paro Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was warmly greeted by Dkar-sbis Don-grub-rgyal-po, as well as by an official of Pho-lha-nas.¹⁵¹ And it was there, finally, that Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal spent the remainder of his life, devoted principally to literary activities and meditation.

Thus, by the winter of 1732, the political situation was practically the same as it had been in mid-1729. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was once more in refuge at Paro, this time under the protection of Dkar-sbis Don-grub-rgyal-po. Mi-pham-dbang-po and his brother continued to reign under ministerial domination at Punakha and Tashichhodzong. The Paro valley remained independent of central authority. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal is said to have corresponded frequently with Pho-lha-nas during these months, receiving in return a set of the Buddhist canon, almost certainly a print of the Snar-thang Bka'-'gyur prepared under Pho-lha-nas' own patronage and completed in mid-1733.¹⁵² Mi-pham-dbang-po was displeased at the turn of events which had led Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal into the hands of his political rival, and made overtures for his return.¹⁵³ But his ministers overruled him and Don-grub-rgyal-po, naturally, was unlikely to set free the one bargaining piece he now possessed. If, as seems likely, Don-grub-rgyal-po's ultimate goal was to become Sde-srid himself, control of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's movements would be important. But for many months nothing occurred to upset the political stalemate which had here developed. Western Bhutan was split in two.

At this point Pho-lha-nas intervened one final time in the turgid politics of Bhutan. In the 10th Chinese month of 1733 (7 Nov. - 5 Dec.) a political mission was dispatched to the south, probably as a joint enter-

prise by the Ambans and Pho-lha-nas. The responsible officers were the Tibetan cabinet minister Bka'-blon 'Brong-rtse (Ka-pu-lun Chung-tzu) and Major Ho-shang of the Vanguard Battalion of the Shensi Provincial Governor's Brigade, a Manchu officer stationed in Tibet.¹⁵⁴ Their visit took them to Wangdiphodrang, where mediation between representatives of the contending parties took place.¹⁵⁵ A sealed agreement of peace is said to have been obtained, and emissaries from the two sides were taken back to Lhasa, which they reached during the 1st month of the year chia-yin (4 Feb. - 4 Mar., 1734). From there the emissaries were escorted to Peking to submit tribute to the imperial presence.

This mission is thoroughly glossed over in Central Tibetan documents of the period, and its highly delicate nature probably explains the silence of Bhutanese sources as well. Nevertheless, it seems to have been genuine enough, for the Seventh Dalai Lama met the two emissaries and their escort at Mgar-thar in eastern Tibet about the middle of July, briefly describing the purpose of their journey.¹⁵⁶ Sometime later an audience with emperor Yung-cheng took place, and although the event is not specifically mentioned in the Shih-lu, we are told elsewhere that the men were given imperial gifts and seals (yin) and escorted back to Lhasa, arriving there during the 5th month of Yung-cheng's 13th year (21 June - 19 July, 1735).¹⁵⁷

Of the Dkar-sbis representative we have no subsequent information, but the return of Mi-pham-dbang-po's emissary during the 1735 summer session at Tashichhodzong was regarded as an event of great importance. The man's name, we now learn, was Dge-slong Bar-gcung-pa, a devoted servant of the 'Brug-pa faith, who had steeled his courage for the difficult journey and now brought back from the emperor an imperial patent (gser-yig) and a seal of office (gser-tham), along with other gifts. "His arrival," writes Shākya-rin-chen, "was the fulfilment of our hopes."¹⁵⁸ This information allows us to identify the two undated memorials reproduced in

the Hsi-tsang-chih and the Wei-tsang t'ung-chih with the mission just completed, as Mi-pham-dbang-po's special envoy is therein identified as one Ke-lung-pa-erh-ch'ung.¹⁵⁹ This can only a transcription of Dge-slong Bar-gcung-pa.

Much had changed in Bhutan since the departure of the mission eighteen months earlier, in many respects obviating any further need to solicit imperial favour. Before discussing this, however, let us see what it was the Bhutanese had requested. The memorials, as Petech has observed, were "very submissive",¹⁶⁰ and we must allow for the fact that the Tibetan originals were "translated" into Chinese in Tibet by imperial officials before transmission to Peking. Mi-pham-dbang-po wrote as follows:¹⁶¹

"To the all-knowing and great lord of the western lands of the Manchu empire, who sustains all living creatures under heaven:

This humble person is the 'Brug-pa Lama Rgyal-sras 'Brug Sku-mched, Noyan Rin-chen-'phrin-las-rab-rgyas. With burning incense, I gaze before your majesty, clasp my hands and perform the head-knocking [kowitz]. Reverently do I memorialize to inquire of your majesty's health, and humbly entreat your benevolent action.

We are simple people of the western frontier, and do not understand as between good and bad. We have behaved recklessly, hating and killing. The Tibetan Beile sent a document proclaiming your majesty's benevolent reforms. We were overwhelmed to receive such joy, and so dispatched officials to his lordship the Beile, requesting permission to submit to your imperial will. In replying [in 1731], your majesty bestowed on us his heavenly benevolence, beyond a lifetime of measure. How even from this distance does your golden brilliance fill the entire world! We could not hope to truly reply your majesty's great benevolence in a myriad generations. We can only gratefully and humbly thank your majesty's favour.

But the people of Bhutan are stupid as wild beasts. We are ignorant of the Buddha's teachings, and consequently we have repeatedly stirred up strife against the Dkar-sbis. His reverence the Amban has memorialized on our behalf that special emissaries, the Bka'-blon and assistants, were to mediate between us. His lordship the Beile of Tibet personally came to Tse-wang [Wangdiphodrang], where he proclaimed your majesty's august reforms. Clearly he discriminated between what would be of profit and injury.

While under his peaceful rule, he has looked out for us, managed affairs and constantly sent dispatches, instructing and commanding. Each and every one of us is humbly grateful to him, and we shall be happy and reconciled hereafter. We are dutifully grateful to receive your majesty's benevolent peace.

Your respectful petitioner, a Bhutanese man practically ignorant of proper legal ways, therefore requests your majesty to reward us with the grant of a seal to facilitate our governance, and so that our simple men may duly fear your majesty's august lordship and each maintain proper law; so that the generations of our sons and grandsons, who will all enjoy the eternal peace which your majesty has reestablished as an act of benevolence, may be every mindful of your majesty and of no other; and that you may ever be watchful and giving of your heavenly teaching and admonishments, bestowed at their humble requests."

There followed the emissary's name and an extensive list of presents, the memorial being dated merely "on an auspicious day of the month." The second memorial, written on behalf of Dkar-sbis Don-grub (Ka-pi Tung-lu-pu La-ma) and conveyed by his personal emissary Shang-na-k'e-no-erh-pu¹⁶² (Sangs-rgyas-nor-bu?), is very similar in style and content. It extolls the emperor's benevolence and Pho-lha-nas' greatness as a leader. It recites the list of Dkar-sbis offences, begs imperial pardon, and promises to abide by the terms of the peace. Dkar-sbis Don-grub concludes with the request for a seal of office, the better to govern the people of his five villages (wu ch'eng).

These documents everywhere betray the hand and bureaucratic outlook of Chinese officialdom, and we need not accept that they accurately reflect the style and wording of the originals. There is a further oddity, the statement that Pho-lha-nas (the Beile) himself personally travelled to Bhutan (presumably as a member of the winter mission of 1733-34), in spite of the covering narrative of the Wei-tsang t'ung chih which mentions only Bka'-blon 'Brong-rtse. Nevertheless, for reasons mentioned elsewhere by Petech,¹⁶³ detailed information on events in Central Tibet for the two years beginning in early autumn of 1733 is not readily available. And in the

absence of contrary information, we must conclude that a Tibetan treaty mission did take place, and that the substance of the two memorials, at least, reflects the peace terms then accepted.¹⁶⁴

The memorials reveal both Mi-pham-dbang-po and Dkar-sbis Don-grub requesting seals of office, but each on his own behalf. Dkar-sbis Don-grub ruled five villages, whereas the extent of Mi-pham-dbang-po's domain is unmentioned. The significance of these documents and the mission to China, though a bit startling, is inescapable. Since the late 17th century, at least, the ostensible object of Tibetan border policy vis-à-vis Bhutan had been to create an established frontier and peaceful relations, with Tibet in a position of political superiority. Neither war nor negotiation had achieved permanent beneficial results. But Chinese involvement in the Tibetan civil war of 1727-28 had demonstrated unmistakably the power of a determined Manchu emperor to influence, and to a large extent control, political events in Tibet.¹⁶⁵ Pho-lha-nas' own rise to power had resulted partly from Chinese support. Might not the threat of Chinese involvement be the key to resolving Tibet's troubles with Bhutan?

Pho-lha-nas' action in 1730 demonstrates that this was his thinking. But misinformation had resulted in the imposition of "benevolent reforms" with little chance of success, and the consequence of the second invasion was a further deepening of the country's division. Short of a third war, the obvious move was therefore to formalize the status quo by negotiating a treaty of mutual non-aggression between the contending camps. To China Bhutan was of no importance, except as its politics might destabilize affairs in Tibet. In imperial edicts of the period the Bhutanese are characterized as "tribals" (lo-jen), an opinion probably shared by most Tibetans. But the presence of a Manchu military officer at the negotiations was certain to have a sobering influence on the Bhutanese, and the decision was apparently reached that, at least for the time being, the territories

controlled by Dkar-sbis Don-grub-rgyal-po should retain their independence from Punakha, with Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal serving as a kind of titular head of the Dkar-sbis "state". To solemnize the arrangement emissaries from the two camps were to be conducted to Peking, there to pay formal tribute and request the grant of individual seals of office.

This they did, and that seals were in fact granted is supported by both unofficial Chinese sources and Shākya-rin-chen's testimony. How long such a solution could have endured, or how seriously it was actually viewed by the contracting parties, is impossible to say. But the question quickly became academic, for within months of the mission's departure for Peking both Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal and Dkar-sbis 'Brug-don-grub had died. As soon as these events became known in Tibet Pho-lha-nas immediately ordered that the former Dkar-sbis possessions, principally Paro Rdzong itself, be returned to central Bhutanese jurisdiction.¹⁶⁶ The order was obeyed and by autumn of 1735 the 'Brug-pa patrons of Paro resubmitted to Mi-pham-dbang-po.¹⁶⁷

As the precise sequence of these events is somewhat in doubt we must pause briefly to note the various evidence. According to Shākya-rin-chen, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal died at "about age 29", on the 21st day, 4th month, of an unstated year.¹⁶⁸ His death is said to have resulted from grief and an excessively meagre diet.¹⁶⁹ Accepting a birth date of 1708, this would put the death in 1736, but the context of events suggests 1734 instead. Firstly, just prior to dying, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal allegedly assented to take rebirth in the family (tsha-brgyud) of 'Brug-don-grub, the Dkar-sbis ruler (srid-gyi-dbang-sgyur-ba). But "owing to the warfare which was still in progress" Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar and 'Brug-don-grub conspired to keep the death secret "for over a year".¹⁷⁰ Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's corpse was dressed in his robes and kept secluded, as if in close retreat. His eventual cremation was also performed secretly, according to the same

authorities, so that there is good reason to suspect the vague information given as to the precise year. Continuing on, we are told that the Mi-rje Dpon-slob-pa ('Brug-don-grub) also died shortly thereafter, at which point the Tibetan Mi-rje Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyas "turned his districts over to the [Punakha] government" (de phyogs gzhung du rtsis sprod).¹⁷¹

Chinese sources also state that by the time the mission returned from Peking Dkar-sbis Don-grub had died, whereupon his subjects returned to the rule of Noyan Rin-chen (Mi-pham-dbang-po).¹⁷²

Shākya-rin-chen's biographies of Mi-pham-dbang-po support two possible dates for the return of Paro to central authority. In the longer version, under events datable to mid-1734, he records that "the Ka-pe patrons again came to pledge their allegiance, this practice having fallen into abeyance for the duration of the strife among the ministers; but as [Mi-pham-dbang-po] was the protector of all Bhutan in general, and in particular that of the Ka-pe militia, they confessed their sins with much shame and touched his lotus feet to their heads."¹⁷³ The same text recites the return of Bar-gcung-pa from China in the following year, "and not long after this event [Mi-pham-dbang-po's] patrons in the Spa-gro region came once more under his authority."¹⁷⁴ The shorter version of the biography states virtually the same thing.¹⁷⁵ The contradiction may be only superficial. The Dkar-sbis patrons probably resubmitted in 1734 (following Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's concealed death?), with full control over Paro being obtained only a year later.

Thus, by rights, the political situation at the close of 1735 should have been relatively straightforward. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, the disputed rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, was dead. Mi-pham-dbang-po's younger brother Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu, technically the head of state through all these events, himself died in the year of Dge-slong Bar-gcung-pa's return from China.¹⁷⁶ The most serious phase of the civil war, the

secession of Paro and the western districts, had been forcibly concluded following the death of Dkar-sbis Don-grub-rgyal-po. Mi-pham-dbang-po, as sole surviving exalted rebirth (mchog-sprul) within the country, should have been in a strong position to enforce his claim to office.

But in fact the political strife did not cease at this time. Rather it worsened through the autumn and winter of 1735, and was exacerbated by a severe outbreak of smallpox and a fire which destroyed the government hermitage of Lcags-ri.¹⁷⁷ Since the reasons for such continued turmoil are not expressly given in contemporary sources, some possibilities need to be suggested. Firstly, the death of Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu had left Bhutan without a reigning head of state. A decision by Mi-pham-dbang-po to have himself installed in the position would have been logical in the circumstances. He was already Sde-srid, the first incarnate Lama in Bhutan's history to hold the office,¹⁷⁸ and his previous embodiment Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had successfully combined the offices of Sde-srid and Rgyal-tshab. But it is clear from subsequent events that powerful factions among both monks and laity were opposed to any such move in 1735. What were the reasons?

Lineage and district rivalry may be a partial explanation. The Bon-sbi were traditionally Rnying-ma-pa adherents, their family ties being strongest in villages eastward of Wangdiphodrang. The traditional elite of western Bhutan, on the other hand, had been families claiming Wang extraction, descent from Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-zhig-po, or both. We know also that there was still strong resistance to Mi-pham-dbang-po's supremacy among the Dkar-sbis people, even after their official reunification with the central government. The Chinese sources relate that at the time of this event, presumably in 1735, some one hundred families refused to submit to his rule and were resettled with new breeding cattle in the Wangdiphodrang district.¹⁷⁹ Evidently, the physical uprooting of Dkar-sbis families from

their traditional valleys was resorted to as a measure to weaken district factionalism.

The most important source of discontent, nevertheless, must have been a heightened fear of Tibetan interference in Bhutanese affairs. We do not know whether Mi-pham-dbang-po ever used the seal of office granted him by the Chinese emperor. But the renewed possibility of Tibetan domination, supported now by the presence of a substantial imperial garrison near Lhasa, cannot have been favourably regarded in Bhutan. Uncertain of Chinese intentions, the potential threat was no doubt magnified to unrealistic extremes. Pho-lha-nas' shrewd exploitation of this new force in Himalayan politics was beginning to produce results favourable to Tibet, but highly unfavourable to Mi-pham-dbang-po, his apparent submissive pawn.

Pho-lha-nas had acquired yet another hold over Bhutan by this time, one potentially as sinister as the uncertain threat from China. 'Jigs-med-grags-pa, as we have mentioned, was a Tibetan boy recognized sometime earlier as a rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The available sources do not reveal when or just how this initial recognition had been performed, but by 1735 it was apparently well known and at least tentatively accepted in Bhutan. The death of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal had left Bhutan without an incarnation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and whatever the spiritual merits of successive Rgyal-sras incarnations, it was inevitable that reemodiments of the country's founder would claim a more exalted status and greater popular following. Hence, the rumoured existence of a rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in Tibet, and the Bhutanese wish to have the child brought to Bhutan, was bound to give Pho-lha-nas an advantage in political negotiations during this period.

Meanwhile, the rebirth of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal had also appeared, in accord with his dying promise, into a family closely related to the Dkar-sbis ruler 'Brug-don-grub. There is reason to doubt the date 1736 given

for his birth in some recent publications.¹⁸⁰ In the biography of Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar, written by the rebirth Shākya-bstan-'dzin himself, it is expressly stated that his birth and preliminary recognition had already occurred by the time Pho-lha-nas ordered the resubmission of Dkar-sbis territories to central authority. At the same time, however, Pho-lha-nas arranged for Shākya-bstan-'dzin and his mother to reside under Tibetan protection at Phag-ri.¹⁸¹ Thus, by the end of 1735, the movements of both rebirths of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal were controlled from Tibet.

The combination of all these factors had one clear implication for responsible Bhutanese officials. In order to retain political independence and gain control of their own incarnate hierarchs, a substantial accommodation with Tibet would be essential. That Mi-pham-dbang-po and other Bhutanese leaders were perceptively aware of their predicament at this time is abundantly obvious from the course of events after 1735. That it was not so clearly understood or willingly accepted by the majority of the monks and citizens is equally obvious.

Nevertheless, the end of 1735 marks the beginning of a new phase in relations between the two countries. Gradually, warmer political ties were cultivated at the ruling level, symbolized diplomatically by jointly sponsored religious enterprises and in other ways. In similar fashion, the deep-seated Bhutanese distrust of the Tibetan 'Brug-pa church became gradually ameliorated by closer contact between their respective monastic leaders. Necessarily this was a slow process, one strongly resisted by popular Bhutanese sentiments. Not unjustifiably, much of the credit for Bhutan's successful negotiation of this new political course has fallen to the Thirteenth Sde-srid, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, whose long and prosperous reign from 1744 to 1763 will be described in the following chapter. But its hesitant beginnings occurred during Mi-pham-dbang-po's last years in office, and these events we must now quickly review.

At the close of the Wood-Hare year (ca. Jan. 1736) political opposition to Mi-pham-dbang-po had apparently reached a peak. His brother's death he regarded as an unhappy omen, and expressed the wish to retire or enter retreat. This was opposed by several groups. Nevertheless, Mi-pham-dbang-po took matters into his own hands, and at midnight of the 25th day of the new year he and a small body of close supporters sneaked out of Punakha and headed quickly for the northern frontier.¹⁸² It was apparently not a well-planned action. The party was poorly equipped for heavy ice and snow, and frostbite hampered their progress. Nevertheless they managed to elude a party of pursuers and crossed the border into Tibet over Wa-skyes-la pass north of Mgar-sa.

There they rested for a few days before moving on to Gyantse. By this time, we are told, Pho-lha-nas had heard of their flight, sent out supplies for their comfort, and given orders for their safe escort on to Lhasa.¹⁸³ They passed Rwa-lung monastery, halting to tour the shrines. Mi-pham-dbang-po was the first Bhutanese ruler to do so in more than one hundred years, and no disguise or secrecy were now needed. Crossing the Gtsang-po River at Chu-bo-ri he was met by a delegation from Lhasa, including twenty or more monk officials and his own Gzims-dpon Tshe-ring-dbang-chen.¹⁸⁴ Immediately he was conducted on to Lhasa where he was warmly received.

Tshe-ring-dbang-chen, apparently, had remained in Lhasa since the treaty of 1730, serving as the Bhutan government's representative in Tibet. One condition of that treaty had been that Bhutan should dispatch an emissary to be present at every Tibetan New Year, to pay respects to the Dalai Lama and his court. The protocol for these lo-phyag missions is not described in contemporary Bhutanese documents, but of course their real object was a political one. Lo-phyag emissaries were customarily men of moderately important rank, and the festival season at Lhasa provided a suitably harmonious atmosphere for the conduct of more serious, private, negotiations.¹⁸⁵

The Bhutanese accounts describe Mi-pham-dbang-po's reception in glowing terms. On various days he was hosted to festivals and dinners by different groups of monks and officials, including the Ambans (Rgya-nag Tā-bzhin). Tours were made of the temples of Ra-mo-che, Jo-khang, and Lcags-po-ri. There were several audiences with Pho-lha-nas, the Dalai Lama, and members of the Tibetan cabinet.¹⁸⁶ Gifts were exchanged and a complementary letter of "tribute" dispatched on Mi-pham-dbang-po's behalf to emperor Ch'ien-lung.¹⁸⁷ This was followed by a long and leisurely excursion to important pilgrimage centres including Bsam-yas, Tshal-gung-thang, Brag-dmar, Yar-klung and Mtshur-phu.¹⁸⁸

Behind the pleasantries, however, more serious matters were being negotiated. Mi-pham-dbang-po's visit to Lhasa was in the nature of a temporary exile, although the sources politely do not dwell on the fact. His position in Bhutan had been challenged, more likely threatened. His open reception by Tibetan authorities we know to have been reported to the Bhutan court, as Gzims-dpon Tshe-ring-dbang-chen returned briefly to Bhutan during Mi-pham-dbang-po's absence.¹⁸⁹ Mi-pham-dbang-po's presence in Tibet, thus, served as a warning to the opposition.

At the same time it is certain that Mi-pham-dbang-po had come to Tibet in the hopes of meeting the rumoured rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, to examine the child physically, and to return with him to Bhutan if possible. Apparently a meeting was arranged, at the Jo-khang in Lhasa, and one source relates that Mi-pham-dbang-po was able to confirm through meditation the legitimacy of the child's incarnate claim.¹⁹⁰ But the Tibetan government was unwilling to allow the child's departure, no doubt for political reasons. In fact, we shall see that it was not until 1746 that permission was obtained for 'Jigs-med-grags-pa to leave Tibet.

