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Establishing the Succession of the Sakya Lamas of Näsar Gompa and Lang Gompa in Dolpo (Nepal)*

INTRODUCTION

Up to the present time there has been very little known about the Sakyapas in the remote north of Dolpo, even though this particular school of Tibetan Buddhism must have played an important role in Dolpo from the thirteenth century onwards. Two of the oldest Sakya monasteries in Dolpo,¹ Näsar and Lang, are located in Bicher Gaon not far from the famous Samling Gompa of the Yangton Bonpos. Of the maps of Dolpo which I have seen, there is not one on which the location of Bicher and Samling is given accurately. Both places are east of the Shey River. While Bicher lies at an altitude of 3,700 metres in a side valley on a small river descending from the holy mountain sMug po'i roñ, Samling is located on a mountain ridge to the south at about 4,100 metres. Bicher appears on the Survey of India map as Phijorgaon. Recalling the old foundation myth of gTsong rna rin chen, most villagers pronounce the name of their village Jicher (Tib. *byi gcer*, “[the place] a mouse was crushed”).

The Sakyapas and Bonpos came from Tibet to the area of Bicher at about the same time and have co-existed in a uniquely peaceful way ever since. In their daily rituals they both worship the mountain deities sMug po'i roñ and dGe bsñen Roñ chuñ; one and the same family makes offerings to Samling Gompa and Näsar Gompa at the same time; and often a Bon *maṇḍala* is found next to a Buddhist one in the same house-

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¹ When coming from Mugu Gaon to Dolpo on a Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) expedition in June 1999, I saw the ruins of a monastery in Phö Gaon with old Sakya wall paintings. Unfortunately, we were unable to collect wood samples for a dendrochronological dating, nor have I succeeded in finding any dates for this gompa in the literature.

hold. That such a practical openness is not only found among lay persons is demonstrated by the fact that it was a Bonpo, Tshe dbaṅ lhun grub, who was entrusted with the task of writing down a daily Buddhist protector ritual (in the tradition of the *ras chuñ sñan rgyud*) used in Näsar Gompa.² The Buddhist lama Chos rgyal mtshan (seventeenth century) from Rin chen gliñ (a half-day walk to the north of Bicher) wrote concerning his teacher Tshul khriṃs rin chen that he received both the Buddhist and Bon teachings, and that for him there was no difference between the two.³ This genuine tolerance was exercised towards not only the Bonpos, but also other Buddhist traditions. Thus the Sakyapas of Bicher have long been practising the *ras chuñ sñan rgyud* teachings of the Kagyupas,⁴ and in a century when Sakyapas and Drikungpas were at war in Tibet (the war lasted from 1267 till 1290),⁵ the Drikung lama Grub thob Seṅ ge ye śes (1181-1255) consecrated Näsar Gompa (see below, p. 88). There, as in other Sakya monasteries in Dolpo, the Nyingma school came in time to enjoy a growing popularity.⁶

Nevertheless, I could observe a certain competition between the different religions. In Samling in June 1999, the present abbot Lama Sherab Tenzin tried to convince me that the Bonpo lama rTa'u ṅi ma rgyal mtshan arrived in Shey before Grub thob Seṅ ge ye śes, opening the sacred place now called Crystal Mountain Dragon Roar (*śel gyi ri bo 'brug sgra*)⁷ by the Buddhists, but then recognized by him as g.Yuñ druñ bon ri. From a short biography of rTa'u ṅi ma rgyal mtshan which is contained in a collection of four life stories written by Drañ sroñ g.Yuñ druñ rgyal mtshan,⁸ we know, however, that rTa'u ṅi ma rgyal mtshan

² *rDor gtum chog khriṅs*, 31b3. Tshe dbaṅ lhun grub is known to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen as a Bonpo.

³ Chos rgyal mtshan, *Tshig 'khyal*, 75a4-b1.

⁴ The third abbot of Näsar, Zaṅs ri khro ras pa, is mentioned in a lineage of Ras chuñ pa in the *rDor gtum chog khriṅs*, 22a5-6.

⁵ See Snellgrove – Richardson 1995: 149.

⁶ The Näsar lama Tshe dbaṅ rgyal mtshan (sixteenth century), for example, was a disciple of dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug, who transmitted, among other teachings, Nyingma cycles of gTer ston Nyañ ral ṅi ma 'od zer (1136-1204).

⁷ The name *śel gyi ri bo* is probably a later fabrication. In the *dkar chags* of Shey (see Mathes 1999: 65) we find *śes kyi ri bo* “the mountain of Shey”. This means that only the place-name Shey is omitted in rTa'u ṅi ma rgyal mtshan's life story.

⁸ Fols. 3a3 - 8a6.

met dMar sgom bSod nams blo gros (1516-1581) and thus only lived in the sixteenth century.⁹

I here acknowledge various forms of help from the present abbot of Lang Gompa and lama of Näsar, Tenzin Gyaltzen, who not only brought his huge collection of manuscripts and documents from the libraries of Näsar and Lang with a small yak caravan to the microfilm station of the NGMPP in Do Tarap in June 1996, but also assisted me in cataloguing them. Out of genuine interest in a critical investigation of his genealogy, he drew my attention to relevant texts and assisted me in finding some of the references. Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen also helped me in understanding various vocabulary items and idioms of the Dolpo dialect which are not covered by the extant Tibetan dictionaries, identified lamas (who often go under two different names) and provided very useful information handed down to him orally from his father and grandfather. Finally, he not only allowed Dr. Achim Bräuning (University of Stuttgart), who accompanied me in June 1999 to Mugu and Dolpo, to take dendrochronological probes from Näsar and Lang, but also successfully assisted us in obtaining such probes from Samling, Shey, Tsakhang and Gomoche.

THE FOUNDATION OF NÄSAR GOMPA

Näsar Gompa was founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century by gTsong rna rin chen, a lama of the Sakya 'Khon family. In a short life story of gTsong rna rin chen, which was written according to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen by his grandfather Nor bu rgyal mtshan¹⁰ on one single large-sized page in fifteen lines, it is claimed that gTsong rna rin chen was the son of gTsong gtor śes rab,¹¹ who is mentioned in the *Sa skya'i gduñ rabs* in the family lineage of dKon pa rJe Guñ stag or dPal po che (in the document: 'Khon dPal po che),¹² who according to Nor bu

⁹ rTa'u Ņi ma rgyal mtshan is further said to have meditated for three years in Samling and sixteen years at Tsakhang Gompa at the foot of "Mountain Dragon Roar" (a short form for *śel gyi ri bo 'brug sgra*), the latter being the same number of years Grub thob Señ ge ye śes spent at Shey three centuries earlier (Drañ sroñ g.Yuñ druñ rgyal mtshan, *Lo rgyus*, 5a6-7 and 5b7-6a2).

¹⁰ Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen recognized Nor bu rgyal mtshan's handwriting.

¹¹ Nor bu rgyal mtshan, *bSil ljōns*, l. 5.

