



## MORE HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON BRAG MKHAR



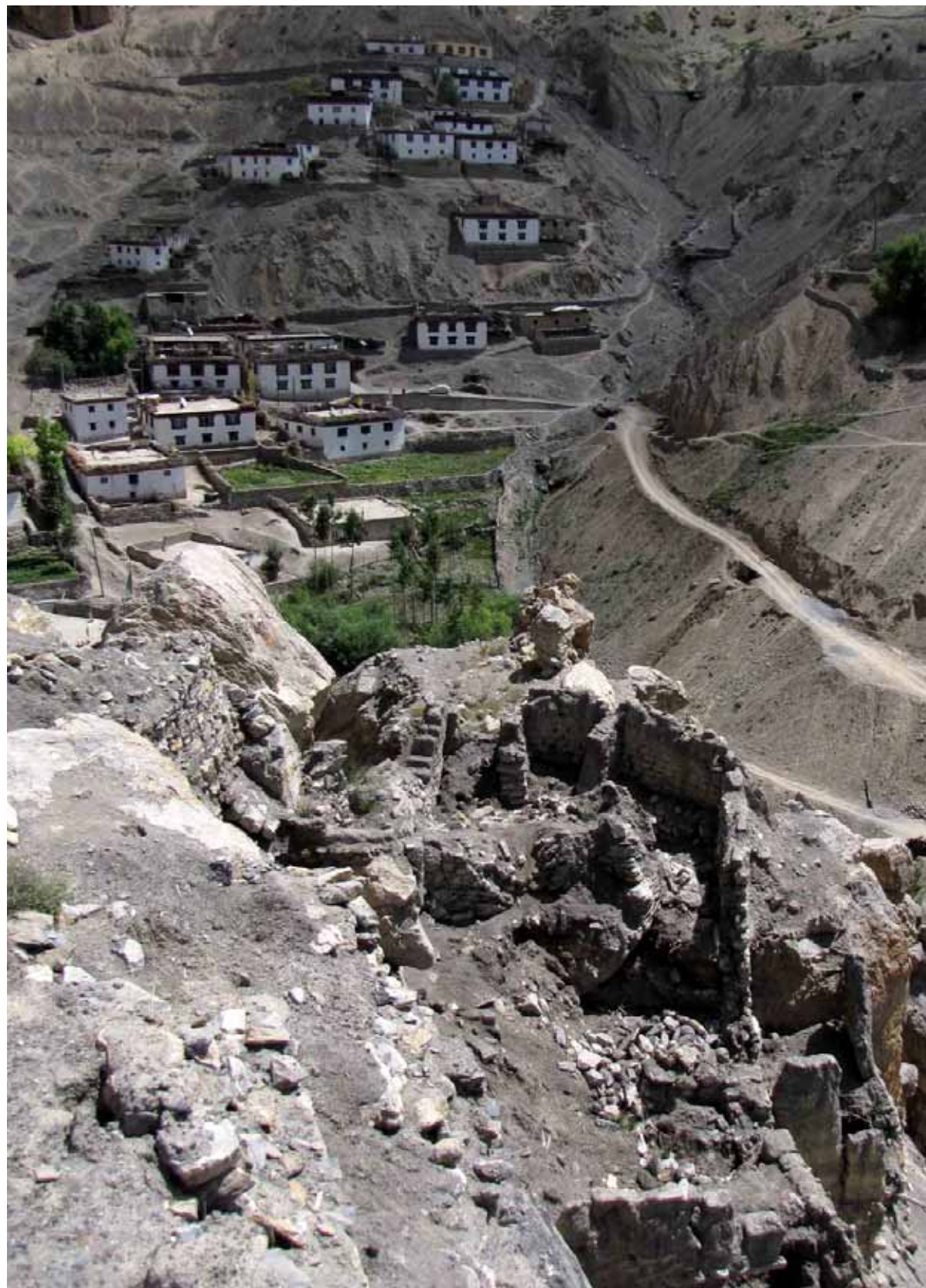


Fig. 01: Ruins on top of the ridge; LN 2011

## MORE HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON BRAG MKHAR

by Lobsang Nyima

Historical research on Brag mkhar started modestly in 2010. A few Tibetan literary sources and Western testimonies, covering almost a millennium of history, were studied in order to establish the historical background of the place. Not unexpectedly, the reliability of some of these documents is still uncertain and their content often calls for corroboration from other sources and archaeological evidence at best.

While the earliest reference found in *The Ngari Chronicles* clearly mentions the toponym of *Sang brag Brang mkhar* in relation to the royal family of Gu ge – Pu hrang, for example, it does not state the architectural nature of the site<sup>1</sup>. Did it, therefore, refer to a fortified royal residence (*rgyal mkhar*), as we tend to believe, or to a monastic complex (*dgon pa*)? Moreover, can we even ascertain that the toponym from *The Ngari Chronicles* refers to the site in the Spiti valley?<sup>2</sup>

Despite the difficulty of clarifying the origin of Brag mkhar and establishing the *terminus post quem* for our building, this campaign has shed some new light in the form of oral testimonies and monastic literary documents. The information they contain helps contextualize the fortress-monastery of Brag mkhar within the larger framework of a territory (*sa khul, yul*), its villages and hamlets, fields, water system, and communication routes. In addition, this year's fieldwork was also the occasion to further investigate information recorded by August Hermann Francke, Joseph Gergan, and others in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> *The Ngari Chronicles (mNga' ris rgyal rabs)* were composed by Ngag dbang grags pa around 1497. The mention of the toponym *Sang brag Brang mkhar* is related to events which probably occurred between 1083 and 1092 when the kingdom of West Tibet was agitated by internal strife and was eventually dismembered in 1088 according to Vitali; see VITALI 1996 & 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Howard has documented the structural vestiges of a rounded fortified tower of approximately 7m in diameter known as Takkar (Brag mkhar), and which “command[ed] the south-western entrance to central Zanskar”. This edifice could have served as early as the 10th century hence colliding with our assumption that *The Ngari Chronicles* actually refers to a location in the Spiti valley; see HOWARD 1995.