Why Pho-lha-nas disallowed the boy's departure for Bhutan in 1736 is not made clear in the sources. Probably it was felt that the political

situation in Bhutan was still too unstable, and that the sincerity of Bhutanese motives had yet to be thoroughly tested. This would not have been an unreasonable conclusion in view of the strained circumstances forcing Mi-pham-dbang-po's absence from Bhutan. In fact it is clear that his flight from the country had thrown Bhutan into political chaos. One of Mi-pham-dbang-po's uncles, the same Dpal-'byor who had helped engineer his nephew's installation as Sde-srid in 1729, was immediately elevated to the position of Sde-srid XI.¹⁹¹ But his authority did not go undisputed.

It is apparent that Mi-pham-dbang-po's secret departure was widely interpreted as a de facto abdication, and stern measures were taken by lower government officials to prevent other political defectors from leaving the country. Shākya-rin-chen, for instance, by now a respected monastic officer and temporary attendant to the Rje Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las, attempted to leave without permission sometime during the 3rd month. But the frontier guards at Gling-bzhi had been warned to expect such attempts, and his lame leg prevented escape.¹⁹² For a time he was imprisoned, first at Gling-bzhi, while his case was being considered, and then for several months at Skyabs-khra on the southern border. Several of his accomplices were exiled to India through Dewangiri.

Of the crucial discussions held at the Bhutan court during Mi-pham-dbang-po's absence we have no information. The opposition's strength seems to have weakened when it learned of Pho-lha-nas' warm reception for the exiled ruler. The possibility of Chinese retaliation probably weighed on their minds, and the emperor's edict of 1735 must have been scrutinized for its implications. The innocuous content of Mi-pham-dbang-po's latest memorial to Ch'ien-lung may not have been known; more important was the fact that it had been sent at all. Consequently some semblance of court order was restored, and compromise between the ministerial factions

enabled a unanimous petition to be sent requesting Mi-pham-dbang-po's return. His exile having thus achieved one of its two objects, the latter finally departed Tibet on 9 September,¹⁹³ and arrived to a vast welcoming assemblage of the state monks at Tashichhodzong. Immediately he was installed by common agreement as head of state (Rgyal-tshab), the position left vacant by his brother's death a year earlier.¹⁹⁴ Dpal-'byor remained as Sde-srid and the reins of government, for a while at least, continued in the hands of Bon-sbi people.

One of Mi-pham-dbang-po's major accomplishments in Tibet was the cultivation of friendly ties with influential Lamas of other sects. Pho-lha-nas' rule was widely known for its liberal patronage of non-Yellow Hat monks¹⁹⁵ and consequently Mi-pham-dbang-po was able to meet several great ecclesiastic personalities of 18th century Tibet. Principally these included the Karma-pa Si-tu Rin-po-che Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas, Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu (1698-1755), and the 'Brug-pa Kun-legs rebirth G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje (1721-69). Owing to his incarnate ties with the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa lineage in Bhutan (including now Mi-pham-dbang-po himself) G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje was to become an important element of Pho-lha-nas' policy to lure the upper Bhutanese clergy into a closer relationship with Tibetan ecclesiastic circles.¹⁹⁶ The foundation for this was laid during Mi-pham-dbang-po's exile.

We must finally note that, although Mi-pham-dbang-po was unable to bring Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's rebirth 'Jigs-med-grags-pa back to Bhutan, before leaving Lhasa he reached an agreement with Pho-lha-nas to begin restoration of the ancestral 'Brug-pa monastery of Rwa-lung.¹⁹⁷ This was to be along and costly project lasting many years, and although the Tibetan government eventually underwrote much of the expense, it was a cooperative effort between both governments and the Tibetan 'Brug-pa establishment. By the time of its completion in 1754¹⁹⁸ relations between these three

formerly hostile parties had warmed to a degree scarcely conceivable a quarter century earlier. Mi-pham-dbang-po's efforts to begin the venture deserve due recognition, even though other Bhutanese leaders of the 1730's evidently saw them in a very different light.

When Mi-pham-dbang-po returned to Bhutan in the autumn of 1736 he was not in good health. His installation as Rgyal-tshab, although superficially the result of unanimous acclamation, is elsewhere admitted to have been ordered by Pho-lha-nas himself.¹⁹⁹ Those Bhutanese who continued to resist Tibet's growing hold over their internal affairs undoubtedly regarded Mi-pham-dbang-po as an enemy in their midst, and so resistance to his authority persisted. 1737 was not a good year for the new ruler of Bhutan, and many months were spent in retreat at Rta-mgo. Late in the summer at Spang-ri-zam-pa he received the traditional gifts and oath of allegiance from the Dkar-sbis patrons, a performance apparently imposed by the settlement of 1735.²⁰⁰ His uncle Tshe-ring-dbang-chen also paid a visit to Lhasa at this time to consult with Tibetan authorities over treaty matters and the rift between the 'Brug-pa factions.²⁰¹

But Mi-pham-dbang-po's illness grew progressively worse. According to the various accounts, he suffered from the continuing effects of an earlier poisoning attempt, and early in 1738 he went once more to Rta-mgo for retreat.²⁰² There he finally died, on the 15th day of the 5th month.²⁰³ A concerted effort was made to conceal the event, not only from the general populace but apparently from the government as well. Shākya-rin-chen, who had become Mi-pham-dbang-po's personal attendant since his return from Tibet, was the man responsible for the deception. For more than twelve months the pretence was made that the Rgyal-tshab was in secluded meditation, and no visitors were granted audience.²⁰⁴

From all appearances government continued to function normally during this secret crisis. The Lo-phyag emissaries from Dkar-sbis and the central

Bhutan government paid their respects to the Dalai Lama as per custom,²⁰⁵ and we have no record of significant disturbances. However, with Mi-pham-dbang-po's death we are hampered by a brief hiatus of detailed information on court events, and consequently the political changes which took place during the winter of 1739/40 cannot be readily traced to their beginnings.

The secret of Mi-pham-dbang-po's death was broken during the summer of 1739, when a high-ranking mission arrived to request condolence prayers for the deceased Sde-dge hierarch Bstan-pa-tshe-ring (1678-1738). These men could not be turned away without an audience, and Shākya-rin-chen himself assumed Mi-pham-dbang-po's identity, erecting a cloth screen through which he passed questions and answers written on a slate.²⁰⁶ The delegation apparently was satisfied with this treatment, but of course Bhutanese monks and officials were now wise to such ploys, and immediately the deception was found out. Everyone of importance converged on Rta-mgo to learn the truth, following which the body was cremated and death rites performed at Punakha, lasting one week.²⁰⁷

This was followed almost immediately by a change of government. As both scions of the Bon-sbi lineage were now deceased, their ten-year hold on the reins of government ended and the uncle, Dpal-'byor, retired from the post of Sde-srid and went back to Bon-sbi and Tongsa. These changes appear to have been both peaceful and internally generated; there is no direct evidence that Pho-lha-nas exerted any direct influence. The compromise arrived at was nevertheless an interesting one, and illustrates quite clearly that Bhutan was entering a transitional phase in its constitutional procedures. It is unfortunate that two critical biographies which might better illuminate these events are not accessible, those of Rje Mkhan-po VIII Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu (r. 1737-44) and of the new Rgyal-tshab, Rgyal-sras IV Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal (d. 1762).²⁰⁸

The coronation was arranged to coincide with the consecration of a massive gilt image of Avalokiteśvara at Punakha, and the Tibetan 'Brug-pa Kun-legs incarnation G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje had been invited to attend the celebrations. For this pious purpose the Dalai Lama gave him permission to travel to Bhutan. He departed Lhasa about the end of the 8th month of 1739,²⁰⁹ and not long afterwards arrived at Tashichhodzong. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje's visit to Bhutan caused a tremendous stir among both monks and villagers. He was denounced as a false incarnation, a spy for the Tibetan 'Brug-pas, and Bhutanese prelates who associated with him were subjected to similar abuse.²¹⁰ These accusations were not without some justification. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje had for several years been a student at the great Yellow Hat monastery of 'Bras-spungs, and his religious teachings we know to have been profoundly influenced by writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama.²¹¹ At the same time, his incarnation lineage was one of the main subsidiary 'Brug-pa lines of Tibet. But for these very reasons G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje could usefully serve as an emissary between the governments of Bhutan and Tibet. Mi-pham-dbang-po may have originally conceived the possibility in 1736, and we shall see that it was partially through G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje's intercession that 'Jigs-med-grags-pa was eventually brought to Bhutan in 1746.

The coronations of Sde-srid XII Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (r. 1739/40-1743/4) and Rgyal-sras Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal took place simultaneously.²¹² Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was from a lineage of 'Gram-rdo in the Sbed-smad district of western Bhutan. So far as is known he was unrelated to any of the high officials then in power, and his rise to the position of Sde-srid apparently owed much to his military service during the civil war. He had earlier served as Rdzong-dpon at Brda-gling-kha and during the war itself as Rdzong-dpon at Tashichhodzong. He was not a monk. It

is recorded in the Seventh Dalai Lama's biography that his accession to Sde-srid resulted from a unanimous acclamation by the country's monks and laymen.²¹³ Since there was no reigning head of state at the time of his coronation this seems not an unreasonable statement. His reign may therefore have been the first not officially sanctioned in the constitutionally-recognized fashion.

Rgyal-sras IV Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal was born into the eastern Bhutanese Rnying-ma-pa lineage of the Gdong-dkar (Dung-dkar) Chos-rje in an uncertain year. It is therefore likely that he claimed lineal descent from Padma-gling-pa, although this is not expressly stated. As he was the rebirth of Mi-pham-dbang-po's younger brother Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu (d. 1735) he cannot have been more than four or five years old at the time of his installation as Rgyal-tshab, the youngest incarnate Lama yet to hold the position in Bhutan's history. His recognition as the legitimate rebirth is attributed to the Paro Dpon-slob Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, who is also said to have arranged for his installation at this time.²¹⁴ Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's role in political events of the 1730's is still rather obscure, and we shall have more to say of it when we review his achievements as Sde-srid XIII. Here we need only note that since 1710 he had been a student of Rgyal-sras II Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, which may explain his favouritism towards 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's lineage of Rgyal-sras incarnations into which Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal had now been born.²¹⁵

The coronation of the Rgyal-tshab took place in the Ka-brgyad-ma temple at Punakha. Shakya-rin-chen relates that it was G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje himself who performed the installation, tonsuring the boy and bestowing on him the name Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal.²¹⁶ The irony of a controversial Tibetan 'Brug-pa Lama leading the coronation celebration for a Bhutanese head of state should not be lost sight of. We need not wonder, therefore, at the vigorous opposition to his presence in the country among the common

citizenry. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje also consecrated the Avalokiteśvara image whose construction had been sponsored originally by Mi-pham-dbang-po.²¹⁷ This was the officially acknowledged reason for his presence at Punakha in 1739, but in retrospect we know that it was part of Mi-pham-dbang-po's determined plan to have Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's rebirth 'Jigs-med-grags-pa brought to Bhutan.

One of Mi-pham-dbang-po's confederates in this plan had been Rje Mkhan-po VII Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las.²¹⁸ This venerable Lama had retired from office in 1737 and spent the remaining nine years of his life at a small hermitage in Kho-dang near Wangdiphodrang. Following Mi-pham-dbang-po's untimely death Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las took it upon himself to pursue the former hierarch's cherished object, and from 1739 there developed a close relationship between him and G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje.²¹⁹ It was not merely a friendship of expediency, however, and for years afterwards they exchanged polite correspondence on religious matters. But there is no doubt that Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las constantly urged in these letters his wish that G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje expedite permission for 'Jigs-med-grags-pa to be brought to Bhutan. Unfortunately for Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las, he did not live to see that day arrive, but his effort to bring the event about must receive due notice. When news of Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las' death reached Lhasa in 1746 G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje composed a long ode to commemorate the achievements of this important Bhutanese Lama.²²⁰

While these events were transpiring the new Sde-srid pursued his own policy of accommodation with Tibet. Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan does not emerge from the sources as a man with the well-ordered attitudes of a natural leader. His relations with Tibet were correct but not over solicitous. The child "head of state" had no active role during these years, of course. Immediately upon coronation he had been placed under the tutelage of Gzims-dpon Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho and the historian Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, and

little more is known of his life until 1747.²²¹ Consequently, the policies pursued by the Bhutan government during Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's four-year reign must be traced to him personally. Insofar as he continued the course set earlier by Mi-pham-dbang-po these were successful, but where his personal attitudes intruded into affairs of state, trouble developed.

Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan followed a rather reserved course of accommodation towards Tibet. He apparently shared with Mi-pham-dbang-po the goal of eventually freeing 'Jigs-med-grags-pa from Tibetan control, but left the matter to be pursued by the monks through religious diplomacy. When G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje returned to Tibet early in 1740 the Sde-srid allowed Shākya-rin-chen and a few other Bhutanese monks to travel with him.²²² Two years later, and following Shākya-rin-chen's return, it was decided to send several monks to Tibet to study for the Dge-bshes degree with G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje. This also was approved by the Sde-srid, and of the men selected two, Yon-tan-mtha'-yas and Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho, were later to rise to the position of Rje Mkhan-po. We need not describe their activities in Tibet, except to note that by 1744 they had entered Blo-gsal-gling college at 'Bras-spungs in Lhasa, were later personally tested in Sanskrit grammar and logic by the Dalai Lama,²²³ and in general attracted a great deal of attention, being the first Bhutanese 'Brug-pa Lamas in living memory to study for a higher academic degree in a Yellow Hat institution.

In accord with his treaty obligations, the Sde-srid dutifully dispatched Lo-phyag missions during the four years of his tenure.²²⁴ The Dkar-sbis Lo-phyag emissaries also attended the New Year events at Lhasa during the period, although the strength of their following in Bhutan appears to have rapidly weakened by this time. Ngag-dbang-'brug-pa, a nephew of the former Dkar-sbis ruler 'Brug-don-grub, normally attended personally to the mission.²²⁵ As a sort of sinecure the Bhutan government seems to have

allowed him to retain the office of Gling-bzhi Rdzong-dpon, not a very important position in peace time.

In 1741 Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan sent a special congratulatory emissary for the enthronement of the new Panchen Lama, Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan-ye-shes,²²⁶ and in 1743 he appealed to the Dalai Lama for a financial contribution to refurbish Stag-tshang and Skyer-chu'i-lha-khang hermitages at Paro.²²⁷ These two shrines were of special importance in Tibetan history, and, as the Seventh Dalai Lama was himself avidly devoted throughout his career to restoring temples of the ancient monarchy, the grant was approved. And that is all that we know of Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's diplomatic relations with Tibet. In spite of the formality of these exchanges, nevertheless, we can see that a more cooperative spirit was emerging between the two countries.

There are two further aspects of Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan's reign which must be mentioned, his involvement in the Sikkim civil war and his persecution of Shakya-bstan-'dzin, the rebirth of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal. In the absence of reliable sources on Sikkim's history the chronology of the first event is still obscure. Apparently king 'Gyur-med-rnam-rgyal had died in 1733 without an acknowledged heir to the throne. A bastard son Rnam-rgyal-phun-tshogs, born in that very year to a nun of the Gsang-sngags-chos-gling convent, was put forward by the royalist faction but rejected by a Lepcha minister, Phyag-mdzod Rta-mgrin.²²⁸ The latter usurped the throne on his own behalf, touching off the civil war. Rta-mgrin assumed the title Rgyal-po, "king", and thereafter ruled for about eight years, as he visited Lhasa in 1737²²⁹ and is probably the ex-king of Sikkim received by the Dalai Lama in 1742.²³⁰

This civil war appears to have been a rather inconsequential affair to Tibet. Neither the Panchen Lama nor the 'Ba'-ra-ba monks say anything of it; nor does Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu, who resided for a

time in northern Sikkim in early 1735.²³¹ The Tibetan government finally involved itself in about 1742,²³² when it dispatched a man to serve as interim administrator, a personality famous in Sikkimese history as Rab-brtan-shar-pa, but who may also have been a near relative of the 'Brug-pa Kun-legs rebirth G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje.²³³ "King" Rab-brtan-shar-pa vigorously reorganized the country's tax system,²³⁴ was succeeded for a time by his own son in about 1749,²³⁵ and was finally recalled by Lhasa in 1754, when the bastard prince Rnam-rgyal-phun-tshogs was enthroned under Tibetan supervision.²³⁶

These events were to be of some importance to Bhutanese history since, from what we can gather from stray information, Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan and his frontier lieutenants were supporters of the royalist faction of Rnam-rgyal-phun-tshogs, perhaps the first significant instance of co-operation between the two countries' ruling elites. From about 1736 to 1742 the fighting was intense in southeastern Sikkim and therefore involved the Bhutanese Rdzong-dpon of Brda-gling-kha. This we know from the account of Shākya-bstan-'dzin, who resided there up to about 1740. The recognized rebirth of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, Shākya-bstan-'dzin had been taken under Pho-lha-nas' protection shortly after birth, and after six months at Phagri was removed with his mother and some other relatives to Brda-gling-kha.²³⁷ There he resided, along with Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar, until ca. 1740 when Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan was enthroned as Sde-srid.

Shākya-bstan-'dzin's childhood reminiscences of Brda-gling-kha were of nearly constant fighting among the local people and Sikkimese inhabitants. The Rdzong-dpon Dar-rgyas-pa himself is said to have made forays into Sikkim proper, but, as the Sikkim chronicle explains, these were in support of one Phyag-mdzod Gar-dbang, supporter of the bastard prince and opponent of Rta-mgrin.²⁴⁸ Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, who was serving a second term as Paro Dpon-slob during the period, is said to have admitted many refugees

from the Phag-ri region into Bhutan, which would indicate that Bhutanese policy on the issue was one formulated by the government.²³⁹ It was not purely a local intrigue.

Somehow out of this involvement in the Sikkim civil war Bhutan acquired the right to maintain a permanent garrison at Sgang-thog. The size of the garrison was probably small, but by 1747 it was under the district administration of Brda-gling-kha and received regular taxes from 143 subject families in or near the Sikkim capital itself.²⁴⁰ This was about one third the number of family units taxed directly by Brda-gling-kha (413), probably about 800 individuals in all. The lack of comparable data for subsequent years prevents us from assessing changes in the size of Bhutan's "diplomatic presence" in Sikkim, but it is unlikely to have decreased by 1763. It is a factor which future studies of the complex wars which engulfed the Himalayan states after 1767 will need to properly weigh.

As an outgrowth of the Sikkim civil war there arose again the question of how to handle the Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal rebirth Shākya-bstan-'dzin. For reasons which are not entirely clear, this incarnation lineage of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal continued to remain unpopular in Bhutan. His family tie with Dkar-sbis people and the political controversies concerning his previous embodiment may be partial reasons. What Petech aptly describes as a "theological" explanation for the possibility of simultaneous legitimate incarnations of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, of his body, speech, and mind, had in fact emerged as early as 1728.²⁴¹ But this explanation was not apparently widely accepted before Shes-rab-dbang-phyug became Sde-srid in 1744, after which it was adopted as constitutionally official.

Until 1744 court opposition to the Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal rebirths remained strong, and when warfare near Brda-gling-kha induced Shākya-bstan-'dzin's supporters to bring the boy to Paro for safety, Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan began a policy of harassment against him which lasted

until the Sde-srid's death in the winter of 1743. The Sde-srid also bitterly hated the boy's Gzims-dpon, Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar, who had held the same position in the service of the previous embodiment. For a time they were forcibly separated, and Shākya-bstan-'dzin remained virtually a prisoner of state at Paro for over a year.²⁴² An attempted reunion at Wangdiphodrang was again frustrated by Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan, and a further exile at Tagana imposed. And there they remained until 1744, when the new Sde-srid Shes-rab-dbang-phyug sponsored Shākya-bstan-'dzin's official return to incarnate respectability.

* * * * *

In recapitulating briefly the troubled fifty years from Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' abdication in 1694 to the point we have now reached, it is readily apparent that constitutional disorder lay at the core of the matter. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's "experiment with monarchy" had failed, and subsequent rulers had been unable or unwilling to arrive at a universally acceptable alternative. More fundamentally, however, it was the structure of church authority which had disintegrated, a crisis into which the political state, originally its secular appendage, had inevitably been drawn.

This inability of the church to resolve a crisis of its own making invites comparison with similar occurrences in Tibet. The unique popular attractions of Lamaist Buddhism had never permitted the institution as a whole to be dislodged from its notional supremacy. But the history of successive Tibetan governments shows that major changes were generally imposed or instigated by forces outside the "system", more often than not from outside the country. The argument that these forces, the Mongols and Manchus, did not subsequently "rule" the various governments which they promoted for their own ends, does not alter the crucial fact of their involvement at the outset.

