

A Hidden Valley in Iron Mountains: the Nyingma Tradition in Spiti's Pin Valley

by

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Figure 1: Rachel Levy, "Kungri Monastery," 2014.

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Dedication

For Lobsang.

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Abstract

The Pin Valley in Spiti is a western Himalayan region predominantly adhering to the Nyingma sect of Buddhism. Although Spiti is currently part of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, the region is situated along the historically shifting political and cultural borders of Tibet, India, and China. Literature on Spiti and the Western Himalayas articulates a particular relationship between the Pin Valley and the Nyingma tradition, in which Pin's geography and its sectarian affiliation are perceived as mutually constitutive. This framework characterizes Pin as an isolated periphery, and the Nyingma (as the "old" or "ancient" sect) as predating other Buddhist sects prevalent in Tibet and the Himalayas. Such a spatiotemporal logic articulates sectarian affiliation in Spiti as determined not by contingent historical processes but rather by a teleological view of religious development. I examine the ways this connects a rhetoric of Buddhist authenticity to a spatial relationship between an authoritative center and isolated periphery. Pin's shifting status within these frameworks points to changing Buddhist landscapes within which those authoritative centers are positioned.

This dissertation establishes the history of the Nyingma tradition in Pin Valley from the seventeenth century to the present. I argue that in Pin the category of texts, practices, traditions, and ideas encompassed under the framework of "the Nyingma tradition" is historically variable and nuanced, not monolithic, attesting to both a diverse body of distinct Nyingma traditions and also to the prevalence of widespread Buddhist practices that are not particularly sectarian in nature. Although two particular Nyingma traditions are predominant today—the Pema Lingpa

Terma and the Dudjom Tersar—what it means to be Nyingma in Pin has changed over time. Pin remained Nyingma from the seventeenth century on, not because it was isolated from the outside world, but rather through ongoing interactions with other Buddhist regions and traditions. The Dudjom Tersar in particular developed in Tibet during a period of political upheaval, widespread mobility, and the hardening of contested international borders. These conditions contributed to the tradition flourishing in the Pin Valley when it was isolated or threatened elsewhere. The Dudjom Tersar and Pema Lingpa Terma traditions form the backbone of the recently established Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery in Pin, which in the last decade emerged as the primary Buddhist authority in the region. The monastery's rise consolidated an historically diffuse and diverse body of ritual practices, institutions, and authorities in the Pin Valley under the auspices of a single Nyingma institution. Alongside this consolidation within Pin, contemporary Nyingma are expanding their presence throughout Spiti and developing ties to international Nyingma institutions and networks. These new connections signal a larger shift in the global Buddhist landscape and Spiti's changing status within it. This project elucidates the Pin Valley's position as a Nyingma center emerging on the margins and the ongoing processes by which Buddhist authority and authenticity are constituted and contested.

Introduction

“Here in Pin, this region of darkness on the outskirts of Tibet.”
- manuscript dedication Pin Valley, ca. 1630

Here, the Nyingmapa monks grow long hair which is never combed, and gives them a savage appearance. The best specimens of this uncivilized order of saints can, however, be seen at Pin in Spiti.
- August Francke, 1909

In his 1847 work *Historical Researches on the Origin of the Buddha*, James Bird, then Vice-President of the Royal Asiatic Society, noted that although India was the birthplace of Buddhism, “no living remnant of its followers is now met with in India.”¹ Such a claim regarding Buddhism’s origins in—and disappearance from—India had only recently been made possible by Eugène Burnouf’s monumental 1844 study, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism*, which was the first European work to firmly locate the Buddha in an Indian context. In it he also argued that Buddhism had since disappeared from its birthplace.² Bird and Burnouf were writing about Buddhism in the same years that the British East India Company expanded their control to parts of the Punjab and the Western Himalayas during the First Anglo-Sikh War.³ This extension

¹ James Bird, *Historical Researches on the Origin and Principles of the Buddha and Jaina Religions Embracing the Leading Tenets of Their System, as Found Prevailing in Various Countries; Illustrated by Descriptive Accounts of the Sculptures in the Caves of Western India, with Translations of the Inscriptions ... Which Indicate Their Connexion with the Coins and Topes of the Panjab and Afghanistan*. (Bombay: Printed at the American Mission Press, 1847), 1; Philip C Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16.

² Eugène Burnouf, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism, Buddhism and Modernity* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

³ Robert A. Huttenback, “Gulab Singh and the Creation of the Dogra State of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 20, no. 4 (August 1961): 477–488; Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs: From the Origins of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej* (London: John Murray, 1853); John Hutchison and Jean Philippe Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, 2 vols. (Lahore, Printed by the Superintendent, Govt. Print., Punjab, 1933).

of power culminated in the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, which incorporated predominantly Buddhist regions of the Western Himalayas into British territory, including a small region called Spiti, lying just north of the Sutlej River, on what is now the border between India and the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China.

Very few Europeans had traveled to Spiti prior to its acquisition in 1846, and little was known about the region.⁴ Spiti drew British interests in large part because it provided access to Western Tibet and Central Asia, particularly the profitable wool trade. In 1863, Deputy-Commissioner Philip Egerton embarked on a tour of Spiti with a goal “to take advantage of the small space where our territory (the Province of Spiti) joins with Chinese Tibet, and to turn, if possible, a considerable share of the Yarkund and China traffic into our Indian dominions by that route, thus avoiding the imposts, exactions, and obstructions of intervening states.”⁵ The British were rebuffed in their efforts to establish trade relationships, and despite initial enthusiasm over Spiti’s potential, trade interest in the region faded. In the ensuing century, relatively few Europeans traveled to Spiti, which subsequently became known as “the most inaccessible part of the British dominions in India.”⁶

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century colonial officers who traveled to Spiti, like Egerton, typically made note of a wide range of information about the region. They included descriptions of Buddhism alongside population data, taxation tables, and lists of flora and fauna. Their pseudo-ethnographic observations repeatedly describe Buddhism’s presence in Spiti while

⁴ There were a handful of pre-1846 travelers to Spiti, including George Trebeck in 1822 and Thomas Hutton in 1838. Alexander Gerard traveled to Spiti several times between 1818 and 1833, sometimes accompanied by his brother. The Hungarian Csoma de Koros, sometimes called the founder of Tibetan studies, does not seem to have spent much time in Spiti, despite his extensive stays in neighboring regions. He notes that he passed through Spiti once while on route to Lahul.

⁵ Philip Henry Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Thibet* (London: Cundall, Downes and Co., 1864), 1.

⁶ H. Lee Shuttleworth, “Border Countries of the Punjab Himalaya,” *The Geographical Journal* 60, no. 4 (1922): 241.

also continually noting its absence. This simultaneous presence and absence relied on an understanding of Buddhism's "pure" Indian origins and its subsequent adulteration and transformation into something called "Lamaism" in the Himalayas and Tibet, a framework that owed much to the work of Burnouf and his contemporaries.⁷ Thus there were Buddhists in Spiti, but they were decidedly not *true* Buddhists, as Rudyard Kipling noted some fifty years later in *Kim*.⁸ Not only were the Western Himalayas populated by Lamas and Lamaism rather than Buddhists and Buddhism, Spiti's distance from Central Tibet made even the Lamaism there subpar. In 1933, the Italian explorer and scholar of Tibet Giuseppe Tucci, and his traveling companion Eugenio Ghersi, noted that "in Western Tibet, cultured Lamas have become extremely rare."⁹ This sentiment was often echoed in descriptions of Spiti.

In 1997, a little over fifty years after Tucci's expedition, Deborah Klimburg-Salter published the first major academic study related to Spiti, based in part on Tucci's vast archive. There, Klimburg-Salter describes Tabo Monastery in Spiti as "the oldest continuously functioning Buddhist monastery in India and the Himalayas."¹⁰ Nearly a century and a half after Burnouf and Bird, Buddhism had once again been found in India. Klimburg-Salter's claim's veracity depended on Tabo—and Spiti—being part of India rather than Tibet, or some other entity. The proposition that Buddhism had previously disappeared from India also relied on a

⁷ Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 38.

⁸ "Look!" said the Frenchman. "It is like a picture for the birth of a religion—the first teacher and the first disciple. Is he a Buddhist?" "Of some debased kind," the other answered. "There are no true Buddhists among the Hills." Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, 190. John Hurst summarizes the general view of religion in the "Hill Tribes of India," a region that included Spiti, at the end of the nineteenth century, "The Hill Tribes of India practice a worship of the grossest character. Some of them are so degraded as to have almost no religion at all, while others make a near approach to either the Hindu, Mohammedan, or Buddhist faith, and still others combine certain parts of both Hinduism and Mohammedanism." J. F. Hurst, *Indika: The Country and the People of India and Ceylon* (New York: Harper & Sons, 1891), 482.

⁹ Giuseppe Tucci and Eugenio Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet: Being the Chronicle of the Tucci Scientific Expedition to Western Tibet (1933)* (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, Ltd., 1935).

¹⁰ Deborah E Klimburg-Salter and Christian Luczanits, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya* (Milano; New York: Skira Thames and Hudson Inc., 1997), 21.

particular geographic notion of what constituted “India,” as well as on a particular notion of what constituted “Buddhism.”

For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Spiti occupied a transitional space nestled in the Himalayas, heralded as both a part of India but also not quite India, part of Tibet, but not quite Tibet. Francke referred to this region as Indian Tibet; Snellgrove later called it Indo-Tibet.¹¹ For Buddhism to be absent from India in 1847, either the Buddhism in Spiti must not be *real* Buddhism, or else Spiti must not be part of India. Spiti’s liminal status on a Himalayan frontier fulfilled the latter criteria, while Spiti’s Buddhism *qua* Lamaism fulfilled the former. They were temporally too far from Buddhism’s origins in India and geographically too far from Lamaism’s center in Tibet. Spiti was thus doubly ambiguous.

Although designations like “Lamaism,” “Buddhism,” “India,” and “Tibet” have shifted over time in response to new scholarship and shifting political boundaries, the narrative that Spiti’s geographic isolation from authoritative centers fundamentally shapes Buddhism in the region has persisted, even in contemporary studies. There are two ways in particular that this narrative has been recapitulated in response to such shifts. The first, is that the movement of many Tibetans into exile and the changes to Buddhist institutions within Tibet under the People’s Republic of China, has altered how Buddhism in Spiti is evaluated. Spiti’s peripheral status as distanced from Central Tibet was previously described as a bane but in this new context was also a boon; Spiti’s geographic separation from Tibet “saved” it from the changes that impacted Tibet itself. For some, this preservation elevated the status of Buddhism in Spiti, such that it became

¹¹ August Hermann Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, vol. 38, 50, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series (Calcutta: Superintendent government printing, India, 1914); David L Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (Boston; [New York: Shambhala ; Distributed in the United States by Random House, 1987).

the “last bastion of *vajrayāna* Buddhism.”¹² While for others, the greater proximity of Tibetans in exile only highlighted Spiti’s status as an isolated frontier in need of reform. It was saved from the ravages of the PRC, but the version of Buddhism it preserved lagged behind what was lost in Tibet itself, as if Spiti were a time capsule of Tibet’s past.

The second shift concerns the process of state formation within a newly independent India. Spiti is now part of the state of Himachal Pradesh, which was carved out of the Punjab Province in the 1960s. As Mark Elmore argues, religion played a critical role in the political and conceptual formation of the state of Himachal Pradesh.¹³ Spiti as a Buddhist entity and a “hills” region, contributed to the architect of the modern state Y. S. Parmar’s rhetoric of religious and cultural diversity as the foundational bedrock of Himachal Pradesh.¹⁴ Spiti and other Buddhist parts of the Indian Himalaya like Ladakh, became key mechanisms for Indian nationalist claims to the Himalayas as part of India, but also to the Buddhist Himalaya as a ground for establishing Buddhism’s continual presence in India. Not only was Spiti part of India, it had *always* been part of India. Not only was Spiti Buddhist, it had *always* been Buddhist. Locating Buddhism in Spiti thus supported India’s spatial and temporal claims to the Himalayas, as well as its claims to Buddhism as a cultural product.¹⁵

¹² This description of Spiti as preserving “*vajrayāna* Buddhism” was made in the context of comparisons to regions where *vajrayāna* was under threat, adulterated, or no longer the primary tradition in the region, including in Tibet, Lahaul, and Ladakh. Sonam Angdu, Interview, interview by author, June 12, 2014.

¹³ Mark Elmore, *States of Religion: Postcolonialism, Power, and the Formation of Himachal Pradesh (India)*. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005).

¹⁴ Elmore, 68.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the role of Buddhist symbols in the formation of the modern nation of India, see Sadan Jha, *Reverence, Resistance and Politics of Seeing the Indian National Flag* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 177; Himanshu Prabha Ray, *The Return of the Buddha: Ancient Symbols for a New Nation* (Routledge, 2014); Lella Karunyakara, *Modernisation of Buddhism: Contributions of Ambedkar and Dalai Lama XIV* (Gyan Books, 2002).. Buddhism’s absence from contemporary India and its firm location in India’s past allowed it to serve as a “safe” source of national emblems, particularly compared to the partition-era minefield of drawing on iconographic elements of other religious traditions. In an address to the Constituent Assembly of India in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru states, “That wheel is a symbol of India's ancient culture, it is a symbol of the many things that India had stood for through the ages. So we thought that this *Chakra* emblem should be there, and that wheel appears. For my part, I am exceedingly happy that in this sense indirectly we have associated with this Flag of ours, not only this emblem but in

Two Claims in Tension: The Impetus of the Project

This project developed out of an interest in seemingly contradictory claims about the relationship between Buddhism, authenticity, time, and space in Spiti. In the course of my research, I kept encountering echoes of a dual logic of presence and absence, of origins and decline, legitimacy and adulteration.¹⁶ It emerged in my conversations with people in Spiti, with Tibetans in exile in Himachal Pradesh, and in popular and scholarly sources on this “Buddhist enclave” in the Western Himalayas. Characterizations of the relationship between Buddhism and Spiti’s location generally fell along two contradictory lines. Some informants claimed that the isolation of Spiti from major centers of Buddhism (usually a reference to places in Tibet) meant that Buddhism in the region had degraded and needed to be reformed, hence the importance of major exile Tibetan figures like the Dalai Lama or Dudjom Rinpoche’s involvement in Spiti.¹⁷ Others argued that Spiti’s position on the frontiers of Tibet and India resulted in the protection and preservation of Buddhism when it was persecuted in central locations (usually a reference to the Chinese occupation of Tibet).¹⁸ This latter position was often coupled with assertions of the authenticity

a sense the name of Asoka, one of the most magnificent names not only in India's history but in world history. It is well that at this moment of strife, conflict and intolerance, our minds should go back towards what India stood for in the ancient days and what it has stood for, I hope and believe, essentially throughout the ages in spite of mistakes and errors and degradations from time to time.” India and Constituent Assembly, “Constituent Assembly of India Debates,” *Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates : Official Report*. 4 (July 22, 1947), https://cadindia.clpr.org.in/constitution_assembly_debates/volume/4/1947-07-22.

¹⁶ Ravina Aggarwal describes a very similar dynamic at play with respect to Ladakh, “The image of the border manifests itself in popular representations of Ladakh that tend to portray it as a remote land located at the edge of modernity. Ladakh is described in binary terms, either as a self-sustaining and unique paradise open for adventure, sport, and tranquil spiritual self-discovery, a surviving remnant of the glory and mysticism of an unsalvageable Tibet, or else as a backward border on the fringes of India, a stark, hazard-filled wilderness where men of courage battle nature and enemies. Government directives, academic writings, and travel literature have all spawned images that add to the region’s marginalization.” Ravina Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines of Control: Performance and Politics on the Disputed Borders of Ladakh, India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

¹⁷ Two figures who made this argument were Sey Rinpoche, a Tibetan teacher whose monastery is in Manali, a day’s journey from Spiti, and the current Lotsawa Rinpoche, the reincarnation of the famous translator Rinchen Zangpo, whose home monastery is Kee Gompa in Spiti, just a couple hours from the Pin Valley.

¹⁸ Proponents of this position include Lobsang Topgyel, a Tibetan in exile who worked as a Tibetan teacher in Spiti, and Chemi Dorje, a leader in the Himalayan Buddhist Cultural Association of Spiti. For example, Paul B. Donnelly, in his 2017 article on the Saurata pilgrimage route located in the Hangrong region comprising “Kinnaur district’s

of Buddhism in Spiti because it was isolated not only from Chinese intrusions but also from the trappings of modernity (the scarcity of phones, television, and roads were frequent examples).¹⁹ These arguments are significant not only in terms of the way they connect a rhetoric of Buddhist authenticity and authority to spatial relationships, but also because they point to recent shifts in the Buddhist landscapes within which those authoritative centers are positioned. These arguments about the nature and quality of Buddhism in Spiti on the one hand, and the way in which geography or landscape shaped that Buddhism struck me as circular or self-reinforcing.

As I continued researching the ways this dual discourse was articulated in historical sources and among contemporary Spitians, I encountered a similar spatio-temporal logic—in this case articulated through the rubric of sectarian affiliation—underlying how the relationship between the Nyingma tradition and the Pin Valley in Spiti is described. I decided to examine this particular relationship in my dissertation research.²⁰

The Spiti region today is part of the Lahaul-Spiti sub-district of Himachal Pradesh. Spiti is primarily constituted by the Spiti Valley, which is in turn geographically formed by the Spiti River. There are other smaller valleys within Spiti, often formed by tributaries to the Spiti River,

portion of the Spiti valley,” notes that “The pilgrimage under consideration here is located on the Indian side of the Indo-Chinese border, so its study offers a glimpse into the practice of Tibetan pilgrimage that has not been interrupted by outside forces.” Paul B. Donnelly, “Where the Heroes and Sky-Goers Gather: A Study of the Saurata Pilgrimage,” *Religions* 8, no. 8 (2017): 2.

¹⁹ In his preface to Thukral’s text, Lochen Tulku states, “This remote tribal area of India retains its ancient culture and tradition in all their elegance even though it is connected now by a road and modern facilities like the telephone.” Kishore. Thukral, *Spiti: Through Legend and Lore* (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2006), ix.

²⁰ I conducted annual research trips to Spiti from 2009 to 2014. I also conducted field research in India in the areas of Rewalsar, Dharamsala, Manali, Lahul, and Kinnaur, and in Nepal in Kathmandu, Bodhanath, and Sundarjal. I conducted archival research at the British Library’s India Office of Records and Private Papers, the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the Roerich Archives in New York City. Funding for this research was provided by the Rackham Graduate School, the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Center for South Asian Studies.

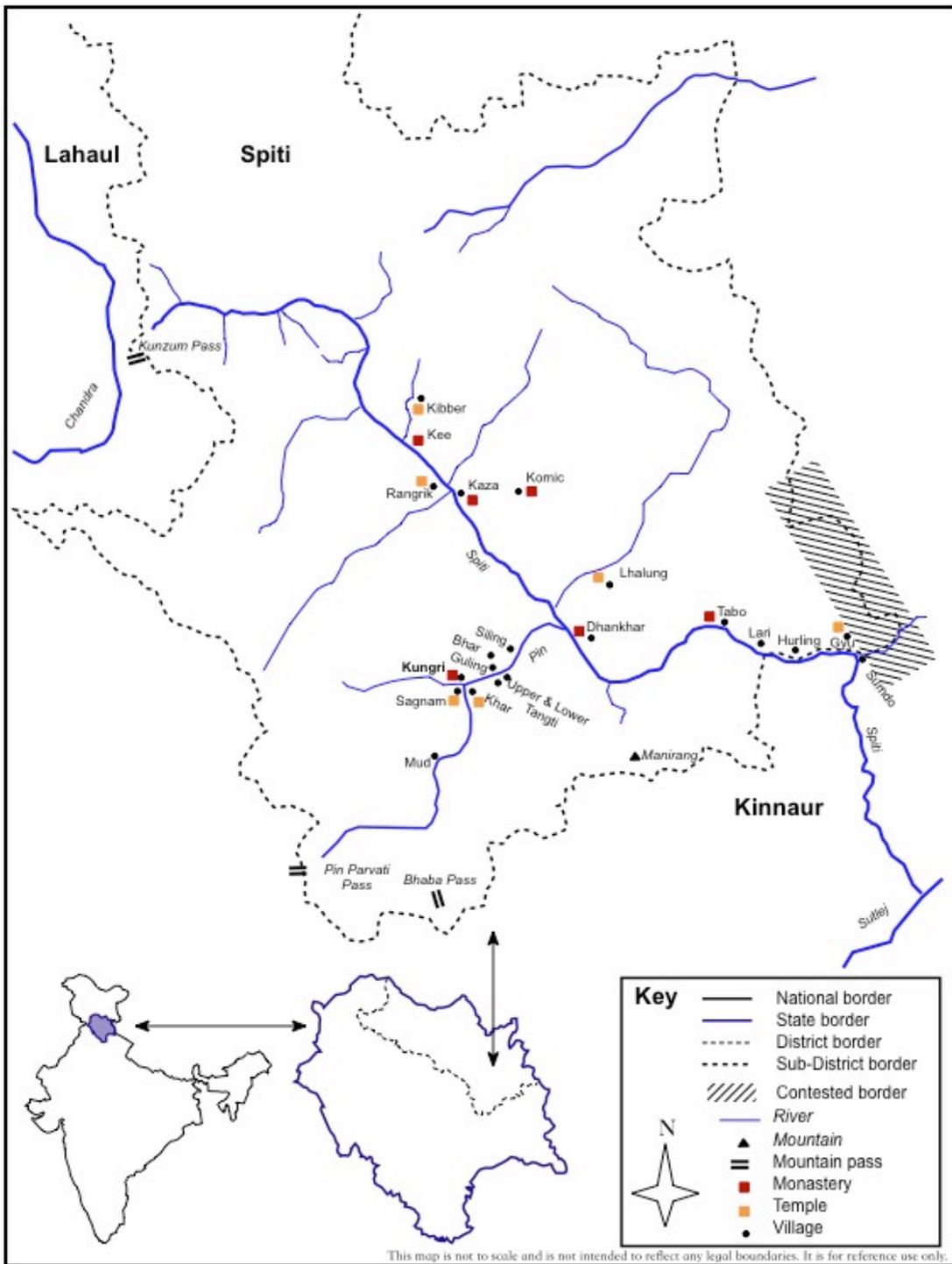


Figure 2: Map of Spiti in relation to India.

but the Pin Valley is by far the largest and most important. Pin has constituted a distinct region in Spiti since at least the early seventeenth century.²¹ In addition to forming a geographically distinct area within Spiti, the Pin Valley is also typically demarcated as different in terms of the particular Buddhist sect prevalent in Pin. Ascribing a “sectarian affiliation” to a region is not necessarily clear-cut. In the case of Spiti, this designation is usually made on the basis of a village’s proximity to a monastery, extending the monastery’s affiliation to the village.²²

The major monasteries in Spiti are usually enumerated as five: Kee, Tabo, Drangkhār, Tengyud, and Kungri.²³ A. H. Francke’s 1914 account of the monasteries and their sectarian affiliation is fairly typical:

²¹ And likely for long before that. My observation here is limited to the extant primary sources. Christian Jahoda traces some of the changing methods of subdividing Spiti, particularly the five-part division of Spiti for tax purposes. Christian Jahoda, “Socio-Economic Organization of Village Communities and Monasteries in Spiti, H.P., India: The Case of a Religious Administrative Unit (Chos Gzhis),” in *Discoveries in Western Tibet and the Western Himalayas: Essays on History, Literature, Archaeology and Art: PIATS 2003, Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Amy Heller and Giacomella Orofino, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, 10/8 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 215–35.

²² This kind of designation based on proximity makes sense, particularly in terms of which regions provided material support for each of the monasteries. But proximity was certainly not the determining factor. For example, the Spiti Nono’s family were typically affiliated with the Sakya monastery, despite the distance between the Nono’s home in Kyiling and Tengyud. Although this too may have originally been an affiliation based on proximity, if current oral history regarding a pre-seventeenth-century Sakya presence in Pin has any historical validity.

²³ Kee (dKyil), Tabo (Rta pho, various spellings), Drangkhār (Brang mkhar, Grang mkhar, Brag mkhar) are located in their eponymous villages. Tengyud (Steng rgyud, Btang rgyud) has an old location in Komic and a new location in Kaza. This list of five is not entirely accurate today, since Tengyud shifted its original location in the 1970s and opened a second branch in Kaza in the 2000s. One might also take into account the ambiguity of the term “monastery,” since there are other temples in Spiti (for example in Lhalung, Kibber, and Gyu) that have caretaker monks. These are generally much smaller structures and institutions compared to the larger complexes of the five monasteries listed. O. C. Handa states that there are some twenty-one Geluk monasteries in the Spiti Valley, but his list seems to count every building, even small shrine structures for *lha tho*, as a monastery. The Desi Sangye Gyatso’s work on the Geluk monasteries in the late seventeenth century lists six in Spiti: Lagopal (La go spal), which is another name for Drangkhār, Tabo, Kee, and two monasteries no longer extant, Changchubling (Byang chub gling) and Kamlo/Ramlo (Kam lo, Ram lo). This list also appears in Tucci’s translation of Sangye Gyatso’s work. Klimburg-Salter proposes that Changchubling was likely near Lari Village. If the two monasteries no longer in existence were also Geluk, as their inclusion in Sangye Gyatso’s work indicates, then the Geluk had an even greater presence in Spiti in the seventeenth century than they do today. Tobdan records a document from 1756 that lists seven monasteries in Spiti: Kee (Skyid pa), Barkyö (Bar kyog), Drangkhār/Lhagope (Lag dpe), Tabo (Ta so), Chang[chub]ling (Byang gling), Tengyud/Gongmig (Gong mig), and Pin (Spi ni). The monastery Tobdan’s document refers to as Barkyö is likely the same monastery as Kamlo/Ramlo, given the shared second syllable. Both it and Changchubling must have been destroyed sometime after 1756. Contemporary oral history in Pin holds that prior to the introduction of the Pema Lingpa tradition, parts of the Pin Valley were Sakya, and there was a Sakya monastery located in Pin in a place called Pikar (spelling unknown). Omacanda Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh* (New Delhi: Indus Pub. Co., 1987), 86; Giuseppe Tucci, “Tibetan Notes,” *Harvard Journal of*

There are now-a-days five principal monasteries in Spiti, which represent three sects of Lamaism. the Tabo, Drangkhar, and Ki monasteries belong now to the Ge-lug-pa sect. The Kaze monastery belongs to the Sa-skyapa sect, and the Pyin monastery belongs to the rNying-ma-pa. Whilst the four first mentioned monasteries do not differ essentially from Central Tibetan establishments, with which they keep up intercourse, the Pyin monastery has no connection with Lhasa, and maintains those traditions which have been handed down from the times of the most primitive Lamaism. I have already mentioned the wild appearance of its monks.²⁴

In this list, the Pin monastery (Pyin in Francke) is singled out as different from the other four. It is different because it belongs to the Nyingma sect and because it is isolated, with no connections to Tibet. Both of these, its sect and its isolation, mark it as wild and primitive. Such claims recur in the decades following Francke.

One of the points I argue is that the literature on Spiti and the Western Himalayas articulates a particular relationship between the Pin Valley and the Nyingma tradition, between space and sect, topography and tradition. That relationship is itself based on an amalgamation of a diverse set of notions about Buddhism, Tibet, the Himalayas, religion, legitimacy, continuity, change, isolation, peripheries, and centers. I use the term “sect” here to gloss a number of Tibetan terms: *lugs*, *chos lugs*, *ring lugs*, *srol*, *chos rgyud*. These terms might also be translated as tradition, school, or lineage. Francke lists three sects in Spiti, the Geluk, Sakya, and Nyingma, which he then subdivides into two groups, Geluk and Sakya on the one hand and Nyingma on the other.

This two-part division is found throughout the sources on Spiti, and although Francke does not use these terms himself, are usually articulated as the Sarma (*gsar ma*) and the Nyingma (*rnying ma*), or the “new” and the “old”. These terms are usually used to classify the various schools or sects of Buddhism practiced in Tibetan and Himalayan regions. Their usage and

Asiatic Studies 12, no. 3/4 (1949): 489; Klimburg-Salter and Luczanits, *Tabo*, 12; Tobdan, *Spiti: A Study in Socio-Cultural Traditions*, 2015, 166; Kunzang Namdrol, interview by author, February 11, 2014.

²⁴ Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:47.

origins are often ascribed to a distinct shift in the history of Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas, i.e. the emergence of the so-called old and new translations of the tantras, *nyingma* and *sarma*, and the advent of the “later spread” (*phyi dar*) of the doctrine. However, uses of these terms are often anachronistic, insofar as they developed retrospectively to describe the origins of doxographic and frequently polemical classifications of Tibetan traditions into the Nyingma and Sarma schools. Moreover, the various uses of the term to describe Buddhism in Pin as Nyingma tend to the multiple and distinct uses of the word *nying*, overlaying it with evaluative significance—evaluations that can be both positive and negative—rather than being merely descriptive or identifying.²⁵

Articulations of the Pin Valley as Nyingma frequently collapse the doxographic and historical resonances of the word “nyingma.” The word conveys a temporal meaning; “nying” (*rnying*) or “nyingpa” (*rnying pa*) translates to old or ancient. In the case of Pin, this multivalent meaning of *nying* is further appended to notions of isolation, particularly isolation as it relates to change, continuity, modernity, and religion. Pin is described as isolated in the sense of being geographically or physically separate and removed from its surroundings. Pin is a valley formed along a river, flanked on either side by lofty mountain ranges. These formidable rock parapets do much to shape life in Pin: they protect the valley from outside incursions, trap the limited monsoon moisture able to crest the Himalayas, and support a slightly greener landscape than the adjacent Spiti Valley. However, the Pin Valley is also described as isolated in the sense of being cut off from the outside world, self-contained, autonomous, cloistered. (In Francke’s comment, the relevant world from which Pin is cut off is Central Tibet.)

²⁵ One notes that some dictionaries gloss Nyingma (*rnying ma*) itself as “unreformed” and Sarma (*gsar ma*) as “fresh, modern, reformed.” Conversely, the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* defines both terms in a more clearly temporal sense of “earlier” and “later,” or “now” and “prior to the present.” James Valby, Ives Waldo. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*.

This spatial description is used to convey a temporal argument; Pin is old or ancient *because* it is isolated, or in some iterations, Pin is *not modern* because it is isolated. Its spatial conditions bring about temporal ones. This notion of modernity and the non-modern as suspended in time is oft argued.²⁶ I argue that discussions of Spiti that simply gloss Pin as Nyingma because it is isolated do more to obscure the history of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti than to elucidate it. It takes a contemporary, historically contingent, constructed isolation and projects it onto the past.²⁷ It denies any exchange or similarities between Pin's Nyingmapa and their non-Nyingma neighbors; it calcifies sectarian boundaries; and it makes a monolith of the diverse and changing entity glossed as "Nyingma."

Rather, Pin's isolation is not a given. Pin's relationship to the various centers against which it is made a periphery have changed over time. What it means to be Nyingma in Pin has also changed. Buddhism in Pin has certainly developed in response to events outside of the not-so-impermeable wall of iron mountains encircling the valley. The Nyingma tradition in Pin does not simply maintain traditions handed down from primitive time, in Francke's words; it is dynamic and changing. In recent decades, it is even expanding, making forays into areas outside the Pin Valley, such that the oft repeated claim that the Pin Valley is Nyingma and the Nyingma in Spiti are only in Pin, is no longer particularly accurate.

²⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N. J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008). In the case of Pin, this is typical of such descriptions, "One of the results of sectarian strife in Spiti was that most monasteries here are of the Gelukpa sect. Only in Spiti's Pin Valley does one find monasteries of the Nyingmapa tradition, at Kungri and Mud - perhaps because this region was relatively isolated, the only entrance to it being through the Pin river." Swati Mitra, *The Buddhist Trail in Himachal: A Travel Guide* (Good Earth, 2006), 95.

²⁷ Klimburg-Salter noted early in the field of Spiti studies that "The present appearance of the physical environment, as well as the politico-geographic contexts are particularly modern phenomena and are not useful for reconstructing the earlier history of the region." Despite this caution, the majority of sources on do just that. Pin has arguably only recently been made to be isolated. For a similar argument about Lingshed in Ladakh, see Jonathan P. Demenge, "The Road to Lingshed: Manufactured Isolation and Experienced Mobility in Ladakh," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 32, no. 1 (2013): 14; Klimburg-Salter and Luczanits, *Tabo*, 28.

Sartorial Dichotomies: The Red Hat and Yellow Hat Sects of Tibetan Buddhism

Perhaps the earliest European-language source to identify and locate Spiti in the Western Himalayas may be found in the cartographic efforts of a French Jesuit missionary in China, Father J. B. Régis (1664–1738), who included “Piti” on a 1711 map of Tibet and China.²⁸ In 1708, the Emperor Kangxi (1661–1722) tasked Régis and his Jesuit colleagues with creating a map of his empire.²⁹ That map did not initially include Tibet, but later, when Kangxi sent a Chinese envoy to Lhasa, he tasked the envoy with bringing back maps of Tibet. When the envoy returned, he gave the maps to Régis, who used them to produce a new and larger map of Tibet and China. Régis’s map was published in 1735 by the French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743), as part of a volume called *The General History of China*.³⁰ Spiti is included on “The Ninth Sheet of Tibet, containing, among others, the Country of Latak [or Ladak].” It appears on the far Western edge of the map, and also on the Western edge of Tibet, just south of Ladakh, and surrounded by mountain ranges and rivers on three sides.³¹

Du Halde and his team of cartographers drew upon Régis’s notes about Tibet, in addition to his maps, when preparing the text. While the text does not address Spiti specifically, it does

²⁸ There are certainly earlier references to this area, but this is the earliest I have located that specifically refers to Spiti. For example, the pilgrim Xuanzang refers to several lands bordering Spiti, including Kulu and Lahul, but not to Spiti itself. Xuanzang, *Si-Yu-Ki. Buddhist Records of the Western World.*, trans. Sammel Beal (London: Trubner & Co., 1884), 177–178.

²⁹ Luciano Petech, *China and Tibet in the Early XVIIIth Century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 19; Peter Schwieger, *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 171. Schwieger also reproduces Régis and Du Halde’s map on page 79.

³⁰ It was published in 1735 in French and in 1739 in English. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde et al., *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de l’empire de La Chine et de La Tartarie Chinoise: Enrichie Des Cartes Generales et Particulieres de Ces Pays, de La Carte Générale & Des Cartes Particulieres Du Thibet, & de La Corée, & Ornée d’un Grand Nombre de Figures & de Vignettes Gravées En Taille-Douce*, 4 vols. (Paris: Chez P.G. Le Mercier, 1735); Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary, Together with the Kingdoms of Korea, and Tibet :Containing the Geography and History (Natural as Well as Civil) of Those Countries: Enrich’d with General and Particular Maps, and Adorned with a Great Number of Cuts*, 1739.

³¹ Spiti contains relatively little detail, especially compared to the adjacent map panel to the East, which depicts the Kailash region. A few monastery names in Ladakh are included (Tikse, Spituk, etc.)

raise a topic in its discussion of Tibet that would come to dominate future assessments of Buddhism in Spiti: the various sects of Tibetan Buddhism and their association with particular colored attire. In the section on Tibet, we read, “In the beginning of this century a division happened amongst the Lamas of Tibet: One party assumed Yellow Hats to denote their attachment to the present Imperial family of China; and the other adhered to the Red Hat, the colour used by the Grand Lama, who was always independent of the Chinese Emperors.”³² Here Régis seems to be conflating fairly recent political events at the start of the eighteenth century—namely the emperor’s patronage of the Geluk school—with that same school’s adoption of yellow hats, which actually took place much earlier in the fifteenth century.³³ He also implies that these events *caused* Tibetan Buddhists to divide into two opposing parties, with the Yellow Hats on the one side and the Red Hats on the other. This too is inaccurate.

The emergence of the so-called “Red Hats” also took place centuries prior to Régis’s day, and quite independent of any conflict with the Geluk, who had not yet been founded. There

³² This section is called “Geographical and Historical Observations on the Map of Tibet, containing the Dominions of the Grand Lama, and the adjacent Countries, Extracted from the Memoirs of P. Régis.” Du Halde, *A Description of the Empire of China and Chinese-Tartary, Together with the Kingdoms of Korea, and Tibet*, 384.

³³ The color and style of monastic attire (hats and robes) was used to distinguish sect in Tibet, although not quite in the manner European sources imply. One of the most notable and perhaps earliest use of hat-color as a metonymy for sect was among the Kagyu, where hat color was used to refer to two reincarnation lines: the Red Hat Karmapa (*zhwa dmar*) and the Black Hat (*zhwa nag*) Karmapa. While most sources attribute the Geluk adoption of yellow hats (*zhwa ser*) to Tsongkhapa, Sam van Schaik attributes it to his student Khedrup. According to van Schaik, Khedrup adopted the yellow hat to differentiate the Geluk the Sakya, since the latter typically wore red hats. “In his new post Khedrup could exert much more influence over the direction of the Gandenpas. Whereas Gyaltsab had been firmly rooted in the Sakya school, and never really considered himself to have broken away from it, Khedrup now made that break and worked to establish a distinct identity for the Gandenpas. One effective tactic he adopted was to change the colour of the hat worn by the Ganden abbot from the red favoured by the Sakya to yellow. Though this idea was borrowed from another school that had broken away from Sakya, the Bulug, that school had died out, leaving the Gandenpas as the only ‘Yellow Hats’ in Tibet.” Cyrus Stearns notes that the use of a yellow hat had a history prior to its adoption by the Geluk, “A yellow scholar’s hat (*pañ zhwa ser po*) was earlier worn by Budön, and later became a trademark of the Geluk tradition. But Budön and the Geluk teachers after him were by no means the only ones to wear yellow ceremonial scholar’s hats in Tibet. Dolpopa himself had worn a yellow hat, and it is clear in the account of the vision that Tāranātha wore a yellow hat while he was still a Jonang teacher.” Cyrus Stearns, *The Buddha from Dolpo: A Study of the Life and Thought of the Tibetan Master Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen* (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2002), 72–73. Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 106.

certainly was political and sectarian conflict in Tibet while Régis was in China, and the emperor did play a role in it. However, that conflict did not instigate a Yellow-Red division.

This division into Yellow Hats and Red Hats seemed to have great appeal as a rubric. Following Régis's initial rather mistaken account, sources in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consistently try to divide Tibetan Buddhism into sects based on the color of their robes and hats.³⁵ These sources usually identify two schools, yellow and red, as Régis did, while some added a third, the Black Hats. But the particular school(s) affiliated with each color of attire varied. In addition to delineating the various schools, as these accounts develop they increasingly convey a marked sectarian bias. They generally describe the Yellow Hats or Geluk in positive terms, while criticizing the Red (and Black) Hats. The Scottish diplomat George Bogle (1746–1781) travelled to Bhutan and Tibet in 1774. After reiterating Régis's account of the Emperor Kang-xi's involvement in the Red/Yellow division, Bogle writes, “[T]here are two sets of clergy in Tibet... Yellow Caps and Red Caps... I may be allowed, however, just to mention two things, which must convince every unprejudiced person of the wicked lives and false doctrines of the Red Caps. In the first place, many of the clergy marry; and in the next, they persist, in opposition to religion and common sense, in wearing Red Caps.”³⁶ His denunciation of the Red Hats

³⁵ About the same time as Du Halde published *The General History*, Bernard and Picart published the monumental nine-volume work *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* (1723–1743). That text also draws upon Régis, among others, for its account of Tibetan Buddhism. However, the discussion of hat and robe color is quite brief: The Great Lama's colour is red; but as the emperor of China has gained some footing in Thibet, those of his party, as well as all the Mongol and Kalka Lamas, wear yellow.” Charles A. Goodrich and Bernard Picart, *Religious Ceremonies and Customs, or, The Forms of Worship Practised by the Several Nations of the Known World, from the Earliest Records to the Present Time. On the Basis of the Celebrated and Splendid Work of Bernard Picart. To Which Is Added. A Brief View of Minor Sects, Which Exist at the Present Day* (Hartford, 1834), 542.

³⁶ Bogle's full quote reads: “It may be necessary to state that there are two sets of clergy in Tibet, distinguished by, and classed under the names of, Yellow Caps and Red Caps...In times of old there were violent disputes between them, in which the Yellow Caps got the victory, as well by the assistance of the Tatars as by their superior sanctity. But as I adhere to the tenets of this sect, and have acquired my knowledge of religion from its votaries, I will not here say much upon the subject, lest it should be thought spiteful. I may be allowed, however, just to mention two things, which must convince every unprejudiced person of the wicked lives and false doctrines of the Red Caps. In the first place, many of the clergy marry; and in the next, they persist, in opposition to religion and common sense, in wearing Red Caps.” Despite claiming he is more familiar with the Yellow Sect, Bogle spent time in Bhutan on his

highlights one point that is repeatedly used to both differentiate the Red and Yellow hats and also create a hierarchy among them, namely that Red Hats allow the clergy to marry while the Yellow Hats do not.

While Bogle and Regis were writing in the early period of European-Tibetan interactions, by the nineteenth century, these categories were firmly entrenched. Celibacy is one of the key features nineteenth-century sources use to differentiate the varying traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, alongside magic and hair. This state of the field is found such formative works in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies as Lawrence Waddell's 1895 work *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, and Monier Monier-Williams's 1888 *Duff Lectures*.³⁷ In Lecture Nine, Monier-Williams, the second Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, reiterates the relationship between hat color and sect, elaborating upon the various divisions and qualities of the Red and Yellow as he recounts the history of Lamaism. The passage is lengthy but worth considering in detail:

The teaching of Thomi Samghota seems to have been of an orthodox character. He may perhaps be regarded as the founder of the strict school of Tibetan Buddhism, which was afterwards called Kadampa, and finally developed into the Yellow-robed sect, as distinguished from the Red...[King Trisong Detsen] sent for religious teachers in great numbers from India. These seem to have brought with

way to Tibet, where he also met Red Hat adherents. In this case, the "Red Hats" are Drukpa Kagyu, although he refers to them as "Shammar" Kagyu. The English diplomat Samuel Turner (1749–1802), who traveled to Tibet in 1783, makes a similar assessment. Sir Clements Robert Markham, George Bogle, and Thomas Manning, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet: And of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa. Ed., with Notes, an Introduction, and Lives of Mr. Bogle and Mr. Manning* (Trübner and Company, 1876), 179–180; Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama, in Tibet; Containing a Narrative of a Journey through Bootan, and Part of Tibet* (London, 1800), 14.

³⁷ Lawrence Waddell was a British medical officer who traveled extensively in India, Tibet, and Sikkim, among other regions, and studied Sanskrit and Tibetan. In his 1895 work *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, he devotes an entire section to monks' hats, where he first notes that hats are not a part of a monk's attire in Indian Buddhism "No hat is mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures as part of the outfit of a monk." He continues, "We have seen how the colour of the cap afforded a rough distinction into yellow, red, and black hats. But the shape is also an important element in differentiating hats, both for sectarian and ceremonial purposes... Tsong-Khapa altered the colour of this hat from red to yellow, and hence arose the title of "Yellow-hat" (s'a-ser), a synonym for his new sect, "the Ge-lug-pa," in contradistinction to the "Red-hat" (S'a-mar) of the Unreformed Lāmas." L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet; or, Lamaism, with Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and in Its Relation to Indian Buddhism* (London: Luzac & Co., 1899), 194–195.

them a very corrupt form of Buddhism, which aimed chiefly at counteracting the evil influences of demons by magical spells... Then the celebrated Padmasambhava was sent for out of the land of Udyāna—west of the Indus, north of Peshawar—where the people were addicted to Śaivism and witchcraft... He was celebrated for his skill in magic, sorcery, and alchemy, and became the real founder of the Red sect, after instructing several young Tibetans in his own lore... A sect called Urgyanpa, another called Brugpa, another called Sakyapa—all belonging to the Red-clothed. Lāmas who are numerous in Nepāl, Bhutān, Sikkim, Ladāk, and in portions of Southern Tibet--follow the rules of Padmasambhava... Atīsha, who might be called the re-founder of Lāmism [sic] belonged to a school which did not favor Śaivism and sorcery in the way that Padmasambhava had done, and his pupil, Bromton of the Raseng monastery, was the founder of the sect called Kadampa, which enforced great strictness of monastic life...whose tenets were adopted by the celebrated reformer Tsong Khapa, the real founder of the Yellow sect...he became impressed with the necessity of purifying and reforming the discipline of Tibetan Buddhism, which the Red sect had corrupted by allowing the marriage of monks and by laxity in other matters. Innumerable pupils gathered around him, all of whom adopted, as their distinguishing mark, the orthodox yellow garments of primitive Buddhism, and especially the yellow cap; while the followers of Padmasambhava and the more corrupt school wore red garments and a red cap.³⁸

Monier-Williams presents a fairly familiar abridged account of the history of Buddhism in Tibet. He draws a line between Thomi Sambhota, Atisha, Bromton, and Tsongkhapa as adherents to the Yellow Hat sect, the Kadampa and Geluk. He introduces the figure of Padmasambhava as the founder of the Red sect, and lists three subdivisions of the Red: Orgyenpa, Brugpa, and Sakyapa. He explicitly contrasts Padmasambhava as the founder of the Red sect with Tsongkhapa as the founder of the Yellow. Lastly, he associates Padmasambhava and the Red with Śaivism, witchcraft, magic, sorcery, corruption, and non-celibacy, while associating Tsongkhapa and the Yellow with purifying, reforming, discipline, and celibacy. Elsewhere in the Lecture, he refers to them as the “strict” and the “lax.”³⁹

³⁸ Parenthetical alternative spellings have been omitted. Monier-Williams, 271–272, 278.

³⁹ “The fraternity of Lāmas became split up into two chief parties or sects—the strict and the lax. We shall see in the end that these two sects were distinguished from each other by the colour of their garments, and especially of their caps, the former adopting yellow and calling themselves Gelug pa or Galden pa, the latter adopting red.” Monier-Williams, 268.

This Lecture encapsulates most of the notions about Padmasambhava and the Red sects and Tsongkhapa and the Yellow that dominate the literature on Buddhism in Tibet throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Monier-Williams's work also encapsulates the prevailing notions of Buddhism—or Lamaism—at the time of the British acquisition of Spiti. The Europeans who traveled to, and governed, Spiti read sources like Bogle, Waddell, and Monier-Williams. They evaluated the practices and people they encountered in Spiti according to this rubric, designating monasteries as Red or Yellow. The monastery in Pin Valley was designated as Red. One of the few sources to argue that this hat color and sect correlation is erroneous is the Moravian missionary Karl Marx, who pinpointed Monier-Williams as the source of this widespread misunderstanding.⁴⁰ Marx's comment appears in a footnote to August Francke's *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, then and now a heavily relied upon source for Spiti's history. Marx's comment seems to have gone unnoticed by his contemporaries.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Although Monier-Williams was not the "source" of this framework, he was perhaps one of the most well-known and widely read perpetuators of it. "There is a prevalent error regarding the dress of lamas, which is propagated even by Sir Monier Williams (Buddhism, ed. 2, pp. 268 and 278), viz. that the dress of lamas of the 'red' persuasion is red, that of the 'yellow' persuasion yellow. This is not so. The dress of both the red and yellow lamas is red (with the exception of one special order of lamas belonging to the Dge-ldan-pa, who, to my knowledge, exist only in Zangskar, whose dress is yellow." Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:104.

⁴¹ This red/yellow hat framework was widespread in sources on Buddhism, like Monier-Williams, works by colonial British administrators, particularly the yearly Gazetteers, and accounts from missionaries like Francke and Marx. But it also made its way into popular sources with widespread circulation, for example in Carey, "But the most distinctive feature is the cap or cowl. Petticoat and robe mark the genus monk; the hat indicates the species, the sect. There is quite a bewildering variety of shapes and sizes, and each is symbolical of something; but the main patterns are three, and their colors are black, red, and yellow. The black hat is a madcap piece of head-gear...the hat of the Bon-pa...The red hat...belongs to the Nin-ma-pa...The yellow hat...the Ge-lug-pa." William Carey, *Adventures in Tibet: Including the Diary of Miss Annie R. Taylor's Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu Through the Heart of the "Forbidden Land."* (United society of Christian endeavor, 1901), 95.

Nyingma therefore Old, or Old therefore Nyingma: Buddhism and the Isolation of Pin Valley

This general nineteenth-century narrative about sectarian divisions in Lamaism has had lasting implications in the context of Spiti, though it eventually gives way to a more nuanced understanding of sectarian divisions in Tibetan Buddhism. What we see in the sources on Spiti is an initial period of confusion in the early nineteenth century, in which the British officers and others travelers in the region are fairly clear on how to identify the Yellow Hats but not quite sure what the Red Hat sect entails.⁴² They work through that confusion in their efforts to document and understand Spiti, which also entails recording the sectarian differences they identify between Buddhists within and outside of Pin Valley. Just as these sources differentiate between Buddhism (good) and Lamaism (bad), they differentiate between Buddhist sects within Spiti, Yellow Hat (good) and Red Hat (bad). In their evaluations and assignments, sources use the same set of characteristics to evaluate and identify the Buddhists in Spiti as Monier-Williams and his contemporaries: celibacy, hair, attire (hats and robes), magic, purity, reform.

These early evaluations of Buddhist sects in Spiti are positioned at a point when sources were transitioning between two different rubrics for categorizing the Buddhist traditions, the first the Red/Yellow division and the second the Nyingma/Sarma division. The first two-part division eventually gave way to the second, but in the process, the two different methods for assessing Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas often overlapped. One example of the confusion surrounding sectarian divisions and monastic attire in the early nineteenth century is found in the travel account of William Moorcroft and George Trebeck. Moorcroft and Trebeck were based

⁴² George Trebeck and Alexander Gerard's journals of his time in Spiti are good examples. It is interesting to see how each case accounts for the Sakya. In Monier-Williams, the Sakya are a Red Hat sect because they are not Geluk/Yellow. In the case of Spiti, the Sakya are more often categorized as Yellow Hats.

primarily in Leh, Ladakh, but Trebeck traveled from Ladakh to Spiti in 1822, and gives an account of the lamas from Pin, “Their appearance is similar to that of the monks of the Romish Church but with the robe of sable exchanged for one of a dirty red or a dull yellow... My observations have only relation to the red order—those who have been received at Oortsang [U-Tsang] into the community of the yellow are severely punished if they are ever discovered to transgress. But the Lammas of Pin differ from the rest of their brethren in allowing their hair to grow and matt and generally wearing black.”⁴³ Trebeck states that he is mostly acquainted with “the red order,” which makes sense if he is identifying the Drukpa Kagyu in Ladakh as “red.” But he seems to think the defining characteristic of the yellow Geluk is training in the Central Tibetan areas of U-Tsang (*dbus gtsang*).⁴⁴ He describes the lamas of Pin as neither red nor yellow, rather they wear black and have long matted hair. Both Moorcroft and Trebeck extend what is sometimes just the color of the hat to the monk’s attire as a whole, and pinpoint another frequently remarked upon feature of the Pin lamas, their hair.⁴⁵ Like Trebeck, Francke says long hair is a defining feature of the lamas in Pin, and even specifies that this is particular to the *Pin* Nyingma, and not a feature of *all* Nyingma (i.e. the Nyingma in Lhasa).⁴⁶ Even Tucci and Ghersi, who arguably had a greater depth of knowledge and were more widely traveled than

⁴³ “August 7, 1822” George Trebeck, “Journal Commencing with Reference to Field Book No. 2” (1822), 329/D 255, British Library British Library, Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections, European Manuscripts.

⁴⁴ Trebeck recounts meeting monks returning to Spiti from long periods of study in Tibet, which may be the source of his claim.

⁴⁵ Moorcroft identifies the Dalai Lama (Grand Lama) in Lhasa as “yellow,” i.e. a Gelukpa, whereas those in Ladakh—which at the time was heavily Drukpa Kagyu—are “red.” He does not refer specifically to hats, but seems to be describing their general attire. “The Lamas wear red or yellow, according to their order. The dress of the Grand Lama at Lassa is yellow, but that of the chief Lamas in Ladakh is red.” William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara;*, ed. H. H Wilson (London: J. Murray, 1841), 323.

⁴⁶ “Around Lhasa, those monks of the rNyingmapa order cannot be distinguished from other orders of the “red persuasion,” as regards dress, but here in the west they can. Here, the rNyingmapa monks grow long hair which is never combed, and gives them a savage appearance. The best specimens of this uncivilized order of saints can, however, be seen at Pyin in Spiti. Although I am convinced of the correctness of the assertion that the monastery is of remote origin, this statement cannot be confirmed by documentary evidence. The present building does not appear to be of many years’ standing, nor the few idols contained in it.” Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:31.

either Francke or Trebeck, described the Nyingma from Pin as uniquely possessing “long beards and long hair knotted on the head.”⁴⁷

Egerton does not explicitly refer to long hair, but he juxtaposes two photographs that visually convey a similar argument. The first, captioned “Abbott of Dhunkur,” shows a seated figure wearing robes, a vest, and a hat, and holding two cymbals in his lap. Although the photograph is in black and white, the figure’s attire and the caption clearly identify him as a monk, moreover, as the head of Drangkhar monastery, one of the five principal monasteries in Spiti and a Geluk institution. His head is covered but the hat is slightly cocked, showing his short-cropped hair beneath. The next plate is captioned “A Monk of Peen.” It also shows a seated figure wearing robes, although the style is quite different. The monk from Pin has long, dreadlocked hair and a beard. He does not hold anything in his hands but wears a string of beads for counting recitations, a *trenywa* or *mālā* (*phreng ba*), draped around his neck. The photographs evoke two “types” of Buddhist monk in Spiti, and are reminiscent of J. D. Anderson’s massive colonial-era classification project, *The Peoples of India*.⁴⁸

Alongside long hair, nineteenth century sources frequently pinpoint celibacy as a means of differentiating and evaluating Buddhism in Spiti. Egerton contrasts the “inmates” of the Geluk monasteries in Spiti, who are celibate, with those of the Pin monastery, who are not.⁴⁹ Bogle had similarly characterized celibacy as a difference between the “red” and “yellow” nearly a century

⁴⁷ Tucci further connects this to Dzogchen and ascetic practices. Tucci and Gherzi, *Secrets of Tibet*, 45.

⁴⁸ Plates 30 and 31. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Thibet*; J. D Anderson, *The Peoples of India*, (Cambridge; New York: University Press; G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913).

⁴⁹ “The monastery is a small building not capable of holding more than thirty persons. The monks of this monastery are not like those of Kee, and Dhunkar, of the Gelukpa sect, who are enjoined a celibate life. They are Nyangmas, and are permitted to marry, which accounts for the smallness of the monastery, the inmates of which were only two old men.” Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Thibet*, 33.



Figure 4: The Abbot of Drangkhar.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Philip Henry Egerton (British, active 1860s), *The Abbot of Dhunkur*, negative June–August 1863; print 1863–1864, Albumen silver print. 22.2 × 17.2 cm (8 3/4 × 6 3/4 in.), 84.XB.1337.31, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Figure 5: A Monk of Pin.⁵¹

⁵¹ Philip Henry Egerton (British, active 1860s), *A Monk of Peen*, negative June–August 1863; print 1863–1864, Albumen silver print, 15.5 × 19.8 cm (6 1/8 × 7 13/16 in.), 84.XB.1337.32, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

prior to Egerton, as had the Assistant Commissioner of Kulu, W. C. Hay in 1850.⁵² This persists well into the mid twentieth century. Even for Tucci, celibacy remained a point for not only differentiating the “Yellow Sect” from the Nyingma (and Kagyu), but celebrating the former and denigrating the latter.⁵³ Thus the sources consistently distinguish between the red and yellow, or the Geluk and Nyingma, in Spiti on the grounds of their appearance and practice, their hair and attire in the former case, and celibacy or non-celibacy in the latter case.

The Nyingma and the Sarma, with their Red and Yellow Hats

This Red/Yellow division is one that both overlaps with but precedes the later scholarly reliance on another sectarian rubric, the Nyingma and Sarma. The terms and categories of Red Hats and Yellow Hats are not made up by outside observers; they are meaningful terms used by Tibetan Buddhists to refer to their own traditions.⁵⁴ However, scholarship about Tibetan Buddhism often use the terms in a different way than one finds in the sources themselves. The terms Nyingma

⁵² “There are however two sects of Lambas; one called “Neingma” answering to the Byragis of Hindustan; who though not allowed to marry, are allowed to keep women; there are only 13 of this sect in Spiti. The other sect is the “Gilopa” who represent the Sannyasies: they consider themselves defiled if they touch a woman. The “Neingma” sect generally wear long hair, and the other short. They dispute with one another as to their superiority of learning.” Captain W. B. Hay, “Report on the Valley of Spiti,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 19, no. 1–7 (1851): 445.

⁵³ “[The Geluk began] as a reform born out of that same corruption into which the religious communities had fallen, too intent on worldly pursuits which turned them away from meditation and study. The very fact that the rNin ma pa monks and nearly all the bKa’ brgyud pa might marry (*ser k’yim*) diverted them from sacred matters and made them too keen on earthly affairs.. naturally had a bad influence.. religion degenerated into magic and esoterism; this explains, as I have said elsewhere, the cause of Tson k’a pa’s success. His reform is rather a return to tradition; he restored serious study, he cleared away the luxuriant growth of magic which had found a favourable field in the Vajrayana, he organized monastic life on a solid base, restoring the Vinaya rules, too often violated by other schools: celibacy, prohibition of alcoholic drinks, prohibition of meat.” Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), 92.

⁵⁴ For example, the phrase “Yellow Hats” is used to refer to the Geluk in documents relating to the 1679–1684 war between Ladakh and Tibet. The Desi Sangye Gyatso also refers to the Geluk as the Yellow Hats in his history of the Geluk Monasteries, the *Baidūrya ser po*, as does the Fifth Dalai Lama in his autobiography. Zahiruddin Ahmad, “New Light on the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War of 1679-84,” *East and West* 18, no. 3/4 (1968): 340–61; Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Rgyal dbang lnga pa ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho ’i gsung ’bum*, par gzhi 1., Gangs can khyad nor (Pe cin: Krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009); Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho and Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, *Dga’-ldan chos ’byung Baidūrya ser po* (Zi-ling: Krung-go Bod-kyi Shes-rig Dpe-skrun-khang, 1991); Zahiruddin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 40, Serie Orientale Roma (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970).

and Sarma are also often misapplied, or used as categories in ways that are factually incorrect (i.e. using the term Red Hat to refer to every school other than the Geluk). This is not to say that *no* scholarly sources use them in ways that are similar to how the Tibetan primary sources use them, many do. However, this is also sometimes a misstep, particularly if scholarly sources use sectarian frameworks as if they were describing historical facts rather than polemical arguments—for example by taking “Nyingma” and “Sarma” as temporal claims rather than doxographic terms, or by asserting that any Nyingma texts, traditions, and temples in Spiti must date to the eighth century, since that is when the Nyingma tradition was founded by Padmasambhava.⁵⁵

This very move—taking the Nyingma as “old” and Sarma as “new” as *historical* claims rather than doxographic ones—recurs throughout the literature on Spiti. Francke says he is convinced that the Nyingma monastery in Pin must be ancient because it is Nyingma.⁵⁶ However, as Dalton clearly argues, the formative period for the creation of the Nyingma as a school was not the period chronologically *prior* to the so-called later diffusion, it was the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the same span of time in which the Sarma schools developed. Kapstein similarly emphasizes that the solidification of sectarian trends took place in the twelfth through seventeenth centuries.⁵⁷ Sources on Spiti like Francke, utilize the Nyingma/Sarma division to describe and chronologically date the origins of monasteries and sects there, grouping the Geluk and Sakya together (both as Sarma and as “Yellow Hats). In this binary division, the

⁵⁵ Or by viewing the Sarma schools as chronologically later and more developed forms of Tibetan Buddhism than the Nyingma, as Donald S. Lopez Jr. argues is implied in Robert Thurman’s work, among others. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 83.

⁵⁶ He makes this chronological assessment even though he thinks the material evidence at hand does not support such a claim. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:31.

⁵⁷ “It was the restoration of monastic Buddhism in western Tibet, from the late tenth century onwards, that provided the ground for the next great eruption of controversy over matters of authenticity...As Tibetan sectarian trends ossified, from the twelfth through the seventeenth centuries, the first of these three positions came to characterize the Nyingmapa school and its sympathizers...” Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 127.

Nyingma are assigned to the period prior to the second diffusion of Buddhism (prior to the tenth century and primarily in the seventh and eighth) and the Sarma to the second diffusion and later (the tenth century and after). Thus the word “nyingma” as “old” comes to imply that the Nyingma presence in Spiti is *older* and the Sarma presence in Spiti *newer*.

This tendency to interpret the literal meaning of Nyingma and Sarma as a temporal reality is not unique to Spiti. Francke uses the same logic when he states that a monastery in Kinnaur is “asserted to be of ancient origin” which “may be true, for it belongs to the rNyingmapa sect, the most ancient order of monks in Tibet.”⁵⁸ However, what *is* particular to Spiti, is the correlation drawn between sect and space. That is to say, once the various missionaries, administrators, and travelers in Spiti determine that the Red Sect in Spiti refers specifically to the Nyingma tradition, and that the Nyingma are in Pin, they use this binary sectarian division to make an argument about the relationship between sect, space, and time.

Some of the literature on Spiti makes a similar chronological claim regarding a Nyingma/non-Nyingma binary, by contrasting the “unreformed” Nyingma with the “reformed” Geluk. The Geluk tradition developed much later than the other Sarma schools. In the fourteenth century, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) “founded” what would much later become known as the Geluk tradition.⁵⁹ Tsongkhapa is often described as a reformer, or even “the great reformer.”⁶⁰ His image as a strict ethical figure held great appeal for many of the Europeans writing about Buddhism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, among them Deputy Commissioner

⁵⁸ Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:31.

⁵⁹ Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 522–523. Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014). “Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa.”

⁶⁰ Tsutomu Iwasaki’s brief gloss of Tsongkhapa is telling, particularly in its reference to the Red Hats. After quoting a stele that reads, “although Tibetan monks understand the teachings of Buddhism, they do not study the monastic code. They therefore marry and have children, often behave no differently from the laity, and think nothing of eating meat and drinking liquor,” Iwasaki comments, “It is as if we were here given a glimpse of life in Tibetan monasteries of the so-called Red Hats (*zha marpa*) prior to Tsongkhapa’s reforms.” Gray, Tuttle and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *The Tibetan History Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 162.

Sherring, who noted in 1906, “there were reactions to a purer and nobler faith, and the great reformation, introduced by Tson-Kapa in the fifteenth century, led to the formation of the Gelug-Pa sect.”⁶¹ Against this pure and noble reformed tradition, stood the unreformed Nyingma.

This narrative is certainly not a new one in the field of Tibetan Buddhist studies.⁶² In the case of Spiti, the reformed/unreformed categorization serves as a chronological rubric, in much the same manner as the Nyingma/Sarma division. Since Tsongkhapa’s “reforms” came *later*, anything that is *not* Geluk must be leftover from a period prior to the reform.⁶³ However, in the case of Spiti, the geography of the Pin Valley, particularly perceptions of the Pin Valley as isolated, are interpreted as *causing* Pin to remain unreformed. H. Lee Shuttleworth, writing in 1922, argues that Pin (and Lahaul, which borders Spiti to the north-west) must have become Nyingma in the eighth century and only remained Nyingma because of its isolation from the main area of Spiti:

We pass the Pin monastery by a large poplar tree, said to have been planted at the foundation of the monastery, some eight or nine hundred years ago. Here only in Spiti is found the Nying-ma sect of monks, an early sect prior to the seventeenth [sic] century reformation of Tsong-khapa and his disciples. That reformation has not affected this valley or Lahul, where also some traces of ancient Buddhism are preserved... little affected by the monastic reforms of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that considerably modified the early Buddhism of Tibet and the main valley of Spiti.⁶⁴

Shuttleworth’s claim that any existing Nyingma regions must predate the Geluk “reformation”

⁶¹ Charles Atmore Sherring, *Western Tibet and the British Borderland; the Sacred Country of Hindus and Buddhists, with an Account of the Government, Religion, and Customs of Its Peoples*, by Charles A. Sherring. With a Chapter by T. G. Longstaff Describing an Attempt to Climb Gurla Mandhata. With Illustrations and Maps. (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), 74.

⁶² As Lopez argues, the idealization and elevation of Tsongkhapa and the Geluk sect has persisted, and continued to shape the field of Tibetan Buddhist studies long after the likes of Francke, Tucci, or Sherring. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, 83.

⁶³ This interpretation of sect as chronological succession in Spiti is similar to what Lopez calls “a rather thinly veiled teleology” with respect to Robert Thurman’s description of the sects as “four great waves.” Lopez, Jr., 148.

⁶⁴ H. Lee Shuttleworth, “Border Countries of the Punjab Himalaya,” *The Geographical Journal* 60, no. 4 (1922): 254, 262. Shuttleworth mistakenly dates Tsongkhapa and his disciples to the seventeenth century, rather than the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, as he more accurately states a few sentences later. His comments identify Pin Valley as Nyingma and Nyingma as “unreformed” and “ancient” because it predates Tsongkhapa’s reforms, be they in the fifteenth-, sixteenth-, or seventeenth-century.

does not allow for the possibility of the Nyingma tradition spreading into, or converting, regions that were not already Nyingma. There is an implicit argument that the later reformed tradition would necessarily displace the earlier unreformed one, that Tsongkhapa's more enlightened reforms must displace its superstitious predecessors.⁶⁵ The only way a region in the Himalayas could remain mired in magic is if it were somehow isolated from the influence of an inevitable reform. The geography of Pin becomes causal, the determining factor in its status as Nyingma.