Fig. 02: The fortress-monastery of Brag mkhar and the mkhar stod area; etching, source unknown



Fig. 03: Brag mkhar corrie and the tshe area; LN 2011

## THE EXPANSION OF BRAG MKHAR VILLAGE & THE TOPOGRAPHICAL REORGANISATION OF THE AREA

The earliest buildings still preserved are located on the spur above the fortress-monastery and below the uppermost “castle” of the Governor (*no no*).<sup>3</sup> Most of them have been refurbished over the centuries. Three buildings still present some old architectural features such as large defensive stone walls at ground level, use of sun dried bricks for the next floors, and larger windows and openings at the upper levels.

The first dwelling established within the corrie belongs to the *Tshe ba* family.<sup>4</sup> Their house was first built by the grandparents of rGen dPal ldan who was born in 1970. Their habitation, therefore, cannot be much older than the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Since then, the households located within the corrie are usually referred to as *tshe* while the earliest houses situated on the spur are called *mkhar stod*; literally the upper part of the fortress. Many families have since moved from *mkhar stod* to *tshe*.

There are today eleven *mkhar stod pa* households although only ten of them are currently inhabited.<sup>5</sup> The owner of the last one has moved to the *tshe* area while retaining his old property. Whether they are located on the spur or inside the corrie, the households belong to both *khang chung pa* and *khang chen pa* families.

This social and economical distinction between large householders (*khang chen pa*) and small householders (*khang chung pa*) plays not only a decisive role in the division of the arable land of the territory, but also involves the taxes levied by the religious administration unit (*chos gzhis*), as some of the monastic documents recorded this year emphasise.

The downhill expansion of the village at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century could well be the consequence of a period of political stability under British rule, when Spiti was eventually detached from Ladakh, following the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846. The inhabitants of Brag mkhar village were then able to leave their defensive location on top of the spur and move to the corrie.

<sup>3</sup> Other houses and/or monastic quarters were located on the ridge below the monastery, as black and white photographs and etchings attest. All these buildings were abandoned due to the instability of this part of the rock and are now in ruins.

<sup>4</sup> Tibetan spelling uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Referred to as *mkhar stod te* [sic] in *spi ti skad*.





Fig. 04: Mahākāla Caturbhūja;  
LN 2011

It is probably at this time too that the gateway stūpa (*rgyal sgo'i mchod rten*), located to the south of the site, was annexed and enlarged by the household who settled nearby. The leonine wooden brackets, which are no longer *in situ* and which belong to an earlier phase, display some skilful work and archaic features.<sup>6</sup>

These kinds of leonine beam ends are commonly found on early monuments in Ladakh (e.g. Alchi and Wanla). The lions of Brag mkhar seem, however, to exhibit a regional and somewhat more naturalistic style than those of the neighbouring kingdom, as the whirl of hair on the shoulder tends to indicate. The reuse of these lions within the enlarged structure of the gateway stūpa prevents any relative dating based on stylistic grounds alone.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the small murals partly preserved in a niche inside the structure could well be some of the earliest paintings at Brag mkhar. Despite the heavy damage and the almost complete crumbling of the front wall, the iconographical composition, the blue background, the shape of the haloes, and the colour palette (i.e. blue, red, white, and tawny) suggest a date between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The lion, already a symbol of royalty and power in ancient India, came to represent the Buddha as the “Lion of the Sakya”. With the expansion of Buddhism, the artistic representation of lions spread beyond the Indian subcontinent and reached Tibet between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century. As an architectural feature, beam ends in the shape of a lion are already represented in reliefs at Gandhāra and Mathurā. In Tibet, early representations of lions are not only found in imperial necropolises (i.e. lion statues of ‘Phyong rgyas; see HELLER 2007) but also in religious architecture (i.e. carved lion beam ends of the Jo khang; see HELLER 2004).

<sup>7</sup> We wish to thank Christian Luczanits for the information regarding the use of leonine brackets in the early temples of Ladakh as well as for his stylistic analysis of the lions of Brag mkhar. Personal communication, November 2011.

<sup>8</sup> We are again indebted to Christian Luczanits for the stylistic analysis of these murals and for suggesting a bKa’ brgyud or even ‘Bris gung bKa’ brgyud context. The closest stylistic comparison can be seen inside the Shangrong temple at Alchi. Personal communication, November 2011.

Fig. 05: Gateway stupa; CA 2011



Fig. 06: Leonine wooden bracket; LN 2011







Fig. 07: Mahākāla's attendants; LN 2011



Fig. 08: Front wall and ceiling; LN 2011

The left sidewall of the niche is entirely covered with the representation of a blue four-armed Mahākāla (*mgon po*) carrying in his principal pair of hands a vajra chopper (*gri gug*) and a skull cup (*ka pa li*). While he holds a trisūla (*rtse gsum*) in his second left hand, the attribute of the second right hand is no longer visible, but can be confidently asserted to be a sword (*ral gri*). On the right sidewall, a set of six figures disposed in two rows shows the attendants of Mahākāla; only two of them clearly visible. Among these figures with zoomorphic faces, the one situated in the upper right corner can be identified as a representation of Raven-faced Mahākāla (*las mgon bya rog gdon can*).<sup>9</sup>

As for the front wall, traces of painting in the upper part and left hand corner points towards the presence of a single deity as the outline of a large *vesica piscis* suggests. Emerging from behind the aureole, two red branches bearing bodhi leaves develop towards the left.<sup>10</sup> A few other floral elements are represented on the left side of the wall. Finally, the wooden ceiling of the niche, which might have been replaced over the years, does not bear any traces of painting. The niche also served as a votive deposit place for hundreds of stūpa *tsha tsha* miniatures.