Pho-lha-nas' outside influence in redirecting the course of Bhutanese policies is therefore bound to remain an issue of controversy for Bhutanese scholars and foreigners interested in the country's history. Our perspective on this event is biased owing to the monastic provenance of the sources, but the very fact that they do not provide adequate insight into the civil war years seems clear evidence that major political initiatives were being formulated in a different arena. Important questions remain unanswered, in the absence of archival information. In particular, the circumstances of the third Tibetan mission during the winter of 1733/4, resulting in the dispatch of emissaries to China, is puzzling. Equivocation in Tibetan sources may be explained by official embarrassment over the patent failure of Pho-lha-nas' original formula for peace, imposed in 1730. Nevertheless, he was the first Tibetan ruler ever to effectively manipulate Bhutanese sectarian stresses to the advantage of Tibet. It seems ironically appropriate, therefore, that his admiring biographer Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal should have written of Pho-lha-nas as the reincarnation of Dga'-ldan-tshe-dbang-dpal-bzang, the Mongol general who manipulated the Tibetan 'Brug-pas in 1684 and thereby brought Ladakh to its knees.²⁴³

Nevertheless, the China issue would appear to offer a more important clue to understanding the sudden changes in Tibet-Bhutan relations after 1735, I suggest, than Pho-lha-nas' individual involvement. Tibet was a known quantity to Bhutan; China was unknown and potentially more threatening. We shall see that by the late 18th century, the perceived or imagined menace from British India and China loomed far larger in Bhutanese monastic circles than that from Tibet.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.32.b-33.a.
- ² Ibid., f.34.a.
- ³ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.61.b.
- ⁴ On the careers of these two remarkable ladies, cf. Ibid., ff.57.b-58.a, and Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.348.b-355.b. From 1708 until her death ca. 1732, Lha-lcam Kun-legs was a renowned female teacher and contemplative. As lineal head of the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa establishment she also wielded a certain measure of political influence. It was she who certified Rgyal-sras Mi-pham-dbang-po as the legitimate rebirth of her deceased father. In turn, Mi-pham-dbang-po conducted her final rites of cremation (Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' ...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.47.b-48.a).
- ⁵ Cf. above, Ch. IV.
- ⁶ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.361.a-364.b.
- ⁷ Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, f.158.b.
- ⁸ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.32.a.
- ⁹ Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.148.a, 153.a-154.b.
- ¹⁰ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.31.b-33.b.
- ¹¹ Ibid., ff.34.b-38.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.61.b-62.a; Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po dam chos pad dkar kyi rnam par thar pa, f.35.a-b.

¹² Cf. above, Ch. VI, fn. 65.

¹³ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.7.a-19.b. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan is said to have uttered the name Tilopa when still a baby (Ibid., f.29.b). He had several childhood names; a visiting group of Indian yogins named him Gha-na-pa-ti (i.e. Gaṇapati); local people nicknamed him Rnal-'byor Smyon-pa.

¹⁴ Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.108.a-109.a.

¹⁵ Ibid., ff.109.a-115.b.

¹⁶ Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.83.a.

¹⁷ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.61.a.

¹⁸ Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, f.36.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.45.b-46.b.

¹⁹ Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, ff.273.a, 310.a.

²⁰ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.96.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.46.b.

²¹ History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 28.

²² Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.83.a.

²³ Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.122.b-124.b.

²⁴ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.53.b-55.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.62gong.a-b; Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje btsun dam chos pad dkar gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.36.b-37.a.

²⁵ Ibid., f.38.a; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan (p. 29) says he died in 1704.

²⁶ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.97.a; Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.84.a.

²⁷ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.80.a-b; on Nyi-ma-rnam-rgyal's dates cf. Petech, China and Tibet, p. 100.

²⁸ Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.127.a-170.a for the mission's account.

²⁹ Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.86.b; the same author (Lho'i chos 'byung, f.97.a) claims that he died about this time. We should note that the MS "History of Sikkim (pp. 49-53) alleges a major Bhutanese invasion and occupation of Sikkim during the period 1701-09; but portions of this account (e.g. the machinations of Mon-pa A-chog) have clearly been chronologically misplaced. Bhutanese sources mention nothing of border strife at this time; nor does the Panchen Lama.

³⁰ Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.82.b-83.b.

³¹ Ibid., ff.89.b-90.a, 91.a.

³² Ibid., f.91.a.

³³ The spellings of 'Brug-rab-rgyal and Wang Dpal-'byor are also found.

³⁴ Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.14.a.

- 35 It is said to have been written at the behest of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan (Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.177.b).
- 36 Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 209.
- 37 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.94.a.
- 38 Ibid., f.94.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.97.a; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 29.
- 39 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.79.b-80.b; his date of death is recorded in Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.26.b.
- 40 Shākya-rin-chen Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.96.b-108.b.
- 41 Ibid., ff.108.a-110.a.
- 42 Ibid., ff.110.b-111.a; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.173.a-b.
- 43 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.4.a-5.b. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's dates are open to doubt; that of his birth can be reconstructed from statements in several sources according to which he was brought to court at age six, in the year before Lha-bzang Khan's invasion (1714). His death is more problematic, and will be discussed below.
- 44 Ibid., f.6.a.
- 45 Ibid., f.7.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung f.64.a-b), however, dates his tonsuring to late in 1712 (chu-'brug X/10). The discrepancy is difficult to reconcile.
- 46 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.113.a-b.

- 47 Ibid., f.114.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.62.b.
- 48 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.114.b-119.a.
- 49 Ibid., f.122.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.63.a. As Petech has indicated ("Rulers of Bhutan," p. 206), sa-sbrul of the texts must be emended to chu-sbrul, the 12th month of which, however, would fall early in 1774.
- 50 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.8.a-b; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa, f.175.a.
- 51 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.96.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.10.a; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.174.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.10.a.
- 52 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Kha, ff.5.a-6.a.
- 53 Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 8-29.
- 54 Sku bzhi'i dbang phuug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.133.b, 167.b-168.b.
- 55 Ibid., f.170.b.
- 56 Ibid., f.168.b; Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa, ff.70.b-71.a; Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 4, pp. 339-47.
- 57 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.113.a; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 30.
- 58 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.101.a-102.b (MS, ff.103.a-104.b).

59 Ibid., f.101.b (MS, f.103.a-b).

60 Grags-pa-rgya-mtsho, op. cit., f.81.a.

61 The date is from Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.176.a; the Panchen Lama describes events near the close of the war in the 10th month (Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.268.b-69.a).

62 Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 29-30.

63 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., ff.104.a-106.a (MS, ff.106.a-108.b); the looting is more fully described in the MS version.

64 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.176.a-b.

65 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, Byang chub sems dpa' ngag dbang pad dkar gyi rtogs pa brjod pa, f.19.a.

66 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.97.a-b.

67 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.176.b-178.a.

68 Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.268.b-269.a.

69 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.10.b.

70 Petech, China and Tibet, p. 29.

71 "History of Sikkim," pp. 58-59. The Sikkim king's "illness" supposedly prevented prompt compliance.

72 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.11.b; Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.20.a.

73 Cf. above, Ch. III.

74 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.6.b-7.b.

75 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal (Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, f.100.b-101.a) dates his move to Rta-mgo to a Dog year (1718); however, much of the chronology of this text is untrustworthy.

76 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.10.b.

77 Ibid.

78 Information on the previous embodiments is found in Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' biography (ff.6.b-7.a), written in 1720. On the lives of these Rnying-ma-pa predecessors, cf. Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 3, pp. 336-41, 391-406, 632-63; there were, of course, numerous Tibetan saints and scholars who claimed to be rebirths of these famous individuals.

79 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.12.b; the length of his reign is variously given as 12 or 13 years. Modern Bhutanese accept that he ruled 1707-20 (History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 29-31).

80 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.97.b; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.121.a.

81 Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, ff.14.a-18.b.

82 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.6.a-7.b.

83 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.14.b-15.a.

84 Ibid., ff.15.b-16.a; the precise coronation date is not recorded.

85 Lho'i chos 'byung (f.68.a) says that Rgyal-sras III died at age 18; however Shākya-rin-chen, who was one of his close attendants, puts his death at age 19, during mid-1735 (Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Ca, f.12.b).

- 86 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.67.b.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, Rgyal kun khyab bdag 'gro ba'i bla ma bstan 'dzin rin po che legs pa'i don grub zhabs kyi rnam par thar pa, ff.101.b-105.b.
- 89 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.67.b.
- 90 On the death, cf. Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.88.a. For his date of birth, cf. the anonymous English preface to the reprint of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's rnam-thar.
- 91 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.67.a.
- 92 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.14.a.
- 93 Ibid., f.14.b.
- 94 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.31.b.
- 95 Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, Sgrub rgyud karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa..., vol. 2, ff.209.b-213.a. Zhwa-nag XII Byang-chub-rdo-rje (1703-32) and Zhwa-dmar VIII Chos-kyi-don-grub (1695-1732) are said to have constantly travelled together from 1712 until their deaths in China (Ibid., f.223.b). They entered Bhutan on sa-sprul XII/23 and remained there for 18 months, touring the eastern districts, and paying a brief visit to Koch Hājo and Kāmṛup in the winter of 1729. Owing to the extremely precise nature of this diary's chronology I have accepted it as a basic source in arranging the sequence of events up to mid-1731. Unfortunately, the authors give absolutely no hint as to the content of the messages passing between the Lamas, the Bhutan government, and Pho-lha-nas.
- 96 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.32.a; Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 210, fn. 67.

- 97 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.345.a-346.a (MS, ff.370.a-371.a); Petech, China and Tibet, p. 162.
- 98 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.210.a-b.
- 99 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.14.b-15.a.
- 100 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.32.a-b.
- 101 Ibid., f.33.a-b; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.12.b-13.a.
- 102 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.33.a.
- 103 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.24.b-25.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Nga, f.10.a.
- 104 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.67.a, 98.a-b.
- 105 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.24.b.
- 106 The earliest notice of Mi-pham-dbang-po's name and title in Chinese documents is the edict from emperor Yung-cheng dated 19 March, 1731 (Shih-tsung shih-lu, 103, 9.a) where he is called No-yen Lin-ch'in-ch'i-lei-la-pu-chi Hou-shen La-ma Cha-se-li Pu-lu-k'e Ku-chi (諾彥林親齊雷喇布集後身喇嘛渣色禮布魯克古迹). The same name, occasionally abbreviated and with different transcriptional characters, is found in all Chinese documents. No-yen is the Mongol style Noyan used of princes and rulers in general. Lin-ch'in-ch'i-lei-la-pu-chi, as Petech mentions ("Rulers of Bhutan", p. 210), transcribes Rin-chen-'phrin-las-rab-rgyas, which we now know was the name given him by the Karma-pa Lamas. Hou-shen translates sprul-sku (Skt. nirmanakāya), La-ma represents Bla-ma,

and the remaining characters can only represent Rgyal-sras 'Brug Sku-mched. The syllable li need not be puzzling if we suppose that in the Bhutanese vernacular, as opposed to Lhasa Tibetan, the l-graph in Rgyal-sras was pronounced rather than silent.

107 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.15.b-16.a.

108 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.37.a; Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.212.a.

109 Ibid., ff.214.b-215.a.

110 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.16.a-b; Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.25.a-b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.65.a-b.

111 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.16.b-17.a; Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.25.b.

112 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.346.b-347.a (MS, ff.371.b-372.a); Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.a-b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3,11.a. Chinese accounts of the Dkar-sbis rebellion state that, as Dkar-sbis power began to eclipse that of Mi-pham-dbang-po, the latter's priest Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (C'hu-k'e-lai-na-mu-cha-erh) went over to Dkar-sbis, where he was held captive, and that shortly thereafter another subject of Mi-pham-dbang-po named Ti-na-wa-na-erh (Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar?) slipped away to attend upon Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal. It was at this point that the war is said to have broken out, and Dkar-sbis appealed to Pho-lha-nas in Yung-cheng's tenth year (1732). The thread of the narrative continues in a rather pro-Dkar-sbis vein. The Bhutanese, we shall see, record a Tibetan invasion in 1732 at Dkar-sbis' behest, but also one in 1730; in neither instance was Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal resident at Dkar-sbis.

The Chinese seem further to have confused the negotiations of 1732 with those of 1730. Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal's accounts are somewhat different, but chronologically even more ambiguous. The Dalai Lama was absent from Lhasa, so his biography is of no help. In an end-of-year summary of events for 1731 the Panchen Lama briefly describes the conflict and attempts at negotiation, but ignores the sequel of 1732-36. It is possible that the Dkar-sbis deliberately misinformed Pho-lha-nas, but the principal reason for confusion and obfuscation in the Tibetan and Chinese accounts, I suspect, was misinformation resulting in a serious policy error, only later corrected. There developed a need to conceal this from the emperor, on whose behalf Pho-lha-nas acted but did not consult. Settlement of the Bhutan situation had been prematurely reported to Peking.

113 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., f.347.a (MS, f.372.a-b).

114 Shākya'i dge slong blo bzang ye shes kyi spyod tshul gsal bar byed pa ngor dkar can gyi 'phreng ba, ff.338.a, 356.a.

115 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, op. cit., vol. 2, f.214.a. On these generals, cf. Petech, Aristocracy and Government in Tibet, p. 155, and Petech, China and Tibet, p. 132.

116 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Bka' blon rtogs brjod, f.17.b. Rgya-dpon Ga-lo-ye, I think, cannot be identified with Major Ho-shang (Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 211), whose negotiating mission with Bka'-blon 'Brong-rtse is specifically dated in Chinese sources to 1733-34. This will become clearer in a moment.

117 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbayngs can rgyud mang, f.38.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.24.a.

118 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.17.a.

- 119 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Nga, ff.9.a-11.b.
- 120 Sku bzhi'i dbang phyug rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, ff.216.b-217.a.
- 121 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.17.a-b.
- 122 Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.24.a-b.
- 123 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Bka' blon rtogs brjod, f.17.b.
- 124 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, op. cit., vol. 2, ff.212.b-213.b.
- 125 Ibid., ff.213.b-214.a. The MS "History of Sikkim: (pp. 72-74) records a boundary dispute between Sikkim and Bhutan at this time, at which the Tibetan general Lcang-lo-can-pa is said to have mediated, with results favourable to Bhutan. Its connection with the civil war is unclear.
- 126 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, op. cit., vol. 2, f.214.a.
- 127 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.39.b.
- 128 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs brjod, f.348.a-b (MS, f.373.a-b).
- 129 Shih-tsung shih-lu, 103, 8.b-9.b (edict of 19 March, 1731); cf. also the summary in Huang-ch'ao fan-pu yao-lüeh, 17, 35.a-b.
- 130 Shih-tsung shih-lu, 103, 4.b (edict of 14 March, 1731).
- 131 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 11.a-b.
- 132 Pan-chen Bla-ma III Blo-bzang-dpal-ldan-ye-shes, Rdo rje 'chang chen po pan chen thams cad mkhyen pa blo bzang ye shes dpal bzang po'i... rnam par thar pa...smad cha, f.25.b (Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, Collected Works of the Third Panchen Lama, New Delhi, 1975, vol. 3).

- 133 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.17.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, f.15.b.
- 134 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.17.b.
- 135 Si-tu Pan-chen & 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang-kun-khyab, op. cit., vol. 2, f.215.a.
- 136 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.18.b; Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.25.b, 26.b-27.a.
- 137 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.18.a-b.
- 138 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., f.344.b (MS, f.369.a-b).
- 139 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.18.b; Sku bzhi'i rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.218.a.
- 140 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.27.a.
- 141 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.18.b; Sku bzhi'i rje btsun ngag dbang rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar, f.218.b.
- 142 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.41.a-b.
- 143 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.18.b-19.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Ca, ff.4.b-5.a.
- 144 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.18.b; Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Panḍi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.39.b. The death of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan on chu-byi VI/4 (mid-1732), an event mentioned in all the Bhutanese texts, is an important chronological guidepost for this period.

- 145 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.45.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.25.a.
- 146 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, op. cit., f.349.b (MS, f.375.a).
- 147 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, f.19.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.47.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Ca, f.8.b.
- 148 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 11.b.
- 149 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.19.b-20.a; Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.27.a-b.
- 150 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.20.b-21.b.
- 151 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.27.b-28.a; Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.22.a.
- 152 Ibid., This, perhaps, was the first print of the Snar-thang Bka'-'gyur (on which cf. Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 160-61) to be brought to Bhutan. Another set was also acquired during the civil war by Ngag-dbang-'brug-pa (1682-1748), a renowned devotee of canonical studies from Mtshams-brag monastery, near Tagana. The same man was later one of the first to bring the Snar-thang Bstan-'gyur to Bhutan (Ma-ti [i.e. Shākya-rin-chen Dri-med-legs-pa'i-blo-gros], Rgyal kun brtse ba'i spyi gzugs sems dpa'chen po gsung dbang sprin dbyangs kyi rtogs pa brjod pa rig 'dzin kun tu dga' ba'i zlos gar, ff.81.b-82.a, 101.b-102.a [reprinted in Kunsang Topgay, Biographies of Two Bhutanese Lamas of the Padma-glin-pa Tradition, Thimphu, 1975]). Ngag-dbang-'brug-pa was an uncle of Rje Mkhan-po XIII Yon-tan-mtha'-yas.
- 153 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.28.b.

154 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 11.b. On the Shan-hsi tu-piao ch'ien-ying, cf. W.F. Mayers, The Chinese Government (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., 1886²), p. 59.

155 Wang-tse-ch'eng (汪則城), and the apparent variant Tse-wang (則汪), I take to mean Wangdiphodrang. At the time of year in question one might have expected a meeting at Punakha, but for this fortress the Chinese have Pang-t'ang-te-ch'ing (蚌湯德慶), i.e. Spungs-thang Bde-ba-can.

156 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, Rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen gzigs rdo rje 'chang blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho... rnam par thar pa, f.155.a.

157 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 11.b-12.a.

158 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'... dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.49.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, f.19.a.

159 格隆巴爾沖 (for the two memorials cf. Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b-10.b and Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 12.a-14.b). Doubt as to the date of these memorials (Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 211, fn. 73) arises from their apparent inclusion as appendices (附) to the account of Mi-pham-dbang-po's visit to Lhasa in 1736. But the oldest version, the Hsi-tsang-chih, shows I think that they were meant to conclude discussion of the entire Bhutan problem, documentary proof of its successful resolution. Finally, a date after 1735 for the Dkar-sbis memorial would conflict with the information that Ka-pi Tung-lu-pu La-ma ('Brug-don-grub) died in that year.

160 Petech, loc. cit.

161 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b-10.a; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 12.a-13.a.

162 商納克諾爾布

- 163 Petch, China and Tibet, p. 171.
- 164 One wonders if 'Brong-rtse Dbang-rgyal-rab-brtan's promotion to Bka'-blon sometime between 1733 and 1734 might not have resulted in part from his role in this mission (Petch, op. cit., pp. 171-172).
- 165 On these events, cf. Petch, op. cit., pp. 67-140.
- 166 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.29.a-31.a.
- 167 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.49.b.
- 168 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa, ff.22.b-23.a; cf. also Lho'i chos 'byung, f.66.a which has drawn heavily on Shākya-rin-chen's text, written two years before the completion of Lho'i chos 'byung.
- 169 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.29.a.
- 170 Ibid., ff.29.a-b; Shākya-rin-chen, loc. cit.
- 171 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.30.b-31.a.
- 172 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 12.a.
- 173 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.48.b.
- 174 Ibid., f.49.b.
- 175 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.19.b.-19.b.
- 176 Ibid., f.19.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.29.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Ca, f.12.b.
- 177 Ibid., Ca, f.12.a-b; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.29.b. Arson was a distinct possibility.
- 178 Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas, it must be recalled, was not officially recognized as an incarnate Lama during his tenure as Sde-srid IV.

179 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 9.b; Hsi-tsang-chih, 3, 12.a.

180 Shākya-bstan-'dzin's death in 1778 is recorded in 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi ...rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.60.b-61.a. The dates 1736-1778 are given in the anonymous English preface to the reprint of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's rnam-thar.

181 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., f.31.a-b.

182 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.51.b-52.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.19.b-20.a. One of his attendants on this mission was Bzhi-dar (Bsod-nams-lhun-grub), who later served a controversial term as Sde-srid XVI during the war with the British (History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 39).

183 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.19.b-20.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.52.b-53.b.

184 Ibid., f.57.a, says he was met by 100 drung-'khor of the Tibetan government; the Seventh Dalai Lama's biography (f.196.a) gives a figure of 20.

185 In Tibetan texts the Lo-phyag of Dkar-sbis people is generally noted separately from that of the Bhutan government ('Brug gzhung), but after 1735 it persisted only as a relic from the few years during which Dkar-sbis actually maintained independent government. This can be explained by the prestige attaching to the right to dispatch such a mission (at the Tibetan government's expense) and receive gifts in return. Dkar-sbis emissaries were still being received in Lhasa as late as 1757 (in their reduced sinecure of Gling-bzhi Rdzong-dpon) when Dalai Lama VII died. I am uncertain when (or if) the exercise ended formally.

186 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.54.a-58.a.

187 A summary of the memorial, with the emperor's response, dated 7 June, 1736, is in Kao-tsung Shih-lu, 17, 21.b-22.a.

188 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.58.a-68.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.21.b-25.a.

189 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chug sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.58.a. Tshe-ring-dbang-chen is said to have sponsored important reconstructions at Sgang-steng, perhaps during this visit (Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog, f.35.a).

190 Shākya-rin-chen, Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing, f.130.a-b. In these passages, also, a peculiar story is related that a rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been located and recognized sometime before Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas became Sde-srid IV (1680), but had been captured by the Tibetan government from his place of residence at 'Gos-yul, a border district between the two countries. It is said that confidential efforts by Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas during his reign to have the child brought to Bhutan were unsuccessful, and that eventually the rebirth died in China. It was only after this that gter-ston Byang-chub-rdo-rje's prophecy (on which cf. below, Ch. IX) was discovered and made the basis for the theory of multiple incarnations of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. Whatever else this story proves, it is clear evidence of early resistance to the notion of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's long "retreat".