¹² Kun dga' blo gros, *Sa skya'i gduñ rabs*, p. 2-3. The disturbing fact is that between the time of Khri sroñ lde btsan (eighth century) and gTsong rna rin chen,

rgyal mtshan was a minister of Khri sroñ lde btsan. A short “foundation story” (*chags rabs*) written by Tshul khirms rdo rje, an abbot of Näsar in the fourteenth century (see below, p. 96), informs us that gTsong rna rin chen shot an arrow from the gÑan la (pass) to find out where to stay in the newly discovered valley in front of him – a common element of narration in Himalayan foundation myths. The arrow pierced a mouse, killing it, and thus he called his new home *byi gcer*. Charles Ramble has recorded a later version of this story within the oral tradition of the Bonpos, according to which Yañ ston bla ma (sÑags pa?) went to Dolpo and shot an arrow when he did not know where to go from Pungmo. He founded a large village at the place where the arrow embedded itself in a *bicher* tree.¹³

gTsong rna rin chen constructed a gompa, and it was during his time that Grub thob Señ ge ye śes visited Bicher. The latter consecrated and inaugurated the gompa and called it Näsar.¹⁴ This must have been in the year 1220,¹⁵ when Grub thob señ ge ye śes came from Mount Kailash for the first time to Crystal Mountain in Shey. According to the old strands of the “guides” (*dkar chag*) to Crystal Mountain,¹⁶ Grub thob

who met Grub thob señ ge ye śes in 1220, there are supposedly only five generations. But the lineage given in Nor bu rgyal mtshan’s document differs from the one in the *Sa skya gduñ rabs*, which lists: dKon pa rJe Guñ stag or dPal po che (minister of Khri sroñ lde btsan) – Śes rab yon tan – Yon tan ’byuñ gnas – Tshul khirms rgyal po – gTsong śes (ibid.). Nor bu rgyal mtshan lists another two names, mTshan ’dzin and rDo rje rin chen, between dPal po che and Śes rab yon tan, and omits Yon tan ’byuñ gnas (l. 5). Evidently omissions in genealogies are not unusual; indeed further omissions could explain the small number of generations for the long period of four centuries. On the other hand, the author of the short account of gTsong rna rin chen also claims that Yangser Gompa and Margom Gompa were already standing when the founder of Näsar reached Dolpo (l. 14), so that one may doubt the reliability of this document.

¹³ Ramble 1983: 284.

¹⁴ See Tshul khirms rdo rje, *Chags rabs*, l. 6-7: “At this place Lama gTsong rna rin chen erected a gompa, and when he was residing there the Mahāsiddha Señ ge ye śes came [to Bicher]. He (i.e., the latter) properly consecrated [and at the same time] inaugurated that gompa, and gave it the name ‘New Place’” (*sa cha de ru bla ma gtsug rna* [text: *na*] *rin chen gyis dgon pa btab nas de ru bžugs pa’i dus su grub thob chen po señ ge ye śes phebs nas khoñ gis dgon pa de la rab gnas mnga’ gsol legs par mdzad nas dgon de’i mtshan la gnas gsar dgon zer pa’ i mtshan phul lo*).

¹⁵ This date is based on the accounts found in the early *rnam thar* of Grub thob Señ ge ye śes written by his disciple Don mo ri pa in Lemi (see rDo rje mdzed ’od, dPal ldan Ri khrod dbañ phyug rnam thar, p. 459ff. and Mathes 1999: 63). Cf. also Vitali 1996: 379.

¹⁶ See Mathes 1999: 66-67.

Señ ge ye śes crossed the 'Khruñs la (pass) from the Tibetan plateau, probably in the footsteps of gTsong rna rin chen, and proceeded via Yangser and Bicher to Shey, staying three days at Bicher.¹⁷

Now the question is, who arrived at Bicher first, the Sakyapas or the Bonpos? gTsong rna rin chen must have arrived at Bicher at least a few years before the consecration of his monastery by Grub thob Señ ge ye śes in 1220, if not earlier, because, when settling in a new valley the first thing people do, rather than erecting religious buildings, is to cultivate land, etc. While we have a safe *terminus ante quem* for gTsong rna rin chen's arrival in Bicher, the date when Bla ma sÑags pa founded the Bonpo temple¹⁸ in Bicher is far from certain. All we know is that his father, Klu brag pa bKra śis rgyal mtshan, studied under sMan goñ pa (b. 1123) and Ye shes blo gros, the latter of which erected Dar ldiñ gser sgo gtsug lha khañ in 1173 in Tsang. Snellgrove deduces from this that bKra śis rgyal mtshan studied as a young man in Tsang in the mid-twelfth century.¹⁹ But this could well have been in the 1170s or even 1180s, it being nothing unusual to study under a fifty- or sixty-year-old teacher. Given these uncertainties, it is very possible that gTsong rna rin chen settled in Bicher before Bla ma sÑags pa. This is also supported by the fact that the Sakya gompa has a good location on the sunny slope of the Bicher valley, which is considerably warmer in the winter than the location of the Bonpo temple at the border of the village with less sun. A newcomer with the choice would definitely opt for the site of Näsar Gompa. The famous Samling Gompa, which is a one-and-a-half-hour walk to the south of Bicher, was founded by Yangton rGyal mtshan rin chen. He, according to the *Ya ñal gduñ rabs*, was invited by bKra śis rgyal mtshan from his original family seat sTag rtse in upper Tsang.²⁰ That Samling was founded in a terrain much rougher than Bicher, and with a problematic water supply, also shows that the valley of Bicher must have been already occupied by people not belonging to the Ya ñal clan. The question arises, however, whether the valley of Bicher was not already settled before either gTsong rna rin chen or Bla ma sÑags pa arrived.

¹⁷ Both names, *byi gcer* and *gnas gсар*, are mentioned in the *dkar chags* (bŚes gñen Chos dpal – Blo gros kun spañs, *Śes ri dkar chag*, 2b1; O rgyan bstan 'dzin, *gNas chen śes ri dkar chag*, 13b5).

¹⁸ I.e., the Bon po *lha khañ*.

¹⁹ See Snellgrove 1967: 4-5.

²⁰ Yañ sgom Mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, *Ya ñal gduñ rabs*, 29a3-6.

There are indeed indications that the area of Bicher was inhabited by pre-Buddhist (and pre-Bon?) people who numbered so-called “sorcerers” (*mthu mkhan*) among them. I was told in Bicher that one of the “five friends” from Dolpo Milarepa met in Tibet in search of learning “witchcraft” (*mthu*) and *dharma*²¹ was from their village. Also from the biography of Grub thob Señ ge ye śes we know that the grandfather of Señ ge ye śes’s sponsor Mon chuñ from the village of Drä (*sprad*), which forms a social unit with Samling and Bicher,²² was such a “sorcerer”. In the biography it becomes clear that the latter was not very happy about the newcomers from Tibet, especially when his son dPal grags and grandson became Buddhists.²³

Finally, both Buddhists and Bonpos alike worship in their daily rituals the same mountains or mountain deities, sMug po roñ and dGe bsñen Roñ chuñ,²⁴ which were – and still are – objects of an older animistic mountain cult, in which mountain and mountain deity were not properly differentiated. Schicklgruber has observed that the people of Bicher do not really distinguish between their mountain sMug po roñ and their *yul lha* (or *dgra lha*) sMug po roñ.²⁵ In the *dkar chag* of Crystal Mountain we find the pre-Buddhist phenomenon of mountains behaving like sentient beings: both Crystal Mountain and Roñ chuñ were forced to take the vows of a Buddhist layman in front of Grub thob Señ ge ye śes.²⁶

Nevertheless, the argument that Näsar Gompa occupies a far better location than the Bonpo temple remains.