On the whole, the rather confused architectural state of this gateway stūpa raises more questions than it answers. Following Nepalese and Tibetan conventions, a depiction of Mahākāla would traditionally be located at the temple's entrance; as a dharmapāla (*chos skyong*), he functions as a protector and guardian. The purpose of the niche and its murals, and their function within the original structure cannot be established, given their present condition. In addition, the reuse of the leonine wooden brackets does not simplify the interpretation of this structure, and its initial appearance may now be difficult to determine.

<sup>9</sup> This iconographical treatment seems to conform to the manifestation of Mahākāla Caturbhūja (*Yes shes mgon po phyag bzhi pa*) as it was established by the time of the later diffusion; see BRAUEN & WILSON 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Due to the shape of the halo and the presence of the bodhi leaves, it is tempting to speculate that the main deity depicted is none other than the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni.

## SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND PATERNAL CLANS

Based on Lyall’s earlier observations, August Hermann Francke records the names of six paternal clans (*pha spun*) which, in Spiti, may also be termed father-son clans (*pha spad*), bone-lineages (*rus pa*), or even paternal bone-lineages (*pha rus*) in Brag mkhar.<sup>11</sup>

This notion of paternal family lineage has been documented by various researchers and shows some commonalities throughout the Western Himalayas.<sup>12</sup> It is essentially an exogamic system ensuring a social cohesion and solidarity among a group of people living in proximity. The members of the same paternal clan tend to worship a common tutelary deity (*pha lha*) – literally father-deity – and are responsible for the organisation of the funeral rites and the cremation of their dead.

This last point possibly explains the nature of the exogamic system where a male individual of a certain *pha rus* is not allowed to marry a woman of the same *pha rus*. Due to the polluting character of the dead body, the closest relatives of the deceased are bound by funereal prohibitions. The other members of the group must take care of the body and perform the cremation as a clan duty. Eventually, it alleviates the burden of loss for the closest relatives, both psychologically and financially, since the cost of the funeral is shared among all the members of a single *phas rus*.

For that reason, consanguineous marriages and marriages within a *phas rus* were prohibited and punished by local law, according to Joseph Gergan who visited Spiti in the early 1920s.<sup>13</sup> Until quite recently the judicial enforcement of this rule was the responsibility of the main Governor (*no no*).

11 See FRANCKE 1914

12 See BRAUEN 1979

13 See DE ROSSI FILIBECK 2002

According to interviews conducted this year, the previous Governor of Spiti still administrated justice in the valley; the exogamy rule was probably followed more strictly than nowadays.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the information recorded by Francke, Gergan, and others, about the family names and paternal clans of Spiti, the distribution of those names for the territory of Brag mkhar has not been established with certainty yet. The historical interest of these names lies in the fact that they are believed to indicate the geographical provenance of these groups (indigenous vs. exogenous) and may occasionally pop up in some historical documents, epigraphical inscriptions, or wall-paintings all over West Tibet. With regard to our research a few remarks can, however, be formulated.<sup>15</sup>

14 The origin of these governors, whether they belonged to a local aristocracy or were descended from the court of Ladakh, remains unclear. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two small governors (*cho ta* [sic] *no no*) and a main governor and judge (*khri ms dpon*) administered the Spiti Valley. The places of their jurisdiction were rGyu gling, Mani, and Brag mkhar. The last of the three came to be viewed as the centre of legal authority and power for the whole valley, therefore assuming tardily the role of a capital (*rgyal sa*), especially since the governors (*no no*) were “entitled to be called *rgyal-po* or king”, as Luciano Petech has remarked; see PETECH 1977.

15 The chart below is an attempt to organize and compare the information collected on paternal family lineages. It must be noted that in addition to the five paternal clans given by Gergan, the author also extracts a list of thirty-six *rus pa* from the *Lha nyi ma'i gdung brgyud* text; see DE ROSSI FILIBECK 2002.

<i>rus pa / pha rus / rigs rus in Brag-mkhar (or in Spiti)</i>			
	<i>Lyall - Francke</i>	<i>J. Gergan</i>	Interviews 2011
1			No no
2	Blon chen pa	Blon chen pa	Blon po
3	rGya zhing pa	rGyan shing pa	Am chi
4	Khyung po	gNam ru pa	Jo ba 'brum dkar po
5	sNyegs pa	Tum bo pa	<i>thun mong gi rigs rgyud</i>
6	Henir	Nil 'gro ba	Be da
7	Nandu	Rum pa	mGar ba





Fig. 09: Royal banquet;  
Lha khang gong ma; LN 2011



Fig. 10: Royal banquet;  
Lha khang gong ma; LN 2011

The most important paternal family lineage in Brag mkhar today is the minister family (*blon po*), which was reported by Francke and Gergan as the great minister family (*blon chen po*). For Christian Jahoda, the ministers who resided in Brag mkhar in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were not only functionaries (*bka' blon*) of the Ladakhi administration but also castellans (*mkhar dpon*).<sup>16</sup>