191 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.98.b.

192 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Cha, ff.3.a-13.b.

193 For the date of departure cf. Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15,9.b.

194 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, ff.65.b-66.a, 70.b-71.a.

195 Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 27, 83, 106-112, 197.

196 G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje, alias Kun-dga'-mi-'gyur-rdo-rje, was the son of a controversial Rnying-ma-pa visionary Sle-slung Rje-drung Padma-bzhad-pa'i-rdo-rje (b. 1697), a man occasionally feted by Pho-lha-nas in Lhasa until Phur-bu-lcog Ngag-dbang-byams-pa's self righteous theological attacks induced him to leave for Padma-bkod in the far southeast of Tibet. Perhaps this had some influence on G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje's doctrinal predilection for Yellow Hat teachings. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje received the name Ngag-dbang-dge-legs-rgya-mtsho from Dalai Lama VII in 1725 (cf. the latter's biography, f.108.b), but in Tibetan and Bhutanese sources he is most commonly designated simply Grub-dbang Rin-po-che or Dre'u-lhas Sprul-sku, the last from the name of the 'Brug-pa Kun-legs gdan-sa near Mtsho-sna.

197 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.66.a.

198 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, Rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen gzigs rdo rje 'chang blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho...rnam par thar pa, ff.439.b-440.a.

199 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., f.68.b; Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Cha, f.18.a.

200 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.75.a-b.

201 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.233.b.

202 Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, f.28.b; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.69.a.

203 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.69.a, gives a date different from this, but Shākya-rin-chen is unlikely to be mistaken since he was present at the occurrence.

204 Shākya-rin-chen, op.cit., f.29.a-b; Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.82.a.

205 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op.cit., ff.239.a, 252.a.

206 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsaṃ pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtaṃ, Ja, ff.9.b-11.b.

207 Ibid., Ja, ff.12.a-b; Shākya-rin-chen, Sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa, ff.29.b-30.b.

208 The death date is noted in 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi...rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.60.b-61.a; references indicating the existence of biographies for these two men have not yet come to my attention.

209 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.261.a.

210 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsaṃ pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtaṃ, Ja, ff.14.b-15.a; 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, op.cit., f.22.a.

211 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa'...dbyangs can rgyud mang, f.65.b; 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, op. cit., f.27.a-b provides an intriguing account of his eclectic mixture of 'Brug-pa, Rnying-ma-pa, and Bka'-gdams-pa religious teachings and ritual practice.

212 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.99.a.

213 Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.267.a.

214 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.69.b, which, however, fails to record his name or incarnate affiliation; Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, f.23.b.

215 Ibid., f.22.a.

216 Shākya-rin-chen, Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing, ff.113.b-114.a.

217 Ibid., f.114.a-b.

218 Ibid., ff.130.b-131.a; Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.69.b-70.a.

219 Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., ff.131.a-137.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa...bsdus pa, f.33.a-b.

220

The gsol-'debs bears the title Rnam thar mos gus gdung ba'i glu dbyangs, and is appended to Shākya-rin-chen, Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing (ff.144.a-145.b); it was written at the behest of Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, who was in Lhasa at the time ('Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, op. cit., f.35.a).

221

Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos kyi gtam, Nya, f.23.b; Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.60.a-b.

222

Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., Nya, ff.1-24.a; this entire chapter of the autobiography is devoted to his five-month excursion to Tibet (it is also included as a separate work in vol. 6 of his Collected Works). He was received cordially by the Dalai Lama and Pho-lha-nas. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje's return to Lhasa early in 1740 is recorded in Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.266.a, but Shākya-rin-chen is not mentioned there by name.

223

'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, op. cit., ff.23.a-38.b describes their four-year studentship in great and often amusing detail. They availed themselves of opportunities to discuss Sanskrit grammar with Si-tu Rin-po-che, editor of the Sde-dge Bka'-'gyur, and made friends with Kah-thog Rig-'dzin and Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen VII Dkar-brgyud-'phrin-las-shing-rta (1718-66). The Dalai Lama mentions these students merely as "Bhutanese students of grammar" (Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., ff.311.b, 327.b-28.a).

224

Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., ff.265.a, 291.b; the missions for 1741 and 1742 are not specifically noted, except by vague mention of "customary emissaries".

225

Ibid., ff.277.b, 299.b.

226

Dkon-mchog-'jigs-med-dbang-po, Rje bla ma srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan paṇ chen thams cad mkhyen pa blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa...stod cha, f.32.a.

227 Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.293.a.

228 "History of Sikkim," pp. 75-78, where the chronology is hopelessly confused, however. Cf. also Ram Rahul, "Sikkim of History," pp. 18-19.

229 Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.223.a.

230 Ibid., f.283.a.

231 Brag-dkar-rta-so-pa Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug (b. 1775), Dpal rig 'dzin chen po rdo rje tshe dbang nor bu'i zhabs kyis rnam par thar pa'i cha shas brjod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i rol mtsho, f.83.a.

232 The Dalai Lama's biography does not record the dispatch of this mission, and various dates have been put forward. The MS "History of Sikkim" (p. 77) gives 1747; Shakabpa (Tibet, p. 146-7) supported 1740, but more recently has argued for 1744 (Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs, vol. 1, p. 551), apparently on the basis of more reliable information from Sikkim. My tentative date relies on passages from Dalai Lama VII's biography, and information in the following footnote.

233 The evidence for this is intriguing but inconclusive. G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje we know was born in Rab-brtan-shar, a small district in or very near the Yar-klung valley entrance. The most interesting clue is provided by Yon-tan-mtha'-yas who studied with G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje at Dre'u-lhas late in 1742, and who witnessed a visit by the Yab 'Bras-ljongs-rgyal-po Rab-brtan-shar-pa ('Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, op. cit., f.27.a). The question is to whom does yab (hon. "father") refer. It can only designate the father or uncle (by polyandrous marriage) of G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje, or Rab-brtan-shar-pa retrospectively as the father of the Sikkim king enthroned ca. 1749.

234 "History of Sikkim," pp. 77, 87.

235 Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.355.b, for the Dalai Lama's interview with Rab-brtan-shar-pa's son, specifically titled "King of Sikkim".

236 Ibid., f.442.b.

237 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.31.b-33.b. Shākya-bstan-'dzin's opinion of the wretched and unpleasant aspect of Brda-gling-kha was as uncomplementary as that of British Indian emissary Ashley Eden in 1864 (Great Britain, House of Commons, Accounts & Papers vol. 39, 1865(47) Papers Relating to Bhutan, pp. 201-202).

238 "History of Sikkim," pp. 77-79.

239 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, f.23.b.

240 Ibid., f.40.a.

241 Petech, "Rulers of Bhutan," p. 207.

242 Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.34.a-39.a.

243 Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs brjod, ff.30.b, 33.a-34.a, 67.b.

Ch. IX: The Reign of Chos-rgyal Shes-rab-dbang-phyug: 1744-1763

The installation of Shes-rab-dbang-phyug as Sde-srid XIII early in 1744 marked the beginning of two decades of enlightened government and sustained prosperity in Bhutan. Strong central government was reimposed and the factionalism which had prevailed for so long was brought under control, enabling the country's energies to be directed with a unity of purpose long absent. The monk historians declare that under Shes-rab-dbang-phyug internal administration was responsible and just, the collection and expenditure of revenue equitable and proper, and support for the church unstinting in its generosity.¹ There is no evidence to suggest that this was not the case.

Responsible internal government was paralleled by a foreign policy very different from the ingrown isolationism to which the Bhutanese leaders had so long been accustomed. Defensive isolationism had been the legacy of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's era, and might have been abandoned much earlier had stable government ensued. But constitutional uncertainty had left the government self-consciously weak and the church unable to assert its traditional supreme authority. Thus preoccupied with organizational problems and infighting, the government became out of step with economic and political developments occurring elsewhere in the Himalayan region. By the early 18th century, at least, imports of rice and other staples from Bhutan had become important to the economy of Central Tibet,² but there is little evidence from Bhutanese sources to indicate that the government effectively controlled or derived the principal benefit from this source of revenue. The secessionist inclination of dominant families in the agriculturally rich Paro valley, which was also the main export route into Tibet, probably reflects to a degree the growing conflict between local economic self-interest and nationalist sentiments.

But the shock of Tibet's successful exploitation of this weakness and Pho-lha-nas' judicious display of Chinese power changed everything. Temporary Tibetan support for Dkar-sbis secession had forced the Punakha government to compete for accommodation with the north; the facade of national unity and independence was exposed for what it was. That precedent once established, there could be no question of retreat to the old ways. Even after the Dkar-sbis crisis abated, Bhutan had to face the obvious fact of its inability to control the reappearance and movement of its incarnate heads of state. Thus, Mi-pham-dbang-po's policy of accommodation was temporarily continued by his successor. But there was needed a complete re-thinking of Bhutan's status in the Himalayan world, a coordinated plan and a vigorous ruler to implement it.

It is not insignificant that Tibet itself had just passed through a crisis in its incarnate governing structure. The Sixth Dalai Lama was no ruler, the never-enthroned "false" Seventh Dalai Lama was a puppet. The "real" Seventh Dalai Lama, Bskal-bzang-rgya-mtsho, was not officially empowered to rule until 1751, and even then only after Pho-lha-nas' death in 1747 and under the watchful eye of China. Tibet's growth in prosperity and stability under Pho-lha-nas' eighteen-year rule as "king", politely side-stepping the religious superiority of the Dalai Lama, was a lesson not unnoticed in Bhutan.

Bhutanese leaders could hardly have wished to be dominated by Tibet, even less by China. It was a question of proper response to a complex threat. The answer was found in Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, a man whose career and political sagacity compare strikingly with those of his Tibetan counterpart, Pho-lha-nas Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyas. Under Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's careful guidance the sources of internal stress were greatly reduced, in part by lavish distribution of government funds. At the same

time, the demeaning posture of accommodation was reshaped into an active policy of Bhutanese involvement in Tibet's own internal affairs. This, we shall see, was fairly restrained and low key. Money played a role here, too, but clever diplomacy was the hallmark. The net result was an economically strengthened national government, which brought about a workable rearrangement of rights and responsibilities between the church and secular establishments, and led to the country's emergence as a "responsible" power in Himalayan political circles.

When George Bogle visited Tashichhodzong during the summer of 1774, he wrote of the Bhutanese monks and their "sacred profession" that it, "so far from disqualifying them from the conduct of civil affairs, is the means of advancing them to it."³ Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was just such a man. He was born in 1697 as the youngest of eight children into an undistinguished, though locally prominent, peasant family of Mkharsarkha, a village in the Thim valley.⁴ His early life is not well known. The childhood name Sri-thub he retained throughout his life, even after entering the monastery at the age of fourteen (1710), at which time he was tonsured by Rgyal-sras Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan and given the initiatory name Shes-rab-dbang-phyug.⁵ There he resided for the next eighteen years, until the initial phase of the civil war in 1729.

Of his long career as an ordained monk we know nothing whatsoever, but no doubt the personal qualities which later brought him to political prominence became manifest during those years. When the civil war broke out in 1729 and Mi-pham-dbang-po was installed as Sde-srid, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug immediately received appointment as mgron-gnyer at Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse. There he was responsible for preventing the factional feud from spreading into eastern Bhutan, his success at which earned him appointment as mgron-gnyer at Wangdiphodrang in about 1730. The dates here are not certain, but it is clear that Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's

abilities as a wartime commander were at least as notable as those as a monk and scholar. He was also thoroughly loyal to Mi-pham-dbang-po and the Punakha government, and when the Dkar-sbis faction seized control over Paro, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was appointed as "official" Paro Dpon-slob and commissioned the hazardous task of coordinating the campaign to defeat the secessionists.⁶

Unfortunately, the record of his conduct during this period has not been preserved in the biography. His commission would certainly have pitted him against Tibetan troops. The historian Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal mentions the bitter strife at Tashichhodzong which he observed between the armies of Dkar-sbis and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug,⁷ and eventually, it is said, the latter was able "by valour and craft" to reoccupy Paro Rin-chen-spungs. This, no doubt, occurred during 1734-35. After the fall of Paro Shes-rab-dbang-phyug remained as Dpon-slob to supervise the restoration of order, following which he was appointed to the more responsible and diplomatically more sensitive post of Gzhung-mgron-gnyer.

Here also he distinguished himself as a loyal servant of Mi-pham-dbang-po. When the latter fled to Tibet in 1736, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was largely responsible for maintaining order and suppressing factional pressures. Owing to his zeal, even vague hints of revolt brought the threat of government punishment. It was Shes-rab-dbang-phyug who ordered Shākya-rin-chen's imprisonment at Skyabs-khra during the summer of that year, owing to official "misunderstanding" of Shākya-rin-chen's unauthorized attempt to enter Tibet.⁸ Shes-rab-dbang-phyug later apologized for this harsh treatment, and was instrumental in having Shākya-rin-chen installed as Rje Mkhan-po IX during the spring of 1744.

Sometime after Mi-pham-dbang-po returned from Tibet, late in 1736, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was appointed to a second term as Paro Dpon-slob, and he continued in that office until the final restoration of order in

about 1740 or the year following. During these years Shes-rab-dbang-phyug spent large sums on new religious constructions at Paro; a gilt dome was provided for the dbu-rtse-chen-mo or palace keep, and life-size castings of Padmasambhava and Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal were fashioned at his behest.⁹ When Mi-pham-dbang-po's death was revealed and the body cremated in 1739, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug personally financed the rituals and sponsored a distribution of money to the assemblage of monks, more than 300 in all. This was the first of nine such distributions (mang-'gyed; gnang-sbyin), eight of which occurred after his accession to office as Sde-srid in 1744.¹⁰

Having arranged for the installation of Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal as Tgyal-tshab VI in 1740, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug decided to retire from public life and resume his monastic career. However, he seems to have remained as Paro Dpon-slob for a bit longer, as he offered sanctuary at Rin-spungs to the Phyogs-las Sprul-sku Shākya-bstan-'dzin, who had left Brda-gling-kha with Ngag-dbang-pad-dkar owing to the civil strife in Sikkim. In supporting Shākya-bstan-'dzin at this time, however, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug provoked the ire of the new Sde-srid, Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan,¹¹ which may have had something to do with his retirement as Dpon-slob. This is not certain.

Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan died at Wangdiphodrang, sometime during the winter of 1743-44, and early in 1744 Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was installed as Sde-srid. Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, his biographer, offers several explanations for his selection to the position. His early career as a monk was not unimportant, and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug had undoubtedly emerged from the civil war years with honour and distinction. There were also the usual omens, interpreted later as indications of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's prophetic will. Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's victory in an archery contest among the government ministers, while Mi-pham-dbang-po was still alive, was one such prognostic.¹²

The formal installation took place at Punakha, and was officiated by the youthful Rgyal-tshab Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal and the Rje Mkhan-po Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu. Celebrations lasted for several days, and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's position was acclaimed by the ministers of state. Immediate notice was sent to the Tibetan government, along with presents of gold and silver for the Dalai Lama.¹³ Other Tibetan officials and dignitaries were also notified, probably with the accompaniment of gifts. These included Pho-lha-nas and his sons, and the Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen incarnation Dkar-brgyud-'phrin-las-shing-rta. Congratulatory messages are in turn said to have been received from China, the kings of Ladakh, Nepal and Sikkim, and from Kāmarūpa in India.¹⁴ Of course, the dispatch of missions to these places informing of Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's installation served the additional purpose of establishing his credentials and soliciting the good will of neighbouring rulers. It was a diplomatic formality not systematically pursued by earlier Bhutanese rulers, but one which Shes-rab-dbang-phyug put to good use on many occasions during his term as Sde-srid.

Almost immediately upon taking office Shes-rab-dbang-phyug set about settling the pressing crisis of Bhutan's constitutional structure. This had been attempted by previous rulers, largely through the crude expedient of patronizing one lineage of incarnate claimants at the expense of others. Well aware of the factionalism to which this had earlier given rise, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's solution was to patronize all the lineages, and from the 1740's it became a common feature of the Bhutanese court that two 'Brug-pa rebirths simultaneously occupied the position of Rgyal-tshab. During Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's reign these heads of state did not "rule" the state, however, but were kept thoroughly occupied in religious enterprises sponsored by the government, and in teaching duties in various monasteries of the country. Patronage for the incarnate pretenders was lavish, and it

is difficult not to reach the simple conclusion that monastic contentment during these years resulted in great measure from the unprecedented expenditure of wealth on behalf of the church. Where this money came from is a question to which we shall return.

In mid-1744 Shes-rab-dbang-phyug officially sponsored Shākya-bstan-'dzin's return to incarnate respectability. The occasion was the enthronement of Shākya-rin-chen as Rje Mkhan-po during the 3rd month at Tashichhodzong.¹⁵ By firm government action, and the expenditure of considerable money, the hypersensitive faction opposed to the incarnate pretensions of the Phyogs-las rebirths was temporarily shunted aside. Shākya-bstan-'dzin was immediately entered into the state monastery for the usual course of religious training, and was accorded a measure of distinctive status by special robes and ceremonial privileges. He was not, however, installed as Rgyal-tshab, and in fact in the hierarchy of incarnate claimants before 1763 the Phyogs-las lineage remained lowest in prestige. This can be inferred from the relative value of government gifts distributed on ceremonial occasions during Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's reign, the highly detailed lists of which fill the Sde-srid's biography.

At this point there remained only one living rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal outside the frontiers of Bhutan, 'Jigs-med-grags-pa. Sometime late in 1745 the Sde-srid, Shākya-rin-chen, and the retired Rje Mkhan-po Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las decided to make a fresh approach to the Tibetan government for the young man's release. Letters were sent via the Tibetan 'Brug-pa Kun-legs rebirth G.yung-mgon-rdo-rje, which finally resulted in permission being granted.¹⁶ Undoubtedly, the political manoeuvring necessary to achieve this result was far more complex than we are told. The presence of an amiable contingent of Bhutanese government-sponsored students at 'Bras-spungs during the years 1744-48 must have been a positive influence, although Yon-tan-mtha'-yas' biography does not

openly admit this. Information about Pho-lha-nas' thinking at this period, or about the activities of Bhutanese agents in Tibet, is not yet available.

Whatever the real reasons for the change of policy, the official version was that 'Jigs-med-grags-pa had reached a point in his spiritual career where a long retreat was necessary, and his return to Bhutan was permitted on that basis. About the middle of 1746 'Jigs-med-grags-pa had an audience with the Dalai Lama, was given an assortment of suitable gifts, and was granted leave to depart for Bhutan.¹⁷ He arrived shortly afterwards, though apparently without a great deal of fanfare, and was placed under the tutelage of Shākya-rin-chen. Early in 1747, and just before entering his three-year retreat at Lcags-ri, 'Jigs-med-grags-pa was installed as Rgyal-tshab alongside Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal.

This coronation was an elaborate and expensive affair, the official celebrations for which lasted for twenty days. It was concluded by a large distribution of gifts and money to every resident tax-paying family of the country, to the Sikkim garrison at Sgang-thog, and of course to the Bhutanese monastic officials and heads of state themselves. Altogether, gifts and presents to the value of 47,000 silver coins (dngul-tam) were expended for this event.¹⁸

The relative distribution of gifts among the principal celebrants reveals clearly the incarnate hierarchy as it existed in 1747. Firstly, gifts were laid out before the images of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and his son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, representing the progenitors of three of the four incarnate hierarchs feted at the ceremony. This was followed by gifts to the Mchog gi sprul pa'i sku Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal and to the Mchog gi sprul pa'i sku Ngag-dbang-'jigs-med-grags-pa, each receiving money and presents to the value of 2,290 dngul-tam. The next in precedence was Rin-po-che 'Jigs-med-seng-ge, who received 1,000 dngul-tam. This boy

was the recognized rebirth of Mi-pham-dbang-po, and hence Rgyal-sras III in the lineage deriving from the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa line of the Rgya.¹⁹ The Rje Mkhan-po Shākya-rin-chen next received gifts totalling 450 ngul-tam, and finally Shākya-bstan-'dzin, the rebirth of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, received 164 ngul-tam. By contrast, one of the retired Sde-srid, perhaps Sde-srid XI Dpal-'byor, was given presents totalling 910 ngul-tam.²⁰

Thus, the two joint and coequal heads of state were 'Jigs-med-grags-pa and Rgyal-sras IV Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal, one a reincarnation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal and the other of his son 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje.²¹ Below them in the hierarchy were Rgyal-sras III 'Jigs-med-seng-ge, and, a rather poor fourth, Shākya-bstan-'dzin, also a reincarnation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. It is interesting to note the latter's status as subordinate to that of the Rje Mkhan-po, and superior to a retired Sde-srid only in precedence, but not in the value of his gift. This hierarchy remained unaltered until 'Jigs-med-grags-pa's death in 1761 and that of Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal in the following year, at which point Rgyal-sras III 'Jigs-med-seng-ge was installed as head of state, the situation in existence during the Bogle mission of 1774-75.²² Since this picture of the incarnate hierarchy of Bhutan is rather different from the way it has been described in previous studies, we must briefly attempt to explain how and why the situation prevailing in 1747 came to be.