THE LAMAS OF NÄSAR GOMPA

During a second microfilm expedition to Dolpo in 1995, my assistant Tsewang brought a few interesting documents from Bicher Gaon to our microfilm station in Do Tarap. Among them was the copy made by Bla ma dKon mchog of an old “edict” (*bem chag*)²⁷ which regulated in detail

²¹ Rus pa'i rgyan can, *Mi la'i rnam mgur*, p. 31.

²² See Snellgrove 1961: 118.

²³ See Mathes 1999: 63-64.

²⁴ dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug, *Lha bsañs*, 27b2-28b2.

²⁵ See Schicklgruber 1996: 120.

²⁶ O rgyan bstan 'dzin, *gNas chen śes ri dkar chag*, 13a4-5 and 13b4.

²⁷ Schuh (1992: 79-80) translates *bem chag* or *bem gźag*, which derives according to him from Mongolian *bičig*, into German as “Herrscherurkunde, Grundordnungstext, Landesverfassung etc.”.

how much grain, etc., each household in dKar ma'i roñ (southern Mugu) had to hand over to the lama of Näsar each year.²⁸ As usual for a local *bem chag* of this type, it contains a historical part substantiating the status of the local chieftain or abbot and establishing the necessary authority for him to levy taxes. The Bicher *bem chag* contains genealogies of the Jumla kings and the Näsar lamas. It was probably composed by mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs, or at least during his time.²⁹ In the winter of the following year Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen brought a second more complete copy of the same edict to Kathmandu.³⁰

After words of praise for the Sakya family lineage, the *bem chag* starts with the well-known genealogy of the Tibetan kings and also that of the kings of Jumla, who are considered to be descendants of sKyid lde Ñi ma mgon (tenth century), who ruled over Western Tibet (*mñā' ri*).³¹ When sKyid lde Ñi ma mgon divided his kingdom among his three sons, the middle one, bKra śis mgon, received sPu hraṅs and Dolpo, and his youngest son, lDe btsun mgon, Žaṅ žuṅ.³² While all Tibetan chronicles say that the Malla kings of Western Nepal were descendants of sKyid lde Ñi ma mgon, they disagree over whether they spring from bKra śis mgon or lDe gtsun mgon.³³ In comparing the succession of kings given in the *bem chag* of Bicher³⁴ with the Dullu inscription of Pṛthvīmalla (dated 1357)³⁵ and the relevant passages in the main Tibetan chronicles, one notices a number of omissions. sKyid lde Ñi ma mgon is, for example, wrongly given as a son of Khri sroñ lde btsan (742-796). But it is not that the correct genealogy was not known in Dolpo. Thus the one contained in a “narrative” (*mol gtam*) written by dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug³⁶ (sixteenth century) is for the most part in accordance

²⁸ According to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, there existed an independent *bem chag* which listed how much grain and so forth each household in Bicher had to hand over to the Näsar lamas.

²⁹ *Bem chag* II, l. 62.

³⁰ *Bem chag* I.

³¹ *Bem chag* I, l. 16.

³² This is according to the Tibetan chronicles, except the ones by Grags pa rgyal mtshan and 'Phags pa, who say that bKra śis mgon got Žaṅ žuṅ, sPu hraṅs and Ya tshe (Tucci 1956: 51-52).

³³ Tucci 1956: 51-63.

³⁴ For the list from sKyid lde Ñi ma mgon up to Puṅyamalla see *Bem chag* I, l. 15-23 and *Bem chag* II, l. 12-15.

³⁵ Tucci 1956: 46-49.

³⁶ See dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug, *Mol gtam*, 15b3-16a4: *skyid lde ñi ma mgon gyis* (text: *gyi*) | *mñā' ris stod kyī rje mdzad* | *de la sras gsum byuṅ ste* | *dpal*

with the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me loñ* and the Dullu inscription.³⁷ One has the impression that the first part of the *bem chag* was carelessly copied from a source like Blo gros dbañ phyug's *Mol gtam*. The list ends with Puñyamalla (b. between 1259 and 1267)³⁸ who was, according to the other sources, not a son of 'Ba' ri smal (= Pratāpamalla). Like the Dullu inscription and the main Tibetan chronicles, Blo gros dbañ phyug tells us that this lineage ends with 'Ba' ri smal (= Par thab smal or Pratāpamalla).³⁹ Thus, Puñyamalla was invited from Gelā,⁴⁰ or sPu hrañs, to the throne of Semjā in Jumla, which is, according to Tucci, the Tibetan Ya tshe.⁴¹

Given the numerous omissions in the royal genealogy, one wonders how accurately the Bicher *bem chag* presents the lineage of the abbots of Bicher. Independent sources, however, confirm the first abbot, gTsong rna rin chen (see above, p. 88). The family succession of gTsong rna rin chen is given up to mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs, who became a good friend of Puñyamalla, Dolpo being under the control of Jumla at the time.⁴² The hereditary lineage is as follows:⁴³

mgon bkra śis mgon dañ | lde btsun (text: tsun) mgon dañ gsum la | stod kyi mgon gsum bya'o | lde btsun (text: tsun) mgon gyi sras ni | kho re sroñ gñis so | kho re'i sras ni lha lde | de sras źi ba 'od dañ | bla ma byañ chub 'od dañ | 'od lde dañ gsum mo | 'od lde'i sras ni btsan lde | de'i sras ni bha la | de sras bkra śis lde'o | de sras na ga lde'o | de'i sras ni btsan (text: tsan) lde | de'i sras bkra śis lde'o | de (text: bde) sras grags btsan (text: rtsan) lde'o | de sras grigs btsan lde'o | de sras a rog lde'o | de sras a sog lde'o | de sras dzi dar smal | dañ a nan ta smal gñis so | a nan ta smal sras la | ri lu smal du grags so | de sras sañ gha (text: ga) smal dañ | dzi dar smal gñis yin la | dzi dar smal gyi sras la | a dzi smal du grags so | de sras a nan smal lo | de sras ba ri smal gyi | ya tshe'i (text: tse'i) rgyal rgyud rdzogs so | gzan yañ bsod nams lde dañ | Except for a few variant spellings and the omission of Ka len smal, the list is identical with the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me loñ* (Tucci 1956: 56). Tucci (ibid. 66) showed that the list from Na ga lde onwards corresponds to the kings Nāgarāja etc. in the Dullu inscription.

³⁷ Tucci, the discoverer of this inscription, shows in his *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal* that it agrees with the Tibetan chronicles (Tucci 1956: 51-71).