As for the governors of Spiti, the origin of these ministers (*bka' blon*, *blon chen po*, *slob dpon*) and castellans of Brag mkhar cannot be established with certainty at present.<sup>17</sup> For instance, the earliest reference to a minister living in Brag mkhar (*blon po Grang dkar dpon btsun*) is from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, hence predating any possible Ladakhi influence.<sup>18</sup>

Among the other high-status paternal family lineages of Brag mkhar, a mention should be made of the Am chi (doctors) as well as the Jo ba 'brum dkar po's clan; the latter was described to us as a family of tantric practitioners (*sngags pa*) of the rNying ma tradition.<sup>19</sup> Among the other family lineages reported by oral tradition, the *Be da* of Spiti and the *mGar ba* from Brag mkhar were already acknowledged by Gergan in his *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter*. The unusual description of these two groups seems to have escaped the attention of Elena De Rossi Filibeck who left untranslated two lines of subchapter 3:<sup>20</sup>

སྤྱི་ཉི་མཉམ་མཚོ་<sup>21</sup> མཁན་གྱི་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་། ལུང་གི་སྐུ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་བརྒྱུད་ལས་བྲང་མཁར་  
གྱི་མགར་བ་དེ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་།

*The Be da are the grooms of the people of Spiti. The family lineage wearing conch shell earrings are said to be the mGar ba of Brang mkhar.*

These two groups, which are found in Spiti, Kinnaur, Ladakh, and Lahaul, represent the lowest social strata in the Tibetanized Western Himalayas. It is, however, curious that Gergan describes the *Be da* as grooms (*rta bcos mkhan*) since they usually constitute a caste of professional musicians who play an oboe-like instrument called *su na* or *sur na*.<sup>22</sup> It is remarkable, and it is rather unclear why Gergan specifically associates the *mGar ba* with the area of Brag mkhar. The members of this group are traditionally blacksmiths or kettledrum players (*lda man*).<sup>23</sup>

16 See JAHODA 2009  
 17 The title *slob dpon* appears a few times in the monastic documents computerized this year. See BmK01 below.  
 18 See LOBSANG NYIMA 2010  
 19 Though a follower of the rNying ma tradition, one of the youngest members of the Jo ba 'brum dkar po family recently became a dGe bshes lha rams pa (the highest grade of Buddhist "doctorate") in the dGe lugs pa school. We suspect this family lineage to be somewhat related to the *khyung po* or *gnam ru pa*; two clan names that may suggest pre-Buddhist origins.  
 20 See DE ROSSI FILIBECK 2002  
 21 Sic; for *bcos*.  
 22 A musical instrument close to the Tibetan *rgyal gling*.  
 23 *mGar ba* are viewed as belonging to the lowest of all the social strata in Spiti. Nowadays, however, the government policy of reservations (affirmative action) may have improved the social status of some individuals. Personal communication with rGen dPal ldan, July 2011.





Fig. 11: Su na player;  
Lha khang gong ma; LN 2011



Fig. 12: Drum players;  
Lha khang gong ma; LN 2011

The establishment of a local court at Brag mkhar may somehow explain this situation. For Christian Jahoda, the development and popularisation of traditional music and dance in Spiti could follow “a model established and practiced in the sphere of royal culture in the kingdom of Ladakh” where low caste groups, such as the *Be da* and *mGar ba*, found their primary function in courtly performances.<sup>24</sup> This model finds its artistic expression in a remarkable wall painting inside the upper chapel (*lha khang gong ma*) of Brag mkhar Monastery. Situated on the lower frieze of the north wall, the scene depicts the court of Spiti at a lavish banquet. Two groups of women fully adorned with traditional jewels, headdresses, and garments are dancing to the sound of drums, oboes, and lutes, while horseriding envoys punctuate the lower part of the scene.

Finally, the common family lineages (*thun mong gi rigs rgyud*) are agriculturalists who own fields and practice animal husbandry. They seem to be related to the large field owners (*rgya zhing pa*) observed by Lyall, Francke, and Gergan. This last includes both small householders (*khang chung pa*) and large householders (*khang chen pa*), who can be members of the same *pha rus*, when the many sons of a large family do not inherit family wealth equally. As for the administration of Brag mkhar, two village headmen (*rgad po*, *rgad dpon*) oversee the village council. They are elected, one each, from the *khang chen* and the *khang chung* groups for a period of three years.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See JAHODA 2009

<sup>25</sup> According to Gergan, the chieftain of a village is a minor headman (*rgad po chung*), while the authority of a district is a major headman (*rgad po chen*); see DE ROSSI FILIBECK 2002.