To understand the complex "theological" history of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's incarnate residue, it is necessary to return to events during the career of Rgyal-sras II Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (r. 1702?-1713). At that time, the death of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had not yet been officially acknowledged. The cell at Lcags-ri wherein Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal was supposedly meditating was still sealed and guarded against entry. In an uncertain year, however, perhaps 1706, the new hierarch Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan nevertheless went to Lcags-ri and, probably out of youthful

curiosity, ordered that the room be unlocked.²³ Of course the chamber was empty except for some sealed cases, and these too Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan opened, in spite of being informed that Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had ordered this never to be done.

These politically indelicate actions on the part of Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan caused something of a stir. If Shākya-rin-chen is to be believed, the government had already tentatively identified a rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal during Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas' tenure as Sde-srid (1680-94), but as this child had been captured from their hands by the Dge-lugs-pa, firm recognition was apparently postponed and the official fiction of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's retreat publicly maintained for some time further. These were the very years during which the Fifth Dalai Lama's death was also being kept secret, and the Bhutan government's intention must have been to locate another rebirth and sequester him safely out of enemy reach before making a public revelation. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's rash move, however, forced the secret into the open, or, as it was later and more poetically interpreted, "broke the spell of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's samadhi".²⁴

The consequences of this event were manifold, but not all became apparent immediately. The strife which plagued Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's last years in office and resulted in his murder was undoubtedly at least an indirect result of his indiscretion in 1706. Unfortunately, the available information does not permit clear distinction between the political and "theological" motives of the factions which quickly arose. By 1707, we have seen earlier, numerous alleged rebirths of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had been hopefully brought to the government's attention. Inevitably, what should have been a process of confidential and methodical monastic selection became swept up in political infighting. Kun-dga'-rgyal-

mtshan's assassination was therefore postumously interpreted, not inaccurately perhaps, as wrathful compensation by the protective deities for setting the trouble into motion.²⁵

Seen in this light, Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's recognition and installation as rightful successor to Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in 1714 was bound to be disputed. Unlike Tibet, Bhutan had not developed a cult of official oracles to resolve such matters, and for some reason the prophetic Rangbyon Khasarpaṇa image which Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal had brought from Rwalung was not used in this fashion. Hence the lack of sanctifying mechanisms for settling the dispute, combined with powerful antipathy towards Sdesrid 'Brug-rab-rgyas on sheer political grounds, redounded to Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal's misfortune. A bright scholar and poet, the author of a life of the Buddha and many other works, this unfortunate incarnation lived and died a victim of circumstances over which he had no control.

The bitter confusion during these years is revealed to some extent by the manner in which the incarnate hierarchs before 1744 were designated. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal was referred to by some as Zhabs-drung Rin-po-che,²⁶ a term which originally had been reserved for Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's lineage of the Rgya. The right to inherit this title in its new incarnate sense naturally became at issue. Even the early Rgyal-sras incarnations were sometimes so addressed. Eventually it was decided that the lineage represented by 'Jigs-med-grags-pa would officially be called Zhabs-drung, but that solution became final only after another civil war in the early 19th century. During the period with which we are concerned, the controversy was commonly avoided by indiscriminate use of the theologically neutral title Mchog-sprul ("Exalted incarnation") for all of the lineages. The rebirths of Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, however, were also addressed simply as Phyogs-las Rin-po-che or Phyogs-las Sprul-sku, implying little more than their incarnate affiliation with Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal himself.

The crisis, we have seen, reached a peak in 1729 when full civil war broke out. How much the incarnation controversy contributed independently to the event is difficult to say. We know that by that year a claim had already been put forward on behalf of 'Jigs-med-grags-pa, the alleged rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal born in Tibet. Yet another rebirth had supposedly been born into the royal family of Sikkim. Resolution of these conflicting claims ultimately had to be a spiritual affair; no political leader could enforce a decision on his own authority. This was as true in Tibet as in Bhutan, the instance of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself being a case in point.

Not surprisingly in such a time of grave political impasse, compromise was found in the interpretation of a prophecy from Padmasambhava, conveniently discovered in about 1727 or 1728. The prophet in this case was a Rnying-ma-pa gter-ston from Khams, a long-time resident of western Bhutan known variously as Byang-chub-rdo-rje, 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje, or 'Brug-grags-rdo-rje.²⁷ For many years he lived at Dpag-bsam-kha (Buxa), proselytizing among the Indians who frequented the trade mart, and, as he was also the discoverer of "hidden texts" at Paro, he was commonly known by the style gter-ston Dpag-bsam-pa. It was this man's prophecies which had allegedly induced Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan to abdicate in 1713,²⁸ and we also know that other prophecies of his were widely interpreted as condemnations of Sde-srid 'Brug-rab-rgyas' imperious activities. Probably in 1728, the very year that the latter took full bhikṣu ordination from Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, gter-ston 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje died, or, according to current Bhutanese belief, was murdered by 'Brug-rab-rgyas.²⁹ We may suppose that the prophetic compromise discovered by 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje did not completely favour this Sde-srid's own wishes, and that the gter-ston's assassination was a factor in the outbreak of civil strife the following year.

The compromise which emerged from 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje's prophetic vision was classic. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan's inadvertent penetration of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's contemplative repose, it was explained, had instantly resulted in Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's death. But immediately there had shot forth beams of light from his body, speech, and mind, which in due course embedded themselves respectively in the human embryo of three unborn infants in Sikkim, Tagana, and Grwa-nang in Tibet. The Body incarnation (Sku-sprul) was thus born as a royal prince of Sikkim who, however, died during the civil war years and never again took rebirth. The Speech incarnation (Gsung-sprul) was none other than the reigning head of state Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal, according to this interpretation, while the Mind incarnation (Thugs-sprul) was the child born in Tibet, later named 'Jigs-med-grags-pa.³⁰

The compromise was not perfect, however. Although it reconciled in typically Rnying-ma-pa fashion the existence of rival incarnations of the same individual, it did not apparently resolve the question of their mutual hierarchic arrangement. The disappearance of the Body incarnation still left the potential for contest between the other two, which was in fact what the Tibetans and Chinese believed to underlie the Bhutan civil war of 1729-35. Nor did it reconcile the existence of a much earlier rebirth of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, the one whom Shākya-rin-chen alleges died in China.³¹ Finally, it left the status of the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che in doubt. Perhaps in postumously blaming this incarnation for "breaking the spell" of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's samādhi it was intended to find a scapegoat acceptable to the principal contending parties. But we have seen that in the revolution of 1729 Rgyal-sras III Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu was installed as head of state, and his brother Rgyal-sras II Mi-pham-dbang-po from the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa branch of the Rgya as Sde-srid. Thus, by the time Tibet actively intervened in 1730, the incarnation question

was already far more complex than Pho-lha-nas realized. There is evidence to suggest that even at the end of the 18th century the Chinese still did not fully comprehend the rulership controversy in Bhutan.³² Nor was it clearly understood by George Bogle in 1774-75, or in fact by any subsequent British Indian emissaries to Bhutan in more recent centuries.

In any case, from 1729 onwards there were in Bhutan four incarnation lineages whose rivalry for government patronage had to be taken into account. Two of these, the Gsung-sprul (Phyogs-las) and the Thugs-sprul (Zhabs-drung), were rebirths of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The other two were rebirths respectively of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's son Rgyal-sras 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje and of his designated collateral heir from the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa, Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas.

Why the Bhutanese monks generally favoured the Thugs-sprul lineage over the Gsung-sprul during the 18th century is difficult to say with certainty. There are any number of possible political reasons, in addition to purely theological explanations, about which we are ill-informed. Nevertheless, during Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's tenure as Sde-srid the Thugs-sprul or "Mind" lineage, represented by 'Jigs-med-grags-pa, in fact was superior in status to the "Speech" lineage, but was on an even footing with the Rgyal-sras lineage of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje. There is nothing further to add at this point except to note that the jockeying for position between these incarnate lineages and their supporters continued long past 1763. 'Jigs-med-grags-pa reigned scarcely more than thirteen years before being poisoned by factional opponents, but he recuperated for a year or so at Wangdiphodrang under the protection of the future Sde-srid Bzhi-dar, and finally died in 1761. His next rebirth, Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1762-1785), another protégé of Bzhi-dar, also died of poisoning at a young age.³³

Thus the reincarnate infighting continued to be a source of tension to Bhutan. It naturally weakened the prestige and power of the church,

whose continued disunity allowed civil authorities to assume ever greater authority. Under a strong and pious Sde-srid such as Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, the incarnate heads of state functioned virtually as exalted church leaders. They spent long periods of time in contemplative retreat, and were apparently content to enjoy the perquisites of ceremonial supremacy. But they were in fact at the beck and call of the Sde-srid. In this way Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's liberal reign set a precedent for the de facto supremacy of secular rulers. The pretence of subordination to the church was maintained in various ways. Those later Sde-srid, who were not in fact also incarnate heads of state, were usually accorded the title Chos-rgyal or Dharmarāja, and most took at least preliminary monastic vows, thereby receiving initiatory names and monastic robes. The court retained a "monkish" look, as Bogle aptly observed.³⁴ But there was no official devolution of monastic supremacy, no constitutional amendment such as occurred finally in 1907. Attempts by the church to reassert its authority, however, were generally attended by strife, and, while frequently successful (especially in the early 19th century), underlying tension between the religious and secular establishments remained a feature of the Bhutanese political scene down to the 20th century.

Thus Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's resolution of the incarnate succession question was not a permanent one. His innovation was to simultaneously patronize all four lineages, an experiment which succeeded, at least during his reign, in neutralizing the issue which had been a principal focus of civil discord for fifty years. Competition between jointly-reigning hierarchs was perhaps minimized by a practice of alternate rule and retreat. 'Jigs-med-grags-pa entered the retreat for which he had been brought to Bhutan in 1747, at the completion of which in 1750 Rgyal-sras Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal began a five-year retreat at Lcags-ri.³⁵ From 1744 to 1763, monastic factionalism persisted only as a minor and largely

unobtrusive feature of the state, an important factor in Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's successful pursuit of diplomatic initiatives in other spheres of government.

Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's patronage of the incarnate hierarchs was matched by generous support for the church as a whole, and even for such minor sects as the Sa-skya, which still maintained a presence in the country. Expenditure in this was lavish, and the monks of the state church were kept constantly active in the construction and consecration of new images, hangings, and hermitages. We need not describe these events in great detail. In 1748, the state made a major donation of funds and supplies for 243 monasteries and smaller chapels throughout the country, in addition to the principal monasteries of state.³⁶ In 1765, following his retirement, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug paid for another such distribution of wealth to the monasteries from his personal resources.³⁷ In 1749 he sponsored at Pha-jo-sdings, near Thimphu, the construction of a new hermitage, a centre of scholarly activity named Thub-bstan-bya-rgod-phung-po-gtsug-lag-khang upon completion.³⁸

Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's main preoccupation, however, was the restoration and enlargement of Tashichhodzong and Punakha. His principal achievement at Punakha was the great golden dome, a large appliqué hanging, and various images to outfit the interior. Beginning in 1753 with an elaborate founding ceremony, 134 wood and metal craftsmen, many of them Nepalese, worked continuously until 1756, when the structure was formally dedicated. Expenditure on the project, according to government records, amounted to 192,106 angul-tam.³⁹ The restoration and additions at Tashichhodzong was a somewhat smaller project during the years 1758-60.⁴⁰

Bhutanese historians universally describe Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's reign as a period of peace and prosperity, a time when law was firmly and justly maintained. This also was thought to have been foreseen in a

prophecy of 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje.⁴¹ Much of the strictness with which bureaucratic efficiency and honesty were enforced during his years was probably due, however, to the large state expenditures incurred during his reign. We are fortunate that Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's biography reproduces or summarizes several interesting official proclamations which indicate rather clearly, if indirectly, the measures by which Shes-rab-dbang-phyug intended to increase administrative effectiveness and internal stability.

Either as a matter of tradition or owing to the earlier times of war with Tibet, it had apparently been the practice to concentrate government and monastic stores in one or two locations only. The Gling-bzhi fortress on the northwestern frontier, for example, traditionally served as the main government granary. During the Dkar-sbis secession, however, this granary must have become inaccessible to the Punakha government. Other recent events also revealed the danger of such overcentralization. In 1752, therefore, a series of measures was begun to decentralize stores, and to build up stockpiles of strategic goods at all the major fortresses. This, allegedly, was in harmony with a plan of national defence once implemented by king Srong-btsan-sgam-po, who distributed government supplies and weapons among the frontier temples to guarantee the peace of his empire. Following this cue from history, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug adopted a similar plan, and thus we have a detailed list for 1752 of money, bulk grain, muskets, gunpowder and other such items which the Sde-srid transferred from central storerooms to the outlying administrative centres of his state.⁴² In 1757 it was ordered that the annual grain collection through Tagana, amounting to 12,000 khal, should thereafter be apportioned between Gling-bzhi, Punakha and Tashichhodzong.⁴³

Many provisions of the legal code preserved in the Lho'i chos 'byung (1759), particularly those closely regulating land and taxes, should

probably be attributed to Shes-rab-dbang-phyug himself. 'Brug-rab-rgyas, an earlier vigorous ruler, is also known to have promulgated strict laws on such matters, but between his assassination and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's accession to power enforcement was apparently minimal. Thus, for instance, a practice had once been common whereby local officials or headmen would resume for themselves the title to land whose hereditary male ownership had ended. The practice was once banned by 'Brug-rab-rgyas, but was surreptitiously resumed during the civil war years, and again prohibited by Shes-rab-dbang-phyug.⁴⁴ Corollary decrees in the legal code further restrained such confiscation in providing for inheritance by sons, daughters, or nearest living relatives.⁴⁵ Other regulations, such as the prohibition against joint family habitation, were clearly intended to prevent tax evasion and the emergence of large landholders.⁴⁶

Most taxation in Bhutan was levied from the family unit, although precise assessments, as in Tibet, were figured on the basis of a land-yield index known as the rkang. By demanding official honesty, and by promoting new settlement and the cultivation of vacant fields, it was apparently felt that increased internal revenue could be generated without causing undue hardship. Indeed, taxes in general appear to have been more evenly assessed than in 18th century Tibet. There were no conspicuously large aristocratic estates, and by comparison the property holdings of the Bhutanese church were apparently rather small. Fertile land was not allowed to remain fallow in any circumstance by decrees of this period, and if not cultivated it was subject to confiscation and redistribution among the peasantry. On the other hand, government grain surpluses over and above those required in case of war or famine were ordered to be regularly redistributed to needy peasants. We are further told that the legendary decision of the 8th century Tibetan king Mu-ne-btsan-po to equalise the wealth of rich and poor was to be adhered to as the exemplary model.⁴⁷

Did Shes-rab-dbang-phyug pursue yet other sources of government revenue? The subject of traditional Bhutanese administrative and taxing privileges in the Duar or hilly tracts on the Indian frontier cannot, unfortunately, be adequately studied from the local literature currently available. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, we have seen, received donatory estates from the kings of Cooch Bihar during the 17th century. But their physical extent and revenue-producing capacity are questions yet to be resolved. The 1747 coronation record lists 1,667 taxable family units of Indic and Bhutanese nationality under the administration of Tagana, and in 1757, it has been noted,⁴⁸ the annual grain collection from these people amounted to 12,000 khal, about 18,500 kilograms at our hypothetical rate of 1 khal = 15.3 kg. The anachronistic description of this tax as dbang-yon or "tithe" probably reflects its historical origin as a right granted to the Bhutanese church during the 17th century. By 1757 it had clearly become an involuntary levy.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, comparable information about Bhutanese collections from the so-called Assam Duars is not available. Nevertheless, since the issue of Bhutanese taxation rights along the Indian frontier became a constant source of strife with British India, some note must be taken of what these rights were and how they came into being.

Firstly, the collection of taxes from the Duars, assuming the natural unwillingness of cultivators to voluntarily pay them, is unlikely to have been a consistent enterprise except during periods of strong central rule in Punakha. The ability of Bhutan to collect grain "tithes" from peasants adjacent to Cooch Bihar, moreover, would probably have depended also on the strength of rule in that principality as well. Squeezed between vigorous administrations on mutually friendly terms, the peasants are likely to have paid. Administrative weakness in either state, on the other hand, would probably have caused population movements into the weaker area, at least during harvest seasons, in the hope of tax reduction or

avoidance. There were only two periods of strong central rule in 18th century Bhutan, the administrations of 'Brug-rab-rgyas and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug. The fragmentary information from Bhutanese texts suggests that during both periods effort was expended to extend effective control into the Bengal Duars. 'Brug-rab-rgyas, we are told, had forbidden the practice of sati by the country's Hindu subjects. However, during the interregnum following his assassination the practice was resumed, only to be once more outlawed by Shes-rab-dbang-phyug.⁴⁹

This tells us nothing about taxes, of course, but it is reasonable to assume that any Buddhist government of the hill country seriously intent on enforcing such a prohibition along the plains would also have been reasonably placed to enforce the payment of traditional "tithes". Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, moreover, took various steps to cultivate cordial relations with the princes of Cooch Bihar. In order to "benefit the peasants", it is said, he made regular grants of valuable horses, musk, and other goods to the Cooch Bihar ruling princes, and to further increase the physical extent of Bhutanese rule he patronized minor chieftains at other places along the southern frontier.⁵⁰ In 1757, finally, an unidentified but prosperous king of Assam is said to have sent Shes-rab-dbang-phyug presents as an inducement to spread the Buddhist faith in his territories.⁵¹ No doubt the Hindu rulers in question had rather different interpretations of these developments, but that is another matter. In simple and less colourful terms, it is clear that Shes-rab-dbang-phyug pursued policies in the lowlands designed to augment the tax base of Bhutan, whether by reasserting traditional privileges or cultivating new ones.

A comparison of the admittedly inadequate population data for Bhutan lends additional support to this hypothesis. The figures contained in the coronation document of 1747 suggest that the tax-paying population of

Bhutan was then only about one sixth the estimated modern figure of approximately 1,000,000 persons. Unfortunately, detailed mang-'gyed records for subsequent years of Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's reign are not available to indicate whether, in what areas, or how rapidly, the subject population might have increased. The population in 1747 may also have been artificially low owing the country's recent emergence from several decades of internal strife. Residents in the remote areas, moreover, might not yet have been reincluded in the roll of citizens. A late 18th century Chinese estimate of Bhutan's population was something over 40,000 households, roughly 40% more than the figure of 27,363 officially recognized in 1747.⁵² In the biography of Zhabs-drung IV 'Jigs-med-grags-pa II (1791-1830?) a figure of 60,000 subject households (mi-khyim) is cited in connection with the ceremony for his official incarnate recognition in about 1795. But this number was perhaps a traditional one current at the time the work was written (1831).⁵³

This combination of evidence, along with the legal code's pre-occupation with various measures to increase the internal tax base, suggest that mid-18th century Bhutan was still relatively underpopulated (or unregistered), with the result that the revenue required to guarantee church tranquility and pursue other foreign policy objectives could not readily be met from traditional, indigenous sources. Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's expenditures may have been atypically large, and state income during his reign from the commodity trade with Tibet cannot be estimated from available data. On the other hand imports of salt and wool from Tibet would have been financially offsetting to a degree. Nevertheless, systematic collection of revenue from the Duars probably began in earnest only after 1744, when the need for it became pressing and the bureaucracy to properly administer it was established and subjected to tighter central control. Bhutanese dependency on this source of income was quickly perceived by the

British after 1774, and, as is well known, became the key to British Indian domination of Bhutan in subsequent centuries.

Increasing the citizenry and stricter control on taxes were not the only means of augmenting the state's income, however. Initiatives pursued by Shes-rab-dbang-phyug in respect of Tibet had the result of generating a modest inflow of "foreign aid". Actually, these sums were not very large, and were channelled in such a fashion that the militantly conservative faction among Bhutan's monastic leadership could not realistically have objected. Initially, at least, there was also a matching outflow of "aid" funds to Tibet. These transactions had their origin in Mi-pham-dbang-po's involuntary visit to Lhasa in 1736, but were promoted by Shes-rab-dbang-phyug as an aspect of broader foreign policy goals. These, I have suggested, were designed to neutralize any impression that Bhutan's new relationship with Tibet was one of subservience. They were also clearly nationalistic in purpose and implementation. Not stated in the sources, but evident in the outcome, was that they steered a careful path past the Manchu Ambans in Lhasa.

Shes-rab-dbang-phyug moved simultaneously on several fronts. Since Pho-lha-nas' death in 1747 the rulership question in Tibet had become somewhat complicated by increasing tension between his younger son and heir, "king" 'Gyur-med-rnam-rgyal, and his elder son Ye-shes-tshe-brtan. The Dalai Lama was also apparently becoming restless at being kept politically impotent for so many years.⁵⁴ Whereas earlier Bhutanese rulers might have squandered the opportunity offered by these signs of weakness by reopening useless frontier disputes, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug adopted a diplomatic "forward policy" to guarantee Bhutan's safe position whatever the outcome in Tibet. While at the same time nurturing the Dalai Lama's passion for restoring ancient temples, towards the quarrelling brothers Shes-rab-dbang-phyug pursued a course of helpful mediation.

The plan to restore Rwa-lung had been proposed in 1736, but had not apparently been pursued at a very rapid rate. Mi-pham-dbang-po's death in 1738 left Bhutan temporarily out of the picture, and the initiative for completing the work devolved upon the Tibetan 'Brug-pa hierarch Dkar-brgyud-'phrin-las-shing-rta, who would have been the major beneficiary in any case. In the meantime, however, the Seventh Dalai Lama continued his program of systematically restoring the frontier temples of the ancient Tibetan empire. Two of these, of course, were in Bhutan, at Bum-thang and Paro. Some funds for their restoration had been solicited and received by the previous Sde-srid Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan in 1743. From about 1749, however, lavish temple restoration was renewed on a cooperative basis between Shes-rab-dbang-phyug and the Dalai Lama, and continued until the latter's death in 1757.