³⁸ According to Vitali 1996: 453. Pandey (1997: 137) informs us that Puñyamalla died in 1337. This is very unlikely, though, because Bu ston Rin po che sent his disciple Puñyamalla a letter in 1339 (Vitali 1996: 453-454).

³⁹ dMar sgom Blo gros dbañ phyug, *Mol gtam*, 16a4.

⁴⁰ Pandey 1997: 135.

⁴¹ Tucci 1956: 71.

⁴² *Bem chag* I, l. 33-4 (see below, n. 50).

⁴³ In the meantime Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen has published my tentative genealogies of the lamas of Nāsar and Lang in a small booklet with the title *Dol po byi*

1. gTsug rna rin chen
(met Grub thob Señ ge ye śes in 1220)
2. gTsug tor rgyal po
3. Zañs⁴⁴ ri khro ras pa
4. Slob dpon sTon pa rTse mo
5. Bla ma rGya thams cad mkhyen pa
6. Me ñag rnal 'byor
7. Sum bha⁴⁵ rnal 'byor
8. Byañ chub tshul khrimś
9. Dharma señ ge
10. mKhan po 'Jam dbyañś⁴⁶

Being a contemporary of King Puṇyamalla, mKhan po 'Jam dbyañś can be assigned to the beginning of the fourteenth century. In a transmission lineage of the *rDor gtum chog khrigs*, the lamas from Zañś ri gro ras pa (no. 3) up to mKhan po 'Jam dbyañś (no. 10) are mentioned after Ras chuñ pa (1085-1161) in the same order. Even if Zañś ri gro ras pa lived at the same time as gTsug rna rin chen, it is impossible that he received initiations and teachings from Ras chuñ pa. As we have seen above (p. 88), however, the omission of one or two links in a transmission is nothing unusual. In any case, the transmission lineage of the *rDor gtum chog khrigs* confirms the sequence of the third to the tenth lamas of the *bem chag*.⁴⁷

gcer gnas gsar dgon dañ | bla ma'i brgyud rabs kyi lo rgyus rags bsduś go bder brjod pa bžugs so, p. 15-18. Since he recently converted to the Nyingma School, he calls his two gompas on the title page "Ngagyur Nyingma Nasar and Lhang Monastery".

⁴⁴ Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen prefers the reading *bzañ*.

⁴⁵ Emended according to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen.

⁴⁶ See *Bem chag* I, l. 24-27 (A) and *Bem chag* II, l. 17-19 (B): 'di la sa skya 'khon bcas byon (A: sbyon) pa'i | thog mar gtsug rna rin chen | de sras gtsug tor (AB: rtor) rgyal po | de sras zañ[s?] (A ziñ) ri gro ras pa | de nas rim par 'khrunś tshul slob dpon ston (AB: bston) pa rtse mo | bla ma rgya thams cad mkhyen pa (B om.) | me ñag rnal 'byor sum pa (B: spa) rnal 'byor | byañ chub tshul khrimś dharma señ ge | de sras mkhan po 'jams dbyañś.

⁴⁷ *rDor gtum chog khrigs*, 22a5-6.

mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs did not stay at Nāsar Gompa, but in the “Great Cave” (*phug chen*) at Brag dkar 'dzum pa,⁴⁸ which is a twenty minutes' walk to the west of Nāsar. As already mentioned, the king of Jumla Puṅyamalla ruled over Dolpo at that time, and as a friend of mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs, he used taxes collected in Dolpo to build a huge chapel at Nāsar, furnishing it with a Maitreya statue, a Kanjur and a Tanjur.⁴⁹ The walls were painted with thirty-seven *maṅḍalas* and with pictures portraying the deeds of the Buddha.⁵⁰ According to the *mṅa' ris rgyal rabs* Puṅyamalla was especially devoted to Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) and received a copy of the Kanjur and Tanjur from

⁴⁸ *Bem chag* I, l. 27.

⁴⁹ Unfortunately I could not locate any Tanjur in Bicher Gaon (neither in Lang nor in Nāsar Gompa). Even Snellgrove did not discover one there; he found only a Kanjur (Snellgrove 1961: 129).

⁵⁰ See *Bem chag* I, l. 33-38: “Then, since the king[s] of Semjā, Jumla, had the power over the region of Dolpo, both, the king bSod nams sde and mKhan po 'Jams dbyaṅs were on friendly terms helping each other. He released the region of Dolpo from [the duty of] religious tax, and erected the chapel of Nāsar, twelve fathoms in width and eighteen fathoms in length. Inside are (i.e., he put) three supports [of Buddhism], a Maitreya [statue] reaching up to the ceiling, the Dharma [in form of] the Kanjur and Tanjur, and as wall paintings he let paint a Śākyamuni and [also] thirty-seven *maṅḍalas*. [The items of the chapel] are only mentioned briefly, if mentioned in detail, the paper would not be enough.” (*de nas ya* [tshe] *mdzum rgyal po la* | *dol* [text: *sdol*] *phyogs mṅa'* [text: *lṅa*] *thañ yod pas* | *rgyal po bsod nams sde* [text: *mde*] *dañ mkhan po 'jams dbyaṅs gñis po* | *rogs po rogs mdza'* [text: *mdzan*] *mdzad nas* | *dol* [text: *sdol*] *phyogs chos khral* [text: *phral*] *du bstoñ* [text: *bstañ*] *pa mdzad nas* | *gnas gsar* [text: *sar*] *gtsug lag khañ bžeṅs* [text: *žeṅs*] | *žen du 'dom* [text: *mdom*] *pa bcu gñis dkyus* [text: *kyus*] *su 'dom* [text: *mdom*] *pa bco brgyad* | *nañ na rten* [text: *brten*] *gsum byams pa thog tshad geig* | *chos bka'* *'gyur bstan 'gyur* | *gyaṅ ris la thub pa'i btso mdzad* | *dkyil 'khor sum cu so bdun bžugs pa ni zur tsaṃ yin* | *rgyas par brjod* [text: *bsjod*] *na śog* [text: *śu*] *bu mi gtañ* [text: *sdañ*]). Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen informed me that the wooden sculptures of dragons, tigers and lions in the Gompa were made by artists from Jumla (see also Jest 1975: 361). Jest (1975: 361) quotes a more detailed version of this story without any reference (it is not clear if he used a different document or if he simply relates oral information): “Les habitants de Jumla mouraient tous d’une épidémie, les lamas de Phijor accomplirent une cérémonie *sku-rim* et sauvèrent le roi de Jumla, connu sous le nom de Sonam, et ses sujets. Le roi demanda aux lamas ce qu’ils désiraient en remerciement: ils lui demandèrent une exemption d’impôts pendant dix-huit ans; l’argent économisé leur permit d’acheter les ouvrages du Canon bouddhique.” According to Jest’s *Tales of the Turquoise* (1993: 69-70), the custodian of the Nāsar Gompa told the story in a slightly different way. The epidemic was in the valley of Karma rong and with the money that would have been paid as tax, religious works, printed in Lhasa, could be bought.