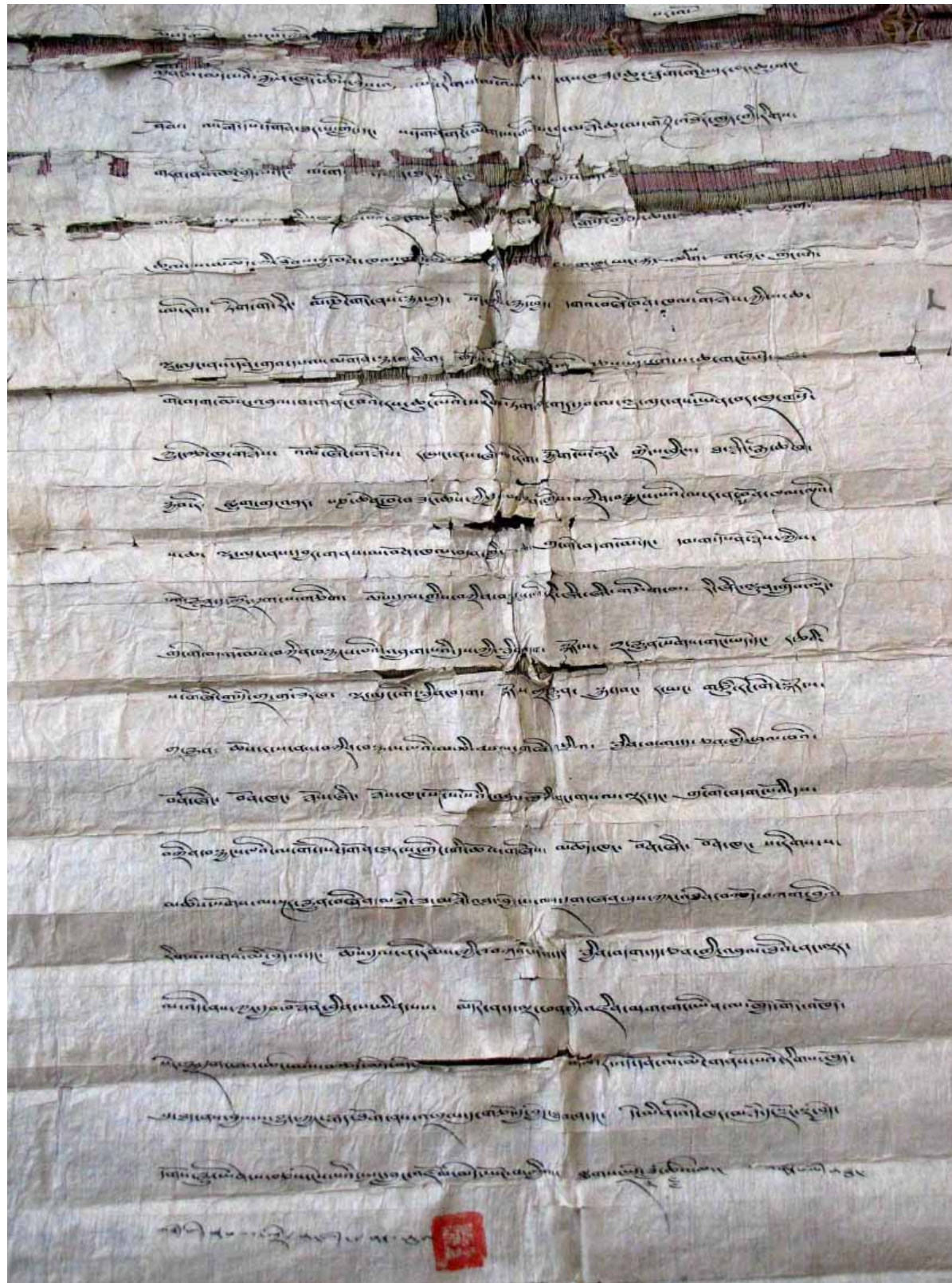


Fig. 13: BmK 01; LN 2011

MONASTIC DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO BRAG MKHAR MONASTERY

We were fortunate this summer to be entrusted by the administration of Brag mkhar Monastery with a bag full of documents pertaining to various monastic issues.<sup>26</sup> Most of these documents are edicts and official letters, often stamped with the seal of the authority that issued them. A first selection was made on the basis of the handwriting, the paper quality, and the content of the colophon. Ten of these documents were then photographed and digitalized with the help of the local community. One of these has been translated and succinctly annotated, and is presented below.

Almost all of these documents are written in cursive styles, either in 'bru tsha or in 'khyug yig. As for the language, it is primarily monastic classical Tibetan with the strong influence of *spi ti skad* dialect. As is often the case with such material, grammar and spelling are arbitrary. For this reason, the computerization and study of these documents required the help of some senior monks from Brag mkhar; the youngest generation of monks often having difficulties in understanding idiomatic expressions or issues no longer extant.

These documents were catalogued as BmK01, 02, 03 etc.<sup>27</sup> Due to the peculiarity of the language and the specificity of the subject matter, the study of the remaining documents cannot be done without the collaboration of the monks from Brag mkhar Monastery, as was the case with BmK01.

BMK01<sup>28</sup>

BmK01 is an official edict made of very thin paper which was lately glued on a piece of material in order to be preserved. The edict is composed of twenty-six lines in 'bru tsha style. The last line preceding the official red seal is written in 'khyug yig style and is, alas, partly illegible.

<sup>26</sup> We wish to express our deepest gratitude to Phyag mdzod rGen Tshe ring for handing us over to computerize and to study these documents.

<sup>27</sup> The abbreviation BmK stands for **Br**ag **mk**har.

<sup>28</sup> This work could not have been realised without the generous help of rGen rDo rje bsod nam, rGen Byang chub, rGen bKra shis, and rGen dPal ldan from Brag mkhar Monastery.