In 1749 Shes-rab-dbang-phyug dispatched a quantity of money (2,000 dngul-tam) and other supplies for the restoration work at Rwa-lung.⁵⁵ His generous contribution to this project is said to have been so highly appreciated that Dkar-brgyud-'phrin-las-shing-rta ordered Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's portrait to be painted on the wall as patron.⁵⁶ The Dalai Lama had also contributed heavily to this restoration, anxious to rebuild relations with both Bhutan and the lesser Buddhist sects in Tibet.⁵⁷ Thus, Bhutanese money flowed into Tibet as a matter of state diplomacy. As an ancient Tibetan temple, the former seat of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, and a historic monument for the Tibetan 'Brug-pas, restoration of Rwa-lung was a convenient and suitable focus for the divergent interests of these formerly inimical parties.

The money spent by Bhutan at Rwa-lung was small compared with the quantity of Tibetan aid for religious construction in Bhutan, however. The main project was the golden dome of Punakha and the simultaneous fabrication of a huge appliqué hanging of Avalokiteśvara. Shes-rab-dbang-

phyug first solicited money for this purpose in 1752, and the Dalai Lama responded willingly.⁵⁸ An even larger grant of Tibetan financial support was received in the following year, and yet again in 1754.⁵⁹ When work was finally completed late in 1755 Shes-rab-dbang-phyug sent a mission to Tibet announcing New Year of 1756 for the consecration ceremony, invited a Tibetan representative to attend, and presented the Dalai Lama with a variety of expensive gifts to thank him for his support over the years. Tibetan contributions had actually been rather substantial. Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's biography lists these in some detail. In addition to bullion for the gilding of the dome, Tibet had also sent muskets, swords, and other weapons for inclusion in the Punakha armoury, the total value of which, we are told, was 20,663 dnagul-tam, about 10% of the total cost of the Punakha project.⁶⁰ This was considerably more than Bhutan's contribution towards the expenses at Rwa-lung.

"Temple diplomacy" thus had the net effect of an influx of money into the country, and a heightened reputation for Shes-rab-dbang-phyug personally, in both Bhutan and Tibet, as a pious sponsor of religious enterprises. To commemorate the event at Punakha the Dalai Lama composed a verse epistle filled with effusive praise for this Sde-srid, the text of which was incorporated into the official compendium of the Dalai Lama's epistolary masterpieces.⁶¹ But that was not all. In 1751, the first year of the Seventh Dalai Lama's independent rule, he allocated 38,800 silver srang for restoration of the frontier temples.⁶² Similar amounts were spent in subsequent years,⁶³ and some of this money, we know, was spent at Bum-thang and Paro. Almost certainly it was during these years that the custom was begun for Tibet to pay contributions to Bhutan for the performance of regular services of worship at its ancient frontier temples, a custom which continued down to the 20th century.⁶⁴

Before 1751, however, the tense political situation in Tibet had demanded a more complex response from Bhutan. "Temple diplomacy" with the Dalai Lama had then served the additional function of cultivating good will at the religious level, independent of the course of political relations between their governments. About the latter we have relatively little information. Shes-rab-dbang-phyug continued to dispatch the annual lo-phyag missions, and could not be faulted on that score. On the other hand, he may have seen in the growing enmity between Pho-lha-nas' sons the seeds of a civil war situation similar to that of 1727-30, from which Pho-lha-nas had emerged triumphantly and, partly at Bhutan's expense, with acclaim from China. Probably to forestall the possibility of a repeat performance, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug adopted the role of peacemaker.

The novel irony of a Bhutanese ruler attempting to mediate in the palace politics of Tibet must have seemed a curious turn of events. But, coming near the peak of the struggle, late in 1749, the mission did not travel unprepared for trouble. In addition to large sums of money to be distributed as "presents", the Tagana Dpon-slob, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's principal emissary, was accompanied by a force of 300 soldiers, armed with 35 muskets, powder and 700 rounds of ammunition.⁶⁵ Tibetan sources are silent about Bhutanese involvement at this time, and Shes-rab-dbang-phyug was apparently careful to maintain strict neutrality between the contending factions. 'Gyur-med-rnam-rgyal and his brother each received 500 ngul-tam, and lesser amounts were provided for Pho-lha-nas' daughter Bde-ldan-sgrol-ma and the ministers of state. Gifts were also sent to the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and the monks of the three principal monasteries in Lhasa.

The mediation effort, of course, came to nothing. By the time the mission returned during the 2nd month of 1750 Ye-shes-tshe-brtan had already been assassinated by his brother, and a year later 'Gyur-med-rnam-

rgyal met the same fate at the hands of the Manchu Ambans, whereupon the Dalai Lama was installed in power under Chinese protection.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Bhutan emerged from the fracas unscathed, and in fact in a very strong position indeed, as relations between Shes-rab-dbang-phyug and the Dalai Lama during subsequent years prove.

In 1751 Shes-rab-dbang-phyug adopted the role of peacemaker in Tibet yet again, this time during the course of a civil war in Ladakh. This was a minor event in Tibetan history, although of somewhat greater importance for Ladakh in that the principle of ruling succession was at stake.⁶⁷ Shes-rab-dbang-phyug, we are told, was invited to dispatch an envoy. The man selected was the Wangdiphodrang Rdzong-dpon Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, who later achieved notoriety as Sde-srid Bzhi-dar in the war with the British.⁶⁸ Again, presents for the contending factions were sent, and Bsod-nams-lhun-grub is said to have successfully mediated a settlement.⁶⁹ Actually, however, it was the Tibetan Lama Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang-nor-bu who served as principal negotiator, and neither the Ladakhis nor the Tibetans admit to any Bhutanese involvement in the episode. But, minor as it may have been, it is the character of Bhutan's response at this time, rather than its consequences, which is worth noting. In a principality where once Tibet and Bhutan had been sectarian adversaries they now competed to display their individual diplomatic eminence.

Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's efforts to promote the image of an independent and "responsible" Bhutan were thus successful in a modest way. The country's comparatively limited resources did not permit it to assume a major role in Himalayan affairs. But isolation from the north was an anachronistic policy to which return was impossible, and it was to Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's credit that shrewd diplomacy achieved as much as it did. That he acted out of nationalistic interest cannot be doubted. The writing of history,

for instance, a rather haphazard enterprise in Bhutan till this time, truly flourished during these years. Aside from the extensive writings of Shākya-rin-chen, who we know wrote under government sponsorship, 1759 saw the completion of the first comprehensive history of Bhutan, the Lho'i chos 'byung of Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal, who reigned as Rje Mkhan-po from 1755 to 1762. The work had been begun in 1731, but it was under Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's auspices that it was finished, and several of the first prints from the new woodblocks were in fact sent as gifts to Lamas of the 'Brug-pa church in Tibet.⁷⁰

Bhutan was becoming known; the closed doors to this "Hidden Land" were reopening once more, at least to the north. The 'Ba'-ra-ba monks, for instance, denied a presence in Bhutan since their expulsion by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal in 1634, were again permitted to enter the country and worship at their ancient hermitage of 'Brang-rgyas-kha near Paro. It was in 1752 that 'Ba'-ra-ba Ngag-dbang-ye-shes (b. 1700) visited the old site, and thereafter such missions became more frequent.⁷¹ Later still the 'Ba'-ra-ba were allowed to sponsor reconstruction at the monastery, and of its celebrated image of their sect's founder Rgyal-mtshan-dpal-bzang. Limited 'Ba'-ra-ba activity in Bhutan continued to be permitted throughout the 19th century, which is as far as the available sources continue the story.

* * * * *

Here we shall close our account. At the beginning of this research the point was made that Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's reign was a landmark in the country's history. This was so for several reasons, some of which have been related in this chapter. 1763, the year of his retirement, saw the rise to power of a new generation of monastic and civil rulers. Zhabs-drung 'Jigs-med-grags-pa had died of poisoning in 1761, and Rgyal-sras

Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal died in 1762, of uncertain causes. Rgyal-sras III 'Jigs-med-seng-ge of the Rdo-rje-gdan-pa incarnation line was installed as Rgyal-tshab or head of state in 1763.⁷² In 1762 Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal retired as Rje Mkhan-po. The historian Shākya-rin-chen had already died in 1759.

The new Sde-srid 'Brug-phun-tshogs, though a well-liked and generous statesman, was not cut from the same mould as his predecessor, and when he died precipitously in 1765 the monks turned once again to Shes-rab-dbang-phyug. But he refused the offer of a second term as Sde-srid and devoted the remaining years of his retirement to pious works and charity.⁷³ In 1766 he sponsored one last distribution of wealth to the hermitages and monks of Bhutan, 120,000 ngul-tam, which was, we are told, everything he possessed.⁷⁴

From that year the factionalism which Shes-rab-dbang-phyug had successfully held in check began again to emerge. Competition between the church and civil leaders, between the new Rgyal-tshab and the future Sde-srid XVI Bsod-nams-lhun-grub, reopened old wounds and was exacerbated by the war with the British in 1773-74. Moreover, Zhabs-drung III Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1762-1785) once again took rebirth in Tibet, this time into a family of Dge-lugs-pa patrons at 'Phyongs-rgyas.⁷⁵ The need to negotiate his release again forced Bhutan into a defensive position vis-à-vis Tibet, and, although only dimly perceived by George Bogle in 1774, the question of Bhutan's incarnate rulership was to remain a vital issue dominating political events at Punakha for nearly four decades.

The structural vulnerability of the Bhutan state was certainly perceived by its more enlightened and informed monastic leaders, but solutions to the problem were not readily come by. Nor could the British have then known that their war with Bhutan in 1773-74 had been prophesied, or what the influence of that prophecy would be. In 1782 the retired

Rje Mkhan-po Yon-tan-mtha'-yas travelled to the old pilgrimage centre of Tsā-ri in southeastern Tibet, and there, before the prophetic lake at Dag-pa-shel-ri, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal appeared to him in a series of visions.⁷⁶ In these the entire course of Bhutan's tribulations since the 17th century was rehearsed and explained by Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself, who urged Yon-tan-mtha'-yas to relate them to 'Jigs-med-seng-ge, the man known to Bogle as "Lama Rimboché" but who at this time was serving jointly as head of state and Sde-srid.

The troubles in Bhutan and Tibet, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal, explained, were basically the result of a decline in the purity of religious practice. The countries were filled with men and monks, high and low alike, with few interests other than fame, sex, and money. These preoccupations, it was claimed, had given rise to every sort of problem, and had now enticed Bhutan's new rulers into treaty relations with the British (Phi-ling-pa). This had happened once before, when Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal himself had made peace and begun commercial transactions with the Sde-pa Gtsang-pa, his former enemy. The result of confusing the protective deities on that occasion had been the termination of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's family line. Failure now to morally rearm, to reaffirm the country's religious foundations, Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal predicted, would inevitably turn both Bhutan and Tibet into a sparring ground between India and China.⁷⁷

So the monastic response to British presence was basically reactionary, and indeed backward-looking. The god of Commerce was seen by these pious men as a manifestation of the Devil, the very same whose handiwork had been responsible for their country's constitutional trouble since the time of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. The historic consequences of 1773 coloured events in Bhutan for long into the future, but with these we cannot deal.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.99.b-100.a; Shes-rab-dbang-phyug must have been the "Deb Seklu", of whom Bogle heard several reports in 1774. Seklu is certainly a mispronunciation of Sri-thub, Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's non-monastic name (Markham, Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet..., pp. 24, 61).

² De Filippi, Filippo, ed., An Account of Tibet (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1937²), pp. 140-141. Gurkha depredations in Nepal may also have induced Tibet's renewed interest in the possibilities of trade through Bhutan during this period.

³ Markham, op. cit., p. 35.

⁴ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, ff.21.a-27.b.

⁵ Such names as Sri-thub ("Demon-withstanding") were commonly given to children in Bhutan. Bzhi-dar is obscure but probably has a similar origin.

⁶ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.23.a.

⁷ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pan̄di ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.37.b. This work, in addition to other chronological peculiarities, causes the reader certain difficulties by frequently and carelessly referring to individuals by the titles they held at the time of its composition (1769) and not at the time of the events being described.

⁸ Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i gtam, Ja, f.12.b.

⁹ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, f.23.b.

¹⁰ Ibid., ff.29.b, 93.b; Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., Ja, 12.a.

¹¹ Shākya-bstan-'dzin, Byang chub sems dpa' ngag dbang pad dkar gyi rtogs pa brjod pa, f.34.a-b.

¹² Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.23.b; archery has long been as much a sacred as a secular sport in Bhutan; for some discussion cf. Michael Aris, "'The admonition of the thunderbolt cannon-ball'...", p. 633, fn.86 and Mehra, Bhutan, pp. 37-38.

¹³ Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, Rgyal ba'i dbang po thams cad mkhyen gzigs rdo rje 'chang blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho'i ... rnam par thar pa, f.311.a.

¹⁴ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.24.a-26.a.

¹⁵ Shākya-bstan-'dzin, op. cit., ff.39.a-40.b.

¹⁶ Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., Ja, f.12.a.

¹⁷ Lcang-skyā Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.329.b.

¹⁸ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.40.a for the total, and Ibid, ff.30.b-40.a for a complete financial breakdown of the gifts distributed at this event. The question of currency values and types circulating in Bhutan during the 18th century is little known from the native literature. The ngul-tam may have been a local silver coin of moderately high value. Prize horses, given to princes of Cooch Bihar as gifts, for example, were each worth 130 ngul-tam. A unit known as ma-tam is also found, possibly a gold coin. The vast quantity of statistical data reproduced in Shes-rab-dbang-phyug's biography could be analyzed to provide a fairly clear picture of produce costs, salaries for artisans, etc. It is beyond the scope of the present work, however.

¹⁹ 'Jigs-med-seng-ge's dates are not yet available. He was, however, one of the leading personalities of late 18th century Bhutanese history, and served as both head of state and Sde-srid XVIII from about 1776 to 1789; a biography of him may well exist in Bhutan. Bogle knew him as

Lama Rimboché in 1774 (Markham, op. cit., pp. 26, 37-39, 200); cf. also History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 42-43, where his incarnate affiliation is wrongly given, however.

20 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.31.a-34.a.

21 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.69.b.

22 Markham, op. cit., pp. 38-39; Bogle, however, was unaware of the incarnate claims to office of the Rgyal-sras lineages of incarnations.

23 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.87.a-89.b.

24 Lho'i chos 'byung, f.62.b.

25 Ibid.

26 E.g., Ibid., f.67.a; Mtshungs med chos kyi rgyal po rje rin po che'i rnam par thar pa, f.367.b.

27 Khetsun Sangpo, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 4, p. 364; Lho'i chos 'byung, f.67.a; Shākya-rin-chen, Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar, ff.58.a, 130.a.

28 Shākya-rin-chen, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.113.a.

29 History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 30. The date of his death is indirectly given by Shākya-rin-chen (Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar, f.58.a-b), who performed the cremation services at Skyabs-khra. It occurred following the murder of Khang-chennas and the aftermath of violence in Tibet (August, 1727; cf. Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 115-16), but before the outbreak of civil war in Bhutan in 1729.

30 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.66.b-67.a.

31 Shākya-rin-chen (op. cit., f.130.a-b), writing many years after the events, suggests that, as 'Jigs-med-grags-pa was born only after the

earlier incarnation had died in China, they were to be construed as belonging to the same lineage, i.e. the Zhabs-drung or "Mind". Of course, this would contradict the prophecy of 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje which dated Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's decease only to about 1706. Shākya-rin-chen, it must be remembered, was partisan to the "Mind" incarnation faction.

32 Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 10.b-11.a writes in conclusion that the dual rulers of Bhutan were the Rgyal-sras 'Brug Sku-mched gubilyan and the Erdeni Sde-pa Noyan Rin-chen-'phrin-las-rab-rgyas, as if they were separate titles. In reality, of course, both referred to Mi-pham-dbang-po only.

33 Byang-chub-nor-bu, op. cit., Kha, ff.7.a-9.b. The dates of Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan are from the anonymous English preface to the reprint of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's biography.

34 Markham, op. cit., p. 48.

35 Shākya-rin-chen, Lhag pa'i bsam pa bskul zhing byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i gtam, Tha, f.20.a.

36 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.40.a-44.b.

37 Ibid., ff.89.b-91.a.

38 Ibid., ff.47.b-48.a; Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., Tha, ff.18.a-19.a.

For a description of this important Bhutanese monastery, cf. D.I. Lauf, "Vorläufiger Bericht...II," pp. 52-54.

39 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.62.b-69.a; Shākya-rin-chen, op. cit., Da, ff.5.b-6.a.

40 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.74.b-77.b.

41 Lho'i chos 'byung, ff.99.b-100.b; History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, pp. 35-38.

42 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.57.a-62.b.

⁴³ Ibid., f.74.a. The weight designated by the unit khal varied considerably over time and area in Tibet, and depended in part on the item being measured. Surkhang estimated the "official" Tibetan khal at 27 lbs. av. but recent research suggests 34 lbs. as a more accurate figure (Wangchen Surkhang, "Tax Measurement and Lag 'Don Tax," Bulletin of Tibetology 3, pt. 1 (1966), p. 18, and oral information from Dr. Melvyn Goldstein). The Bhutanese khal is not necessarily to be equated to any Tibetan unit, but as a provisional figure 15.3 kilograms may be taken as a close estimate.

⁴⁴ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.84.a.

⁴⁵ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.112.b.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lho'i chos 'byung, f.110.a.

⁴⁸ Taxes levied during the 18th century from the Wang tsho-chen-brgyad were also denoted dbang-yon, even though their individual tax units (i.e. households) were designated khral-pa, as elsewhere in the country.

⁴⁹ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.84.a.

⁵⁰ Ibid., f.84.a-b.

⁵¹ Ibid., ff.73.b-74.a.

⁵² Wei-tsang t'ung-chih, 15, 11.a.

⁵³ Byang-chub-nor-bu, op. cit., Ga, f.38.b.

⁵⁴ On these events, cf. Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 193, 198-235.

⁵⁵ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.49.a-b.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., ff.439.b-440.a, 513.a.

⁵⁸ Ibid., f.409.b.

⁵⁹ Ibid., ff.429.a, 460.b.

⁶⁰ Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.69.a-70.b.

- 61 Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., ff.476.a-79.a; Bskal-bzang-rgya-mtsho, Rgya hor bod kyi mchog dman bar pa la song ba'i 'phrin yig gi rim pa phyogs gcig tu bkod pa dpyod ldan yid kyi shing rta, ff.73.a-75.b (I have used a copy from the Toyo Bunko example in 79 folia: #140-1161).
- 62 Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, op. cit., f.402.a-b.
- 63 Ibid., ff.435.a, 513.a, 545.a-46.a.
- 64 Bell, Government of Tibet, pp. 14, 41; the amount paid by the early 20th century was very nominal (Rs. 45-8) and was the responsibility of the Phag-ri Rdzong-dpon.
- 65 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., ff.50.b-51.b.
- 66 Petech, China and Tibet, pp. 209, 216-18, 230-31.
- 67 Petech, "Notes on Ladakhi History", p. 225.
- 68 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.53.a.
- 69 History of Deb Rajas of Bhutan, p. 40.
- 70 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa, f.78.a.
- 71 Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje, Rje btsun bla ma dam pa rdo rje 'chang kun mkhyen chos rje o rgyan ngag dbang ye shes dpal bzang po'i rnam thar dpag bsam ljon shing, f.90.a-b (reprinted in Ngawang Gyaltzen & Ngawang Lungtok, Bka' brgyud gser phreng chen mo, Vol. 3, Dehra Dun, 1970).
- 72 Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, op. cit., f.95.a; Yon-tan-mtha'-yas, Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, f.85.a.
- 73 Ibid., f.91.a-b.
- 74 Ibid., ff.91.b-94.a.
- 75 Byang-chub-nor-bu, op. cit., Kha, f.8.b.
- 76 'Jam-dbyangs-rgyal-mtshan, Khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang ngag dbang yon tan mtha' yas kyi gsang gsum mi zad rgyan gyi 'khor lor rnam par rol pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa, ff.111.a-112.b.

77 Ibid., f.112.a: nam phugs bod dbus gtsang dang / lho rong 'di
 rgya dkar nag gi rol drangs sar 'gyur ba yin no //; cf. also Yon-tan-mtha'-
 yas' elaboration of the visions to 'Jigs-med-seng-ge at Ibid., ff.120.a,
 and his final testament to the same effect (122.b-123.b) written up in
 a zhal-chems to be opened after his death.

APPENDIX AThe Coronation Document of 1747

The document incorporated from state archives in Yon-tan-mtha'-yas' biography of Sde-srid XIII Shes-rab-dbang-phyug (Chos rgyal chen po shes rab dbang phyug gi dge ba'i cho ga, ff.30.b-40.a) detailing the coronation gifts at 'Jigs-med-grags-pa's enthronement in 1747 is a unique record of the mid-18th century Bhutanese state. It purports to indicate, completely and precisely, the government's distribution of gifts to celebrate the event. Since every government functionary and tax-paying household (khral-pa) of the country received at least a nominal sum, and since each of these grants is recorded by rank and district, thorough analysis of this document will eventually yield a great deal of information on the country's social and political structure at the time in question. For this, however, consultation with Bhutanese officials knowledgeable of the old administrative and tax structures will be essential, as the document contains much special terminology peculiar to Bhutan.