Žva lu in 1335 or soon after.⁵¹ It is not clear, however, exactly where the present Kanjur volumes in Bicher Gaon are from. A preliminary analysis of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra by Zimmermann suggests⁵² that this Kanjur is closely related to the three Phug brag versions of the Kanjur.⁵³

mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs established good contacts with the neighbouring southern and eastern parts of present-day Mugu, which are referred to in the texts as dKar ma'i roṅ (the entire southern and eastern parts) and Zaṅs dol po (the eastern parts only).⁵⁴ dKar ma'i roṅ is thus mainly the area of the Mugu Karnali valley east of Gamgadhi (the district capital of present-day Mugu) up to Dolpo, including smaller side valleys to the north and south. In Tibetan literature the name Mu gum (Mugu) is reserved for the upper valley of Mugu Gaon to the north of Ter Gomba. In the winter months it is possible to descend from Bicher to the riverbed of the Mugu Karnali (or Namlang, as the river is called in Dolpo) and follow it through a deep, narrow canyon to Zaṅs dol po in less than three days. At Gamgadhi, the Mugu Karnali is only 1,800 metres above sea level, which means that most parts of dKar ma'i roṅ are pleasantly mild and rich in grains during the winter. According to the *bem chag*, mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs discovered Zaṅs dol po when a leopard (*gsa'*) took away a Guhyasamāja *maṅḍala* from his cave. He followed the animal through the gorge of the Mugu Karnali, till it dropped the *maṅḍala* on a flat mountain ridge in Zaṅs dol po. Then he meditated at this place, called dKyil 'khor thaṅ pa (pa').⁵⁵ This could well be the “sacred place” (*gnas*) dBye laṅ, which is according to a protector ritual of Nāsar Gomba a former dwelling place of mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs.⁵⁶ According to Lama Rangrig, dBye laṅ can be reached

⁵¹ See Vitali 1996: 454.

⁵² See his appendix to this paper.

⁵³ The Tibetan tradition has it that the first complete Buddhist canon was compiled in the monastery of Narthang in 1310. Eimer (2000: 28) informs us that the abbots of Narthang provided a number of monasteries with a copy of their Kanjur in the following years.

⁵⁴ In other words, Zaṅs dol po is a part of dKar ma'i roṅ.

⁵⁵ *Bem chag* I, l. 28-32.

⁵⁶ In the *dPal mgon bskāṅs bśags* (8a3-4) his dwelling place is called *ri'o smig dgu*, which is just a different spelling of the name *ri po smig gi sku* in the *dBye laṅ gi dkar chag* (1b1-2): *rgya gar skad du | ri po smig gi sku ru zes* (text: *bzes*) *bya ba yin* || *bod skad du* || *dbye laṅ gaṅ gi* (text: *kyi*) *ra ba zes bya yin*. Even though one may wonder which Indian language the *dkar chag* is referring to, it is clear that *ri po smig gi sku ru*, and thus probably also *ri'o smig dgu*, are different names of dBye laṅ.

from Ter Gompa in one and a half days by walking to the north-east after crossing a high pass.⁵⁷

The remaining part of the document contains a great number of sponsors in different villages in dKar ma'i roñ. The exact amounts of grain to be given by each household and rent for fields belonging to the Näsar lamas are listed. Of particular interest is the fact that upon the arrival of the Näsar lama, an ox had to be slaughtered in the village sKar ti in dKar ma'i roñ. The butcher was always somebody from sDa ri khañ gsar. The two villages were to be given half of the entrails each. It is further exactly spelled out which parts of the ox the lama, the village chiefs, etc., get.⁵⁸ This is an indication that at the beginning of the fourteenth century Hindu influence in the Western Malla kingdom must have been marginal, it being otherwise inconceivable that an ox could have been officially slaughtered in a place only three days walk from the capital Semjā near Jumla.

Thanks to a protector ritual, still practised daily by the lamas of Näsar, we can continue our list of lamas who were of some importance to Näsar.⁵⁹ From Blo gros rgyal mtshan (no. 18) onwards, it may also include lamas of Lang Gompa. The list starts with Tshul khrims rdo rje, the author of a short genealogy containing the foundation myth of Bicher (see above):

11. Tshul khrims rdo rje

12. bSod nams bkra śis

⁵⁷ The *dBye lañ dkar chag*, possibly by mKhan po 'Jam dbyaṅs, (3a4-b4) says: "To the north is the area [of the village] called Mu gum (that is, Mugu Gaon), which has everything one wishes. It is on the Indian-Tibetan border, and [its inhabitants] are able to translate. To the east is the area called Dolpo, a place with rich deposits of copper etc. (that is, Zaṅs dol po, or 'Copper-Dolpo'). In the south is the area called dKar ma[']i roñ] which grows various grains. In the west is the area of [the village] Cu ti with abundant water, grass, etc. supporting the 'four-legged' sentient beings." (*byaṅ phyogs* [text: *phyog*] na 'dod dgu [text: *gu*] 'byuṅ ba'i [text: *pa'i*] yul mu gum bya ba || rgya bod gñis kyi sa mtshams [text: *mtsham*] dañ lo tstsha byed pa yod || śar phyogs [text: *phyog*] na rin po [text: *por*] che zaṅs la [text: *las*] sogs pa 'byuṅ ba'i gnas yul dol po bya ba yod || lho na 'bru [text: 'brus] sna tshogs sbye ba'i yul dkar ma bya ba yod || nub na sems can rkyañ bži [text: *bskañ ži*] ba sgyoṅ ba'i rtsa chu sogs [text: *sog*] 'dzom [text: *mdzom*] pa'i yul cu ti yod do ||). *dBye lañ* must be close to what is called *Chhayachhetra* on the *Humla / Jumla / Mugu / Bajura / Kalikot Map* (edition 2000) of the Karto-Atelier Nepal (the village of Cu ti is spelled "Chiti" on this map).

⁵⁸ *Bem chag* I, l. 55-58.

⁵⁹ *mGon po'i bsañ phud*, 1b4-2a4.

13. Tshul khrims bzañ po
14. Nam mkha' rdo rje
15. Grags pa 'od zer
16. Chos dpal bzañ po
17. Kun dga' rgyal mtshan
18. Blo gros rgyal mtshan
(founder of Lang Gompa)
19. Grags pa rgyal mtshan
20. dKon mchog mgon po
21. bSod nams rgyal po
22. bSod nams rgya mtsho
23. dKon mchog rgyal mtshan
24. dKon mchog rgya mtsho
25. Blo gros rgyal mtshan
26. 'Jam dbyaṅs lhun grub
27. Chos rnam rgyal
28. Tshe dbaṅ rgyal mtshan

Tshe dbaṅ rgyal mtshan was a disciple of dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug, as we know from the latter's biography.⁶⁰ He must have lived in the middle of the sixteenth century, since dMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug is mentioned after the Mustangi lama mÑa' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbaṅ rgyal (1487-1542) in a ritual offering to a succession of root lamas in the *O rgyan drag po'i las byaṅ* of the gTer ston Ñaṅ ral Ñi ma 'od zer.⁶¹ Blo gros dbaṅ phyug passed some of the Ñaṅ ral cycles on to dMar sgom bSod nams blo gros (1516-1581).⁶² In other words, numbers 11 to 28 cover less than two centuries, which suggests that not only the chief lamas of Nāsar are listed. From the biography of Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin we know that Blo gros rgyal mtshan, who is mentioned next in the transmission lineage of the *mGon po'i bsaṅ phud*, was a lama of Lang Gompa.⁶³ He is therefore not included here. The last name from

⁶⁰ sMar sgom Blo gros dbaṅ phyug, *'Chal gtam*, 147b1.