It is worth noting that this kind of narrative may seem to be supported by historical evidence about the advent of a Geluk influence in the Western Himalayas. I am not underestimating the significance of the Geluk influence or denying that they *did* convert non-Geluk institutions. Indeed, as Vitali notes, "The history of mNga' ris stod from the 15th century onwards is, in most cases, the history of the dGe lugs pa masters in the region. The preponderance of the dGe lugs pa, especially in Gu ge until 1630, led to a virtual monopoly of this school in the territory. Even the monasteries belonging to the proponents of other doctrines, such as the Sa skya pa, ended up being deeply linked with them."⁶⁶ If one assumes Shuttleworth's argument to be true, that Pin's status as Nyingma precedes the advent of the Geluk tradition in the region, then the Pin Valley would likely have been Nyingma prior to the mid-fifteenth century, when Tsongkhapa's students introduced the Geluk tradition throughout Tibet and adjacent Himalayan regions including Spiti, Ladakh, Zanskar, etc.

It is entirely possible that this was the case, that there were Nyingma practitioners in Pin prior to the fifteenth-century wave of Geluk influence, and that the Pin Valley, as a discrete

⁶⁵ These arguments rely on a Hegelian notion of linear time and the evolution of religion. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 236; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel et al., *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. (and) The Concept of Religion*, vol. 1 (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1984).

⁶⁶ Roberto Vitali, Dpal-vbyor-rgya-mtsho, and A-myes-rma-chen-bod-kyi-rig-gzuñ-zib-'jug-khañ, *The Dge lugs pa in Gu ge and the Western Himalaya (early 15th - late 17th century): A Study of Four Historical Documents* (Dharamshala: AMI Books, 2012), 3.

entity separate from the surrounding regions, contributed to it remaining Nyingma. If more pre-seventeenth-century sources on Pin come to light, they might support or refute such an argument.⁶⁷ What is significant about the narrative repeatedly encountered in the sources addressed here is not its validity or invalidity, but rather the basis of such arguments and the conclusions that follow.⁶⁸ To critique this Pin/Nyingma correlation is not to say that Pin is not Nyingma, or that it has not been Nyingma for quite some time. Rather, it is to say that the causes and conditions, the reasons for the Nyingma tradition's presence and perdurance in Pin, differ from those proposed in the literature. In the literature, the reasons proposed for the Nyingma tradition's continued presence in Pin is tied to its geographic isolation, both from other regions of Spiti and from the wider Tibetan cultural sphere, but it is not argued to be *solely* a result of geography. It is also based in a notion of the superiority or persuasive impact of Tsongkhapa's Geluk reform, the inevitability of the Sarma replacing the Nyingma, and the notion that physical isolation entails a temporal condition. Such arguments in the sources create a kind of circular logic that is built on the supposed relationship between isolation, time, and the evolution of religious traditions.⁶⁹

The various nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources on Spiti are collapsing three very different categories: red/yellow, nyingma/sarma, unreformed/reformed. In each case, the Nyingma in Pin are categorized as chronologically prior, and that temporality is interpreted

⁶⁷ In Chapter 1, I examine the earliest sources to clearly describe Pin as Nyingma, which date to the 1630s.

⁶⁸ It is worth noting that these sources on Spiti do not similarly describe the Sakya monastery as "surviving" Geluk reform because of the monastery's isolation.

⁶⁹ The explanatory appeal of this narrative is perhaps found in its endurance. In his 1997 work on Buddhism in Spiti, Verma argues that the presence of the Nyingma, Sakya, and Geluk in Spiti form a kind of timeline of Buddhism, "In Spiti one can trace a continuous course of development from its very primitive form to its latest version," from the "unreformed form of *lamaism*, the *Nyingmapa* order" to the hybrid Sakya (who study *and* practice magic), culminating with the reformed Geluk tradition. V. Verma, *Spiti: A Buddhist Land in Western Himalaya* (Delhi: B.R. Pub. Corp., 1997), 88–89. One also finds these claims outside of academic literature in popular sources like travel guides, "One of the results of sectarian strife in Spiti was that most monasteries here are of the Gelukpa sect. Only in Spiti's Pin Valley does one find monasteries of the Nyingmapa tradition, at Kungri and Mud—*perhaps because this region was relatively isolated, the only entrance to it being through the Pin river.*" (emphasis added) Mitra, *The Buddhist Trail in Himachal*, 95.

causally to account for the “negative” features of the Nyingma tradition (non-celibacy, wild hair, magic, superstition).⁷⁰ Although this pattern of lauding the “reformed” Geluk over the “unreformed” Nyingma appears in literature on Buddhism in Tibet and in contexts other than Spiti, it is particularly widespread and influential in the sources on Spiti. These dichotomous evaluations dominate references to the Pin Valley in particular, where they intersect with notions of how isolation impacts the formation, development, and endurance of Buddhist sects.

The “Deified Wizard”: Guru Padmasambhava and the Nyingma Tradition

The figure of Padmasambhava is central to constructing the Nyingma and Pin as old, unreformed, and isolated. Some sources on Spiti date Pin’s affiliation with the Nyingma tradition to the eighth century, based on the notion that Padmasambhava must have introduced the Nyingma tradition to Pin during his travels through the Himalayas en route to Tibet. These sources accept the historicity of the person of Padmasambhava and narratives constructed by the Nyingma tradition itself about its own origins. While it would be easy to dismiss such sources as unreliable, we find a similar move recurring in scholarly sources much relied upon in the field that draw a causal link between Pin’s isolation, its status as Nyingma, and Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava is also often at the center of critiques of the Nyingma in general, and in Pin specifically, as superstition, magic, and debased *tantra*. Who then, is this person Waddell referred to as the deified wizard?⁷¹

⁷⁰ Or perhaps even persisting in wearing Red Caps in opposition to common sense, as Bogle exclaims. Markham, Bogle, and Manning, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet*, 14.

⁷¹ “The routine in the monasteries of the unreformed or Nyingma sects departs considerably from the high standard above described, and introduces more demonolatry and the worship of the deified wizard Guru Padmasambhava.” Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet*, 220.

Padmasambhava is one of the most important figures in the Tibetan Buddhist *imaginaire*, a status evidenced in one of his epithets: the second Buddha.⁷² Traditional historiography holds that Padmasambhava lived during the eighth century and was a tantric Buddhist master from Oḍḍiyāna, a land associated with the Swat Valley in modern day Pakistan. On the advice of the Indian teacher Śāntarakṣita, he was invited to come to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen, where he helped found Tibet's first monastery, Samye. He aids in the monastery's construction by combatting and subduing the autochthonous elements of Tibet, deities hostile to Buddhism's spread, often incorporating them into the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon as "worldly deities" (*jig rten pa'i lha*) bound to serve the dharma. The various biographies of Padmasambhava recount episode after episode of such encounters, across the length and breadth of the Himalayas and Tibet.⁷³ As Benjamin Bogin notes, Padmasambhava becomes central to Tibetan "cultural place-making practices."⁷⁴ Indeed, there is seemingly no place in the Buddhist Himalaya that does not have an account of Padmasambhava's local activities.⁷⁵

Despite the proliferation of biographies of Padmasambhava in later centuries, early sources on Padmasambhava are scarce, and we know relatively little about him.⁷⁶ Most scholars

⁷² "If there is a figure in the Tibetan pantheon whose popularity rivals the ubiquitous cult of Avalokiteśvara, surely it is Padmasambhava, the Lotus-Born Precious Guru (Guru Rinpoche)." Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 155; Benjamin Bogin, "Locating the Copper-Colored Mountain: Buddhist Cosmology, Himalayan Geography, and Maps of Imagined Worlds," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies* 34, no. 2 (2014): 4.

⁷³ Such episodes are found, for example, in the most widespread account of Padmasambhava's life, Nyangral Nyima Özer's (1124–1192) discovered text, *The Lotus-Born*. Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal et al., *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava* (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 1993).

⁷⁴ Bogin, "Locating the Copper-Colored Mountain," 4.

⁷⁵ Dalton notes this in his discussion of two early Dunhuang sources on Padmasambhava, "Today the geography of Tibet is covered with countless sacred sites where the tantric saint is said to have subjugated local Tibetan pre-Buddhist spirits and converted them to Buddhism." Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot Tibetain 307," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 4 (October 2004): 760.

⁷⁶ "In the usages of modern scholarship, the admissible historical evidence for the person of Padmasambhava, or even for his representations, is very slight indeed." Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in Early Post-Imperial Tibet," in *Tibet after Empire: Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000: Proceedings of the Seminar Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2011*, ed. Christoph Cüppers, Robert Mayer, and Michael L. Walter, vol. 4, LIRI Seminar Proceedings Series (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute,

agree that there was likely an historical person called Padmasambhava, although this is not indisputable. Based on their examination of the existing early sources on Padmasambhava, Cantwell and Mayer conclude that it is likely Padmasambhava was an historical figure who visited Tibet during the time of King Trisong Detsen.⁷⁷ But the sources diverge on exactly who Padmasambhava was, how important he was at that time, and what his areas of ritual expertise entailed (for example, some sources suggest he was connected to water and irrigation technology).⁷⁸ Some of these sources depict Padmasambhava as but one of many teachers involved in this period of Tibet's Buddhist history, ancillary rather than central, such that his importance to narratives of Buddhism's triumph in Tibet must have developed only later.⁷⁹

The paucity of early evidence stands in sharp contrast to his significance in subsequent centuries, and to the corresponding explosion of sources about him from the twelfth century onwards.⁸⁰ As Jacob Dalton argues, "From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, the India master's role in the Tibetan imagination grew and evolved dramatically, so that by the time of his first complete biography, the twelfth-century *Copper Island* by Nyangrel Nyima Özer (1124–1192), Padmasambhava had become the single most important figure in Tibetan narratives of their early conversion to Buddhism."⁸¹ Beginning in the twelfth century with the efforts of figures like Nyangrel Nyima Özer, Padmasambhava transformed from just one among many Indian Buddhist

2013), 19; Herbert V. Guenther, *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, vol. 12, Brill's Indological Library (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1.

⁷⁷ Cantwell and Mayer revisit the sources Kapstein previously examined, and reach similar conclusions. Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in Early Post-Imperial Tibet," 19.

⁷⁸ This is proposed by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger in their translation of the *Testament of Ba (dBa' bzhed)*, one of the few early sources to mention Padmasambhava.

⁷⁹ Cantwell and Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in Early Post-Imperial Tibet"; Daniel Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age* (Simon and Schuster, 2016); Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet."

⁸⁰ For a discussion of this twelfth-century proliferation and its significance, see especially Hirschberg and Dalton. Jacob Paul Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 68, 111, 129. Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born*.

⁸¹ Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, 68.

teachers to *the* Indian Buddhist teacher of Tibet. His life, activities, teachings, and their legacy became intricately connected to the history and development of Buddhism in Tibet.

In the more elaborated version of Padmasambhava that emerges from these later narratives, he becomes a key tool for the Nyingma to continue to innovate, introduce new textual material, and challenge accusations of inauthenticity of the Nyingma teachings by linking them to a source of Buddhist authority. This is one of the reasons why Padmasambhava takes on such particular significance for the Nyingma, beyond his reverence across all sects. The Nyingma sect is also called the *Ngagyur Nyingma* (*snga 'gyur rnying ma*) or the “early translation” ancient school. This refers to their focus on texts translated into Tibetan in the “early” period, roughly spanning the seventh to mid-ninth centuries, as opposed to those translated in the later period, beginning in the late tenth century. Although the Nyingma tradition primarily lays claim to that earlier period, many of the texts comprising the tradition were developed at a later date. One way the Nyingma account for this chronological dissonance is by attributing the texts to Padmasambhava, to one of his students, or to his consort Yeshe Tsogyal, who produced a given teaching but then hid it so that it could be revealed at a later time. This set of hidden Nyingma teachings are called *terma* (*gter ma*) or “treasures.” *Terma* teachings are hidden in a variety of ways, including in the minds of the recipients themselves in a special form of transmission referred to as a “mind treasures” (*dgongs gter*). Those who receive the hidden teachings are known as *tertön* (*gter ston*) or treasure revealers. Some *tertön* might also write additional texts to accompany or contextualize a particular *terma*. In this way, *terma* texts could continue to proliferate over time, up to the present day, and the Nyingma canon was able to expand, even after the period of the “early translation” ended.

The two core sets of teachings maintained in the Pin Valley today are *terma* traditions. The first set of *terma* is called the Pema Lingpa or Pe-ling Terma, after the person who revealed them, Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). The second set of *terma* is called the Dudjom Terma or the Dudjom Tersar (literally “new *terma*”), and encompasses the teachings of two different figures, Dudjom Lingpa (1835–1904), who was a Nyingma *tertön* from the Golok region on the eastern edge of the Tibetan cultural sphere, and his reincarnation, Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987). Dudjom Rinpoche’s importance to the contemporary shape of the Nyingma tradition cannot be overstated. He became the head of the Nyingma school in exile after 1959. He was also the primary teacher of the current head of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, Yomed Tulku Jigme Tenzin Dorje (b. 1962). The Peling Terma was introduced to Spiti in the late seventeenth century and the Dudjom Terma teachings were introduced to Spiti in the early twentieth century. Padmasambhava played a central role in the genesis of these treasure teachings, for example by appearing to Dudjom Lingpa in a dream. Thus Padmasambhava is the primary origin of the Nyingma tradition in the Pin Valley, both in the sense of his eighth-century activities and also as a source of new Nyingma texts.

Most Nyingmapa in the Pin Valley will readily cite the eighth century as the point when Buddhism was established in the region. Padmasambhava’s homeland of Oḍḍiyāna is somewhere to the West of Spiti. Central Tibet, where he met King Trisong Detsen, is to Spiti’s East, placing Spiti en route to Central Tibet. This is an utterly unsurprising attribution, and one that most Himalayan Buddhist regions would also make. Indeed, literal traces of Padmasambhava’s presence in Pin recently materialized in the form of a self-arisen image of the teacher that emerged from the mountainside following a flood. Padmasambhava, his taming activities that enabled Buddhism to flourish in places like Pin, and his role in producing *terma* texts is crucial



Figure 6: A “self-arisen” image of Padmasambhava on the bank of the Pin River in July 2013.⁸²

⁸² Photo courtesy of Namgyal. The image is described as “self-arisen” or *rangjung* (*rang ’byung*), indicating that it emerged from the landscape on its own, and was not shaped by or crafted by hand.

to establishing the authenticity and authority of the two *terma* traditions practiced in Pin Valley today.

Although Padmasambhava is central to the ways that Buddhists in Pin frame their own history, the scant historical record available to scholars is not sufficient to support claims about Pin's Nyingma history in the eighth century. Despite the paucity of evidence, sources adopt this narrative as historically sound, which has significantly impacted scholarship on the history of Buddhism in Spiti. By the early twentieth century, Francke notes in his influential work on Buddhism in the Indian Himalayas that the presence of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti and neighboring Kinnaur likely dates to the time of Padmasambhava.⁸³ Even though Francke somewhat hedges this claim, his statement is picked up by others.⁸⁴ In *Wooden Temples of Himachal Pradesh*, Singh states, "Buddhism of the Vajrayana tantric system seems to have been introduced in the border areas of Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur from India probably by Padmasambhava in the 8th century A. D."⁸⁵ O. C. Handa also cites Francke's claims as plausible.⁸⁶ Helmut Hoffman's *The Religions of Tibet* more broadly describes Padmasambhava's eighth-century influence on "those primitive beliefs of the Western Himalayan districts."⁸⁷

⁸³ Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:31.

⁸⁴ Shuttleworth's similar claim about Padmasambhava establishing Buddhism in Lahaul predates Francke, "The Tantric Buddhism that Padma Sambhava introduced into Lahul and Tibet in the eighth century, has survived here with less change than it has suffered further east. Lahul, probably owing to its distance and political separation from Great Tibet, was little affected by the monastic reforms of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that considerably modified the early Buddhism of Tibet and the main valley of Spiti." Shuttleworth, "Border Countries of the Punjab Himalaya," 254.

⁸⁵ Mian Goverdhan Singh, *Wooden Temples of Himachal Pradesh*, 1999, 24.

⁸⁶ "Evidence of that phase of primitive Buddhism may be seen in the monastery at Gungri in Pin valley...The primitive phase of Buddhism (the First Epoch) was largely devoted to the introduction and propagation of dharma by the Padmasambhava-Santarakshita team." Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh*, 172.

⁸⁷ Hoffman refers to Padmasambhava as a "strange Indian master" and asserts that "Padmasambhava obviously made an attempt to found a religion of his own, and this attempt was to some extent successful, because 'Padmaism', the doctrine of the sect rNying-ma-pa which honours him, or U-rgyan-pa, has always held its own specific and rather independent place in Lamasism." Helmut Hoffmann, *The Religions of Tibet* (MacMillan, 1961), 51, 58.

The claim that the Nyingma tradition in Pin was established in the past based on the argument that the sectarian category “Nyingma” entails a temporal claim (i.e. that to be Nyingma is to be pre-Geluk, pre-Sarma, pre-reform, ca. eighth century, etc.) and that it has remained so because of the Pin Valley’s isolation, persists in contemporary scholarship in both clear and subtle ways. In an otherwise excellent 2004 article on the Buchen in Pin, Pascale Dollfus describes the Pin Valley as:

Shut off from the rest of Spiti by high mountains, except where the stream forces its way through a rocky gorge, several kilometres in length, to join the main river, Pin forms a secluded world. ...They have almost no relationships—even economical or religious—with the inhabitants of the villages lying on both sides of the Spiti River and belonging to Töd (*stod*, “higher region”), Bar (*bar*, “middle region”) and Sham (*gsham*, “lower region”). In contrast, they maintain the closest ties with people of upper Kinnaur... Though the dGe lugs pa is the most prominent Buddhist order in Spiti, the Pin valley shelters the only monastery belonging to the rNying ma pa...⁸⁸

The Pin Valley is shut off from the rest of Spiti, secluded, with “almost no relationships” with its neighbors in Spiti. Pin “shelters” the Nyingma from the prominent Geluk influence in Spiti. Pin certainly is hemmed in by high mountains and does maintain ties with upper Kinnaur. But the correlation between the presence of the Nyingma tradition in Pin and the valley as closed off or sheltered from the Geluk, implies that the Nyingma tradition would not be present in Pin—that it would have succumbed to the Geluk—if not for those sheltering mountains. Once again, the implicit claims are that the Geluk *would have been successful* in converting or overwhelming the Nyingma in Pin if not for Pin’s isolation, and that Pin must have been Nyingma *prior to the advent of the Geluk* in Spiti. Again, it is entirely possible that the Nyingma were present in Pin prior to the fifteenth century. But as yet, the historical evidence does not support such a claim, and even if evidence arose to support a pre-fifteenth-century Nyingma presence, it does not

⁸⁸ Pascale Dollfus, “The Great Sons of Thang Stong Rgyal Po: The Bu Chen of the Pin Valley, Spiti,” *The Tibet Journal* 29, no. 1 (2004): 9.

necessarily follow that the Nyingma are only able to persist *in spite of* the Geluk because they are somehow physically or geographically protected.⁸⁹

Manufactured Isolation

The preceding arguments about the presence and preservation of a sectarian tradition in Pin rely on the assumption that Pin is isolated. In Chapter 2, I argue that Pin was not as isolated as scholarship describes based on the robust exchange between the Nyingma in Pin and their neighbors in Spiti, Kinnaur, and Tibet in the first half of the twentieth-century. This is also supported by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources that often describe Pin as less isolated than it is described as today. The Pin Valley is accessible from neighboring regions over mountain passes that are often preferable to the two main routes into and out of Spiti. Trebeck, Gerard, and others traveling into or out of Spiti, frequently followed such routes through Pin rather than traveling through the main Spiti Valley. The advent of a single main road through the region and the ossification of the India-China border made both Spiti and Pin more isolated today than it was in preceding centuries.

In 1822, George Trebeck indicates that Pin's routes to Kinnaur (then Bushahr) were more easily traversed than the currently favored route out of Pin through the main Spiti Valley, and

⁸⁹ This same logic recurs in sources about other areas of the Western Himalayas and Tibet's Himalayan periphery, in which the Himalayan mountains are interpreted as preserving a prior element. There is a causal link between geography—the idea that mountains are isolating—time, and change. Erberto Lo Bue makes a similar claim about art history and culture as preserved by the isolated mountainous periphery of Ladakh, “The persistence of early cultural features is a characteristic of peripheral areas, which often tend to be culturally conservative—preserving for instance even archaic pronunciations—while changes may occur faster in culturally hegemonic centres.” And from Tucci we read, “It is evident that we are in a border country, in which, alongside Lamaism, introduced from Tibet, there linger indigenous cults and traditions of great antiquity, and the influence, more or less clear, of Hinduism.” E Lo Bue, “The Guru Lhakhang at Phyang: A Mid-15th Century Temple in Central Ladakh,” in *Discoveries in Western Tibet and the Western Himalayas: Essays on History, Literature, Archaeology and Art: PIATS 2003, Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Amy Heller and Giacomella Orofino, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, 10/8 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 190; Tucci and Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet*, 66.

past Hurling. He describes Pin as a wider valley than the Spiti Valley near Drangkar, with an “extremely good” road.⁹⁰ This last might surprise anyone familiar with the road in Pin today, which is typically in much worse condition than the road through Spiti. The routes he describes, including that through the Bhaba Pass, were on more equal footing in the nineteenth century, when travel was conducted on foot, mule, or horse, than they became in subsequent decades as first the colonial government and later the Indian government invested in the Trans-Himalayan Road.⁹¹ In his discussion of Spiti’s neighbor Kinnaur, Alex McKay argues that shifting British trade interests in the region contributed to isolating this part of the Indian Himalayas.⁹²

In Pin today, the multiple routes available in the past have given way to one primary point of access, the one by car, and even it is often impassable.⁹³ Pin’s current condition is frequently cited to support the idea that it is isolated, as in Kishore Thukral’s description, “Were it not for the Attargu Bridge, Pin valley would be well-nigh inaccessible.”⁹⁴ Jonathan Demenge describes the same mechanisms at play in Ladakh’s apparent isolation, “Yet what these accounts tend to forget is that mobility takes place even in the absence of roads, and that “isolation” and “mobility” are hardly ontologically given and objectifiable concepts, but highly subjective and experiential...Historically, Ladakh became “marginal” and “isolated” with its inclusion as a border district of India and the closing of its borders with Pakistan in 1947 and Tibet in 1949.

⁹⁰ “The pass to Han in Bube [Bhaba] is represented as very easy and the valley of Peen is wider than that of Dunkhur and the road is extremely good.” He also describes a large group of traders from Pin en route to Changthang. “August 18th,” Trebeck, “Journal Commencing with Reference to Field Book No. 2.”

⁹¹ Or what Briggs describes as the Hindostan Thibet Road. David Briggs, *Report on the Operations Connected with the Hindostan and Thibet Road, from 1850 to 1855* (Bath: Pagoda Tree, 2001).

⁹² McKay establishes that the Western Himalayas, particularly along the Sutlej River, became an important center for trade in the mid seventeenth century, following the Tibet-Ladakh War, in which Bushahr—part of modern-day Kinnaur, played a key role. Then in the nineteenth century, when the British shifted their trade focus to other parts of the Himalayas, the Western Himalayas became more peripheral. Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 177–179.

⁹³ Conversely, Cunningham in 1854 describes multiple routes in and out of Pin. Alexander Cunningham, *Ladāk, Physical, Statistical, and Historical; with Notices of the Surrounding Countries*. (London, 1854), 155.

⁹⁴ Thukral, *Spiti*, 29.

From being the centre of trans-Himalayan caravan trade, an important tributary...Ladakh slipped into the margins and became remote, “isolated,” and “backward.”⁹⁵ Road-oriented access and its concomitant notions of isolation, certainly shape which Himalayan sites receive scholarly attention. In some cases, relying on roads may cause important sites to go unnoticed.⁹⁶

In addition to Pin’s isolation within Spiti, political circumstances isolated Spiti as a whole. Until the 1990s, Spiti’s isolation was reinforced by its proximity to the contested border between India and China. The 1958 Foreigners Protected Areas Order closed travel to Spiti to non-residents because part of the route to Spiti was within the “Inner Line” of the contested border. That restriction was relaxed first for non-resident Indians and later for foreigners. Even after the area opened, non-locals were still required to obtain an Inner Line Permit, which limited the ways in which they could enter or leave Spiti, as well as the amount of time they could remain there.⁹⁷ There is still some ambiguity about access to Gyu Village, which lies within the contested region and hosts a military base for the Indo-Tibetan Border Patrol.

India and China’s border negotiations similarly restricted travel for residents of Spiti itself. Prior to 1960, there were close ties between Spiti and Western Tibet. Pilgrims and traders would regularly cross the border between the two areas. Although foreigners were frequently prevented from traveling from India to Tibet, this restriction did not seem to apply to most

⁹⁵ Demenge, “The Road to Lingshed,” 53.

⁹⁶ For example, regarding the Sumda Chung temple complex in Ladakh, Christian Luczanits writes, “these sites have as yet hardly been studied. This is mainly because Sumda Chung can only be reached after half a day’s walk from the road following the lower Zangskar river. One can also walk to Sumda directly from Alchi within a single day, but the trek over the Stakspila pass (5200 metres) between the two villages is one of the most tiring imaginable.” Although Sumda Chung is an important architectural and art historical site, scholars often cite its inaccessibility to justify the lack of attention it has received. However, it is clear that Sumda Chung is both an important site and also located within regional religious networks that link it to locations like Alchi, if one considers the temple’s accessibility if traveling on foot or horseback rather than by road. Special thanks to Rachel Levy for pointing out this particular example and its relevance. Christian. Luczanits, *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay: Early Western Himalayan Art, Late 10th to Early 13th Centuries* (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2004), 175. Rachel Levy, personal communication, April 10, 2019.

⁹⁷ As of 2014, an Inner Line Permit was still required if entering Spiti via Kinnaur, since this is the route that passes close to the contested border. Conversely, entering Spiti from Lahaul in the north did not require a permit. Visitors are required to submit their passports at perimeter checks on both points of entry.

Himalayan Buddhists residing on Tibet's periphery. Indeed, the easy mobility between Spiti and Western Tibet enabled the Dudjom Tersar tradition to become established in Pin in the 1930s.⁹⁸ This mobility was curtailed in 1960, which had the effect of isolating Pin from its regional religious networks. Thus, scholars and tourists visiting Spiti and Pin after 1960, encountered a fairly isolated and peripheral region, and often projected that condition onto Spiti's past.⁹⁹ The same retrospective assumption about contemporary isolation as an historical condition applied to Pin, where it reinforced—and was itself reinforced by—the idea of the Nyingma tradition in Pin as representing a chronologically earlier form of Buddhism.

One key theme of this dissertation, which spans four centuries of Spiti's history (from the seventeenth century to the present), is the ways in which discourses of isolation are reconfigured in response to shifting centers of religious and political authority. I argue that Pin Valley, and Spiti generally, is not inherently isolated, despite its location and the harsh Himalayan mountain range, but is consistently constructed as marginal in relationship to shifting centers, be they Tibetan empires, colonial outposts, Buddhist centers, modern nation-states, trade routes, or tourist trails. Indeed, as I argue in Chapter 4, the fabricated nature of isolation and relatively underdeveloped condition of Spiti with respect to its neighbors, is evident to Spitians themselves, who draw comparisons to places like Ladakh—which is of greater strategic importance to the

⁹⁸ McKay makes a similar argument with respect to Kinnaur. "Close religious links between Kinnaur and Tibet continued until recently. Before the 1962 closing of the Sino-Indian border, Kinnauri Buddhist monks were primarily oriented not to Ladakh but to Tholing...and to Lhasa where they traveled for advanced training." Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories*, 181.

⁹⁹ For example, Klimburg-Salter, who was one of the few international scholars given access to Spiti before the 1990s, assumes not only that Spiti must have always been isolated and peripheral, but takes this as one of the central questions about Tabo Monastery, namely, she wants to determine why such an important temple would have been located in such an out of the way and unimportant location. Klimburg-Salter and Luczanits, *Tabo*, 12–13.

military—and to Western Tibet—which has fared differently under Chinese infrastructure developments.¹⁰⁰

Writing from the Periphery: The Geography of Tibetan Buddhist Studies

While colonial era scholarship presents Spiti as an isolated backwater, Spiti and other borderlands were key centers for nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship. Tibet pursued a policy of isolation throughout much of the nineteenth century, closing its borders to the British in particular, among others. As a result, much of the early scholarly work in Tibetan studies and Tibetan Buddhist studies was conducted outside of Tibet, from such regions of Tibet's Himalayan periphery as Sikkim, Nepal, and Ladakh, despite the fact that governments in these regions were occasionally in armed conflict with Tibet and articulated their status as kingdoms independent of a Tibetan authority. As a result, peripheral regions were discussed as if they were extensions of Tibet, or served as surrogates for an inaccessible Tibet. Scholars often acknowledge this reality by describing their domain as “cultural” Tibet, then quickly move on, without examining the ways in which writing about Tibet based on Himalayan Buddhism and culture might shape their scholarship.

This persisted into the mid-twentieth century, when the large-scale influx of Tibetans into exile in Nepal and India, and thence to other parts of the world, substantially expanded the field of Tibetan studies. Tibet came to be “known” from exile communities in India. In anthropology in particular, core works about Tibet continued to be written based on work done outside of Tibet.¹⁰¹ The border regions of Tibet were displaced in this sense, made to stand in for Tibet itself

¹⁰⁰ Anand Bodh, “Two Arrested for Sedition in Lahaul - Times of India,” *The Times of India*, August 26, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Two-arrested-for-sedition-in-Lahaul/articleshow/40889184.cms>; Anand Bodh and Suresh Sharma, “In Picturesque Pin Valley, Some Border Envy,” *The Times of India*, August 31, 2014.

¹⁰¹ The substantial body of anthropology monographs about Buddhism in Nepal is a prime example.

and thus not necessarily written about for their own sake. This was certainly the case with Spiti, where the over-emphasis on Tabo Monastery led most works to examine Spiti as an extension of Tibet.

In recent decades, the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Kham, and Amdo have been more accessible to international scholars, who are increasingly calling attention to this imbalance by focusing their studies on Tibet's periphery.¹⁰² The proceedings from the 2003 International Association of Tibetan Studies, *Tibetan Borderlands* attests to the shift toward Tibet's peripheries and the ways in which scholars are framing their work in the context of Himalayan studies.¹⁰³ However, Tibet's western-most region, Ngari, remains woefully understudied, as do Ngari-adjacent areas in the western Himalayas, like Kinnaur, Spiti, and Lahaul. (Indeed, Spiti, Kinnaur, Lahaul, and Zaskar garner no mention in the 2003 IATS volume.) This project is positioned in the context of the trend to attend to Tibet's borderlands, while also calling attention to Spiti as an understudied region.

Scholarship on Spiti is still a very small field, but it is one with clear imbalances. Works on Spiti have overwhelmingly focused on the tenth-to sixteenth-century period encompassing the rise and fall of Ngari Korsum (*mnga' ris skor gsum*), the three kingdoms of Guge, Puhrang, and Maryul (Ladakh). This is not unwarranted; in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, the western Tibetan Guge Kingdom—which encompassed Spiti—emerged as a major religious and political center, particularly in terms of the role the monarchy played in the eleventh-century period traditional historiography refers to as the later spread of Buddhism (*phyi dar*). Luciano

¹⁰² In recent decades, work from Gray Tuttle, Alex Gardner, Sarah Jacoby on Kham and Amdo among others, are shifting this trend away from focusing on Central Tibet. Toni Huber's trans-Himalayan approach to pilgrimage as also emphasized the important of both Tibet's periphery and also pan-Tibetan mobility. Alex McKay's study of the Kailash region, which although it has long been a major pilgrimage destination, is still situated in Tibet's periphery, is a useful contribution.

¹⁰³ Sara Shneiderman's essay in the 2003 IATS volume is a particularly insightful engagement with these questions. Sara Shneiderman, "Barbarians at the Border and Civilising Projects: Analysing Ethnic and National Identities in the Tibetan Context," in *Tibetan Borderlands*, ed. Christiaan Klieger (Brill, 2003), 9–34.

Petech's chapter on Western Tibetan history remains a clear and concise treatment of this period. It is a narrative in which the Nyingma are largely absent and Pin within Spiti figures not at all. This is not due to any neglect on Petech's part; there simply are not sources on the latter and relatively few sources addressing the former.¹⁰⁴ As Petech clearly lays out, the history of this region in this period was dominated by the Sakya, Kagyu, and Geluk (roughly in that order).

Spiti's edifices dating to that period—Tabo and Lhalung—receive the bulk of scholarly attention. Several texts that on one level purport to address a much broader range of materials, in reality only attend to this period and these structures. In *Indo-Tibetica*, Giuseppe Tucci's 1930's multi-volume work on Buddhism in Tibet and the Himalayas, he devotes a full volume of *The Temples of Western Tibet and their Artistic Symbolism* to the monasteries of Spiti and Kinnaur.¹⁰⁵ However, most of the two-hundred page volume is devoted to discussing only a few of the many monasteries in these two regions, with Tabo Monastery accounting for a full half of the book.¹⁰⁶ The Pin temple complex, just some 50 kilometers by road from Tabo, is mentioned occasionally but garners no extended treatment.¹⁰⁷ For Tucci, and so many others after him, Tabo and a few other locations demand scholarly priority because of their age and perhaps more significantly, because of their connections to the much heralded late tenth-century period of the “later diffusion” and the height of the Guge Kingdom under Yeshe Od and his heirs. Tucci's volume on Spiti, as with the entire set of volumes, largely ignores structures that do not fall within the centuries marked by the height of the Guge Kingdom. The temples and smaller shrines scattered

¹⁰⁴ This study of the history of the Nyingma in Pin Valley from the seventeenth century onward would likely fall under the scope of what Petech states is “purely provincial and offers but scanty interest” and “no important event disturbed the somnolent quiet of the country” 248–9. Luciano Petech, “Western Tibet: Historical Information,” in *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom: Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya* (Milano; New York: Skira Thames and Hudson Inc., 1997), 248–249.

¹⁰⁵ The volumes span from 1933 to 1941. Giuseppe Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet and Their Artistic Symbolism*, ed. Lokesh Chandra, vol. v. 3 pt 2, 4 vols. (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988).

¹⁰⁶ The sections on Tabo cover ninety-four pages. Tucci.

¹⁰⁷ It is not clear from *Indo-Tibetica* if Tucci ever actually went to the Pin Valley, which would be a telling omission in and of itself.

throughout the Pin Valley do not harken to this pivotal period, and the main Buddhist temple complex in Pin in Kungri Village is not even on Tucci's map.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, in Thakur's work *Buddhism in the Western Himalayas: a Study of the Tabo Monastery*, Tabo stands in for all of the Buddhist Western Himalaya. One monument is a sufficient lens for the whole. Pin does not figure in the book at all, nor appear on the map. O. C. Handa's *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh* is more even in its treatment. He even includes a diagram of the monastic complex in the Pin Valley.¹⁰⁹ However, he also devotes a separate volume to Tabo, *Tabo Monastery and Buddhism in the Trans-Himalaya*.¹¹⁰

Scholarly treatments of Spiti are also disciplinarily limited; they are predominantly in the fields of art history and philology, both of which focus primarily on the Tabo monastic complex and the Tabo library.¹¹¹ For example, while Tucci's vast corpus of work is rather eclectic in approach, *Indo-Tibetica* is still heavily devoted to art history, particularly descriptions of iconography, diagrams of temple layouts, and the adjacent area of inscriptional evidence. McKay identifies a similar overemphasis on Buddhist art history in studies of Kinnaur (179).¹¹² Certainly, a key reason for the lack of scholarship on the Pin Valley is the relative dearth of materials on the region. However, this point alone does not fully account for such a significant

¹⁰⁸ Tucci includes some of the villages in Pin Valley on the map, but oddly does not include Kungri Village of any indication of the temples there.

¹⁰⁹ Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh*, 84.

¹¹⁰ Omacanda Hāṇḍā, *Tabo Monastery and Buddhism in the Trans-Himalaya: Thousand Years of Existence of the Tabo Chos-Khor* (New Delhi: Indus Pub. Co., 1994).

¹¹¹ This is not to denigrate scholarship on Tabo, but merely to point out how much a fairly narrow chronological and spatial slice of Spiti's past has dominated academic work in the region.

¹¹² Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories*, 179.

lacuna.¹¹³ This imbalance is shifting, as the proceedings of Oxford’s 2016 First International Conference on Spiti suggest, and will hopefully continue to do so.¹¹⁴

Tibet’s Relationship to its Borderlands and Peripheries

A recurring theme in this dissertation is the overlaps, ruptures, and distinct logics that inform understandings about Spiti. So how then do Buddhists in Spiti present themselves/their history? Tibet’s relationship to its borderlands (and centers) is complex and contradictory. Borders are often places antithetical to Buddhism. They are the domain of subdued worldly deities, forces antagonistic to the dharma, barbarians, and threats. Some aspects of this are not specific to Tibet, and are general Buddhist frameworks for understanding space, place, and boundaries.

Demarcating a boundary is one of the most foundational methods of engaging with space or constituting a space as sacred.¹¹⁵ For example, marking a boundary or *sīmā* (*mtshams*) is a necessary component for creating the space where the *samgha* gathers, for giving shape to a Buddhist community.¹¹⁶ The term can refer both to the space where a *samgha* gathers and also to the group itself. The term *sīmā* or *mtshams* can also refer to “the boundaries practitioners draw

¹¹³ When I initially began this project, two different scholars I consulted said the equivalent to “Good luck with that. There’s nothing there.”

¹¹⁴ In recent years, the Geluk monasteries of Kee and Drangkhar have received some attention, although the quantity still pales in comparison to the extensive bibliography of works on Tabo, and the Sakya monastery of Tengyud remains largely unexamined. The conference proceedings were still heavily weighted toward art history, including architectural studies and rock art, which Lochen Tulku drew attention to in his keynote address. The conference did include some new work in social history and anthropology.

Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, “Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti” (May 2016).

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Z Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 50.

¹¹⁶ “According to Vinayic texts, a physical establishment of the Sangha was only created by putting down a *sīmā*, a monastic “border,” after which certain essential ritual practices could be performed.” Although, as Jansen also notes, a *sīmā* is not necessarily required to have a monastery. Berthe Jansen, *The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet* (Univ of California Press, 2018), 8.

“*sīmā*” Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

for themselves when they enter into a retreat (*mtshams*).” Determining boundaries then, is a necessary and formative Buddhist act.

Delimiting a boundary can create an inside and an outside, as in the case of a *samgha* being defined as the boundary and those who are inside of it, but it can also create spatial relationships of degree or proximity. Tibetan Buddhist temples generally indicate the status and significance of deities *spatially*; they locate the worldly deities and protectors on the periphery, guarding the entrance to the space, while the most important deities are located at the rear and center, the places farthest from the entrance. In this context, one might consider the term and concept of a *maṇḍala* (*dkyil 'khor*), which “originates from the Sanskrit meaning “circle,” where a boundary is demarcated and increasing significance is accorded to areas closer to the center; the Tibetan translation (*dkyil 'khor*) “center periphery” indicates this by juxtaposing the two terms, center and periphery, to convey the meaning of a *maṇḍala*.¹¹⁷ This center and periphery model is, perhaps alongside Mount Meru, one of the most widespread Buddhist spatial conceptions.

In the Tibetan *imaginaire*, the foundational act of establishing Buddhism in Tibet is precisely one of demarcating center and periphery. During the seventh century, King Songsten Gampo’s efforts to establish Buddhism in Tibet were met with resistance, in some narratives envisioned as coming from the landscape itself in the form of a female demon (*srin mo*). He erected temples at key locations that pinned down the body of the demon and the landscape of Tibet. One temple was positioned over her heart while the remaining temples were located in a series of concentric squares radiating away from the center. They were organized in three groups

¹¹⁷ “*maṇḍala*” Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

of four, pinning down the “main sectors,” “four borders,” and “four further borders.”¹¹⁸ These temples created inner and outer realms, forming a clear center and periphery, at the same time overlaying a maṇḍala-like structure onto Tibet. The area within the tamed borders was suitably civilized and Buddhist, while the area beyond the further border became the realm of the barbarians. Although accounts of this period in Tibet’s history were penned centuries later, they still occupy a prominent place in Tibetan mythos and historiography, and subsequent Tibetan authors continue to refer to the barbarians at the borders.

Depictions of Spiti as a borderland, isolated, and peripheral are not just descriptions of location and accessibility, they also evoke Buddhist conceptions of a borderland as a place where the dharma is not.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the relationship between Buddhism, barbarians, and borderlands is defined in a rather circular manner. For example, one of the conditions of an inopportune birth (*mi khom pa*) is to be born in a border land or barbarian region (*yul mtha’ khob*). Such barbarian lands are themselves defined as places that lack the dharma. One of the marks of a fortunate rebirth is the exact opposite, *not* to be born in a borderland or barbarian land. If a borderland is a region where there is no dharma, then to obtain an inopportune birth (to be born *not* at the right time or not at a time of ease) is a spatial condition as well as a temporal one.¹²⁰ To be uncivilized is to be born at the wrong place and time.

¹¹⁸ Janet Gyatso, “Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The GTer Ma Literature,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R Jackson (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1996), 41.

¹¹⁹ This suggests an interesting contrast to the notion of a monastery (*dgon pa*) as an isolated place. Jansen’s clarification of this point is helpful. “The word *dgon pa* does not necessarily cover what Tibetans understand to be a living community of monks, for it refers more to a physical space than to a community. The contemporary Tibetan author and monk Rendo Senggé considers the primary meaning of this term to be a secluded place, although more generally Tibetans do not identify remote places of practice as such: ‘It is more common to understand *dgon pa* to be an institution where there is an organized community of ordained people who maintain the three rituals.’” Jansen, *The Monastery Rules*, 9.

¹²⁰ Charles Goodman’s gloss is thorough. “A “barbaric land” (Skt. *pratyanta*, Tib. *yul mtha’ khob*) is a region where the level of cultural and technological development is extremely low, and not only has Buddhism not spread there, but the local cultural practices are antithetical to the Dharma. For example, a region where people live by hunting and gathering and practice headhunting or human sacrifice would be a clear example of a barbaric land in the

Traditional Tibetan historiography generally refers to two distinct phases of Buddhism's spread in Tibet, the early (*snga dar*) and later (*phyi dar*) spread, or the early and later diffusion of the doctrine. These two periods are separated by the so-called period of disintegration or fragmentation (*sil bu'i dus*), which was marked by the collapse of Buddhism and its persecution in Tibet.¹²¹ In a rather contradictory move, during this period, Buddhism is said to have disappeared from the center of Tibet, while it struggled to continue on the margins. Indeed, it is from those margins that Buddhism is reestablished in Tibet. Although recent scholarship suggests that the era of fragmentation may have been an important period for Buddhism's development, rather than the anti-Buddhist vacuum Tibetan sources often suggest, traditional accounts of Tibetan history nonetheless employ this rhetoric of a collapse at the center and then reinvigoration from the margins.¹²² There are moments then, where the relationship between center and periphery in Tibetan Buddhism are inverted.

Another key arena that takes a different approach to Tibet's periphery is the concept of "hidden lands" or *beyul* (*sbas yul*). *Beyul* are realms whose existence and discovery are predicted by Padmasambhava, typically delegated to a particular *tertön* or *tertöns*. *Beyul* are said to be refuges in times of turmoil or persecution, havens from threats to the dharma.¹²³ These hidden lands are also typically located in borderlands and on Tibet's periphery.¹²⁴ Thus *beyul* can be

Buddhist sense." Charles Goodman, *The Training Anthology of Santideva: A Translation of the Siksa-Samuccaya* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 87.

¹²¹ Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, 5–7.

¹²² Dalton argues that many of the Buddhist innovations that mark the second diffusion—what Ronald Davidson describes as a renaissance—may have actually developed during the period of fragmentation. Dalton, 6.

¹²³ Saul Mullard describes them as "theoretically and spiritually separated from the world at large." Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, v. 26 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 1.

¹²⁴ Andrew Quintman remarks upon *beyul*'s tendency to be located in borderlands as well as their ties to Padmasambhava, "Perhaps the clearest example of the early creation of Tibetan sacred space is in Padmasambhava's formulation of "hidden lands" (*sbas yul*) — sanctuaries for meditation practice and refuges from the harsh realities of war and social strife — ascribed to him in the form of revealed guidebooks and catalogues. Such natural enclaves mark the borders of Tibet, Nepal, India, and Bhutan, spanning both sides of the Himalayan

found in the very places from which threats to Buddhism are said to emerge. There is an ambivalence then, about the relationship between center and periphery, in which the borderlands serve as both the source of a contagion and the refuge from it, “Tibetan attitudes toward their border regions from the sixteenth century onward were marked by an ambivalence that viewed them as both Buddhist paradises promising spiritual renewal in dark times and demonic lands at the edges of civilization in desperate need of righteous subjugation.”¹²⁵ This ambivalence is echoed in contemporary views of Spiti as both a degenerated border region in need of subjugation and a place of refuge that preserves the Buddhism under attack in Central Tibet (Chapter 3).

From Periphery to Center: Tibetans in Exile and a New Shangri-La

When the border between India and China became impassable, Spiti was cut off from Western Tibet, severing ties between Spiti and Buddhist communities in Tibet as well as northwestern Nepal. Spiti became peripheral to two nations. However, in some ways Spiti became much closer to one important “center” against which it had long been peripheral, namely Tibet itself. When so many Tibetans fled Tibet for Nepal and India, leaving the center for the periphery, they carried with them the bodies, institutions, texts, resources, patronage, etc. that Spitians had long traveled to Tibet to access.¹²⁶ Tibetans living in exile brought Spiti closer to the central institutions of Tibetan Buddhism. It also brought Spiti—and many other regions of the Buddhist

slope.” Andrew Quintman, “Toward a Geographic Biography: Mi La Ras Pa in the Tibetan Landscape,” *Numen* 55, no. 4 (2008): 371.

¹²⁵ Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, 17.

¹²⁶ For example, monks from one of Spiti’s three Geluk institutions generally needed to travel to Central Tibet to study if they wished to attain higher degrees not available to them in Spiti itself.

Himalaya—into the orbit of those same individuals and institutions. Spiti suddenly garnered the attention of eminent teachers, not least among them the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.¹²⁷

This new proximity and interest on the part of Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhist institutions has also necessitated pulling away. Some of Spiti's leaders and organizations are working to differentiate Spiti from Tibet. There is much at stake in how they tread the thin line between drawing on the international cachet of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism on the one hand, and avoiding too closely associating themselves with Tibet (and thus China) on the other. Thus when he gave the keynote address at the First International Conference on Spiti, Lochen Tulku, a leading figure in Spiti, firmly asserted that Spiti is not Tibet, that it has its own culture.¹²⁸ Some have stepped up to and apparently even over this line. In September 2014, two men were charged with sedition when they paired their criticism of the Indian government's neglect of Spiti with drawing attention to Spiti's proximity to the Chinese border, in the form of a call to "*chalo* China" or "let's go (to) China."¹²⁹ There is a risk for Spitians in disavowing India, but as Lochen Tulku cautioned when he referred to Spiti's "Indianization," embracing India carries risks as well.¹³⁰

Spiti's new spatial relationship with Tibetan Buddhist leaders and institutions brings to bear several different threads raised here. It evokes Tibet's ambivalent relationship to its own borderlands as places of degeneration but also refuge. It also reinterprets the nineteenth and twentieth-century discourse of Buddhism and isolation in Spiti, casting the same isolation mobilized in claims about the region's lack of development as the very cause of Spiti's purity.

¹²⁷ One sign of Spiti's new centrality is the number of times the Dalai Lama has held the Kalachakra initiation there, in 1983, 1996, and 2000. It is quite unusual for one location to host more than one Kalachakra. "Kalachakra Initiations by His Holiness the Dalai Lama | The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama," accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.dalailama.com/teachings/kalachakra-initiations>.

¹²⁸ Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, "Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti."

¹²⁹ Bodh, "Two Arrested for Sedition in Lahaul - Times of India"; Bodh and Sharma, "In Picturesque Pin Valley, Some Border Envy."

¹³⁰ Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, "Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti."

Some view Spiti's proximity to Tibet as a source for revitalizing and reforming Spiti's declining Buddhist traditions and institutions, as in Tsering and Ishimura's claim that "the quality of education in the monasteries had become extremely poor. They began to improve only after the Dalai Lama and a large number of Tibetan refugees came into exile in India. Several senior lamas came to Spiti and spent extended periods of time to revive its declining culture."¹³¹ Others argue that Spiti's isolation enables it to uniquely preserve Buddhism in a period when it has declined everywhere else, as when Sonam Angdui refers to Spiti as the "last bastion" of Buddhism, the only place left that is "only *vajrayāna*."¹³²

Each of these very different claims relies upon an implicit argument about the relationship between Buddhism, space, and time. The arguments from Lochen Tulku, Sonam Angdui, Tsering and Ishimura, Tucci, Francke, and Hay may be based on very different evidence and intend very different ends, but they share some parameters for assessing Buddhism in Spiti, namely that geography determines isolation, that isolation alters time, and that time and isolation shape Buddhist authenticity.

Fields and Frameworks

When I began to articulate the larger themes addressed here, there was very little material to build upon. The lack of source material certainly shaped both my research and the dissertation. I combined field research and archival research, and considered a diverse range of types of sources, in order to build sufficient source material for the project. I conducted field research in Spiti and other regions in India and in Nepal, and archival research primarily at the British

¹³¹ Tashi Tsering and Gaku Ishimura, "A Historical Overview of Education and Social Change in Spiti Valley, India," *Ladakh Studies* 28 (2012): 8.

¹³² Sonam Angdu, Interview.

Library's India Office, and through the digital archive of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center. For field research, I spent a few months at a time each summer in Spiti, primarily based at the monastery. I located and documented a large and diverse body of previously unpublished materials from the monastic complex and from private homes throughout the Valley. That material certainly exceeds what I was able to address in the dissertation. Indeed, other scholars have recently begun working on some of the same material, which will hopefully further clarify the history of Buddhism in the region. I also documented a range of visual and material sources, including architecture, wall paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions. I conducted formal and informal interviews, particularly with the head of the Nyingma monastery, Yomed Tulku.

My aim in the dissertation, and in the field of Buddhist studies, is to take an interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse approach to the study of religion, rather than focusing on textual exegesis, as is more common in the field. I am less invested in analyzing Buddhist doctrine than I am in understanding the quotidian aspects of Buddhist practice and Buddhist lives, although certainly those rely in part on the intricacies of doctrine. As such, I approach religious studies through a "lived religions" framework. This theoretical lens responds to and avoids some of the issues present in other studies of Buddhism in the Himalayas, particularly the anthropological study of Himalayan religions, which often perpetuate a dichotomy between canonical Buddhism and non-canonical "popular" religion, or Buddhism and shamanism, or Buddhism and what Rolf Stein called the "nameless religion," often articulated as the "local," in Tibetan quite literally *lung pa'i chos*. As much as possible, I aim to give equal weight to the range of practices, institutions, and authorities in Pin, not just the Buddhist monastery, and to describe the points of overlap and disjuncture between them. Thus, while the dissertation is in some ways in the vein of classic "village studies" in South Asian anthropology,

I work to undermine rather than reify the Buddhist studies version of what Kim Marriott called the “Great and Little traditions” of India so prevalent in twentieth-century Himalayan anthropological works like Stan Mumford’s *Himalayan Dialogue*, Barbara Aziz’s *Tibetan Frontier Families*, or Sherry Ortner’s *High Religion, Sherpas through their Ritual*.¹³³

Throughout the dissertation, I focus on place: the relationship between people, places, and practice; how spaces are constituted as meaningful or sacred; the ways in which spaces relate to one another; and the material and structural methods of engaging with place. My understanding of the relationship between people and places is informed by the work of J. Z. Smith, who noted that “Sacrality is, above all, a category of emplacement” and “The language of “center” is preeminently political and only secondarily cosmological.”¹³⁴ I examine the different contexts within which Pin is constituted as a center and periphery, or as a periphery with respect to different centers, and the methods of place-making integral to those processes.

In addition to the field of religious studies and the anthropology of Himalayan Buddhism, one of the primary audiences I imagine for this dissertation, is the body of scholars working on Spiti. As I note above, they are predominantly art historians, although this is changing in recent years. I hope the dissertation calls attention to some of the persistent themes I see in such work, particularly the tendency to treat Spiti as peripheral to, or only relevant with respect to, Tibetan history, art, and culture.

In a similar vein, focusing on Spiti provides geographic balance to the field of Tibetan studies in two ways, first by contributing to the recent trend of examining Tibet’s periphery rather than its center, and second, by balancing that trend’s current emphasis on the eastern

¹³³ Sherry Ortner, *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); Barbara Nimri Aziz, *Tibetan Frontier Families: Reflections of Three Generations from D’ing-Ri* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1978); Stan Mumford, *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

¹³⁴ Smith, *To Take Place*.

regions of the Tibet/China periphery. The context of Spiti also requires separating several categories and concepts that often go hand in hand in the field, including the term Tibetan Buddhism itself. Indeed, contemporary Spiti very clearly points to the implications and possible consequences of correlating geography, nationality, and Buddhism, one result of which is often an emphasis placed on Spiti's culture and Buddhist traditions as hybrid entities, or as Indo-Tibetan.

Within the field of Buddhist studies and Tibetan studies, I also engage with and contribute to several important topics, including pilgrimage, *terma* and *tertön*, hidden lands, predictions of Buddhism's decline, institutional authority, teacher-student relationships, attitudes toward death and the body, and sacrifice and ritual.

Locating the Pin Valley in Time and Place

Where then, does this place the Nyingma tradition in the Pin Valley? In Chapter 1, I examine the history of Pin from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. I begin in the early seventeenth century for two reasons. First, as Petech's history of Western Tibet indicates, there are no historical sources to support a history of the Pin Valley, or of the Nyingma in Spiti, prior to the seventeenth century. Second, the earlier of the two major Nyingma traditions prevalent in Pin today was established there in the late seventeenth century. During field research, I located a number of documents that aid in establishing Pin's history. They are, to the best of my knowledge, the earliest documents to specifically refer to the Pin Valley. They date to 1630–1642.¹³⁵ They indicate that the Pin Valley was identifiably Nyingma in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, they also reveal that the Pema Lingpa *Terma*—the earlier of the

¹³⁵ Prior to 1630, the history of Guge likely describes the general circumstances of both Spiti and the Pin Valley.

two *terma* traditions that form the core practices of Pin today—was not yet established in the Valley. The documents refer to a diverse group of Nyingma texts, reflecting a diversity of practice, rather than to a single widespread tradition.¹³⁶ They are all *terma* texts whose respective *tertöns* lived in the fourteenth century. It is possible then, that Pin became Nyingma during a particularly active period of textual discovery and dissemination spanning the fourteenth century.¹³⁷

The Pema Lingpa *terma* was introduced to Pin in the late seventeenth century, and the oldest Nyingma temple in the Pin Valley likely dates to that same period. The Pema Lingpa tradition was introduced to Pin at a particularly strong period for the tradition in Central Tibet, when the Fifth Dalai Lama actively patronized the tradition. However, this was followed by a period of Nyingma persecution in the early eighteenth century, which may have contributed to the Pin Valley's Pema Lingpa practitioners being isolated from their counterparts in Tibet and Bhutan. There is evidence of renewed ties with the major Pema Lingpa institution and hierarchy in Tibet in the second half of the nineteenth century, but otherwise, the tradition's presence in Pin was not remarked upon in Tibetan sources.

In Chapter 2, I establish the circumstances in which the Dudjom Tersar—Pin's second core Nyingma tradition—became established in the Valley in the early twenty-first century. I argue that the Dudjom Tersar developed in the context of political turmoil and violence in Eastern Tibet, which contributed to a prevalent rhetoric of Buddhism's decline. The various prophecies Dudjom Lingpa receives about his revelations encourage him and his students to

¹³⁶ These texts include *Cycle of Dzogchen practice of the Nyingma* by Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409), *Self-Liberation through Recognizing the Signs of Death from Profound Dharma of Self-Liberation through the Intention of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* by Karma Lingpa (14th c.), *Lama Jewel Ocean* and *Clear Crystal Garland Treasury Instructions* by Pema Lingpa (1450–1521), *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born* by Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396), *The Five Chronicles* by Orgyen Lingpa (b. 1323).

¹³⁷ This is entirely speculative in the absence of pre-seventeenth century evidence.

propagate and spread his *terma* in order to stave off Buddhism's decline. Shortly after his death, some of his students disperse, leaving Eastern Tibet to go on pilgrimage or join *gar* encampments, and wander through Central Tibet and the Himalayan borderlands. Two of these students Pema Dewé Gyalpo (1873–1933), better known as Etaraja, and Pema Lungtok Gyatso (1891–1964), better known as Golok Serta Rinpoche, establish a Dudjom Tersar center near Mount Kailash called Namkha Khyung Dzong. At its height, Namkha Khyung Dzong was a major institution in the region, with a large and diverse body of students, as well as an active printing press.

From this base near Kailash, the Dudjom Tersar spread into neighboring Spiti, particularly through the efforts of two individuals, Yeshe Palden (d. 1942) and Yomed Dorje (d. 1960). These two figures cultivated a regional network spanning the Pin Valley and locations in Western Tibet, which enabled them to construct a new temple in the Pin Valley in the 1930s dedicated to Padmasambhava. They were not the only Nyingma from Pin to travel back and forth between Spiti and Tibet, rather such trans-Himalayan wide-ranging travels were very much the norm for both Spitians and Tibetans. This persisted until the border between India and China closed in 1960, effectively severing connections between the Dudjom Tersar in Spiti and the center at Namkha Khyung Dzong. Although they were cut off from Western Tibet, Nyingma practitioners in Pin were able to forge new ties with important Dudjom Tersar figures who had recently fled Tibet for India and Nepal, foremost among them Dudjom Rinpoche. These renewed connections led, among other things, to the recognition of three *tulku* lines in the Pin Valley, particularly the reincarnation of Yomed Dorje, whose reincarnation, Yomed Tulku Jigme Tenzin Dorje (b. 1962), is the head of Nyingma in the Pin Valley today.

Chapter 3 takes a closer look at the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, to understand how Buddhist authority and authenticity in the Pin Valley is constituted. This period in Spiti was marked by rapid and widespread change. Over the course of a few decades, Spiti transitioned from being part of a colonial India to an independent India, from the Punjab Province to the newly fashioned state of Himachal Pradesh. It also shifted from being far removed from the central political and religious institutions of Tibetan Buddhism to becoming their relative neighbors. This has certainly impacted Buddhism and Buddhist institutions in Spiti. In the Pin Valley, the new monastery of Urgyen Sangnag Chöling¹³⁸ in Kungri, under the helm of Yomed Tulku, has gradually emerged as the primary institutional authority in the region. Over the last two decades, a diffuse and diverse body of ritual practices and institutions in the Pin Valley are effectively being consolidated under the auspices of a single institution. What is emerging as a result is a more centralized and structured form of the Nyingma tradition built on a *shedra (bshad grwa)* model of monastic education, in place of the family-based traditions and diverse modes of Buddhist instruction spread across the valley. I explore these themes by examining the changing status and responsibilities of the *Nono* family in Pin, documents banning *marchö* meat or “red offerings,” a series of changes to a local feast tradition called *sönchok (gsog ’jog)*, and negotiations around the status of local deities (*yul lha*). Each of these topics points to an ongoing negotiation of the parameters of normative, authoritative, or orthodox Buddhism taking shape in the Pin Valley.

In Chapter 4, I argue that although the Nyingma tradition in Spiti has been primarily located in the Pin Valley since at least the seventeenth century, in the last decade the Nyingma tradition has expanded geographically within Spiti, into areas previously unassociated with the

¹³⁸ Throughout, I spell the place associated with Padmasambhava Orgyen (*O rgyan*) rather than Urgyen, except in the case of the monastery’s name, where I defer to the monastery’s preferred spelling.

Nyingma. This Nyingma expansion is taking place along recently formed Buddhist networks, established by Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje, and reinforced by Yomed Tulku and the Nyingma communities in Spiti they serve. At the same time, the regional Nyingma network in Spiti is actively engaging with the global networks of Tibetan Buddhism that developed in the post-exile period. I argue that the image of Spiti as an isolated Buddhist enclave in the Himalayas is outdated, as Buddhist individuals and institutions actively “center” Spiti in a new international Buddhist context. The recent expansion of the Nyingma tradition is manifesting through building activities that produce structures like temples, monumental sculpture, and a new monastic complex in locations throughout Spiti. The resulting structures are distinctly Nyingma, highly visible, and strategically located in spaces significant to regional Buddhists. Buddhists in Spiti are mobilizing these new material structures in a way that engages with issues of nationality and sectarian identity in order to establish a regional Nyingma presence and network within Spiti.

Throughout, I assert that the Nyingma tradition in the Pin Valley is not monolithic, and warrants a nuanced history of its development. I argue that widespread depictions of the Nyingma in the Pin Valley as isolated are firmly rooted in nineteenth-century misunderstandings of the historical development of sectarian traditions in Tibet. Moreover, isolation and marginality are relative not absolute conditions. A key theme of this dissertation is the ways in which discourses of isolation are reconfigured in response to shifting centers of religious and political authority. The Pin Valley is not inherently isolated, despite its location, but is consistently constructed as marginal in relationship to shifting centers, be they Tibetan empires, colonial outposts, Buddhist centers, modern nation-states, trade routes, or tourist trails.



Figure 7: Kungri Village with the Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery complex on the left. Photograph by the author.



Figure 8: Main temple of the Ugyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery. Photograph by the author.

Chapter 1: Locating the Nyingma Tradition and the Pin Valley in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Among the five major monasteries in Spiti, one—the monastic complex in Kungri Village—is in the Pin Valley. Both the monastery and the residents of Pin predominantly adhere to the Nyingma sect of Buddhism. Until a fairly recent period of expansion within Spiti, the Nyingma sect was *only* present in Pin, with the rest of Spiti adhering to other traditions. Much of the extant scholarship on Spiti simply notes that the Pin region is Nyingma, without elaboration. Beyond this observation, literature on Spiti frequently extends Pin’s current status as Nyingma to its historical status, inferring that since Pin is currently Nyingma, it must have been Nyingma in preceding centuries, in the process articulating a relationship between the Pin Valley and the Nyingma tradition, in which Pin’s geography and its sectarian affiliation are perceived as mutually constitutive. This framework characterizes Pin as an isolated periphery, and the Nyingma (as the “old” or “ancient” sect) as predating other Buddhist sects prevalent in Tibet and the Himalayas. Pin is Nyingma because it is isolated. Since Pin is Nyingma, it must be old. This spatiotemporal logic articulates sectarian affiliation in Spiti as determined not by historical processes but rather by a teleological view of religious development. I argue that in the case of Pin, there is no *causal* relationship between history, geography, and sect, in the simplistic manner proposed by the sources.

This chapter approaches that argument in a number of ways: One, by clarifying and diversifying what is simply glossed in the sources as “Nyingma,” I argue that in Pin the category

of texts, practices, and ideas encompassed under the framework of “the Nyingma tradition” is historically variable and nuanced, attesting to a diverse body of distinct Nyingma traditions, whose prevalence ebbs and flows. Which is to say, what it means to be Nyingma in Pin has changed over time. Two, I establish that there are widespread Buddhist practices in Pin that are not particularly sectarian in nature. This is obscured by referring to the region simply as Nyingma in a move that emphasizes Pin’s difference from the rest of Spiti rather than its similarity. Three, I examine the extent to which Buddhists in Pin engaged with their neighbors, near and far, to evaluate the extent to which Pin was or is isolated. In support of these arguments, I establish that the Pin Valley was identifiably Nyingma in the first half of the seventeenth century, during a period of political and religious mobility, change, and sectarian conflict in the western Himalayan and western Tibetan region. I also establish that the Pema Lingpa *terma*—the earlier of the two *terma* traditions that form the core practices in Pin today—was established in Pin in the late seventeenth century. Thus the seventeenth century marked a key turning point in the history of Buddhism in the valley. Until recently, the Pema Lingpa tradition, although important and well-studied in other respects, had not been connected to the Pin Valley. This chapter provides new insights on this tradition’s history in Spiti.

This chapter argues that Pin’s isolation is not a given, that what it means to be Nyingma in Pin has developed over time, and that Buddhism in Pin has changed in response to events outside the not-so-impermeable wall of iron mountains encircling the valley. None of this is to deny the reality of Pin as a discrete geographic space, nor as a distinctly Nyingma one. I show how local primary sources describe Pin as a particular place—and indeed a Nyingma place—over the course of two centuries. I argue that the Nyingma tradition in Pin has undergone distinct changes, that quotidian religious practices do not differentiate Buddhists in Pin from their

neighbors so much as it joins them, and that Pin's status as Nyingma endured in the context exchange and contact with non-Nyingma influences, not in their absence.

Sources from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

There is a paucity of information on Spiti's history prior to the seventeenth century, much less mention of the Pin Valley.¹³⁹ References to Spiti in Tibetan sources are scarce, although in general, accounts of the Guge Kingdom—of which it was generally a part from the tenth century to the early seventeenth—may apply to some degree to Spiti.¹⁴⁰ Spiti begins to appear more frequently in the seventeenth century, when it came under Ladakhi control. The rise of Ladakhi control of Spiti largely coincided with, and in part precipitated, the decline of the Guge Kingdom.¹⁴¹ Thus the general history of Spiti after the seventeenth century is somewhat better known than in the preceding centuries, and much of the recent work on Spiti has not surprisingly tended to start with the seventeenth century or later.¹⁴²

This century also marks a sea change in the governance of Spiti, as the region came under the control of the Ladakh-based Namgyal Dynasty rulers. Generally, Spiti came under increasing

¹³⁹ There are to my knowledge, no references to Spiti in non-Tibetan sources prior to the early nineteenth century. The Jesuits who traveled in Ladakh and Western Tibet in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries make no mention of Spiti. Trebeck traveled to Spiti in 1822, and chronicled his time there. There is a steadily increasing number of sources after Spiti comes under British influence in 1843, mostly personal travel accounts and administrative accounts.