TIBETAN TEXT

- 1 དབུ་མཛད། ས་དགོན་གོག་མིག་པའི་ཕྱི་<sup>i</sup>.....
- 2 ཚོས་གཞིས་ར་སྤངས་ཀྱི་གྲམས་མོ་དེའི་.....གསར་འདོན་བྱས་པ་ལ་
- 3 འདྲེན་ས་མེད་པའི་རྒྱུ་ཁྲིའི་ཚོས་བྱས་འདུག་པ་དེ་རིགས་མ་འོས་པས། ད་ནས་བཟུང་ཆུ་སྐྱུག་གི་ཡུར་བར་ཆུ་གང་
- 4 འོམ། ལ་སློ་དཔེ་དགོན་ཐར་ས་གླིང་དང། ས་དགོན་གོག་མིག་ས་གཉིས་ཆུ་མཉམ་ཆུ་མ་གཏོགས་འཐེང་བྱེད་ཀྱི་རིགས་
- 5 གཏན་ནས་མི་བྱེད་པ་དང། ལ་གམོ་<sup>ii</sup>.....ད་ཐར་<sup>iii</sup>.....སངས་རྒྱས་ཡོད་ཅ་<sup>iv</sup>.....ཀྱིས་གསར་རྒྱག་བྱས་པའི་
- 6 ལུ་གོ་ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ནས་འདྲེན་<sup>v</sup>བརྒྱུད་པའི་བྱང་མཁའ་<sup>vi</sup>.....གཞི་<sup>vii</sup>.....བ་གསུམ་གྱི་ས་ཆ་དང་<sup>viii</sup>.....ཆུའི་ལྷ་གུ་
- 7 ཆུལ་དུས་མཚོན་གྱི་ཐེབས་སུ་བོན་ཁལ་གསུམ་གྱི་ས་ཆ་<sup>ix</sup>.....དག་ཞིང་ཁ་ཡང་སྐྱ་གཅིག་ གོ་བྱང་། ལྷ་གུ་
- 8 ཨ་རིག་ ཉིག་གོ་རིང་། མ་ཉི་བོད་ནས་སྐྱ་བྱེད། མོང་<sup>x</sup>བཞི་སྐྱ་བྱེད། དགའ་བཞི་བོན་ཁལ་གཉིས་གྱི་ས་ཆ་
- 9 ལྷ་ལྷུང་ནས་དོན་གྲུབ་དཔལ་མགོན་སྐྱ་གཅིག་ ཚོགས་པ་རང་གིས་ཉོས་པའི་བཅས་སྐྱུང་གི་ས་ཆ་གང་ཡོད། ལུ་
- 10 གོ་བདག་མོས་འབྲུལ་བ་གནང་བའི་རས་རྒྱུང་པའི་ས་རིགས་ཉོག་ཅེ་<sup>xii</sup>གང་རྒྱུབ་ལ་ལྷ་ལྷུང་ནས་སྐྱེན་བར་ཁ་ཁ་གསུམ་

<sup>i</sup> A X indicates an unknown or unreadable root letter (*ming gzhi*) and can be preceded by a prefix or followed by a suffix, post-suffix, super-fix, sub-joined letter, or one of the four vowels if they appear to be readable.

<sup>ii</sup> ལ་སློ་དཔེ་དགོན་ཐར་ས་གླིང་

<sup>iii</sup> རྒྱུན་

<sup>iv</sup> ཟེར་

<sup>v</sup> Sic; for བཞིན་

<sup>vi</sup> Sic; for མོང་ ?

TRANSLATION

- 1. The Abbot: The Sa skya monastery of Gog mig<sup>29</sup> [...]
- 2. the religious administration unit, the riversides of Ra spang [...] in order to implement the new [...]
- 3. the conditions are lacking due to your inappropriate ways. From today onwards, (regarding) the spring and water supply
- 4. set on the land belonging to either La sgod dpe Monastery of Thar sa gling<sup>30</sup> or Sa skya monastery of Gong mig, none of the commonly shared rivulets
- 5. shall be diverted for one’s own benefit. The minister Sangs rgyas ‘od zer of La sgod dpe monastery of Thar sa gling repaired it.
- 6. The Dharma King of Gu ge extended his kindness to Brang mkhar by [...] of three plots of land and [...] the riversides.
- 7. At the offering time<sup>31</sup> , three measures of crops from the plot [...] the full harvest of those fields: Go byang, Gung gi,
- 8. A rig, Tig go ring (shall be supplied). From Upper Mani<sup>32</sup> the full harvest (shall be supplied). From the Song bkra shis (family) half of the harvest. From the dGa’ bzhi (family) two measures of crops from their plots.
- 9. From Lha lung, the full harvest of the Don grub dpal mgon (household). The monastic community purchased the full area of bCas spang<sup>33</sup> .
- 10. The Lady Sovereign from Guge donated the hoeing plots of the Ras chung pa. From Lha lung, the sPen bar’s fields Khra<sup>34</sup> gsum

<sup>29</sup> The Sakya monastery of Gog mig (or Gong mig) was possibly founded or enlarged by Gu ge Chos dpal bzang po, a biographer and disciple of Ngor chen kun dga’ bzang po (1382 – 1456), in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It later received the name of sTeng rgyud Monastery and eventually became a dependency (*dgon pa’i yan lag*) of Mang spro Monastery (also Ma spro or Ma sro) in Ladakh. I wish to thank Jörg Heimbel for shedding light on this matter; see HEIMBEL 2011 & CHOS DUNG DKAR PO 2010. The remains of the old Gog mig Monastery are situated about 3.5 to 4 kilometers north-west of Kaza.

<sup>30</sup> Another name for Brag mkhar Monastery.

<sup>31</sup> The offering of annual donations (*mchod thebs kyi ma rtsa*) to Brag mkhar Monastery takes place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tibetan month. It usually includes both money and goods.

<sup>32</sup> Mani gong ma is located about 6.5 kilometres south-west from Brag mkhar. It overlooks the Spiti River which changes orientation and flows westwards.

<sup>33</sup> This area is located roughly 1.5 kilometres directly uphill from the new monastery of Brag mkhar, north-east of the lake, at an elevation of more than 4150m. It is still used as grazing land for the village flocks.

<sup>34</sup> *khra* can also mean a precious stone ring in *spi ti skad* dialect.