For the present, it is intended merely to present in summary fashion the census data on tax-paying households by major district. In the original, however, these are further divided into sub-districts, villages or village groups, and certain special categories the meaning of which is not always particularly obvious. It is evident, for instance, that taxes were levied differently in different parts of the country. In general, the situation in western Bhutan appears to have been far more complex than in the east, probably in part for historical reasons. In Shar-phyogs the single administrative centre was Chos-'khor-rab-brtan-rtse (Tongsa), beneath which were several district Rdzong. Each of these, in turn, was divided into as many as six Drung or sub-district administrative units of government. A very few special categories, such as nomadic families,

seem to have been responsible to the Rdzong directly, and not the Drung in their immediate locality.

There were several broad categories of khral-pa. In Shar-phyogs, virtually all are listed as paying ma-khral, a term of uncertain significance which does not appear in the districts of western Bhutan at all. In the west, on the other hand, a clear distinction was made between families paying skam-khral and those paying rlon-khral, literally "dry tax" and "wet tax". The temptation is to see in this a differentiation between cultivators of irrigated and non-irrigated lands. If this proves to be correct then we shall be in a position to study the extent of irrigation practised at the period in question, since this distinction is recorded at the sub-district (Drung) level. There were, however, special categories of subject households not so classified. The nomads were an obvious exception, but there were others. It is interesting to note that whereas skam-khral households mostly received the minimal gift of $\frac{1}{2}$ ngul-tam, rlon-khral households received 1 full ngul-tam.

Several limitations of the following list need emphasis. Firstly, it is a list of households (khral-pa) primarily, but for the sake of completeness I have also included the small number of units specially designated in the document, such as 'brog khral-pa and gnag-rdzi. It is assumed that these represented families, and not individuals. Family size, undoubtedly, varied greatly according to ethnic, geo-ecological, and other factors. It has been traditional since the Mongol census of 13th century Tibet to calculate an average of six individuals per (Tibetan) khral-pa household. Whether the same might be said of Bhutan is not known, and consequently it would be hazardous to estimate the country's population in 1747 from the bare statistics given here.

In the coronation document, moreover, a few khral-pa are enumerated as fractional units. The reason for this is unclear, and may possibly

indicate the existence of families whose taxes were temporarily reduced for special reasons. But for the moment it has been assumed that such families in fact represent whole khral-pa households. Also, I have not included in this chart the lists of minor government servants, such as those entitled Dro-rgyar-thob-pa, Lto-bzan-dkyus-ma, Bza'-pa, Gzhi-gnyer, etc., since it is unclear what their precise functions were and whether or not their families were counted elsewhere in the census. Monks, of course, would not have been enumerated as khral-pa.

Finally, the lists for the Punakha district appear to contain an error in enumeration. The total value of money distributed as gifts to the peasantry (1,708 ngul-tam) does not in fact correlate with the specific break-down of khral-pa for the district. The average gift per khral-pa elsewhere in western Bhutan was 1.3 ngul-tam; applying the figure to Punakha would suggest a total of 2,231 khral-pa, instead of the 1,094 specifically noted.

For a variety of reasons, then, it is likely that the figures given below underestimate the total population by several percent. Even so, some interesting observations may be made. For instance, the distribution of population between eastern and western Bhutan for this period differs radically from the present situation where, according to the customary assertion in Western sources, the majority of Bhutanese citizens reside in the east. The figure for 1747 Tashigang in particular seems very low, and suggests that substantial increase in population in that area occurred during subsequent years. For reasons indicated elsewhere in this research, however, the numbers for eastern Bhutan may not accurately reflect the actual resident population.

I. Western Bhutan

A. Tashichhodzong - - - - -	4,964.5
B. Punakha - - - - -	1,094
C. Wangdiphodrang - - - - -	3,571
D. Paro (including Gangtok <u>khral-pa</u>) - - - - -	7,331.5
E. Tagana (including Indian subjects) - - - - -	1,667
	18,628

II. Eastern Bhutan

A. Chos-rtse - - - - -	1,079
B. Bya-dkar - - - - -	1,104
C. Lhun-rtse - - - - -	1,139
D. Bkra-shis-yang-rtse - - - - -	1,124
E. Tashigang - - - - -	1,898
F. Gzhong-mkhar - - - - -	1,506.5
G. Gzhal-gshong - - - - -	679.5
H. Miscellaneous (subject to Chos-rtse) - - - - -	205
	8,735

Total: 27,363

APPENDIX B

Chronologies and Genealogies

The charts and tables presented here are designed to relate, in graphic form, the main family and incarnation lineages important in Bhutanese history. Related Tibetan lineages are also given where relevant. In addition, there are included lists of incumbents of the principal positions of government, namely the Rgyal-tshab, Sde-srid, and Rje Mkhan-po. It must be emphasized that, to varying degrees, all the information presented here is provisional and probably incomplete. As additional source material becomes available refinements may be possible, and of course it will be desirable to extend the information down to the present day. In general, no systematic effort has been made to include material beyond the period covered in this study, except where such material was readily (and reliably) available in Bhutanese or other sources.

For western Bhutan, detailed family lineages other than those given here will probably prove very difficult to reconstruct from literary records. Eastern Bhutanese lineages are still poorly known, but sources for some are said to exist, and will require study elsewhere. Numerous minor incarnation lineages existed in Bhutan, and many of these no doubt continue to be recognized. Eventually, lists and chronological data on these will probably emerge from libraries within the country.

A few notes on the numbering and sources for the following tables need to be given.

1. Rgyal-tshab ("Dharmarājas") of Bhutan: 1616-1763

The dates of these individuals have been established elsewhere in this research and require no further mention. The numbering of the Rgyal-tshab follows the pattern set in the Lho'i chos 'byung (ff.57.b-70.a), with

certain additions, indicated by round braces. The term Rgyal-tshab is used in the Lho'i chos 'byung to designate the enthroned, spiritual successors of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal. In fact, however, the vicissitudes of this office are not so neatly charted. Although never enthroned as Rgyal-tshab, the pretence was made at the time that 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje would (or should) so serve in due course. Moreover, until the revelation of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's death in about 1706, all the Rgyal-tshab were technically interim heads of state, pending his emergence from contemplative retreat.

The Lho'i chos 'byung also refuses to acknowledge the enthronement of Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal's granddaughter Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje, and so omits her from its list. The same source also neglects to clearly describe the fact that Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal served two terms on the throne of hierarch, the second jointly with Rgyal-tshab IV Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu. The older documents, nevertheless, require that these additions be made.

The joint Rgyal-tshab VI 'Jigs-med-grags-pa abdicated the throne at the time he was poisoned, probably in 1760. The precise date, however, remains to be established.

2. Sde-srid ("Deb Rājas") of Bhutan: 1616-1763

This table is self-explanatory, as far as it goes. The questioned dates will require more detailed sources for verification or further refinement.

3. Rje Mkhān-po of Bhutan: 1651-1775

This table is also self-explanatory. Dates have been derived largely from individual biographies or, where unavailable, from secondary sources. Owing to uncertainties in the Bhutanese calendar, changes of office occurring during late winter months have had to be indicated by slashed dates.

4. The Avalokiteśvara Incarnations of the 'Brug-pa Tradition

With slight alterations, this chart is reproduced from the

anonymous preface to Topden Tshering, The detailed biography of the First Zabs-druñ Rin-po-che of Bhutan, Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal (Nag-dbañ-bdud-'joms-rdo-rje), Dolanji, P.O. Ochghat (via Solan), H.P., 1974. The sources on which it is based are not recorded. As far as it can be verified from available documents, nevertheless, the chart appears reliable. For reasons described elsewhere, however, I have altered the dates of Phyogs-las Sprul-sku Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal and of his rebirth Shākya-bstan-'dzin. In the original chart these are given as 1708-1736? and 1736-1778 respectively.

5. The Rgyal-sras Incarnation Lineages of Bhutan

These two lineages have been compiled from contemporary records studied elsewhere in this research. Letters have been assigned to early embodiments in the series. The early embodiments of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje are given in the introductory folios of the biography of Rgyal-sras II Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, by Shākya-rin-chen, and appear to derive from prophecies of 'Brug-sgra-rdo-rje (d.1728?). The early embodiments of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas are described in his biography, by Rje Mkhan-po VI Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub.

6. Incarnations of the Padma-gling-pa Tradition

For the Gsung-sprul Rin-po-che, names and dates are taken from three primary sources: 1) the biography of Padma-gling-pa; 2) the Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog (1873) by Pad-gling Gsung-sprul VIII Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma; 3) the Pad gling 'khrungs rabs rtogs brjod dad pa'i me tog gi kha skong mos pa'i ze'u 'bru (1975) by Bdud-'joms-'jigs-bral Ye-shes-rdo-rje.

Accurate 'khrungs-rabs for the Thugs-sras and Rgyal-sras lineages have not yet become available, and information given here is derived, to a large extent, from sources 2) and 3) above. The rivalry for recognition as Thugs-sras VII is briefly noted in 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-

po, Gangs can bod kyi yul du byon pa'i gsang sngags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs mdor bsdud ngo mtshar padmo'i dga' tshal, ff.4.a-b. For some reason, none of the sources mention the name of Thugs-sras II; the numbering is otherwise traditional.

Information on the early embodiments of the Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che is from the long introductory discussion in Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal's biography of Rgyal-sras Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub. The numbering is provisional, however, as no numbers are indicated in the available sources.

7. Gnyos Lineages of Tibet and Bhutan

The principal source for the Tibetan branch is the anonymous Kha rag gnyos kyi rgyud pa byon tshul mdor bsdus (1431). This has been compared with the parallel material in Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho's biography of Dalai Lama VI, and significant orthographic variants from the latter source have been indicated in round braces.

For the Bhutanese branch of Padma-gling-pa, information is from the biography of Dalai Lama VI, and the sources mentioned above on the incarnations in this tradition. Some discrepancy exists between the sources on the names of Padma-gling-pa's eight younger brothers, and their arrangement by age. That given here is from the biography of Dalai Lama VI. The dates of decease of several of these men are indicated in the autobiography of Padma-gling-pa.

8. Ldan-ma Lineages of 'Obs-mtsho

Virtually all the information in this chart has been extracted from Shākya-rin-chen's biography of 'Obs-mtsho-ba Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan. The incarnate Byams-mgon Rin-po-che lineage deriving from him is not yet thoroughly established from available material.

9. Lineage of Lha-sras Lde-chung-don-grub

On the sources for this lineage, cf. Ch. III, fn. 47. The basic

family data has been supplemented with other information to demonstrate the incarnate and marital mergers of this lineage with those of Padma-gling-pa and of the Rgya. A number of important descendants of Lde-chung-don-grub during the 18th century have been omitted, however, as their precise position in the chart cannot yet be determined.

10. Rgya Lineages of Rwa-lung and Bhutan

This chart represents a composite of information derived from a wide variety of sources, most of which have been described in the text. Data on the early filiation of the Rgya of Rwa-lung is entirely derived from individual biographies in the Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, which contain a great deal of detailed information written by contemporary authors. The dates are those from the biographies, and from Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor's brief history (Dkar brgyud chos 'byung), now accessible in a reprint edition.

Comparison of this chart with an earlier version by Stein (Vie et chants, facing p. 10) reveals a major discrepancy in traditions of the early Rgya filiation. The filiation shown by Stein is also supported by Padma-dkar-po (Chos 'byung bstan pa'i padma rgyas pa'i nyin byed, ff.301.b-309.b). The basic disharmony revolves about the personage of Dbon-stag, a second generation descendant of Lha-'bum according to the contemporary biographies, or, following Padma-dkar-po, a first generation descendant of Lha-gnyan. Nevertheless, against the authority of the contemporary biographies in the Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, Padma-dkar-po's brief account must be set aside as anomalous. The version presented here, moreover, is supported by Gtsang Mkhan-chen 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho (Dpal 'brug pa rin po che ngag dbang rnam rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas pa chos kyi sprin chen po'i dbyangs, Ka, ff.17.b-19.b).

Rgyal-tshab ("Dharmarājas") of Bhutan: 1616-1763

		<u>life</u>	<u>reign</u>
0	(Zhabs-drung) Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal	1594 - 1651	1616 - 1651
(0.a)	(Rgyal-sras) 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje (never enthroned)	1631 - 1680/1	(1651 - 1680)
I	(Rgyal-sras) Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (<u>Bla-lhag</u> since 1667)	1638 - 1696	1680 - 1694
(I.a)	Mtsho-skyes-rdo-rje (throne designation: <u>Bstan-pa'i-gtso-bo</u>)	1680 - 1697	(1694/5 - 1697)
II	(Rgyal-sras) Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (rebirth of 0.a)	1689 - 1714	1702? - 1713
III	(Sprul-sku) Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (rebirth of "Speech" of Rgyal-tshab 0)	1708 - 1734?	1714 - 1729
IV	(Rgyal-sras) Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu (rebirth of Rgyal-tshab II)	1717 - 1735	1729 - 1735
(IV.a)	Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (second term; jointly with IV)		(1730 - 1732)
V	(Rgyal-sras) Mi-pham-dbang-po (rebirth of Rgyal-tshab I)	1709 - 1738	1736 - 1738
VI	(Rgyal-sras) Mi-pham-'brug-sgrarnam-rgyal (rebirth of Rgyal-tshab IV)	d.1762	1740 - 1762
	(Zhabs-drung) 'Jigs-med-grags-pa (rebirth of "Mind" of Rgyal-tshab 0)	1725 - 1761	1747 - 1760?
	(joint rule 1747 - 1760?)		
VII	(Rgyal-sras) 'Jigs-med-seng-ge (rebirth of Rgyal-tshab V)	- -	1763 - ?

Sde-srid ("Deb Rajas") of Bhutan: 1616-1763

		<u>life</u>	<u>reign</u>
I	Bstan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas (<u>alias</u> : Sde-srid-dbu-mdzad-chen-mo)	1591 - 1656	1616 - 1656
II	(La-sngon-pa) Bstan-'dzin-'brug-sgra	1607 - 1667	1656 - 1667
III	(Smin-'khyud-pa) Mi-'gyur-brtan-pa (<u>alias</u> : Dam-chos-lhun-grub)	1613 - 1681	1667 - 1680
IV	(Rgyal-sras) Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas	1638 - 1696	1680 - 1694
V	(Dge-slong) Dge-'dun-chos-'phel	d.1701?	1694 - 1701?
VI	(Drung-yig) Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring	- -	1701? - 1704?
VII	(Dbu-mdzad) Dpal-'byor	- -	1704? - 1707?
VIII	'Brug-rab-rgyas (<u>alias</u> : Wang Pha-jo)	d.1729	1707? - 1719?
IX	(Sde-pa Dge-bshes) Ngag-dbang-rgya-mtsho	d.1730?	1719? - 1729
X	(Rgyal-sras) Mi-pham-dbang-po	1709 - 1738	1729 - 1736
XI	(Gzims-dpon) Dpal-'byor	- -	1736 - 1739/40
XII	Ngag-dbang-rgyal-mtshan	d.1743/4	1739/40 - 1743/4
XIII	Shes-rab-dbang-phyug (<u>alias</u> : Sri-thub)	1697 - 1767?	1744 - 1763

Rje Mkhan-po of Bhutan: 1651-1775

		<u>life</u>	<u>reign</u>
I	Pad-dkar-'byung-gnas	1604 - 1672	1651 - 1672
II	Bsod-nams-'od-zer	1613 - 1689	1672 - 1689
III	Pad-dkar-lhun-grub	1640 - 1699	1689/90 - 1697
IV	Dam-chos-pad-dkar	1636 - 1708	1697 - 1708
V	Bzod-pa-'phrin-las	1648 - 1732	1708 - 1724
VI	Ngag-dbang-lhun-grub	1673 - 1730	1724 - 1729/30
VII	Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las	1671 - 1746	1729/30 - 1737
VIII	Bstan-'dzin-nor-bu	1689 - 1746	1737 - 1744
IX	Shākya-rin-chen	1710 - 1767	1744 - 1755
X	Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal	1700 - 1767	1755 - 1762
XI	Ngag-dbang-'phrin-las	- -	1762 - 1769/70
XII	Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-rgya-mtsho	d.1771	1770 - 1771
XIII	Yon-tan-mtha'-yas	1724 - 1784	1771 - 1775

The Avalokiteśvara Incarnations of the 'Brug-pa Tradition

- A. Lokeśvara ('Jig-rten-dbang-phyug)
- B. Pundarīka, the Kulika King of Sambhala
- C. Chōś-rgyal Srong-btsan-sgam-po
- D. Sāntaraksita
- E. Nā-ro-pa
- F. Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams-rin-chen (1079-1153)
- 1. Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras Ye-shes-rdo-rje (1161-1211)
- 2. Rgyal-dbang Kun-dga'-dpal-'byor (1428-1476)
- 3. 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi-grags-pa (1478-1523)
- 4. Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po (1527-1592)

Rgyal-dbang 'Brug-chen of the Tibetan (Byang-'brug) Tradition

Seat: Byar Gsang-sngags-chos-gling

- 5. Dpag-bsam-dbang-po (1593-1641)
- 6. Mi-pham-dbang-po (1641-1717)
- 7. Dkar-brgyud-'phrin-las-shing-rta (1718-1766)
- 8. Kun-gzigs Chos-kyi-s nang-ba (1768-1822)
- 9. 'Jigs-med-mi-'gyur-dbang-rgyal (1823-1883)
- 10. 'Jigs-med-mi-pham-chos-dbang (1884-1930)
- 11. Bstan-'dzin-mkhyen-rab-dge-legs-dbang-po (1931-1960)
- 12. 'Jigs-med-dbang-gi-rdo-rje (b.1963)

A-'dzom 'Brug-pa Rin-po-che of A-'dzom 'Brug-pa Chos-sgar in Kham

- 10. 'Gro-'dul-dpa'-bo-rdo-rje (1842-1924)

The Zhabs-drung Incarnations of the Bhutanese (Lho-'brug) Tradition

- 5. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1594-1651)

The Zhabs-drung or Thugs-sprul ("Mind") Incarnations

Seat: Rta-log Gsang-sngags-chos-gling

- 1. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1594-1651)
- 2. 'Jigs-med-grags-pa (1725-1761)
- 3. Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1762-1785)
- 4. 'Jigs-med-grags-pa II (1791-1830?)
- 5. 'Jigs-med-nor-bu (1831-1861)
- 6. 'Jigs-med-chos-rgyal (1862-1904)
- 7. 'Jigs-med-rdo-rje (1905-1931)

The Phyogs-las or Gsung-sprul ("Speech") Incarnations

Seat: Spa-gro Gsang-chen-chos-'khor

- 0. Ngag-dbang-rnam-rgyal (1594-1651)
- 1. Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1708-1734?)
- 2. Shākya-bstan-'dzin (1735?-1778)
- 3. Ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan (1781-?)
- 4. 'Jigs-med-rdo-rje (1830-1850)
- 5. Ye-shes-dngos-grub (1851-?)

The Rgyal-sras Incarnation Lineages of Bhutan

The Rgyal-sras Lineage of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

- A. Vajrasattva (Guhyapati)
 - B. King Indrabhūti of O-rgyan
 - C. The Rsi Dbugs-'byin of O-rgyan
 - D. Ānanda
 - E. King Rab-gsal of Za-hor
 - F. Prince Rāma
 - G. Rje-btsun Ti-lo-pā
 - H. Prince Gsal-'od of Dza-go (in E. India)
 - I. Lo-chen Ka-ba-dpal-brtsegs
 - J. Gling-ras-pa Padma-rdo-rje (1128-1188)
 - K. Mi-pham Bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1567-1619)
-
- 1. 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje (1631-1680/1)
 - 2. Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1689-1714)
 - 3. Mi-pham-'jigs-med-nor-bu (1717-1735)
 - 4. Mi-pham-'brug-sgra-rnam-rgyal (d.1762)
 - 5. 'Jigs-med-rnam-rgyal (d.1796?)