¹⁴⁰ At the same time, any discussion of Spiti during the height of the Guge Kingdom generally centers on the later and rarely on the former. This is particularly the case for Tabo Monastery, which is generally described as a product of western Tibet historical, cultural, and institutional efforts, rather than, say, emphasizing its connections to Spiti. Lobzang Shastri has assembled many of the Tibetan sources that reference Spiti. Lobzang Shastri and bLo bzang Shaa+stri, "Ri bo gangs can pa'i rtsom rig nang Spi ti dang Ta po'i skor [References to Spiti and Tabo in Tibetan Literature]," *Gtam Tsogs* 27, no. 2 (2007): 33–72. Rangrik Repa's collected works are often cited as an exception, and Rangrik Repa himself heralded as a scion of Spiti. However, he left the area while still young and does not seem to have returned there, drawn any students from there, or established any substantive connection to Spiti. Most of his life was spent in Nepal and southern Tibet.

¹⁴¹ Guge came under the oversight and governance of Central Tibet. A series of governors were posted to Ngari, generally stationed at Gartok. W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet, a Political History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 138–42.

¹⁴² Research on Spiti in general was somewhat stymied by the Indian government's restrictions on travel to the region until it was lifted in 1992. In recent decades, a growing number of scholars have begun to work on the area.

Ladakhi influence during a period when Ladakh was itself developing new administrative and Buddhist institutions and projects. Their suzerainty brought with it new forms of governance and administrative positions, as well as new forms of Buddhist patronage and material production. The Namgyal rulers, their family members, nobles, and administrators, were active Buddhist patrons. They constructed new temples and monasteries, produced images and texts, and patronized individual teachers and broader traditions. This efflorescence certainly impacted not just Ladakh, but also its neighbors and regions directly under its control.

In addition to these shifts and the availability of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources on Spiti, the earliest—and to my knowledge the only—body of sources specifically relating to the Pin Valley also dates to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The body of materials from Pin are a group of Buddhist manuscript dedication colophons. These colophons are part of a genre found throughout the western Himalayan region that may have been the result of Namgyal Dynasty patronage.¹⁴³ Given how few primary sources are available on Spiti, and even fewer addressing Pin, these colophons constitute an important new body of material on an otherwise relatively unexamined time and place.

Beyond the practicalities of available sources, the seventeenth century also marks an important point in the history of the Nyingma tradition in Pin. Although most residents of Pin today attribute the origins of the Nyingma tradition in the region to the eighth-century exploits of the Indian figure Padmasambhava, there is little extant evidence to support the claim.¹⁴⁴ This is

¹⁴³ In particular, multiple Namgyal rulers sponsored manuscript production, both of individual texts and of collections of texts, including the *kanjur* and *tengyur*.

¹⁴⁴ Indeed, most Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist regions would likewise point to an eighth-century pedigree. As later chapters will examine, these claims about the Nyingma tradition's eighth-century origins in Spiti are strategically employed to serve a variety of ends. A recently erected informational plaque at the main Nyingma monastery in Pin reads. "Kungri monastery is situated at Kungri village in Pin Valley. It adheres to the Nyingma pa order of Tibetan Buddhism. As per accounts of Francke, the monastery was founded in the 8th century during the time of Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Nyingma sect. Scholars like Rahul Sanskritayan, and Professor D.D.

not to say that Pin was *not* Nyingma prior to the seventeenth century, merely to say that there are not currently sufficient sources to support an argument, one way or the other.¹⁴⁵ The seventeenth century marks the advent of one particular Nyingma tradition in the region, the Pema Lingpa Terma. The Pema Lingpa Terma, or Pelingter, was a major force shaping the Nyingma tradition in subsequent centuries.¹⁴⁶ While it did not necessarily displace other forms of Buddhist practice in Pin, it did become one of the central features of the Nyingma tradition in the valley, and the focal point for at least one of Pin's temples.¹⁴⁷ This tradition initially developed in an area quite far from Spiti, crossing the Himalayas and Tibetan plateau before becoming rooted in the small and arguably isolated region of the Pin Valley. The body of documents from Pin provides new details as to when and how the Pelingter likely made its way from one end of the Himalayas to the other, and what impact that may have had on existing Nyingma institutions in Pin.

Methods of Mapping the Pin Valley

While the Pin Valley is a distinct geographic space within Spiti, the valley is also a place that is demarcated in Buddhist terms. As such, taking the valley as the parameters for examining the history of Buddhism in Spiti is supported by local documents themselves. These sources utilize a

Sharma also believed that the monastery may have been founded by Padmasambhava." *Kungri Monastery*, ca 2017, etched stone, ca 2017, Kungri Village, Pin Valley, Spiti.

¹⁴⁵ Some current oral histories from Pin hold that Pin was at one point partially, if not entirely, affiliated with the Sakya tradition. Indeed, until recently, part of Pin provided material and financial support to the Sakya monastery in Spiti rather than to the Nyingma monastery in Pin.

¹⁴⁶ A number of the individuals I interviewed in Pin provided accounts of the origins of Buddhism, the Nyingma tradition, and the Pema Lingpa tradition in the Pin Valley. In subsequent chapters I draw upon interviews and oral history relating to events in the more recent past, at most about eighty-five years ago. However, while some of my informants refer to events in the seventeenth or even eighth centuries, I limit my discussion of this period to events documented in primary sources. Thus I date the rise of the Pema Lingpa tradition in Pin to the late seventeenth century based on the colophons and other documents from Pin.

¹⁴⁷ The other Nyingma traditions for which Pin is widely known are the more recently established Dudjom Tersar and the much older and more ambiguous Buchen tradition. See Rolf A Stein and Arthur McKeown, *Rolf Stein's Tibetica Antiqua: With Additional Materials (Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, v. 24)* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 109.

number of fairly common Buddhist tropes for place making, applying them to the specific context of Pin. In spatial terms, Spiti's Pin Valley refers to a fairly clear geographic area, namely the valley formed around the Pin River, itself a tributary of the Spiti River, which forms the bulk of the Spiti region. As such, Pin is both part of Spiti but also stands somewhat separate from it. This geographic sense of the Pin Valley is not necessarily the same sense of space found in the documents from Pin. Rather, descriptions of the region are articulated in what might be called Buddhist terms. The people producing these documents/objects make sense of the world, and make meaning of their place within it, in particularly Buddhist terms, in a Buddhist cosmological context. They locate themselves within this Buddhist landscape at micro and macro levels. This "Buddhist map" of the Pin Valley and its surroundings may be different from other ways of making sense of space, but at the same time, it may overlap with or share the contours of other methods of place-making. This analysis takes as a starting point the notion of the Pin Valley as it is articulated in the manuscripts, as a self-contained locally-delimited space, situated within a wider Buddhist cosmology and geography.

In what follows I show how the colophons present several different methods of mapping the space of the Pin Valley and articulate Pin's relationship to different Buddhist centers and sources of Buddhist authority, themes examined throughout this project as a whole. I discuss how the locally articulated version of the Pin Valley, as both a physical and a Buddhist space, frames the valley as isolated and self-contained in a way that is distinct from the subsequently produced body of sources—colonial, scholarly, or otherwise—that emphasize the Pin Valley's isolation, a status inextricably entwined with accounts of the valley as Nyingma. Lastly, this chapter sets the stage for discussions in the subsequent chapters. Much of this dissertation examines the pivotal period of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, which fundamentally

reshaped the Tibetan and Himalayan world, including in Spiti. For the Nyingma in Pin, the twentieth century marked the introduction of a new Nyingma tradition, which would be largely responsible for remapping Pin's relationship to Buddhist networks and centers. In order to discuss how this *terma* tradition reorganized the Nyingma tradition in Pin, it is necessary to establish what existed before that reorganization. This is not to claim that any one particular period marked stasis while others marked change, but to choose to carve out particular periods as logical book ends.

Buddhist Manuscript Colophons

The body of local documents from Pin are manuscript dedication colophons spanning the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries. These documents are unique to Pin at the same time as they are just one local iteration of a more widespread phenomenon. They are appended to a number of different Buddhist manuscripts and generally record the circumstances of each manuscript's production and use. The dedications are simultaneously formulaic and varied, in a manner that highlights both continuity and change in Buddhist traditions and practice. In the case of Pin, they attest to an enduring sense of space and Buddhist identity, while also marking changes over time.

The production and sponsorship of Buddhist manuscripts is an important and widespread form of Buddhist practice. Buddhist manuscripts often contain inscriptions detailing the circumstances of a text's production and dedication.¹⁴⁸ The particular kind of manuscript

¹⁴⁸ Manuscript production can entail a wide range of activities, as can sponsoring the manuscript production. This includes contributing physical materials for producing the text, like paper, ink, paint, glue, and binding cloth; contributing material to support individuals engaged in manuscript production, usually in the form of food and drink; contributing money to support any of these activities; performing the actual work of making the manuscript, for example as the scribe or illustrator; supporting ritual practices surrounding the completed manuscript, like sponsoring reading the text aloud after it is completed. Buddhist manuscripts are (re)produced for a number of

dedications discussed here are examples of a genre that some argue is unique to the Western Himalayas and Western Tibet in terms of its structure and contents.¹⁴⁹ This Western Himalayan colophon genre has elements found in most Buddhist dedications, including material related to cosmology, local patrons, and sectarian affiliation. In conveying information about the local patron, the colophons typically locate that patron in a specific place, usually a single village, while also locating that place within a larger geographic context, usually encompassing Tibet and India. As such, the colophons can be mapped in a fairly reliable manner, with respect to both the immediate location where they were utilized and also the larger material and religious landscape of which they are part.

reasons, foremost among them being the production of merit. These practices are not limited to manuscripts. Similar types of sponsorship and production pertain to creating Buddhist statues, paintings, architecture, and ritual objects. Buddhist dedication inscriptions are found not only throughout Tibet and the Himalayas but also in Central and South Asia.. Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *The Culture of the Book in Tibet* (Columbia University Press, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ The Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci was one of the first scholars to discuss these Western Himalayan manuscript dedications. He examined a few manuscript dedication colophons in 1932 in his multi-volume work *Indo-Tibetica*. Tucci acquired the manuscripts and corresponding colophons during his travels throughout the Western Tibetan and Himalayan regions, including from the now famous “library” from Tabo Monastery in Spiti. Tucci did not reproduce the dedications in their entirety, only publishing excerpts of the passages he deemed historically relevant. Those manuscripts and colophons are now part of the Tucci Fund Archive in Rome, currently led by Elena De Rossi Filibeck, who has since reexamined the colophons and published additional examples from the Tucci collection, the earliest of which date to the sixteenth century. Similar manuscript dedications have since been located in Nepal, Ladakh, Zaskar, and Lahaul, in addition to Spiti. In 1987, Eva Dargyay examined four colophons from Zangla in Zaskar, a region to the north of Spiti in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. More recently, Amy Heller conducted an extensive examination of a set of manuscript colophons that are part of the Bicher “library,” a large manuscript collection from Dolpo in Western Nepal. Aside from these dedicated studies, references to similar colophons are found in works by Luciano Petech, David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski, August Francke, and Joseph Gergan. As this summary indicates, for the most part extant scholarship is limited to a handful of studies of colophons from a few locations, with most derived from just two large collections of manuscript “libraries.” The list of extant studies does give a sense of the geographic range where such colophons are located. The colophons span a fairly large area encompassing much of the Western Himalayas in what is today north-west India, western Nepal, and the western part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. It is likely that future field research in these areas would locate additional colophons of this type, as might revisiting collections of manuscripts held in archives outside of the region. Heller, “Preliminary Remarks on the Manuscripts of Gnas Gsar Dgon Pa in Northern Dolpo (Nepal).”

Elements of the Colophons

The Western Himalayan colophon dedications share a number of elements. They are usually found either at the beginning or the end of the relevant Buddhist text, either as loose folios or bound together with the title page.¹⁵⁰ They vary in length, with some covering just one folio, usually with writing on the front and back, and most covering multiple folios.¹⁵¹ Depending in part on the paper dimensions, the number of lines of text on each side of the folio can vary.¹⁵² Scholars use a range of terms, in Tibetan and in translation, to describe these textual additions: “*bsngo yig smon lam*” and “individual dedicatory texts as prefaces” in Heller; “*chab brjod*” and “declaration of might” in Dargyay; “poetical preface” and “dedicatory poem” in De Rossi Filibeck; “poem of dedication” in Tauscher; “manuscript dedication” in Tucci.¹⁵³ As a whole, these terms describe where the colophons are located with respect to the main text, what they

¹⁵⁰ Most of the colophons from Pin that are not physically bound to the title page have holes indicating that they were once bound together with a text. The title pages themselves are often bound together to form a kind of cover sheet. Usually Tibetan books consist of a series of loose sheets or folios of paper bound between two wooden covers. The first page in the book, after removing the cover, is usually the title page. In the case of these colophons, the title page is frequently bound together with several other sheets of paper, woven together with strips of cloth, so that the thicker bundle of paper forms a second stiff paper cover. These covers can be quite decorative, with elaborate borders, roundels, and bound with multi-colored strips of cloth. Often the colophon is bound together with this bundle of “title” pages along one of the two long edges, allowing both the front and back of the folio to be read. This is quite different from the typically loose folios comprising a Tibetan text. It is perhaps not surprising that the loose colophon folios no longer attached to a title page tend to be quite damaged and torn while those still bound to the title page were in better condition.

¹⁵¹ The folios can also vary in size in terms of the paper dimensions. Filibeck notes the variation in dimensions in her study of the Tabo manuscripts. Heller also discusses the different sizes and dimensions of the colophons from Dolpo, particularly in terms of what the dimensions indicate about the date of the papers’ production.

¹⁵² In the case of the colophons from Pin, most had eight or nine lines of text per side. The text itself appears in both black and red ink. The writing is usually in the capital script called *uchen* (dbu can).

¹⁵³ Filibeck, “Poetical Prefaces of Manuscripts from Western Tibet”; Heller, “Preliminary Remarks on the Manuscripts of Gnas Gsar Dgon Pa in Northern Dolpo (Nepal)”; Dargyay, “The Dynasty of Bzang-La (Zanskar, West-Tibet) and Its Chronology—A Reconsideration”; Tauscher, “Here in La Ri, in the Valley Where the Ten Virtues Convene...A Poem of Dedication in the ’Tabo Kanjur””; Tucci and Lokesh Chandra, *The Temples of Western Tibet and Their Artistic Symbolism*.

contain, what they are meant to do, and the form they take. They are referred to at times as “poems” or “poetical” because the contents of the colophons are largely in verse.¹⁵⁴

The colophons have the same general structure, with individual scholars proposing slightly different subdivisions.¹⁵⁵ The colophons open with verses of praise to buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the three jewels. This is often followed by verses praising specific figures and teachers. The colophons then shift to a sort of hybrid cosmological-geographic description of the origins and spread of the Buddhist teachings from Bodh Gaya in India, to Mount Kailash in Tibet, eventually ending in the particular place where the manuscript dedication likely occurred.¹⁵⁶ In the process of this geographic narrowing, the texts usually name and describe the domain of a ruler, listing his capital palace or fort, which is followed by the name of a regional administrator or governor. This is followed by a section providing the name of the primary donor, a description of his or her motivation for sponsoring the text, and often a list of the names of the primary donor’s immediate family members. This section of the colophons occasionally includes the titles of other texts sponsored by the primary donor, probably at the same time as the

¹⁵⁴ The verses themselves are typically four lines, with some two-line verses and several longer verses of anywhere from six to twenty lines. Most of the verses maintain a consistent number of syllables. The syllable count varies verse to verse and can vary within the lines of a verse when proper names are added, disrupting the meter. Most of the verses are separated by exclamations like “E ma ho” and “kye legs.” Heller proposes that this verse form indicates that the colophons were partially oral objects, “Although the rhythms vary, the dedication verses appear to have been written to be read aloud, in cadence.” Although this remains speculation given the evidence at hand, this would add an interesting performative component to the lives of the colophons. Heller, *Hidden Treasures of the Himalayas*, 191.

¹⁵⁵ Dargyay notes a “well established pattern” consisting of 1) “praise to the three jewels” and “masters of a specific lineage and school”, 2) an account of “the beginning of the world and its order”, 3) a description of the ruling monarch and his domain, 4) praise for “the meritorious act” of copying the text, and 5) “a list follows, giving all the names of people who somehow contributed.” Dargyay, 16. De Rossi Filibeck expands this list and identifies seven distinct “phases” or components, “1) The initial clause always contains praise to Buddha and to faith in the Law. Then we find 2) a general and 3) a particular description of the place where the copy has been made, followed by 4) a mention of the ruler of the place, and 5) the name of the donor or donors of the copy are to be found, as well as 6) the title of the copied work and 7) a list of the offerings.” De Rossi Filibeck, “Poetical Prefaces of Manuscripts from Western Tibet,” 153.

¹⁵⁶ By “produced locally” I refer to the colophons rather than to the Buddhist manuscript. It remains to be determined if the manuscripts to which the colophons are appended were produced locally or produced elsewhere but dedicated and used locally. In the case of the Pin colophons, it is possible the texts themselves were produced in Ladakh. The colophons however, are almost certainly written locally, given the number of specific local villages, temples, and persons named in each.

text at hand. Lastly, the colophons include a list of names of additional donors who financially and materially supported the production of the text, typically providing the village or region from which each donor hails.

In addition to this shared overarching structure, the colophons employ very similar language, some of which is geographically specific to the Western Tibetan and Himalayan region. The colophons often repeat words, phrases, and entire verses, including verses copied from other texts that are not part of the genre.¹⁵⁷ Scholars note that some of the language is archaic and regionally specific, perhaps indicating that it either derives from earlier forms of dedications or is used to evoke the authority of earlier eras.¹⁵⁸ Dating the colophons on the basis of language thus proves quite difficult, since the archaic nature of the language does not necessarily reflect the period in which the colophons were produced. Rather, it likely reflects the antiquity of the form of the colophons and the relative consistency of scribes in maintaining the genre over time.¹⁵⁹ The colophons also employ language particular to Western Tibet, supporting the argument that they are a genre unique to this geographic region.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Heller notes, “Many dedications give excerpts from Buddhist cosmological texts.” Heller, *Hidden Treasures of the Himalayas*, 191. The most prevalent example of this are two verses that frequently occur in the colophons and are also found in the opening verses of the fourteenth century text *The Mirror Illuminating Royal Genealogies* (*Rgyal rab kun gsal me long*). Sorensen notes that the *Royal Genealogies* itself often copied verses from other texts. Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan and Per K. Sørensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies: An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: RGYal-Rabs Gsal- Ba 'i Me-Long* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 43.,

¹⁵⁸ De Rossi Filibeck and Heller both note that the language draws on earlier sources in texts and inscriptions, particularly from the Tibetan imperial period and the Guge Kingdom period. De Rossi Filibeck argues that this is especially the case when describing a given ruler’s domain and authority. “In western Tibet the survival of some concepts of the ancient Tibetan monarchy was strong. The recurrence of the phrase “May the helmet (dbu rmog) of the king...be high and may his dominion (chab srid) spread far”, used to indicate the name of the incumbent ruler of the place where the copy was made, is the same in many official Ladakhi inscriptions. Also the conventional description of Tibet goes back to the poetical phrasing found in the Tun huang manuscripts. It is worth noting that the paper inscriptions on the north wall of the 'Du khang in Ta bo gtsug lag khang also belong to this literary genre. Filibeck, “Poetical Prefaces of Manuscripts from Western Tibet,” 152–3.

¹⁵⁹ Rolf A Stein and Arthur McKeown, *Rolf Stein's Tibetica Antiqua: With Additional Materials*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library 24 (Brill Academic Publishers, 2010), 109.

¹⁶⁰ Tauscher notes for example that “words might display typical West Tibetan particularities.” Tauscher, 29. This claim is bolstered by the absence of similarly structured dedication colophons located outside of Western Tibet or the Western Himalayas. This is not to say that manuscript dedications or manuscript colophons are unique to the

Fortunately, references to historical persons enable dating the colophons in spite of their at times anachronistic language. The colophons usually name a specific ruler, and those which do not typically provide at least the ruler's title. They also usually list the ruler's capital palace or fort, as well as the name of a regional administrator or governor. These elements are often sufficient to identify the ruler, including his exact or approximate dates. Thus, the colophons themselves can be dated within a certain degree of certainty.

The Colophons from Pin Valley

There are seventeen manuscript dedication colophons from the Pin Valley that are part of the genre of manuscript dedications found throughout Western Tibet and the Himalayas.¹⁶¹ The colophons from Pin follow the same basic structure and content outlined above. There is some variation across the seventeen colophons, but all map more or less onto this shared structure.¹⁶²

The Pin colophons encompass most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ranging in date from approximately 1630 to 1782.¹⁶³ These dates span a tumultuous period in Spiti's history. The

Western Himalayas. Rather, these particular colophons all share certain features of language and structure that are not found in other kinds of Tibetan language manuscript dedications or dedication inscriptions.

¹⁶¹ These colophons were located and photographed in the Pin Valley in 2012–2014. I identify the colophons based on a catalogue number I assigned to them within a digital archive called the Himalayan Manuscripts and Documents Archive or HMDA. The digital archive comprises a few hundred objects, including the manuscript dedication inscriptions, documented during field research in Spiti from 2006–2014. All of the original manuscripts remain with their respective owners or caretakers. Those titles relevant to this chapter are found in tables in Appendix 1: Buddhist Manuscript Dedication Colophons from Pin Valley and Appendix 2: Buddhist Manuscripts from the Pin Valley. Full translations of two of the colophons are found in Appendix 3: Dedication Colophon for *the Golden Light Sūtra* and Appendix 5: Dedication Colophon for *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born*.

¹⁶² This is likely the case. However, since other studies of Western Tibetan colophons do not always publish the colophons in full, it is not possible to verify that all the contents are similar. There are verses in the Pin colophons that are likely unique to those colophons, particularly since they provide poetic descriptions of the Pin Valley and are thus unlikely to occur in colophons that are not from Pin. However, there could be similar verses in colophons from other regions with their own parallel but geographically differing poetic descriptions.

¹⁶³ The colophons are dated based on the ruler mentioned in each. The dates of rule are themselves approximate. Scholars have identified some discrepancies with Petech's dating, however this remains the standard in the absence of clear alternatives. The earliest manuscripts dating to the reign of Senge Namgyal are likely from 1630–1642 and the latest manuscript dates to 1753–1782. The absence of any colophons after the 1780s is likely due to the period of political fracture during and after the Gurkha incursions in the region. This resulted, among other things, in new

earliest colophons mark the advent of Ladakh-based Namgyal rule in Spiti in 1630. The Namgyals continued to rule Spiti throughout the eighteenth century and the date of the latest colophon, in the latter half of the century.¹⁶⁴ Namgyal rule was interrupted for a brief period in the late seventeenth century, when Spiti was under the control of the Ganden Phodrang government established by the Fifth Dalai Lama in Central Tibet. This shift in power over Spiti was the result of Ladakh's defeat in the 1679–1684 war between Ladakh and Tibet. One of the seventeen colophons dates to the period of Central Tibetan control, and is the only one to mention a ruler who is not part of the Namgyal family. References to these rulers provide general dates for each colophon.¹⁶⁵

The earliest of the colophons from Pin provides most of the hallmarks of the genre. It is one of two colophons dating to the reign of king Senge Namgyal. Senge Namgyal was the king of Ladakh who initially expanded his domain to gain control of Spiti in 1630. After he died in 1642, control of Spiti passed to his son.¹⁶⁶ Thus this earliest colophon from Pin likely dates to the period of Senge Namgyal's control of Spiti, from approximately 1630 to 1642. The colophon is appended to a copy of the *Golden Light Sūtra*.¹⁶⁷ It consists of five folios bound together with the

border restrictions between Tibet and its neighbors, and the weakening of Ladakh's control over Spiti. I located more than seventeen such colophons, but not all of them contained named locations or people that could definitively connect them to the Pin Valley. I excluded one colophon currently held in the Pin Valley, since it lacks any internal reference concretely tying it to Pin. It is possible the colophon was produced in Pin, but also entirely possible that it was not and only later made its way to the valley. Similarly, at least one colophon currently held in the Pin Valley likely originated outside of Pin, as it contains references to several locations outside of the valley and none within it.¹⁶⁴ As Petech and others discuss, the extent to which the Namgyal rulers and their surrogates were directly involved in Spiti is unclear.

¹⁶⁵ The dates of the Namgyal rulers is in some cases approximate.

¹⁶⁶ These dates are approximate and based on Petech.

¹⁶⁷ The *Golden Light Sūtra, Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra, 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa*, HMDA Cat. No. OLK 03, See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4. The colophon folios are bound together with the cover of the text. The cover itself consists of several sheets of thick hand-made paper bound together along the longer top and bottom edges, creating a thicker bundle of paper that functions as a cover. The sheets of paper are bound together with small strips of multi-colored cloth. The cover bears the title of the text in Tibetan with multi-colored decorative elements, including a series of borders in red, yellow, and blue-green hues, and two multi-colored circular designs. The colophon follows several pages bound together to form a stiff inner cover, separate from the text's wooden cover. The colophon is bound to the paper cover along the upper edge with pieces of multi-colored cloth. It comprises five folios of paper with writing on the front and back, except for the last folio, which only has writing on one side. Each of the folios

text's cover. It spans 108 lines that are divided into seventeen verses of varying length, followed by a long list of donors.¹⁶⁸ The text bears all of the sections typical of the genre: opening verses of praise (verses 1–4), origins and spread of Buddhism (6–9), the regional ruler and his subordinates (9–10), description of the specific location where the text is produced (11–14), the primary donor's motivation, acts, family members, and lineage (15–17), and a list of additional donors. I will refer back to this colophon and others in the following discussion. The full text appears in Appendix 3: Dedication Colophon for the *Golden Light Sūtra*.

Buddhist Cosmology and Geography

The colophons locate Pin in time and space through hybrid cosmological-geographic descriptions of places that are both ideal and real. These descriptions chart a trajectory of the spread of Buddhism, locating Pin within that spread, and with respect to regional authorities. The colophons all share a similar description of the origins of Buddhism and its movements. They trace a line that is at once a timeline and route, an idealized line of Buddhist influence.

This geographic-cosmological section begins with the beginning of Buddhism in Bodhgaya, “the place from which the noble doctrine spread.” It then moves to Tibet, “the land of snow, emanating from Shambala.”¹⁶⁹ The next verse references two locations within Tibet:

has six or seven lines of text in black and red ink. The first two folios are surrounded by a decorative red border while the remaining folios have a less elaborate series of red lines marking the right and left margins. A piece of yellow cloth separates the colophon from the interior title page of the text. The body of the text itself has an illustration of White Tārā with a partially legible caption: *phags ma [sgrol dkar]*. Several of the pages of the main text also have a blue wash. Since the title of the text appears in the colophon itself as well as on the title page, it seems likely that the colophon is bound to the original text and was not rebound to a different text at a later date.

¹⁶⁸ This line count does not include the list of donors at the end. The auspicious number 108 appears to be a coincidence or instance unique to this colophon rather than the norm, as none of the other colophons numbers 108 lines. The verse divisions are largely indicated by the text itself, with repeating phrases interspersed between verses. However, there are a few areas where no division is indicated in the text and I separated verses where it seemed like the content shifted thematically. For example, the break between verses eight and nine is arbitrary, as well as between verses fourteen and fifteen.

¹⁶⁹ *Golden Light Sūtra*, verse 8 lines 1–2, Appendix 3 and Appendix 4.

Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarowar.¹⁷⁰ The mountain and lake are important Buddhist places of pilgrimage and practice, what Huber calls “power places.”¹⁷¹ They also serve as a pivot point through which the colophon moves from Tibet to Ladakh by way of the Indus River (*seng ge kha 'bab*), one of four rivers Tibetan accounts describe as originating from the mountain and lake.¹⁷² The next location is the relevant capital or seat of royal authority, in this case the city of Leh in Ladakh, followed by the regional capital.¹⁷³ In the case of the colophons from Pin, the regional capital of Spiti is always listed as Drangkhar.¹⁷⁴ Drangkhar village is located near the junction of

¹⁷⁰ Kailash is described as the dwelling place of arhats and Lake Manasarowar as the abode of the Naga King Anavatapta, *Golden Light Sūtra*, verse 9 lines 3–4.

¹⁷¹ Toni Huber and Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, *Sacred Spaces and Powerful Places in Tibetan Culture: A Collection of Essays* (Dharamsala, H.P.: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1999).

¹⁷² The Indus is one of four rivers Tibetan accounts say issue from the vicinity of Kailash and Manasarowar and travel in the four cardinal directions (the Indus or Lion-mouth flows north). The four rivers (*kha 'bab bzhi*) and Kailash-Manasarowar serve as a kind of hub in the larger genre of Western Tibetan and Himalayan colophons. Colophons from other regions than Pin also reference this important location, and will trace one of the four rivers to that colophon's location. So a colophon Heller discusses from Dzumla in north-western Nepal shares a reference to Kailash and Manasarowar, but instead of listing the Indus, it refers to the Pakshu river (*phag shu*), which Heller identifies as the Karnali river, a major tributary of the Ganges, (although here there is somewhat of a mismatch between cardinal direction and the Tibetan name of the river). Filibeck translates a colophon that references the Elephant-mouth river (*glang chen kha 'babs*), which she identifies as the Sulej. My translation of Heller: “on the banks of the great Pakshu river included [in] the four rivers [as] the southern [river] of Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarowar.” In the colophon, the Pakshu river is listed as the south and identified in translation as the Karnali/Ganga. The Pakshu river is also identified as the Brahmaputra or Tasngpo river, said to flow from the west. And the Ganges river is often connected to the east (Langchen) or even the south (Sindu). Primary and secondary sources offer several different lists of the four rivers that originate near Kailash, often allocating the same river to different cardinal directions. Part of this confusion seems to involve naming different tributaries. As McKay notes, “Nor do the associations of the four rivers with particular creatures shed light on geographical realities.” He also points out that the various identifications of the four rivers and their directions changed over time. Amy Heller, “Preliminary Remarks on the Manuscripts of Gnas Gsar Dgon Pa in Northern Dolpo (Nepal),” in *Discoveries in Western Tibet and the Western Himalayas: Essays on History, Literature, Archaeology and Art: PIATS 2003, Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, 10/8 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007); Elena De Rossi Filibeck, “Poetical Prefaces of Manuscripts from Western Tibet,” in *Discoveries in Western Tibet and the Western Himalayas: Essays on History, Literature, Archaeology and Art: PIATS 2003, Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Amy Heller and Giacomella Orofino, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, 10/8 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007); Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, Volume 38, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 80–83.

¹⁷³ Other colophons from Pin refer to different capitals, although Leh is the most frequent.

¹⁷⁴ Drangkhar was historically the capital of Spiti, although the contemporary capital is in nearby Kaza. Drangkhar seems to have continued to function as the regional capital in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The capital shifted to Kaza in the late twentieth century under the Himachal Pradesh state government. In addition to the village itself, Drangkhar houses a monastery comprised of several separate buildings.

the Pin River and Spiti River, on a high mountain ridge from which it commands a towering view of the surrounding area.

The cosmological-geographic description then enters the Pin Valley proper. Within Pin, the colophons often refer to the regional capital, usually Khar, a village whose name references the fort historically located there.¹⁷⁵ The colophons then refer to the specific village where the manuscript's primary patron resides. For example, in the colophon for the *Golden Light Sūtra* from Senge Namgyal's reign (1630–1642), the donor's village is Mud. In each of the seventeen colophons from Pin, the donor's village is an identifiable location within Pin.¹⁷⁶

This marks the end of the cosmological-geographic trajectory, beginning with Bodhgaya and ending with the patron's home. It is clear that the colophons are concerned with tracing lines of Buddhist influence in both time and space. They trace lines of hybrid religions and political control. These are not merely geographic locations or "directions" to Pin. The direction of movement in the colophons does not follow trade routes or the most direct point of travel between locations. They are engaged in a particular kind of place making. They plot Pin on the map of Buddhist rule, in the process positing Pin as the ultimate end or locus of that rule. Pin is at the center of the Buddhist cosmos mapped in the colophons, as well as the most particular and most local unit of space. The colophon dedications constitute place as both particular and universal, as a unique locale and as an interchangeable instance of a Buddhist ideal. They make Pin the ultimate and most local realization of a universal process. It is both place holder and particular.

¹⁷⁵ The fort is now in ruins. It is also interesting to note that Drangkhar and Khar share the same syllable, *mkhar*, meaning fort, castle, palace, etc., referring both to a structure and to its function.

¹⁷⁶ See Appendix 1 for a list of all of the donor villages. I excluded colophons from Pin from this chart and this aspect of my analysis if they did not explicitly refer to a location within Pin. Appendix 2 includes colophons from Pin whose manuscripts are not concretely linked to Pin through an internal reference to locations in the valley.

This is not to say that the colophons from Pin treat Pin uniquely in this manner. Quite the contrary; the larger genre of western Tibetan dedication colophons tend to “center” the particular location where they were dedicated (and composed). This does not detract from the significance placed on Pin in the colophons produced there. Rather, it illustrates how these colophons were useful tools for imagining a particular place as part of the larger Buddhist cosmological-geographic world, for locating it *in place*, as simultaneously the relevant center of the lives of the colophon’s patrons and as one of many such centers.

In addition to this cosmological-geographic locating, the colophons employ a number of other Buddhist images and ideas to map the Pin Valley. These elements contribute to constituting Pin as an ideal Buddhist realm. They describe the valley as under appropriately Buddhist rule, modeled on a Buddhist spatial ideal, and a distinct self-contained entity.

The colophons locate Pin with respect to a king and his ministers in order to constitute Pin as an ideal Buddhist place within the domain of Buddhist rule. Within the geographic-cosmological trajectory discussed above, each of the capital cities accompanies the name of a ruler. For example, in the *Golden Light Sūtra*, we have the names of the king and two subsidiary ministers: “the great fearless dharma king Senge,” rules in Leh; “the wise protector Nono Kalzang” is the governor at Drangkhar; within Pin, the governor Nono Tsering Tsebhel governs from Khar.¹⁷⁷ The colophons highlight the king’s capital to emphasize its status as the seat of royal authority, of the ideal Buddhist ruler. It continues with the subsidiary capitals to emphasize

¹⁷⁷ The particular significance and scope of authority for the title *Garpon (Mkhar dpon)* in Spiti is a point of debate among scholars. In the colophons, the titles for the regional administrators vary. In the *Golden Light Sūtra* in Appendix 3, both the governor at Drangkhar and within Pin are called *Garpon chenpo*, “great governor” (*Mkhar dpon chen po*). In other colophons, the regional administrators at Drangkhar and in Pin are also called *Gaga (Ga ga, ga rga)*, *Garpon Gaga (Mkhar dpon Ga ga)*, *Nono (no no)*, and *Garpon Nono (Mkhar dpon no no)*. In two instances, the colophons give the title of the minister as *kalon (bka’ blon)*, in reference to Namkha Gyaltsan, who was active in the second half of the seventeenth century, and Tenzin Paljor, active in the mid-eighteenth century. See Appendix 16: Governors and Rulers of Spiti and Pin, for the names, dates, and titles of each of these figures.

the relationship between that ruler and his appropriately Buddhist domain.¹⁷⁸ The king as a great dharma king (*chos rgyal chen po*) is an important component in the ability of the primary donors in the Pin Valley to reap the karmic benefit of patronizing the manuscript.¹⁷⁹ The king does not establish this ideal Buddhist domain on his own; he also relies on his ministers.¹⁸⁰

Their rule is enacted through *place*, specifically through the “royal seat” or capital, with its own iteration in the Pin Valley. The colophon describes these capitals at Leh, Drangkhār, and Khar through mountainous imagery and vertical hierarchy. All three locations are elevated,

¹⁷⁸ Leh was the capital of Ladakh from at least the seventeenth century to the present. The city hosts a large palace built by Senge Namgyal in the first half of the century. The colophons gloss the relevant king as an ideal Buddhist ruler a *chogyal* (*chos rgyal*), who is responsible for upholding the dharma and constituting his domain as an ideal Buddhist space, which in turn supports the practice of those residing in that domain. The dharma king is in this role comparable to a *cakravartin*. S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁷⁹ In this particular colophon, the king is called a great dharma king whose might and rule is articulated through the metonym of the helmet, a phrase that echoes archaic Tibetan conceptions of kingship. The lines gloss the king with two different epithets of Śākyamuni Buddha, the “Kinsmen of the Sun” and “the lineage of Ikṣvaku,” drawing further parallels between the Namgyal king and an ideal Buddhist ruler. According to Stein, the term *dbu rmog* or “helmet” is meant to stand in for the king’s power and domain in a manner that emphasizes a connection between the king’s helmet, elevation, and mountains. The emphasis on helmet and height further links the person of the king to the palace on the summit (*dpal khang rtser*) with a phrase repeated throughout the colophons. Regarding the possible origins of the term *dbu rmog*, Stein states, “As Gri gum was engaged in combat, we may suppose that he wore a helmet and that the ladder and the cord from his head formed part of the helmet. This is perhaps whence comes the expression “mighty helmet,” which characterizes the power of the king...The exaltation of the height of the head (*dbu ’phang, go ’phang*) is parallel to that of the “mighty helmet” in designating a grand reign, and this great power is, in its turn, celebrated by the height (cf. n. 34). This height is compared to that of the sky and mountains. The first king of great military power drew his name from it...In the *Prayers of De ga* also, the reign of the king is sometimes “of elevated height” (37a, l. 1; *chab srid kyi phang mtho ba*), sometimes “mighty helmet and grand reign” (40b, l. 2 *dbu rmog brtsan la chab srid che*.” Rolf Alfred Stein, *Tibetan Civilization* (Stanford University Press, 1972), 155–156. The term appears in an inscription from the tomb of Trisong Detsen (Khri srong Lde btsan) in the Treaty of Lhasa (821–822), the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, and the *Lde’u chos ’byung*. The colophon indicates that the king is not necessarily significant in and of himself, but in how he serves as an instance of a type, a kind of place holder. What is necessary for a particular locale to prosper, for it to function as an ideal Buddhist realm, is not any one *specific* ruler, but rather that the ruler at hand is able to embody a universal type. Stein also translates *sku mkhar* as “royal palace,” which is one of the signs of a cultivated country. Stein, 111–114; H. E. Richardson, “The Inscription at the Tomb of Khri Lde Srong Brtsan,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1969): 29–38.

¹⁸⁰ Stein notes the important link between rulers and ministers in earlier imperial era Tibetan texts, “King and minister are so closely linked that the epithets of one hold value for the other. The expressions proper to the king alone are distributed, in corresponding phrases, to the one and to the other.” Indeed, the colophon glosses the king’s minister and the minister’s dominion in Spiti in much the same language as it uses to describe the king and the king’s dominion in Ladakh. This language is further applied to the local ruler in Pin, who functions as a kind of sub-minister to the governor of Spiti. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 160. Stein notes elsewhere that “The pair wisdom-bravery characterizes the minister and other inhabitants of Tibet, but is also proper to the king. The elements of this pair are sometimes distributed between one and the other of the protagonists. The minister is at once wise and brave “like a jewel” (*Prayers of De ga*, 26a); the king has the mighty helmet, the minister is brave and wise (38a).”

literally towering over the surrounding environment, at the same time as they are described as metaphorically lofty, peaks at the summit echoing the height of Mount Meru or the king's helmet. All three locations have or had a palace-fort located on a high mountain ridge from which it commands a towering view of the surrounding area.¹⁸¹

In addition to royal imagery, the colophons constitute Pin as place by describing it as a self-contained spatial entity and an ideal Buddhist realm. This is accomplished with descriptions of the valley as a physical ideal with references to, among other things, the ten virtues, a hidden land, a paradise, and a maṇḍala. Much of this language is found in a section of the colophons devoted to poetic descriptions of the Pin Valley.¹⁸² They paint an image of a lush valley of karmic and material prosperity, protected from the outside. The particular language varies in each colophon, although some elements occur repeatedly. (The relevant section is verse 10 in the *Golden Light Sūtra* but also see Appendix 6: Descriptions of the Pin Valley.)

Here, Pin is referred to as a “hidden land” (*sbas pa 'i yul*) encircled by a ring of iron mountains (*lcags ri*), in a double entendre evoking both the actual mountainous obstructions that hide Pin from outside view, as well as the Buddhist concept of a hidden land. Hidden lands are

¹⁸¹ The colophons consistently refer to Khar village as a center of rule in Pin, often linking it to the regional governor. The other location of central importance in Pin that occurs throughout the colophons is Kungri, both the village and monastery. Khar is situated roughly across the Pin River from Kungri. These two locations seem to serve as the political and religious centers of power in the valley.

¹⁸² This verse is not necessarily unique to the Pin colophons, as structurally similar verses and some elements of language are found in colophons from Tabo and elsewhere. This section of the colophon also contains the earliest reference to a *gonpa* or monastery in Pin, here called the “great monastery Sangnag Chöling.” Aside from the question of the exact architectural structures and spaces implied by the terms *gonpa* and *lhakhang*, the monastery Sangnag Chöling appears repeatedly throughout the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colophons under a variety of names and descriptions. It is variously called: Sangnag Chöling, Sangnag Tashi Chöling, and Tashi Chöling. These different names are also variously glossed as the “great” or “glorious” monastery Sangnag Tashi Chöling, *mgon pa chen po gsang sngags bkra shis chos gling* (GCL 23); Tashi Chöling, *mgon pa chen po bkra shis chos gling* (Khar 03); Sangnag Chöling, *mgon pa khyad 'phags gsang sngags chos gling* (Sagname 04); Sangnag Chöling, *mgon pa chen po gsang sngags chos gling* (OLK 03); Sangnag Chöling, *mgon pa gsang sngags chos gling* (Sangnam 05). It is also interesting to note that the current name for the entire temple and monastic complex at Kungri is Ugyen Sangnag Chöling, following the title of the monastery and temple constructed in the 1990s. This name simultaneously links the newer structures to the older structures of a similar but different title, and also prioritizes the figure of Padmasambhava through the name Orgyen, which is one of his epithets and the name of the region where he was born.

kinds of paradises, created or prophesied by Padmasambhava. They often serve as refuges at times of turmoil, perhaps indicated in the line, “the realm itself is never disturbed.”¹⁸³ Other language evokes a paradise: an endless ambrosia stream, a lake of healing medicine that is never dry, a river of many different flowers, a king’s seat, where all the grain ripens, an inexhaustible treasure of riches.¹⁸⁴ Pin is not merely a paradise though, it is a Buddhist paradise, a place where the “ten virtues are plentiful.”¹⁸⁵ Thus the Pin Valley grants its inhabitants prosperity and health, abundant crops and riches, as well as abundant virtue.

In addition to being a paradise, the Pin Valley is presented as a self-contained sphere. It is described as enclosed on all sides, surrounded by indestructible iron mountains, and shielded from the front by a silk curtain or conjoined hands. The reference to Pin as encircled by a ring of iron mountains evokes not just the indestructibility and protection of mountains, but also the idea of a maṇḍala, typically encircled by a ring of iron mountains, as well as the ring of mountains encircling the Buddhist world.¹⁸⁶ This idea of Pin as contained within a ring of mountains echoes Buddhist imagery but also conveys that the valley is a clearly defined, demarcated space, with a border all around it. It may be part of Spiti, and part of the dharma king’s domain, but it is also entirely its own.

This section of the colophons provides repeated examples over the course of two centuries, in which local residents of Pin are describing the valley in their own terms, as a discrete physical space and as an ideal Buddhist realm. They are also using the colophons to

¹⁸³ *sku mdun na dkyil 'khor gyi rdzas ma 'khrugs pa'*, *Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa (1694–1729) Bar 01. Appendix 6: Descriptions of the Pin Valley

¹⁸⁴ Appendix 6: Descriptions of the Pin Valley

¹⁸⁵ *yul la dge bcu 'dzom pa 'i sprin gyi lung pa 'dir'*, *The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra Mahāsannipātaaratnaketuḍhāraṇī-sūtra*, [*'Phags pa 'dus pa chen po*] *rin po che tog [gi gzungs]*, (1734–1753)

¹⁸⁶ “cakravāda” Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.

locate Pin spatially and temporally as the center of the Buddhist world and the end point of a timeline of Buddhism's development. The colophons move from Bodhgaya in India to Khar



Figure 9: Confluence of the Pin and Spiti Rivers and the entrance to the Pin Valley as seen from Drangkar. Photo by the author, 2013.

Village in Pin Valley, from the time of the Buddha to the present of the colophon's patrons. These centering movements provide an interesting juxtaposition to descriptions of Pin as peripheral and isolated.

Pin Valley as a Nyingma Space

The colophons articulate the Pin Valley as *place* spatially and temporally; they also articulate Pin as a distinctly Nyingma space. The colophons indicate that Buddhists in Pin Valley envisioned the valley as a Nyingma space through references to Nyingma figures (historical or literary), to ideas in the colophons themselves, and through the kinds of texts that were patronized. Visual evidence from the Old Lhaxhang in Pin also supports a clear Nyingma presence in Pin.

From among the seventeenth- and eighteenth- century texts, one finds a body of texts that are identifiably Nyingma. While the mere presence of a text does not necessarily indicate a community of practitioners or a sectarian identity, the clear preponderance of Nyingma texts likely gives some indication that the texts themselves were produced by and for a Nyingma community. Among these are several texts related to Padmasambhava. There are several iterations of his biography in the list of texts with colophons, including copies of *The Chronicle of Padma (Padma bka' thang)* by Orgyen Lingpa (b. 1323) and *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born* by Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396).¹⁸⁷ Padmasambhava is a popular figure throughout Buddhist Tibet and the Himalayas, however he is also particularly revered by, and associated with, the Nyingma. Thus the large number of texts related to him is in keeping with the region's Nyingma affiliation. Other Nyingma texts include the *Catalogue of Prophecies* from

¹⁸⁷ Orgyen Lingpa (b. 1323) and Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396) are fairly well-known Nyingma *tertöns* or treasure revealers. “o rgyan gling pa,” Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, P4943. <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=P4943>. “sang rgyas gling pa,” Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, P4943. <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=P5340>

*Cycle of Dzogchen Practice of the Nyingma*¹⁸⁸ by Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409); *Self-Liberation through Recognizing the Signs of Death from Profound Dharma of Self-Liberation through the Intention of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*¹⁸⁹ by Karma Lingpa (14th c.); and dozens of manuscripts from the Pema Lingpa *terma* cycle, including the *Lama Jewel Ocean*, and *Clear Crystal Garland Treasury Instructions*.¹⁹⁰ In the case some of texts, other evidence from Pin supports the claim that the texts indicate a corresponding practice, including the presence of associated statues, paintings, ritual implements, and ritual diagrams. As a whole, this body of texts reflects Pin’s clear affiliation with the Nyingma tradition.

The colophons also articulate Pin as a Nyingma place by explicitly referring to Nyingma figures. In the section of the colophons generally given to paying homage to particular teachers, several of the colophons refer to specifically Nyingma historical and literary figures. One of the most important among these is Padmasambhava and other figures associated with him. For example, in the colophon appended to the *Golden Light Sūtra*, verses two and four pay homage Padmasambhava while verse four also praises Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, Śrī Singha, and Garab Dorje. The three-part group of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, and Garab Dorje is particularly significant in a Nyingma context. These figures correlate to the three lineages, which is a Nyingma framework for describing how the Buddhist teachings were transmitted to the world.¹⁹¹ This verse clearly marks the dedication as a whole, and the donors, as Nyingma. Other

¹⁸⁸ Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409) Rgod kyi ldem ’phru can. “lung byang bka’i them: (pa).” In *dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor*. TBRC W4CZ1106. 1: 235 - 238. Leh: s.w. Tashigangpa, 1979.

[http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395\\$W4CZ1106](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395$W4CZ1106)

¹⁸⁹ Karma Lingpa (14th c.) .”zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las: ’chi ltas mtshan ma rang grol.” In *mo dpe phyogs bsdu sng srid gsal ba’i me long*. TBRC W29669. : 197 - 220. [Bylakuppe]. Karnataka: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, 2001-2002. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149\\$W29669](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149$W29669)

¹⁹⁰ For a full list, see Appendix 2: Buddhist Manuscripts from Pin Valley.

¹⁹¹ The three lineages (*brgyud pa gsum*) are the intentional, symbolic, and aural teachings, which correspond to the figures of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, and Garab Dorje or Padmasambhava respectively. Both Garab Dorje and Padmasambhava can occupy the third position. Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its*

colophons, like *The Chronicle of Padma*, refer to Padmasambhava along with his consorts and students, including Yeshe Tsogyal, Mandarava, and Namkha'i Nyingpo.¹⁹² These figures are all important to the Nyingma tradition in that they often serve as the conduits for *terma* or treasure revelations, like the Pema Lingpa *terma*, which were often revealed to Pema Lingpa through visions of *dākinī* like Yeshe Tsogyal.¹⁹³

Two of the colophons also reference a figure named Lhasal Dramdul. In the *Golden Light Sūtra* he is glossed as a “great master” (*dpon slob chen po*), but in a colophon appended to the *Diamond Sūtra*, identifies him as a Dzogchen practitioner and a great tantric adept or yogin.¹⁹⁴ While this figure is as yet unidentified, the *Diamond Sūtra* colophon characterizes him as Nyingma.

These aspects of the colophons are evoking a Nyingma milieu, which likely reflects the context in which the texts were produced and the persons involved in their production, which is to say they imply that Pin in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a Nyingma milieu. Pin's Nyingma environment seems to prioritize the figure of Padmasambhava and the Pema Lingpa *terma* text cycle. As telling as this material is, it also indicates a great degree of variation in the range of Nyingma texts produced, painting a diverse picture of what it means for Pin to “be Nyingma.”

Fundamentals and History, ed. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, 2nd edition (Boston, Mass: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 452–454.

¹⁹² Appendix 5: Dedication Colophon for the *Golden Garland Chronicles* (1630–1642).

¹⁹³ This colophon also refers to a number of other texts produced at the same time, all of which are Nyingma and one of which is specifically called a *chod terma*. Appendix 5: Dedication Colophon for the *Golden Garland Chronicles* (1630–1642).

¹⁹⁴ The line reads: *rdzogs pa chen po thugs su rjes pa / sngags 'chang chen po lha gsal dgra 'dul. Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa* (1694–1729), Bar 01.

Expanding the Category “Nyingma”

When sources on Spiti describe Pin as “Nyingma,” they are collapsing a diverse body of practices, texts, and traditions under a single identifying term. While many of these texts can be accurately described as Nyingma, beyond that fact they are quite diverse and relate to a range of traditions within the broader category of Nyingma. So while it is accurate to say that Pin is a Nyingma place, it is also not necessarily very informative to identify it as such. Overemphasizing a sectarian framework risks overshadowing the diversity of Buddhist practice in Pin, diversity in terms of both Nyingma and non-Nyingma practice.

The diversity of Nyingma texts and traditions in Pin is evident in the preceding account of the identifiably Nyingma texts. Among the texts from Pin, one finds: *Catalogue of Prophecies from Cycle of Dzogchen practice of the Nyingma*¹⁹⁵ by Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409); *Self-Liberation through Recognizing the Signs of Death from Profound Dharma of Self-Liberation through the Intention of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*¹⁹⁶ by Karma Lingpa (14th c.); *Lama Jewel Ocean and Clear Crystal Garland Treasury Instructions* by Pema Lingpa (1450–1521), *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born* by Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396), and *The Chronicle of Padma* by Orgyen Lingpa (b. 1323), among others. These texts certainly share some features, particularly in that they are all revealed texts or *terma* from the fourteenth century. Aside from these shared features, they were produced in very different contexts by very different *tertöns* or treasure revealers, across a wide geographic range. Tracing how these diverse Nyingma texts made their way to Pin and became established there would likely paint a more

¹⁹⁵ Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409, P5254) Rgod kyi ldem 'phru can. “lung byang bka'i them: (pa).” In dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor/. TBRC W4CZ1106. 1: 235 - 238. leh: s.w. tashigangpa, 1979. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395\\$W4CZ1106](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395$W4CZ1106)

¹⁹⁶ Karma Lingpa (14th c. P5245) . For text see . “zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las: 'chi ltas mtshan ma rang grol.” In mo dpe phyogs bsdu srid gsal ba'i me long. TBRC W29669. : 197 - 220. [Bylakuppe].Karnataka: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, 2001-2002. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149\\$W29669](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149$W29669)

nuanced and varied picture of the Pin Valley as Nyingma than what is generally indicated in sources on Spiti that focus solely on the term Nyingma. In the case of the Pema Lingpa *terma*, some aspects of how the tradition reached Pin can be gleaned from the colophons and associated manuscripts; but even this only provides broad sketches. In the case of most of these other *terma* traditions, little to nothing is known, with few sources to pursue. While the colophons can tell us much about the nature of the Nyingma tradition in Pin, there are still large gaps in the telling.

Non-sectarian Buddhist Practices

When sources gloss Pin as uniformly Nyingma they also emphasize sectarian difference. Referring to the whole valley as simply Nyingma ignores a range of practices, activities, texts, and traditions in the valley that are not explicitly sectarian or are related to a non-Nyingma sect. The colophons indicate that much of the practice in Pin was not particularly or explicitly “Nyingma.” Many of the texts are widespread Mahāyāna texts, for example: *Golden Light Sūtra*, *[Jewel] Casket Sūtra*, *Stainless Confession Tantra*, *Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra*, *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses*, *Diamond Sūtra*.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, these *perfection of wisdom* (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*) texts are the most frequently produced and patronized from the manuscripts that exist in Pin. Evidence suggests that these were also popular in the general area around Pin, based on the larger genre of western Himalayan manuscript dedication colophons. This indicates that for many of the donors sponsoring these texts, it was not particularly important to sponsor a *Nyingma* text. These perfection of wisdom texts may have been preferred because of their exhortation to reproduction, along with their contexts extolling the benefits of such acts, or

¹⁹⁷ There are also many texts currently held in the Pin Valley that lack a colophon explicitly connecting them to Pin or determining their approximate date. Many of these appear to be contemporaneous to the datable texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These texts also include titles that are clearly not Nyingma: *Register of the Reliquary of Rangrik Repa* and *Account of the Origins and Contents of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa* by the Fifth Dalai Lama, *Sakya Rinpoche's Collected Works*. See Appendix 2: Buddhist Manuscripts from Pin Valley.

perhaps because of their ability to prevent harm or misfortune and dispel demons.¹⁹⁸ Conversely, the explicitly Nyingma texts from the same period require very different kinds of practices to reap results, ones not achievable by merely sponsoring the reproduction of a text.

The colophons describe other patronage activities that are not explicitly Nyingma. For example, in the colophon for the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the donors record that they also sponsored a statue of Avalokiteśvara, carving one thousand *mani* stones, and copies of the five great *dhāraṇī*.¹⁹⁹ These kinds of acts of patronage are found throughout the colophons from Pin. The colophons also describe these acts as public corporate productions. The primary donor and his or her family may take the lead or make a larger material and financial contribution, but each colophon also lists extensive donations from the community as a whole. Friends, family, neighbors, and figures from much farther afield donated money, food, and drink to support the ritual reproduction of these texts and engagement with the resulting product (acts like reading the texts aloud a certain number of times, for example).

Aside from these non-sectarian activities, emphasizing Pin Valley's status as Nyingma may also gloss over sectarian diversity. The colophons include references to donations from other non-Nyingma monasteries in Spiti, non-Nyingma regions outside of Spiti, and include non-Nyingma texts. There are also recorded donations from Geluk-affiliated monasteries in Spiti.

Additionally, the oldest extant temple in Pin contains evidence of Drukpa Kagyu patronage, despite a lack of evidence of Drukpa Kagyu practice in Pin.²⁰⁰ This temple in Kungri

¹⁹⁸ Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sūtra* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 216–238.

¹⁹⁹ This may refer to creating prayer flags, possibly copying a text, or writing *dhāraṇī* on paper for use in consecrating other objects. Yael Bentor, “On the Indian Origins of the Tibetan Practice of Depositing Relics and Dhāraṇīs in Stūpas and Images,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 2 (April 1995): 248; Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism* (Brill, 1996).

²⁰⁰ There is to my knowledge, no evidence of a Kagyu presence in Spiti in the seventeenth century. Indeed, one of the most famous people from Spiti, the Kagyu figure Rangrik Repa, left Spiti early in his life. He traveled between Nepal and Tibet, but never returned to Spiti. While there is a copy of a text related to Rangrik Repa in Pin that

Village is variously called the Old Lhakhang or the Peling Lhakhang. It was likely constructed in the seventeenth century, thus overlapping with the period when several of the colophons were produced. As the name indicates, the Peling Lhakhang is devoted to the Pema Lingpa *terma* tradition. However, it also bears evidence of potential non-Nyingma patronage.

The temple's walls are covered in murals, including portraits of dozens of teachers. Some of these are identifiable historical figures from both the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions. Among these, the most significant is a portrait of Taksang Repa Ngawang Gyatso (1574–1651).²⁰¹ Taksang Repa was a direct disciple of the prominent Drukpa Kagyu teacher Lhatsewa Ngawang Zangpo (1546–1615) who was instrumental in the lineage's split into “Northern” and “Southern” branches. Taksang Repa was born in Gyantse and established connections with the highest-ranking Drukpa Kagyu teachers of his day. He was renowned for his extensive pilgrimages to far flung sites, including Mt. Wutai, present-day Bhutan, and Swat Valley (present day Pakistan). The Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal learned of Taktsang Repa's reputation as a great meditator and wandering yogi and requested that he serve as royal preceptor. Under the auspices of the Namgyal kings, Taktsang Repa founded three monasteries at Hemis, Chemre, and Hanle in Ladakh, significantly strengthening and expanding the Drukpa Kagyu presence in the region. Shortly after Taksang Repa's death, the Namgyal kings' patronage of the Drukpa Kagyu—particularly the preferential royal treatment of their monasteries over Geluk monasteries in Ladakh—would eventually contribute to the war between Tibet and Ladakh.

The image from the Old Lhakhang in Pin is unfortunately obscured by smoke damage, but the figure is still easy to identify, with its distinctive white hat and white robes. The hat in

probably dates to the eighteenth century, there is no evidence of any associated followers in Pin. See Appendix 1: Buddhist Manuscripts from Pin Valley, Khar 11, *Register of the Reliquary of Rangrik Repa, Bal yul mchod rten 'phags pa shing kun dang de'i gnas gzhan rnams kyi dkar chag.*

²⁰¹ “Ngag dbang rgya mtsho,” Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, <https://www-tbrc-org/#!rid=P7857> (accessed December 15, 2016).

particular identifies the figure as Taktsang Repa portraits and references his time in Swat Valley where, such headgear was worn. Thus, the inclusion Taktsang Repa's portrait in the temple indicates that the murals were produced during his lifetime or after his death in the mid-seventeenth century. It also suggests connections with the Drukpa Kagyu and the Namgyal dynasty who patronized them. The other aspect of the temple that may hint at Drukpa patronage is the quality of the temple murals themselves. The range and quality of pigment used in the murals, the quality of the murals themselves, and especially the amount of gold used in the murals all point to the patronage of a wealthy donor or donors. It is highly unlikely that the relatively small population of the Pin Valley could have produced the temple on its own. It is much more likely that the temple was also patronized by either a Namgyal ruler or else possibly from patrons in Central Tibet.²⁰² In the first case, the presence of Taktsang Repa as an important Drukpa figure affiliated with the Namgyal Dynasty supports a royal patron. The Namgyal rulers were also active Buddhist patrons in Ladakh and Zangskar, responsible for establishing temples, monasteries, statues, manuscripts, etc.²⁰³ It seems likely that their patronage would have extended to their domain in Spiti. Indeed, one also finds an image of Taktsang Repa at the Geluk

²⁰² It is possible that the Peling lineage students who brought the tradition from Lhalung Lhodrak in Central Tibet were either wealthy themselves or else received patronage from the Peling hierarchs in Tibet. I have not yet had the chance to thoroughly compare the murals in Pin with any seventeenth-century images from Pema Lingpa temples in Tibet. Future work on this point may clarify who the patrons of the temple were.

²⁰³ Thus far, a cursory examination of comparisons between the Old Lhakang in Spiti and seventeenth century temples in Ladakh and Zangskar has not clearly established a connection between Pin and the structures the Namgyal ruler patronized on stylistic grounds. The current condition of the Old Lhakang makes this kind of visual analysis difficult at present, given the damage to the murals and the percentage of the walls that are blocked by other structures. Additional research on this point is needed to definitively argue for or against the possibility of Namgyal patronage.



Figure 10: Taksang Repa from the north wall of the Old Lhakhang in Kungri.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Photograph by author, 2014.

monastery in Drangkhar. The presence of both images of the Drukpa figure of Taksang Repa, one at a Geluk monastery in Spiti and the other at a Nyingma monastery in Spiti, supports the possibility that the Drukpa affiliated Namgyal rulers also patronized non-Drukpa institutions in Spiti.

While the colophons from Pin and visual evidence from the Old Lhakhang attest to a clear Nyingma presence in Pin, they do not indicate that most or even all of the Buddhists in Pin primarily engaged with Nyingma practices and texts. The colophons show a range of texts were produced, including a large number of perfection of wisdom texts and a few explicitly non-Nyingma texts. They also show that non-Nyingma donors contributed to the production of texts and possibly temples in Pin. Describing Pin as simply Nyingma obscures much of this activity.

Available textual and visual evidence from Pin Valley in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indicates that the production and patronage of Buddhist texts was a prevalent Buddhist practice, one that involved a large community from across the Pin Valley and occasionally from outside of Pin. Buddhist manuscripts were often dedicated alongside other activities, including textual recitations, erecting statues, carving *mani* stones, and donating money, food, and drink. While some of these practices were centered around texts that were affiliated with the Nyingma tradition, many were not, and their attendant practices are fairly widespread non-sectarian Buddhist activities. At the same time, one sees a clear Nyingma presence in Pin, and the repeated articulation of—and celebration of—that particular sectarian identity. The colophons and texts also show that what “Nyingma” entails is not uniform, but varied. All of this indicates that the history of the Nyingma tradition in Pin is itself more varied than current literature attests, and more diverse than can be captured by a single sectarian lens.

Separate but not Isolated

The body of literature on Spiti is fairly limited in its treatment of the Pin Valley. This is in part due to the lack of sources on both Pin and Spiti. The colophons from the Pin Valley examined here provide valuable information on Buddhism in Pin before the nineteenth century. These documents indicate that the Pin Valley is a discrete and separate entity from the rest of Spiti, geographically and in how it is conceived in the texts. However, the texts do not indicate that separation entails isolation. Rather, the colophons attest to an awareness of, exchange with, and adaptation in response to the world beyond Pin.

The first place where this occurs in the colophons is in the section detailing the names of the ruler and his ministers. The seventeen colophons span one hundred and fifty years, from 1630 to 1782. They account for each ruler of Spiti within that same time-span.²⁰⁵ They include details like the name of the ruler's palace or capital, his wife, and the Buddhist sect with which he is affiliated. This is an impressive feat if one assumes that the Pin Valley is isolated. It is difficult to imagine a local scribe keeping up with these details in a place with limited exchange with the outside world.. We also see a network of patronage in the long lists of donors at the end of the colophons that often extends beyond Pin itself. While most of the names provided are from the Pin Valley, there are also names of donors from outside of Pin.²⁰⁶ The colophon for *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born* describes how the text spread to Pin from Tsang

²⁰⁵ These seventeen must surely be a small fragment of the number of texts actually produced in Pin over these two centuries. There are numerous accounts of European and American travelers in Spiti buying, stealing, or coercing the exchange of texts like these. Indeed, this likely accounts for some family's hesitation in sharing old manuscripts with visiting foreigners, as was occasionally the case during my field research. Texts removed from Pin often made their way to private and public collections. In that process of transfer, details like the location where the texts were acquired were often lost or intentionally omitted. In some cases, documents like these dedication colophons were separated from the manuscripts. In at least one case, we hear of a collector who did not think these documents were very useful. He was likely one of many. If anything, this chapter shows just how much can be gleaned from these relatively short mundane documents.

²⁰⁶ This trend also occurs in the opposite direction. One of the colophons I consulted at a monastery in Lahaul included a few donors from villages in Pin.

and Mustang. A colophon for *The Chronicles of Padma* describes donors from the Geluk monasteries in Spiti, from Guge, Ladakh, and Lhodrak. Several other colophons similarly refer to donations from Spiti's Geluk monasteries, and from villages in Spiti outside of Pin.

The introduction of the Pema Lingpa tradition in the late seventeenth century marks an important point of exchange between Pin and Buddhist developments outside of Spiti, which is reflected in the colophons.²⁰⁷ Some of the colophons are appended to texts associated with the Pema Lingpa *terma*. They provide an indication of when the tradition became established in Spiti. Some colophons also explicitly refer to Pema Lingpa in the section praising Buddhist figures. The earliest colophons to reference Pema Lingpa or be appended to a Pema Lingpa text are from the first half of the eighteenth century, ca. 1734–1753.²⁰⁸ They were likely produced about half a century after the tradition was initially introduced to Pin. The colophons indicate that the tradition must have been sufficiently established within that time frame, such that the donors chose to incorporate it into the dedication text.

Another collection of texts from Pin indicates that the *terma* tradition was likely introduced to Pin somewhat earlier, in the late seventeenth or perhaps early eighteenth century. These texts are a collection of records of transmission (*thob yig*). They indicate that a group of students of the main Pema Lingpa lineage holders in Tibet made their way to Spiti in the late seventeenth century, eventually settling in Pin and leaving this collection of personal documents some time after 1669.²⁰⁹ The Old Lhakhang in Pin must have been founded in the decades after.

²⁰⁷ Today, the Pin Valley maintains two different treasure traditions, the Pema Lingpa treasure tradition and the Dudjom *terma* treasure tradition. The former was introduced to Pin in the late seventeenth century and the latter in the 1930s–40s.

²⁰⁸ These are Sagnam 01, Sagnam 04, and Sagnam 05, listed in Appendix 1.