⁶¹ Ñaṅ ral Ñi ma 'od zer, *Drag po'i las byaṅ*, 9b3-4.

⁶² Ehrhard 1996: 58.

⁶³ Yon tan grags pa, *sByin mthar rnam mgur*, 3b3.

the *rDor gtum chog khrigs* protector ritual listed under the lamas of Näsar Gompa is

29. dKon mchog rgyal mtshan.

In his *Tshig 'khyal*, Bla ma Chos rgyal mtshan, who founded Rin chen gliñ Gompa⁶⁴ to the north of Bicher on the other side of the mountain mDzes po roñ, mentions two further lamas, the *gnas gsar gyi mkhan po* Nam mkha' and dPal bzañ. Chos rgyal mtshan taught both of them on different occasions.⁶⁵ No years are mentioned, and it is likely that only one of the *mkhan po* occupied the seat of Näsar. Indeed, the title *gnas gsar gyi mkhan po* does not necessarily mean that its holder was an abbot of Näsar Gompa. Since the seat of Lang Gompa was not yet hereditary at that time, the abbots of Lang Gompa were normally the older brothers of the abbots of Näsar Gompa. mKhan po Nam mkha' received teachings at Lang Gompa, so I list him tentatively under the lamas of Lang Gompa, and mKhan po dPal bzañ under those of Näsar Gompa:

30. mKhan po dPal bzañ

Chos rgyal mtshan was a contemporary of gTer ston Gar dbañ rdo rje (1640-1685) and bsTan dzin ras pa⁶⁶ (1644/46-1723), the latter from Shey.⁶⁷ We can therefore place mKhan po Nam mkha' and mKhan po dPal bzañ in the seventeenth century.

Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen adds, according to oral tradition, another five lamas:

31. 'Jam dbyaṅs

32. Grags pa 'od zer

33. 'Gar chuñ

34. Blo gros rgyal mtshan

⁶⁴ Rin chen gliñ must therefore have been founded in the seventeenth century. Together with the whole village of Phod it was abandoned some fifty years ago because of a sudden lack of water (oral information from Tsewang, Bicher). Dendrochronological research conducted by Dr. Achim Bräuning shows that one hut was constructed or repaired in 1942, but this could have been done by herdsmen, who still use the summer pastures of this place.

⁶⁵ Chos rgyal mtshan, *Tshig 'khyal*, 100b5-101a1 and 129b3-4.

⁶⁶ Ibid. (cf. n. 65) 11a3 and 25a1.

⁶⁷ See Mathes 1999: 67.

35. Nam mkha' tshe dbaṅ

The lineage of Nāsar Gompa ends with Bla ma Nam mkha' tshe dbaṅ's death in 1987.⁶⁸ The oral tradition must be far from complete: mKhan po dPal bzaṅ (no. 30) lived in the seventeenth century, which leaves us with only five lamas to cover a period of more than three centuries. For Blo gros rgyal mtshan (no. 34) we have a water-rabbit year (which must be 1902) in which he, together with Bla ma dKon mehog rnam rgyal⁶⁹ and all important family heads of Bicher and Samling, signed a document in which everybody agreed in front of the judge sKu źabs Chos mdzad in Saldang that cattle and so forth had to be kept well away from the fields during the summer.⁷⁰

THE LAMAS OF LANG GOMPA

According to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, oral tradition in Bicher has it that Lang Gompa was founded by a certain Blo gros rgyal mtshan. From the prefatory pages of volumes *ra* and *dza* in the *sūtra* section of an old Kanjur⁷¹ which was kept on the shelves of Lang Gompa, we know that

⁶⁸ Oral information from Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen.

⁶⁹ Lama dKon mehog rnam rgyal was the great-grandfather of the present abbot, Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, and so already long dead in the next water-rabbit year 1962.

⁷⁰ Śrī sKu źabs Chos mdzad, [first line:] *Phan bde...*, l. 4 and 11.

⁷¹ The remaining volumes of this Lang Kanjur, together with a number of other old Kanjur volumes, are nowadays kept in a room behind the shrine of Nāsar Gompa. In May 2000 Amy Heller had a chance to read the prefatory pages of several volumes of this Kanjur and could establish, with the help of Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, that many of these volumes were specifically donated during the reigns of the Jumla kings Punyamalla and Pṛthvīmalla, and the Mustang kings A mgon bzaṅ po and bKra śis mgon. The dating was confirmed by a C-14 analysis of several pages. A catalogue of the Kanjur and the results mentioned above will be published by Heller (according to an e-mail sent by her on April 13, 2002). Heller (2001: 64-71) reports that the Pritzker-Roncoroni expeditions brought to light a hidden treasure, i.e., the Kanjur volumes kept at Nāsar. But this treasure was hidden, i.e., the library was walled up, only in summer 1996, that is after I saw the Kanjur volumes in the Nāsar library in May 1996 and learned about their importance from Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen and the Bicher *bem chag*. During my Dolpo expedition of August/September 2000, I located and microfilmed the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra (NGMPP Reel No. L 1168/3) and parts of the Pravrajyāvastu (NGMPP Reel No. L 1168/4). For a preliminary assessment of the Kanjur's position in relation to other transmissions see the appendix by Zimmermann at the end of this

these particular volumes were written at the time of the Lang Gomba lama Byañ chub bśes gñen under the king of Mustang bKra śis mgon⁷² (d. 1489).⁷³ Thus Lang Gomba must have been founded well before the Blo gros rgyal mtshan mentioned in the biography of sByin pa mthar phyin – founded, that is, by Blo gros rgyal mtshan no. 25 or 18. It is therefore likely that the list of Nāsar lamas given above intermittently contains a few abbots of Lang Gomba. The present lama of Nāsar Gomba and Lang Gomba, Tenzin Gyaltzen, informs us that one lama of each generation became a monk, while the remaining brother(s) led a life of Tantric lay-practitioners (*sñags pa*); the monk–lamas moved to Lang Gomba, while the *sñags pas* remained at Nāsar.