- further rebirths in this lineage remain to be established

The Rgyal-sras Lineage of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī

- A. Chos-rgyal Khri-srong-lde-btsan
 - B. Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124-1192)
 - C. Guru Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug (1212-1270)
 - D. Mnga'-ris Rig-'dzin Padma-dbang-rgyal (1487-1542)
-
- 1. Bstan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638-1696)
 - 2. Mi-pham-dbang-po (1709-1738)
 - 3. 'Jigs-med-seng-ge
 - 4. Tshul-khrims-grags-pa
 - 5. 'Phrin-las-rgya-mtsho

- further rebirths in this lineage remain to be established

Incarnations of the Padma-gling-pa TraditionPad-gling Gsung-sprul Rin-po-che

- A. Lha-gcig Padma-gsal
 - B. Rig-ma Sangs-rgyas-skyid
 - C. Jo-mo Padma-sgrol-ma
 - D. Sngags-'chang Rin-chen-grags-pa
 - E. Padma-las-'brel-rtsal (1291-1319)
 - F. Klong-chen-pa Dri-med-'od-zer (1308-1363)
 - G. Thod-dkar
-
- 1. (Dpal-'byor) Padma-gling-pa (1450-1521)
 - 2. Bstan-'dzin-chos-grags-dpal-bzang (1536-1597)
 - 3. Kun-mkhyen Tshul-khrims-rdo-rje (1598-1669)
 - 4. Ngag-dbang-kun-bzang-rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1680-1723)
 - 5. Bstan-'dzin-grub-mchog-rdo-rje (1725-1762)
 - 6. Kun-bzang-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan (1763-1817)
 - 7. Padma-bstan-'dzin, alias Kun-bzang-ngag-dbang-chos-kyi-blo-gros (1819-1842)
 - 8. Kun-bzang-bde-chen-rdo-rje, alias Nges-don-bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma-dpal-bzang (1843-1891)
 - 9. Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1894-1925)
 - 10. Padma-'od-gsal-'gyur-med-rdo-rje, alias Thub-bstan-chos-kyi-rdo-rje (1930-1955)
 - 11. Kun-bzang-padma-rin-chen-rnam-rgyal (b.1968)

Pad-gling Thugs-sras Rin-po-che

- 1. Rgyal-sras Zla-ba-rgyal-mtshan
- 2. (unknown)
- 3. Nyi-ma-rgyal-mtshan (fl. early 17th century)
- 4. Bstan-'dzin-'gyur-med-rdo-rje (1641-ca.1702)
- 5. Kun-bzang-bstan-'dzin-ye-shes-mchog-dbyangs-'gyur-med-chos-kyi-rdo-rje, alias Bstan-'dzin-'gyur-med-rdo-rje, alias 'Gyur-med-mchog-grub-dpal-'bar-bzang-po (ca.1708-ca.1750)
- 6. Bstan-'dzin-chos-kyi-nyi-ma (ca.1752-1775)
- 7. (two recognized rebirths in this generation)
 - a. Kun-bzang-'gyur-med-rdo-rje-lung-rigs-chos-kyi-go-cha (ca.1780-ca.1825)
 - b. Bstan-'dzin-ngag-dbang-'phrin-las
- 8. Kun-bzang-zil-gnon-bzhad-pa-rtsal (rebirth of 7.a)
- 9. Thub-bstan-dpal-'bar (fl. early 20th century)

Pad-gling Rgyal-sras Rin-po-che

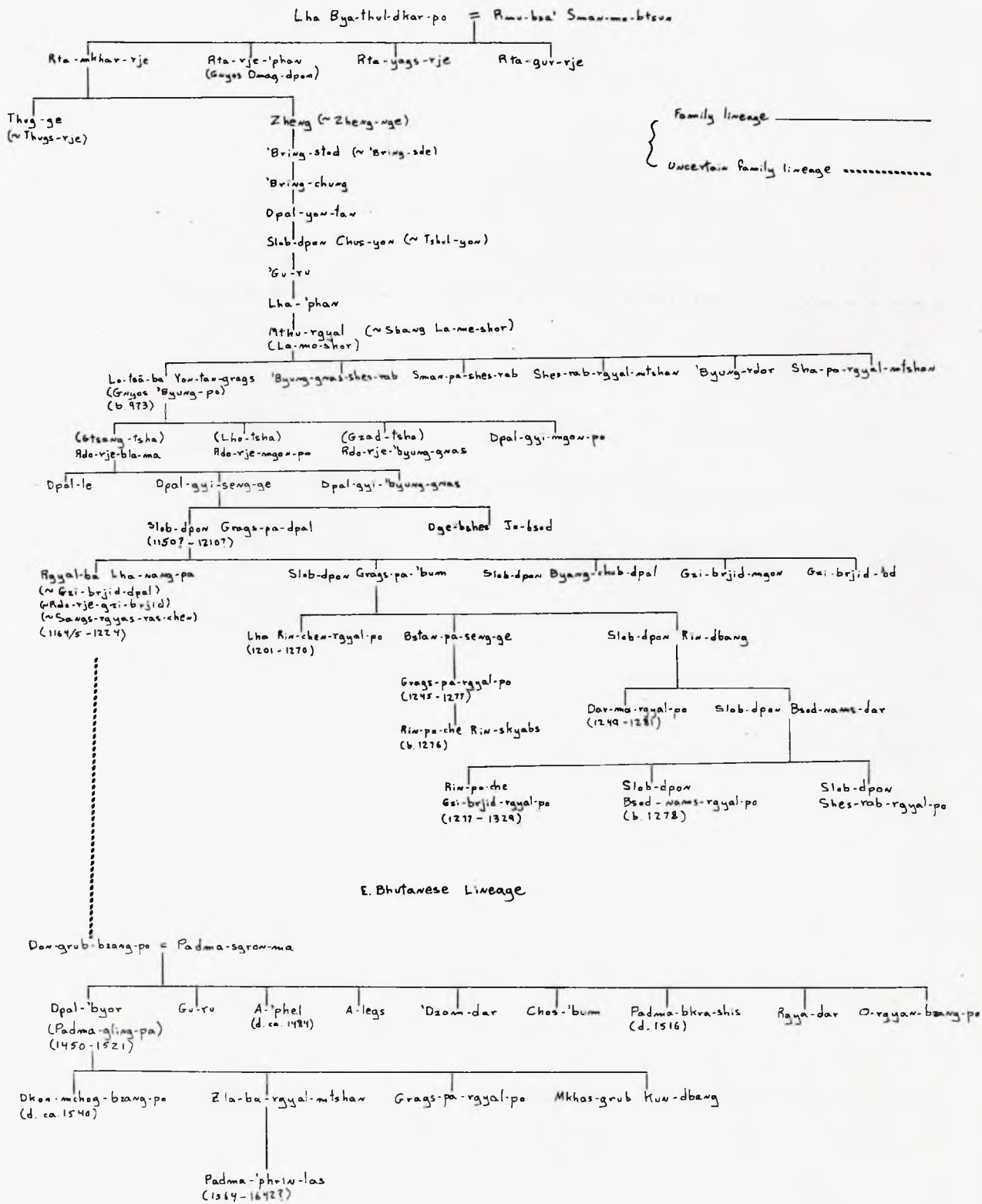
- (A) Bodhisattva Tsunda (Skul-byed)
- (B) Mkhas-pa-chen-po Ldan-ma Rtse-mangs, alias Rnam-grol-ye-shes
- (C) Lha Bla-ma Ye-shes-'od
- (D) Mkhas-mchog Kun-dga'-grags-pa
- (E) Myang-sras Bstan-'dzin-yon-tan
- (F) Legs-pa-rgyal-mtshan, alias Dbang-phyug-dpal-'bar

Incarnations of the Padma-gling-pa Tradition, contd.

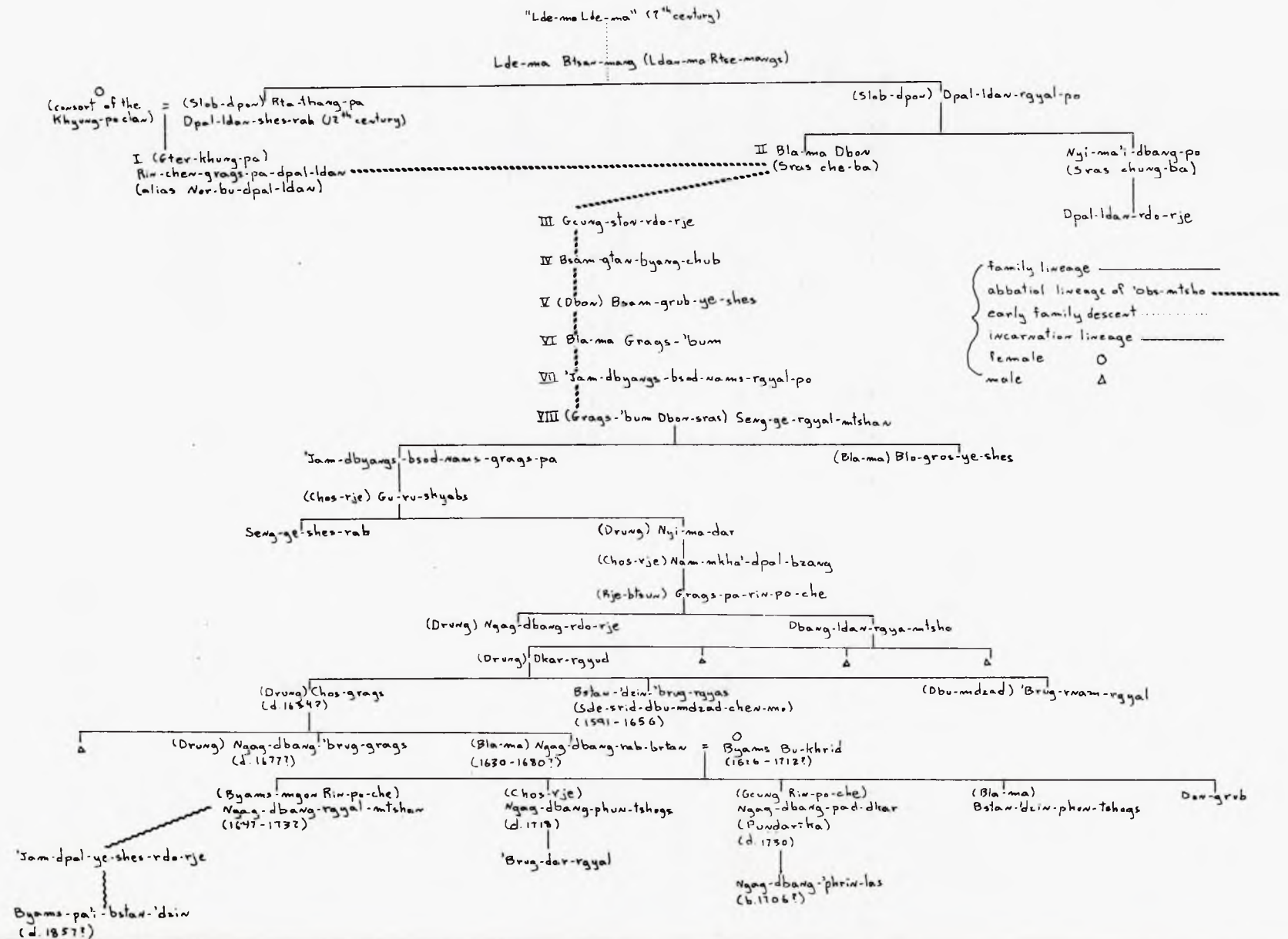
- (H) Gter-ston-chen-po Dri-med-gling-pa
- (I) Mkhan-chen Tshul-khrims-dpal-'byor
- (1) Rgyal-sras Padma-'phrin-las (1564-1642?)
- (2) Bstan-'dzin-legs-pa'i-don-grub (1645-1726)
- (3) Padma-kun-bzang-'phrin-las-rnam-rgyal, alias Kun-bzang-padma-rnam-rgyal (d. ca.1750)
- (4) Bstan-'dzin-srid-zhi-rnam-rgyal (1761?-ca.1796)
- (5) O-rgyan-dge-legs-rnam-rgyal (d.1842?)

- further rebirths in this lineage remain to be established

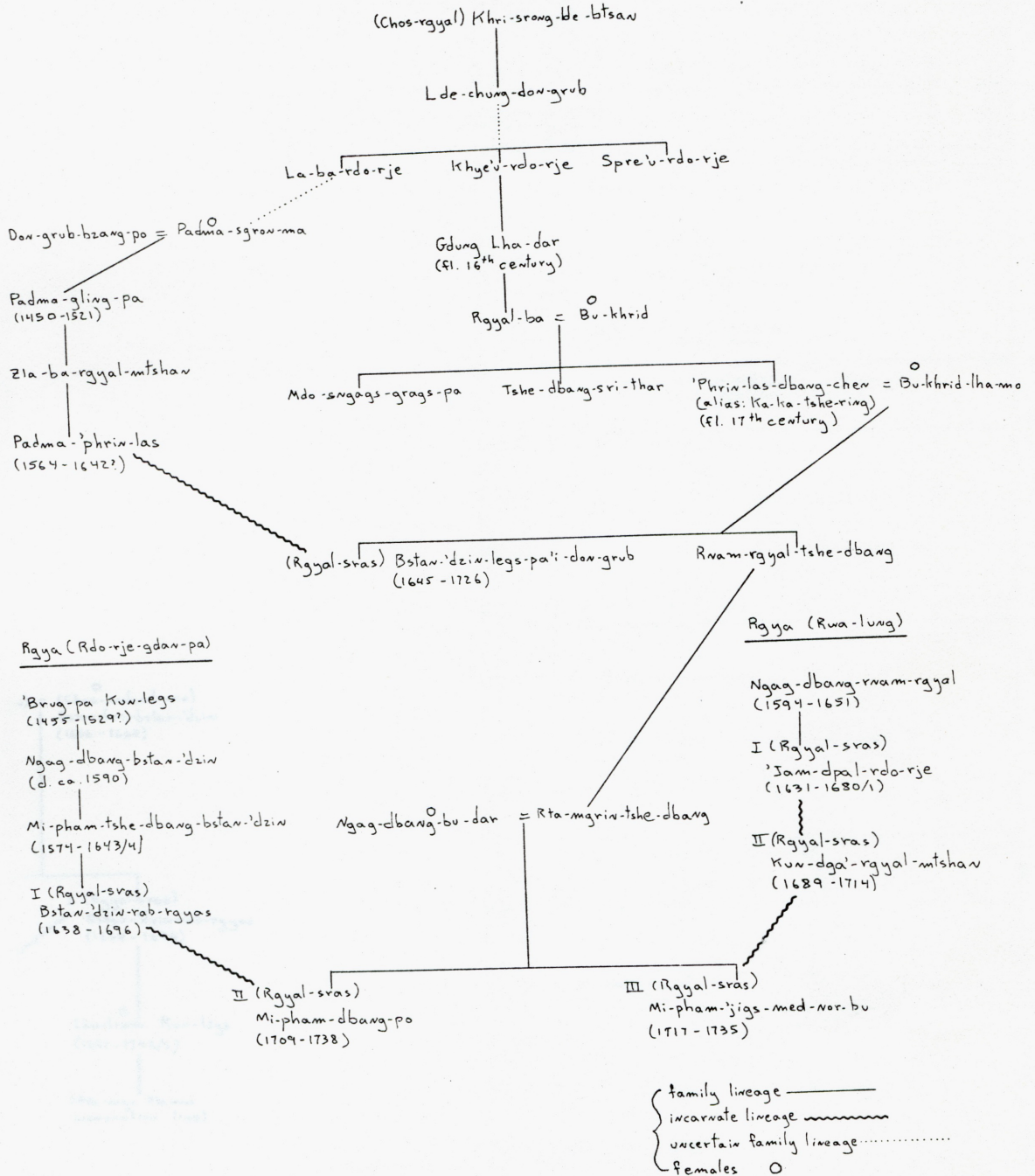
Gross Lineages of Tibet and Bhutan



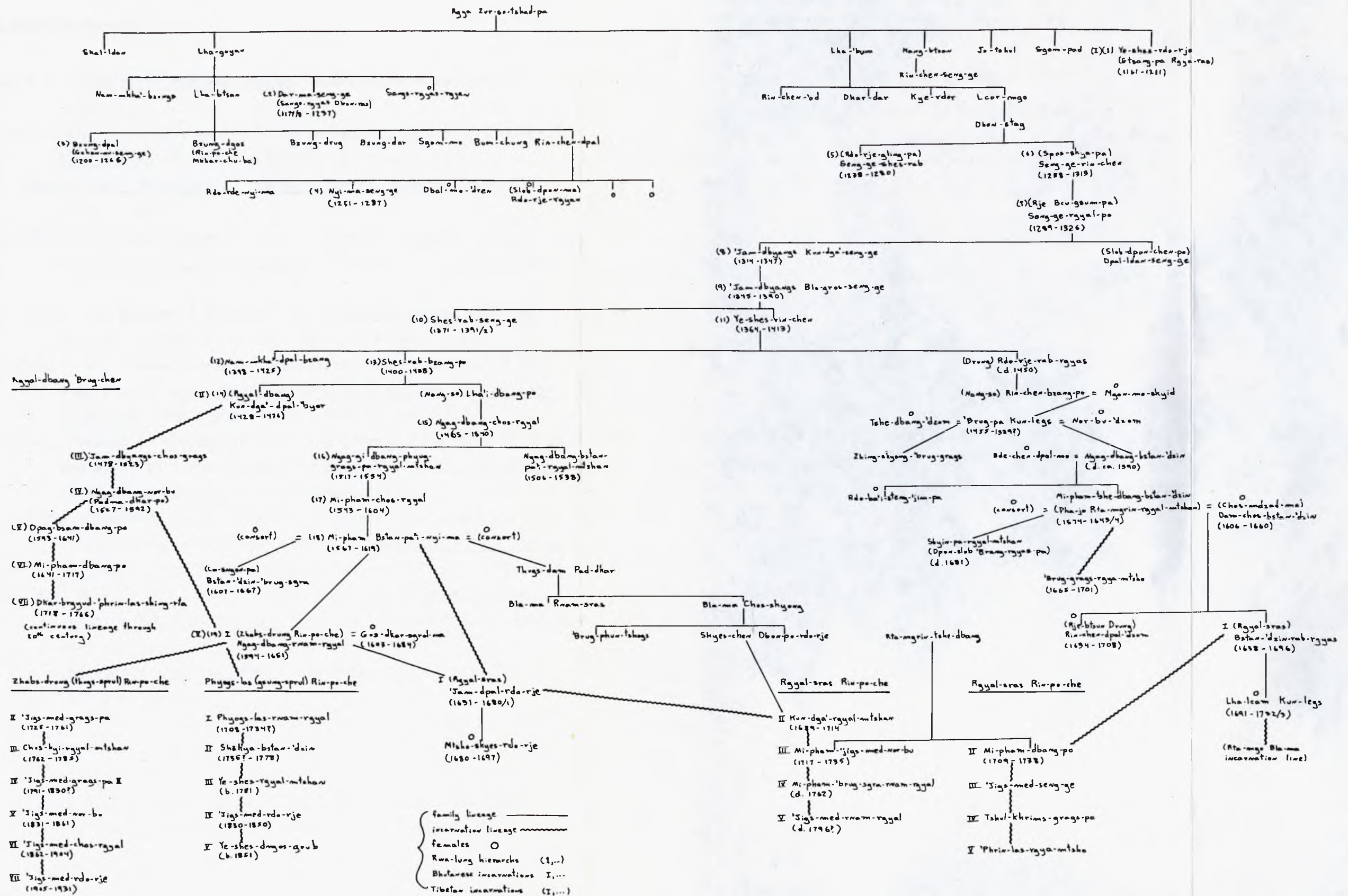
Ldan-ma Lineages of 'Obs.-mtsho



Lineage of Lha-sras Lde-chung-don-grub



Rgya Lineages of Rwa-lung
and Bhutan



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Gtsang Mkhan-chen; cf. (Gtsang Mkhan-chen) 'Jam-dbyangs-dpal-ldan-rgya-mtsho (1610-84)

(Dpa'-bo Sprul-sku II) Gtsug-lag-'phreng-ba, Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, sec. Ja (1565) (ed. Lokesh Chandra, mkhas-pahi-dgah-ston. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1962).

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- (Mdo-mkhar Zhabs-drung) Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal (1697-1763), Dirghayurindra-jina'i byung ba brjod pa zol med ngag gi rol mo, 69 folios (cf. Ch. II, fn. 82).
- _____, Dpal mi'i dbang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam, 395 folios (MS: 427 folios) (1733) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 81).
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- Zla-tho; cf. Anon., Me nyes pa 'byung ba bzhi....
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- _____, Pandi ta bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa sgyu ma chen po'i yar stabs, 110 folios (1769) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 75).
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_____, Dkar rgyud kyi rnam thar gser gyi 'phreng ba lta bu las dbon ras dar ma seng ge'i skabs, 24 folios (ca. 1755) (reprinted in Kunzang Topgey, The Collected Works (Gsun 'bum) of Śākya-rin-chen. Thimphu: 1976, vol. 1).

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_____, Rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam par thar pa rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing bsdu pa, 39 folios (1753-59) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 62).

_____, Rdo rje 'chang chen po rje btsun ngag dbang 'phrin las kyi rnam thar rgyal sras rtse dga'i khri shing, 147 folios (1753-59) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 62).

_____, Sprul pa'i sku ngag abang bstan 'dzin mi pham dbang po'i rnam par thar pa skal bzang rna rgyan, 31 folios (ca. 1752) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 73).

_____, Sprul pa'i sku mchog ngag dbang phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi rnam par

- thar pa skal bzang 'jug sgo, 23 folios (cf. Ch. II, fn. 71).
- _____, Byang chub sems dpa' grags pa rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa rgyal sras kun tu dga'i zlos gar, 56 folios (cf. Ch. II, fn. 64).
- _____, Byang chub sems dpa' chen po kun tu dga' ba'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam yongs 'du'i snye ma, 126 folios (cf. Ch. II, fn. 70).
- _____, Byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po ngag gi dbang phyug bstan 'dzin mi pham 'jigs med thub bstan dbang po'i sde'i rtogs pa brjod pa dbyangs can rgyud mang, 83 folios (ca. 1752) (cf. Ch. II, fn. 74).
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- Shī-la (= Dge-sbyong Tshul-khrims?), Chos rje lo ras pa'i rnam thar, 36 folios (Rwa lung dkar brgyud gser 'phreng, vol. 2).
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