²⁰⁹ Records of transmission trace a line of recipients of teachings or initiation, from teacher to student, typically ending with the most recent student. The records of transmission from Pin usually terminate with the immediate subject receiving the teaching directly from one of three Peling hierarchs: Gyalse Pema Trinle (1565–1642), Sungtrul Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669), Tukse Tenzin Gyurme Dorje (1641– ca. 1702). Given the dates of these individuals, the recipients of the transmissions likely lived in the mid-seventeenth century. They are also likely

Contemporary oral history in Pin also maintains a narrative of events surrounding the introduction of the Pema Lingpa tradition in Spiti. It attributes the tradition's foundation to a figure called Changchub Zangpo (Byang chub bzang po). Changchub Zangpo is said to have studied in Central Tibet with the major Pema Lingpa lineage holders of his day, after which he settled in Pin. He may have been accompanied by other students of the Pema Lingpa tradition, some of whom are referenced in the various *thob yig* currently located in Pin.²¹⁰ One person referred to a Lama Desheg (*Bde gshegs*), who was "like a son to Changchub Zangpo," although this name does not appear in the existing documents.²¹¹ Changchub Zangpo is also thought to have established a hermitage or retreat cave in Pin at Saling, also the name of a village in the valley.²¹² This location appears twice in the colophons, spelled *sa ling*, where it might refer to either the village or the retreat cave.²¹³ The name is currently associated with a largely abandoned retreat house perched on the mountainside above the village of Saling.

The presence of the Pema Lingpa tradition indicates that the Pin Valley was not necessarily isolated in the late seventeenth century. Further, the Nyingma in Pin garnered sufficient outside interest to make a venture like the Old Lhakhang feasible. This would have

responsible for introducing the Pema Lingpa *terma* to Pin in the latter half of the seventeenth century. This date can be narrowed to the period after 1669, because one of the documents appears to address Tsultrim Dorje's death. It was certainly well established by the 1750s, since Pema Lingpa's name is incorporated into manuscript dedication colophons from Pin. The two individuals whose names appear most frequently are Pema Samten and Changchub Zangpo. Other figures mentioned include Tashi Tsering, Tenzin Jigme, Jampa Gyaltzen, Orgyen Tsultrim, and Bonlung Choje. Not all of these figures are necessarily connected to the Pin Valley, however it seems likely that Pema Samten and Changchub Zangpo are, given the large number of their *thob yig* that survive today. It is possible that some or all of these individuals were part of a group referred to as the Garzha Yogins. Garzha is another name for Lahaul, a region just north of Spiti. For a discussion of these individuals and the associated documents, see Appendix 10: Records of Transmission from the Gyajin Lhakhang (*brgya byin lha khang*), Pin Valley.

²¹⁰ Regarding these figures, see Appendix 10: Records of Transmission from the Gyajin Lhakhang.

²¹¹ Two of the individuals I interviewed on this topic referred to Changchub Zangpo as Tibetan, not as a Spitian. However, his origins in Tibet or Spiti are not indicated by the existing documents. Interview with Meme Kunzang Namgyal. Interview with Meme Sonam Phuntsok.

²¹² In one interview the retreat location's spelling was provided as *Gser ling phug*, rather than *Sa ling*. Interview with Meme Kunzang Namgyal.

²¹³ Alternate possible spellings of similar proper names in Pin are *gser ling*, *gsal ling*, and *gser gling*.

required wealth patron, access to supplies, and skilled artists, all of which would have been difficult to procure if Pin were cut off from the outside world.

It is not clear if the Peling practitioners in Pin traveled to and from the Peling centers in Tibet and Bhutan. If so, their mobility may have been hampered by the political and military turmoil in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Indeed, evidence shows that the rise of Nyingma persecution in central Tibet in the eighteenth century led many Nyingma to take refuge in the Himalayas.²¹⁴ Future evidence may clarify the extent to which Pin maintained active connections with Peling centers elsewhere in the eighteenth century. Evidence from Pin does indicate that there were active exchanges between Pin and the Peling seat at Lhalung in central Tibet in the nineteenth century. A dedication inscription in the Old Lhaxhang notes that new statues were installed during the lifetime of the current Pema Lingpa lineage holders, the reincarnations of those same Peling lineage holders whose students settled in Pin at least a century prior.²¹⁵ The extent to which this reflects a singular event or an ongoing exchange is yet to be determined.

This body of evidence from Pin taken as a whole indicates that Buddhists in the Pin Valley imagined and articulated the region as a distinct space, part of but set apart from its

²¹⁴ Ehrhard notes that a Ngawang Lhundrup Dragspa was sent from Lhalung, the seat of the Peling tradition in Central Tibet, to Ngari Tod. Ngawang Dragspa was a lineage holder for the Pema Lingpa terma in addition to the newly organized and printed Nyingma Gyubum, which he passed on to those in Mangyul. Ehrhard, Franz-Karl, “Recently Discovered Manuscripts of the RNying Ma Rgyud ’bum from Nepal,” in *Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, n.d. Franz-Karl Ehrhard, *A Rosary of Rubies: The Chronicle of the Gur-Rigs MDo-Chen Tradition from South-Western Tibet* (Indus Verlag, 2008).

²¹⁵ For a translation of the inscription and description of the temple, see Appendix 7 The Old Lhaxhang in the Pin Valley, Appendix 8: Translation of the Renovation Inscription in the Old Lhaxhang, and Appendix 9: Tibetan text of the Renovation Inscription in the Old Lhaxhang. Not long after this inscription, in the early twentieth century, a new Nyingma tradition became established in Pin, the Dudjom Tersar. This tradition developed on the opposite side of Tibet in Amdo by Dudjom Lingpa. Shortly after his death, his students established what was later called the western branch of the Dudjom Tersar at Kailash. There they encountered traveling practitioners from Spiti and Pin. These events took place on the cusp of two major upheavals: Indian Independence and the Chinese occupation of Tibet. While this period will be addressed in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting that in these events too, Pin’s Nyingma practitioners were not isolated but wide ranging in their travels. As a result, Pin today houses not one but two major Nyingma *terma* traditions that developed far away from Pin.

surroundings. They gave shape to the valley as a Buddhist space through the poetic content of the colophons. They also articulated the valley as a primarily Nyingma space in both the colophons and the temple space. Throughout, this material shows that while most of the participants in Pin's Buddhist life were from that valley, some were from outside of Pin in the main Spiti Valley, and others were even outside of Spiti. The particular nature of the Nyingma tradition in Pin was not static but changed over time, as new traditions were introduced and became established. Over the course of these two centuries, Pin was clearly Nyingma, and remained so not because it was isolated from the outside world, but rather through interactions with the world outside of Pin.

Chapter 2: Go West Young Man: Establishing the Dudjom Tersar in Spiti

In this aeon, during the middle period,
I was known as Gesar, resident of the Land of Jambu.
Its upper part is India, the exalted land;
The middle part Tibet, the land of snows;
And the lower part China and Mongolia—
My fame spread throughout all these lands....
These days I'm a little boy—that's you!
Now you are a little boy with excellent fortune.²¹⁶

The defining feature of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti today is the Dudjom Tersar tradition.

While this may not seem particularly surprising given the widespread influence of this tradition throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world, owing in no small part to the influence of Dudjom Rinpoche Jigtral Yeshe Dorje and his role as the head of the Nyingma sect in exile, the presence of the tradition in Spiti predates both Dudjom Rinpoche's influence and the post-exile global spread of Tibetan Buddhism. How then did this tradition spread from a region on the far eastern edge of cultural Tibet to a region on the far western edge of cultural Tibet in such a short period of time? Like the mid to late seventeenth-century period when the Pema Lingpa tradition became established in Pin, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of political upheaval and warfare. Despite characterizations of Tibet as insular and isolated at the time, the lives of the figures involved in spreading the Dudjom Tersar to Spiti attest to a period of mobility and engagement with Tibet's neighbors. They were not alone in this.

²¹⁶ Bdud-'joms-glin-pa and Choying Drolma, *A Clear Mirror: The Visionary Autobiography of a Tibetan Master* (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2012), 222.

The Dudjom Tersar teachings found their way from one far end of the Tibetan Plateau to the other, from Amdo to Spiti, in a surprisingly short span of time, such that when Dudjom Lingpa traveled to Spiti in the nineteen fifties and sixties, he was not introducing the *tersar* to Spiti; rather, the *tersar* brought him to the region. The mobility of the Dudjom Tersar and the rapidity with which it became established in the western Himalayas are in part indicative of the mobility of Nyingmapa in Spiti in the first half of the twentieth century. This mobility is also due to a longer trend of movement from east to west, as described by Huber. Dudjom Lingpa's students crossed the Tibetan Plateau and established themselves in the Kailash region, rapidly founding two institutions associated with the tradition. Members of or participants in these institutions were also very mobile. This was in part due to the cyclical structure of teaching and retreat (perhaps stretching back to the annual retreat practices in early Indian Buddhism). Thus the students of the new Dudjom Tersar spread out in the western Himalayas then returned, in a continually expanding and contracting sphere of influence. This mobility was curtailed by the solidification of international borders, causing these new *tersar* communities to be cut off from each other. In some cases, this isolation persisted, whereas in others, new circuits of connection, new spheres of expansion and contraction, developed in ways that circumvented or superseded newly hardened borders. Again, this shows the great mobility of Buddhists in Spiti and the plasticity, adaptability, and mutability of regional Buddhist networks. This mutability is later concretized, both literally and figuratively, through material engagements with the landscape.

Apocalypse Now: Dudjom Lingpa's *Terma* Tradition for the End Times

Dudjom Lingpa (1835–1904) was an important nineteenth-century Nyingma *tertön* (*gter ston*) or treasure revealer from Golok in Amdo.²¹⁷ He began discovering *terma* at a young age, and continued to do so throughout his life. He led a mobile existence, rarely settling for too long in one area. He frequently extolls a peripatetic lifestyle and secluded training in isolated places. Dudjom Lingpa had a somewhat ambivalent relationship to monastic institutions. He distanced himself from them while also drawing on the prestige of leading monastic figures to validate his own activities. While Dudjom Lingpa himself frequently celebrated his lack of formal monastic training, he installed his sons at various monasteries, including the monastery he eventually founded, Drasang Kalzang (*Brda tshang bskal bzang dgon*).²¹⁸ This ambivalence or tension between settled monastery-based training and a wandering solitary existence recurs in the lives and activities of his students, and indeed, is a persistent theme throughout the history of Buddhism in Tibet.

Dudjom Lingpa's *terma* texts were discovered during a period of often violent political upheaval and change. This turmoil is referenced throughout his biographies, and shaped the content and nature of the various prophecies and revelations he received.²¹⁹ The world Dudjom Lingpa lived in—Golok in the nineteenth century—was marked by threats, both from foreign

²¹⁷ *Masters of the Nyingma Lineage*, Crystal Mirror Series, v. 11 (Berkeley, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1995); Bdud-'joms-gliñ-pa and Drolma, *Clear Mirror*; Bdud 'joms gling pa author and Pad+ma lung rtogs rgya mtsho editor, *Gter chen chos kyi rgyal po khrag 'thung bdud 'joms gling pa'i rnam thar zhal gsungs ma the autobiography of bdud-'joms-gling-pa* (Dehradun: G.T.K. Lodoy & N. Gyeltsen, 1970).

²¹⁸ He describes himself as self-taught or else as receiving instructions from *ḍākinī*. "I am an infant without refuge or guardian. / Above there is no one to shelter or protect me. / Below there is no one to support me. / Beside me, not a single person props me up. / Although I've taught others / As my self-manifest teachers ordered, / No one is interested in me / Except as an object of universal criticism..." Bdud-'joms-gliñ-pa and Drolma, *Clear Mirror*, 81.

²¹⁹ The word *apocalypse* is an apt term for describing the Dudjom Lingpa *terma*. His biography emphasizes throughout foretelling the decline of the dharma. He lived in—and produced his texts in the context of—a period of warfare and disorder. The word *apocalypse* derives from the Greek, to uncover or disclose, any revelation or disclosure. It also refers to a disaster, a large-scale cataclysm. Thus these two dominant sense of the term, as a revelation and a disaster, capture the mood of Dudjom Lingpa's context.

invasion and from brigands closer to home.²²⁰ His biographies articulate this violence in Buddhist terms, warning that the future turmoil heralds the decline of the *dharma* in Tibet.²²¹

Just one hundred years from now
Non-Buddhist barbarian border people
Will cause not even a murmur of the teachings to endure
Since we've reached a dark era
Transcribing many lengthy texts
Will only cause you fatigue.
Therefore, you must transcribe into words and spread
The innermost pith of all your sacred teachings,
And it's possible you can help those fortunate individuals.
Stretch your mind to its utmost limit
And you will accomplish the supreme purpose of this life and the next.²²²

The threats are described as barbarians, foreigners, and non-Buddhists, who linger on the borderlands.²²³

These prophecies about Buddhism's decline also position Dudjom Lingpa's *terma* as an essential counterforce in forestalling such calamities. He is repeatedly enjoined to teach and spread his own *terma*, and not to focus on other teachings, as in the verse above ("Therefore, you

²²⁰ Robin Kornman describes people from Golok as "notorious for their aggressiveness." Robin Kornman, "A Tribal History," in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Princeton Readings in Religions (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 47. The biography of Dudjom Lingpa's contemporary, Tertön Tsogyal, paints a similar picture of Golok in the nineteenth century. Matteo Pistono and Sogyal, *Fearless in Tibet: The Life of the Mystic Tertön Sogyal*, 2014, 189, 195. Sarah Jacoby's translation of Sera Khandro's auto/biography attests to the ongoing turmoil in Golok after Dudjom Lingpa's life, which eventually caused her consort—and Dudjom Lingpa's so—Drimè Özer, to relocate his monastic seat. Sarah Jacoby, "Consorts and Revelation in Eastern Tibet: The Auto/Biographical Writings of the Treasure Revealer Sera Khandro (1892–1940)" (University of Virginia, 2007), 54.

²²¹ "In this first part of your life, major disasters won't occur in your area. During the latter part of your life, due to the incursion of border people's power substances and incantations, irresolvable calamities—disease, war, and famine— will spread; fear and turmoil will erupt. Nevertheless, until your life ends, the doctrine of sūtra and mantra definitely won't be lost to demons on a corrupt path. Later, after some time, not even a spark of the doctrine of sūtra and mantra will remain in your region; demonic creeds will spread and there won't even be a sesame seed's worth of a chance for happiness." Bdud-'joms-gliñ-pa and Drolma, *Clear Mirror*, 107.

²²² Bdud-'joms-gliñ-pa and Drolma, 82.

²²³ He refers to threats from non-Buddhists, the Chinese, "non-Asians" "*pi pi ling ling*," and "border people." Sarah Jacoby describes a prophecy Dudjom Lingpa gave to his son, Drime Ozer in 1899, that conveys the same language and idea, indicating that the apocalyptic events will occur after his death, when "the terror of the Chinese Mongols from the borderlands will come near...[and] the power of the barbaric people of the borderlands will spread." Sarah Jacoby, *Love and Liberation: The Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Visionary Sera Khandro* (New York ; Chichester, England: Columbia University Press, 2014), 127.

must transcribe into words and spread / The innermost pith of all your sacred teachings”). In addition to slowing the decline of the dharma, Dudjom Lingpa also thwarts worldly threats of violence, “I stood my ground, the army never even appeared and the dispute vanished on its own.”

The idea that the present moment—at any given time—is a period of Buddhism’s decline has a long history in Buddhism, as Jan Nattier’s exhaustive study shows. In Tibetan contexts specifically, predictions of an imminent degenerate age are frequently linked to Padmasambhava and to the activities of *tertöns*. Indeed, Padmasambhava’s predictions about a future degenerate age often appear in the context of predictions about individual *tertöns* in a way that reinforces the legitimacy and significance of the *tertön* him or herself.²²⁴ The *terma* are both meant to be revealed in the period of decline and are also meant to be an aid in forestalling that degeneration. They position the *terma* or *tertön* as both harbinger and failsafe. As in the verse above, if Dudjom Lingpa copies down and spreads his teachings, he “can help those fortunate individuals.”

This logic also extends to hidden lands or *beyul* (*sbas yul*), the discovery of which are also predicted by Padmasambhava and delegated to a particular *tertön* or *tertöns*.²²⁵ Like the *terma* teachings as a balm in a degenerate time, the hidden lands provide a refuge from the turbulence in the everyday world. Indeed, a number of scholars have suggested a connection between periods of military and political turmoil on the one hand, and the activities of *tertöns* on

²²⁴ Bryan Cuevas describes one example of this in the case of Gedun Gyeltsen. The same verses Padmasambhava speaks that foretell the *terma* discovery describe the discovery taking place in a degenerate age. Bryan J. Cuevas, *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 87–89.

²²⁵ Despite the centrality of Padmasambhava to *tertöns*, *terma*, and *beyul*, and his importance to the Nyingma, Dudjom Lingpa’s biography does not seem to emphasize the Nyingma as such, or sectarian affiliation. Rather, he focuses on the importance and significance of specific practices, especially Troma Nakmo. It is clear that he does have ties to the Nyingma, and some ties to Nyingma institutions in Amdo, but for the most part he does not champion the Nyingma over other traditions.

the other.²²⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, these sanctuaries are typically located in borderlands, the very place from which threats to Buddhism are said to emerge. There is an ambivalence then, about the relationship between center and periphery, in which the borderlands serve as both the source of a contagion and the refuge from it. Dudjom Lingpa received prophecies about one such hidden land called Pemakö. While he did not reach Pemakö in his lifetime, he told his disciples to go there to seek his next rebirth.²²⁷

The warnings and prophecies Dudjom Lingpa receives also convey a strong sense of space. They describe the world as if it were a maṇḍala, orienting his environment in terms of center and periphery. For example, in one vision he is transported to a pure land and instructed to look in the cardinal directions, and describes what he sees in each location.²²⁸ The prophetic descriptions of violence he receives in his vision evoke this senses of space-as-maṇḍala. The threats in most cases are said to come from the borderlands and periphery, the outer margin of the maṇḍala, as in the verse above. In his dreams, *dākinī* warn that the threat will reach the center, “The border people have intruded into the center of the country: Look at how the clouds of their corrupt dogmas veil the sun of the holy Buddhist doctrine.”²²⁹ He also receives predictions about his students, and the extent to which they will spread his teachings. One

²²⁶ Jann Ronis argues that the number of Nyingma *tertöns* exploring a hidden land was related to the rise of other political powers that ousted those *tertöns*. Jann Ronis, “Bdud ’dul Rdo Rje (1615–1672) and Rnying Ma Adaptations to the Era of the Fifth Dalai Lama,” in *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition*, ed. Bryan Jaré Cuevas and Kurtis R Schaeffer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), 184. See also Andrew Quintman, “Toward a Geographic Biography: Mi La Ras Pa in the Tibetan Landscape,” *Numen* 55, no. 4 (2008): 371; Saul Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, v. 26 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011), 10.

²²⁷ “I prepared to go to the place called Pemakö, Lotus Array. However, due to other circumstances, the auspicious connection was blundered...” Bdud-’joms-glin-pa and Drolma, *Clear Mirror*, 157.

²²⁸ Bdud-’joms-glin-pa and Drolma, 57–59.

²²⁹ Bdud-’joms-glin-pa and Drolma, 110.

prophecy refers to thirteen students in particular, among them a student who would establish his *terma* in Western Tibet.²³⁰

Perhaps because of the warnings about the collapse of the center, or the predictions of his students' activities, what might have remained a very local, and localized, tradition spread out following the death of its founder, such that within two decades, there was an established Dudjom Tersar center in Ngari, on the opposite side of Tibet. In a striking coincidence that perhaps underscores the timeliness of Dudjom Lingpa's apocalyptic visions and prophecies, Dudjom Lingpa died in the same year that the Younghusband Expedition invaded Tibet, forcing the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to flee Tibet to take refuge in Mongolia. His own reincarnation was identified in Pemakö, as he had instructed.

Two Journeys with One End: The Dudjom Tersar in Western Tibet

Dudjom Lingpa's visions contained prophecies of his students spreading out across Tibet, the Dudjom Tersar going with them. While this may or may not have been a factor in their decisions, some of his students *did* travel far afield from the region where Dudjom Lingpa was active and discovered his *terma*.²³¹ Two in particular were responsible for spreading the Dudjom Tersar in the Ngari region of Tibet, and beyond Tibet in Himalayan areas in north-west Nepal and India, including Spiti. Although some two decades separated their travels, each one left their homeland in Golok, Amdo, in far eastern Tibet, and embarked on a journey across the Tibetan Plateau that eventually brought them to the region of Mount Kailash. There, first one and then the other, established new institutions centered around Dudjom Lingpa's teachings. These institutions

²³⁰ "Thirteen practitioners of magical illusion will accomplish the illusory rainbow body."

²³¹ In Pema Lungtok Gyatso's case, he refers several times to his desire to wander and travel in isolated wild places. He seeks out the mobile *gar* encampments after leaving the monastery. Although it is not explicitly stated in his *namthar*, he may have been inspired by Dudjom Lingpa's entreaties to seek out isolated places for practice.

thrived and grew, drawing students from far afield, until they were abandoned and subsequently destroyed in 1959.

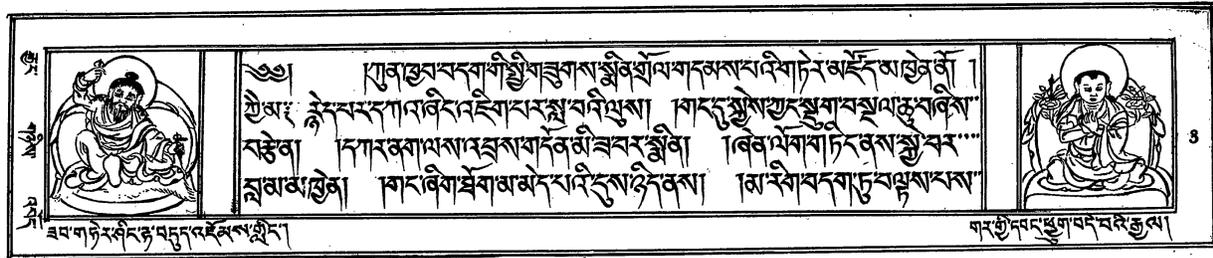


Figure 11: Folio from Etaraja’s *Collected Works* depicting Dudjom Lingpa and Etaraja.²³²

The first of these students was a monk named Pema Dewé Gyalpo (1873–1933). Pema Dewé Gyalpo left a body of writings that were published in 1984 as a *Collected Works* or *sungum* (*gsung ’bum*). The *Collected Works* provides a sense of the kinds of practices and teachings he engaged with and taught his students. They also provide glimpses of his life, which were not otherwise recorded.²³³ Although his students apparently requested that he compose a *namthar* (*rnam thar*) or autobiography, none have come to light.²³⁴ He signed his works with several names: Tsultrim Lobzang Changchub Palzangpo (his ordination name), Pema Dewé Gyalpo, Etaraja, “the mad beggar,” and “the little monk.”²³⁵ The most frequent name he used was

²³² E ta rA dza, *The Collected Works (gsung ’bum) of EtarAja alias Bde ba’i rgyal po*, ed. Tshe dbang rdo rje (Delhi: Damchoe Sangpo, 1984), vols. 1, 3.

²³³ His *Collected Works* are possibly incomplete, derived from what the community at Namkha Khyung Dzong could carry with them when they left Tibet. Oral histories and references in other sources have provided some broad outlines of his life once he reached Ngari. They are published in two collections, one compiled from texts belonging to Tsewang Dorje, who was the son of Pema Lungtok Gyatso. Given that the monastery he founded ran an active printing press, and the relatively small amount of texts that exist now, it seems likely that much of what the monastery produced has not survived.

²³⁴ *Dpal ldan bla ma’i rnam thar ’debs*, “Petition to the Glorious Lama [for his] Biography,” at the request of Ani Utpala Zangmo (A ni U ta pa la bzang mo). E ta rA dza, *The Collected Works (gsung ’bum) of EtarAja alias Bde ba’i rgyal po*, ed. Tshe dbang rdo rje (Delhi: Damchoe Sangpo, 1984), vol. 1, f 49–57.

²³⁵ Tsultrim Lobzang Changchub Palzangpo (tshul khriims blo bzang byang chub dpal bzang po), Pema Dewé Gyalpo (Pad+ma bde ba’i rgyal po), Etaraja (E ta ra dza), the mad beggar (*sprang smyon*), the humble beggar (*sprang ma nus*), the one called De[wa] (*bde ming pa*), the little monk who is illusory (*sgyu ma’i btsun chung*), the “Kusulipa” Etaraja (*Ku su li pa*, “the one who thinks only of eating, sleeping, and eliminating”), and Khyung Dzongpa (*Khyung rdzong pa*). Although it is listed in the preface to the published edition of his collected works, I have not located a text where he refers to himself as Pema Dechen Gyalpo.

Etaraja, while others often referred to him as Degyal Rinpoche. For the sake of differentiating him from his student, Pema Lungtok Gyatso, I refer to him as Etaraja.

After Dudjom Lingpa's death in 1904, Etaraja traveled to Pemakö to recognize his teacher's reincarnation, then likely left Eastern Tibet. The exact route he took is not known, but he eventually reached Ngari in Western Tibet, where he settled near Mount Kailash. He seems to have primarily stayed in this area through the end of his life.²³⁶ His fairly stationary life in Ngari differentiates him from some of his contemporaries and students, who engaged in frequent and often wide-ranging pilgrimages. Near Kailash, he established a monastery called Namkha Khyung Dzong (*Nam mkha' khyung rdzong*), which attracted a diverse group of students.²³⁷ We get a sense of Etaraja's wide appeal and following from the students mentioned in his *Collected Works*. They included men and women, lay and monastic. He had students from across the Tibetan traditions, not only the Nyingma, as well as Bön students.²³⁸ They hailed from the length

²³⁶ In his *Collected Works*, he refers to the various locations where he gave teachings, had dreams or visions, composed texts, and was requested to give teachings. There are relatively few individual locations specified, but those that are indicated frequently recur, perhaps indicating that he remained in those locations for a long time, or else traveled between them. They are nearly all in the vicinity of Kailash: He records one instance in which he "spontaneously composed" a text at Tsari in 1912 and wrote it down later in 1931, at his monastery near Kailash. This indicates that he left Kailash at least once to travel to Tsari.

²³⁷ He also refers to it at Drakmar Namkha Khyung Dzong and Drakmar Palgyi Khyung Dzong (*Brag dmar dpal gyi Nam mkha' khyung rdzong*). According to the history of the reestablished Namkha Khyung Dzong Monastery in Humla, Nepal, Etaraja established the original Kailash monastery in 1906. The Humla monastery was established in 1985. "About Monastery | Namkhyung Monastery," accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.namkhyung.org/about-namkhyung-monastery/>.

²³⁸ Of the twenty-eight individuals named in his collected works, four are women (all four are nuns). In one instance, a married couple from Tsang are recorded as his students. For a list of all of his students named in the *Collected Works*, see the Appendix 11: Students, Teachers, and Pilgrims: Members of the Namkha Khyung Dzong Community, 1900–1959. Some have attributed the category of *rime* (*ris med*) to Etaraja and his community at Namkha Khyung Dzong, which included Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje, the Bön teacher also described as a *rime* figure. Some caution is necessary here, to distinguish between teachers who happened to have wide appeal and those who actively advanced a non-sectarian framework. While Etaraja certainly fulfilled the former, I do not think he necessarily adheres to the latter, at least based on my cursory reading of his works. Millard for example describes Etaraja's student Khyungtrul as "a true representative of the Tibetan non sectarian *ris med* movement" because he published both Bon and Buddhist texts and practiced both Bon and Buddhism. It is also true though, that Khyungtrul was explicitly engaged in a sectarian effort to reinvigorate Bon in what he saw as its historical heartland. Despite the diverse group of students that coalesced around Etaraja and the arguably "non-sectarian" context in which he taught the Dudjom *tersar*, contemporary inheritors of this lineage in Spiti relate the process of transmission in distinctly sectarian terms. They articulate the life and activities of Etaraja's student Yeshe Palden, who was in large part

and breadth of the Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist world, from Kham to Ladakh. At its height, Namkha Khyung Dzong boasted some one-thousand students.²³⁹ Despite the size and diversity of the institution, Etaraja apparently kept different groups apart. The monastery had three sections or gates, one for the monks, one for the nuns, and one for the *ngakpa* (*sngag pa*).²⁴⁰ The Namkha Khyung Dzong community would gather for teachings in the summer and spend the winter in retreat. It was a thriving new institution centered around the Dudjom Tersar.

Etaraja himself, and possibly the students responsible for compiling and publishing his works, also viewed the period they were living in as a degenerate age, one that necessitated spreading Dudjom Lingpa's *terma*. In one instance, Etaraja says that "these days, the five corruptions are spreading these days the life of inferior beings are spreading the spreading," "sentient beings are unrealized and deluded" and offers his own text as a remedy, in an echo of Dudjom Lingpa's *namthar*.²⁴¹ The caption underneath a block-printed image of Etaraja also reads "Dewé Gyal [whose] teachings illuminate the dark time."²⁴²

responsible for bringing the Dudjom teachings from Kailash to Spiti, as a triumph of dynamic Nyingma practice over staid Geluk institutionalism. This same theme is prevalent in Pema Lungtok Gyatso's life.

Colin Millard, "The Life and Medical Legacy of Khyung Sprul 'Jigs Med Nam Mkha'i Rdo Rje (1897-1955)," *East and West* 59 (2009): 154.

²³⁹ The printing house continued to be active after Etaraja's death. We read of Pema Lungtok Gyatso's continual search for supplies for manufacturing books, as well as his gifts of books and book materials to other visiting luminaries. The press may have been looted in 1941, along with many of the other monasteries in the area. Chos 'phel, *gangs can bod kyi gnas bshad lam yig gсар ma*, par gzhi 1., vol. 4 (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 41–42.

²⁴⁰ Chos 'phel, 4:41.

²⁴¹ He uses humilific language to describe his efforts, calling himself a "small monk who is illusory." *deng dus snyigs ma lnga bdo tha ma'i tshe / sgyu ma'i btsun chung E ta rA dza ngas / ma rtogs 'khrul ba'i smes can khams dbang dang/ 'tshams par sgyu ma'i rnam 'gyur du ma bstan/ la la'i chos mthong la la'i log par mthong / thar lam gnyer mkhan re gnyis tsam las med/ da ni mi sdod rtag 'dzin can rnams la/ mi rtag bstan nas srid las 'da' bar 'dod/ E ta rA dza, The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of Etar.Aja alias Bde ba'i rgyal po. Vol 2: 340–341.*

²⁴² "Snyigs dus bstan pa'i gsal byed bde ba'i rgyal." E ta rA dza, *The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of Etar.Aja alias Bde ba'i rgyal po, Vol. 3, 73.*

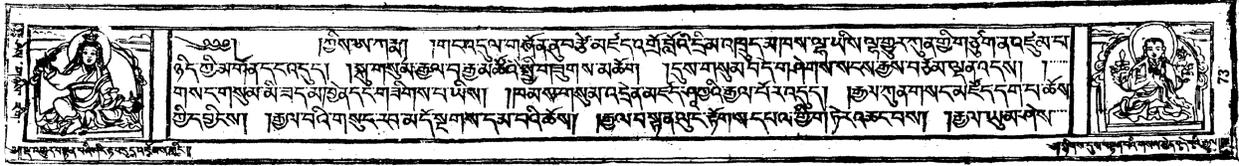


Figure 12: Folio from Etaraja’s *Collected Works* depicting Dudjom Lingpa and Etaraja.²⁴³

The two different images of Etaraja in his *Collected Works*, locate him alongside his teacher Dudjom Lingpa. The illustrations contrast their two very different appearances: Etaraja is depicted in monastic attire, seated with a sword and book over his right shoulder, both hands raised in a teaching gesture, with a pronounced widows peak.²⁴⁴ He is juxtaposed with Dudjom Lingpa, who is depicted as a *yogin* or *siddha*, with long hair bound on his head in a topknot, his right leg extended in an active stance, and his right hand raised in a threatening gesture. In one text, they are preceded by the tripartite Nyingma group of Vajrasattva, Samantabhadra, and Garab Dorje.²⁴⁵ These two figures thus arrayed depict two archetypal Tibetan Buddhist practitioners: the yogin and the monk. Their contrasting representations might reflect the diverse community of Dudjom Tersar practitioners active at Namkha Khyung Dzong, subdivided into monks and yogins. They also attest to the early Dudjom Tersar tradition as encompassing a scholarly tradition founded in monastic training as well as non-monastic family-based lineage components. This latter method of maintaining and imparting a group of teachings comes to the fore in the life of one of Etaraja’s students, Pema Lungtok Gyatso.

Pema Lungtok Gyatso (1891–1964) was one of Etaraja’s core students. Like Dudjom Rinpoche, he was from Golok Serta, and was more widely known as Golok Serta Rinpoche.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ E ta rA dza, vols. 1, 73.

²⁴⁴ These blocks were likely carved by Etaraja’s student(s) and were carried from Kailash India. His students Khyungtrul and Pema Lungtok Gyatso were actively involved in printing texts.

²⁴⁵ E ta rA dza, *The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of EtarAja alias Bde ba'i rgyal po*, Vol. 3, 72–73.

²⁴⁶ A different Pema Gyatso appears in the colophon of Dudjom Lingpa’s autobiography (*rang rnam*) and in sections of his secret autobiography. In the text’s colophon, Dudjom Lingpa describes him as: and states that he was

He met Dudjom Lingpa in 1899, when he was eight years old. Although he was quite young at the time, this meeting with Dudjom Lingpa had a significant impact on his life. Pema Lungtok Gyatso's Collected Works span volumes. His *namthar* or biography, was published by his son, Tsewang Dorje.²⁴⁷

As a youth, Pema Lungtok Gyatso enrolled at Zhichen Monastery in Golok, where his primary teacher was another student of Dudjom Lingpa, Goser Onpo Khyenrab Gyatso.

However, he did not remain long at Zhichen; he preferred “wandering alone through rugged country” to life in the monastery.²⁴⁸ When he consulted his teacher about his desire to leave,

Onpo Khyenrab Gyatso said:

Although I had a hope you would benefit if you stayed in this monastery, last night I had a dream in which you reached the peak of a snow mountain (*gangs ri*, Kailash). You saw there were many wild animals nearby, staying there and eating grass, [but you were] carefree. It was like you had some benefit for all sentient beings' happiness. I had a hazy memory that at the time (of your) birth (you were) Turquoise Roar, Yudra Nyingpo. It is certain (you will) meet an authentic teacher in this lifetime.²⁴⁹

In 1910, when he was nineteen years old, he left the monastery to join Adzom Drukpa's (1842–1924) *gar* (*sgar*), a “camp” or “encampment.”²⁵⁰ According to his biography, he stayed for a few months, was not able to meet with Adzom Drukpa in person, then left to join others on a

responsible for editing the work. Given his age and the date of Dudjom Lingpa's death, it is highly likely this was a different person named Pema Lungtok Gyatso.

²⁴⁷ Tsewang Dorje was the reincarnation of Tsogkhang Rinpoche, who was also a student of Dudjom Lingpa.

²⁴⁸ *te gnyan sa 'grim pa dang sngon 'gro 'bum lnga skyel ba sogs shug sgang ri khrod du lo gnyis tsam bzhugs pas/ Tshe dbang rdo rje, Grub dbang pad+ma lung rtogs rgya mtsho mchog gi rnam thar byang chub lam bstan: the Biography of the Golok Buddhist Yogi, Padma-lung-rtogs-rgya-mtsho, 1891-1964* (Dalhousie: Damchoe sangpo, 1984), 9.

²⁴⁹ Yudra Nyingpo was one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava and the main Tibetan recipient of the Dzogchen *sems sde* tradition. This passage reads: *phyir nyin sku mdun du bcar bas/ ya thos pa dga' khyod dgon pa 'dir phan thog gi re ba zhid yod kyang / mdang dgong nga yi rmi lam na khyod gangs ri zhid gi rtser slebs te 'dug de'i 'gram du ri dwags mang pos bag phebs kyi rtsa za zhid gnas pa mthong/ khyod kyi sems can 'ga' la phan thog cung tsam yod ba 'dra/ khyod rang gyu sgra'i skye ba yin cing skabs su 'al 'ol dran pa'ng yong / tshe rab kyi bla ma dam pa zhid kyang phrad nges yin zhes gsungs.* Translation my own. Tshe dbang rdo rje, 12.

²⁵⁰ For a biography of Adzom Drukpa, see 'Jam-dbyaṅs-rdo-rje and Richard Barron, *A marvelous garland of rare gems: biographies of masters of awareness in the Dzogchen lineage: a spiritual history of the teachings of Natural Great Perfection* (Junction City, CA: Padma Pub., 2012).

pilgrimage to Central Tibet.²⁵¹ He then returned and joined Śākya Śrī's (1853–1919) encampment.²⁵² An encampment, sometimes called a *chos gar* or religious camp, is a type of mobile community of practitioners. They may be more strictly organized, as was the case for Śākya Śrī's, or less formal. According to Antonio Terrone, “Where most religious encampments diverge from the monasteries is their decentralized administration and the fact that their inhabitants need to provide their own economic resources.”²⁵³ He also notes that for members of these encampments, isolation is often part of the appeal.²⁵⁴

This certainly seems to have been the case for Pema Lungtok Gyatso, who spent the next decade on what might be termed an extended pilgrimage in the periphery. He traveled from one power place to the next, to use Keith Dowman's term, alternating his practice with seeking material and financial support. He made his way throughout Central Tibet and Nepal, gradually making his way westward. Throughout this period, his biography describes his goal of roaming and practicing in dangerous, isolated, and wild places. It also conveys a rejection both of Central Tibet and of formal monasteries. In one episode in particular, a group of monks criticize him for playing his drum, a typical accouterment for *chöd* (*gcod*) practice. They tell him he would

²⁵¹ *der slebs pa dang mgo ser dbon po mkhyen rab rgya mtsho mchog gis bla ma brten tshul ni A 'dzom 'brug pa rin po che'i sku mdun du cung tsam re bsdad na shes yong gsung ba'i zhal gdams gnam ba ltar zla ba gsum bzhugs cing mjal kha yang dka' bas lan gsum las mjal kha ma thob/* Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*, 15.

²⁵² Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa's study of Śākya Śrī's life addresses several themes that might also be applied to Pema Lungtok Gyatso. Although Śākya Śrī was perhaps more widely traveled, both operated in geographically peripheral areas, were largely mobile, and were concerned with non-monastic forms of Buddhist institutions. Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatso and Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, *Togden Shakya Shri: The Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yogi*, trans. Elio Guarisco (Arcidosso Italy: Shang Shung Publications, 2009); Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, *The Social Life of Tibetan Biography: Textuality, Community, and Authority in the Lineage of Tokden Shakya Shri*, Studies in Modern Tibetan Culture (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014); 'Jam-dbyaṅs-rdo-rje and Barron, *A marvelous garland of rare gems*.

²⁵³ Terrone, Antonio, “Householders and Monks: A Study of Treasure Revealers and Their Role in Religious Revival in Contemporary Eastern Tibet,” in *Buddhism beyond the Monastery Tantric Practices and Their Performers in Tibet and the Himalayas*, ed. Sarah Jacoby and Antonio Terrone (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009), 87.

²⁵⁴ Terrone, Antonio, 85.

receive better alms if he got rid of the drum. He scolds them and says they are ignorant of his practice.²⁵⁵

In his massive compendium of biographies of Dzogchen masters, Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorje attributes an important event to Pema Lungtok Gyatso's brief time at Adzom Drukpa's camp. He says that Adzom told Pema Lungtok Gyatso, "You must go to western Tibet and benefit beings there."²⁵⁶ He also told the young wanderer to meditate in solitude. Whether it was motivated by Goser Onpo Khyenrab Gyatso's dream about Kailash or Adzom Drukpa's instructions, Pema Lungtok Gyatso eventually reached western Tibet in 1923.²⁵⁷

After completing his key aim of circumambulating Mount Kailash, Pema Lungtok Gyatso sought out Etaraja at Namkha Khyung Dzong. He had encountered a third Dudjom Tersar student from Golok while he was in northwest Nepal, Tsogkhang Rinpoche, who told him about the monk from Golok, and accompanied Pema Lungtok Gyatso to meet him.²⁵⁸ At Namkha Khyung Dzong, Etaraja became Pema Lungtok Gyatso's primary teacher, his "root lama" (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*). Pema Lungtok Gyatso spent the next three and a half decades based in the Kailash

²⁵⁵ *Troma Nakmo chöd (khro ma nag mo mchod)* is one—if not the—core Nyingma practice in the Pin Valley, as well as in the Dudjom Tersar. In a rather confusing coincidence, Dudjom Lingpa had another student named Pema Lungtok Gyatso. He wrote an important commentary on Dudjom Lingpa's chöd, and appears in the colophon of Dudjom Lingpa's *namthar* as the person who copied down the text. There, he refers to himself as Pema Lungtok Gyatso, or Lobzang Tenpe Gyaltzen. This is not the same person as Golok Serta Pema Lungtok Gyatso. Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*; Heruka Dudjom Lingpa et al., *Dudjom Lingpa's Chöd: An Ambrosia Ocean of Sublime Explanations: The Profound Heart Essence of Saraha*, 2014; Bdud-'joms-gliñ-pa and Drolma, *Clear Mirror*, 200.

²⁵⁶ "His guru told him, "If I instruct you in the main body of practice of the Dzogchen approach, you must go to western Tibet and benefit beings there." He then conferred on Sertar Rinpoche such teachings as the Dzogchen manual Timeless Awareness as the Guiding Principle, The Innermost Heart Drop of the Guru, The Heart Drop of Chetsun, [2.154b] and his own daknang transmission, The Twenty-five Spheres. "Now practice these," Adzom Druktrul told Sertar Rinpoche. "As is said, if one does not practice, how will one attain siddhis? Plant the victory banner of spiritual practice in your mind.' So now you must meditate in solitude." Accordingly, Sertar Rinpoche returned to Sertar, where he received from the first Dudjom that master's profound terma revelations, such as the cycle of the wrathful goddess Krodhikali. He then visited more than a hundred springs and other isolated, haunted places, becoming a mendicant with no fixed abode. He also journeyed to the region of Ngari in western Tibet to practice in places like the glacial mountain Kailash." 'Jam-dbyañs-rdo-rje and Barron, *A marvelous garland of rare gems*, 457.

²⁵⁷ Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*, 40.

²⁵⁸ "tshe dbang rdo rje," Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, P6159. <https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P4943>

area, both at Namkha Khyung Dzong and at a second monastery he founded nearby, called Tsegya, until he left Tibet for India in 1959. When Etaraja died in 1933, Pema Lungtok Gyatso took over leadership of Namkha Khyung Dzong as well as Tsegya. From 1923 to 1959, a community of diverse practitioners continued to grow at both institutions.

Several key themes resonate throughout Pema Gyatso's biography. He emphasized retreat in isolated places and wandering in borderlands. He had success in founding one, and maintaining two, monastic institutions, despite rejecting formal monastic education in his youth. His practice was based in a *terma* tradition born out of a particular time and place that was very distant from the area where he spent most of his life. His biography describes a cyclical lifestyle, in which he oscillated between periods of wandering, extended pilgrimages, isolated retreat practices, collecting material support from patrons, and teaching at Namkha Khyung Dzong and Tsegya monasteries. There is a constant push and pull from center to periphery and back again.

Pema Lungtok Gyatso's near-constant pilgrimages spanned regions in Tibet, Nepal, and India. He maintained a widespread network of patrons and students, as well as a web of important places.²⁵⁹ On two occasions—in 1952 and 1955—his travels brought him into contact with Buddhists from Spiti. In 1952, he and his students were invited to go to Tso Pema for a major teaching. He spent three months of that winter in Tso Pema with ten students, but the teacher who had invited them was unable to come himself.²⁶⁰ Instead, Pema Lungtok Gyatso

²⁵⁹ The emphasis his biography places on *place* is not unusual. As Andrew Quintman observes with respect to Milarepa, “The life of a saint, it has been suggested, is a “composition of places,” charting an itinerary of departures and returns that ultimately comes to define the life through the places it inhabits (Certeau 1988: 281).” Quintman, “Toward a Geographic Biography: Mi La Ras Pa in the Tibetan Landscape,” 264.

²⁶⁰ The teacher is not identified by name but with honorific titles “his holiness the wish-fulfilling jewel” (*skyabs rje yid bzhin nor bu*, and *skyabs rje rin po che*). Given these particular honorific titles, the teacher who invited them was probably Dudjom Rinpoche. While Pema Lungtok Gyatso and his biographer frequently use honorific titles like *rinpoche* (*rin po che*) for other figures, they do not use this particularly elevated title for anyone else in the biography. I was unable to locate a reference to Dudjom Rinpoche's activities in 1952 that might confirm this.

gave a Troma Nakmo empowerment to “some students from Garsha (Lahaul) and Spiti.”²⁶¹ At the end of the winter, everyone returned to their respective homes.

Pema Lungtok Gyatso returned to north India via Kinnaur again in 1955. This time, when he left Tso Pema he traveled north along a major Buddhist pilgrimage route that took him through Lahaul and Spiti.²⁶² He records an interesting interaction while in Spiti:

[From Lahaul] he went to Spiti. In Spiti, there was a medium of a local deity who had magical powers. He said, “A lama who is unrivaled is coming.” The medium himself came to escort him, riding a saddled great “divine” yak. [The people of] that area also offered whatever they had as a feast offering. From there, he went to Kinnaur, where he stayed about a month.²⁶³

Pema Lungtok Gyatso does not describe any particular teachings he may have imparted, nor does he specify where in Spiti he traveled. He may have met those individuals who received the Troma Nakmo initiation at Tso Pema a few years earlier. There is unfortunately no mention of the Pin Valley or any Dudjom Tersar practitioners in the area, who are known to be present from other sources.

Pema Lungtok Gyatso returned to western Tibet shortly after this episode. It was not his last pilgrimage to India by any means, but it was the only time his biography records travel in Spiti. When he fled Tibet a few years later in 1959, he traveled south and east, passing through

²⁶¹ “Gar sha [zha] dang pi ti phyogs kyi slob ma ’ga’ la khros ma’i dbang lung mang tsam gsungs/” Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*, 97.

²⁶² He went to the famous site of Triloknāth in Lahaul to see the statue of Avalokiteśvara called “Garsha Phagpa” (*gar zha ’phags pa rin po che*). For a discussion of Jetsun Lochan’s pilgrimage on this same western-Himalayan circuit, see Hanna Havnevik, “On Pilgrimage for Forty Years in the Himalayas: The Female Lama Jetsun Lochan Rinpoche’s (1865-1951) Quest for Sacred Sites,” in *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay, n.d.; Hanna Havnevik, “The Life of Jetsun Lochan Rinpoche,” *Journal Für Religionskultur* 27, no. 11 (1999): 1–15.

²⁶³ *De nas pi ti la phebs pa’i de’i yul gyi lha ba rdzu ’phrul can zhig yod pa des bla ma ’gran bral zhig phebs yod zhes lha gtag chen po de chib bzhon tu gtang ste lha ba rang yang bsu ba la yong / yul nas kyang tshogs ’bul sogs gang zab byas/ de nas snu la phebs der zla ba gcig tsam bzhugs/* This episode describes Pema Lungtok Gyatso meeting one of the local deities of Spiti, many of whom have a corresponding medium or oracle. This particular medium rode a large yak. The phrase “*lha g.yag*” likely indicates that either the yak had been “liberated” (set free to roam and not be killed for its meat) or else that it was dedicated to the local deity to serve as its mount. Translation my own. Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*, 103.

Nepal and India. His biography does not record any subsequent trips to Tso Pema or Kinnaur, although it is possible he revisited the area before his death in 1964.

Regional Circuits of Pilgrimage and Practice

Pema Lungtok Gyatso's pilgrimages and the networks crisscrossed invisible lines that soon became impassable, closing firmly behind him when he left Tibet, as they coalesced into international boundaries. His many travels—including his overall journey from Golok to Ngari—took place in the context of a general wave of movement, migration, and pilgrimage from East to West Tibet, and from Tibet to India. Huber argues that this pattern of movement contributed to the rise of the Western Himalayas as a major pilgrimage location, which was itself part of a revival of Tibetan interest in India. Tibetans “rediscovered” important Buddhist sites in India and the Himalayas, including Tso Pema.²⁶⁴ Thus Dudjom Lingpa's students, Etaraja, Pema Lungtok Gyatso, and Tsokhang Rinpoche (about whom we know much less), were not unique in their trans-Tibetan journeys. Their activities, and the many other travelers they met along the way, all attest to the active and ongoing exchange between Tibet and the areas comprising modern-day Himachal Pradesh in the first half of the twentieth century. The popularity of the western Himalayas in this period is in striking contrast to the widespread descriptions of places like Spiti, Kinnaur, and Lahaul as isolated and peripheral. It also runs counter to the narrative that these areas became less isolated and newly invigorated by Tibetans in exile after 1959.

²⁶⁴ Huber discusses how Tso Pema's relationship to Padmasambhava and emergence as a major Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage site developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as part of a larger process in which Tibetans interpreted sites sacred to other religious traditions in the Punjab as part of Padmasambhava's domain. This topic is the focus of the eighth chapter, “The Precious Guru in the Punjab.” Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage & the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*, Buddhism and Modernity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

The model of practice followed by the individuals from Golok who introduced the Dudjom Tersar to the western Himalayas was particularly peripatetic. These individuals sought out isolation, borderlands, and peripheral places. At the same time, they relied on material support from donors or patron, necessitating a degree of proximity to settled places. This tension between access to communities of support on the one hand, and an ideal of isolated practice on the other, plays out in a series of movements or cycles, wherein practitioners oscillate between peripheries and centers, or between inhabited and uninhabited places. This oscillation directs and provides structure for what might otherwise seem to be random wandering. Indeed, Pema Lungtok Gyatso's biographical account of his wandering may be in part performative or idealized in its description of his wandering and motivation for travel. How wild, rugged, and isolated are the lands he is describing as just that, particularly given his tendency to follow well-established pilgrimage routes and seek out famous meditation sites?

Tibetans "rediscovered" important Buddhist sites in India and the Himalayas, including Tso Pema or Rewalsar. They frequented the pilgrimage and trade routes from western Tibet to the Western Himalayas, often passing through the Sutlej River Valley in Kinnaur. Tso Pema, and Spiti with it, became part of an increasingly popular Buddhist pilgrimage circuit in Western Tibet.²⁶⁵ Sources as early as Gampopa and Taksang Repa visited these sites in their search for lands farther west associated with Padmasambhava. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their routes were more established and more frequented. Figures like Jetsun Lochen (1865–1951), who was born in Tso Pema, describe not only her travels on this route but also the

²⁶⁵ "I will also show, on the other hand, how at the same time an ongoing series of displacements and migrations of local populations on the Tibetan plateau eventually led to the opening of new frontiers for Tibetan reinvention and colonization of the terrain of the Buddha in India. This time, the focus of Tibetan activities was to be India's northwestern region of Punjab..." Huber, 232.

numerous pilgrims she encountered on the same paths.²⁶⁶ The Sixteenth Karmapa traveled on pilgrimage through Himachal Pradesh, visiting Tso Pema before following the Sutlej Valley through Kinnaur to Ngari, in 1948. This shift West in some ways echoed an earlier shift in Tibetan Buddhist centers, during the rise of the Guge Kingdom during the second diffusion, and also laid the foundation for the flurry of Tibetan activity in this area after 1959. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century interest in rediscovering the western Himalayas and western Tibet also included Bon figures like Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje (1897–1955), who sought to reestablish Bon in its historical center, the Zhangzhung region, which predated the period of Buddhism’s “early” spread in Tibet.²⁶⁷ Thus by the time Tibetans in exile flooded into India and launched a flurry of building activities in Himachal Pradesh, Buddhist interest and activity in this region had already been on the rise.

A Nighttime Flight: Yeshe Palden Encounters the Dudjom Tersar

The flow of pilgrims and practitioners, teachers and students, was not solely oriented from East to West or initiated by Tibetans toward Himalayan regions like Spiti. There was also widespread mobility from Spiti into Tibet and toward the East. One of Etaraja’s students was a young Geluk monk from a village on the border of India and Tibet. This young monk left his monastery to join the burgeoning Nyingma community at Namkha Khyung Dzong near Kailash, where Etaraja became his primary teacher. He spent the rest of his life traveling between the Kailash region and

²⁶⁶ Havnevik, “On Pilgrimage for Forty Years in the Himalayas: The Female Lama Jetsun Lochen Rinpoche’s (1865-1951) Quest for Sacred Sites.”

²⁶⁷ Dpal Idan Tshul khriṃs, *Jigs-med-nam-mkha’i-rdo-rje*, and Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, *The biography of Khyuṅ-sprul ’Jigs-med-nam-mkha’i-rdo-rje*; Blezer, “Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow, Wherever Rin Po Che Lays His Head Down to Rest Is the Original Place of Bon”; Kvaerne, “Khyung-Sprul ’Jigs-Med Nam-Mkha’i Rdo-Rje (1897–1955): An Early Twentieth-Century Tibetan Pilgrim in India”; Alay, “The Early Years of Khyung Sprul Rin Po Che.”

his home in Spiti, where he played a pivotal role in establishing the Dudjom Tersar in the Pin Valley. His name was Yeshe Palden.

Yeshe Palden was born in Gyu, a village in present-day Spiti that was, in his lifetime, part of Western Tibet.²⁶⁸ He was reportedly a mischievous ill-behaved youth, which contributed to his mother's decision to send him to a monastery when he was eight. She enrolled him in a Geluk monastery in Ngari called Changchub Ling.²⁶⁹ He persisted in his mischievous behavior—for example fighting with some of the other monks—nonetheless, rising in his studies until he became an *umze* (*dbu mdzad*) or chant master. He was probably about thirty at the time.

The *umze* position may have been a turning point for Yeshe Palden, as he left shortly after. Accounts diverge somewhat as to how and why he left the Geluk monastery. In one account, Yeshe Palden did not want to become the *umze*. He knew that if he stayed at the Geluk monastery, he would become attached to things there, like his status and position, and would not achieve enlightenment in this lifetime. Around this time he heard the name of his future teacher—a Nyingma teacher—and a feeling arose instantly within him. He knew he had to leave, but the monastery was very strict and would not allow him to go.²⁷⁰ He consulted his friends in hopes of devising a plan. And so, he escaped through a toilet and made his way to Kailash. The toilet was described as “Tibetan style,” with an opening over a cliff side, through which he absconded. This account articulates Yeshe Palden's actions through familiar tropes, like a moment of realization upon hearing the name of his teacher, or the rejection of institutional

²⁶⁸ Details of Yeshe Palden's life are primarily drawn from interviews with his nephew, Phuntsok Rai and interviews with Yomed Tulku. There are also a handful of documents and inscriptions that reference him. His birth date is likely prior to 1890. Phuntsok Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai, interview by Author, June 24, 2014; Yomed Tulku, Interview about Yeshe Palden, interview by Author, June 26, 2014.

²⁶⁹ There was some uncertainty over the monastery's name and location, but most thought it was Changchubling, of which there are a couple of possibilities. There is a Changchub Ling Monastery to the south-east of Spiti, en route to the Kailash-Manasarowar region (TBRC G2220). The Sumkyil Changchub Ling Monastery (gSum dkyil byang chub gling dgon pa) in Ngari is near the border of Spiti to the north (TBRC G2LS553). Chos 'phel, *gangs can bod kyi gnas bshad lam yig gsar ma*, 4:76.

²⁷⁰ This is also a criticism Yomed Tulku levels at the Geluk Tabo Monastery.

prestige in favor of a life of practice.²⁷¹ According to the slightly less exciting—but perhaps more sanitary—account from his nephew Phuntsok Rai,²⁷² Yeshe Palden’s fighting resulted in his expulsion from the monastery, after which he made his way to Kailash.

Regardless of the circumstances of his departure, Yeshe Palden *did* join Etaraja at Namkha Khyung Dzong, where he became one of the latter monk’s primary students. This must have occurred sometime before 1928, based on a colophon from Etaraja’s *Collected Works* that references Yeshe Palden.²⁷³ Yeshe Palden received the Dudjom Tersar teachings from Etaraja and was sent to complete a three-year retreat.²⁷⁴ In the course of the retreat, his benefactor who was responsible for bringing him food every six months forgot about him, such that Yeshe Palden nearly starved. His life was saved by a thief who came to look in the cave and rob him. He was amazed when he saw that Yeshe Palden was near death and still practicing, so he left and returned with some *tsampa* (roasted barley flour), sufficient for Yeshe Palden to complete the remainder of the three years.²⁷⁵ Yeshe Palden was by all accounts an excellent student and practitioner. He may have accompanied Pema Lungtok Gyatso and Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje as a guide when the latter went on pilgrimage to India.

Yeshe Palden also established a regional network of connections, spanning India and Tibet. In Western Tibet, he became involved with two locations in particular, Lhakpa Monastery and the famous pilgrimage site of Pretapuri. Lhakpa is a Nyingma monastery south-east of Spiti,

²⁷¹ Reports of Yeshe Palden as an ill-behaved youth are also in keeping with normative narratives of realized figures, including Dudjom Lingpa, who was reportedly badly behaved in his youth. However, Dudjom Lingpa’s biography describes his behavior as misinterpreted and not necessarily understood by the less-realized observers.

²⁷² Phuntsok Rai (b. 1934) is Yeshe Palden’s nephew. Although he was young—about eight years old—when Yeshe Palden died, he grew up hearing stories about his uncle from his parents and from Yomed Dorje. Phuntsok Rai was a Member of the State Legislative Assembly of Himachal Pradesh (*Vidhan Sabha*) representing Lahaul and Spiti in the 1990s.

²⁷³ E tarA dza, *The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of EtarAja alias Bde ba'i rgyal po*. Vol. 1: 419–421.

²⁷⁴ Yomed Tulku describes this as “progressing much faster than usual.”

²⁷⁵ This narrative too echoes accounts of other exemplary Buddhist lives. Yomed Dorje described how Yeshe Palden was so hungry that he was tempted to eat his *torma* (*gtor ma*), but that would have been bad and he refrained. *Torma* offerings that are typically made out of *tsampa* and a binding fat like butter or oil.

between Spiti and the Mount Kailash-Namkha Khyung Dzong area. It is associated with the important Nyingma monastery Dorje Drak, and has as its primary image a statue of Padmasambhava.²⁷⁶ Pretapuri is an old and important pilgrimage location for Buddhists and Hindus, connected to Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar.²⁷⁷ It is one of the twenty-four *pīṭha* sites associated with Cakrasaṃvara.²⁷⁸ Both locations were ransacked in 1941 by a group of Kazakhs who raided a number of monasteries in the area. They attacked Tsegya Monastery at the time, while Pema Lungtok Gyatso and some forty others were present.²⁷⁹ Yeshe Palden was responsible for repairing Lhakpa and Pretapuri after the damage.

²⁷⁶ There are four different Tibetan sources recounting nearly identical brief histories of Lhakpa and Pretapuri. The earliest of these is by Tenzin Wangdrak, who was a student of Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje. The relevant section on Lhakpa reads, “The *gonpa* was founded at the time of Lochen Rinchen Zangpo [as a place for] upholding the New School of Secret Mantra. The *gonpa* was expanded by Lama Yeshe Palden, who was a lama in the lineage of Dorje Drak *gonpa*, the renowned *terma* [place in] southern Ü. He was also the second [in the] lineage of Pretapuri *gonpa*. Inside the Assembly Hall (*’du khang*) the chief image is a statue of Guru Rinpoche one story high, that is clay mixed with medicine and herbs, and a *thangka* of Machig Labdron. There are three one-story-high silver *chortens* ornamented with precious stones. Inside there are many *torma* of *yidam*, guardians, etc. Previously, this *gonpa* had ten monks and five nuns. It is also said that there was one called Tulku Gelong Rinpoche. Other than that, there was also a caretaker and a chant master.” All translation my own. Tsering Gyalpo, *mNga’ ris chos ’byung gangs ljongs mdzes rgyan*, par gzhi 1. (Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 245; Chos ’phel, *gangs can bod kyi gnas bshad lam yig gsar ma*, 4:444; Tenzing Wangdrak, *bod ljongs stod mnga’ ris skor gsum nye rabs chab srid kyi lo rgyus dang dgon sde khag gzhig gsos grub pa’i gnas tshul/ spyi tshogs gsar pa’i ’phel shugs sogs rgyas par brjod pa’i ’bel gtam rin chen gter gyi ’phreng ba*, par gzhi 1. (Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1996), 341.

²⁷⁷ The relevant section on Pretapuri from the four histories of Ngari reads, “It was originally founded as a Nyingmapa monastery but was later taken over by the Drukpa Kagyu. This was in part due to the efforts Taksang Repa. After that, at the time of the destruction by the Kazakhs [who raided the region in 1941], a Spiti Lama Yeshe Palden received permission to restore it from the Tibetan government and stayed there to restore the monastery for a few years. After that, it came under control of Puhrang Shadpheling, but the lineage did not change. There aren’t any extensive *chorten* or statues at this monastery; the monastery also lacks any famous lamas or monks.” All translation my own. Gyalpo, *mNga’ ris chos ’byung gangs ljongs mdzes rgyan*, 245. In his 1949 travel account, Swami Pranavānanda includes a photograph of Pretapuri (Tirthapuri), Figure 68. Swami Pranavānanda, *HISTORY of Kailash-Manasarovar* (Calcutta: S.P. League, Ltd., 1949), 103.

²⁷⁸ “Tirthapuri (Tib: Pretapuri), around 38 miles (60 kilometres) northwest of Lake Manasarovar on the Sutlej route is a site of sulphur springs and is particularly rich in alchemical substances. Of Tirthapuri, Pranavananda states that it, “is believed both by Indians as well as Tibetans that the pilgrimage to Kailas is incomplete or does not bear full fruit unless one visits Tirthapuri also.” Alex McKay, *Kailas Histories*, 102. The seventh-century Drukpa Kagyu pilgrim Taksang Repa traveled to Pretapuri while on route to the west, where he followed the Sutlej River through Kinnaur, following the same routes that Pema Lungtok Gyatso and his contemporaries traveled. Orgyan-pa, s’Tag-ta’añ-ras-pa, and Giuseppe Tucci, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrims in the Swat Valley* (Greater India Society, 1940).

²⁷⁹ Pema Lungtok Gyatso’s account of these events is quite interesting. Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*, 84–85. The delightfully titled *Hot Pursuit of Kazakh Bandits* describes events from a slightly different vantage point. Elmar Grypa and S. S Pāṅgatī, *Hot Pursuit of Kazakh Bandits by a Johari Trader 1941* (Haldwani, Distt. Nainital: Smt. Jaiwanti (Jaya), 2009), 22–26. This event was so significant and impacted such a

He was aided in his efforts by his student, Yomed Dorje (d. 1960). Yomed Dorje was from Gulling Village, in the Pin Valley, and had been tasked with accompanying the older monk on a pilgrimage, despite his initial disinterest in Buddhist practice.²⁸⁰ Together, Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje established the Dudjom Tersar in the Pin Valley, as well as in parts of Spiti that were not previously associated with the Nyingma. They were responsible for converting Yeshe Palden's home town of Gyu from Geluk to Nyingma, as well as Lari Village in the main Spiti Valley, which had also previously been primarily Geluk. In Pin, they were involved in efforts to regulate certain ritual practices, including banning *marchö* (*dmar mchod*) or "red offerings," and decreasing meat consumption at particular gatherings.²⁸¹ Perhaps their most enduring physical legacy in Pin is the Guru Lhakhang, a temple they built in the 1930s dedicated to Padmasambhava. The extensive dedication inscription inside the temple's vestibule attests to the extent of their network, with some two-hundred donors from Spiti and Tibet.²⁸² It was a massive undertaking, by all accounts, and one that both reshaped the landscape of the Pin Valley and also physically attested to the new shape of the Nyingma tradition.²⁸³

large area, that it appears in most accounts from anyone who happened to be in the Kailash area or pass through it in subsequent years. Anagarika Govinda is rather taken aback by what he perceives as rudeness when he encounters Khyungtrul Jigme Dorje right after the attack, sitting outside his deserted monastery. He asks Khyungtrul for hospitality for his entourage and the latter laughs at him, indicating he has nothing to offer. Anagarika Govinda, *The Way of the White Clouds: A Buddhist Pilgrim in Tibet* (Hutchinson, 1966), 223–4.

²⁸⁰ Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai.

²⁸¹ For a discussion of these events see Chapter 3. A copy of the documents is included in Appendix 14: Tibetan text of Documents Regulating Offerings and Appendix 15: Translations of documents regulating offerings.

²⁸² The donors included the Spiti Nono and the Pin Nono, every village in Pin, monasteries in Spiti, monasteries in Tibet, and most of the ritual specialists and authorities from Pin alive at the time (ex. Lama Longsal (Klong gsal), local deity mediums, etc.) The text of the inscription can be found in Appendix 13: Yellow Inscription in the Guru Lhakhang, Kungri.

²⁸³ It was described as a massive undertaking for Yomed Dorje in particular, who hauled the wood for the temple over high mountain passes from neighboring Kinnaur.

Exemplary Deaths, Fractured Communities, and Contended Borders

The significance of death in Tibetan Buddhism, as an opportunity for practice, a tool for transformation, or a testament to accomplishments, cannot be overstated. By all accounts, both Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje lived exemplary lives and died exemplary deaths. In 1942, teacher and student were in Lhakpa when Yeshe Palden told the younger man “My time has run out.”²⁸⁴ He instructed Yomed Dorje on how to practice and how to care for his body, then he died. Yomed Dorje cared for his body for three days, cleaning it, placing salt around it, and performing a consecration (*rab gnas*). After three days, his body shrank to be very small. Yeshe Palden had been a tall man, but three days after death, Yomed Dorje could carry his body in his arms like a child. He called others to help him and burned the body. It produced many relics, which Yomed Dorje placed in some twenty-six or twenty-seven *chorten* (*mchod rten*), distributed throughout the network of places Yeshe Palden had cultivated in life, Lhakpa, Gyu, Lari, Pin.