There are no sources detailing the lineage of the lamas of Lang Gomba other than oral tradition and occasional information in the prefatory pages of the *sūtra* section in the old Kanjur of Lang.⁷⁴ Altogether six abbots are mentioned in the *sūtra* section: two in the two volumes *ka* (which are double), one each in vols. *cha*, *da* and *tsa*, and the sixth in *dza* and *ra*. Now, if this order is anything to go by (and a sponsor's preference for a particular *sūtra* may easily have been the reason that a later volume was commissioned first) there were at least five abbots before Byañ chub bśes gñen. Thus there is some reason to assume that Lang Gomba was founded by Blo gros rgyal mtshan no. 18 of the Nāsar list, probably already at the end of the fourteenth century. A tentative list of abbots would be:

article. — I am particularly grateful to the Pritzker–Roncoroni expeditions for having opened up and made accessible again the Nāsar library. It is hoped that it can be preserved on microfilm or CD-ROM in the near future.

⁷² On the prefatory page of Vol. *dza* of the *sūtra* section, l. 3 we read: “In sincere praise of the Hon. Lama Byañ chub bśes gñen.” And in l. 5-6: “[...] on the hillock bKra śis gyeñ po che [in] the upper part of the district [of] the prosperous village Bicher, [which is under] the dominion of the great Dharma King bKra śis mgon, [...]” (*bla ma byañ chub bśes gñen sku la mñon par bstod* || [...] *chos rgyal chen po bkra śis mgon gyi mña'* || *yul la g.yañ chags bi cher gru'i stod* [text: *bstod*] || *sa la 'bur dod bkra śis gyeñ po cher* ||). On the prefatory page of Vol. *ra* of the *sūtra* section, l. 6 we read: “In respectful praise of the feet of [Lama] Byañ chub bśes gñen.” And in l. 8: “[...] in the district of the prosperous village Bi cher, [which is under] the dominion of Am mchog bKra śis mgon etc., that is, the king and [his two] brothers, the three [of them], [...]” (*byañ chub bśes gñen žabs la gus pas stod* || [...] | *am mchog bkra śis mgon sogs rgyal po mched gsum mña'* || *yul la g.yañ chags bi cher gru'i nañ* ||). I am indebted to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen for providing me both of these references.

⁷³ For the date of bKra śis mgon see Jackson 1984: 133.

⁷⁴ I have to thank Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen who extracted for me the information used here from the prefatory pages of the *sūtra* section.

1. Blo gros rgyal mtshan (= Näsar no. 18)
 2. dKon mchog 'od zer (*sūtra*, vol. *ka* I)
 3. dKon mchog bkra śis (*sūtra*, vol. *ka* II)
 4. dGe sloñ Kun dga' sñiñ po (*sūtra*, vol. *cha*)
 5. dGe bśes Nam mkha' dpal ldan (*sūtra*, vol. *da*)
 6. mKhan chen mGon bzañ (*sūtra*, vol. *tsa*)
7. Bla ma Byañ chub bśes gñen (*sūtra*, vols. *dza* and *ra*)
(lived at the time of the Mustang king bKra śis mgon)

The transmission lineage in the *rDor gtum chog khriqs* (22a6-b3) contains three more lamas after dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (Näsar no. 29). The first is Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin (1499-1581)⁷⁵ from dBye lañ in Zañs dol po (Mu gum), and the remaining two Yon tan grags pa and dBañ rgyal rdo rje. sByin pa thar phyin is probably an exception, since none of the famous lamas from places other than Bicher, such as dMar sgom and Shey, are mentioned. This reflects the strong traditional ties of Bicher and Zañs dol po. Instead of Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin I include here Bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan from the list of the *mGon po'i bsañ phud*. From the biography of Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin it is clear that this Blo gros rgyal mtshan was an abbot of Lang Gompa and a disciple of dMar sgom Blo gros dbañ phyug:⁷⁶

8. Blo gros rgyal mtshan
9. Yon tan grags pa
10. dBañ rgyal rdo rje

According to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen's grandfather, Yon tan grags pa (no. 9) was the ordination name of Nor bu rgyal mtshan. After giving

⁷⁵ According to his biography (Yon tan grags pa, *sByin mthar rnam mgur*.) Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin was born in an earth-sheep year (3a1-2) and reached eighty-two years (2b4), dying in an iron-snake year (49a1); he was a disciple of dMar sgom Blo gros dbañ phyug, Bla ma Chos skyoñ rgyal mtshan from Rin chen gliñ, Bla ma Chos skyabs from Śug tsher and Blo gros rgyal mtshan from Lang Gompa (3b2-3).

⁷⁶ Yon tan grags pa, *sByin mthar rnam mgur*, 3b1-3.

up his monk's vows, he escaped to Pisang in sÑi śaṅ.⁷⁷ From a document kept at Lang Gompa we know that he was requested by several lamas of Dolpo, and even by the king of Mustang, to return to his seat at Lang Gompa.⁷⁸ Yon tan grags pa wrote the biography of Bla ma sByin pa mthar phyin and was probably his disciple. dBaṅ rgyal rdo rje (Lang no. 10) was, according to Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen, the bSod nams bla ma under whom a *dkar chag* of Lang Gompa was written.⁷⁹

Next I list the *gnas gsar mkhan po* Nam mkha', who probably was occupying the seat of Lang Gompa when he received teachings at Lang from Lama Chos rgyal mtshan (see above, p. 98):

11. mKhan po Nam mkha'

Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen remembers the six abbots before him. According to him, Bla ma Phyag rdor gave up his monk's vows, became a *sñags pa* and founded his own family lineage of Lang Gompa. Six lamas are, of course, hardly enough for more than three centuries, so that there must be a huge gap between numbers 11 and 12:

12. Bla ma Phyag rdor

13. Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan

14. Tshe dbaṅ rgyal mtshan

15. dKon mchog rnam rgyal

(fl. ca. 1920)

16. Nor bu rgyal mtshan

17. Karma bstan 'dzin

18. bsTan 'dzin rgyal mtshan

(the present abbot)

The lama of Lang Gompa dKon mchog rnam rgyal (Lang no. 15) is admonished in one order to fulfill his duties as an abbot properly; this was issued by the representative of the late Mustang *rāja* 'Jam dpal bstan 'dzin dgra 'dul (d. 1964),⁸⁰ the "tax-collector" (*bsdud dpon*) Ka byi rab rgyas, in Karang (Dolpo) in an iron-monkey year (1920).⁸¹

⁷⁷ Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen once asked his grandfather Nor bu rgyal mtshan if he was the Nor bu rgyal mtshan who ran away to Pisang. The answer was that there was a Nor bu rgyal mtshan before him, whose monk's name was Yon tan grags pa.

⁷⁸ [First line:] *Khriṃs bdag* ...

⁷⁹ Rang grol, *dkar chag*, 2b12.

⁸⁰ See Jackson 1984: xii.

⁸¹ [First line:] *'Od gsal* ...

CONCLUSION

Even though parts of the presented genealogies remain incomplete and tentative, a first step has been taken to shed some light on the early history of Bicher Gaon. With the help of this list it will be possible to bring some order to the huge libraries of Näsar Gompa and Lang Gompa.

The material analyzed is not only relevant to the local history of north-west Dolpo; it also shows, for example, that the second last of the powerful Malla kings of Jumla, Puṇyamalla, must have exercised uncontested control over Dolpo, since otherwise he would not have been able to collect taxes there and spend them on a new Buddhist chapel in Bicher. And given that at that time oxen could be officially slaughtered for lamas from Bicher in dKar ma'i roñ, only three days away from Jumla, the influence of Hinduism must have been marginal during the reign of Puṇyamalla.