- 11 ལུང་རྩེ་ཁ་གཉིས། འོ་ལོ་ལོ་གཉིས། ར་སྤང་ནས་ཞིང་ཅ་རིག་རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལྷོང། གམ་པ་བྱིངས། ཐ་སྤིང་རྒྱ་ཆེ་བ་
- 12 ལྷུ་བ་རི། ལྷུ་ག་གུ་འབྲུང། བཏ་ཆེན་མོ་བཟང་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན་གྱིས་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་པའི་ལ་ར་ནས་བོན་ཁལ་ལྗེའི་
- 13 ས་ཆ། ལྷ་ལུང་ནས་དབྱར་གནས་ལ་བོན་ཁལ་བདུན་གྱི་ས་ཆ། གུ་གེ་བདག་མོ་དང། དམག་དཔོན་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་
- 14 དགོ་རྒྱུན་དུ་སློང་བཤུག་གཅིག་ཚོས་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་པའི་རི་ཞིང་ཞིང་གཅིག་ལ། རི་ཞིང་ལྷན་སྐྱུ་ལྷོང།
- 15 གུ་གེ་བདག་མོས་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་པའི་འབྲུག་པའི་དུས་ཀྱི་སྤྱིན་བདག་སློང་ས། ག་རྒྱུན་<sup>viii</sup>སོགས་གང་ཡོད་དང། ར་ཅའི་
- 16 ས་གཞི་གསུམ་ག་གུ་ཟེར་བ། ལྷ་ལུང་གི་སྤྱིན་བདག་སློང་ས་ག་རྒྱུན་<sup>ix</sup>སྤྱད་བདག་ར་སྤང། གཞུ་ར་ར་གི་སློང་ས་
- 17 ག་རྒྱུན། ཚོས་ར་ས་ནས་བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་པའི་མ་ཉི་ནས་ས་གཞི་<sup>x</sup>གཅིག་སྤྱིན་བདག་དང་ཅན་གྱི་སྤུལ་བའི་
- 18 བོན་ཞིང། བོན་ཁང། ཉོས་ཞིང། ཉོས་ཁང་སོགས་སོ་སོའི་འབྲུལ་ཐོའི་ནང་གསལ་ལྡར་དང། གུ་གེ་བདག་མོའི་དུས་
- 19 བཀྱིན་བསྐྱུངས་པའི་ལ་གོ་དཔེ་དཔོན་ཐར་ས་གྲིང་གི་ཚོས་གཞིས། མཚོད་ཁང། བོན་ཞིང། བོན་ཁང། ས་རིགས་ས་
- 20 མཚམས་སོགས་ལ་སྤར་རྒྱུན་བཞིན་མཉམ་ཐ་མཉམ་འབྲུང་བྱེད་པ་ལས་དག་ཞན་སྤུས་ཀྱང་འཕྲེན་བརྩོད་བགག་བྱའི་
- 21 རིགས་སོགས་མི་བྱེད་པ་དང། ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ན་རིམས་ཀྱི་བཀའ་བོག་དང། སྤྱིན་བདག་དང་ཅན་གྱི་འབྲུལ་ཐོའི་ནང་ལྡར་
- 22 ལ་འདི་ནས་ཀྱང་རྒྱལ་བསྐྱོན་<sup>xi</sup>བྱིན་པ་ཡིན་པས། མདོར་ན་ད་ལྷ་ཐན་གྱི་འཕྲེན་བདག་གང་ཡིན་ལ་ཁྱོད་གོང་འཁོད་

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<sup>vii</sup> Sic; or ཉོག་ཅེ་

<sup>viii</sup> Sic; for ག་རྒྱུན་

<sup>ix</sup> Sic; for ག་རྒྱུན་

<sup>x</sup> Sic; for ས་གཞི་

- 11. the Kyung rtse's fields Khra gnyis and a clover field (were donated). From Ra spang, the (following) fields: rTsa rig, rKyog po ldong, Gram pa byings, the large Tha snying,
- 12. sKyab ri and sMyug gu 'bur (were donated). Pan chen Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan<sup>35</sup> extended his kindness by offering five measures of crops from
- 13. the plots of La ra.<sup>36</sup> From Lha lung, seven measures of crops from the plots (shall be supplied) for the summer retreat.<sup>37</sup> The Lady Sovereign of Gu ge and the General(s)
- 14. meritoriously and repeatedly offered feasts. The Dharma King extended his kindness (by granting) fields on hill slopes: Zhing gcig ma and lHun grub lding.
- 15. The Lady Sovereign of Gu ge extended her kindness by being the patron during the 'Brug pa(s)'.<sup>38</sup> During sKor sa<sup>39</sup>, a great number of monks would gather together<sup>40</sup>
- 16. at a site known as Ra tsa'i sa gzhi gsum gra gu. (Under) the patron of Lha lung, during sKor sa, a great number of monks would gather at sKru dbang, at Ra spang, and so would they at gTsum rang.<sup>41</sup>
- 17. Chos ra sa na extended his kindness by offering a site from Mani. The patron Dad can offered
- 18. crop field(s), granary house(s) and purchased field(s), house(s) and so forth as it is clearly established in the donation register. In the time of the Sovereign of Gu ge,
- 19. (the former) extended his kindness towards the administrative unit of La go dpe Monastery of Thar sa gling, its chapels, crop field(s), granary house(s), the land,
- 20. the boundaries and so forth. As formally, in order to keep on eating and drinking together, whoever, good or bad, supports quarrels
- 21. shall be stopped. The edict of the Dharma King's lineage and the donation register of the patron Dad can
- 22. provide no contradiction to this (matter). In short, whoever obtains or holds (land), as mentioned above,

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<sup>35</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> Pan chen bla ma (1570 – 1662) was formally enthroned at mTho lding on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1618 where he met the court of Gu ge.