Some twenty years later in 1960, Yomed Dorje was on retreat in a cave he had constructed near Lari Village in Spiti, when he too died.²⁸⁵ He had been alone, and there was a great deal of snow, so no one knew right away he had died. They carried his body down the mountain to Lari, where a group had gathered, and burned him there. Everyone noticed that the body did not smell, either before or after it burned. Sonam Phuntsok, who was only a child at the time, said usually when they burned a body it made him feel sick and revolted (*zhen log*), but

²⁸⁴ This is Phuntsok Rai’s account, who was only a child when Yeshe Palden died, but grew up hearing stories about his uncle.

²⁸⁵ This account of Yomed Dorje’s life and death is based in part on an interview with his nephew, Kunzang Namdrol, who passed away a few months after I interviewed him in Tso Pema in February 2014. I am grateful to him and his family for welcoming me and taking the time to answer my questions. Kunzang Namdrol, interview; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview, interview by author, July 11, 2013.

Yomed Dorje smelled like sandalwood.²⁸⁶ There were no relics but there was a bright white light and a pleasant odor. Like his teacher, Yomed Dorje's remains were placed inside a *chorten* and ensconced in the temple to Padmasambhava he had built, where they are to this day.

Normative modes of death and dying are important elements in crafting life stories. The circumstances of death are read as signs of an individual's practice and its result. Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje's lives and deaths as articulated by the Nyingma community in Spiti, convey certain key elements that attest to their lives and legitimate their practice. Yomed Dorje's death might also mark a turning point for the development of the Nyingma tradition in Pin, insofar as his death prompted a search for his next life.

The series of border changes in the mid-twentieth century significantly reshaped the landscape. It impacted practices, mobility, access to patrons, access to important sites (including the physical remains of teachers), and the status of peripheries or frontiers. In one case, the body of Etaraja was carried to a new location; a literal displacement of the body. The colonial British presence in the western Himalayas does not seem to have curtailed mobility of Buddhist practitioners in the area (although the movements of the British themselves were curtailed). Nor does Indian Independence in 1947 seem to have significantly restricted movement across the invisible lines of new national boundaries. However, as tensions between India and China escalated in the 1950s, these invisible lines became increasingly evident and solidified. When the People's Liberation Army reached western Tibet, the community of Dudjom Tersar practitioners fled to India and Nepal, where decades later they established a new center to mirror the one abandoned at Kailash (much in the same way that countless Tibetan monasteries were reestablished in India and Nepal). The new national borders also cut these institutions and

²⁸⁶ Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview.

individuals off from their networks of patronage and their community of practitioners, as well as larger cross-border routes of travel.

As a result, separate nodes of the Dudjom tradition developed in isolation from one another at the same time as they forged new ties, becoming part of new networks of patronage and practices emerging in new national and international contexts. These international networks drew Dudjom Tersar practitioners in Spiti into new political contexts, where their patronage and practices evoked associated nationalist claims related to the movement of Tibetans into exile. These new connections also contributed to casting what was described as an initially ecumenical and diverse community of practitioners in a distinctly sectarian context. Subsequent interpretations of the earlier pre-1950s period are frequently articulated through a sectarian lens.

These networks were disrupted in the 1950's. The Chinese PLA entered Tibet and moved westward. The borders between India, Tibet, and Nepal solidified. This caused the young Dudjom centers in Ngari to move and isolated its inheritors from each other. The bulk of this community eventually coalesced in Humla, Nepal.

The East Goes West Again: Dudjom Rinpoche's Visits to Spiti

After Yomed Dorje's death in 1960, a group from the Pin Valley travelled to India to seek out Dudjom Rinpoche, Dudjom Lingpa's incarnation. At the time, Dudjom Rinpoche was in Kalimpong, having left Tibet in 1958, in light of the growing tensions with China. The group from Spiti asked Dudjom Rinpoche for help filling the gap left by the deaths of Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje.²⁸⁷ He told them he would come. They returned to Spiti and a couple of years

²⁸⁷ Tsering Paljor, interview by author, n.d. In Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche's memoirs, he recounts a group of "several lamas from Ladakh and Khunu" who were meeting with Dudjom Rinpoche in 1960/1961. It is possible this group included the contingent from Spiti. Ugyen, Erik Pema Kunsang, and Marcia Binder Schmidt, *Blazing Splendor: The*

later in 1962, Dudjom Rinpoche came to Spiti.²⁸⁸ This in and of itself marked a shift in Spiti's standing in the context of the larger Tibetan Buddhist world. Tibetans were slowly "rediscovering India" over the course of the nineteenth century, but events in the mid-twentieth propelled them over the Himalayas and accelerated that rediscovery. Along with it came a new awareness of Buddhist regions long thought of as a hinterland.

Dudjom Rinpoche returned to the Pin Valley a second time, in 1964. On that occasion, Dudjom Rinpoche recognized a young boy as the reincarnation of Yomed Dorje, giving him the title Yomed Tulku.²⁸⁹ This was Tulku Jigme Tenzin Dorje (b. 1962), the current head of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti. He identified other children too. The recognition of these *tulku* lines in Pin, perhaps marked a stage in Tibetans' "rediscovery" of Buddhist India by identifying it in some ways as a part of Tibet, linking bodies in time and space.²⁹⁰ Yomed Tulku was only a child at the time. He first studied with his uncle, as was long the method of education in Pin, but when he was older he followed Dudjom Rinpoche's journey in reverse, to spend some two and a half decades training in places that were emerging as important Dudjom Tersar centers outside of Tibet, in Kalimpong, Sikkim, and Kathmandu. He studied under Dudjom Rinpoche and other prominent Nyingma teachers, accompanying Dudjom Rinpoche to France as the circumstances of exile opened up new avenues for patronage, new sources of students. When Dudjom Rinpoche himself died in France in 1987, there were what may by now be familiar elements: his body was packed in salt; some saw bright lights; his remains were interred in a large *chorten*. Yomed

Memoirs of the Dzogchen Yogi Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, as Told to Erik Pema Kunsang & Marcia Binder Schmidt (Kathmandu, Nepal: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2005), 334.

²⁸⁸ Dudjom Rinpoche had previously traveled in Himachal Pradesh to visit Tso Pema, but he did not travel to Spiti on those occasions. His biographer records trips to Tso Pema in 1960, 1964, and 1965, although there were almost certainly others. Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal, *Light of Fearless Indestructible Wisdom: The Life and Legacy of H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche* (Snow Lion Publications, 2008).

²⁸⁹ Yomed Tulku's grandfather, Meme Salwa, was part of the contingent who traveled to see Dudjom Rinpoche in 1960. Meme Trinley, interview by author, February 13, 2014.

²⁹⁰ Anya Bernstein, *Religious Bodies Politic: Rituals of Sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism*, *Buddhism and Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 73.

Tulku, now in his late twenties, returned to Pin to found a *shedra* (*bshad grwa*), to introduce a new method of religious training. He wanted to introduce people in Spiti to new techniques, to “do *drupchen* in Spiti, only bigger.”²⁹¹ And indeed, he has.²⁹²

Conclusion

Dudjom Lingpa recounts dreams and visions where deities and *ḍākinī* appear to him and predict his *terma* will be carried in the four directions by his students; while Tibet is invaded by barbarians from the borders, Buddhists would take refuge in Tibet’s periphery.

Just as *terma* often predict turmoil, degradation, an era of degeneracy, and the concomitant discovery of refuges, hidden lands, so too did Tibetans in exile, fleeing turmoil, “discover” a kind of refuge in the western Himalayas. Spiti may serve as a sort of new Shangri-La, a Buddhist environ protected from the collapse at the center.

The presence of the Dudjom Tersar and the Peling *terma* in Spiti in the context of contemporary geo-politics disrupt some of the frameworks for analyzing the relationship between *terma*, *tertöns*, and place. In his discussion of *gar* encampments in contemporary areas of Eastern Tibet, (including the Golok stonping grounds of the *tertön* Dudjom Lingpa), Terrone suggests that current *terma* revelations are a strategy to link contemporary authority to “an idealized mytho-historical era, namely the eighth century... the Indian mystic Padmasambhava,”

²⁹¹ Yomed Tulku and author, Interview about Yomed Tulku’s youth and training., June 21, 2013.

²⁹² A future comparison of how the Dudjom Tersar developed in Pin and in Humla might be fruitful in terms of examining the relationship between *terma* and family-based lineages. In Spiti, we see a transition away from family-based activities toward a central institution. At Namkha Khyung Dzong and Tsegya under Pema Lungtok Gyatso, and then later with the Namkha Khyung Dzong reestablished in Humla, Nepal, family-based lineages play a key role. Some of the extant literature on *terma* and *tertöns* also emphasizes how *terma* are anti-institutional, anti-monastic, or provide an alternative to the monastery if not being explicitly “anti” monastery. In Pin, we see the active institutionalization of both the Dudjom Tersar and the Peling tersar. Would this have occurred had the conditions of exile not taken place?

which in turn leads to a “reinforced sense of Tibetan identity.”²⁹³ Holly Gayley’s treatment of the tertön Pema Lingpa similarly emphasizes his contributions to “the religious life and national identity of Bhutan.” She also notes that biographies—particularly of Padmasambhava, “may foster national pride by their focus on a golden era of Tibetan imperial strength.”²⁹⁴ These articulations of the relation between *tertöns*, *terma* discovery, and place, as a process of nation-building make sense in the context of Tibet or Bhutan, but are not applicable to Spiti. Many today view Spiti’s position on the periphery as walking a kind of tight rope, in which they must actively reject aligning themselves with an idea of Tibet-as-nation. To do so could draw unwanted attention from both India and China.

The lives and activities of Pema Lungtok Gyatso, Yeshe Palden, and Yomed Dorje also attest to active regional and trans-Himalayan networks, to a period of mobility and exchange, in the western Himalayas before 1959. These communities were disrupted by the solidification of borders that cut them off from patrons, students, monastic institutions. In some cases, those networks were rerouted around impermeable national boundaries, as in the case of Pin’s relationship to Dudjom Rinpoche. In others, whole nodes in those networks were relocated, as in the case of the new Namkha Khyung Dzong established in exile.

The rapid dissemination of Dudjom Lingpa’s *terma* in the western Himalayas and western Tibet predated exile. There was a great deal of activity, travel, etc. in this region from the late nineteenth century onwards. This period of movement, the “rediscovery” of India,

²⁹³ Terrone, Antonio, “Householders and Monks: A Study of Treasure Revealers and Their Role in Religious Revival in Contemporary Eastern Tibet.”

²⁹⁴ Nikolai Solmsdorf similarly explores the role of *tertöns* in the processes of state building in his study of the *tertön* Rigzin Godemchan (Rig ’dzin Rgod ldem can, 1337–1408) and other *tertöns* active in the Mangyul Gungthang Kingdom. Michael Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: A Study of Pemalingpa (1450-1521) and the Sixth Dalai Lama (1683-1706)* (London: K. Paul international, 1989), 72; Holly Gayley, “Introduction,” in *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2003), 12; Nikolai Solmsdorf, *Treasure-Traditions of Western Tibet: Rig-’dzin Gar-Dbang Rdo-Rje Snying-Po (1640 - 1685) and His Activities in Mang-Yul Gung-Thang*, *Collectanea Himalayica* 4 (München: Indus-Verl, 2014).

contributed to the Dudjom Tersar becoming established in Spiti in a relatively short amount of time after Dudjom Lingpa's life and *terma* discovery. This calls for reevaluating claims that the presence of Tibetans in exile post-1959 were responsible for the surge of Buddhist activity in Spiti. While this may be a contributing factor, it is not the sole or even primary factor, as the activities of Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje, Pema Lungtok Gyatso, Yeshe Palden, and Yomed Dorje attest. Rather, the influx of exiled Tibetans into Himachal Pradesh occurred in the midst of an ongoing process.

Similarly, narratives that emphasize exiled Tibetans' agency in reshaping the Himalayas should be balanced by attending to the agency of locals. Figures like Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje were not isolated examples, they were of a piece with their contemporaries. There are others from Pin who also traveled far afield: Tomey Trinley spent seven years in Lhodrak; Lama Langsal accompanied Yeshe Palden on some of his pilgrimages in Ngari; Meme Orgyen and Meme Namdrol each spent years three on pilgrimage in Tibet. Indeed, people from Pin traveled to Tibet right up to the border closure in 1960. One account from Spiti describes Yomed Dorje urging a group of Pin men to rush back to Tibet and retrieve a copy of the Tibetan canon for the new Guru Lhakhang in Kungri before the Chinese reach Ngari.

The Western Dudjom Tersar provides a case study for comparing a community that found itself within the boundaries of Tibet in 1959, with one located without. The Namkha Khyung Dzong and Tsegya Monasteries in Ngari were destroyed, their practitioners scattered. Over the course of the following decades, some stayed in South India while others made their way back north, either to return to Ngari or else to settle in Humla in Nepal. The Dudjom Tersar in Pin was established later than the Namkha Khyung Dzong community, and perhaps developed more slowly. However, with Yomed Tulku's return as an adult in the 1990s, the new Urgyen

Sangnak Chöling Monastery has increasingly accelerated its development, crafting an institution organized around two prominent *terma* traditions from two very different times and places.

The Dudjom Tersar's spread in Spiti also points to the limitations of examining *terma* traditions, *tertöns*, and their appeal to Padmasambhava's imperial-era prophecies as nationalistic or nation-building moves. Indeed, Buddhists in Spiti are often adamant about differentiating Spiti from Tibet, careful to describe Buddhism as a cultural or religious form, separate from its political components.

Chapter 3: Negotiating Merit and Meat: Shifting Sources of Buddhist Authority

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Spiti have been marked by rapid and widespread change. Over the course of just a few decades, Spiti transitioned from being part of a colonial India to an independent India, from the Punjab Province to the newly fashioned state of Himachal Pradesh. It also shifted from being far removed from the central political and religious institutions of Tibetan Buddhism to becoming their relative neighbors. Many of these changes—and the pace of such change—are both celebrated and decried, often in the same moment and by the same voices.²⁹⁵ The presence of Tibetans in exile in Himachal Pradesh and other nearby regions is usually considered a boon to Buddhism in Spiti, generally increasing access to important teachers and supporting monastic expansion in the region.²⁹⁶ However, this has also given rise to urgent expressions of difference and independence from Tibet and Tibetan

²⁹⁵ One example of this tension that garners frequent local commentary is education. On the one hand, people who live in Spiti today have dramatically increased access to education—particularly education outside of the context of a monastery—including reserved space in regional universities. This is generally a celebrated change. But these same opportunities have prompted fierce debate over educational content, the primary language of instruction, and the distance students must travel to pursue education beyond primary levels. Language of instruction is a particularly volatile issue. As a member of the Spiti Himalayan Buddhist Cultural Association noted, the organization must be very particular about describing their elementary language textbooks as Bhoti and not Tibetan, even though the textbooks themselves were largely compiled by the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamasala. Many of the community leaders in Spiti I interviewed were similarly careful to refer to Spiti’s language as either “Spiti-dialect (*spi ti skad*) or Bhoti. Swargajyoti Gohain has discussed the politics of Bhoti in another Buddhist Himalayan region in Arunachal Pradesh. Swargajyoti Gohain, “Mobilising Language, Imagining Region: Use of Bhoti in West Arunachal Pradesh,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 46, no. 3 (October 1, 2012): 337–63; Dorje, Interview with an organizer of the Spiti Himalayan Buddhist Cultural Association, 14 2013; Sonam Angdu, Interview. For an overview of some of these changes in the field of education, see Tsering and Ishimura, “A Historical Overview of Education and Social Change in Spiti Valley, India.”

²⁹⁶ For example, until the exile period, no Dalai Lama had ever visited Spiti, while the current Fourteenth Dalai Lama has visited Spiti several times and voiced a preference for retiring to Tabo Monastery.

institutions.²⁹⁷ Indeed, in an address to the First International Conference on Spiti in 2016, Lochen Tulku, the head of Kee Monastery and current incarnation of the famed tenth-century translator Rinchen Zangpo, emphatically noted that Spiti is *not* Tibet. He emphasized that Spiti boasts its own culture, customs, linguistic forms, and Buddhist institutions, all of which are facing change and, in the face of such change, need to be preserved.²⁹⁸

Lochen Tulku's address is not alone in calling for preservation in the face of change. Scholars too, have weighed in on this dichotomous celebration and censure.²⁹⁹ Some of the key questions at the center of such debates and this chapter are which customs, practices, and institutions are being preserved, which are set aside, who is responsible for these choices, and what are the grounds for those decisions. Phrased slightly differently, which Buddhist institutions and practices count as legitimate and who is authorized to evaluate that legitimacy?

In the Pin Valley, the new monastery of Urgyen Sangnag Chöling in Kungri has gradually emerged as the primary institutional authority in the region. A diffuse and diverse body of ritual practices and institutions in the Pin Valley are effectively being consolidated under the auspices of a single institution. What is emerging as a result is a more centralized and structured

²⁹⁷ Here I refer to both Tibet and Tibetan institutions in exile and those in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

²⁹⁸ Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, "Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti."

²⁹⁹ One significant example may be found in the Tabo monastic complex, which has garnered the bulk of scholarly interest in Spiti, itself perhaps a reflection of an academic overemphasis on Spiti's ties to Tibet. While scholarship has generally celebrated the Tabo "library" and the quality and chronological spread of its temples, it has also been critical of some of the efforts to utilize, maintain, and repair those temples in the interests of serving the local Buddhist community. Perhaps the most widespread example of this is the tension between the goals of protecting and preserving Buddhist visual and material artifacts on the one hand, and the desire to make use of those same objects and spaces to support Buddhist communities. This frequently leads to criticisms of local efforts to clean and restore paintings and statues. In another instance, a scholar at an academic conference criticized the use of concrete for new monastic structures in Spiti on the grounds that the building material was not traditional, and instead advocated for the continued use of rammed mud walled buildings. One might also consider how feminist-influenced efforts in Spiti have worked to expand women's access to monastic education, amplify women's voices in Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism, and increase the number of nunneries in the region, all efforts to be celebrated. At the same time, these efforts often enable gatekeeping tactics and fundamentally shape the kinds of institutions, personal narratives, and educational practices that have access to resources. In one such case, an organization that provides financial support for nuns in the Himalayas developed a rubric for evaluating nunneries that is firmly rooted in a sectarian-influenced academic view of Tibetan Buddhism.

form of the Nyingma tradition built on a *shedra* (*bshad grwa*) model of monastic education, in place of the numerous family-based traditions and diverse modes of Buddhist instruction spread across the valley. This process entails 1) critiquing, curtailing, or banning some existing practices; 2) displacing or appropriating existing practices; 3) centralizing and consolidating existing practices.³⁰⁰ I explore these themes by examining the changing status and responsibilities of the *Nono* (*No no*) family in Pin, documents banning *marchö* (*dmar mchod*) or “red offerings,” a series of changes to a local feast tradition called *sönchok* (*gsog ’jog*), and negotiations around the status of local deities (*yul lha*).

Some of the modes of consolidation, appropriation, and critique I explore are fairly ubiquitous in Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist contexts. Indeed, bans on practices like “red offerings” or negotiations around the status of local deities are widespread in both space and time. They are part of the constant negotiations around the parameters of normative, authoritative, or orthodox Buddhism, although what exactly constitutes “normative” Buddhism may vary in each instance. But these topics also engage issues that pertain particularly to the Pin Valley.

The Family

In 1863 Deputy-Commissioner Philip Henry Egerton photographed a man whom he described as “the Nono (or chief man) of Spiti.”³⁰¹ He also photographed a man from the Pin Valley whom he called the “little Nono,” a title and position Egerton viewed as clearly subordinate to the “chief

³⁰⁰ This process began in the early twentieth century and continues to the present. These efforts as a whole are part of a larger process of consolidation and centralization of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti traced throughout each chapter. The consolidation of institutional authority in Pin connects Kungri as a center to other emerging Nyingma centers in Spiti. These new centers together comprise a regional Nyingma network. This regional network is simultaneously part of larger global networks of the Nyingma tradition .

³⁰¹ Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Thibet*. P.H. Egerton was the Deputy-Commissioner of Kangra under Sir Robert Montgomery, K.C.B. Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.

Nono” of Spiti.³⁰² Some forty years earlier in 1822, the British traveler George Trebeck wrote of the leadership of Spiti:

Khaga Khan, the manager of the district, and the peon or scribe, paid me every civility in the absence of the chief of Piti, Sultan Begh, whom I had left at Leh [Ladakh]...The authority of the Raja of Ladakh, or rather that of the Khalun, is absolute, and it is exercised through a chief, who seldom visits Piti, except at harvest time to collect the revenue. This office is therefore discharged by a deputy, who is rarely a person of much influence, and whose measures are completely controlled by the Gatpos...householders acting for a month in turn as elders of the villages.³⁰³

Who exactly were these great and little chiefs of Spiti? The term *nono*, its origins, meaning, and scope, remain ambiguous. Indeed, limited advance has been made since Francke observed in 1914, “The No-nos are the ruling family of chiefs in Spyi-ti. At present it is impossible to decide whether they are descended from a native Spyi-ti family or from certain governors of Spyi-ti, posted there by the kings of Ladakh.”³⁰⁴

Some scholars propose that the Nono was a position associated with the Namgyal Dynasty’s administration that was extended to areas under its control, like Spiti.³⁰⁵ Thus, the

³⁰² Trebeck did not meet or mention a second Nono residing in the Pin Valley. His plans to travel to Pin did not materialize, or he might have encountered the fellow and his family. During Egerton’s visit, the administrator was called upon to settle a dispute between the Pin Nono and the Spiti Nono regarding the scope of each one’s authority. Egerton saw a clear hierarchy between the Spiti Nono and the “Chota” or “little” Nono of Pin, and based his decision on that. While there are not any primary sources describing the scope of these positions or their authority with respect to one another, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century manuscript colophons from Pin seem to describe a hierarchical relationship wherein the king (of Ladakh or elsewhere) is above the governor of Spiti, who is in turn above the Nono of Pin. Egerton also met a claimant to the title and position of Garpon (*Mkhar dpon*), the governor or “fortress chief” of Spiti. This position also appears in the manuscript colophons, where it sometimes overlaps with other titles including that of the Nono.

³⁰³ Moorcroft et al., *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara*, 58–59.

³⁰⁴ I use the capitalized Nono to refer to the title: the Nono of Pin or the Nono of Spiti. I use the lower case *Nono* in non-titular instances, for example to refer to the family. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:276. Tucci seems to combine three different titles when discussing copying the inscriptions on *mani* stones “because they preserve the name of certain Gagas, as they call the Nonos of Spiti, and they show that their family is derived from ancient rulers who administered the district in the name of the Ladakh kings...One of these Gagas is called commander of the fort (*Mkhar dpon*).” In the case of Pin, the three terms Nono, Gaga, Garpon, often refer to the same person but need not do so. There are several examples of different contemporaneous individuals in Pin bearing the title Nono or Garpon. Tucci and Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet*, 43.

³⁰⁵ One finds references to *Nono* in Lahaul and Zaskar in addition to Ladakh and Spiti. Dieter Schuh, *Urkunden und Sendschreiben aus Zentraltibet, Ladakh und Zaskar. Bd. 1. Bd. 1.* (St. Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverl.,

office of the Nono of Spiti would have been established in the 1630s, when the Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal conquered the region.³⁰⁶ In Trebeck's time, the Nono of Spiti seems to have resided primarily in Ladakh while remotely holding the position. This may have been the case for many of the ministers deputed to govern Spiti from Ladakh.³⁰⁷ Indeed, when such governors of Spiti appear in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Buddhist manuscript colophons from Pin, they are said to rule from—but not necessarily reside at—Drangkhar, Spiti's erstwhile capital. In the colophons, none are linked to Kyiling, a village across the Spiti River from Drangkhar and the home of the Spiti Nono from at least the 1820s to present. This might lend support to the Spiti Nono as a Namgyal-instituted position, rather than an inherited family title.

Others propose that *nono* was initially a surname rather than a title, or possibly a surname in addition to being a title.³⁰⁸ This might account for both the frequency with which, and range of locations where, the term *nono* appears in the Western Himalayas. There were other *nono* families in Spiti in addition to the Spiti Nono, who was associated with Kyiling and Drangkhar, and the Nono in Pin, who was associated with Khar and Guling. There were also *nono* families in Lahaul, Zanskar, and Ladakh.³⁰⁹ It is possible that the term, as a family name, spread throughout these regions as noble families intermarried. The sources are further complicated by

1976); Dargyay, "The Dynasty of Bzang-La (Zanskar, West-Tibet) and Its Chronology—A Reconsideration"; Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*.

³⁰⁶ Some of the colophons explicitly link the governor of Spiti to Ladakh. For example, the minister Gada Tsering, in GCL 22 is called the "Ladakhi Gaga Gada Tsering" (*La dags kyi Ga ga 'Ga da Tshe ring*).

³⁰⁷ Conversely, in the 1680s, Spiti was governed by a Dzungpon who was appointed from Lhasa. In Ahmad's translation of the Fifth Dalai Lama's history (in this part penned by the Desi Sangye Gyatso), he reports that in 1685, "On the day of the new moon, I gave appropriate farewell presence to [Tsetan Dorje of Khangmar who was appointed Dzungpon of Tsaparang in Guge and to Lobzang Donyod who was appointed to Taglakhar (Taklakot), and Thang Dronpa, who was appointed to Spiti.]" Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho and Zahiruddin Ahmad, *The History of Tibet* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1995). Vol. V, p 104b.

³⁰⁸ Christian Jahoda refers to the *Nono* of Spiti as "noble families." Jahoda, "Socio-Economic Organization of Village Communities and Monasteries in Spiti, H.P., India: The Case of a Religious Administrative Unit (Chos Gzhis)."

³⁰⁹ Francke states that "According to information obtained by Mr. H. Lee Shuttleworth, there are several (four?) families of No-nos in Spyi-ti, who have never had much political importance." Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:276.

kinship terms in Spiti, where *no* and *nomo* refer to boys and girls or sons and daughters, such that each instance of the term *no* or *nono* in the colophons might not refer to an individual in the family of *the* Pin Nono.³¹⁰

The seventeenth-and eighteenth-century Buddhist manuscript colophons from Pin do not clarify this confusion. They seem to support the argument that *nono* referred to a whole family rather than just to the individual who served as the Nono. They also indicate that the title Nono was sometimes separate from, and at other times overlapped with, the titles Garpon and Gaga. Some but not all of the governors of Spiti are called Nono. Some are called Gaga instead, while others are both Gaga and Nono.³¹¹ It may be that the Namgyal kings appointed a governor of Spiti who was sometimes from a *nono* family and sometimes not.³¹² In the case of Pin, the sources name multiple contemporaneous individuals who are all called *nono*. They reside in different villages in Pin, usually Guling, Kungri, or Khar. This likely indicates that there was a *nono* family in Pin, with family members residing in different villages, and probably one member of the family occupying the hereditary position of the Nono of Pin.³¹³ Given the number

³¹⁰ The lists of donors in the colophons often include titles or kinship terms that tell us something of the familial relationships, occupations, and status of individuals from Pin. Such kinship terms include *A bha/A pha*, *A khu/A gu*, *A zhang*, *bu*, *bu mo*, *no*, *no mo*, *bu tsha*, *tsha mo*, *jo jo*, *bo mo*, *ma*, and *pha*. The colophons also contain terms indicating one's "Buddhist" status, including ordination status, role in monastic administration, or describing the quality of one's practice and learning: *rje btsun*, *bla ma*, *chos mdzad*, *chos blon*, *byo mo/jo mo*, *byo pa*, *dpon slob*, *btsun pa*.

³¹¹ See Appendix 16: Governors and Rulers of Spiti and Pin. *Gaga* is a term and title whose significance and scope are also debated. It may be that the terms were used more or less interchangeably, hence the confusion over how to interpret them. Francke defines *Gaga* as "a Tibetan title of a nobleman or chief, originally meaning 'elder brother.'"

³¹² The term *Mkhar dpon* appears as early as in *The Old Tibetan Annals*. It was widely used in Ladakh and regions under its influence, like Spiti. "Fortresses were in charge of *mkhar-dpon*, corresponding to the *rdzon-dpon* of Gu-ge and Central Tibet; but it seems that their authority did not stretch beyond the walls of the fort." Luciano Petech and Christian Luczanits, *Inscriptions from the Tabo Main Temple: Texts and Translations* (ISIAO, 1999), 156. See also Petech and Luczanits, 193; Tudeng Nima et al., *An Encyclopaedic Tibetan-English Dictionary: A Revised Version of Bod Rgya Tshig Mdzod Chen Mo = Bod Dbyin Tshig Mdzod Chen Mo : Bod Rgya Tshig Mdzod Chen Mo Bcos Snon Byas Pa'i Deb* (Beijing; London: Nationalities Pub. House ; School of Oriental and African Studies, 2001); Brandon Dotson, trans., *The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History* (Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2009), 71.

³¹³ For example, in a document from the reign of Tashi Namgyal (ca. 1734–1753), the text refers to the Khar Garpon Chenpo Nono Dondrup and Sonam Jora. Later in the same colophon Sonam Jora is said to be from Guling. The two might be father and son or else two brothers, one acting as the Garpon from Khar and the other as the Nono from

and geographic spread of *nono* within Pin, the Pin Nono was probably not a position remotely held by a Ladakhi, as they case may have been with the Spiti Nono.

The earliest reference to a *nono* in the Pin colophons dates to Senge Namgyal's reign (1630–1642).³¹⁴ Since this is also the earliest colophon from Pin, it does not indicate if the title predated or originated with Ladakhi control. There, the figure ruling from Drangkar is glossed as “the wise protector Nono Kalzang, father and son...the great governor at the capital Drangkar.”³¹⁵ This may indicate that the position was hereditary, since it refers to the father and son (*yab sras*), or that it was a family name, unlike the position of governor, which is separated from the name Nono Kalzang, appearing in the next line. Conversely, the Pin counterpart places the name and titles together in the same line, “the great governor Nono Tsering Tsebhel, in this place the Pin Khar.”³¹⁶ This situation is further complicated by the verse describing the primary donors, who are called Lord Norbu Wangdul and Lady Nomo Gadruk, also from Pin, and the other donors called Nono Sangdrup, Nono Phuntsok, and the elder Nono.³¹⁷ The number of individuals glossed as Nono or Nomo here seems to support the term's function as a family name, rather than or in addition to, the title Nono. Thus in the first half of the seventeenth century, it was possible for four different individuals in Pin to be called *nono*, with only one also styled the governor.

Debates regarding the history and origin of the term and title *nono* tend to focus on its relationship to political administration and rule; but the various *nono* of Spiti and Pin also had an important connection to Spiti's monasteries. Spiti families generally adhered to a form of primogeniture, in which the eldest son inherited the family estate upon adulthood (and

Guling. Complicating matters even more, the colophon also lists a *Nono* Tsewang and *Nono* Dondrup from Kungri. The text does not clearly relate the latter two names to the first two. Given their residence in Kungri, it is possible that Tsewang and Dondrup are *lamas* and the younger brothers of Dondrup (father) and Sonam Jora (son),

³¹⁴ This colophon is translated in Appendix 3.

³¹⁵ Verse 9 in Appendix 3.

³¹⁶ Verse 12 in Appendix 3.

³¹⁷ Verse 14 in Appendix 3.

marriage).³¹⁸ Younger sons often joined a monastery.³¹⁹ This was true for both the Spiti Nono and the Pin Nono. The younger brother of the Spiti Nono typically joined the Sakya Tengyud Monastery, while the younger brother of the Pin Nono joined the Nyingma Sangnag Chöling Monastery.³²⁰

In the case of Pin, for at least the last century, the younger *nono* brother held a prominent position at the monastery, not merely joining it as one of many *lama*, but serving as the head or “throne holder,” *lama tripa (bla ma khri pa)*, a term generally designating an abbot or head of a monastery.³²¹ In Pin, the *lama tripa* was responsible for caretaking and ritual maintenance of the temples in the Kungri temple complex. Prior to the foundation of the new *shedra (bshad grwa)*, the Kungri monastery was primarily a cluster of temples and not a *shedra* or residential monastery for training young monks.³²² One of temples in the monastic complex was associated with the Pin Nono family. It was called the Gyajin Lhakhang (*brgya byin lha khang*).³²³ The Nono of Pin is occasionally referred to as the Gyajin, underscoring the relationship between the

³¹⁸ This transition could take place before the father’s death. Upon his marriage, a son’s parents would move out of the main house, or out of the main quarters in the house, into a smaller room or separate smaller house, while the son occupied the main room or house.

³¹⁹ They might also seek out employment outside of Spiti, as a traveling merchant for example, or marry into a different family.

³²⁰ Sources call this monastery by several names, including simply “Kungri monastery,” but the most frequent name in the colophons from Pin is Sangang Chöling. What it might mean to “join” a monastery with a limited residential population of monks is unclear, particularly in the Pin Valley where many of the lamas were married, maintained households, and only resided at the monastery for specific festivals and rituals. Meme Gartruk, Interview, interview by author, June 27, 2014.

³²¹ The term *lama tripa* does not appear in any of the historical documents from Pin prior to the twentieth century, but it does occur in the twentieth-century documents. A number of the older *lama* and lay practitioners from Pin whom I interviewed, used the term, including two individuals who held the position on a rotating basis. Meme Gartruk; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Meme Trinley, interview. Some of the colophon sources describe the same person as both a relative of the Pin Nono and also a lama or monk. A few colophons further connect such persons to the Kungri monastery. Presumably, these were the younger *nono* sons who became monks at the Kungri monastery, although this is somewhat speculative. The earliest source for this practice remains Egerton in 1864. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Tibet*.

³²² Georges Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (University of California Press, 2003), 111.

³²³ On this temple, see Appendix 10. The temple is also sometimes called the Lenta Chökhang, *Brgya byin gling thar mchod khang*. It previously stood where the monastery guest house is today. While part of the name of the temple is a word that also refers to the figure Indra (*Brgya byin*), who serves as a guardian deity in Buddhism, none of the individuals I interviewed made this association. Interview with Meme Sonam Phuntsok, 2013.

family and the temple. The *lama tripa* seems to have been responsible for the other temples in Kungri, not just the Gyajin Lhakhang.³²⁴ Thus while the elder son in the family held what might be termed political authority, the younger son held a position of religious authority.³²⁵ He is often listed in important historical documents as a witness or arbiter, as well as being named in some of the Buddhist manuscript dedication colophons.³²⁶

The decline of the Spiti and Pin Nono's political authority over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is more clearly understood, while the waning of the Nono's non-secular authority is less clear. Spiti's contact with British administrators from the mid-nineteenth century onwards gives some idea of the narrowing scope of the office holder's authority. After Spiti became part of British territory, new laws defined and regulated the office, generally limiting the Spiti Nono's power while allowing him to continue to hold office.³²⁷ In addition to delimiting the Spiti Nono's power, accounts from British officials indicate that they viewed the Spiti Nono as paramount and the Pin Nono as both subsidiary and rather defunct.³²⁸ This limited position apparently continued briefly after Indian Independence in 1947, according

³²⁴ The Gyajin Lhakhang is also sometimes called the Gyajin Chökhang (*brgya byin mchod khang*) or the Jindag Lhakhang (*byin bdag lha khang*). In addition to the Gyajin Lhakhang, there is a small temple housing a large prayer wheel called the Dungkhor Lhakhang (*gdung 'khor lha khang*) and a temple dated to at least the seventeenth century variously called the Tsuklakhang (*gtsug lag khang*, *gtsug lha khang*), Pema Lingpa Lhakhang (*pad+ma gling pa'i lha khang*), the Linta Chökhang (*gling thar mchod khang*), or the "Old Temple" Nyingpa Lhakhang (*rnying pa lha khang*). Another temple called the Kangyur Lhakhang (*bka' 'gyur lha khang*) has since been torn down. The Guru Lhakhang (*gu ru lha khang*) was added in the late 1930s. The 1987 monastery plan in O. C. Handa, although accurate with regard to location, scale, and layout, mislabels these structures. Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh*, 84; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Meme Trinley, interview.

³²⁵ This might in some ways be characterized as akin to a local family-based iteration of the traditional patron/priest structure in Tibetan history, or even a continuation of practices established by Yeshe Ö and his family, whereby one member of the royal family held served as king and the other became a monk.

³²⁶ For example, Lama Kunzang Wangchuk is a signatory to the documents banning *marchö* in Appendix 14. His predecessor, Lama Jampa, and Lama Jampa's brother, the Nono Tsering Ngodrup, also appear as signatories for important documents from Pin. See Appendix 16.

³²⁷ The Nono could only adjudicate minor disputes. In 1883, Captain W. B. Hay described the situation as "The 'Nono' of Spiti is also an Honorary Magistrate; but he has no civil powers, and can only fine up to Rs. 10 on the criminal side." *The Spiti Regulation of 1873 detailed the extent of the Nono's powers under the British. Denzil Ibbetson, Punjab District Gazetteers. Ibbetson Series, 1883-1884.* (Punjab: Compiled and published under the authority of the Punjab government, 1883), 404.

³²⁸ Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Thibet.*

to the current Spiti Nono, Sonam Angdu, who noted that his grandfather still retained some authority and power through the 1960s when the Panchayat system was established.³²⁹ Today, the title is a largely empty, and the Spiti Nono wields no political power through that particular office.³³⁰

While the decline of the elder Nono's political authority is explicitly tied to British administration during the colonial period, the younger brother of the Nono's position as unofficial head of Kungri monastery persisted in Pin until the 1970s or 1980s, when there was no younger brother of the Pin Nono who could serve as the temple caretaker. To compensate for this lack, a group of elders in Pin served as the lama *tripa* on a rotating three-year basis.³³¹ This lasted for about thirty years, until Yomed Tulku became the *defacto* head of the Nyingma tradition in Pin, bringing all of the temples in the monastic complex under his oversight, as well as under the new monastery name of Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Gonpa. When the new Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Gonpa was being constructed in the 1990s, the old Gyajin Lhakhang, associated with the Pin Nono, and the Kangyur Lhakhang (*bka' 'gyur lha khang*) were demolished to make room for what is today a guest house and small general store.³³²

Care and management of the temples underwent another important transition in 2014. In February of that year, one former lama *tripa* summarized responsibility for the various temples in Kungri, "The older folks (*bla ma tripa*) take care of the two older temples [i.e. the Peling

³²⁹ Sonam Angdu, Interview.

³³⁰ He is still afforded respect in the community and, in his career as a government administrator, does wield some political power. When I interviewed him in 2014, he headed the Child Development Office in Kaza. His ability to obtain and retain government positions may be related in some degree to his family's historical status as governors of Spiti.

³³¹ Most of the former *lama tripa* who served during this period said it lasted twenty or thirty years. Meme Trinley was able to recall the names of eleven individuals who served as the *lama tripa* during this period, which would make it span about thirty-three years. However, he also said that some individuals served for shorter and longer periods. He noted that they similarly rotated service as the *umze (dbu mdzad)* or "chant master" on a three-year basis. Those individuals were: 1) Guling Meme Lama Khoru, 2) Tsud Polo, 3) Sagnam Meme Drupgya, 4) Kungri Meme Dorje, 5) Bar Meme Kunzang, 6) Bar Meme Olnyog, 7) Khar Orgyen, 8) Meme Kunzang, 9) Khar Tsetan, 10) Tsud Chowa Dondrup, 11) Meme Sonam Phuntsok. Meme Trinley, interview.

³³² Some, but not all, of the contents of the Nono's family temple were salvaged. See Appendix 10.

Lhakhang and the Guru Lhakhang] but the monks and the *shedra* take care of the newer temple and the *shedra* [i.e. Urgyen Sangnag Chöling].³³³ Just four months later in June 2014, the monks at the *shedra* also took on responsibility for the older temples. Now, a monk from the monastery is posted daily to the Peling Lhakhang to perform the necessary ritual (and physical) maintenance of the space. There is no longer a Gyajin Lhakhang to maintain.

While there was no official “head” of the Kungri monastery prior to the 1980s, the younger *nono* brother held a prominent position comparable to leading the monastery. This was followed in recent decades by a rotation among village elders. Now there is a rotation among monks from the *shedra*. The new *shedra* monastery did not necessarily contribute to the decline of the Nono family’s authority, which was largely a result of major political changes, but that decline did create a power gap that first the local elders and then the monastery stepped into.

This shift from a hereditary lama *tripa* to monastery oversight is part of a larger process in Pin of transitioning away from a family-based hereditary system for maintaining and transmitting ritual knowledge.³³⁴ Before the advent of the new *shedra*, young monks and nuns were trained at home by family members, usually a father or uncle.³³⁵ They might stay at the Kungri monastic complex for certain periods, usually around important festivals or rituals, but often lived at home.³³⁶ Pin differed in this way from the other monasteries in Spiti. Similarly, it was only in the last decade that a nunnery was established in Kungri. Before the new nunnery,

³³³ Meme Trinley, interview.

³³⁴ Other areas of ritual expertise and training that were primarily family-based hereditary practices include the Buchen, astrologers, and doctors. These too are changing. In the case of the Buchen, renewed interest is reinvigorating the tradition, after a period of decline when individual family lineages came to an end. Von Nils Florian Besch paints a different picture of the state of *amchi*, or doctors, in Spiti, in which the decline of local transmission practices presents a greater threat to the ongoing vitality of the tradition. Sutherland and Tsering, *Disciples of a Crazy Saint*; Dollfus, “The Great Sons of Thang Stong Rgyal Po”; Nils F. Besch, “Making a Medical Living: On the Monetisation of Tibetan Medicine in Spiti,” in *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, Edited by Mona Schrempf, 2007, 155–70; Roerich, “The Ceremony of Breaking the Stone.”

³³⁵ Yomed Tulku, Interview about Yeshe Palden; Meme Trinley, interview; Tsering Paljor, interview.

³³⁶ The monastery taking over responsibility for the Peling Temple in particular supports Yomed Tulku’s efforts to establish the Peling *terma* in Pin as an institutionally dominant *monastic* practice and tradition.

nuns in Pin lived at home throughout their lives.³³⁷ With the recent substantial expansion of the Kungri monastery, particularly the addition of rooms sufficient to house a large number of monks, the monastery has both expanded in size and also taken on a central role in the training and education of young monks. According to Yomed Tulku, the impetus for this massive undertaking was Dudjom Rinpoche, who encouraged Yomed Tulku to return to Pin after his own training, and found a *shedra*.³³⁸ Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (1904–1987), also known as Dudjom Rinpoche, became the first head of the Nyingma tradition.³³⁹ He was also the reincarnation of Dudjom Lingpa (1835–1904), who discovered the Dudjom *tersar* (*gter gsar*) teachings that form one of the two main Nyingma traditions in Pin today.³⁴⁰ In addition to being the most important figure in the Dudjom tradition at the time, Dudjom Rinpoche was also Yomed Tulku’s primary teacher. Thus an injunction to return to Pin and found a new monastery would be taken quite seriously.

Pin is not alone in experiencing this kind of major institutional transitions. Christian Jahoda describes a significant shift in the 1970s in the ways in which monasteries in Spiti received economic support.³⁴¹ This entailed changes in monastic land ownership, taxation, and other forms of material and financial support. Prior to the 1970s, monasteries in Spiti derived support from “tax” payers in the region. Only some of the households in a monastery’s designated region paid taxes (generally land-owning families). Taxes paid to the monasteries

³³⁷ Until 2014, the nuns at Pin’s Dechen Chöling Ani Gonpa were all initially trained at home. Once the nunnery was established, they began to study with teachers from the monastery. In 2014, Dechen Chöling took on its first large group of novice nuns, whose Buddhist training would commence at the nunnery (those who were old enough had been enrolled in elementary education at the local schools).

³³⁸ Yomed Tulku, Interview, interview by Joseph Leach, June 14, 2014.

³³⁹ The concept of a single “head” of the various Nyingma lineages, monasteries, and traditions was invented in an exile context when Tibetans were focused on preserving and promoting Tibetan religious and cultural traditions outside of Tibet.

³⁴⁰ The other is the Pema Lingpa or Peling *terma*.

³⁴¹ Jahoda, “Socio-Economic Organization of Village Communities and Monasteries in Spiti, H.P., India: The Case of a Religious Administrative Unit (Chos Gzhis).”

were typically goods rather than coin: barley, butter, beer, meat. After the changes in taxation and land ownership laws following Indian Independence in 1947, monasteries increasingly developed different sources of financial support. Today, these sources include tourism revenue, foreign donations, and government funding for “cultural” institutions, all of which greatly overshadow the previous income from local tax payers. For example, the monastery in Kungri garners financial support from a diverse global base, primarily through connections to other Dudjom Tersar institutions.

The Red Offering

In his keynote address at the end of the conference on Spiti, Lochen Tulku directed very few remarks toward specific presentations, but did take the time to weigh in on a potentially controversial point, namely, the history of animal sacrifice in Spiti. He said:

I asked Deborah [Klimburg-Salter] about Zhang Zhung. She thinks Spiti and Kinnaur fall in the Zhang Zhung area, right? So prior to Buddhism there must be Bonism...I remember trying to stop the animal sacrifice in Spiti when I was younger, when I was maybe fifteen or twenty years old. So I also tried to stop these [inaudible] practices and I became successful in my mission. I have also heard recently, five to seven years ago, I heard people talking about sacrifice, about sacrificing a black goat to cause a spell on their enemies...I don't think this practice exists anymore. These are the signs of the Bon culture, I believe. It could be signs of Bon culture. So at the moment, our culture is a totally Buddhist culture. But our culture is different from Tibetan culture.³⁴²

The specter of sacrifice certainly looms large in Spiti, as well as in the Western Himalayas as a whole, where as recently as 2014 the High Court of Himachal Pradesh, India passed a law banning animal sacrifices in the state.³⁴³ Critiques of sacrifice are fairly ubiquitous in Tibetan and

³⁴² Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, “Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti.”

³⁴³ The ruling states, “these practices have no social sanction but [are] merely based on superstition and ignorance...the Constitution of India protects, of course, religious beliefs, opinions and practices but not superstitions.” Although the lawsuit that led to this ruling focused on animal sacrifice in Hindu and Muslim

Himalayan Buddhist contexts, where the prevalence of critiques may reflect the ubiquity of the practice.

In the Western Himalayas and Spiti, rituals involving killing animals—whether deemed sacrifice or not—have garnered comment from a wide range of voices in the last two centuries: colonial British officers, German missionaries, mountaineers, tourists, Indian government officials, Tibetans on pilgrimage to Spiti prior to the 1950s, exiled Tibetans living in India, and Spitians themselves, Lochen Tulku among them.³⁴⁴ However, as Jacob Dalton and J. Z. Smith argue, one must be careful in taking all of these critiques as somehow related, since not all of these voices mean the same thing when they refer to “sacrifice,” or have the same reasons for arguing that such practices are not a part of Buddhism.³⁴⁵ In the case of recent critiques of sacrifice in Spiti, contemporary anxieties about the relationship between Buddhism and sacrifice are largely articulated through Buddhist concerns over karma and virtue, rather than through the kind of language employed in the HPHC ruling, which deemed animal sacrifice a “superstition” and not part of “religious” practice.

In the twentieth-century, a number of Buddhist leaders enacted a series of regulations concerning the ritual status and use of meat in the Pin Valley. One such regulation of meat entailed a ban on *marchö* (*dmar mchod*) enacted in the Pin Valley between the 1940s and the 1960s. The Tibetan term *marchö* refers to a particular kind of offering involving meat or flesh. *Marchö* can be translated as “red offering” or “blood sacrifice.” However, many scholars choose

contexts, the scope of the law certainly applies to Buddhist areas of Himachal Pradesh. In the High Court of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla” CWP No. 9257 of 2011, Decided on: 26.9.2014 <<http://hpsja.nic.in/JAcaselawAS.pdf>>

³⁴⁴ See for example Walter Asboe, “Sacrifices in Western Tibet,” *Man* 36 (1936): 75–76; Walter Asboe, “The Scape-Goat in Western Tibet,” *Man* 36 (1936): 74–75.

³⁴⁵ “As the ideological weight of the term “sacrifice” becomes clear, one may even wonder whether it can ever be a neutral or appropriate label for anything we find in other cultures. “I know of no ethnographic monograph published in the last twenty years,” J. Z. Smith has observed, “in which the term sacrifice appears in the index. My conclusion is that there is no ‘sacrifice’ until we invent it. We imagine it and then go out and find it.” Sacrifice, then, is a constructed category that may well be ill suited for describing the liberation right.” Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, 107.

to translate the term as “animal sacrifice” or simply “sacrifice.” The *Tshig mdzod chen mo* defines *marchö* as “*sems can bsad pa’i sha khrag gi mchod pa*” or “offering the flesh and blood of sentient (or living) beings that were killed.”³⁴⁶ In the documents from Pin, we get no such gloss. They refer only to *marchö*.

I examine recent bans on *marchö* in Spiti not in order to retrace the lines of such arguments, but to examine how those arguments articulate a conception of authority and legitimacy, and the role such authorities play in the process of defining and consolidating Buddhist authority in the Pin Valley. I argue that critiques of *marchö* in Pin are largely voiced by those individuals who already hold some kind of authority in a ritual or Buddhist context, an authority that is itself often derived from an association with Tibet. Those poised to proffer critiques in Pin have all travelled elsewhere, returning to articulate a critique of the local. Thus a practice—and its corresponding censorship—that is widespread in both place and time, is consistently articulated as both past and particular. It is past in the sense that Lochen Tulku articulated, as a holdover from some pre-Buddhist other, be it Bön or otherwise, a practice that has no place in the here and now, since, “at the moment, our culture is a totally Buddhist culture.”³⁴⁷ It is particular in the sense that it is often directed toward perhaps the most

³⁴⁶ “*dmar mchod*,” Nima et al., *Bod Rgya Tshig Mdzod Chen Mo*.

³⁴⁷ When discussing sacrifice in the Spiti region in particular, Buddhist critics and “reformers” often harken back to the edicts of King Yeshe Ö (947–1024), noting, like Lochen Tulku, that Spiti was part of the Bön influenced area called Zhangzhung and Yeshe Ö’s subsequent kingdom. What is perhaps striking in the case of Pin is that Spiti becomes an other to an authoritative Tibetan Buddhism much in the same way that Bon and Zhangzhung served as an other to an authoritative Indian Buddhism. Having eradicated such adulterations as sacrifice from the Buddhist center of Tibet, attention must now turn toward Tibet’s borderlands, with their ever-present barbarian threats. This tension is central to Spiti’s status as an isolated enclave that on the one hand preserves an unadulterated form of Tibetan Buddhism, and on the other requires reform to bring it “up to speed” with more advanced developments in Tibet’s “center.” Some scholars similarly view “sacrifice” as a practice that only exists on the margins of Tibetan Buddhism. This notion is at the core of Geoff Childs’s discussion of animal sacrifice in the Himalayas, “Providing blood offerings to potentially malevolent forces is a practice seemingly at odds with Buddhism. Nevertheless, animal sacrifices have endured in “Buddhist” communities existing at the periphery of the Tibetan world.” Stan Mumford’s study of the Gurung in Nepal similarly argues that sacrifice is an explicitly non-Buddhist act that only enters the Buddhist context he examines through a locally-introduced element on the periphery of the Tibetan

particular—and plentiful—category of deities in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, *lha* or deities of place. There are as many of these *lha* as there are mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and boulders.³⁴⁸ They are also both past and particular in the sense that they are not part of a universal Buddhism; they are displaced from what originated in India and must thus be local introductions. Lastly, I argue that the bans on *marchö* in the mid-twentieth century acknowledge a diverse and diffused corporate body of ritual authorities in Pin, including the very recipients of *marchö* offerings. These multiple and diffused authorities were increasingly consolidated under the umbrella of a single central Buddhist institutional authority, culminating in the contemporary moment.

The ban on *marchö* in the Pin Valley is described in four documents currently stored in a temple in Kungri. The documents were written between 1940 and 1961. The two longer documents both date to 1940 and are quite similar. They open with a verse of praise to the Buddha followed by the date. They refer to a prior unspecified period when the Pin Valley was overrun by the evils of red offering, until the *drupthop* or *siddha* Tsetan Zangpo enacted an oath in writing prohibiting the red offering. As a result of that oath, the Pin region experienced a period of virtue until the red offerings reemerged, again bringing with them a period of dark conditions and degeneration. In the second period of degeneration, the Lama Yeshe Palden was invited to make a new oath, which once again prohibited the red offering, after which the land was purified. The text then lists everyone who is bound by the new oath, specifying that the vow

Buddhist world. Childs, “Householder Lamas and the Persistence of Tradition: Animal Sacrifice in Himalayan Buddhist Communities” 142.; Mumford, *Himalayan Dialogue*, 59.

³⁴⁸ Such local deities are place-based and autochthonous, inherently tied to the land and village, to the *yul*. The category of *yul lha* are not particular to Pin, nor to Spiti, and can be found throughout Tibet and the Himalayas. Local deities manifest in different ways, both material and embodied. They may take the shape of statues or images that are anthropomorphic figures (for example, a red-faced warrior riding a lion). They may be a single rod or a cluster of rods, arrows, or spears, often topped by a cluster of colored cloth strips. They may be materially manifested by an element of the landscape like a stone or tree. They may also manifest in human bodies, typically entering or “descending” to inhabit the body of a person who serves as a mouthpiece or conduit for the local deity, generally called a *lus yar* or *lha ’bab mkhen*. These figures are propitiated and consulted in a variety of ways. In Pin today, they are typically given offerings of butter lamps, incense, and grain.

applies to everyone regardless of status, high or low, lay or monastic, human or deity. The documents conclude by specifying a fine to be paid to the monastery at Kungri in any case of transgression. One of the documents, dated two months after the first, raises the fine for violating the ban.

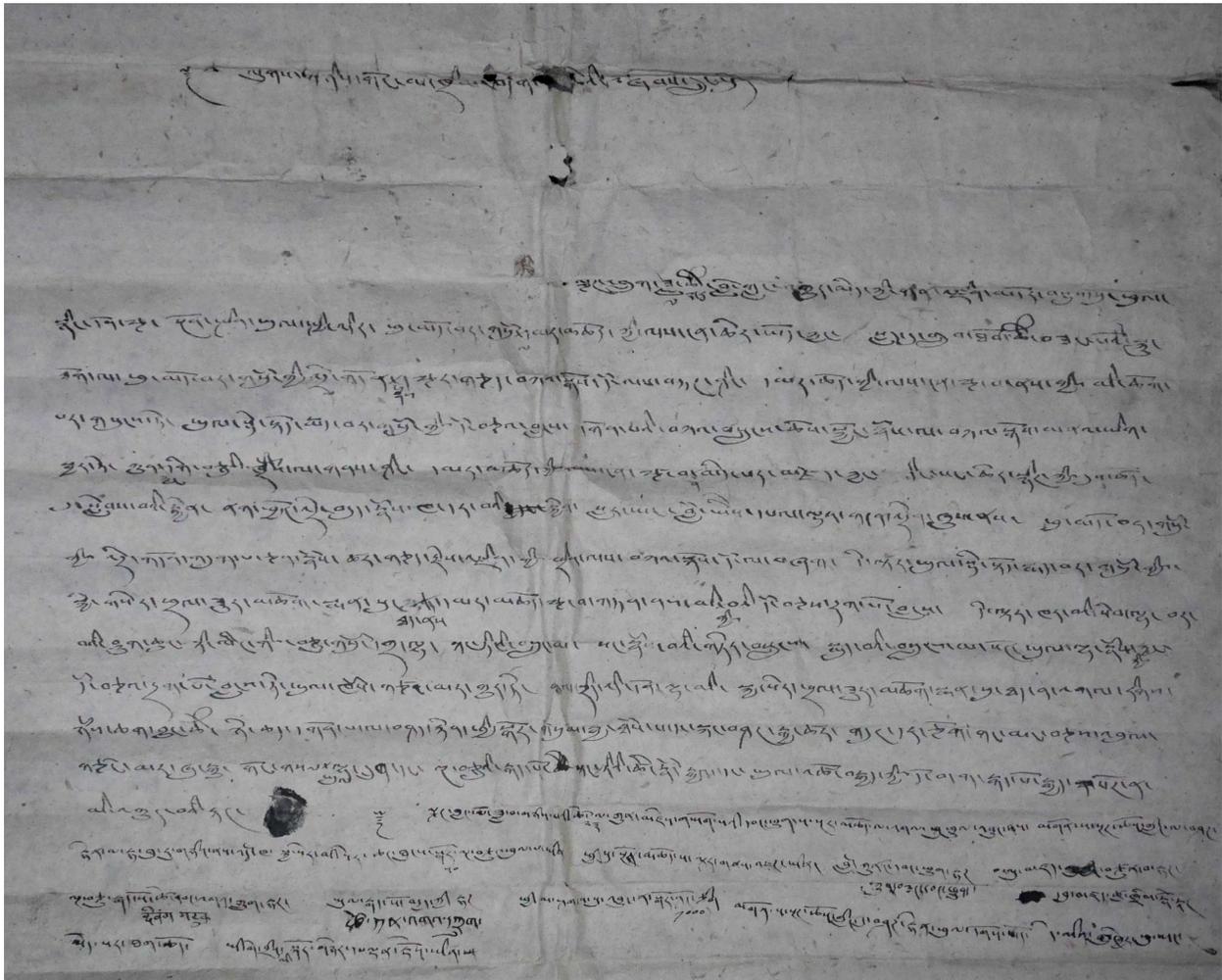


Figure 13: *Marchö* document from the Old Temple in Kungri dated to 1940.³⁴⁹

A shorter document dated 1961, is appended to the earlier nineteen-forties ban. It notes that, “just like before,” someone made an offering. They confessed, paid a fine, and the matter was settled. The document signatories enjoined the valley anew to avoid the evils of *marchö* and

³⁴⁹ Photograph by author, 2014.

set a higher fine for future infractions. The last of the shorter documents, dated 1954, notes that someone was accused of making an offering, here only called a *solkha* (*gsol kha*), an offering or petition possibly made with meat and drink, but not necessarily a *marchö*. As before, the residents of Pin, humans and deities, lay and monastic, are all called to witness and adhere to the ban on such practices.³⁵⁰ This last document bears the name and seal of a Lama Gelong Yomed Dorje.

These documents raise several interesting points about the nature and sources of ritual authority in Pin. The first figure mentioned is the otherwise unknown *siddha* Tsetan Zangpo. His capacity to enact a ban on *marchö* in Pin seems to be derived from his ritual acumen: his status as a *siddha* or tantric Buddhist adept. These figures are often unconventional masters who train and practice outside the institutional norms of Buddhist monasteries. Their expertise makes them particularly well-suited for combatting and subduing the threats autochthonous deities might pose to Buddhism. This is particularly relevant to the *marchö* documents, since the recipients of such offerings were likely the autochthonous *yul lha* in Pin. Thus as a *siddha*, Tsetan Zangpo theoretically would be able to subdue any local deity who receives an offensive offering like *marchö*, and possibly rehabilitate that deity within a new Buddhist context as a Buddhist deity, usually as a *dharma* protector.

The documents from Pin do not explicitly say who the recipients of the *marchö* are. It is likely that the *marchö* offerings were made to one or more of Pin's *yul lha*. Perhaps the authors of the documents did not think it necessary to explicitly state what would have been readily understood. In the absence of such a specification, the documents instead focus on those who enact the offerings. They spend a great deal of time listing everyone who might possibly perform

³⁵⁰ There's a very cyclical sense to these documents, in which the *marchö* is repeatedly encountered and combatted, only to emerge again as an ever-present threat, despite the steadily increasing fine.

a red offering in the future, ensuring no loopholes whereby someone could be excluded from the ban. The fine itself is also directed at the person who *makes* the offering, not at the deity who receives it. So if Pin's local deities *are* the recipients of *marchö*, these documents seem to be less concerned with them than with the human actors who propitiate them.

The next two people named in the documents are Lama Yeshe Palden and Lama Gelong Yomed Dorje. Yeshe Palden was an important local figure active in Western Tibet and the Himalayas in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁵¹ He was one of the individuals responsible for introducing the Dudjom *terma* tradition to Pin. Yomed Dorje, whose name appears in the later 1954 document, was his student. Both Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje traveled extensively in the Western Tibetan and Himalayan regions, where they studied with Tibetan teachers, particularly in the Ngari area around Mount Kailash. They became prominent local Buddhist figures upon their return to Spiti, founding a new temple and originating an incarnation lineage.

In addition to these individuals who enact the ban, the documents list several different groups of adherents bound by the ban (the documents refer to this as taking an ardent vow or oath). They clearly state that the ban applies to *everyone* in Pin, describing a range of different people: taxpayers and non-taxpayers, landowners and non-landowners, high and low, lay and monastic, god or human. The inclusion of *lha* among this list is particularly striking. There are eight main villages in Pin, seven of which have *yul lha*, or local deities, that are named in the documents. The eight villages are Kungri, Bar, Mud, Tiling, Khar, Sagnam, Tangti, and

³⁵¹ Yeshe Palden and his activities are discussed in Chapter 2. Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje built the Guru Lhakang, a temple dedicated to Padmasambhava, in Kungri. Yeshe Palden died in 1942, so the Guru Lhakang would have been built prior to that year. An inscription inside the temple records some of the circumstances of its construction, but unfortunately does not include a date. See Appendix 3: Yellow Inscription in the Guru Lhakang. Yomed Dorje was from Guling Village in Pin and became Yeshe Palden's student. Yomed Dorje was also the previous rebirth of the current Yomed Tulku. Yomed Dorje died in 1960.

Guling.³⁵² Guling and Kungri are not named in the documents because they do not have a *yul lha* that takes possession of a person. The documents might be singling out these six because the six *yul lha* are the likely recipients of a *marchö* offering, or simply listing them alongside all of the other residents of Pin. In either case, by name each, the documents acknowledge the *yul lha*'s existence and status as stakeholders in Pin. They have a level of ritual importance sufficient to warrant their inclusion among the few figures to be individually named.

The inclusion of the six deities is significant because from the 1960s on, what takes place in Pin, and in two other Nyingma villages in Spiti, is an effort on the part of the monastery leadership to discourage propitiating the *yul lha*, be it with “red offerings” or otherwise. In this instance, the documents clearly articulate a Buddhist logic of merit and virtue for discouraging the offerings. They describe the negative actions or karma (*las ngan*), darkness (*nag*), and harm (*gdug pa*) that are spreading as a result of the offerings. They describe a desire to make Pin a place where the ten virtues (*dge bcu*) and lawful actions (*khriims las*) abide. This language is not particularly surprising.

There is a difference between what the two longer documents from the 1940s say and what the two shorter documents from 1954 and 1961 say about these offerings. The two 1940s documents do not say that *marchö* should be banned because the recipients are not Buddhist deities, nor that the act of making an offering itself is problematic. The documents seem to focus

³⁵² These eight villages in Pin each elect a head man (*rgad po*), who serves on a rotating basis. The headmen are also enjoined to adhere to the oath. Of these eight, seven have a *yul lha* and six of those *yul lha* have an oracle or human mouthpiece whom they take possession of. In Pin they refer to this person as either a *lus yar*, a “borrowed body,” or a *lha 'bab mkhan*, a person whom the god “descends upon.” The Kungri *lha* is Jowo Dralha (*jo bo dgra lha*), who has no *lus yar*. Tiling is Chusum Dralha (*bcu gsum dgra lha*), Khar is Seblha, Tselha, or Serlha, depending on the source (*seb lha*, *rtser lha*, *gser lha*), Sagnam is Dzampalha (*'dzam pa lha*) or Tersrung (*gter bsrungs*), Bar is Shukchung (*shug chung*), Mud is Srungma (*bsrungs ma*). Mud Village apparently has two *yul lha*, but no one I interviewed provided both of their names. The second document from 1940 specifically names the Mud headman Tsewang. His name could be a stand in for all of the village headmen, or all of the village *lha* and their *lus yar*. It might also indicate that the Mud *lha*, whose *lus yar* is Tsewang, was the recipient of the *marchö* offering that instigated this new oath.

on the content or substance of the offering as the problem, namely the meat or flesh that constitutes the content of a red offering. Conversely, the 1954 and 1961 documents do not actually refer to *marchö* at all. In 1954, the act of offering is called *solka* (*gsol kha*), an oblation or offering, not necessarily involving meat. The recipient of the offering *is* clearly stated; in this case the *lha* of Rong.³⁵³ A few lines later, this act is described as an offering to the *lower* direction (*'od phyogs la gsol kha*). Here, the problem seems to be as much about the recipient, the Rong *lha*, as it is about the nature of the offering itself. There is perhaps a tension in the documents between on the one hand, critiquing offerings because the offering itself involves killing and the associated bad karma, and on the other, critiquing the offering because of the recipient. While these documents banning *marchö* seem to focus on the former, there are other later efforts to curb the propitiation of Pin's *yul lha* that frame this earlier effort.

The document banning red offerings in Pin are not isolated or unusual examples. Dalton argues that there was a general movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on ethical behavior, including critiquing so-called blood offerings or red offerings.³⁵⁴ He notes that the movement was particularly active in Eastern Tibet. The material addressed here establishes that this ethical current was also present in Spiti and the Western Himalayas. Indeed, there was at least one other persistent source of critique of *marchö* in the Western Himalayas in early twentieth century, Khyungtrul Jigme Namkha Dorje (1897–1955).³⁵⁵ Khyungtrul Jigme

³⁵³ Rong as a place name may be connected to the Tashigang Rong Gonpa at the juncture of the Spiti and Sutlej Rivers, or to Rong in Ladakh, or Rong in Guge. There is a *Rong lha* mentioned in Nebesky-Wojkowitz that seems unrelated. René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and demons of Tibet: the cult and iconography of the Tibetan protective deities* (Delhi: Book Faith India, 1996).

³⁵⁴ Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*, 151.

³⁵⁵ For a discussion of this figure and his efforts to combat *marchö* in the Western Himalayas, especially in Kinnaur, see Dpal Idan Tshul khriims, 'Jigs-med-nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje, and Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, *The biography of Khyun-sprul 'Jigs-med-nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje*; Blezer, "Heaven My Blanket, Earth My Pillow, Wherever Rin Po Che Lays His Head Down to Rest Is the Original Place of Bon"; Kvaerne, "Khyung-Sprul 'Jigs-Med Nam-Mkha'i Rdo-Rje (1897–1955): An Early Twentieth-Century Tibetan Pilgrim in India"; Alay, "The Early Years of Khyung Sprul Rin Po Che."