While Jumla's power over Dolpo was certainly strong under Puṇyamalla, and also during the seventeenth century,⁸² the information of two prefatory pages of the Lang Kanjur⁸³ suggests that Bicher was under the dominion of the Mustang *rāja* bKra śis mgon (d. 1489).

Numerous documents I found in Näsar and Samling, only a few of which I used for this paper, demonstrate that after 1790⁸⁴ the influence

⁸² In 1652 the army of Jumla came to Mustang in support of a minister of Mustang and killed many men (see Jackson 1978: 68).

⁸³ Vols. *ra* and *dza* (see above, p. 100).

⁸⁴ In a handwritten copy (*dbu med*) of a document (first line: *rGyal sras thos grog slob dan mi slob 'phags tshogs ...*) kept at Näsar Gompa, we are told that under King Raṇa Bahādur taxes previously paid by Dolpo to Jumla should be given to Mustang, starting from the iron-dog year (1790). Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen tried to acquire the original, but only managed to acquire a copy fifteen years ago. According to him the original, which is now in the possession of one 'Jig med from Bicher, is in *dbu can* and has the red seal of the Mustang *rāja*. After a long eulogy of the qualities of A hañ dbañ rgyal rdo rje it says: "In particular, the king A hañ dbañ rgyal rdo rje, father and son[s], rejoice that the king of Jumla was forced into a 'single promise' (*dam tshig gcig tu*) [of obedience]. Under the resolute and far-sighted leadership grounded on the truth of the great Mahārāja (that is, Raṇa Bahādur), [who is] the 'cause' of [estimating?] the truth of unmistakable cause and effect, all the various necessary great and small forms of tax, etc., the forms of summer and winter tax, food and services (*za rkañ*), [previously] paid to Jumla, must from now on go to the king of Mustang, for as long as the state and the [Buddhist] teaching prevail; [so] is it firmly decided. As for the list of taxes, which [have

of the Mustang *rājas* was much stronger than previously thought by Western research. Thus the late Mustang *rāja* 'Jam dpal bstan 'dzin dgra 'dul sent to Dolpo representatives whose main function was to collect taxes and settle conflicts. In disputes, the Mustang *rāja* always had the last word. The king even intervened in religious affairs. For example, the same 'Jam dpal bstan 'dzin dgra 'dul ordered the abbot of Lang Gumpa, dKon mchog rnam rgyal, to either fulfill his religious duties properly or pay a fine.

APPENDIX

A Preliminary Analysis of the Tathāgatagarbhasūtra as Found in the Lang Kanjur by Michael Zimmermann

Common throughout the De bzin bśegs pa'i sñiñ po'i mdo (Tathāgatagarbhasūtra) of the Lang Kanjur are several features which are generally assumed to be archaic, such as the *ya btags* in all words beginning with *m-* followed by the vowel *i* or *e* (e.g. *myi*, *myed*, etc.), the usage of the *da drag*, the *tsheg* placed before *śad*, the *mtha' rten 'a* (e.g. *dpe*'), occasionally a reversed *gi gu*, *la(s) (b)stsogs pa* for *la sogs pa*, the omission of genitive particles and, in the verses, the reading 'i instead of *yi* ('i counting as a full syllable).

The version of the *sūtra* represents the canonical transmission (and not the translation found in the “Kanjur from Bathang”).⁸⁵ Stematically, the text in the Lang Kanjur is very close to the three Phug brag versions of the *sūtra*, which have been shown to derive from one and the same archetype.⁸⁶ It shares mistakes with this archetype. In other in-

to] come from the people of Bicher, starting from the male iron–dog year” (l. 5-8: *khyad par* [line 6] *mi rje a hañ* [text: *hañ*] *dbañ rgyal rdo rje yab sras nas* | 'dzum rgyal dam tshig gcig [text: *cig*] *tu brtson pa'i thugs* [text: 'thugs] *bskyed rgyu 'bras mi bslu ba* [text: *pa*] *bden pa'i rgyu śrī ma hā rā* [text: *ra*] *dza chen po'i bden thog tu* [text: *du*] *blo brtan gzigs pa chen po'i mgo 'dren las* [line 7] 'dzum lañ du phul ba'i [text: 'phul pa'i] *khral* [text: *phral*] *rigs che phra dgos rgyal [= gal?] sogs sna tshogs dbyar dgun khral* [text: *phral*] *rigs za rkañ ma lus pa* | *da phyin glo bo rgyal por rgyal bstan nam gnas brtan* [text: *bstan*] *chod du gnañ ba'i* [text: *pa'i*] *yoñs dgos la* | *lcags pho khyi lo* [line 8] *nas bzun* [*gzun*] [*byi gcer*, bracketed in the text] *bi śer ba nas khral* [text: *phral*] *yoñs tho la* |). — For the historical events in the year 1790 see Schuh 1992: 49-50.

⁸⁵ For more details on this paracanonical translation see Zimmermann 1998.

⁸⁶ See Zimmermann 2002: 173-177.

stances it is, however, free of the secondary readings found in all three of the Phug brag versions. In all the cases where Phug brag shares a mistake with the representatives of the Tshal pa-line, the Kanjur version from Dolpo also has this secondary reading. Its use for establishing the stemma of the canonical versions of the De bzin gsegs pa'i sñiñ po'i mdo is therefore restricted primarily to evaluating the readings of the Phug brag Kanjur in the instances where Phug brag deviates from the Tshal pa-transmission. In all the cases where the Chinese translations of the *sūtra* could be used to decide on the originality of a reading in the Tibetan, it turned out that whenever the variant in the Lang Kanjur was identical with the one of Tshal pa as against Phug brag, the latter variant was secondary.

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Chos rgyal mtshan
dBye lañ gi (text: *gis*) *dkar chag bźugs so* (*svo ha*), NGMPP Reel No. E 3017/32, 13 fols.
Tshig 'khyal: rGyal khams kyi sprañ po chos rgyal mtshan gyi ṅams 'gag pa'i dbyaṅs chuñ 'brel med kyi tshig 'khyal 'ga' re bźugs so, NGMPP Reel No. L 689/2, 143 fols.
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Drag po'i las byaṅ: O rgyan drag po'i las byaṅ bdud dpuñ kun 'dul, NGMPP Reel No. L 745/2, 118 fols.
- Draṅ sroṅ g.Yuñ
druñ rgyal mtshan
rDo rje mdzed 'od
Lo rgyus: rJe smon lam rgyal mtshan gyi (text: *gyis*) *lo rgyus la [sogs pa]*, NGMPP Reel No. L 1165/4, 17 fols.
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gros dba' phyug
Mol gtam: rGyas 'brin bsdus gsum gyi rnam par phye ba mol gtam zab mo lo rgyus gter gyi kha byaṅ ces bya ba bźugs so, NGMPP Reel No. L 731/3, 22 fols.
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rgyal mtshan
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