<sup>36</sup> La ra is located about 22 kilometres south-west of Kaza

<sup>37</sup> Skt. vārṣika

<sup>38</sup> The 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud school established itself in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and became prevalent in the area of West Tibet by the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>39</sup> sKor sa takes place on 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> Tibetan month (sa ga zla ba).

<sup>40</sup> It is not clear what the term *grwa rgyun* exactly means in this context. Elsewhere, it usually designates a young monk who has come from far away to spend time in one of the great learning centres of Central Tibet. The monastic gatherings or ceremonies referred to in this document could also involve the presence of nuns.

<sup>41</sup> Ra spang (modern Rama) and gTsum rang (modern Chabrang) are both situated upstream of the Lingti river in the direction of Lha lung.



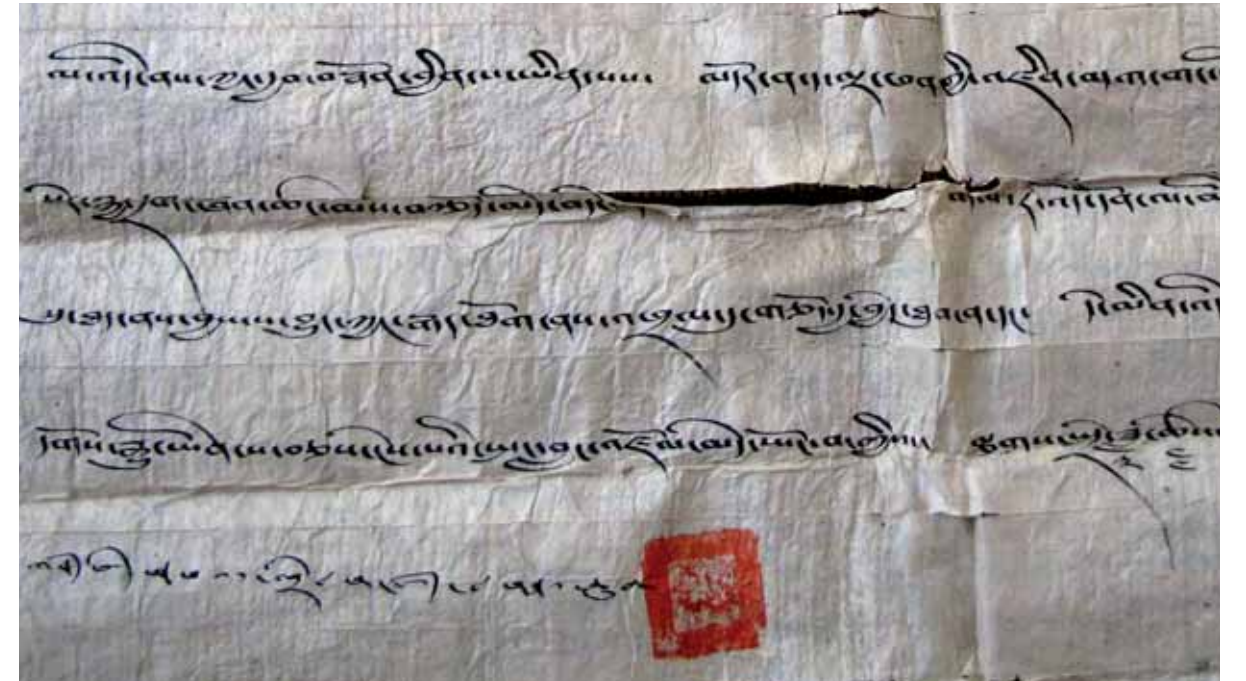


Fig. 14: BmK 01 - Detail; LN 2011

མཉམས་སྦྲེལ་གྱི་ཞུགས་ཚུལ་མཉམས་སྦྲེལ་གྱི་ཞུགས་ཚུལ་མཉམས་སྦྲེལ་གྱི་ཞུགས་ཚུལ་མཉམས་སྦྲེལ་གྱི་ཞུགས་ཚུལ་

སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་

ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་

སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་

<sup>xi</sup> Sic; for ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་

<sup>xii</sup> Sic; for ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་

<sup>xiii</sup> Sic; for ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་

<sup>xiv</sup> Sic; for ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ or maybe ལྟར་སྤྱི་བོད་ ?

<sup>xv</sup> The original document contains the number 4 twice, written on top of each other.

23. either monks and laymen, good or bad, shall abide in living happily and without discord. In addition to this, those not living (in harmony),

24. whoever they may be, shall be prosecuted at sGar tog at once.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, here among us, the bearer of this message

25. shall do what is necessary to ensure the definite rejection and absence of all undesirable things. Iron-Monkey year, 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month.<sup>43</sup> The government of [...]

26. [...].

42 Following the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War (1679 – 1684), the Government of Lhasa (*dGa' ldan pho brang*) was represented in West Tibet by two district commissioners (*sgar dpon*) who would reside at sGar tog for a period of three to six years. sGar tog was essentially a trading center where taxes were levied and from where tributes were sent to Central Tibet. In the early twentieth century it was opened to British trade.

43 The reference to the 4<sup>th</sup> Pan chen bla ma (1570 – 1662) provides a solid *terminus post quem* for this edict which must have been written in, or most likely after, 1620. Since it is clearly specified that litigation should be pursued at sGar tog, this document was probably composed after the signing of the Ladakh-Tibet treaty of 1684; see note 42. The Iron-Monkey years for the whole period concerned would be 1680, 1740, 1800, 1860, 1920, and 1980. This last year can be excluded almost for sure as the senior monks of Brag mkhar would certainly remember the reading of this edict. More research based on the content of this document needs to be conducted to determine its exact calendar year.



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