Namkha Dorje was a Tibetan Bön practitioner who was a particularly vocal critic of red offerings to local deities in Kinnaur, a region that borders Spiti to the south and has close ties to the Pin Valley.³⁵⁶ Khyungtrul traveled extensively in the region and was a close associate of another important figure in the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, Pema Dewé Gyalpo, also known as Etaraja. Khyungtrul studied with Etaraja, eventually establishing a Bön monastery near Etaraja's own monastery near Mount Kailash in Western Tibet. Etaraja had another student who likely crossed paths with Khyungtrul, a lama from Spiti named Yeshe Palden and his student Yomed Dorje. This group of individuals are together responsible for establishing the Dudjom Tersar tradition in the western Himalayas, and eventually in Pin.

The Local Deity

Efforts to curtail certain kinds of offerings in the mid-twentieth century in Pin focused on the karmic repercussions of those acts and not explicitly on the local deities themselves. In more recent decades, local deities in Pin have been increasingly targeted. This is taking place as the new Nyingma monastery in Kungri consolidates and centralizes ritual expertise and authority in the valley. This has included discouraging people from propitiating the Pin *yul lha*, encouraging them to consult the monastery instead of the *yul lha*, attempting to bring the Kungri *yul lha* into the orbit of the monastery, referring to the Kungri *yul lha* by a different name, and as discussed above in the case of the *marchö*, banning particular kinds of offerings to all the deities.

In recent years, Yomed Tulku and some of the leading monastics at the monastery have discouraged people from propitiating the various Pin Valley local deities. Their criticism of the

³⁵⁶ Per Kvaerne, "Khyung-Sprul 'Jigs-Med Nam-Mkha'i Rdo-Rje (1897-1955): An Early Twentieth-Century Tibetan Pilgrim in India," in *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay (Richmond, Surrey; [Leiden, the Netherlands]: Curzon; International Institute for Asian Studies, 1998), 78.

Pin *yul lha* seems to have had the desired effect with some. One person from Tiling Village summarized his shifting relationship with the village deity:

The first time I left Spiti I did [ask the *lhatho* for help]. After that I didn't. The first time I hadn't ever left this place. I was a little afraid. There was a custom here of asking the *lhato* for help so I did. Now I ask the Guru Lhakang and the Buddha instead of the *lhato*. He's a *jigten lha* (*'jig rten lha*, worldly deity) so there's not very much benefit. Before, Rinpoche said that these *lhato* aren't very good. If you stop doing the *lhato* that would be good. Really he isn't a "*lha*." He's not in the pecha. Rinpoche said there's no benefit. They sometimes harm people. Sometimes people ask the *lhato* to harm other people. This isn't good. So people should stop. You can do a *mo* in the gumpa.³⁵⁷

Others are more ambivalent. One person noted that the local deities and the *gonpa* want the same thing, "some butter lamps," so they should be able to get along. Yet another person commented that people ask the local deities for help at the same time as they ask the monastery. "They visit both," he said, "like this," miming cooking a roti on a skillet, flipping the invisible bread back and forth between the monastery and the *yul lha*.³⁵⁸

When I asked Yomed Tulku why he discouraged propitiating the local deities, he said that they ask people to do bad things and are consulted for negative reasons. When I asked what sort of bad things the deities might ask, he said that they require payment and encourage people to harm their enemies, and that they make people's animals sick.³⁵⁹ A different person from Pin similarly noted that the local deities might cause people's yak and sheep to become ill, but that

³⁵⁷ Ngodrup Dorje and Rinzen Drolma, Interview, interview by author, February 11, 2014.

³⁵⁸ Kunzang Namdrol, interview.

³⁵⁹ Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014. One interesting change in the last decade that might be a result of Yomed Tulku's attitude toward the *yul lha* but might be entirely unrelated, concerns the Sagnam Village *yul lha*. The Sagnam deity has a corresponding medium or oracle, which is itself a hereditary office. A few years ago, the person who served as the medium died and his adult son declined to take his father's place. When asking about the village deities in Pin, several individuals related this story in somewhat disapproving tones. One person pointed out that he had even closed off a path leading to his house because people kept using it to visit him/the deity. I tried to arrange an interview with him but was unable to, so I could not ascertain his reasons for discontinuing the practice. Dorje, Interview with an organizer of the Spiti Himalayan Buddhist Cultural Association; Trimey Lodro, Interview, interview by author, June 24, 2013.

those same people might go to the local deity to make offerings when their animals *already are* ill.³⁶⁰

Yomed Tulku was less concerned with people visiting the Kungri deity. Among the various local deities in Pin, the Kungri *yul lha* is rather unique. The deity's name is Jowo Dralha (*jo bo dgra lha*), or Lord Warrior.³⁶¹ Jowo Dralha is the only deity in Pin who does not have an oracle or *lus yar* to act as his mouthpiece. He is also the closest in proximity to the temple complex in Kungri. Yomed Tulku commented that Jowo Dralha is less of a problem compared to the other deities because he does not ask people to do the kinds of things the other deities do. Presumably, each deity's medium or *lus yar* is the one doing the asking, so perhaps the absence of an associated medium renders Jowo Dralha more palatable, since he cannot make direct demands of the villagers. Yomed Tulku also explained that Jowo Dralha is closer to the monastery, so people sometimes think he is connected to the monastery protectors.³⁶² The deity is currently located in a field slightly downhill from the monastery complex (Figure 14).³⁶³ This is an interesting proposition. It implies that physical proximity somehow entails a substantive change in the nature of the deity, as if the acceptable Buddhist atmosphere of the monastery complex has a greater impact on Jowo Dralha than on the other Pin *yul lha*, simply because he is closer.

³⁶⁰ Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview.

³⁶¹ Jowo Dralha might be interpreted as a title as much as a proper name. It seems to describe both an individual and a category. Nebesky-Wojkowitz dedicates an entire chapter to the category *dgra lha*, noting that these figures are particularly associated with protection and material wealth or property. The *dgra lha* are themselves variously sub-categorized, with one particular five-part group including the *yul lha* or "country gods," which would presumably include Kungri's Jowo Dralha. He notes, "The title *dgra lha*, "enemy-god", is usually given to those deities who are believed to be especially capable of protecting their worshipers against enemies, and to help them to increase their property." Jowo Dralha is also a local protector mentioned in an inscription at Lalung, Spiti. There are reports of other local deities with the same name in Zanskar, possibly indicating that it is a regional figure. Kim Gutschow, *Being a Buddhist Nun The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and demons of Tibet*, 318.

³⁶² This correlation was also pointed out by some of the residents of Kungri, particularly when recounting the story about Dudjom Rinpoche's 1964 visit.

³⁶³ Meme Thoru Tsering Paljor resides in Kungri Village and owns the field where the deity is currently located.

In addition to Yomed Tulku's opinion, Jowo Dralha has also been singled out for special attention by Yomed Tulku's previous incarnation Yomed Dorje, as well as by Dudjom Rinpoche. Jowo Dralha has presumably always been located closer to the Kungri temple complex than the other *Pin yul lha*, but his current location is even closer to the monastery than in the past. Jowo Dralha is housed in a small concrete structure in a field belonging to Tsering Paljor. The current building is fairly new. It replaced an earlier stone and mud structure, which was itself preceded by an unprotected boulder.³⁶⁴ The physical form of the deity is a short stick with strips of colored cloth.³⁶⁵ It shares the small building with a low table supporting images of Buddhist deities and occasional offerings of butter lamps and incense. The images and table were apparently quite recent additions.³⁶⁶



Figure 14: Interior of Jowo Dralha's new building.

³⁶⁴ Some of the other *yul lha* in Pin are still primarily large rocks where people leave butter lamps and incense.

³⁶⁵ There are descriptions of anthropomorphic forms of related deities, but there are no such images in Kungri to my knowledge, nor did anyone I interviewed describe Jowo Dralha's appearance.

³⁶⁶ When I interviewed Meme Trinley and Sonam Phuntsok about the deity, I showed them pictures of the images and table inside Jowo Dralha's building. Both were surprised to see them and said they must have been put there recently. Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Meme Trinley, interview.



Figure 15: Jowo Dralha's material support.³⁶⁷

Before Jowo Dralha occupied the new concrete building, he was located in a different place, farther away from the monastery. Some time between 1940 and 1960, Yomed Dorje invited Jowo Dralha to come reside at the recently erected Guru Lhakhang and act as its protector.³⁶⁸ According to Yomed Tulku and others, Yomed Dorje invited Jowo Dralha to “come up” three times.³⁶⁹ Each time he came up but by the next morning he had always returned “down

³⁶⁷ Jowo Dralha's material support, a stick with pieces of multi-colored cloth tied to it, is a fairly typical form for *yul lha* in Spiti. They often consist of an arrow, spear, stick, or trident with strips of colored cloth tied to the end.

³⁶⁸ No one knew exactly when this happened but the Guru Lhakhang was completed ca. 1940–1942 and Yomed Dorje died in 1960. Yomed Dorje and his teacher Yeshe Palden were responsible for building the Guru Lhakhang.

³⁶⁹ It is not necessarily unusual for a local deity to be brought “into” a monastery or temple to serve as a Buddhist protector. Nebesky-Wojkowitz recounts other instances when a deity moved to and from a temple overnight. Tsering Paljor, interview; Yomed Tulku, Interview about the Kungri deity, caretakers for the Peling Lhakhang, and building

to his rock.” No one had a clear sense of why the deity refused to stay at the new temple, although one person speculated that *yul lha* cannot move, since they must stay in their particular place.³⁷⁰ Yomed Tulku supposed that the deity was in a kind of limbo, somewhere between being a demon (*'byung po*) and a wisdom deity (*ye shes pa*).³⁷¹ Regardless of the *yul lha*'s reasoning, it seems to have refused to occupy the Guru Lhakhang, and in so doing rejected a stronger association with Buddhism and in particular the role of Buddhist protector.

When Dudjom Rinpoche visited Pin in 1964, two years after Yomed Dorje's death, he took note of Jowo Dralha.³⁷² According to Tsering Paljor, Dudjom Rinpoche thought the deity was in a poor location and should be moved up the mountain slope to a higher and cleaner place. He also apparently identified Jowo Dralha with the deity Kulakari (*sku lha mkha' ri*). Kulakari is also a mountain *yul lha* within the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, although one with a more established role as a Buddhist protector than Jowo Dralha.³⁷³ Perhaps in response to Dudjom Rinpoche's observations, Jowo Dralha later moved to a different location slightly uphill and closer to the monastery, where he was installed in a small white-washed building that, although often falling in the shadow of the monastery, remains outside of it.³⁷⁴

the Guru Lhakhang., interview by Joseph Leach, n.d.; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and demons of Tibet*, 210.

³⁷⁰ Meme Trinley, interview.

³⁷¹ He specified that one is bound by oath and the other is not. Yomed Tulku, Interview about the Kungri deity, caretakers for the Peling Lhakhang, and building the Guru Lhakhang.

³⁷² Dudjom Rinpoche's visit was primarily to recognize the young Yomed Tulku as the reincarnation of Yomed Dorje.

³⁷³ For a discussion of the Tibetan mountain deity Kulakari, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and demons of Tibet*, 204. “The South is the residence, according to the division given before, of the mountain-god *sKu la mkha' ri*, also called the *dge snyen Ku la ha ri* or *Phu la ha ri*, the personification of a mountain in Lhoka. He is believed to be an “emanation” of king Ge sar.” That this deity shares a name with Kungri's *yul lha* does not necessarily indicate any relationship between them. Yomed Tulku specifically said that Jowo Dralha was not the same deity as the *dge snyen* Kulakari. There are various Tibetan liturgies for *dge snyen* Kulakari. I found one manuscript for an unidentified liturgy for Kulakari in a *yab-yum* form in the Old Temple temple in Kungri. Unknown, “Dge Snyen Mkha' 'ri Tab Yum Kyi Gsol Mkha' Bzhugs So” (Manuscript in the collection of the Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery, Pin Valley, n.d.), OLK 04.

³⁷⁴ Although Tsering Paljor seemed more certain of these details, some of the other residents of Kungri I interviewed did not recall any causal link between Dudjom Rinpoche's visit and the *yul lha*'s subsequent relocation. Jowo

These vignettes reflect a series of negotiations between different Buddhist leaders in Pin and the region's place-based village deities.³⁷⁵ All three individuals who attempted to intervene in the status and conditions of the *yul lha* are local Buddhist authorities, each of whom engaged in expanding, consolidating, or reinforcing the Buddhist institutions in Pin.³⁷⁶ Yomed Dorje and his teacher Yeshe Palden were responsible for introducing the Dudjom Tersar tradition to Spiti and for building the Guru Lhakhang in Kungri. Dudjom Rinpoche first visited Pin in order to recognize the young as the reincarnation of Yomed Dorje, thus establishing a new *tulku* (*sprul sku*) line in Spiti and laying the foundation for Spiti's connections to the wider Dudjom Tersar community. And Yomed Tulku is the head of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, hence his other frequently used title, *Spiti Tulku*, and is in large part responsible for the dramatic expansion of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti. These efforts to enlist the Kungri deity as a protector of the Guru Lhakhang, to physically relocate the deity by drawing it closer to the monastery, and efforts to discourage the propitiation of the other *yul lha* in Pin are in some ways perennial issues for Tibetan Buddhists, harkening back to Padmasambhava and the first Tibetan temple at Samye. They are reenacted here as part of a larger process of institutional establishment and reinforcing that institution's central authority.

Dralha's earlier location was apparently closer to the edge of the village near a cliff that rather unfortunately often serves as a convenient toilet.

³⁷⁵ In Gyu, a village in Spiti but not in the Pin Valley, another two other deities were enlisted in the process of establishing a Nyingma presence in the region. When the village converted from the Geluk tradition to the Nyingma tradition, one of the means by which that transition took place was enlisting the Gyu temple's protector deity in the service of the Nyingma tradition. The deity itself did not change but it "agreed" to become affiliated with the Nyingma. When I visited Gyu in 2014, the deity there was a tall pole covered in *katak* that Namgyal, a monk from Gyu, and another monk from Pin who was responsible for taking care of the temple, both identified as Jamsing, the formerly Geluk protector. There was also a shorter stick bound with *katak* in the temple that Namgyal and the other monk identified as Jokula (*jo sku lha*), the village deity. The location of Jokula inside the temple surprised Namgyal because he said the deity typically lives at the Gyu Nono's house. Jokula apparently also had to agree to the village's conversion to Nyingma. Namgyal, Interview, interview by author, June 14, 2014. Dorje, Interview, interview by Author, June 14, 2014.

³⁷⁶ Dudjom Rinpoche is not local in the sense of being from Pin, but he is one of the most important individuals for Pin's Nyingma community.

The Feast

A very different kind of engagement with meat and merit has also garnered criticism in Pin in recent years—for reasons both similar to, and quite distinct from—the ban on *marchö*. There is a special kind of feast celebration in Pin called a *sönchok* (*gsog 'jog*), which in the last century has had its defining feature slowly pared away, namely large quantities of meat.³⁷⁷ In addition, in recent decades, what was at its core a non-religious event, has increasingly incorporated Buddhist elements. These two moves, the subtraction of meat and the addition of things like reading *pecha*, highlight who in Pin functions as a ritual authority and how that authority is constituted.

The *sönchok* is in essence a large celebration feast held for one person. The family of that individual invites everyone in the community to come over and provides them with food and drink. The attendees in turn, make a gift of money to the individual. Everyone in Pin is supposed to host the *sönchok* at some point in his or her lifetime.³⁷⁸ Failing to do so is considered bad luck.³⁷⁹ Everyone stressed that one of the defining features of this feast was to provide meat for the guests, “For the *sönchok* you must give meat.”³⁸⁰ The feast also entailed special cakes and a great deal of alcohol, but meat by all accounts was the key feature.

Immediately after stressing the centrality of meat, most recounted a similar story about the shifting relationship between the *sönchok* and meat. In the past, when a family held the *sönchok*, they gave meat to their guests. This usually meant killing a large number of sheep

³⁷⁷ When I asked how or when this feast tradition began, most said they did not know. A few speculated that it must have come from Tibet. However, I have not yet found any description of a similar event in Tibet.

³⁷⁸ Most people pointed out that it is often held if someone is sick, if someone in the family has died, for young babies (since infants may die before they can organize a *sönchok* for themselves), or if someone wants to improve their future possibilities (similar to cash gifts at marriage to give the new couple a financial boost). Meme Trinley, interview; Tsering Paljor, interview.

³⁷⁹ Presumably, if the person fails to hold the feast in their lifetime, they have passed away, in which case the bad luck would impact their subsequent rebirth.

³⁸⁰ “*Gsog 'jog btang dus sha btang dgos.*” Kunzang Namdrol, interview.

(“hundreds of sheep,” according to one man). Then, a man from Tangti named Tomey Trinley said they should stop.³⁸¹ Killing that many sheep is sinful (*sdig pa*), a non-virtue. Instead of killing all of the sheep, he suggested they kill a couple of yak. So they began to eat yak instead of sheep at the *sönchok*. Then after a few years, someone else said that killing two yak was bad (accounts differ as to who). They should just kill one yak. So for a while, they only killed one yak. Then Dudjom Rinpoche said that they should not kill even one yak, and that the *sönchok* should instead be vegetarian. He put a “ban” on meat. So now they serve only dal and vegetables. The feast where one must give meat is now vegetarian.³⁸²

Some accounts continued to describe the changes Yomed Tulku instigated. Although meat had been the central feature of the feast, cakes and alcohol were also important. Over time, and perhaps with the decline in meat, the quantity and scale of the cakes and alcohol increased. According to one person, they used to provide one small cake to each guest, which then increased to two cake, then five. In the past, they used to only have local *chang* (barley beer) and *arak* (barley liquor). Then they began to serve hard liquor from “outside.”³⁸³ Along with the food consumed, the amount of money guests gave to their hosts escalated. One person said, “Previously, when I was young, people gave only one rupee each. Then they gave five, then ten...these days they give five-hundred rupees! Then Rinpoche made the fix. He said five-

³⁸¹ Tomey Trinley’s dates are uncertain but he signed a document dated to 1934 and is Meme Gartruk’s (b. 1946) great grandfather, OLK 12, Wood Dog Year 1934. Meme Gartruk, Interview.

³⁸² Events summarized from Meme Trinley, interview; Meme Gartruk, Interview; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Yomed Tulku, Interview about the Kungri deity, caretakers for the Peling Lhakhang, and building the Guru Lhakhang.; Kunzang Namdrol, interview; Tsering Paljor, interview.

³⁸³ One person referred to this as *arak marpo* (*A rag dmar po*), or “red liquor,” perhaps just meant to describe the darker color of whisky compared to the clear or opaque color of locally produced *arak* and *chang*, but providing an interesting verbal parallel to “red offerings” (*dmar mchod*). Apparently, along with the rise in alcohol consumption, people began to get in more fights at each feast. Tsering Paljor, interview.

hundred is too much.”³⁸⁴ Rinpoche’s “fix” included only serving local alcohol and limiting the number of cakes.

Many of these changes to the *sönchok* are not particularly surprising. One can easily see why—in a Buddhist context where sheep are sentient beings—one might want to avoid the negative consequences (*sdig pa, las ngan*) of killing a hundred sheep. Killing one yak and killing a dozen sheep might provide a comparable amount of meat but carry different karmic consequences. It also makes sense to suggest people limit the amount and strength of alcohol they provide to guests at big parties, or put a limit on the amount of money one is socially obligated to give to a host as thanks. Aside from this, the changes to the *sönchok* do highlight something interesting about who and what constitutes ritual authority in Pin.

The first transition from killing many sheep to just two yaks was suggested by Tomey Trinley. Tomey Trinley was from Tangti, a village in Pin, and a lama associated with Kungri monastery.³⁸⁵ He traveled to Tibet with two other men from Pin, where he spent several years studying.³⁸⁶ While the details of his life are somewhat uncertain, what is clear is that most people I spoke with in Pin afforded him great respect. He is considered a very learned person and a local Buddhist authority. But his authority seems to drive from the non-local, that is to say, from his time studying in Tibet. Every person who told me about Tomey Trinley specified that he went to Tibet to practice. It was the most important point they related about him. Most drew a clear causal connection between his time in Tibet and his expertise as a Buddhist practitioner. It was

³⁸⁴ Meme Trinley, interview.

³⁸⁵ Details of Tomey Trinley’s life are summarized from Meme Trinley; Meme Gartruk, Interview; Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Yomed Tulku, Interview about the Kungri deity, caretakers for the Peling Lhakhang, and building the Guru Lhakhang.; Kunzang Namdrol, interview; Tsering Paljor, interview.

³⁸⁶ By most accounts, he spent his time at Lhodrak, a famed center in southern Tibet near the border with Bhutan, and/or Lalung, the Pema Lingpa seat in Central Tibet. According to his great grandson, Tomey Trinley studied with the same teacher as Dudjom Lingpa, the *tertön* (*gter ston*) from Amdo whose students carried his *terma* (*gter ma*) teachings across Tibet to Mount Kailash, where they eventually encountered Yeshe Palden from Spiti. These events are discussed in Chapter 2.

that expertise that made him an authority in Pin, such that he could tell a whole valley of people to stop eating so many sheep.³⁸⁷

The second alteration in the *sönchok*—the shift from two yaks to one yak—is variously attributed to one of several individuals: Yeshe Palden, Lama Langsal, Dudjom Rinpoche, and sometimes Yomed Tulku. Lama Langsal from Pin was a contemporary of Yeshe Palden and Tomey Trinley. He also traveled extensively in Tibet and the Western Himalayas. Lama Langsal was recognized as an incarnate lama by Dudjom Rinpoche when he visited Pin in the 1960s.³⁸⁸ The fact that so many of the narrations collapsed the individuals responsible for instigating these changes is telling. The narrators could imagine any of them making such an argument about the negative consequences of killing sheep or yak. Their interchangeability may also highlight how each individual is constituted as a local ritual authority. They are all recognized as skilled and knowledgeable Buddhist practitioners. All, save Dudjom Rinpoche were from Spiti and traveled to Tibet to study and practice, just like Tomey Trinley. Their status as skilled and knowledgeable, as Buddhist authorities, derives from an association with Tibet. In the case of Dudjom Rinpoche, this too pertains.

Each of the individuals who made changes to the feast celebration focused on reducing or eliminating the use of meat—save Yomed Tulku. He also suggested alterations to the number of cakes, the sources of alcohol, and the amount of money exchanged at the *sönchok*. He suggested these changes because the cakes were more than people could consume and were going to waste, people were consuming too much alcohol and getting in fights, and the amount of money people

³⁸⁷ By all accounts, he was entirely successful. No one I interviewed referred to any lingering sheep consumption at the *sönchok*, and they likely would have, since these narratives were readily interspersed with stories about how people would sneak alcohol at the feast parties and the explosive fights that broke out. No one seemed to gloss over the potentially negative details or idealize how people in Pin actually behave at the *sönchok*.

³⁸⁸ The current Lama Langsal or Langsal Tulku (Klong gsal) is a reincarnation of the Lama Langsal who would have been alive when the changes to *sönchok* were instituted.

spent was causing some financial hardships.³⁸⁹ These changes are not necessarily motivated by karmic consequences in the same manner as the changes to meat consumption. There is a different ethics at play. However, the source of authority is largely the same. It is possible that these changes as a whole reflect a “Buddhization” of a previously non-religious event. One narrated noted that, in addition to the changes outlined above, they now “read *pecha*,” or Buddhist texts, at the feast.³⁹⁰ But Yomed Tulku’s reasons for changing the *sönchok* differed from those of his predecessors. It may be more accurate to see two different sets of changes to this feast practice that are not necessarily related in terms of ethics, but do share a source of ritual authority.

Building a Center

This chapter traces several different kinds of changes to ritual practices in Pin over the last century, changes that are in some ways quite distinct and in others interrelated, but all of which fundamentally shaped the Nyingma tradition in Pin as it is today. In the last few decades, the new Ugyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery in Kungri has emerged as the primary Buddhist institution in Pin, superseding other sources of ritual authority in the valley. The new monastery emerged in a period when previous sources of Buddhist authority in Pin, like the Nono family and the lama *tripa*, were being dismantled. Other sources of Buddhist authority and ritual change were active and strong, including travel to and training in Tibet, and ethical reforms like regulating *marchö*. Kungri is the center of Buddhist authority and practice in Pin, overshadowing earlier centers of authority like Khar and Guling. The temple complex in Kungri has been reorganized, physically and structurally, to produce a more hierarchical and centralized

³⁸⁹ Yomed Tulku, interview, June 14, 2014; Tsering Paljor, interview; Meme Trinley, interview.

³⁹⁰ Meme Trinley, interview.

monastery. The monastery is now the primary source for Buddhist training in Pin, replacing an earlier model of diffused family-based hereditary training.

Prior to the twentieth century, sources refer to three villages in the Pin Valley as seats of authority: Guling, Khar, and Kungri.³⁹¹ Guling Village was the primary residence of the Pin Nono family and Khar was the seat of the Garpon or governor of Pin, what one might call the military capital.³⁹² Both the Nono and the Garpon held some authority in Pin from the early seventeenth century through the 1860s, after which their positions continued to decline alongside their counterparts in the main Spiti Valley.³⁹³

Conversely, Kungri not only did not decline, it continues to expand as a Buddhist center in Pin. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the temple complex at Kungri transformed from a cluster of temples managed by rotating caretakers, the majority of whom did not live at the temple complex, to the new Urgyen Sangnag Chöling Monastery, which includes a large complex for residential monks and took over maintenance of the old temple complex. The new monastery also replaced the numerous family-based traditions spread across the valley with a central *shedra* model of monastic education.³⁹⁴ The new monastery has either taken on the responsibility for the older temples in Kungri or else demolished them to make way for new buildings. As a result, not only has Kungri emerged as the central authority in Pin, but also the

³⁹¹ See Appendix 6: Governors and Rulers Nono of Spiti and Pin.

³⁹² Khar Village as the seat of the governor in Pin is conveyed in the name of the village. Khar (*mkhar*) means castle, fort, stronghold, etc. and Kharpon or Garpon (*Mkhar dpon*) means lord or governor of the castle. Nima et al., *Bod Rgya Tshig Mdzod Chen Mo*.

³⁹³ As discussed above, whereas previously one family held both political and religious authority as the *Nono* and the lama *tripa*, today those realms of authority are separated in Pin. In the main Spiti Valley, the seat of the Nono and the governor, Drangkhar and Kyiling, were superseded by Kaza, the current district capital of Spiti. Egerton met both the Nono and Garpon in 1863. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Tibet*.

³⁹⁴ While there are shrines for the *yul la*, *chorten*, small chapels, family chapel rooms, and retreat houses elsewhere in Pin, there are no primary sources that reference temples (*lha khang*) or monasteries (*dgon pa*) in Pin in any village other than Kungri. Some scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries refer to other temples in Pin. They seem to be referring to *yul lha* shrines or retreat houses as temples. For example, Handa counts “seven monasteries in the Pin valley of Spiti which still profess the unreformed form of Lamaism--the Nyingma-pa order.” He seems to be misidentifying structures that serve other purposes. Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh*, 137.

new monastery now controls all of the temples in Kungri and is responsible for training the new lamas in Pin.³⁹⁵

Conclusion

“At the moment, our culture is a totally Buddhist culture.”

- Lochen Tulku, 2016³⁹⁶

Spiti is undergoing rapid change. Few would deny that. However, there does seem to be a wide gulf between different assessments of the source and direction of that change. Much of the literature on Spiti produced in the past two decades is committed to one of a few narratives about change in the region, particularly as it relates to Buddhism and to Tibet. They often argue that Buddhism in Spiti had stagnated until Tibetans arrived to reinvigorate and reform it, or else they acknowledge a connection to Tibet in the realm of Buddhism, but adamantly carve out a separate space for Spiti as a unique and independent region. The former tend to pivot around the mid-twentieth century as the key point of acceleration, as Tibetans in exile in India became aware of the Spiti region. In the latter case, Tibetans are less of a focus than the changes imposed by bugaboos like modernism, Indian culture, westernization, etc.³⁹⁷

The examples examined in this chapter show that there have indeed been substantial changes to Buddhism in Pin in the last century. But they also show that those changes have resulted from the efforts of people from Pin as much as, if not more than, from Tibetans in India.

³⁹⁵ The process of establishing a residential shedra for training monks warrants more attention than space allows. In brief, in order to train school-age monks, Yomed Tulku needed to institute a curriculum that complied with state educational policies. In addition, he also devised the content for the monks' Buddhist training.

³⁹⁶ Lochen Tulku Tenzin Kalzang, “Keynote Address at First International Conference on Spiti.”

³⁹⁷ For example, in a conversation with the Nono Sonam Angdu, he carefully and consistently referred to Buddhism in Spiti as “*vajrayāna* Buddhism.” He did not use the term “Tibetan Buddhism,” often employed in scholarly sources. He described Spiti as maintaining what “used to exist in Tibet” and as the “last bastion of *vajrayāna*.” Sonam Angdu, Interview. Tsering and Ishimura, “A Historical Overview of Education and Social Change in Spiti Valley, India”; Tucci and Ghersi, *Secrets of Tibet*; Thukral, *Spiti*; Tobdan, *Spiti*; Tobdan, *The People of the Upper Valley: The Stodpas of Lahul in the Himalayas* (Delhi: Book India Pub. Co., 1993); Verma, *Spiti*.

Indeed, before the border between Spiti and Tibet was closed in the 1950s, people from Pin regularly traveled to Tibet, staying for years in one location or traveling often back and forth.³⁹⁸ Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje, two leading figures in Pin, traveled extensively in Western Tibet.³⁹⁹ Tomey Trinley was remarkable for spending so many years studying at an important Nyingma center in Tibet, but he was not unusual for simply going to Tibet. Their cross-border travels stopped when the Chinese reached Western Tibet and closed the border. Their isolation from Tibet was quite recent. What seems to be taking place in Pin in recent decades is a process of institutional growth. This was in part influenced by the presence of Tibetans in exile, but was not solely due to those circumstances.

³⁹⁸ Most of the individuals I interviewed had either a father, uncle, or grandfather who had traveled to Tibet. They readily listed others who had as well. Sonam Phuntsok recounted how a group of men from Pin traveled to Tibet in the 1950s to acquire the Tibetan Buddhist cannon, the Kanjur and Tenjur, for the new Guru Lhakang. Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview.

³⁹⁹ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Yeshe Palden's activities in Western Tibet, Ladakh, and Nepal.

Chapter 4: Materializing a New Nyingma Presence in Spiti Part I: A Mummy and a Temple

In January 1975, a major earthquake struck the western Himalayas, causing extensive damage to Spiti.⁴⁰⁰ Gyu village in Spiti was particularly hard-hit. In addition to damaging buildings and roads, the earthquake disinterred something rather unusual, the naturally mummified body of a person in a remarkable state of preservation.⁴⁰¹ Because the mummy was discovered seated with a strap wrapped around his body, some residents of Gyu interpreted it as the body of a Buddhist practitioner who died in a seated meditation posture, his upright torso aided by the strap, in practice and in death. The mummy became an object of local Buddhist veneration and was eventually installed in a purpose-built shrine in the village. Since Gyu is itself in a contested border region—an area of India also claimed by China and consequently prohibited to tourists—for many years few outside of Spiti were aware of the mummy’s existence. In the 1990s, some of the restrictions on travel in Spiti were lifted, although Gyu remained technically off-limits, and the mummy began to garner some non-local attention. Awareness of the mummy was aided in particular, after it was featured in a 2004 television program that aired in the United States and the United Kingdom.⁴⁰² Now, the mummy draws a small number of domestic and international tourists to Gyu each summer, some just as curious to see local Buddhists’ veneration of the

⁴⁰⁰ Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh*, 126.

⁴⁰¹ The particular circumstances of the mummy’s discovery following the January 19, 1975 earthquake are unclear. Some claim the body was discovered by villagers in Gyu. Others attribute the find to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, who have a military post in the area. Topgye, Conversation about the mummy and Gyu’s history, interview by Joseph Leach, June 14, 2014.

⁴⁰² The show aired on May 19, 2004 on the Discovery Channel in the USA and on the BBC Channel 5 in the UK. Wayne Derrick, *Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-Made Mummy* (BBC Channel 5, 2004).

mummy as they are to see the mummy itself. However, tourism in Gyu is still virtually non-existent, particularly compared to places like Tabo Monastery, which draws thousands to Spiti each summer and is only a couple of hours drive from Gyu. Residents of Gyu are attempting to change this and seek to garner greater attention from tourists to Spiti, in part by drawing attention to the mummy, recently housed in its own small temple, and in part by harnessing that attention and extending it to a new Buddhist temple built adjacent to the mummy's structure. This new site shared by the two temples in Gyu is itself part of a larger process of Nyingma sectarian expansion in the Spiti region.

Buddhist institutions throughout Spiti have expanded substantially in recent decades. This expansion involves founding new monastic buildings, temples, schools, monumental statues, and *chorten* (*mchod rten*), all bolstered by access to new financial and material resources. Most new monastic structures are erected in the vicinity of existing monastic spaces, expanding within an area already associated with that monastery. However, for the Nyingmapa in Spiti and the temple complex in the Pin Valley, this process of expansion also entailed a geographic spread throughout the Spiti region, into areas previously unassociated with the Nyingma. The village of Gyu is one such area.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, Gyu was part of Tibet, not part of Spiti, and maintained ties with monasteries, temples, and villages in western Tibet. For reasons shaped in part by the impact of Britain's colonial presence in the Himalayas and ongoing political and military turmoil in Tibet, Gyu shifted its ties from the Geluk tradition to the Nyingma in the 1920s or 30s. As part of this shift in sectarian affiliation, Gyu developed new ties to Nyingma communities in Spiti in place of its previous connections to Geluk monasteries in Tibet. Spiti would itself soon become part of an independent India in 1947 and was incorporated into the

new Indian state of Himachal Pradesh in 1966. In this larger political context, Gyu formed new ties to Nyingma traditions in the same period in which it became part of Spiti as a district, Himachal Pradesh as a state, and India as a nation.

Nyingma expansion, however, is taking place in Spiti along newly formed Buddhist networks. These networks are both regional—encompassing areas in the immediate vicinity of Spiti and Himachal Pradesh—and global—spanning proximate Himalayan Buddhist regions in Nepal and north-east India as well as more distant places like Taiwan and France. This network is constituted by the mobility of people and patronage—monks training in monasteries far from their homes, ambulant teachers who make annual circuits of these institutions, lay and monastic pilgrims, the financial and material products of patronage—all tracing the lines of these trans-national connections. At the same time, this network is grounded in place, materialized by Buddhist structures and spaces that both enable and are enabled by the mobility of people and patronage. This emerging Nyingma network crisscrosses both state and international boundaries, in the process posing a challenge to those very borders by calling attention to their historical contingency, their permeability, and the extent to which they are superseded by other categories of belonging. In the case of Gyu and the new temple site, these challenges are particularly salient because of the village's location in a disputed border region, itself a testament to contested nature of national boundaries. I examine the material manifestations of Gyu's recently established Nyingma ties in order to elucidate how a Buddhist tradition takes shape in the changing context of a Himalayan borderland.

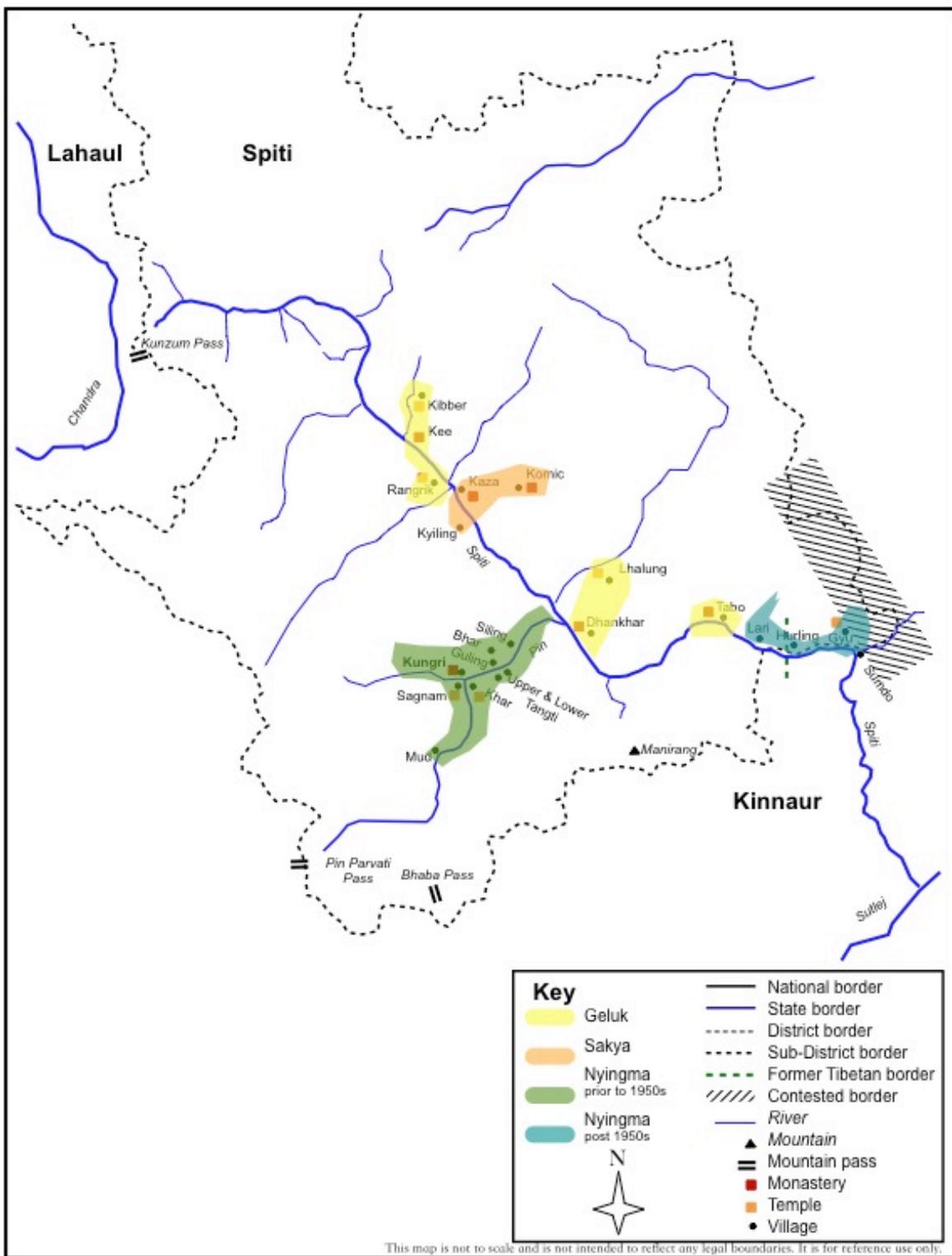


Figure 16: Map of twentieth-century Nyingma expansion in Spiti

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Buddhist tradition predominant in Gyu shifted from the Geluk to the Nyingma tradition under the auspices of two teachers active in western Tibet. Although they introduced Nyingma teachings to the village, neither figure had an immediate material impact on Buddhism in the village; neither established a new temple nor appear to have made substantive changes to the extant Geluk temple in Gyu. Their history with, relationship to, and conversion of the village were never materially manifested. As a result, prior to the current period of material expansion taking place under the leadership of Yomed Tulku (b. 1962), the unofficial head of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, Buddhists structures and spaces in Gyu were much the same as they were prior to the village's conversion. The new space occupied by the Buddhist temple and mummy temple in Gyu constitutes a key site for examining how this sectarian Buddhist expansion is taking place, and how that expansion is itself situated within emerging transnational Nyingma networks, shaped by global practices of patronage and material production.

The recent material expansion of the Nyingma tradition is manifesting through building activities that produce structures like temples, monumental sculpture, and a new monastic complex in locations throughout Spiti. The resulting structures are distinctly Nyingma, highly visible, and strategically located in spaces significant to regional Buddhists. Among these structures, the new temple in Gyu seeks to draw tourist and pilgrimage traffic in Spiti to the village. It pursues this end in part by locating the new temple next to the mummy's temple. This process of expansion and associated efforts to increase visitors to the region calls attention to the ambiguity of lingering state restrictions on travel to Gyu as well as to the uneven infrastructure development in the region. Gyu remained closed to tourists long after restrictions on travel to the rest of Spiti were lifted. The extent to which tourist access to Gyu is permitted, as well as the

particular government office(s) responsible for approving or denying travel to Gyu, is largely unclear to tourists, tourism agencies, and residents of Gyu. Infrastructure development in Spiti falls under the purview of both state-level agencies and the military, given its position on the border between India and China, with private companies involved in infrastructure heavily subsidized by the state.⁴⁰³ Infrastructure in Spiti generally lags far behind that of the rest of the state of Himachal Pradesh, which, along with the uneven infrastructure development in the region, contributes to maintaining Gyu's isolation. I examine the motivations for the recent material expansion and the religious, political, and economic implications it entails for Nyingmapa in Spiti, arguing that in the process of establishing these new structures, Yomed Tulku is intentionally engaging with issues of nationality and sectarian identity in order to establish a regional Nyingma presence and network within Spiti.

A Nyingma Structure

The new temple in Gyu is a three-story building on a leveled part of a mountain ridge overlooking the village. It was a joint project overseen by a committee of villagers from Gyu and Yomed Tulku, largely funded by a number of groups of international Nyingmapa donors, who regularly patronize Yomed Tulku's building projects in the region. Construction on the temple began in the mid 2000s and was largely complete as of May, 2016.⁴⁰⁴ The building is square with

⁴⁰³ For example, as of the time of writing, the only mobile phone provider operating in Spiti was the state-owned communications company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL). BSNL's network does not cover all of Spiti. As a result, several villages in the region, including Gyu, have no access or limited access to telecommunication services. The high cost of operation in Spiti has deterred other communications companies from offering service in the area. "Tribals in Lahaul-Spiti Cry for Cellular Phone Services," *The Hindustan Times; New Delhi*, August 11, 2014.

⁴⁰⁴ The temple was inaugurated and consecrated in May, 2016 by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. Namgyal, Digital communication, interview by Author, May 1, 2016. Namgyal, Interview; "H.E. Spiti Tulku Yomed Rinpoche's Facebook Page," accessed December 1, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/SpitiTulku.YomedRinpoche/photos/a.684947398278056.1073741844.451449048294560/844695525636575/?type=3&theater>.

the second and third stories decreasing in size and centered over the floor below. The main entrance on the ground floor faces the village. The structure and exterior decoration of the new temple are in many ways quite typical of contemporary temples in Buddhist regions of the Himalayas. Indeed, the team of artists currently working on the temple's decoration are responsible for numerous other temple projects in India and Nepal, including two in Spiti.⁴⁰⁵ The exterior of the temple is elaborately decorated with elements typical of Himalayan Buddhist architecture: strings of pearls, jewels, lotuses, parasols, and deer flanking a wheel (a reference to the Buddha's first teaching at Sarnath, India). The temple's interior will be similarly decorated.⁴⁰⁶ Once the interior work is finished, statues of Buddhist deities will be installed inside the temple. There are three main statues planned for the temple, one for each of the three floors. A Bhutanese artist who is working with Yomed Tulku on both the new temple in Gyu and a monumental statue of Padmasambhava at Lari village, will construct the three statues off site and then bring them to the temple to be assembled and painted.

Particularly striking about the design and decoration of the Gyu temple is Yomed Tulku's plan to relate the temple's structure to its three main statues so as to mark the temple as an unambiguously Nyingma structure.⁴⁰⁷ In a multi-story temple, the interior statues or mural paintings on a single level may relate to each other, depicting a more or less coherent subject

⁴⁰⁵ The artists are from the Yolmo region of Nepal and were also employed for work at Urgyen Sangnak Chöling Monastery in the Pin Valley and the Dechen Chöling Nunnery in the Pin Valley. Tenzin, the Bhutanese artist responsible for the main statues, has similarly worked on Buddhist projects in Bhutan, India, and Nepal, among other regions. The geographically wide spread of their work connects the Gyu temple to other similar structures while at the same time highlighting aspects particular to this specific temple. Conversation with the group of artisans from Nepal., interview by author, June 13, 2014; Dorje, Interview, interview by Author, June 13, 2014.

⁴⁰⁶ As of the date of writing, the interior of the temple remained unfinished.

⁴⁰⁷ While the temple's design is not necessarily innovative, it does signal shifts in regional temple construction, among them the new material and architectural possibilities enabled by the availability of concrete and glass and access to skilled and unskilled labor from regions outside of Spiti (primarily northern India and Nepal).

matter. The separate levels may also relate to one another as part of the temple's overall program.⁴⁰⁸ However, this is not necessarily the case.⁴⁰⁹

The three main statues planned for the new temple at Gyu will be separated, with one statue located on each of the three levels. The ground floor image will be placed against the rear wall while the statues on the second and third stories will be placed in the center of each level. The statues' locations within the temple, their positions with respect to each other, and their positions with respect to those who will engage with the space in the future, all enable key modes of Buddhist practice, including circumambulation and visual contact with the deity. The statues' arrangement and their relationship to the temple's architecture also evoke specifically Nyingma concepts that are key to producing Gyu as a Nyingma space, and the future publics it hails as potentially Nyingma audiences.

The new temple in Gyu is designed to be an identifiably Nyingma structure. The temple's architecture combined with the statues planned for the interior work together to convey this particular affiliation. The completed temple will house statues of Padmasambhava, Vajrasattva (*Rdo rje sems dpa'*), and Samantabhadra (*Kun tu bzang po*). The first floor will house the statue of Padmasambhava, the second floor will house Vajrasattva, and the third floor will house Samantabhadra.⁴¹⁰ Individually and as a group, these deities convey the temple's Nyingma affiliation. The temple's statues as a set of three refer to doctrinal concepts and doxographical systems particular to the Nyingma tradition. These include the "nine vehicles" (*theg pa dgu*),

⁴⁰⁸ Rob Linrothe, "Mapping the Iconographic Programme of the Sumtsek," in *Alchi: Ladakh's Hidden Buddhist Sanctuary: The Sumtsek*, by Roger Goepfer and Jaroslav Poncar (London: Serindia Publications, 1996), 269–72.

⁴⁰⁹ The ground floor of a temple, single or multi-level, usually comprises the main temple hall. Sculptures are typically located in the main hall on the ground floor. They are most frequently positioned at the back of the hall such that the statues' backs are against the rear wall and opposite the main entrance. This is almost always where the temple's main shrine is located.

⁴¹⁰ At my last visit in July 2014, the exterior of the building had not been completed. Yomed Tulku specified the three statues that are planned for future installation and Tenzin, the artist from Bhutan, estimated he would be ready to install the statues one to two years later, in 2015 or 2016. Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014; Dorje, Interview, June 13, 2014.

“three lineages” (*brgyud pa gsum*), and the “long” and “short” lineages of the *kama* (*bka’ ma*) and *terma*.



Figure 17: Planned locations for the three statues in the temple, July 2014.⁴¹¹

Padmasambhava as a Sectarian Signifier and the Set of Three Statues

The set of three statues planned for the new temple at Gyu relies in particular on the figure of Padmasambhava to convey a distinctly Nyingma message. The statue of Padmasambhava planned for the Gyu temple will occupy a prominent place in the temple, centrally located on the main floor. This position certainly befits the figure of Padmasambhava and will in turn convey his importance and centrality to the Nyingma to future audiences at Gyu. When taken together as a set, Padmasambhava, Vajrasattva, and Samantabhadra refer to several key features of the

⁴¹¹ Photograph by author, 2014.

Nyingma tradition, the first of which is the three lineages. The three lineages, also referred to as the “three transmissions” and “three great descents” (*babs lugs chen po gsum*), refers to the Nyingma framework for describing how the Buddhist teachings were transmitted to the human world in a series of three stages or “descents of the teaching,” called the intentional, symbolic, and aural teachings.⁴¹² These three types of teachings correspond, respectively, to the figures of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, and Padmasambhava.

The Nyingma tradition recognizes Samantabhadra is recognized as the “primordial” buddha; he is the origin of the Buddhist teachings while being himself without origin. On his own, the presence of Samantabhadra identifies the site as Nyingma, since the other *vajrayāna* traditions extant in the Himalayas hold the primordial buddha to be Vajradhara (*rdo rje 'chang*) rather than Samantabhadra. Samantabhadra’s Nyingma identification is amplified as part of this set of three. Samantabhadra is not only the first of the three transmissions, he is also the source of the other two.⁴¹³ Samantabhadra transmitted the Buddhist teachings to the host of buddhas and bodhisattvas, including Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva, who will occupy the second or middle story of the new temple, in turn transmits the teachings to the “non-human” and “human worlds.”⁴¹⁴

While in many accounts the first human recipient is figure called Garab Dorje, he is often replaced by Padmasambhava, as in the Gyu temple. Having received the teachings from Vajrasattva, Padmasambhava goes on to teach others in the human world, including those who would go on to establish the various Buddhist traditions in Tibet and the Himalayas.⁴¹⁵

Padmasambhava is thus responsible for translating between Vajrasattva, the representative of the

⁴¹² Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*.

⁴¹³ According to Dudjom Rinpoche, Samantabhadra’s “pristine cognition” is the intentional level of the teachings that can only be transmitted as intention or what is sometimes described as pure mind. Such “pristine cognition” cannot be described or verbalized, necessitating an intermediary stage or transformation from pure cognition to a form comprehensible by human practitioners who are still mired in an obfuscatory world of conceptions. Dudjom Rinpoche, 447.

⁴¹⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, 453–54.

⁴¹⁵ On Garab Dorje see Dudjom Rinpoche, 490–94. On the third of the three descents see Dudjom Rinpoche, 456.

buddhas and bodhisattvas, on the one hand, and the world of human recipients, on the other.

Padmasambhava's role within this framework—as a key point of transition between the symbolic and aural teachings—enables a kind of dual access to multiple levels of the Buddhist teachings.

In some accounts, Padmasambhava receives the symbolic teachings, which he passes on as aural teachings; in other contexts, Padmasambhava is himself a buddha who gives the symbolic teachings, rather than receives them. He thus functions as both the teacher and recipient of the symbolic and aural teachings.

Padmasambhava's dual role is a crucial component of his relationship to the *terma* teachings. The *terma* offer another framework for describing how practitioners gain access to such teachings. They are one of a two-part classification of Nyingma teachings: *terma* and *kama*. The term *kama*, literally the “word” or “oral,” refers to those teachings transmitted from teacher to disciple in a long and continuous lineage, usually traced back to Śākyamuni, Padmasambhava, or Garab Dorje. Another term for this lineage is the “long transmission” (*ring brgyud bka' ma*). Conversely, *terma* is classified as the short or direct transmission (*nye brgyud gter ma*). Because the *terma* teachings are usually transmitted directly from Padmasambhava to the recipient, or through an intermediary to whom Padmasambhava entrusted the teachings, *terma* bypass the longer *kama* lineage of transmission. In this manner, *tertöns* (*gter ston*) or treasure revealers can directly receive the *terma* as a symbolic teaching or mind transmission from Padmasambhava himself, in effect displacing Padmasambhava as the recipient of the aural transmission and themselves occupying the last of the three descents.

Since the core set of teachings maintained by the Nyingma in Spiti are *terma* traditions, the three-tiered temple with its planned statues of Padmasambhava, Vajrasattva, and Samantabhadra references not only the general Nyingma system of the three descents but also

the particular status of the *terma* traditions maintained in Spiti. It is interesting to note that the same three statues are also contained in the main monastery temple in Kungri Village in the Pin Valley. There, although a statue of Padmasambhava occupies a similar position on the ground floor of the main hall, statues of Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra are contained in locked private spaces not accessible for or visible to the general public. Those smaller locked rooms are not located above the main hall but are off to either side. The Gyu temple presents a clearer vertical hierarchy and may make this set of three visible and accessible to the public.⁴¹⁶ While the Pin Valley's status as a Nyingma region is long-standing and widely known, Gyu's is not, making the visibility of the statues and their corresponding Nyingma context all the more relevant.

The three-level architectural design raises two other contexts in which temple and statues might be read as specifically Nyingma or evoke Nyingma concepts. The first is relating the three statues to the *trikāya*, "three bodies." In this configuration, the three statues on each of the three tiers of the temple correspond to each of the three bodies.⁴¹⁷ The *trikāya* is not a Nyingma-specific concept, however it can take on a particularly Nyingma significance when Samantabhadra is present, as he corresponds to the *dharmakāya* or truth body, while Vajrasattva corresponds to the *sambhogakāya* or enjoyment body, and Padmasambhava corresponds to the *nirmāṇakāya* or emanation body. At the temple, all three are positioned accordingly in a vertical ascent. Again, Padmasambhava's position here is key in that he replaces Śhākyamuni as the emanation body. Samantabhadra occupying the *dharmakāya* position is a uniquely Nyingma configuration that places it in contrast to the sarma schools, where Vajradhara fulfills this role.

⁴¹⁶ Until the temple is completed and consecrated, it is unclear how accessible, visually or otherwise, the upper two tiers of the temple will be.

⁴¹⁷ Utilizing a three-tiered structure to evoke the *trikāya* is fairly common. Other examples are found in the western Himalayan region, including in nearby Ladakh.

Lastly, the three-tiered architectural design of the temple alludes to one of the most defining features of the Nyingma: the nine vehicle system. The term “nine vehicles” (*theg pa dgu*) refers to the architecture of Nyingma doxography; it is method of organizing the different Buddhist paths into nine levels, further grouped into three sets of three apiece.⁴¹⁸ The last or highest set of three corresponds to the three inner tantras: Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.⁴¹⁹ Of these three, the Nyingma hold the last to be the highest of the Buddhist paths, which correlates to Atiyoga or Dzogchen, the Great Perfection. The three levels of the temple can be understood as a reference to the three groups of three as well as to the three inner tantras that comprise the last and highest group.⁴²⁰ Unique to the Nyingma, this nine-part method of classification differentiates them from other schools of Buddhism that instead assert a four-part system of classification.⁴²¹

The Copper-Colored Mountain

The temple’s multi-storied design evokes another three-tiered architectural structure:

Padmasambhava’s paradisiacal palace, called the Glorious Copper Colored Mountain (*zangs*

⁴¹⁸ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 294–310. Jose Ignacio Cabezon, *The Buddha’s Doctrine and the Nine Vehicles: Rog Bande Sherab’s Lamp of the Teachings* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴¹⁹ “These [three inner classes of tantra] are the characteristic teachings of the Nyingmapa par excellence” Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 396.

⁴²⁰ The status of Dzogchen as the highest teachings and the possibility of interpreting the three-story temple as a reference to this doxographical framework is compounded by the temple’s proximity to the Gyu mummy. The mummified body was found in a seated meditation posture with a cord wrapped around its legs. Some regional news sources and local oral history refer to this posture and corresponding practice as specifically Dzogchen. At least one source traces this connection to comments from Yomed Tulku himself, who apparently provided such an explanation to a scholar of Chinese Buddhism, Victor Mair, when the latter was investigating the mummy in the early 2000s. Derrick, *Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-Made Mummy*.

⁴²¹ There are significant parallels between the Nyingma system and Bon doxography. For example see Samten Gyaltzen Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998). and David L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon: Excerpts from GZi-Brjid*, London Oriental Series 18 (London, New York: Oxford U.P., 1967).

mdog dpal ri).⁴²² According to some narratives, after Padmasambhava completed his work in Tibet he traveled to the Copper Mountain to subdue the resident demons, after which he erected a temple-palace, where he remains to this day.⁴²³ Descriptions and depictions of the Copper Mountain vary somewhat, however most share the same basic features.⁴²⁴ Benjamin Bogin examines one nineteenth-century account of the mountain in detail. This account was revealed in a vision to the tertön Chogyur Lingpa (1829–1870), who commissioned a thangka painting of the pure land that survives today.⁴²⁵ Paintings of the Copper Mountain connected to Chogyur Lingpa’s vision bear a broad resemblance to the main features of the Gyu temple, particularly the three-tiered structure and golden roofs, while paintings of the same palace derived from other teachers and lineages depict palaces that share more specific features with the Gyu temple.

Regardless of the particular source, accounts of the Copper Mountain are often used to reinforce Padmasambhava’s importance in the larger context of the Nyingma teachings, and bolster the legitimacy of particular Nyingma treasure traditions. Indeed, as Bogin argues, Chogyur Lingpa’s vision of Padmasambhava’s pure land authenticates and legitimates “the treasure tradition, in general, and Mchog gling’s [Chogyur Lingpa] treasures, in particular.”⁴²⁶ While Bogin focuses on Chogyur Lingpa’s *terma* discoveries, his argument applies to the other numerous tertöns who go on visionary journeys to the Copper Mountain. Dudjom Rinpoche’s history of the Nyingma tradition mentions at least six figures, all accomplished tertöns, who have

⁴²² Special thanks to Christian Luczanits for pointing out this connection in response to an earlier iteration of this chapter presented at the First International Conference on Spiti, Oxford University, 7 May, 2016.

⁴²³ Benjamin Bogin has examined several aspects of the Copper Mountain in Tibetan literature and material culture. He notes that the mountain has become an important realm for Buddhists similar to a Pure Land, with many making prayers for rebirth there. Bogin, “Locating the Copper-Colored Mountain.” Dudjom Rinpoche also refers to the Copper Colored Mountain as a Pure Land. Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 829.

⁴²⁴ According to Himalayan Art Resources there are four types of representations of the mountain.

“Padmasambhava: Copper Coloured Mountain,” accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=491>.

⁴²⁵ Benjamin Bogin, “Mchog Gyur Gling Pa’s Visionary Journey to the Copper-Colored Mountain,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 27 (October 2013): 55–79.

⁴²⁶ Bogin, 71.

visions of the pure land or travel there at the time of their death.⁴²⁷ Dudjom Rinpoche himself is particularly associated with the Copper Mountain and even founded a monastery called Zangdok Palri in Kalimpong, West Bengal. By visually and structurally evoking the Copper Mountain palace, the new temple in Gyu alludes to Padmasambhava's role in legitimating the treasure traditions.

The Gyu temple is not the only manifestation of Padmasambhava's palace in Spiti; the Old Temple in the Pin Valley, which dates to the seventeenth century and is associated with the Pema Lingpa *terma*, contains a mural painting of Padmasambhava's Copper Mountain on its southern wall.⁴²⁸ There, Padmasambhava sits at the center of a three-tiered palace, which floats in a cloud visible at the edges of the scene. The palace is encircled by a wall and set in a green-blue landscape. Figures kneel next to and below the palace while buddhas hover above. The palace's roofs are golden, sloped with extended eaves, decorated with auspicious symbols, and surmounted by deer flanking a wheel. Many of these features are quite similar to the new temple at Gyu. Although the scene of the Copper Mountain painted on the temple wall is not necessarily accessible to all of Spiti's Nyingma community, it is certainly a familiar image to many.⁴²⁹ And as Bogin shows, Copper Mountain certainly is a widespread theme and object of aspiration for Buddhists throughout Tibet and the Himalayas.

Visualizing Sectarian Specificity

At first glance, it may not seem very remarkable that a new temple in a Nyingma village built and funded by a Nyingma community would visually convey that particular sectarian affiliation.

⁴²⁷ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 676, 765, 793, 808, 814, 829.

⁴²⁸ See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the temple and mural.

⁴²⁹ Women are not supposed to enter the temple, although exceptions are occasionally made.

However, that a Himalayan Buddhist temple does just that *is* rather unusual. For the most part, Buddhist temples throughout the Himalayas do not indicate their sectarian affiliation through their external architecture.⁴³⁰ The general sectarian affiliation and more specific information regarding the traditions and practices upheld by a Buddhist institution may be readily identifiable once one enters *into* the space, particularly through the mural paintings, statues, and photographs of teachers typically found within a temple. Reading this kind of visual information requires crossing the threshold and entering the temple space.

In the narrow context of Spiti, almost all locals would likely be able to name the sectarian affiliation of the five main monasteries and several smaller temples throughout the region, yet such an assessment does not derive from any visual clues presented by the institutions themselves. Since this information is not visually legible from the temples' exteriors, any visiting non-locals would have to glean that information elsewhere, if at all.⁴³¹ That a temple materially and visibly attests to a particular tradition, sect, or set of practices, is thus rather unusual in Spiti.⁴³² That the Gyu temple visually conveys this information in several different ways makes it all the more exceptional, raising the question of what exactly is at stake in producing just such a visibly sectarian structure.

⁴³⁰ By contrast, often Hindu temples externally indicate important information about the temple's central program. The central deity inside the temple may be conveyed through the deity's mount or avatar, positioned outside and in front of the temple.

⁴³¹ One exception might be the large Kalachakra *stūpa* at Tabo, which displays a prominent compound character on the outside identifying it as associated with the Kalachakra Tantra. However, this need not necessarily or solely mark the *stūpa* as a Geluk space. Even in instances where temples look quite distinct or different from others, as is the case with the old Sakya monastery in Spiti, whose walls bear thick vertical stripes in three colors, that visual difference does not signal that it is "Sakya."

⁴³² Again, this is unusual in a wider Himalayan Buddhist context, not just in Spiti.

Highly Visible Structures that Promote Seeing

The particular sectarian affiliation of the new temple at Gyu is strengthened by the high degree of visibility both into the temple and also of the temple itself. The building is strategically designed and located in order to achieve this visibility. The three-tiered design with multiple openings on each of the four walls will make the three interior statues to be visible from outside the temple.⁴³³ The ground floor has large windows at eye level while the second and third levels have doors and windows on all four sides, providing clear lines of sight during circumambulation. Both large windows and the use of glass are fairly recent material developments in Himalayan Buddhist architecture. Older temples in the region feature thicker walls with fewer and smaller window openings for structural stability and to reduce heat loss. The new temple makes use of the architectural possibilities large glass windows offer to bolster the temple's visibility as a Nyingma space from the exterior, not just the interior, or the temple.⁴³⁴ The temple is also the highest building in Gyu, standing well above the rest of the village. It is densely covered with bold patterns and bright paint that make it stand out against the mountain backdrop. While it is not unusual for Himalayan Buddhist temples to have gold roofs, red walls, or multi-colored accents, in the case of the new temple in Gyu, these features promote an overall conspicuousness.⁴³⁵ This conspicuous decoration and elevated location on the ridge make the temple visible from virtually anywhere in the village. The visibility of this location supports

⁴³³ It remains to be seen how the space will be utilized once construction is completed. The doors in each wall may only be opened for particular ritual contexts, or they may be visible more frequently. In the case of the recently built main temple in Kungri in the Pin Valley, a large glass wall was built around the entrance to allow the doors to remain open, without allowing dirt and colder air inside. It's possible Yomed Tulku may add glass walls to the Gyu temple as well.

⁴³⁴ The doors would only allow a line of sight when they are open. Future observations of the completed temple space would likely determine how visible the interior of the two upper levels are in actual practice.

⁴³⁵ The density and variation in color and pattern are also made possible by the availability of new kinds of materials, specifically concrete and paint.

several aims, including elevating the temple over other Buddhist spaces in Gyu, increasing its visual appeal to visitors from outside Gyu, and reinforcing the legibility of the temple—and the village—as Nyingma spaces.

The new temple also achieves a high degree of visibility by being conspicuously tall. Free standing three-story buildings were difficult to achieve using traditional building techniques of mud-brick, rammed earth, and wooden beams.⁴³⁶ Of the extant multi-story buildings in Spiti, few are free-standing. Most are only able to achieve a second or third level because they are built into the mountainside. This is particularly true for multi-story homes, which usually have two entrances, one on the ground level and one on the roof, both of which are accessible because of the slope of the mountain. In terms of temple construction, this strategy can be seen at the monasteries of Drangkar and Kee, which achieve great height and multi-storied buildings by relying on the incline formed by the side of the mountain. The new temple at Gyu uses a different strategy made possible by using concrete and iron rebar. First, rather than making use of the mountain's slope, the ridge was partially leveled to create a flat space for the temple. As a result, the temple is free-standing rather than recessed into the mountainside, which contributes to its overall visibility from the village since it literally stands out from the mountainside. The free-standing design also increases visibility and access from the ridge itself, since one can see and traverse all four sides of the structure rather than the two or three feasible if it were built into the mountain. This free-standing aspect of the temple's design also promotes the visibility of the three statues, since they are able to be seen from all four sides of the building, rather than just from a front entrance. The windows on the ground floor provide a line of sight with the future statue of Padmasambhava and the entrances on all four walls of the upper two stories will

⁴³⁶ The general scarcity of lumber in Spiti and the stunted growth of most trees in the area, make it difficult to acquire wooden beams of a suitable length to support larger structures. The recently introduced use of metal I-beams in place of wooden beams has made taller structures much more feasible.

provide a near-continuous view of Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra as one circumambulates the upper levels. This high degree of visibility reinforces the significance of the three statues in establishing the temple's sectarian identity as well as the importance of visibility for the overall structure.

Lastly, the temple is the highest point in Gyu with a built structure. The village is in a valley surrounded on all sides by high mountains. The village itself is built on a flattened area at the bottom of the valley. The only structures located above the valley floor are all on the same mountain ridge: a row of *stūpa*, the mummy temple, and the new temple. The temple is higher on the mountain ridge than the first of these structures, the row of *stūpa*. It is on the same level as—but much taller than—the second, the mummy temple, which the new temple towers over. As such the new temple occupies the highest built point in Gyu and is the tallest structure in Gyu. The ridge itself also promotes the visibility of the new temple; it is located directly opposite the sole motorable road into or out of Gyu, ensuring that the first thing one will see upon entering the village is the temple. The temple's location, height, design, and decor draw upon the structure and the site to produce a highly visible and conspicuous temple. In so doing, the visibility of the temple reinforces its visibility as a *specifically Nyingma structure*.



Figure 18: View of Gyu with the row of *chorten* visible in the middle ground.⁴³⁷

New Structures, Old Spaces

The preceding discussion establishes that the new temple at Gyu is designed to be highly visible and visibly Nyingma. The new temple is also strategically located at the center of Buddhist life in Gyu, in order to connect the new Nyingma temple to existing spaces of Buddhist significance. This space derives its importance in part from existing Buddhist structures and in part from local Buddhist histories regarding the mummy and its shrine. The new temple structure draws upon these existing understandings of place by creating a spatial relationship between the new and old structures, working the new temple into local geography, and reframing surrounding structures in

⁴³⁷ Photograph by author, 2014.

terms of the temple's own Nyingma affiliation. The temple is able to produce new meanings for Nyingmapa in Gyu by materially referencing local knowledge and physically anchoring these narratives to the landscape. In addition to extending Nyingma claims to surrounding structures and regional histories, the new temple projects claim a specifically Nyingma locale further back in time to a point well before the temple construction began, complicating the idea that the current phase of Nyingma expansion is a recent phenomenon.

The Scorpion's Back

The new temple is strategically located at a site that is already at the center of Buddhist life in Gyu. The temple stands on a mountain ridge along the western boundary of the village that is called the “scorpion” or the “scorpion’s back” (*sdig bu, sdig pa ra tsa*).⁴³⁸ The ridge itself runs alongside a small tree-lined rivulet and slopes gradually down before ending just above a military base.⁴³⁹ The lower section of the ridge has zigzagging foot paths leading to a narrow leveled area with a row of seven small white *chorten* or *stūpa*.⁴⁴⁰ Next to this row of uniform *stūpa* is an eighth larger *stūpa* set slightly apart from the rest. The new temple is on a second flattened area above the *stūpa*. This row of *stūpas* is an important site of Buddhist practice in the village, primarily engaged with through circumambulation. By sharing a space with an established location, the new temple inserts itself into the existing Buddhist landscape, and is effectively incorporated into the quotidian practices of the village.

⁴³⁸ Younger Topgye, Interview, interview by Author, June 3, 2014; Namgyal, Interview.

⁴³⁹ The small base is part of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police.

⁴⁴⁰ Sets of seven and eight *stūpas* are common, representing the seven buddhas or the eight great sites associated with the life of the Buddha.



Figure 19: Row of *stūpa* on the ridge in July 2014.⁴⁴¹

Regarding the history of the ridge, residents of Gyu relate two different explanations for its name. The first is that the mountain ridge itself looks like the body of a scorpion.⁴⁴² This is somewhat evident from aerial images where one can see how the lower slope of the ridge curves at the point designated as the tail.⁴⁴³ The second explanation of the name is that it originates from a story about a scorpion infestation that plagued Gyu in the past.⁴⁴⁴ In order to stop the infestation, a local Buddhist practitioner asked to be walled up inside a cave (in some accounts a

⁴⁴¹ Photograph by author, 2014.

⁴⁴² Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014.

⁴⁴³ The shape might be more visible if viewed from high up on the opposite mountainside, where residents of Gyu used to graze their animals. The area is reportedly heavily monitored by the military causing many to shift where they graze. I was discouraged from attempting to climb that part of the mountain to get a better view in order to avoid any encounter with the military.

⁴⁴⁴ No exact date or estimation for these events was provided. One informant indicated the story was more myth than history, when I asked questions aimed at soliciting more specific details. Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014; Ewi, Interview, interview by Author, July 2, 2014; Namgyal, Interview.

stūpa) while he meditated.⁴⁴⁵ He was successful in ending the infestation through his meditative prowess but died (intentionally in some accounts) in the process, leaving his body effectively entombed. The practitioner's degree of achievement was marked by external signs like the scorpion's retreat and rainbows appearing in the sky. The practitioner is variously called Sangnak Tenzin, Sangha Tenzin, or Sakya Tenzin.⁴⁴⁶ One person recounting this story drew an explicit connection between the mountain ridge and Sakya Tenzin's expulsion of the scorpions. He said some claim the body of Sakya Tenzin was actually walled up inside the largest *stūpa* on the mountain ridge.⁴⁴⁷ He also noted that this was a point of contention, with others holding that the practitioner was originally walled up in a cave but that his body was moved and later interred in the large *stūpa*. Both of these versions of the story connect Sakya Tenzin to the *stūpa* and the ridge where the new temple is located, in the process accounting for the origins of the name the "scorpion's back."

This narrative concerning both the *stūpa* and the name of the ridge was further complicated when the naturally mummified body of a man was discovered in Gyu, when it was disinterred during the 1975 earthquake.⁴⁴⁸ The figure was discovered seated with his legs drawn up, knees

⁴⁴⁵ Accounts differed on this point as well as the location of the cave or *stūpa*.

⁴⁴⁶ The multiple accounts provided by interviewees differed in a number of details, including the figure's name.

⁴⁴⁷ Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ The particular circumstances of the mummy's discovery are unclear. Most attribute it to the earthquake, which struck the region on January 19, 1975. The earthquake marked one of the few instances in the seventies when this area garnered national media attention. Other explanations for the mummy's discovery were that a bulldozer repairing the road following the earthquake opened the cave. I refer to the body as "naturally mummified" because there is little evidence that any mummification or other techniques were utilized to preserve the body. Rather, it seems to have been preserved by the high altitude cold and arid conditions. The accidental or intentional nature of the mummification was the central question Victor Mair poses in the television program, as indicated by its UK title: "The Mystery of the Self-made Mummy." The show seems to want to maintain the possibility that the individual intentionally mummified *himself*, despite a lack of supporting evidence. The program's description on the Discovery Channel reads, "His existence is a mystery that Victor Mair, one of the world's top mummy experts and his team of scientists, are determined to solve. Is it possible that this man could have actually mummified his own body?" The program's description on Channel 5 reads, "Documentary following the investigation of a 500 year old Tibetan mummy, and the team of experts who analyse it and try and establish whether the mummification was self-induced or down to natural causes." Chauhan, "550-Year-Old Mummy Faces Decay"; *Mystery of the Tibetan Mummy* (Discovery Channel, 2003); Derrick, *Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-Made Mummy*.



Figure 20: Aerial view of Gyu Village with a star marking the temple.⁴⁴⁹

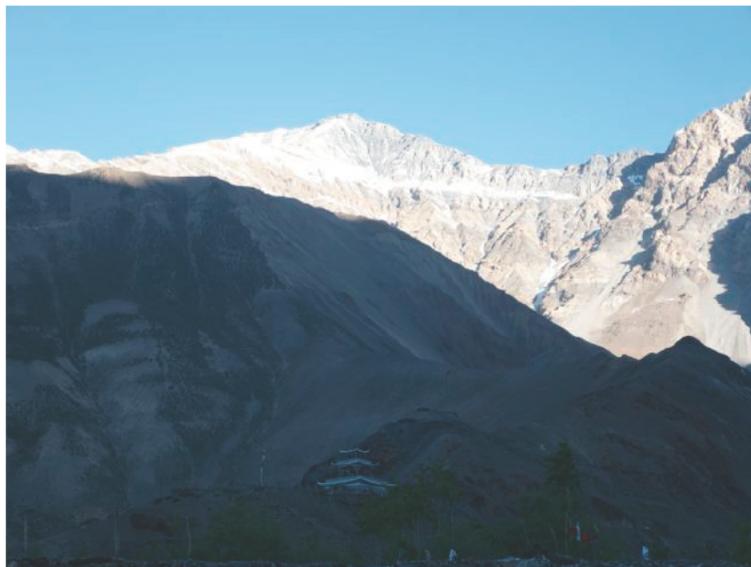


Figure 21: View of the curved mountain spur called the “scorpion’s back” in July 2014.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ Image from Google maps. Accessed December 4, 2015. Star added.

close to his chin, and with a strap wrapped around his body and legs. This particular way of sitting and the presence of the strap led locals to interpret the mummy as having died while seated in a meditation posture.⁴⁵¹ Since the mummy was ostensibly a Buddhist practitioner, locals in Gyu identified it as the same Sakya Tenzin who was walled up in order to end the scorpion infestation.⁴⁵² The mummy, now associated with Sakya Tenzin, became an object of veneration. The body was moved between different locations in the village, eventually occupying a purpose-built structure on the mountain ridge, first a mud-walled temple that was replaced by a concrete structure in 2009, where it remains today. Since its installation, the new building for the mummy has functioned as a kind of Buddhist temple, with the mummy as the central object of veneration. Many in Gyu say they visit the “mummy lama” every day, climbing the ridge to light butter lamps and incense, or offer flowers and rupees, circumambulating the row of *stūpa* on the way up and down.⁴⁵³ The footpaths up and down the ridge connecting the row of *stūpa* and the mummy’s shrine building now also lead to the place occupied by the new temple, all of which constitute a central site for Buddhist practice in the village.

⁴⁵⁰ Photograph by author, 2014.

⁴⁵¹ Meditation straps are tools for aiding long periods of meditation by helping to hold the body upright. They are generally wrapped around the legs, to support a seated posture. In the case of the mummy, the strap was wrapped around the legs and neck, holding the body upright.

⁴⁵² One person shrugged when recounting this connection, then said it was a convenient association, even if an unverifiable one. Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014.

⁴⁵³ The small building where the mummy is kept has clear material traces of this veneration, which some claim are contributing to the mummy’s increasing state of degradation.



Figure 22: Mummy of a seated man identified as a Buddhist practitioner in July 2014.⁴⁵⁴

Reinforcing Existing Connections

The new temple project was in large part responsible for establishing the ridge as an important site in Gyu, even though it shares the location with the mummy and row of *stūpa*. While the mummy's discovery predates the new three-story temple, the mummy was only moved to the ridge after the spur had been leveled to create space for the temple.⁴⁵⁵ The row of *stūpa* predates the new temple site. However, before the new temple was built, the ridge area above the row of

⁴⁵⁴ Photograph by author, 2014.

⁴⁵⁵ Before the new structure on the ridge was built, the mummy resided in several different locations, including the old temple in Gyu, the ITBP base, and in private homes in Gyu.

stūpa was controlled by the ITBP. It was only through building the new temple that the residents of Gyu, and Spiti's Nyingmapa, regained control of the location and designated it as sacred space, rather than military space. Yomed Tulku recounted that, prior to beginning construction on the temple, the part of the mountain ridge above the *stūpa* was primarily used by the military.⁴⁵⁶ While we toured the site, he pointed out where the ridge above the temple was dotted with foxholes and blinds formed from the surrounding rocks, all oriented toward the border with China. The Gyu committee overseeing construction brought in a bulldozer to flatten the ridge to make a space for the temple, but were stopped from proceeding with the temple construction by the ITBP, who also claimed the space. Construction was delayed during a legal conflict with the military over ownership of the land. Although work on the new temple was delayed, the mummy building was able to proceed, and was thus completed well in advance of the three-story temple. While the mummy's temple predates the three-story temple, the former would not have been built on the ridge had the ground not been leveled to make space for the latter. The as-yet unfinished temple created a new space for venerating the mummy, and the mummy's building contributes to framing the ridge and the temple as a specifically Buddhist space. In both cases, the location on the ridge enables the new structure to engage with existing Buddhist spaces and objects of local importance and practice. Physically situating the new Nyingma temple on the ridge positions it inside the sphere of daily practice for many who reside in Gyu. It associates the new structure with the old row of *stūpa* and the simultaneously new and old mummy temple, allowing the new temple to share in the significance these sites and spaces already have. Clustering these sites together encourages Gyu's residents to visit the new temple and

⁴⁵⁶ This actually led to a legal dispute over who owned the ridge itself, which delayed construction on the new temple. Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.

incorporate it into their existing practices by physically placing itself directly in the path of their current practice.



Figure 23: New temple with smaller white mummy temple, 2016.⁴⁵⁷

Fostering a Local Nyingma Community

The new temple is one component of a larger effort on the part of Yomed Tulku to promote the Nyingma tradition in the region. Toward that end, the new temple fosters a sense of local Nyingma identity and community, a “Nyingma public,” that encourages Buddhists in Gyu to

⁴⁵⁷ Photo courtesy of Yomed Tulku.

interpret the temple, the surrounding space, and themselves, as Nyingma.⁴⁵⁸ It does so in part by providing new opportunities for local Buddhist practice that are framed in Nyingma terms. It encourages a connection between Gyu and other Nyingma regions in Spiti, particularly the Pin Valley and Lari Village. At the same time as Yomed Tulku aims to promote the Nyingma tradition, he also challenges Geluk hegemony in Spiti. As Chapter 5 discusses, Yomed Tulku himself, and other Nyingma in Spiti, think there is an imbalance among the different Buddhist traditions, particularly between the Geluk and Nyingma, in Spiti. They perceive Geluk institutions and affiliated villages as receiving greater resources and garnering more attention than Nyingma institutions and village. The emerging Nyingma network aims in part to balance that equation. One of the strategies employed to establish such balance is encouraging tourism to Nyingma areas like Gyu. Yomed Tulku and members of the Gyu committee overseeing the temple's construction think that an increase in tourism will promote the local economy and result in Gyu garnering more attention from state-level institutions, which they see as long neglecting the Spiti region in general and Gyu in particular. In addition to drawing more tourists to Gyu, the new temple is meant to encourage pilgrimage to the village. The new temple will enable Gyu to draw some of the growing number of international Buddhist pilgrims who travel to the Western Himalayas, effectively placing Gyu on the map of both tourist and pilgrimage routes through Spiti.

Challenging Geluk Spaces and Connecting Gyu to the Pin Valley

The new temple promotes a regional Nyingma network by strengthening ties between Gyu and the existing Nyingma region of the Pin Valley. The new temple is a joint project between Yomed

⁴⁵⁸ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York : Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2002).

Tulku and the residents of Gyu, with both parties contributing to planning and funding the structure. A temple committee comprising a half dozen men from Gyu is in charge of overseeing the day to day construction of the temple. Yomed Tulku makes occasional visits to Gyu to meet with the committee, discuss logistics, and visit the construction site. Although, Yomed Tulku is the head of the Nyingma monastery in Pin and effectively the head of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, the local Gyu community is responsible for the day to day work of building the temple. In this sense, the temple is a local project and not solely externally initiated. However, the temple is not entirely local either, in that it provides a concrete manifestation of the ongoing ties between Gyu and the Nyingma institutions in Pin. It constitutes a node in a developing regional Nyingma network, and as such is simultaneously local and regional. The temple connects Gyu to this network by materializing and strengthening the fairly recent conversion of the village from Geluk to Nyingma under the auspices of Yomed Tulku's predecessors and previous incarnation, Yeshe Palden and Yomed Dorje.

The temple provides a new space for Buddhist practice in Gyu that is distinctly Nyingma, elevated above the old temple and potentially replacing the old temple as the primary location for Buddhist practice in Gyu. The village has a small Buddhist temple that predates Gyu's conversion to Nyingma in the early twentieth century. The roughly square building is on the north-western edge of the village. The small temple complex includes quarters for the resident caretaker and visiting Buddhist dignitaries, a kitchen and community meeting space, and a large *stūpa* in the courtyard in front of the temple. According to a member of the planning committee for the new temple, the extant Gyu temple was recently given a new roof, but has remained

largely unchanged in recent decades.⁴⁵⁹ While no one in Gyu knows when the old temple was originally built, those interviewed thought the temple predated the time of Yeshe Palden, an important local Buddhist figure who died in 1942.⁴⁶⁰ A monk from the Pin Valley appointed by Yomed Tulku is responsible for maintaining that temple and resides in an adjacent building in the old temple complex.⁴⁶¹ It is secondarily maintained by a core group of Gyu's residents, who play an active role in Buddhist ritual activities. Not surprisingly, many of these same individuals are on the planning committee for the new temple.

The contents of the temple do not appear to be very old but likely predate Gyu's conversion from Geluk to Nyingma under Yeshe Palden in the first half of the twentieth century. The temple interior is a single room with two pillars, a tiered raised platform for an altar space, a large bookcase along the back wall, and three large statues that are slightly larger than life-sized of a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, Śākyamuni Buddha, and Prajñāparamitā. While these three figures are fairly ubiquitous in Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist contexts and could be present in a temple devoted to any of the various traditions, it is unlikely that they were designed and installed by a post-1940s Nyingma community.⁴⁶² The only visible evidence in the temple indicating its new Nyingma status are a couple of photographs of Nyingma teachers, including the current incarnation of Dudjom Rinpoche. The temple's Geluk protection deity was reportedly

⁴⁵⁹ Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014; Elder Topgye, Interview, interview by Author, June 15, 2014. This renovation is marked by a plaque on the front of the building. Most of the individuals interviewed in Gyu were between the ages of thirty and eighty. Aside from these oral histories, I have not located any sources on Gyu.

⁴⁶⁰ The oldest person I spoke with was only a young child in the nineteen-forties, however it seems likely that the temple is at least that old, otherwise those in Gyu who are in their sixties and seventies would likely remember if a new temple had been built in their youth. Ewi, Interview.

⁴⁶¹ In 2014, the caretaker was an elderly monk from Sagnam Village in the Pin Valley. Sonam, Interview, interview by Author, June 14, 2014.

⁴⁶² At the very least, no one alive today whom I interviewed could recall a period before the statues were in the temple. Regarding the sectarian implications of the statues, most Nyingma temples feature Padmasambhava on an equal if not greater status than Śākyamuni Buddha. The temple does have some statues of Padmasambhava but they are all small portable objects that do not occupy the same central position of importance as the three primary statues, hence the likelihood that the main images predate Yeshe Palden's introduction of Nyingma teachings to Gyu.



Figure 24: Interior of formerly Geluk temple in Gyu, July 2014.⁴⁶³



Figure 25: Exterior of the old temple in Gyu, July 2014.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶³ Photograph by author, 2014.

⁴⁶⁴ Photograph by author, 2014.

replaced with a Nyingma deity, however this seems to have largely been effected by changing the name rather than the object that is the material support of the protector.⁴⁶⁵

Although the village of Gyu converted from Geluk to Nyingma in the first half of the twentieth century, very little changed in terms of the structures and spaces of Buddhist practice to indicate the conversion and Gyu's new Nyingma status. The old temple continues to be used with few visual indications of a Nyingma presence. Conversely, the new temple is an unambiguously Nyingma space and encourages Gyu's Buddhist community to understand it as such. More importantly, the new temple declares not just the structure itself as Nyingma but also the surrounding space of the village as distinctly Nyingma. This is in large part effected by locating the new temple in a more prominent position in Gyu, one that in Buddhist terms evokes a particularly elevated and superior status.

The new temple is positioned on the ridge overlooking the village, where it towers over Gyu and the old Geluk temple. In the context of Buddhist hierarchies of space, this elevated position conveys a higher status. Raising the temple above Gyu is comparable to the kind of respect shown by raising a Buddhist book or object above the head, or lowering one's head before a revered person or object. The new temple's physical location is thus also a claim of superiority over the erstwhile Geluk space of the old temple. The new temple could have been built on the floor of the valley near the old temple. The planning committee might even have destroyed the old temple and built the new one on the same location, replacing the Geluk temple with a Nyingma temple. However, building the new temple on the ridge creates a literal distance

⁴⁶⁵ The protector deity consists of a long pole (a sort of spear or long arrow) covered with many strips of multi-colored cloth affixed to the shaft. The caretaker monk and another monk originally from Gyu but living in Kungri, identified the deity as Jamsing (*lcam sring*). This is the name of an important Sarma protector deity, whose traditional visage is quite different from the cloth and pole support, which is more frequently associated with local deities in Spiti. A second stick with cloth strips was identified as the village deity or *yul lha*, called Jokula. The younger monk from Gyu said Jokula is usually kept in the home of the deity's medium or *lus yar*.

between the two spaces, physically and symbolically elevating the Nyingma space over the other temple rather than merely replacing it. By occupying a new position, the temple also encourages Gyu's Buddhists to come to the new temple on the ridge for practice, moving away from the old temple. This is not to say that the old temple is or will be abandoned. However, the new temple invites a choice between the two spaces, adding a new definitively Nyingma option for future Buddhist practices. By occupying this elevated space on the ridge, the new temple shifts attention away from the Geluk history of the old space and redirects it to the new Nyingma present.

Framing the Mummy as Nyingma

The new Nyingma temple shares the ridge space with a recently built temple for the mummy. This temple is a small square white-washed building. The interior is not subdivided in any way and contains only a square glass case in the center of the floor with the mummy seated inside and a small table near the door for placing burning incense and other offerings. Locating the mummy's temple adjacent to the new Nyingma temple on the ridge creates a spatial relationship between the two structures that frames the mummy as the body of a Buddhist, and potentially Nyingma, practitioner. In addition to the proximity of the two structures, framing the mummy as Nyingma draws upon interpretations of the mummy's posture and attire as related to particular practices, on the high degree of preservation of the body as a sign of both practice and its results, and on explicit references to the mummy in the new three-tiered temple's name.

The mummy's posture and attire, particularly the apparent meditation strap, frame the figure as a Buddhist practitioner. Such meditation straps are tools that aid in long periods of meditative practice. In Indian and Tibetan Buddhist visual and material contexts, these straps

come to serve as a synecdoche for the practice itself; when depicted in paintings and statues, meditation straps, whether or not they are depicted in use, stand in for the practice itself, as well as for the efficacy of particular kinds of practice.⁴⁶⁶ Perhaps the most well-known example of this is the popular Tibetan yogi Milarepa (1040–1123), who is usually depicted with a red meditation strap looped around his torso. In Kagyu traditions, visual and textual representations of Milarepa developed specifically in contrast to representations of monastic figures. While monastic figures are typically depicted wearing a monk’s robes and with a shaved head, images of Milarepa feature his long matted hair, white *repa* clothing, bare skin, and meditation strap. Among these visual features, Milarepa’s meditation strap serves as a sign of his potent yogic powers developed during long periods of intense meditative practice.⁴⁶⁷ This is implied even when images do not show the strap actually in use. Images of Milarepa often depict the strap draped over his torso, from shoulder to hip, rather than looped around his legs as a postural support. In these depictions, the presence of the strap alluded to meditative practice even though the image may not depict the figure actively meditating. Just such a strap appears in mural paintings of teachers in temples in the Pin Valley, for example in the seventeenth-century image of Taksang Repa (1574–1651) from the Old Temple in Kungri, Pin Valley (Figure 10). The Gyu mummy’s strap evokes such meditative practices of Buddhist *siddhas* or yogins and alludes to the kinds of prowess and powers derived from practice, powers like the ability to eradicate a scorpion infestation, in the case of Sakya Tenzin, or preserving one’s own body after death.

⁴⁶⁶ The meditation strap developed as a sign of a particular kind of yogic practice rooted in the Indian *siddha* traditions and later established in Tibet, where it was localized or hybridized in a distinctly Tibetan Buddhist form. This is evident, for example, in images of the Indian *mahasiddha* Padampa Sangye (1055–1149), who is an important figure for Tibetan Buddhists, particularly in the Kagyu traditions. He is almost always depicted with a meditation strap looped around his torso or legs. For a discussion of the significance of the meditation strap in Tibetan images, see Rachel Q. Levy, “Constructing the Cotton-Clad Yogin: Milarepa and the Development of Tibetan Yogin Identity in Visual Representations” (May 1, 2015).

⁴⁶⁷ See Levy for a discussion of the visual evolution of the Milarepa figure as well as her arguments regarding the uses of the Milarepa figure in the context of internal Kagyu debates over legitimate Buddhist practices. Levy.

The Gyu mummy's survival and high degree of preservation are also key factors in interpreting the figure as a powerful Buddhist practitioner worthy of veneration. Mummified bodies and bodily remains can evoke a range of meanings in Buddhist contexts. Perhaps the most pervasive form of bodily remains and their veneration are relics. A relic might entail bodily substances as well as non-bodily remains, like bits of bone left after a body is cremated, or a material or object that has come into contact with the body. These can be objects a person has touched or worn, like a piece of cloth from their clothing or the imprint of their hands, or even a place where a figure has been. Relics, both objects and bodily remains, are frequently installed inside *stūpa*.⁴⁶⁸ In addition, sometimes the entire body of a venerated person is placed inside a *stūpa*. These bodies are often preserved or mummified following death before they are placed inside a *stūpa*. The Gyu mummy similarly functions as a body, the body as relic, the body as an image or object venerated within a temple, and before its disinterment, a body-as-relic housed within a *stūpa*. This complex range of significance for the mummified body would likely be easily called to mind by local Nyingma audiences. Yomed Tulku himself participated in the preservation of his teacher Dudjom Rinpoche's body, when the latter died in France, by packing the body in salt.⁴⁶⁹ The preserved body was transported to Kathmandu, Nepal and interred in a *stūpa*. Kathmandu in general, and the specific monastery housing Dudjom Rinpoche's *stūpa* in particular, are a common pilgrimage destination for Spiti's Nyingmapa.

⁴⁶⁸ Much more could be said about the relationship between *stūpa* and relics, or *stūpa* as relics, than space permits here. See especially Bernard Faure's discussion of the ways in which such mummies complicate the categories of body, relic, *stūpa*, and image, bringing together a complex interplay of ritual presence. For a useful discussion of relics in Tibetan contexts, see Dan Martin, "Pearls from Bones: Relics, Chortens, Tertons and the Signs of Saintly Death in Tibet," *Numen* 41, no. 3 (September 1994): 273. See also Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997); Robert H. Sharf, "The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch'an Masters in Medieval China," *History of Religions* 32, no. 1 (1992): 1–31; Robert H. Sharf, "On the Allure of Buddhist Relics," *Representations*, 1999, 75–99.

⁴⁶⁹ Yomed Tulku, Interview, interview by Leach, Joseph, May 30, 2014. Anya Bernstein, *Religious Bodies Politic: Rituals of Sovereignty in Buryat Buddhism*, Buddhism and Modernity, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 15–16.

In many Buddhist contexts, including in Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism, mummified bodies are also understood as resulting from the efforts of the individual prior to and during death, rather than from how others treat and preserve the body once that person has died. This is thought to have been the case for those who associate the mummy with the story of Sakya Tenzin, who was presumably installed inside the *stūpa* while still alive rather than after death. In this context, aside from the mere fact of the body's existence, the high degree of preservation of the mummy reinforces local understandings of it as belonging to a powerful Buddhist practitioner. The mummy's body is in a remarkable state of preservation; his skin is largely intact with hair, teeth, and nails. These features of the body are associated with practices that can produce "incorruptible" bodies.⁴⁷⁰ Anya Bernstein discusses one such example of an incorruptible body, that of the Russian Buddhist lama Dashi-Dordzho Itigelov who died in 1927 and was exhumed in 2002:

The body of the lama, found seated in the lotus position, allegedly had not deteriorated, and soon rumors spread that the lama was alive... Reports of Itigelov's growing nails, hair, and allegedly warm body temperature consistently make headlines in the local and national press. Those who are more careful claim that he is "neither dead, nor alive," being in a special state of consciousness known as deep Buddhist meditation. Yet others claim that he did die, reaching the state of nirvana and stopping the cycle of rebirth, but he deliberately left his incorruptible body behind.⁴⁷¹

Such incorruptible bodies may be produced by a practitioner as they slowly withdraw consciousness from the body.

In fact, the very person responsible for converting the village of Gyu from Geluk to Nyingma is believed to have achieved a level of realization that enabled him to produce one such incorruptible body. In recounting Yeshe Palden's death in 1942, his nephew Phuntsok Rai

⁴⁷⁰ Anya Bernstein, "More Alive than All the Living: Sovereign Bodies and Cosmic Politics in Buddhist Siberia," *Cultural Anthropology* 27, no. 2 (May 2012): 261–285; Bernstein, *Religious Bodies Politic*, 121–124.

⁴⁷¹ Bernstein, *Religious Bodies Politic*, 14–15.

described Yeshe Palden's bodily transformation, observing that he was a large man, nearly six feet tall. However, when he died, his body shrank to be like that of a seven-year-old child. He reportedly shrank to such a degree that Yomed Dorje, Yomed Tulku's predecessor, was able to carry the man's body in his arms like one would carry a child.⁴⁷²

In addition to what a preserved body indicates about Buddhist practice more broadly, the condition of physical remains—or the absence of them—can result from practices associated with the Nyingma tradition. Bodily remnants and other signs at death are thought to be important indications of a practitioner's level of realization within the Dzogchen tradition, particularly of achieving what is called "rainbow body" (*'ja' lus*). This goal is not itself particular to the Nyingma or Dzogchen, but the particular Dzogchen practices for attaining it are, as is the relationship between attainment and the condition or absence of bodily remains.⁴⁷³ As discussed with regard to the new temple's three levels, the Nyingma tradition is structured around a system of nine vehicles that organize the different Buddhist paths. For the Nyingma, the last or highest of these nine levels is Dzogchen, or the Great Perfection. In Dzogchen, the degree of bodily substance that remains after death can relate to the degree of realization or enlightenment a practitioner achieves. Generally, when one dies, the consciousness withdraws from the body during an intermediate state between death and rebirth called *bardo* (*bar do*). If one has not achieved enlightenment then the consciousness is reborn. However, in Dzogchen, if one achieves enlightenment at the moment of death, then it is possible for one to pass on without leaving behind a material body (or a grossly material one). One instead achieves a luminous state called a "rainbow body" or "body of light," in which one's material body slowly dissolves into light,

⁴⁷² Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai. Yomed Tulku, Interview about Yeshe Palden.

⁴⁷³ This is not to say that Dzogchen is exclusively Nyingma, although it is primarily associated with the Nyingma.

eventually disappearing (or leaving partial bodily remains).⁴⁷⁴ Here, the *absence* of a body following death rather than its presence or preservation is a mark of realization.⁴⁷⁵ Achieving such a state of luminosity that leaves no bodily remains is considered difficult and rare. Practitioners can also leave some form of partial bodily remains upon death. These can include a person's clothing, prayer beads, or other non-bodily material, or it may entail some bodily remains, particularly the hair and nails. That the Gyu mummy's preserved body retained the hair and nails was frequently pointed out by residents of Gyu—some of whom also claimed that the hair and nails were still growing—as material indications of the mummy's power, or rather, of the efficacy of the practice of the person whose body remains in the form of the mummy.⁴⁷⁶ These features of the preserved body as mark of meditative practice, particularly of a Dzogchen form of practice that might result in the practitioner achieving some degree of “rainbow body,” are underscored by the story of Sakya Tenzin, which recounts that at the moment of both his successful eradication of the scorpions and of his death, rainbows appeared in the sky above the place where he was entombed.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴ “In both Tibetan Buddhism and Bon, particularly in explanations of *rdzogs chen*, the physical body dissolves into light when the adept reaches the final goal (often attained through a practice called *thod rgyal*). This dissolution may be in the form of a miraculous disappearance while meditating, but is more usually associated with the time of the adept's death. The elements of the material body that remain at death depend upon the spiritual level of the deceased adept; the very highest leave no physical remnant at all, or in some explanations just hair and nails, and disappear with just a rainbow left behind. The colors in the rainbow body are sometimes associated with the transformation of the five aggregates (*skandha*) into the colors of the five buddhas (*pañcatathāgata*).” Robert E Buswell et al., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014) s.v. “ja’ lus.” Martin, “Pearls from Bones,” 281.

⁴⁷⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche records one such account in his history of the Nyingma, “Finally, the master said, “If I disappear, look at the summit of Lhari.” But when the master did disappear Bagom thought that he had gone to the mountain for recreation and would return that evening. When the master failed to return Bagom went to investigate. He found his hat, his bodhiseed rosary, and so forth, hanging from a juniper tree, but Sherap Jungne's body had vanished without a trace. According to the natural Great Perfection, this is only one of the ways of death: ways resembling space, fire, sky-farers and awareness-holders are spoken of.” Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, 543.

⁴⁷⁶ Some Indian newspapers have reported that villagers claimed the mummy's hair and nails are growing because he is still alive, but I did not speak to anyone who asserted this.

⁴⁷⁷ Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014. Dan Martin categorizes the various “signs of saintly death” in Tibetan Buddhism as including “lights of three types” and “atmospheric phenomenon,” which encompass the events described in the story about Sakya Tenzin in Gyu. Martin, “Pearls from Bones,” 281.

That the body of the mummy might evoke associations with Dzogchen practice and its result, namely a luminous body, is heightened by the juxtaposition of the mummy's temple and the new three-tiered temple. Recalling the three statues planned for the temple, the uppermost level will contain an image of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. In Dzogchen, Samantabhadra *is* just that luminosity into which the practitioner dissolves. He embodies the aim of Dzogchen practice, which is itself marked by the dissolution of the body.⁴⁷⁸ Placing these two structures in the same space brings the mummy into the domain of the temple, that is, into a space that might more readily evoke associations between the mummy as the material remains of practice and the figure of Samantabhadra as encapsulating the aim of Dzogchen practice, a luminous body that might leave no trace at all.

In the case of the Gyu mummy, which is already associated by some residents with the story of Sakya Tenzin, the existence of the body, the mummy's excellent state of preservation, and the body's seated position with a meditation strap, all serve as indications of the practitioner's particular practice and resulting degree of realization, all of which warrant his veneration.⁴⁷⁹ The new temple building's location on the ridge next to the mummy links the two

⁴⁷⁸ As Samten Karmay points out, this is a controversial point of view that is debated within the Tibetan sources and is a common point of critique of the Nyingma by the sarma schools. Samten Gyaltzen Karmay, *The Great Perfection (RDzogs Chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, 2nd ed, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, v. 11 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 196.

⁴⁷⁹ Certainly not everyone I spoke to in Gyu holds this view. Some cited the arid high-altitude air as the reason for the mummy's preservation, rather than it resulting from the practitioner's prowess. However, after noting this, two such skeptics also said that even if the mummy's body was preserved by the weather rather than through his own doing, the body itself was nevertheless remarkable in its survival and the figure's posture clearly indicates he was meditating when he died, all of which still makes him a suitable object of veneration. Topgye, Conversation with village leader, Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.



Figure 26: Gyu mummy showing teeth and hair in July 2014.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Photograph by author, 2014.

structures and connects the temple to the locally significant space constituted by the ridge. For those well-versed in Dzogchen, the proximity of the two might even evoke connections between the mummy and Dzogchen conceptions of the body, practice, realization, and death.

In addition to their shared proximity, the new Nyingma temple's name indicates a connection between the new structure and the mummy. When I last visited Gyu in 2014, the temple did not yet have a name. Recently, Yomed Tulku posted images of the temple on his Facebook account, where he referred to it as the "Temple Commemorating the Indestructible Mummified Body Relic."⁴⁸¹ This may only be a temporary description of the temple rather than its permanent title, particularly since Yomed Tulku has expressed skepticism bordering on disapproval of those who venerate the mummy.⁴⁸² However, the title presented with images of the temple draws a clear connection between the two. By linking the new temple and the mummy in this manner, the title also links the mummy to the Nyingma context the temple articulates, overlaying the nearby structure containing the mummy with this specifically sectarian association. At the same time, the title elevates the status of the mummy by characterizing it as a relic. Calling the mummy a relic supports interpretations of the body as belonging to a highly realized Buddhist practitioner, one whose bodily remains warrant such a status and the corresponding veneration.

⁴⁸¹ The post provided the name of the temple in Chinese rather than in English, French, or Tibetan, all languages Yomed Tulku speaks. This is possibly an indication that his intended audience for the post is his body of Taiwanese students, who make up a large portion of his Facebook followers. In an email to the author on December 5, 2015, Martino Dibeltulo translates the temple's title as, "Temple Commemorating the Whole-body Mummified [or, whole mummified body] Undecayed Relic." 全身肉身不壞舍利紀念佛寺; 全身 quanshen: full-body; 肉身 roushen: flesh body (mummified body); 不壞 buhuai: undecayed; 舍利 sheli: sarīra; 紀念 jinian: commemorative; 佛寺 fosi: (Buddhist) monastery." Such interpretations of the mummified body may have special resonance with Yomed Tulku's growing following in Taiwan. Veneration of the mummified bodies of Buddhist figures is a fairly widespread Buddhist practice in China, Taiwan, and Japan, where mummies are often referred to as "whole-body relics." In the same post, the temple was only described in Tibetan by the short and rather generic name "Khedrupling" (*mkhas grub gling*). Douglas Gildow and Marcus Bingenheimer, "Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan: Two Case Studies," *Asia Major* 15, no. 2 (2002): 87–127. Sharf, "The Idolization of Enlightenment."

⁴⁸² Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.

The new temple's claim to the mummy as Nyingma also constitutes a claim about Gyu's Nyingma past. Although the mummy was unearthed in 1975, it seems very few outside of Gyu knew about it until the early 2000s. In 2004, the *Hindustan Times* published a photograph of the mummy reportedly taken in 2001.⁴⁸³ That same year, the mummy made an appearance on a British television show called "Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-made Mummy," which estimated the mummy to be about five-hundred-years old.⁴⁸⁴ The mummy has since achieved some degree of notoriety, appearing in state and national newspapers in India, as well as in a number of tourism pamphlets, websites, and books, most of which reiterate a handful of confused and often contradictory statements about the mummy's discovery, history, and present condition.⁴⁸⁵ Many in Gyu are aware of these circulating media accounts of the mummy, including those attributing it to the fifteenth century.⁴⁸⁶ The mummy's antiquity, considered alongside the new temple's claim to the mummy as a specifically Nyingma figure whose bodily remains might attest to Dzogchen affiliated practices, is also a claim that the mummy's fifteenth-century context was in fact *Nyingma*. The shared association between mummy and temple thus extends a Nyingma presence across time, encompassing the purported period when the person whose bodily remains are housed in the temple was active as a Buddhist practitioner. It simultaneously extends a Nyingma presence in Gyu across space, bringing the village as a whole under the shadow of the new Nyingma temple high up on the ridge.

⁴⁸³ Anuj Singh first saw the mummy in 1997, then returned in 2001, when he reportedly took the photograph published in the *Hindustan Times*. Singh said he led a team of researchers (unidentified) who supplied an approximate date for the mummy. Later regional news sources also claim the same team performed a carbon dating, but the results, if they exist, do not seem to be published. Anuj Singh, "Trekker Finds Buddhist Lama Mummy in a Mountain Hideaway in North India," *Hindustan Times*, March 4, 2004.

⁴⁸⁴ Derrick, *Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-Made Mummy; Mystery of the Tibetan Mummy*.

⁴⁸⁵ Singh, "Trekker Finds Buddhist Lama Mummy in a Mountain Hideaway in North India"; Chauhan, "550-Year-Old Mummy Faces Decay"; Derrick, *Stranger Than Fiction: The Mystery of the Self-Made Mummy*.

⁴⁸⁶ The results of the mummy's carbon dating are fairly well known in Gyu. Several individuals I spoke with said the mummy was about five-hundred years old, although at least one person said it was a thousand years old. One person explicitly connected the five-hundred year estimate of age to the process of carbon dating. Sonam, Interview. Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014.

Sites, Sights, and Sightseeing: Tourism, Pilgrimage, Patronage, and the State

The new temple in Gyu engages with local, regional, and international Buddhist communities comprised of patrons, pilgrims, and practitioners.⁴⁸⁷ It is a product of contemporary Buddhist patronage practices and networks at the same time as it anticipates future forms of patronage and practice. In addition to these explicitly Buddhist audiences, the new temple is intended to engage with a domestic and international tourist audience that partially overlaps with Buddhist audiences. Tourists and Buddhist pilgrims in Spiti engage in similar practices, despite their potentially different aims and motivations. Vision is central to these shared practices, as both Buddhists and tourists—and Buddhist tourists—engage in acts of looking and sightseeing. This kind of visual engagement has ritual benefits for Gyu’s Buddhist community by bolstering the ritual efficacy of the new temple site. Tourists and pilgrims also have important consequences for Gyu that are not explicitly related to Buddhism. They contribute to the local economy in an area with few economic opportunities. Residents of Gyu hope that increasing numbers of visitors, Buddhists or otherwise, will put pressure on the state to develop infrastructure in the region, and that such infrastructure improvements will draw further visitors, as it becomes easier to reach Gyu. This too, serves Buddhist ends, as better infrastructure draws more visitors to Gyu, further contributing to the financial and ritual viability of the temple site.

These different publics of local and non-local patrons, pilgrims, and tourists that engage with the new temple site mobilize complex discourses around the nature of religious practice in a modern “secular” state and the politics of trans-national Buddhist patronage and nationalism. Domestic Indian tourists to Gyu seem to be interested as much in local religious practices as they

⁴⁸⁷ This is not necessarily an exhaustive list, and there are certainly significant overlaps between these categories. However, they will be useful divisions for thinking about the various people who are likely to engage with the temple site.

are in the focus of that practice; they are more interested in practices directed toward the mummy than they are in the mummy itself. In the case of Gyu, these forms of practice have garnered public criticism and calls for state intervention to protect the mummy from local practitioners, who have thus far resisted state intervention in the mummy's care. These conflicting interests remain unresolved, a tension that is materialized in terms of access to the new temple site.

The Gyu temple is also a product of global Buddhist patronage networks shaped by sectarian and regional interests. International Buddhist patronage for the Gyu temple specifically and the Nyingma in Spiti generally developed through connections to international Dudjom *terma* centers established by Dudjom Rinpoche in the 1980s. This regionally and sectarian specific Nyingma network formed in a transnational Buddhist context that was shaped in part by Tibetan exile politics and nationalist claims to Tibet. This larger context connects the temple site to local Nyingma networks formed between the Pin Valley and new Nyingma spaces in Lari and Gyu, while also situating this local network within a larger regional and international Nyingma context. This global Nyingma network complicates the relationship between territory, nationality, and religion, particularly as they relate to debates over Tibetan independence.

Tourists, Pilgrims, and the Efficacy of Vision in Buddhism

The production and patronage of objects and structures like temples, statues, texts, and ritual implements are fundamental forms of Buddhist practice, generating merit for those involved. The material products of such acts provide benefits for those immediately involved, while also serving as sites for the future and ongoing production of merit.⁴⁸⁸ Thus Buddhist patronage and

⁴⁸⁸ As David Jackson notes, "The creation of a thangka [scroll painting] was not only a meritorious act in itself, but it also made possible further religious activities in relation to the sacred image. An icon of the Buddha acted as a focus and support for the practicing Buddhist's faith (*dad rten*) and it was also a reminder (*dran rten*) of the Buddhist's commitment to travel the path set by the Buddha. Occasionally a simple Buddha image was used as the

production is about the proximate context and its material products at the same time as it is about creating a support for future opportunities. Founding a temple like the one at Gyu provides just such a material support for immediate and future benefit. These material products, including temples, are produced *by* Buddhist communities or publics, while also continually producing such publics themselves: a Buddhist text engages a public of readers; a ritual implement implies a practitioner; a temple entails an audience or public that may see, enter into, or otherwise engage with the structure and space. Buddhist material forms like temples thus manifest the needs and goals of a particular Buddhist community—their desire to produce karmic effects by sponsoring the foundation of such a structure and the long-term support such a structure provides for future Buddhist practice—at the same time as they anticipate future publics that both include and exceed the particular public involved in the foundation and creation of it. As Faure notes, the creation, use, and disuse of Buddhist images and spaces forms a cycle of reinforcement; ritual spaces and objects require practitioners to be efficacious, and practitioners require material supports for their practice. Ongoing practice maintains ritual efficacy, which in turn draws more practitioners, who are themselves interested in engaging with efficacious supports and spaces for practice. Conversely, should a site or image’s efficacy decrease, it may draw fewer practitioners, which would in turn contribute to its decreasing efficacy.⁴⁸⁹ It is, therefore, important for the new temple site in Gyu to be able to draw a steady flow of practitioners, whether that entails local Buddhists in Spiti or non-local pilgrims from farther afield.

object of focus (*dmigs rten*) during concentration meditation (*zhi gnas*), but more commonly it functioned as a worthy object for worship and offerings, one which provided the Buddhist with the right circumstances for adding to the accumulation of merit required for spiritual advancement.” David Paul Jackson, Janice A Jackson, and Robert Beer, *Tibetan Thangka Painting: Methods & Materials* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1988), 10–11.

⁴⁸⁹ Faure, *Visions of Power*, 257.

Despite the region being largely unknown to both tourists and non-local Buddhists prior to the 1990s, Spiti is increasingly a point of interest for both Buddhist pilgrims and tourists.⁴⁹⁰ The new temple site engages with this audience in a manner that utilizes both Buddhist visitors and non-Buddhist tourists to serve local Buddhist ends. The majority of non-residents who travel to and within Spiti are either tourists or pilgrims.⁴⁹¹ The trajectories and practices of these two groups are often parallel. Visitors primarily follow the same routes, visit the same sites, and perform similar actions at those sites. This is not to say that their activities never diverge, often they do. However, for the most part tourists and pilgrims are drawn to Spiti for similar reasons and to similar spaces once they are there.

Buddhist pilgrims aim to visit important Buddhist sites, usually monasteries, temples, and places where famous teachers practiced.⁴⁹² In addition to site-specific aims, pilgrims travel to Spiti to attend special events, including large-scale rituals like the Kalachakra (held in Spiti in 1983, 1996, and 2000), or the visits of important Buddhist teachers, like the Dalai Lama and Dzongsar Khyentse.⁴⁹³ Local annual events like masked monastic dances also routinely draw crowds of tourists and pilgrims from outside Spiti. Pilgrims to Spiti may be Indian nationals (usually from a region elsewhere in the Himalayas), Tibetans in exile (living in India or other countries), or international Buddhist pilgrims. Within the latter group, one finds Buddhist

⁴⁹⁰ News coverage of Spiti is usually limited to tourism based coverage. For example, a recent *India Today* article called the area the “hottest new tourism destination.” Disha Choudhury, “Lahaul-Spiti Is Now Going to Be the Hottest New Tourism Destination,” *India Today*, June 13, 2017, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/lahaul-spiti-himachal-pradesh-new-tourism-destination-lifetr/1/977509.html>.

⁴⁹¹ In addition to tourists and pilgrims, Spiti also has a significant seasonal flow of migrant workers, primarily from north India and Nepal, who mostly perform manual labor, typically construction and road repair. Spiti also hosts a number of non-local residents engaged in teaching and government administration. These individuals are often posted from elsewhere in the state.

⁴⁹² For example, the cave where the Kagyu figure Rangrik Repa practiced in Spiti is a pilgrimage destination, as are monasteries like Tabo and Drangkhari.

⁴⁹³ Two of the three Kalachakra initiations in Spiti were at Tabo Monastery (1983, 1996) and the third was at Kyi Monastery (2000). It is quite unusual for one location to host more than one Kalachakra. Of the twenty-seven places where the Dalai Lama has performed thirty-four Kalachakra initiations, only four locations have hosted more than one: Lhasa, Bodh Gaya, Leh, and Tabo. “Kalachakra Initiations by His Holiness the Dalai Lama | The Office of His Holiness The Dalai Lama.”

pilgrims from Euro-American contexts as well as pilgrims from culturally Buddhist places like Bhutan, Taiwan, and Japan.⁴⁹⁴ Tibetans in exile in particular often travel to Spiti because of the region's religious, cultural, and historical ties to Tibet.⁴⁹⁵

Spiti draws both domestic and international tourists.⁴⁹⁶ Domestic tourism in the region is growing rapidly, in part due to recent advertising campaigns sponsored by the Himachal Pradesh Tourism and Culture Department (HPTCD). The HPTCD advertises different tourism "circuits" in the state, most of which are organized around HPTCD guesthouses and restaurants. Most of the tourism circuits that include Spiti are advertised as a kind of religious cultural tourism, including so-called Buddhist Circuits. As one might expect, these are organized around Buddhist temples and monasteries.⁴⁹⁷ State tourism pamphlets and websites tend to describe these Buddhist sites in historically inaccurate terms that often present Buddhists in Spiti in a stereotypical, orientalist, and exoticizing manner.

⁴⁹⁴ Scholars often classify Buddhists into two categories under a range of terms, including "heritage" Buddhists and "convert" Buddhists.

⁴⁹⁵ See for instance, Khondung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche's remarks during a 2013 trip that he was "struck by how similar Spiti is to Tibet in its landscape, culture and language..." "Melody of Dharma: A Publication of the Office of Sakya Dolma Phodrang Dedicated to the Dharma Activities of His Holiness the Sakya Trizin" Vol. 12 (September 2013), 64.

⁴⁹⁶ Spiti also draws "adventure" tourists, who are interested in activities like hiking, mountain climbing, nature photography, etc. Tourism advertisements routinely emphasize Spiti's isolation, both spatial and temporal. It is typically described as a place apart in space, accessible by a single road blocked much of the year by snow that requires several days of travel to reach, as well as apart in time, frequently referred to as preserving a way of life unchanged for centuries. Trips to Spiti are sometimes described as traveling "back in time." See for example, the popular Spiti eco tourism company Ecosphere's website. "Ecosphere Spiti Eco-Livelihoods," accessed August 16, 2013, http://www.spitiecosphere.com/eco_travel_features_4.htm.

⁴⁹⁷ These state tourism advertising campaigns also emphasize Buddhism in the region as particularly "different," characterizing it as Himalayan, *vajrayāna*, *Lamaism*, and/or Tibetan Buddhism, and often differentiating this kind of Buddhism from "Indian" Buddhism. The notion of India's north-west Himalayan region as particularly "different" and "diverse" was a key factor in the formation of Himachal Pradesh as a state. As Mark Elmore's work argues, justification for forming the new state and the state's identity were inextricably tied to characterizations of the region as religiously and culturally diverse and different. While other states in India formed on the basis of internal similarity, shared language, etc., Himachal Pradesh's internal diversity served the same ends. Elmore's work shows how that internal diversity was immediately problematic once the state took shape. Characterizing areas within Himachal as "different" is part of this process of homogenization. Mark Elmore, "States of Religion: Postcolonialism, Power, and the Formation of Himachal Pradesh (India)". (dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005). Shubhendu Kaushik, *Towards A Tourism Strategy In Spiti* (Bangalore, India: Equitable Tourism Options, 1998). "Buddhist Circuits - Lahaul & Spiti, District Website, HP," accessed April 6, 2016, http://himachal.nic.in/index1.php?lang=1&dpt_id=215&level=1&sublinkid=9422&lid=9799; HPTDC, "Himachal Tourism :: Circuits," accessed April 6, 2016, <http://hptdc.nic.in/circuit.htm>.

Tourism and pilgrimage are both key economic drivers in Spiti. The region has few sources of income for residents and relies heavily on government subsidies and revenue generated by travel. There are few opportunities for Spitians to gain employment within Spiti itself.⁴⁹⁸ Tourists, pilgrims, and other visitors to the region thus provide an important source of employment and income. In the case of Gyu, the village draws few visitors compared to the rest of Spiti. The new temple site is designed in part to draw tourist and pilgrimage traffic to the village. The main route for travel in Spiti provides greater access to some areas and less access to others. There are both geographic and infrastructure factors at play in shaping this route, factors like rivers, mountain passes, government permits and check posts, bus routes and schedules, bridge locations, road conditions, tour packages, and the standard pricing for trips offered by the local taxi union.

Like the Pin Valley, the village of Gyu is not on this main route and thus is not a part of most tourism and pilgrimage travel in Spiti. There are two significant factors shaping this. First, Gyu is not on the single main road through the Spiti Valley, National Highway 22. The village is located on a side valley rather than in the main Spiti Valley, and is accessible by a single road leading only to Gyu. To reach the village, travelers must leave the National Highway for a side trip, eventually backtracking to return to the main road. Time-strapped travelers trying to fit in as much as possible often design their trips to avoid extensive backtracking, making a side trip to a single village less desirable than focusing on more easily accessible villages in the main Spiti

⁴⁹⁸ Spiti as a whole is heavily subsidized by the state and national governments. Most youth leave the area for higher education and employment, often to more populous parts of Himachal Pradesh or bordering parts of the Punjab, particularly Chandigarh. They send back vital income for their families. Government jobs within Spiti like teaching and administration is also a source of income. Farming provides some additional financial support, however farming is limited and not particularly lucrative. Due to the high altitude and arid climate of Spiti, very few crops are viable. The most common cash crop in the region is peas.

valley.⁴⁹⁹ The second factor concerns the two ways to enter Spiti by road on either end of the National Highway. The more popular of these two entrances is the one farther from Gyu. Most visitors to Spiti enter from the north, via Lahaul and the Kunzum pass. This is on the opposite end of Spiti from Gyu. These visitors often only travel south as far as Tabo, which is still well north of Gyu.⁵⁰⁰ The other entrance to Spiti by road is from the south, via Kinnaur. Gyu is the first village on the Spiti side of the Spiti-Kinnaur border, which could increase the likelihood of travel to the village. However, this route is less popular than the northern entrance, particularly for international tourists, for whom the southern entrance requires a special inner-line permit to traverse. The northern route does not require a permit. This inner-line permit is not expensive but can be difficult and time consuming to obtain. It also limits the number of days one can stay in Spiti to two weeks, narrowing the window of time for clearing checkpoints and for sightseeing and travel within Spiti. The southern entrance to Spiti via the National Highway 22 through Kinnaur, is also frequently washed out, causing delays or preventing travel altogether.⁵⁰¹ This route to Spiti through Kinnaur also takes more time to traverse than the northern route through Lahaul, assuming one's destination on either end is Shimla or Manali, both key locations for beginning travels in Lahaul, Spiti, and Kinnaur. The southern route via Kinnaur is open year-round, while the northern route via Lahaul closes in the winter when the Rohtang and Kunzum passes are blocked by snow. Thus during the winter months, travel by road is limited to the southern route closer to Gyu. However, travel to and within Spiti drops off sharply during the

⁴⁹⁹ This is also why Pin does not draw as many visitors as areas in the main Spiti Valley. There are certainly many popular day excursions off of the main road that require backtracking. However, these are generally accessible from the tourist hub of Kaza and often can be seen in one day, avoiding the need for an overnight stay away from Kaza's cluster of hotels and restaurants.

⁵⁰⁰ Tourists can enter Spiti via the north and exit via the south, thus avoiding any backtracking. However, this is a less popular option, particularly for international tourists.

⁵⁰¹ The northern route is also subject to delays, but they seem to occur less frequently and be less serious than on the route through Kinnaur, likely due to Kinnaur's wetter climate, which is more prone to landslides, particularly during the monsoon season, when many travel to Spiti.

winter months, with most tourism ending around the same time as travel is restricted to this southern entrance.⁵⁰² Aside from questions of direction of travel, another important factor contributing to the small number of visitors to Gyu is a lack of transit infrastructure to and within the village. The sole road connecting Gyu to the main highway is often impassable or in a poor state of repair, preventing travel by vehicle to and from the village entirely or making it extremely difficult.⁵⁰³ Infrequent bus schedules to and from Gyu also decrease the number of potential visitors. Lastly, although there are geographic barriers to visiting Gyu, restrictions on tourism and non-local travel to Gyu contribute to constructing Gyu's isolation.⁵⁰⁴

Residents of Gyu discuss poor infrastructure conditions as creating a kind of causal loop that keeps the number of visitors to the area low.⁵⁰⁵ Because tourists and pilgrims do not frequently travel to Gyu, the roads are not maintained as well as roads in the main Spiti Valley. This is both a cause and consequence; tourists are not as readily able to traverse the road to Gyu *because* that route is not well maintained. The same situation pertains to the Pin Valley, which is also often cut off from the rest of Spiti when the only motorable road to the valley is washed out, an all too frequent occurrence. Another factor decreasing tourism is the lack of overnight accommodations in Gyu, requiring visitors to come and go in the same day. This makes travel by

⁵⁰² The vast majority of travel to and within Spiti is by road. Helicopters are also utilized, particularly for visiting dignitaries and medical emergencies, however these are special cases and prohibitively expensive for most.

⁵⁰³ There are other routes to Gyu accessible on foot or with animals.

⁵⁰⁴ I tried to visit Gyu officially in 2011 and 2012. Both times the District Superintendent in Kaza said foreigners needed a special inner-line permit to travel in the area, but that he could not issue one or direct me to any official or office that could. In 2013 and 2014, I was able to visit Gyu while traveling with residents of the village. On both visits, my hosts in Gyu cautioned me to make myself as inconspicuous as possible and to try to stay indoors, so that the ITBP would not stop me and question my presence. I was particularly instructed not to take any pictures of the ITBP base or of the mountain range between Gyu and the Chinese controlled territory on the other side of the border. In 2013, I did interact with a member of the ITBP while visiting the temple site; he seemed unconcerned with my presence and chatted with me about the mummy. However, my earlier inability to officially visit Gyu does not appear to be unique; I have met very few international tourists who have traveled to the village and have myself often been asked by tourists if it is possible to go to Gyu, and if international tourists need to obtain a permit to do so. Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014; Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014; Sonam, Interview.

⁵⁰⁵ Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014; Pema, Interview, interview by Author, July 2015.

bus impossible, since the bus does not arrive frequently enough to avoid staying overnight.⁵⁰⁶

Many travelers in Spiti hire private jeeps rather than relying on the bus, but this is certainly not the case for all, particularly domestic travelers, many of whom either rely on the bus or attempt to drive their own vehicles through Spiti.⁵⁰⁷

Despite these many barriers to access, Gyu does draw a small number of tourists. They usually arrive in hired or private vehicles, rather than by bus. While the bus stops at the edge of the village, thus requiring one to walk through the village to reach the temple site, private cars can drive through the village to the temple site on the ridge, bypassing the need to engage with the village altogether. The ability to reach the ridge by car is itself a new development; the road to the ridge was constructed to enable access to the new temple site. Indeed, most residents typically forgo this new road and use one of several footpaths zigzagging from the village at the bottom of the ridge up to the row of *stūpa*, and above them to the temples. Once they reach the temple site, tourists generally only briefly exit their vehicles. They take a few moments to enter the small mummy temple, then pile back into their vehicles and leave the village. Indeed, tourists have little reason to linger, given the absence of accommodations, restaurants, cafes, or tea stalls in Gyu.⁵⁰⁸

The new temple site on the ridge was intentionally designed and located to engage with and change these circumstances. It both appropriates extant tourist traffic to the village, largely oriented toward the mummy temple, and seeks to increase that traffic toward new ends. Visitors to Gyu are necessarily confronted with a sight of the new temple, given its conspicuousness and

⁵⁰⁶ The first guest house in Gyu recently opened in 2014, so this particular deterrent may change.

⁵⁰⁷ This often does not end well for domestic tourists, as many vehicles that are perfectly suitable outside of a Himalayan context are not able to traverse the main highway and side roads in Spiti without getting stuck.

⁵⁰⁸ The recently opened guest house also features a restaurant. However, the restaurant is merely a family's dining room, and at least in 2014, service was limited to the morning and evening hours when the family was not out maintaining their herd of goats.

visibility from the only road into the village. The new temple building also engages with any visitors to the mummy temple, given their shared location on the same new temple site. By necessitating a visual engagement from visitors, the new temple bolsters the ritual efficacy of the structure and the space it inhabits. Seeing is central to basic forms of Buddhist practice, wherein the practitioner looks at a person, image, built structure, feature of the natural environment, etc., generating merit through that act of vision. Andy Rotman refers to this process as a Buddhist visual economy of faith.⁵⁰⁹ This kind of merit production through seeing can take place with or without the viewer specifically intending that consequence. Visitors to Gyu who see the temple might be inspired by the sight in a way that effectively appropriates a non-Buddhist gaze to serve Buddhist ends.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, Yomed Tulku, the Bhutanese artist designing the temple's statues, and a member of the Gyu temple committee, all explicitly related the temple's *visibility* to its ability to benefit Buddhism.⁵¹¹ Yomed Tulku in particular described the elevation and design of the temple as producing a spectacle that might generate a feeling of amazement or awe in viewers.⁵¹² Beyond the temple itself, he expressed his hope that a feeling of awe will be specifically directed toward Padmasambhava, whose visage is centrally located in the main temple hall.⁵¹³ Thus, the more tourists and pilgrims who come to Gyu, the greater the number of people who will see the temple, which in the aims of the site's primary patron, will further amplify merit, practice, and feelings of awe directed toward Padmasambhava.

⁵⁰⁹ Andy Rotman, *Thus Have I Seen: Visualizing Faith in Early Indian Buddhism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5–6.

⁵¹⁰ See for example Andy Rotman's discussion of Buddhism, sight, and merit in the *Divyāvadāna*, especially Chapter Three. Rotman.

⁵¹¹ Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014; Dorje, Interview, June 13, 2014; Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.

⁵¹² Yomed Tulku emphasized the importance of this point by repeating himself in both Tibetan and English, noting that he thought it would invoke a feeling of what I translate as "awe" (ngo mtshar che), then stating, "wow!" in English. Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.

⁵¹³ This motivation was particularly clear in Yomed Tulku's comment earlier that day while in Lari, when he said he planned to "spread Guru Rinpoche" throughout Spiti. Yomed Tulku, Interview, May 30, 2014.

The temple site's visibility and the shared location of the two new structures also supports the local community's aims in a manner not specifically related to Buddhist practice, one that is instead primarily economic. The three-tier temple's location adjacent to the mummy temple encourages visitors to stay longer at the temple site than they otherwise would, were they only visiting Gyu to see the mummy. This increased duration might lead to increased economic impact, as lingering tourists and pilgrims may spend more money. Indeed, a family in Gyu recently opened a new guest house and restaurant—Gyu's first—situated on the road through town that leads to the ridge, in hopes of enticing tourists to stop for a snack or possibly to stay overnight. Overnight accommodations are particularly necessary if Gyu hopes to draw visitors by bus, given the limited bus schedule. Yomed Tulku and residents of Gyu, including those on the temple committee, expressed hopes that the new temple and easier access to the mummy will increase the number of visitors to the village, and that those visitors will spend more time and money in Gyu.⁵¹⁴ Returning to the causal loop of infrastructure and visitors, one of the individuals on the temple committee, expressed hope that increasing the number of visitors will encourage the state to spend more money on infrastructure in Gyu, like road maintenance and reliable electricity.⁵¹⁵ These improvements would make it still easier for future tourists and pilgrims to visit Gyu, as well as making travel easier for Gyu's own residents.

⁵¹⁴ In 2014, the owners of the new guest house and restaurant had just put up a sign outside the building advertising accommodations. They developed a restaurant menu and list of room prices in English, a clear indication of the kind of travelers they intended to host, largely middle class educated Indians and international tourists. Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014; Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014.

⁵¹⁵ Pema, Interview; Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014.



Figure 27: Sign posted by Himachal Pradesh Tourism Department in 2006.⁵¹⁶

The Politics of International Patronage: Tibet, Taiwan, and the Temple

The new temple site in Gyu is situated within a complex political climate, a context in which its ability to potentially alter the number of visitors to the region and its claims to the new temple site as a particularly Buddhist space, constitute a challenge to state and national political and territorial claims. These challenges are mobilized in particular along four lines: competing local and military claims to the space occupied by the temples, competing national claims to the contested border region containing Gyu, local critiques of state management and infrastructure development, and competing claims to the mummy as a local religious object and the secular property of the state.

⁵¹⁶ Photograph by the author, 2014.

Prior to the temples' construction, rights to the temple site on the mountain ridge were claimed by both the residents of Gyu and the military stationed in the village. Since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, fought primarily over demarcating the border between the two nations, Gyu has hosted a military presence. This led to a legal dispute over control of the mountain ridge housing the new temple. The case was eventually decided in favor of Gyu's villagers, but delayed work for several years. Yomed Tulku and residents of Gyu were surprised by the military's seemingly sudden opposition to the project, which emerged only at the point when they began bulldozing the building site. According to Yomed Tulku, they had previously conducted several consecration rituals at the site well in advance of bringing in a bulldozer, with no opposition from the ITBP. Although he did not draw out the implications of this comment, I take his point as arguing that the act of ground consecration itself was an early sign of the village's intentions, as much a part of the building process as the bulldozer. The consecrations constituted a claim to the ridge space as under the purview of Gyu's Buddhists and available for building the future temples. This made opposition to the bulldozer seem like a delayed response on the part of the ITBP, which had not protested these earlier forms of engagement with the land. In this context, the completed temples at the site today evoke historical tensions with the ITBP base at the same time as they substantiate local residents' claims to the space, claims that—although legally confirmed in court—were first enacted through means of Buddhist rituals.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ It is also worth reiterating that the ridge was *already* a key location for Buddhist practice in Gyu, well in advance of the ritual consecrations preparing the space for the temples. Recall that the row of *stūpa* in Gyu itself precedes the living memory of the oldest living villager, and thus both the presence of the ITBP in the 1960s and the incorporation of Gyu into the new nation of India in 1947. For villagers, this conflict over the ridge territory also resonates with one of the stories of the origin of the mummy in Gyu. In one elderly woman's account, the mummy had originally been interred inside the largest and eighth *stūpa* on the ridge. It was "discovered" when the ITBP broke open that *stūpa* to use it as a blind during the conflict with China. She was not the only resident of Gyu to claim that the military used the *stūpa* as shields, apparently evidenced by bullet holes in the *stūpa*, although I was not able to locate any myself. Ewi, Interview; Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014.

This conflict over the immediate space occupied by the temples is also related to the larger issue of the contested border territory occupied by the village as a whole. In conversations with residents, the topic of Gyu's proximity to the border with China and the contested nature of the surrounding region was usually accompanied by a discussion of Gyu's lack of infrastructure development in comparison with the region on the Chinese side of the border. Gyu's lack of development was almost uniformly attributed to state and national neglect. Indeed, as one interlocutor pointed out, if the issue were just a matter of the difficult terrain and Gyu's location in an isolated corner of the Himalayas, then one would expect development on the Chinese side of the border to be equally hampered.⁵¹⁸ Others raised as evidence of neglect that children must travel far away to pursue their education, since there are no suitable facilities in Spiti, and examples of medically preventable deaths in an area lacking suitable hospital facilities.⁵¹⁹ As one individual surmised, what other cause could there be for this uneven development aside from the historical contingencies of Gyu finding itself in Indian-controlled rather than Chinese-controlled territory?⁵²⁰

These critical opinions may be widely held but are largely only privately voiced. A couple of months after the conversations in Gyu recounted above, two individuals from Pin made

⁵¹⁸ Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014. While I have not traveled within the Chinese controlled region on the other side of the border, satellite evidence, internet, and news coverage do seem to confirm what Topgye argued, as do the comparatively better developed conditions found in other contested areas of the Chinese-Indian border like Ladakh. Claude Arpi, "Claude Arpi: Developing Western Tibet, China Secures Its Border with India," *Claude Arpi* (blog), July 30, 2014, <http://claudearpi.blogspot.com/2014/07/developing-western-tibet-china-secures.html>; Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines of Control*; Sudha Ramachandran, "China Toys with India's Border," *Asia Times Online*, June 27, 2008, sec. South Asia, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JF27Df01.html; "China Steps up Activities along Himachal Pradesh Border in Kinnaur," *Hindustan Times*, August 1, 2017, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-steps-up-activities-along-himachal-pradesh-border-in-kinnaur/story-ylwZRRjH5S2Dimf4nyFfO.html>; Archana Phull, "International Border in Himachal Pradesh in State of Neglect," *The Statesman*, May 3, 2017, <http://www.thestatesman.com/cities/international-border-in-himachal-pradesh-in-state-of-neglect-1493812764.html>.

⁵¹⁹ Children usually travel to Shimla, the state capital, or to Chandigarh in the neighboring Punjab, for education. There is a basic hospital facility in the district capital of Kaza, but it does not seem to be able to handle such routine matters as childbirth. Women in Spiti routinely move to Shimla for the final months of pregnancy so that they are not later prevented from leaving Spiti by snow or damaged roads when they go into labor.

⁵²⁰ Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014.

similar claims of governmental neglect, particularly infrastructure development, while noting Spiti's proximity to China as offering both a counterpoint and a possible solution. When a video circulated online of their statements, the two men were arrested on charges of sedition. Newspapers and websites reporting on the arrest glossed their complaints somewhat blithely as "border envy" and inciting a "Chalo China" or "let's go China" movement.⁵²¹ Yomed Tulku does not hesitate to raise these same issues, including the possible solution offered by Spiti's proximity to the border with China. On one occasion, he related a conversation with the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Virbhadra Singh, during which he joked that if the state could not improve conditions, maybe Spiti should "invite the Chinese" to see if they could do a better job.⁵²² Yomed Tulku is clearly not the only one to speculate on a possible alternative future, were Spiti to become part of China, or a possible alternative past, had China gained control of the disputed border territory, although he is perhaps one of a few Spitians able to articulate this point to political leaders with impunity. Indeed, Chief Minister Singh condemned the comments by the two individuals arrested in Pin, stating that the region was "well connected" with "no dearth of funds for development."⁵²³

To return to the context of the temples, Yomed Tulku and the committee in Gyu overseeing the temple construction see the new temple site as a means of both drawing attention to the lack of development as well as intervening in the state's lack of progress on economic and

⁵²¹ The latter phrase in particular conveys rather casual connotations at odds with the seriousness of the charges faced by the two men. Their case has since been taken up by the People's Union for Civil Liberties, an organization in India similar to the ACLU in the United States. "Tribal Representatives Charged with Sedition, Sent for 13 Days," accessed January 17, 2016, <https://news.webindia123.com/news/articles/india/20140829/2449972.html>; Anand Bodh, "Two Arrested for Sedition in Lahaul - Times of India," *The Times of India*, August 26, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Two-arrested-for-sedition-in-Lahaul/articleshow/40889184.cms>; "Himachal Panchayat Leaders Threaten to Seek Chinese Help, Arrested," *Zee News*, August 26, 2014, http://zeenews.india.com/news/himachal-pradesh/himachal-panchayat-leaders-threaten-to-seek-chinese-help-arrested_957414.html; Anand Bodh and Suresh Sharma, "In Picturesque Pin Valley, Some Border Envy," *The Times of India*, August 31, 2014.

⁵²² Yomed Tulku, Interview, May 30, 2014.

⁵²³ "Virbhadra Condemns Kugri-Sugnam Sedition Episode," *The Pioneer*, September 4, 2014.

infrastructure conditions. By theoretically drawing more tourists and pilgrims to Gyu in the future, and encouraging those visitors to linger longer than it takes to have a quick look at the mummy, villagers hope that the influx of tourists and pilgrims will put pressure on the state to do more to maintain roads and improve conditions in Gyu.⁵²⁴ The Buddhist temple site thus aims to bring about an alternative future not guaranteed by the state, all the while making evident the state's shortcomings in necessitating such forms of local intervention. Aside from the earlier legal dispute with the ITBP over land, such a temple-based intervention should prove less politically risky than the kind of public statements made in Pin that were deemed “anti-national.”⁵²⁵

Another aspect of the Gyu temple site, namely its patronage, situates the temple, the village, and the Nyingma tradition in Spiti within debates over nationalism and sectarian affiliation. The new temple is made possible by funding from international donors, which connects it and Gyu to transnational Nyingma networks of patronage and production. Funds for a range of new Nyingma projects in Spiti, including the new temple in Gyu, are generated in large part through non-local donations. Much of this financial support derives from international Nyingma patrons in a few particular locations. Yomed Tulku's connections to Dudjom Rinpoche and the Dudjom *terma* tradition, particularly Dudjom centers in France, Taiwan, and the United States, generate substantial donations that support Yomed Tulku's projects throughout Spiti, including in Gyu.

Connections between these international Nyingma funding sources and the new temple in Gyu are clearly and publicly signaled through Yomed Tulku's digital presence. They are particularly evident in his online posts and announcements about the temple, which appear in

⁵²⁴ Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014; Topgye, Interview, June 3, 2014.

⁵²⁵ “Virbhadrā Condemns Kugri-Sugnam Sedition Episode.”

Chinese and English rather than Tibetan or Hindi. Posts about the new temple also appear on the websites of affiliated Dudjom centers.⁵²⁶ These connections are also attested to by Yomed Tulku himself, who frequently discusses his international patrons and the financial support they provide for local building projects.⁵²⁷ Among this range of sources of patronage, Yomed Tulku refers most frequently to his Taiwanese donors.

Despite the fact that Spiti is not politically part of Tibet, nor are its residents Tibetans in exile, the new temple's relationship to international Buddhist patronage—specifically to Taiwanese patronage of Tibetan Buddhists—situates the Nyingma in Spiti within recent political debates over Tibetan independence, the religious and political authority of Dharamsala, and regional and sectarian conflict among Tibetans in exile. Yomed Tulku's personal relationship with Dudjom Rinpoche, his strong ties to the Dudjom *terma* tradition, and his association with Dudjom centers in France and Taiwan, draw Spiti into these larger debates over the political and religious implications of such patronage.

According to Abraham Zablocki, Taiwanese interest in and patronage of Tibetan Buddhists initially developed in the 1960s and 70s in the context of the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the subsequent establishment of Tibetans in exile.⁵²⁸ During this period, Taiwanese patronage of Tibetan Buddhism was connected to regional and sectarian tensions among Tibetans in exile. Teachers who became established in Taiwan were primarily from the eastern Tibetan regions of Kham and Amdo and from the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions.⁵²⁹ This early phase of Tibetan Buddhist activity in Taiwan included the introduction of the Dudjom tradition

⁵²⁶ Despite his connections to a major Dudjom *terma* center in France, and his command of the French language, Yomed Tulku does not post online commentary in French, perhaps relying on the English language posts to appeal to those donors. "H.E. Spiti Tulku Yomed Rinpoche's Facebook Page."

⁵²⁷ Yomed Tulku, Interview, May 28, 2014.

⁵²⁸ Abraham Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection: Politics, Piety, and Patronage in Transnational Tibetan Buddhism," in *Buddhism between Tibet and China*, ed. Matthew Kapstein, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism (Boston, Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 379–414.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid*, 386.

by students of Dudjom Rinpoche, who was by then the newly established “head” of the Tibetan Nyingmapa in exile, a position of sectarian leadership that had not existed in Tibet.

Taiwanese patronage accelerated in the 1980s, in the same decade that Yomed Tulku began studying with Dudjom Rinpoche and other prominent exile-Tibetan teachers in the Nyingma tradition. Zablocki argues that Taiwanese patrons and newly established Buddhist institutions in Taiwan provided vital financial support for Tibetans in exile. However, this support complicated the politics of the PRC’s claim to Tibet, Tibetan independence efforts, and regional and sectarian tensions among Tibetans in exile:

Yet many Tibetan exiles—especially those who were suspicious of Dharamsala’s authority—found Taiwanese aid to be invaluable in establishing some degree of financial independence from the exile government. The result was a bitter division within the exile world, one that mirrored older sectarian and regional tensions in Tibet, and that led some Dharamsala loyalists to assert that Taiwan was as dangerous an enemy as the PRC.⁵³⁰ Some Tibetans in exile interpreted Taiwanese patronage as supporting possible claims by the Republic of China to authority over Tibet itself, and criticized Tibetan lamas for their Taiwanese relationships. However, others saw Taiwan as a critical source of financial support in an exile context increasingly dominated by Dharamsala-based Geluk institutions.⁵³¹

Although Spiti is far from Kham and Amdo, and Spitians themselves are Indian citizens, not Tibetans in exile, Spiti’s connections to Taiwanese patronage through Dudjom institutions entangles Nyingmapa in Spiti in the same sectarian and regionally-based conflicts Zablocki discusses. Nyingma patronage in Spiti similarly bypasses Dharamsala-based patronage. This is certainly not the case for other Buddhist institutions and traditions in Spiti, most of which developed ties to Dharamsala.⁵³² The current Nyingma material expansion makes ties between

⁵³⁰ Ibid, 381.

⁵³¹ Abraham Zablocki.

⁵³² Dharamsala’s investment in Geluk institutions in Spiti is clear. The Dalai Lama makes frequent visits to the area, which is not necessarily unusual for prominent Tibetan exile teachers. However, the frequency of the Kalachakra teachings in Spiti gives some indication of the disproportionate attention paid to and investment in Geluk institutions in Spiti.

Spiti's Nyingma community and other regionally-affiliated Nyingma communities from Kham and Amdo more explicit. Recall that the two individuals responsible for introducing the Dudjom tradition to Spiti traveled to western Tibet from Golok, a region in Amdo at the far eastern extent of Tibetan cultural and religious influence.

This is not to say that the Nyingma in Spiti spurn Dharamsala, the Geluk tradition, or the person of the Dalai Lama, as was the case in some of the instances Zablocki discusses; indeed, the Dalai Lama has held large-scale teachings at the new Urgyen Sangnak Chöling Monastery in Pin. However, Spiti's Nyingma community is certainly not dependent upon those ties, financially or institutionally. Nyingma monks from Spiti who go elsewhere to train might go to Dharamsala, but they are much more likely to go to a Dudjom-affiliated monastery in Nepal or Tso Pema, or to Bir in Himachal Pradesh, an institution headed by Dzongsar Khyentse, who himself has ties to the Dudjom tradition and, through family and lineage, to Amdo and Kham.⁵³³ This international network formed along the lines of a particular tradition with strong regional ties to eastern Tibet, one that found itself at odds with Dharmasala exile politics in the 1960s through 1980s. The same network has played a large role in shaping the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, through patronage and the material products such patronage supports, including the new temple site in Gyu.

Spiti's Nyingma institutions and leaders are thus forging connections along lines determined by a particular tradition, and by a single lineage within that tradition, the Dudjom Tersar.⁵³⁴ The regional aspects of a Nyingma and Dudjom expansion addressed by Zablocki

⁵³³ As the grandson of Dudjom Rinpoche, he has familial ties to Amdo, and through his incarnation lineage, to the Dzongsar monastery in Kham. The monastic community at the Pal Ngagyur Shedrup Dojo Ling monastery (*Snga 'gyur bshad sgrub 'dod 'jo gling dgon pa*) in Sundarjal, Nepal, supports a number of monks from Spiti and Kinnaur, as does the Tso Pema Orgyen Heruka Monastery (*Mtsho pad+ma O rgyen he ru ka dgon pa*) in Rewalsar, Himachal Pradesh.

⁵³⁴ The Dudjom Tersar is much more important to the Nyingma in Spiti in terms of establishing institutional connections than the other possible contender, the Pema Lingpa tradition. Efforts to engage with other Pema Lingpa

contributed to shaping this network. However, Spiti's presence in and participation in this network also indicates that—unlike the cases Zablocki examines—participation is not articulated along the same regional Kham and Amdo-based lines that motivated the period of international Nyingma expansion by Tibetans in exile. Nor is Spiti itself establishing any regional unity across sectarian boundaries, in a way that might be comparable to the kind of regionally-based expansion Zablocki describes in the Tibetan exile context. The prominent role of the Dudjom *terma* and the sphere of activity of Dudjom Rinpoche and his students in this process of shaping a Nyingma identity and presence for Tibetans in exile are particularly relevant here, given that Dudjom Rinpoche was selected to lead a tradition that previously had no single leader, nor was unified in the manner that developed in exile. The newly developed Nyingma unity in exile under Dudjom Rinpoche, the international network of Dudjom centers he established, and his ties to Nyingma traditions in Spiti—particularly to the person of Yomed Tulku—all contributed to the Pin Valley's participation in the international Nyingma network described by Zablocki, rather than supporting forging ties with Tibetan exile institutions in India, as other non-Nyingma monasteries in Spiti have done.

In addition to these particular sectarian resonances, Spiti's Nyingma ties to Taiwan have particular political inflections brought about by Spiti's unique location on the border of India and China. Unlike the individuals and monasteries Zablocki examines, Spitians generally—including the Nyingma in Pin and Gyu—are neither Tibetans nor operating in an exile context. This shifts some of the dynamics he describes pertaining to Tibetan exile politics. In the case of Spiti, the political context and ramifications might better be understood in the context of tensions between

centers that are not also associated with the Dudjom Tersar, as in the case of Bhutan, have not led to the kind of close ties extant between Pin and other Dudjom centers.

India and China's competing claims to Himalayan border regions, rather than tensions between the PRC and KMT, or the PRC and the Tibetan government in exile.

The government's lack of infrastructure development in the village has certainly led Gyu's residents to seek it elsewhere. In this case, that elsewhere is at least in part, Taiwan and Taiwanese Buddhist patronage. Keeping in mind Zablocki's discussion of tensions within the Tibetan exile community in the 1980s, cultivating connections to Taiwan challenges the Indian state's claims to and authority over Spiti. Seeking stronger patronage ties to Taiwan prioritizes those international connections between Spiti's Buddhists and Buddhists elsewhere, over state or nation based ties. Indeed, state and national identity categories are tenuous at best for many in Spiti, who frequently refer to people from outside of Spiti as "Indians," a category that generally excludes the speaker. In conversations with individuals in Gyu, the history of territorial control and state formation was referenced at times in a way that drew further attention to both the current state's ineffective and neglectful presence in Spiti and the only recently constituted extension of state authority to the area.⁵³⁵ The topic was raised in conversations critical of the Himachal Pradesh government, in one case followed by a discussion of how conditions were much better when Spiti was part of the Punjab Province, prior to its incorporation in the new state of Himachal Pradesh in 1967.

In the case of Gyu, Taiwanese patronage is complicated by the contested border between India and China. As Zablocki points out, in the case of Tibetans in exile, Taiwanese patronage was interpreted as supporting Chinese claims to Tibet, Taiwanese ROC claims and PRC claims. If Taiwanese patronage of exile Tibetans is, as Zablocki argues, tantamount to a claim of Chinese authority over Tibet, then Taiwanese patronage of Buddhism in Spiti might be similarly

⁵³⁵ Topgye, Interview, June 15, 2014.

interpreted as a kind of territorial claim.⁵³⁶ The new temple in Gyu then, highlights the historically shallow nature of Indian claims to a region that has clearer cultural, religious, historical, and linguistic ties to Tibet, a Tibet claimed by both the PRC and ROC.

Conclusion

What exactly is at stake in this discussion of the Gyu mummy and the new temple standing next to it? The space shared by the mummy's temple and the new three-story Buddhist temple on the ridge overlooking the village mobilize a series of intersecting claims and interests. The temple materializes questions of the coextension of nation and territory, drawing attention to the historically contingent and precarious nature of international borders, lines that at the same time must be treated as natural and immutable. The temple also calls into being a particular public, one that is explicitly Nyingma, and simultaneously local and global. It serves as a node in larger international Nyingma networks formed by acts of patronage and their products. It acts to shape the past, by projecting claims to Nyingma practice in this corner of the Himalayas back in time, to a point when an anonymous person who sat practicing passed away. It acts to shape the future, by seeking to change the economic and infrastructure conditions in the village. And it reshapes space itself, shifting centers of practice within Gyu away from old centers to new, connecting that new space to other Nyingma structures and spaces in Spiti, and framing surrounding spaces, structures, and objects as distinctly Nyingma.

⁵³⁶ Abraham Zablocki, "The Taiwanese Connection: Politics, Piety, and Patronage in Transnational Tibetan Buddhism."

Chapter 5: Materializing a New Nyingma Presence in Spiti Part II: A Statue and a Hidden Place

Early in the morning on June 14th, 2014, with the sun barely showing grey on the horizon, several people climbed into a car parked in the courtyard of the Urgyen Sangnag Choling Monastery. I shared the back seat with a Bhutanese artist named Dorje⁵³⁷ and Yomed Tulku's cook, Ngawang Namgyal. Yomed Tulku's driver, Thubten, started the car, idling the engine while we shivered. Yomed Tulku joined us last, seated in the front passenger seat. We drove from the monastery to the entrance of the Pin Valley, crossing the Attargo bridge before turning south-east, following signs for Tabo Monastery. A couple of hours later, we passed Tabo and continued on to Lari, the next village along the main road through Spiti Valley. We stopped in Lari at a well-to-do appearing house, where rows of men and women stood inside a walled courtyard, white silk *katak* (*kha btags*) draped across their hands, waiting for Yomed Tulku's arrival.

Yomed Tulku was traveling to Lari because he plans to build a monumental statue of Padmasambhava in the Spiti Valley. He and the artist, who also worked on the new three-story temple in Gyu, were meeting a group of people in Lari who were overseeing the project. The future statue would be located on a nearby mountain ridge between Lari and Tabo, and, as in the case of Gyu, would be a joint venture between Yomed Tulku and the residents of Lari. A committee of men from the village, headed by the esteemed Phuntsok Rai, would oversee the

⁵³⁷ Name changed upon request.

day to day construction, with the occasional aid of Dorje and Yomed Tulku. That day's visit concerned preliminary preparations of the site, both metaphysical and mundane. After receiving Yomed Tulku at the house in Lari, everyone proceeded to the top of the ridge for a dusty and wind-blown meeting. Everyone crouched around a deceptively small scale-drawing of Padmasambhava, discussing the details. After the discussion, Yomed Tulku enacted a brief prayer, sprinkling the ground with libations from a plastic bottle. Then the group descended the ridge, haphazardly sliding on loose scree, as they made their way back to the main road and thence to lunch in one of Yomed Tulku's patron's homes Lari.

The morning's work marked but one stage in the multi-year process that would culminate in the monumental statue, while the statue itself marks but one stage in a larger process of Nyingma consolidation and expansion in the Spiti Valley. As in the case of the Gyu temple, once completed, the statue of Padmasambhava will stand as a concrete and visible instantiation of this new Nyingma presence, while also constituting a material argument against that very newness, laying claim to the landscape in the distant past.

The jeep carrying Yomed Tulku left Lari in the late afternoon, continuing east along the main road toward Gyu, to check on the three-tiered temple, much further along in its construction than the Lari statue. Along the drive, Yomed Tulku pointed out the various parcels of land belonging either to him personally or to the monastic complex in Kungri—often gifts to his predecessor from lay followers—and described his plans for future construction projects at each site. At one point he stopped the car next to an unremarkable stretch of land along the road, a parcel scattered with rocks and boulders of various sizes, a roughly level grade up to the base of the mountain slope. Yomed Tulku pointed out a few rocks that seemed largely



Figure 28: Yomed Tulku, Phuntsok Rai, the artist, and committee members discussing the statue plans.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁸ Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 29: Scale drawing of the statue of Padmasambhava.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁹ Photograph by the author, 2014.

indistinguishable from the rest. He explained that the rocks marked the boundaries of one such future project, pacing between boulders to trace the invisible foundations of a building he envisioned, giving rise to imagined concrete and rebar pillars climbing rapidly toward the sky, an echo of the as-yet invisible statue at Lari and the towering tiers of the temple in Gyu.

The drive from Kungri to Lari to Gyu followed a route of future material linkages between the center of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, the Pin Valley, and the more recently established Nyingma communities at Lari and Gyu. These linkages, those already underway as well as those planned for the future, materialize an expanding Nyingma presence in the region, largely enacted in the last decade by Yomed Tulku, and in the preceding century by his previous incarnation, Gelong Yomed Dorje, and his teacher Yeshe Palden.

The expansion is manifesting through building activities that produce structures like temples, monumental sculpture, and a new monastic complex in locations including Kungri, Lari, and Gyu. The resulting structures are distinctly Nyingma, highly visible, and strategically located in spaces significant to regional Nyingmapa. As a result, these new establishments promote local Nyingma communities, challenge a perceived Geluk hegemony in Spiti, provide greater opportunities for Nyingma practitioners, and encourage the intersecting practices of pilgrimage and tourism, which constitute an important source of economic support for Nyingma communities. As discussed in the preceding chapter, with respect to the Gyu temple, in the process of establishing these new structures in specifically significant spaces, Yomed Tulku is intentionally engaging with issues of nationality and sectarian identity in order to establish a regional Nyingma presence and network within Spiti.

Overshadowing the Land: A Monumental Statue of Padmasambhava

The village of Lari is located on the main road through Spiti, a short distance from Tabo Village and Tabo Monastery. Like most villages in the main Spiti Valley, Lari is strung out on a narrow plain constrained on one side by mountains and on the other by the Spiti River. The houses are clustered along the main road, with fields radiating out around them, peppered with struggling trees and the occasional *stūpa*. While Lari is a legibly Buddhist village, it does not have a prominent temple, monastery, or other structure that might identify it as Nyingma or connect it to the center of the Nyingma tradition in the Pin Valley. This is in spite of the village's historical connections to Yomed Dorje and Yeshe Palden, who developed ties between Lari and Pin in the first half of the twentieth century, and its current connections to Yomed Tulku.

The statue of Padmasambhava at Lari conveys a distinctly Nyingma sectarian affiliation. That affiliation derives in part from the statue's location, which alludes to locally significant spaces connected to the important regional Nyingma figure of Yomed Dorje, as well as the statue's mobilization of concepts central to the Nyingma tradition. The future statue's design and location are engineered to be highly visible, amplifying this Nyingma message, while also providing a new visible link between Lari and the Pin Valley. The statue promotes this regional Nyingma presence in opposition to a perceived Geluk hegemony in Spiti. Like the Gyu temple, it seeks to draw some of the tourist and pilgrim traffic to Spiti, the majority of which is focused on Tabo, and redirect it to the new statue, in so doing, drawing attention to the disproportionate resources devoted to the famed Geluk monastic complex at Tabo, be they economic, infrastructure, educational, or scholarly. The planned statue thus bolsters the status and spread of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti, highlighting Lari's burgeoning Nyingma community and the larger networks of Nyingma expansion it both constitutes and enables.



Figure 30: Preparing the site of the future statue of Padmasambhava. Tabo in the background.⁵⁴⁰

Building New Structures: The Statue

As of June 1014, efforts were underway to erect the new monumental statue. About a month after Yomed Tulku met with the committee overseeing the statue's construction, he returned with a dozen or so monks to perform a consecration ceremony, preparing the ground to house and support Padmasambhava.⁵⁴¹ The committee planned to break ground for the new structure later that summer. Plans for the monumental statue of Padmasambhava are ambitious. The completed

⁵⁴⁰ Photograph by the author, 2014.

⁵⁴¹ Bendor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*.

statue will be fifty-four feet high, from the bottom of the base to the top of Padmasambhava's hat. The figure itself will make up more than half of the total height, at just over thirty-six feet, with the remaining seventeen feet comprising the base. The base will allow for an interior room beneath the statue that will eventually be a small temple. The entire structure will be built with cement over an iron rebar frame, a modern adaptation of similar armature construction methods used for Buddhist statues in the western Himalayas.⁵⁴² In addition to the statue, a new road will lead from the main road to the top of the mountain ridge, enabling access to the site during construction and following its completion. Dorje, the sculptor from Bhutan, is overseeing the design and construction of the statue, while villagers from Lari and hired workers from outside of Spiti will perform the actual labor of building the statue. Once complete, the exterior of the statue will also be painted.⁵⁴³

The statue of Padmasambhava will take several years to complete but drafted plans show it will follow a standard iconography. The diagram shows Padmasambhava seated with his legs crossed, the right foot in front so that the sole faces outward. He wears robes that are draped over his shoulders and belted at the waist, as well as the lotus hat uniquely associated with him, topped with a *dorje* (*rdo rje*) or *vajra* and feather. His right hand extends over the right knee and holds a *vajra*, while the left rests in his lap, bearing a skull cup. These objects, the *vajra* or “thunderbolt” and the skull cup or *thöpa* (*thod pa, kapāla*), are Padmasambhava's standard

⁵⁴² Deborah E Klimburg-Salter and Christian Luczanits, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom : Early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya* (Milano; New York: Skira Thames and Hudson Inc., 1997) 191, 202. Luczanits, *Buddhist Sculpture in Clay*, xiv, 353. Reinforced concrete is still a fairly new material in Spiti. As discussed with respect to the Gyu temple, it enables new kinds of construction on a scale previously unfeasible in the area, of which monumental sculpture is one prominent example. While there is a long history of monumental Buddhist sculpture in the Western Himalayas, those constructed of concrete mark a material departure. Other examples include giant buddhas and bodhisattvas carved into rock faces and paper mache or clay over a wooden core.

⁵⁴³ A team of artists from the Yolmo region of Nepal have worked on other recent Nyingma projects in Spiti, including the temple in Gyu and the new monastery in Pin. It is likely Yomed Tulku will ask them to paint the statue as well.

implements and fairly ubiquitous ritual objects in Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism.

Representations of Padmasambhava can have some variations in attire, hand position, and attributes, but are overall quite similar.

The Monumental Statue of Padmasambhava at Tso Pema

To gain a sense of what the Lari statue might look like once completed, one might look to the town of Rewalsar, also in the state of Himachal Pradesh, which is also home to a monumental statue of Padmasambhava. The statue in Rewalsar, generally called Tso Pema by Tibetan-speaking Buddhists, provides a useful point of comparison for the future statue in Spiti.⁵⁴⁴ This statue, built under the supervision of Wangdor Rinpoche (b. 1928), is estimated to be over a hundred feet high, including the base.⁵⁴⁵ It was completed in 2012 and took about ten years to build.

In addition to similarities in scale and design, the extant statue of Padmasambhava at Tso Pema serves as an important point of connection for Nyingmapa in Spiti, who have long-standing ties to the village. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pilgrims from Spiti frequently traveled to Tso Pema during the winter, typically once the harvest in Spiti

⁵⁴⁴ Rewalsar is a small town in the lower ranges of the Himalayas, located a short distance from the city of Mandi, which is a major hub in the state. The town of Rewalsar is also the site of a small lake that is an important pilgrimage site for Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs. Buddhists generally refer to both the town and the lake as Tso Pema (Mtsho pad+ma), or lotus lake. In the eighteenth-century, Buddhist pilgrims began to refer to Rewalsar as Tso Pema, identifying it as a lake described in Padmasambhava's life story. Until the mid-twentieth-century, the only Buddhist structure at the lake was a small temple maintained by local Buddhists. However, following the movement of Tibetans into exile in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, and changes in the economic status and travel capabilities of regional Buddhists, Tso Pema was rapidly built up. Tso Pema today supports several Buddhist monasteries, including one founded by Yomed Tulku's teacher, Dudjom Rinpoche, and draws a large number of local and international Buddhist pilgrims. One of the Tibetans in exile responsible for Tso Pema's recent growth is Wangdor Rinpoche, who settled there in the nineteen-sixties.

⁵⁴⁵ The lake at Rewalsar became a Buddhist pilgrimage destination through an assumed connection between the lake and a lake in the life story of Padmasambhava. As Toni Huber shows, this fairly recent association has no historical foundation. The town also has ties to Yomed Tulku's primary teacher, Dudjom Rinpoche, who spent a great deal of time there. Nyingma monks and nuns from Pin often spend their winter retreat at Tso Pema. Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn*.

had ended. They journeyed on foot over the course of a few weeks and only stayed at Tso Pema for a few days before beginning the return voyage.⁵⁴⁶ This pilgrimage practice persists today, although now pilgrims travel by jeep or bus from the Pin Valley to Tso Pema from the late fall to early winter and stay there until the road to Spiti reopens in the spring. Once the Lari statue is completed, pilgrims traveling from Spiti to Tso Pema will do so under the watchful gaze of Padmasambhava at either end of the journey.

The mountain ridge to the west of Lari was selected for the statue in part because of the location's high degree of visibility.⁵⁴⁷ The ridge itself is separated from Lari by a gorge; on one side sheer rock drops off steeply into the gorge, while the other side facing the Spiti river has a shallower slope, covered in scree, scattered boulders, and sparse vegetation. The bottom of the ridge flattens out onto a level plain where the Spiti River curves inward and the main highway curves outward along the base of the ridge. This protrusion is visible from aerial maps. Because the ridge projects outward onto the plain right where the river curves, it is visible from both east and west, particularly for vehicles traveling on the road. Since the highway is the main route through Spiti, this location means that most travelers to the region will have a clear and prolonged view of the future statue.

The scale and design of the statue contribute to the high degree of visibility afforded by the ridge. At fifty-four feet in height, the statue will tower over the surrounding landscape, dwarfing nearby structures. The monastic complexes of Kee and Drangkar in Spiti are similarly perched on mountain spurs high above the main Spiti Valley, with commanding views of the river in both directions. These two sites are quite striking and correspondingly dominate visual

⁵⁴⁶ Ewi, Interview; Ngodrup Dorje and Rinzen Drolma, Interview.

⁵⁴⁷ This was apparently Yomed Tulku's second choice for the statue's location. His request to build the statue in Tabo was rejected.

representations of the Spiti region.⁵⁴⁸ The finished statue of Padmasambhava might come to occupy a similar position in the visual landscape of the Spiti Valley.

Once painted, the statue's design will also contribute to its visibility. The statue will likely be painted in a similar manner to other recent statues Yomed Tulku has commissioned in the region, as well as the Gyu temple's exterior, which favor bright bold colors and the ample use of gold paint.⁵⁴⁹ These surface decorations will make it stand out all the more from the muted mountain landscape. Although these observations about the statue's appearance are based on plans for the structure, the comparable statue of Padmasambhava at Tso Pema and monumental statues of the Buddha in Langza and Rangrik in Spiti provide a sense of how the finished statue of Padmasambhava will draw the eye and dominate the surrounding landscape.⁵⁵⁰

Distinctly Nyingma: Space, Place, and the Statue

In addition to promoting the structure's prominence and visibility, the ridge location is an important component in framing the statue of Padmasambhava as distinctly Nyingma, by alluding to his relationship to hidden lands or *beyul* (*sbas yul*).⁵⁵¹ The Lari statue draws upon an aspect of Padmasambhava's storied activities that is particularly tied to the landscape of the

⁵⁴⁸ From the sketches and engravings of nineteenth-century European travelers to the Instagram mobile phone photos of contemporary tourists, Drangkhar and Kee are perhaps the most frequently reproduced landscape images of Spiti, likely competing for overall primacy only with figural images of masked whirling *cham* dancers and the famed Buchen perched atop swords.

⁵⁴⁹ For example, the statues in the new temples in the Pin Valley and the new temple in Gyu are all brightly painted with gold accents. Yomed Tulku has described his artistic vision on several occasions, frequently noting how bright, bold, and conspicuous the objects or statues in question should be.

⁵⁵⁰ One could certainly argue that the statue will be painted in typical colors and tones, not ones specially selected for visibility. However, even standard iconographic colors will stand out against the neutral gray/brown landscape of the Spiti Valley. It is also worth noting that Yomed Tulku repeatedly emphasizes the use of gold paint when describing this and other new structures.

⁵⁵¹ There is a great degree of overlap between Nyingma and Kagyu traditions in this respect, and the following discussion could easily refer to the Kagyu as well. However, as there are no established Kagyu institutions and very few Kagyu practitioners in the Spiti region, Padmasambhava's role in this discussion is applicable primarily to the Nyingma.

Himalayas, namely *beyul* or “hidden lands.” *Beyul* are places both identified and hidden by Padmasambhava. These hidden lands are described as paradises that offer a refuge for Buddhists, particularly in periods marked by the decline of or threats to the Buddhist teachings.⁵⁵² *Beyul* are typically hidden until the conditions for their discovery should come to pass. In most cases, those conditions are said to be predicted by Padmasambhava, as are the individuals who will eventually discover them.

Such hidden lands are in some ways comparable to Buddhist paradises and “pure lands,” including Padmasambhava’s own pure land, the Copper Colored Mountain. However, unlike the pure lands, *beyul* are located in *this* world, specifically in the mountainous terrain of the Himalayas. They are similar to *terma* in that they are accessible to those predicted or predisposed to discover them, and the discovery of *terma* and *beyul* often go hand in hand. Hidden lands also mark an area as part of the larger arena of Padmasambhava’s activities, placing it within a distinctly Buddhist landscape.⁵⁵³

The statue of Padmasambhava at Lari will mark one such hidden land in the Spiti Valley. The mountain ridge on the other side of the Spiti River, opposite both the village of Lari and the future statue, is an uninhabited snowy mountainous region. This area centers around the Manirang Peak and is higher in elevation than much of the surrounding landscape. The area around the peak separates Lari and the lower half of the Spiti Valley from the Pin Valley to the north and the Kinnaur region to the south. It is this area that is said to contain a hidden land, one

⁵⁵² Bogin, “Locating the Copper-Colored Mountain.” Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land*.

⁵⁵³ As Toni Huber notes, Padmasambhava is a “figure of singular importance...In terms of the development of a Tibetan sacred geography and pilgrimage culture, the reputed life and deeds of Padmasambhava during his claimed late eighth-century visit to Tibet have served as one of the principal bases of traditional authority for claiming a place to be a religious site in the Tibetan Buddhist world.” Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage & the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*, Buddhism and Modernity, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 239.

reportedly identified by Yomed Dorje, the previous incarnation of Yomed Tulku.⁵⁵⁴ According to Phuntsok Rai, although Yomed Dorje said there was a *beyul* across the Spiti River from Lari Village, he did not actually travel there; he did not open the hidden land.⁵⁵⁵ In Meme Sonam's account, Yomed Dorje *saw* it, but similarly did not go there. The paradisiacal space is there but still closed. It will remain hidden and inaccessible until the right time and the right person are able to reveal it.

Although it remains "closed," identifying a hidden land is one way of marking Spiti as a Buddhist place, of placing it "on the map" of Himalayan Buddhism. In this case, it is also a map specifically oriented around the progenitor and central figure of the Nyingma tradition, Padmasambhava himself, and more locally, one of the central figures of the Nyingma tradition in Spiti's recent history, Yomed Dorje. The hidden land locates Spiti within the purview of Padmasambhava's activities and prophecies, imbuing not only the place but also what *takes place* with a particular significance. Although hidden lands are eminently local phenomena, many become well known far outside their immediate locations, possibly drawing Buddhists from afar to the region to search for an entrance. Drawing such attention to Spiti within wider Himalayan Buddhist contexts might similarly draw such seekers.

However, such significance is difficult to convey; this important place in Spiti, this hidden land, is still just that, *hidden*. It is a place that is difficult to see or materially mark. It can be referred to but not necessarily *entered*, or at least, not entered until the appropriate time, person, and conditions coalesce. The future statue will thus constitute a visible reference to what is still invisible. Once the statue is complete, Padmasambhava will sit on a throne across from the

⁵⁵⁴ According to Meme Sonam, Yomed Dorje told two companions he saw *dewachen* (*bde ba can*), which is the name of a paradise associated with Amitābha, "*rogs po gnyis la bde ba can mthong 'dug pa zer gsung*." However, other individuals I interviewed did not identify the paradise or hidden land as *dewachen* or associated with Amitābha. Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview; Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai.

⁵⁵⁵ Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai.

mountains where Yomed Dorje saw a *beyul*, oriented such that Padmasambhava will always be gazing out at the hidden land, seeing a place that cannot yet be seen.

Given the tumultuous political climate that marked much of Yomed Dorje's life, it is not surprising that the need for a refuge should arise, for both Buddhism as a whole and Spiti's Buddhists in particular. Yomed Dorje died in 1960, two years before the first Sino-Indian War, a border dispute fought over who controlled Himalayan territories on the frontier between India and China. He lived through the Second World War, Indian Independence, and Partition; while there is little documentation of the impact these major events had locally in Spiti, one cannot imagine a situation in which this region, isolated enclave though it may have been, did not feel the reverberations of these momentous and violent events. A more proximate and threatening development for Spiti was the Chinese occupation of Tibet, generally impacting the eastern regions of the Tibetan Plateau, quite far from Spiti, before steadily marching toward Lhasa and then western Tibet, with which Spiti shared a border and had close ties. It is little wonder then, that a local Buddhist teacher living in Spiti in the 1950s might feel like the region and Buddhism faced an imminent crisis. *Beyul* provide a promise of haven in such times of crisis.

The Statue as a Marker of Invisible and Inaccessible Spaces

The future statue of Padmasambhava will refer to a second "invisible" space relevant to Nyingmapa in Spiti. The small river and gorge separating the ridge from Lari extends away from the main road back into the mountains. Farther up inside the gorge along a footpath is a small retreat house that was used by Yomed Tulku's predecessor Yomed Dorje.⁵⁵⁶ Yomed Dorje's

⁵⁵⁶ Yomed Tulku estimated it to be 3km back from the juncture with the Spiti River. Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014.



Figure 31: Yomed Tulku and the artist looking over the statue site.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷ Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 32: Valley where Yomed Dorje built a retreat house and passed away in 1960. View from the statue of Padmasambhava.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁸ Photograph by the author, 2014.

connection to that place is well known and was cited by both Phuntsok Rai and Yomed Tulku as one of the reasons for selecting the ridge as the site for the new statue.⁵⁵⁹ Indeed, Yomed Dorje died there while conducting one such retreat.⁵⁶⁰ That Yomed Dorje conducted a retreat, and passed away, near the statue's location contributes to the efficacy and importance of that place for Nyingmapa in Spiti, pilgrims and practitioners alike. Yomed Tulku is building new retreat houses to support both the Pema Lingpa *terma* and Dudjom *tersar* practices in the Pin Valley and at the site of Yomed Dorje's former retreat house.

While conducting retreats and revering retreat locations are certainly not activities specific to Nyingma traditions, the planned statue at the head of the gorge provides a visible and material reference to the area's Nyingma connections. Accounts of Lari's relationship to the Nyingma tradition highlight connections to events in Yomed Dorje's life, including his practice at the retreat house in the gorge.⁵⁶¹ The retreat house is an anchor for these narratives and a site for producing a specifically Nyingma landscape. However, the retreat house itself is not easily accessible or "publicly" visible.⁵⁶² Nor should it be, since retreat locations are meant to be isolated or removed from the every day and more populated areas.⁵⁶³ The statue of

⁵⁵⁹ When Phuntsok Rai recounted Yomed Dorje's life he built the narrative around an ongoing series of retreats, describing the difficulty of such practices as well as the particular places where he stayed. This is quite typical for *namthar* or biographies of Buddhist figures, and is not unique to Yomed Dorje. However, it does indicate the intersection of place and time in how people in Spiti make meaning from Buddhist lives.

⁵⁶⁰ Meme Sonam described in great detail how Yomed Dorje's body was carried down to Lari Village, where it produced a pleasant odor when cremated. Meme Sonam Phuntsok, Interview.

⁵⁶¹ Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai. Yomed Tulku, Informal conversation, interview by Joseph Leach, June 14, 2014.

⁵⁶² There are no signposts, plaques, or other informational structures that might indicate the building's existence. Most important structures and sites in Spiti have some sort of descriptive sign often erected by the state tourism board, as is the case with the Gyu mummy. Without these signs, most tourists, pilgrims, or other visitors to Spiti would have a difficult time hearing about or locating particular places that are not immediately visible from the main road. Signs for turnoffs to Drangkhar, Lhalung, Gyu, and even the Pin Valley are clear examples.

⁵⁶³ According to Yomed Tulku, an elderly practitioner from Lari Village has long been responsible for maintaining the retreat location and supporting those who utilize it. Phuntsok Rai conveyed the importance of this kind of community support, when recounting the life of Yomed Dorje's teacher, Yeshe Palden. While conducting his own three-year retreat in a cave in Ngari, the villagers forgot about him. Yeshe Palden nearly starved before he was discovered. Yomed Tulku, Informal conversation. Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai.

Padmasambhava and the temple in the statue's base may serve as a substitute or intermediary point between Spiti's Nyingma community and those practicing in the more removed retreat location. The statue also attests to the future reinforcement of ties between the community of patrons and practitioners in Lari and the retreat house farther up the mountain gorge. Along with the new monumental statue, Yomed Tulku plans to construct a new retreat center at the existing location near Lari. Once the statue and retreat center are complete, Lari will constitute a new hub of Nyingma practice in Spiti.⁵⁶⁴

Like the retreat house hidden from the view of the main Spiti Valley, Lari's new Nyingma affiliation is also not publicly or materially evident. In this sense, the new statue at the head of the gorge will visually and publicly mark the space as Nyingma in a way that the current retreat house—or the planned expanded retreat center—do not. By evoking Yomed Dorje's connections to the retreat location and the hidden land, the statue will attest to a Nyingma history and presence that is already part of local knowledge in Lari, while also making that knowledge substantive and concrete. Thus, once complete, the statue of Padmasambhava will visibly refer to the less visible or invisible spaces of the retreat house and *beyul*, materially attesting to the recently established Nyingma presence at Lari in the Spiti Valley.

Connecting Space and Time: *Beyul* as Tools for Local Legitimation

While the planned statue functions as an anchor in *place*—constituting a claim to the landscape as distinctly Nyingma—it also makes claims about *time* as it relates to Buddhism's presence in

⁵⁶⁴ One retreat house in Kungri is nearly completed. It is located above the main monastery complex but below Yomed Tulku's residence. Although the building's location is not particularly isolated, the design of the structure creates some isolation. The retreat house consists of individual rooms facing an interior courtyard. The rooms do not have any exterior windows, opening only to the courtyard, so the occupants should remain relatively undistracted by passersby. However, the steep slope of the mountain will afford anyone at the residence with a clear view into the enclosed courtyard of the retreat building below, providing a panopticon-style perspective of the retreat cells to Yomed Tulku.

Spiti. Hidden lands like the one across the river from Lari are said to have been identified by Padmasambhava during the eighth century. Locating a hidden land in Spiti simultaneously locates Spiti in Padmasambhava's eighth-century context. If there is a *beyul* in Spiti, then Padmasambhava predicted a future time when Spiti would provide a refuge for Buddhism. The hidden land frames contemporary events as the outcome of Padmasambhava's prophecies. In this sense, the efforts of Yomed Dorje and Yomed Tulku to establish and expand the Nyingma tradition in Spiti is not the introduction of something new; rather, it reveals something that was already there. At the same time as the statue as testament to the *beyul* makes claims about Spiti's past, it also projects claims about Spiti's Buddhist status into the future. As Phuntsok Rai pointed out, Yomed Dorje said there was a hidden land but he did not open it. Deferring the process of opening and entering the hidden land ensures that the area around Lari will be the eventual site for a future revelation. Thus, the hidden land simultaneously legitimates the Buddhist past and authorizes a Buddhist future.

Locating a hidden land can serve as an important source of legitimation and authority for the person who discovers it as well as for the place where it is discovered. As Janet Gyatso and others have argued with respect to *terma*, *tertöns* or treasure discoverers are themselves legitimated by the process of discovery, "For Padmasambhava to have uttered a prophecy about someone is the fundamental sign that this person was appointed to reveal a Treasure... prophecy is what legitimizes the discoverer."⁵⁶⁵ Those who discover hidden lands are similarly legitimated by the act of discovery. Yomed Dorje's claim that a hidden land exists across from Lari simultaneously

⁵⁶⁵ Janet Gyatso, 'Jigs-med-gling-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje, and 'Jigs-med-gling-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary: A Translation and Study of Jigme Lingpa's Dancing Moon in the Water and Dākki's Grand Secret-Talk* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 165; Gyatso, "Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The GTer Ma Literature"; Andreas Doctor, *Tibetan Treasure Literature: Revelation, Tradition, and Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2005); Mullard, *Opening the Hidden Land*.

casts himself as a figure prophesied by Padmasambhava and makes a claim about his own level of realization as adequate to recognizing the hidden land, and participating in part in the realization of that prophecy. In addition to legitimating the person who discovers them, *terma* also impact the location where they are discovered; “Treasures confer benefits upon their place of origin and the local residents: Treasures are believed to prevent disease, famine, and war in the locale where they are discovered.”⁵⁶⁶ Similarly, locating a hidden land confers future prosperity on the place that is or contains it. Building a statue in a location that evokes Yomed Dorje’s life, practice, and recognition of a hidden land, correspondingly promotes Lari’s own status and prosperity.

Thus, the statue of Padmasambhava at Lari constitutes an important intersection of spatial and temporal claims in the service of a particularly Nyingma project. It projects claims to Buddhist legitimacy and a Nyingma presence backwards to the eighth century when Padmasambhava sealed the hidden lands. It simultaneously projects such claims forward by deferring the process of opening the hidden land. It lends legitimacy to two people, to Yomed Dorje as the figure recognized as fostering a Nyingma community in Lari, and to Yomed Tulku himself, as Yomed Dorje’s subsequent incarnation. It extends that legitimacy to the village of Lari and the Nyingmapa who reside there, as well as to the Buddhist structures—present and future—that are maintained by that community: the monumental statue near Lari and the retreat house, both the current site and plans for future expansion at the site.

⁵⁶⁶ “To begin with, the Treasures are drawn from none other than the Tibetan landscape (or mind, as in the Mental Treasures) itself. In turn, the Treasures confer benefits upon their place of origin and the local residents: Treasures are believed to prevent disease, famine, and war in the locale where they are discovered. In addition, the content of a Treasure text is said to have been formulated specifically to benefit the Tibetans as a particular moment in their history. The Treasure prophecies often describe the wars and political upheavals of such moments, their traumas somehow to be alleviated by the new religious practices introduced by the Treasure scripture. On a grander scale, the entire narrative of the origin of the Treasure tradition is intimately tied to the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet during the Yarlung dynasty...” Gyatso, ’Jigs-med-gling-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje, and ’Jigs-med-gling-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje, *Apparitions of the Self*, 151.

Thus the proposed statue will accomplish several different aims. The statue's scale and prominent location on a projecting mountain ridge will ensure a high degree of visibility from the main thoroughfare through Spiti Valley. The subject of the statue, namely Padmasambhava, and the specific location chosen for the statue—near Lari Village, across from an identified hidden land, and at the head of a gorge where previous figures conducted their retreats—work together to convey a distinctly Nyingma context and history for the statue. This Nyingma context revolves in particular around the life of Yomed Tulku's predecessor, Yomed Dorje. The subject, location, and orientation of the statue bolster Yomed Dorje's legitimacy as an accomplished practitioner, which in turn promotes Yomed Tulku's own legitimacy and authority as Yomed Dorje's successor. Lastly, the statue frames Lari and the surrounding area as a Buddhist land previously visited and made sacred by Padmasambhava, established as a location for the future revelation of his prophecies. These aspects of the new structure all serve to support Yomed Tulku's efforts to establish a local Nyingma network in Spiti.

Fostering a Local Nyingma Community

The future statue of Padmasambhava promotes the local Nyingma community in Lari and fosters a regional Nyingma connection by strengthening ties between Lari and the Pin Valley. The statue promotes the local Nyingma community in Lari by creating a new space for Buddhist practice. The statue is close enough to Lari for daily circumambulation or offerings inside the temple-base, increasing opportunities for generating merit. Yomed Tulku will likely assign monks from the monastery in Pin to take care of the new temple and serve the needs of visitors, increasing the Lari community's access to the monastic community. Whereas previously, one might travel from

Lari to the monastic complex in the Pin Valley to seek out a Nyingma temple, now one needs only cross the gorge from Lari to the statue's location.

The new statue fosters this growing regional Nyingma network by strengthening ties between Lari and the Nyingma community in the Pin Valley. The statue is a joint project of Yomed Tulku and the village of Lari, who are working together to realize the monument. The as yet unfinished structure has already brought Yomed Tulku and monks from the Pin Valley to the Lari region on multiple occasions. On these statue-related visits, Yomed Tulku and the Pin monks often perform Buddhist rituals like the consecration ceremony. These rituals contribute to the merit-producing potential of place, adding layers to the location's significance. The new statue also memorializes a shared history for Nyingma in Spiti. It alludes to Yomed Dorje's life and deeds. Yomed Dorje's teacher, Yeshe Palden was from Gyu. Phutsok Rai, one of the main individuals overseeing the project from Lari, is Yeshe Palden's nephew. Thus, Yomed Tulku is building a statue marking a location significant to his predecessor, in conjunction with his predecessor's teacher's relatives. This complex nexus of familial, incarnation, and teacher-student connections are a fairly typical feature of Buddhism in the Himalayas, but are nonetheless important means for understanding the relationships between Buddhists, practices, and place.

Connecting Tourism and Pilgrimage

In addition to the Nyingma community in Spiti's engagement with the site, the monumental statue of Padmasambhava provides an important new focal point for visitors to Spiti—largely tourists and pilgrims. Building a focal point for visitors to Spiti can provide real benefits for Lari's local Buddhist community. Travellers might stop to buy a cold drink or cup of tea while

seeing the statue or asking for directions. As discussed in the preceding chapter, these kinds of interactions provide crucial economic support in a region that relies heavily on tourist revenue. This is particularly important for a village like Lari; since it is adjacent to Tabo village, which serves as a hub for travelers, few are likely to stop at Lari when their destination is just down the road. Pilgrims visiting the site will likely engage in practices like making offerings and donations to the statue and the temple below it. Such donations produce merit not only for the donor but also for the caretakers and community surrounding the statue.

The statue also occupies an important position in the context of broader Nyingma-Geluk dynamics in Spiti, particularly as a challenge to a perceived Geluk hegemony in Spiti. The monumental statue of Padmasambhava near Lari will be an identifiably Nyingma structure in a part of Spiti typically associated with the Geluk tradition. Although Padmasambhava is a widely revered figure, this particular statue will carry distinctly Nyingma overtones and significance, part to its location and the Nyingmapa community that will build and maintain it. This location is also a key component in the challenge the statue poses to Geluk authority. The statue asserts Lari's recent Nyingma association, which displaced its prior Geluk affiliation, and places Padmasambhava in an elevated position of prominence with respect to Tabo Monastery. It also elevates the statue over a planned center for Buddhist studies affiliated with Tabo, located on the plain below the statue.⁵⁶⁷ Although the site is in its early stages of planning, any future center for Buddhist studies there will take place under Padmasambhava's gaze.⁵⁶⁸

The statue is located between Lari Village and Tabo Village, but is significantly closer to Lari than to Tabo. The sustained high level of interest in Tabo, particularly since the 1980's, has

⁵⁶⁷ "1,000-Year-Old Tabo Monastery to Have Buddhist Studies Center," *The Hindu*, September 4, 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/1000yearold-tabo-monastery-to-have-buddhist-studies-centre/article6377359.ece>; Dorje, Interview, June 13, 2014.

⁵⁶⁸ The planned title of the institute appears to be the Indian Institute of Bodh Darshan. "1,000-Year-Old Tabo Monastery to Have Buddhist Studies Center."

had a significant impact on both the monastery and the surrounding village, one disproportionate to that experienced by other villages and monasteries in Spiti. Tabo is one of the most developed places in Spiti in terms of infrastructure and amenities. The number of guest houses, tourist shops, internet cafes, banks, and restaurants is on par with Kaza, the regional capital. Tabo is a key stopping point for important figures who travel to Spiti, including politicians and eminent Buddhist teachers.⁵⁶⁹ It also hosts important Buddhist events like the Kalachakra initiation, which was held twice at Tabo, in August 1983 and in June 1996, and drew an estimated 10,000 and 20,000 people respectively.⁵⁷⁰

While Tabo is certainly not the only site in Spiti to garner attention, the interest in and support of Tabo has drawn the ire of some within Spiti's Nyingma communities. This includes individuals involved in new Nyingma construction projects, who view the Nyingma in Spiti as at a disadvantage compared to the Geluk tradition as a whole and Tabo Monastery in particular.⁵⁷¹ As discussed in Chapter 4, residents of Gyu in particular cite poor infrastructure and a lack of government attention as limiting tourist interest in Gyu. Yomed Tulku sees the Pin Valley region, and the Nyingma in Spiti overall, as at a disadvantage with respect to the main Spiti Valley and Geluk institutions in Spiti. At times, he characterizes the Pin Valley as a relative underdog, neglected by tourists, scholars, and government institutions, underfunded compared to other monasteries, well off the main route through Spiti, and only accessible from a frequently

⁵⁶⁹ This certainly includes Buddhist teachers who are not Geluk.

⁵⁷⁰ The Dalai Lama also performed a Kalachakra initiation at the Geluk monastery of Kee in 2000.

⁵⁷¹ Yomed Tulku, Interview, June 14, 2014; Rai, Interview with Phuntsok Rai.



Figure 33: View of the artist looking out over the future Buddhist studies institute below the statue site.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² Photograph by the author, 2014.



Figure 34: Site of the future statue of Padmasambhava as seen from Tabo Village.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ Photograph by the author, 2014.

washed out road that the government cannot seem to keep in a state of functional repair.⁵⁷⁴

It is in this wider context that the planned statue of Padmasambhava at Lari presents a challenge to a perceived Geluk hegemony in Spiti while bolstering an increasingly visible Nyingma presence. While the statue's elevated location on the ridge promotes its visibility, it also raises the statue above the surrounding landscape, including Tabo Monastery and the future Tabo-affiliated Buddhist Institution. As is the case with the temple in Gyu, raising an object or person above one's self can convey respect, quite literally indicating an elevated status. Spaces, bodies, structures, objects, all are evaluated by and instilled with value through vertical hierarchy. Elevating the statue of Padmasambhava over the surrounding landscape is thus a particularly meaningful act, a form of marking value, and of locating the statue within a Buddhist spatial hierarchy. In this case, Padmasambhava is literally elevated above all else, occupying the highest position in the surrounding landscape. The statue's position on the ridge ensures this material testament will be clearly visible from both Lari and Tabo, although perhaps evoking a slightly different nuance in either case. The figure of Padmasambhava near Lari invites a Nyingma reading because of its location. Just as the three-tiered temple's location makes sectarian claims by literally and figuratively elevating the Nyingma above the older, formerly Gelug temple in Gyu, the statue's claim to value through elevation might also be read as elevating the Nyingma, or more specifically, elevating the Nyingma over Tabo monastery.⁵⁷⁵ In fact, Yomed Tulku described his goals for the statue as "spreading Guru Rinpoche" in Spiti.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ One example of this dynamic is the Old Temple in Kungri. The temple's interior is covered with mural paintings that likely date to the seventeenth-century. However, the paintings are quite difficult to see under a dark layer of smoke damage. Yomed Tulku referenced this temple and the quality of the mural paintings as a comparison to Tabo and its mural paintings. He remarked that tourists flock to Tabo but do not come to Kungri to see Buddhist murals.

⁵⁷⁵ This is not to say that the statue's patrons would themselves articulate such a claim, but to point to the ways in which their statements and the statue might support this reading.

⁵⁷⁶ Reading "Guru Rinpoche" as a code for Nyingma in this context is supported by comments Yomed Tulku made later the same day, juxtaposing "Geluk" and "Guru Rinpoche." As we were driving from Lari to Gyu, he pointed out

Conclusion

To conclude, the future statue of Padmasambhava will be an elevated and highly visible structure. Its location and visibility on the ridge constitute a visibly Nyingma presence near Lari village, where Yomed Tulku's previous incarnation, Yomed Dorje established a Nyingma affiliation in the first half of the twentieth century. The statue is an important materialization of a growing Nyingma presence in a formerly Geluk region of Spiti, one that engages with a Buddhist hierarchy of space to elevate the statue, and correspondingly the statue's Nyingma benefactors and supporting community, over Tabo Monastery.

The new spaces at Lari, the monumental statue, the temple housed in the statue's base, and the retreat center, all materialize a growing Nyingma presence in Spiti. Along with the new temple in Gyu, these two locations, Lari and Gyu, are local nodes in an expanding Nyingma network materialized through acts of patronage and production. Like the temple in Gyu, the statue at Lari engages with the past and aims to shape the future. It draws upon events in the life of a locally significant figure, Yomed Dorje, and roots those events in place. In so doing, it highlights Lari's recent Nyingma past, and frames the new structures and surrounding spaces as distinctly Nyingma.

all the places where he owned land and planned to build structures in the future. He said that all of Spiti was Geluk but he would spread Guru Rinpoche. Conversation with Yomed Tulku, 14 June 2014.

Conclusion

The Spiti landscape has much in common with that of its neighbor, my homeland, Tibet. With a shared religious and cultural background the people of these regions until quite recently have followed a similar, unhurried way of life. Over the last twenty years I have visited Spiti several times and have often been struck by the lingering charm of a region that, although slowly changing with the arrival of development, has remained much the same for hundreds of years.

- The Fourteenth Dalai Lama⁵⁷⁷

One thousand years ago, the western Himalayan region was the focus of a golden epoch of Indo-Tibetan collaboration in propagating Buddhist culture.” “The survival of monasteries dating from this era has assumed a special importance in light of the destruction that has taken place in Chinese-occupied Tibet. They remain a direct link to the wonderful civilization that arose and flourished a thousand years ago in this remote region of the Himalayas.

- The Fourteenth Dalai Lama⁵⁷⁸

At its core, this dissertation examines the history of a particular Buddhist sect in a remote region of the western Himalayas. As the title indicates, it is a history of the Nyingma sect in the Pin Valley, Spiti. From the outset, this project requires certain justifications, among them why Spiti, why Pin, and why the Nyingma. Answering these questions gets at the heart of what I find so compelling about Spiti and its unique position in Buddhist studies, Tibetan studies, and Himalayan studies.

It is not particularly surprising that I first encountered Spiti through the field of Tibetan art history. At the time, scholarship on Spiti was dominated by one monument, Tabo Monastery. And it was to see Tabo that I first traveled to Spiti in 2009. Those encounters—in the classroom

⁵⁷⁷ Dalai Lama, “Foreword,” in *Spiti: Through Legend and Lore* (New Delhi: Mosaic Books, 2006), vii.

⁵⁷⁸ Dalai Lama, “Preface,” in *The Forgotten Gods of Tibet: Early Buddhist Art in the Western Himalayas*, by Peter van Ham and Aglaja Stirn (Paris: Mengès, 1997).

and in the dusty courtyard of Tabo—were responsible for the sustained interest I have had in this region over the past decade. Tabo was founded in the tenth century by scions of the Guge Kingdom, whose rulers forged a new relationship between religion and the law. That era is heralded in traditional Tibetan historiography, and in scholarly studies, as a golden era of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama describes that time and Tabo in the preface to a book called *The Forgotten Gods of Tibet* by Peter Ham.⁵⁷⁹ The title and preface raise several key themes at the heart of the dissertation. If Tabo marks the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet, then where exactly is Spiti? Is it in India or in Tibet? Neither? Both? Are the Himalayas their own region or a frontier between two entities? If Spiti is the realm of *The Forgotten Gods of Tibet*, who forgot them? Certainly not the people who live there. What does it mean for a hallmark of Tibetan history and culture to be located not in Tibet, but in India, and to be seemingly evacuated from Tibet itself, as Ham's title implies?

At the core of this project is the relationship between time, place, and tradition. In works like Ham's, Spiti is chronologically and geographically displaced. It is relegated to a past lost and as a place lost, made doubly remote, as a remnant of Tibet's golden age of Buddhist revival and as a remnant of Tibet itself. Tabo is idealized in particular because it survived the destruction of temples and monasteries that took place in Tibet itself. This displacement and idealization enabled the transformation of Tabo from a deserted and neglected monastery with a lone pair of caretaker monks in the nineteenth century, to the most important location in Spiti today, as well as the future retirement home of the Dalai Lama and the subject of dozens of scholarly studies. Tabo certainly warrants the attention it receives. It is an impressive and important site. But the magnitude of this one location continues to stifle other areas in Spiti. Well before I began the

⁵⁷⁹ Peter van Ham and Aglaja Stirn, *The Forgotten Gods of Tibet: Early Buddhist Art in the Western Himalayas* (Paris: Mengès, 1997).

dissertation, I wanted to know what else was in Spiti aside from Tabo, and what had happened in the area after the decline of the Guge Kingdom in the early seventeenth century.

Why focus on Pin and the Nyingma? In the course of my research, I kept encountering seemingly contradictory claims about the relationship between Buddhism, authenticity, time, and space in Spiti. Characterizations of that relationship generally fall along two contradictory lines. Some sources claim that Spiti's isolation from major centers of Buddhism (usually a reference to Tibet) meant that Buddhism in the region had degraded and needed to be reformed. Others argue that Spiti's position on the frontiers of Tibet and India resulted in the protection and preservation of Buddhism when it was persecuted in central locations (as referenced in the Dalai Lama's preface). This latter position was often coupled with assertions of the authenticity of Buddhism in Spiti *because* it was isolated, not only from Chinese intrusions but also from the trappings of modernity. These arguments are significant not only because they connect a rhetoric of Buddhist authenticity and authority to spatial relationships, but also because they point to recent shifts in the Buddhist landscapes within which those authoritative centers are positioned. These arguments about the nature and quality of Buddhism in Spiti, and the way in which geography shaped that Buddhism, struck me as significant but also as self-reinforcing.

As I continued researching the ways this dual discourse was articulated in sources and among contemporary Spitians, I encountered a similar spatiotemporal logic—in this case articulated through the rubric of sectarian affiliation—underlying how the relationship between the Nyingma tradition and the Pin Valley in Spiti is described. I decided to examine that particular relationship in my dissertation research.

Among the five major monasteries in Spiti, one is in the Pin Valley. Both the monastery and the residents of Pin predominantly adhere to the Nyingma sect of Buddhism. Until recently,

the Nyingma sect was *only* present in Pin, with the rest of Spiti adhering to other traditions. Beyond observing that the Nyingma sect is present in Pin, literature on Spiti articulates a relationship between the Pin Valley and the Nyingma tradition, in which Pin's geography and its sectarian affiliation are perceived as mutually constitutive. This framework characterizes Pin as an isolated periphery, and the Nyingma (as the "old" or "ancient" sect) as predating other Buddhist sects prevalent in Tibet and the Himalayas. Pin is Nyingma because it is isolated. Since Pin is Nyingma, it must be old. In the dissertation, I argue that this spatiotemporal logic articulates sectarian affiliation in Spiti as determined not by historical processes but rather by a teleological view of religious development. That is to say, I argue that in the case of Pin, there is no *causal* relationship between history, geography, and sect, in the simplistic manner proposed by the sources.

In the dissertation, I approach this argument in a number of ways: One, by clarifying and diversifying what is simply glossed in the sources as "Nyingma." I argue that in Pin the category of texts, practices, and ideas encompassed under the framework of "the Nyingma tradition" is historically variable and nuanced, attesting to a diverse body of distinct Nyingma traditions, whose prevalence ebbs and flows. Which is to say, what it means to be Nyingma in Pin has changed over time. Two, I establish that there are widespread Buddhist practices in Pin that are not particularly sectarian in nature. This is obscured by referring to the region simply as Nyingma—in a move that emphasizes Pin's difference from the rest of Spiti rather than its similarity. Three, I examine the extent to which Buddhists in Pin engaged with their neighbors, near and far, to evaluate the extent to which Pin was or is isolated. And fourth, I establish and contextualize the recent period of Nyingma institutional consolidation and regional expansion within Spiti.

In support of these arguments, I establish that the Pin Valley was identifiably Nyingma in the first half of the seventeenth century. I also establish that the Pema Lingpa Terma—the earlier of the two *terma* traditions that form the core practices of Pin today—was established in Pin in the late seventeenth century. Thus the seventeenth century marked a key turning point in the history of Buddhism in the Valley. Until recently, the Pema Lingpa tradition, although important and well-studied in other respects, like the history of Bhutan, had not been connected to the Pin Valley. Pin’s other core Nyingma tradition is the Dudjom Tersar, which was introduced to Pin in the early twentieth century by two of Dudjom Lingpa’s students who established a Dudjom Tersar center near Mount Kailash. Scholars who work on the Dudjom tradition and related figures were also largely unaware of the tradition’s relationship to western Tibet. A few individuals from Spiti were particularly central to that process, including Yomed Dorje from Pin, who was later recognized as part of a *tulku* lineage that includes the current head of the Nyingma in Pin, Yomed Tulku. Thus this dissertation provides new insights to both of these treasure traditions.

These figures from Pin were active during a period marked by rapid and widespread changes in Spiti, as it transitioned from being part of a colonial India to an independent India, and shifted from being far removed from the central political and religious institutions of Tibet to becoming the relative neighbor of those institutions reestablished in exile. This had a significant impact on Buddhism and Buddhist institutions in Spiti, including supporting the rise of the new Nyingma monastery in Pin as the primary Buddhist authority in the region. The current shape of Buddhism in Pin is a result of ongoing negotiations over the parameters of normative, authoritative, and orthodox Buddhism in the Valley, negotiations that are themselves influenced by issues of nationality and sectarian identity. Individuals and institutions in Spiti today continue

to engage with these issues of Buddhist authority, in the case of Pin, as part of establishing a growing Nyingma presence in the region.

Throughout the dissertation, I assert that isolation and marginality are relative not absolute conditions. A key theme of the dissertation is the ways in which discourses of isolation are reconfigured in response to shifting centers of religious and political authority. The Pin Valley is not inherently isolated, despite its location, but is consistently constructed as marginal in relationship to shifting centers, be they Tibetan empires, colonial outposts, Buddhist monasteries, modern nation-states, trade routes, or tourist trails.

As I noted in the Introduction, there is relatively little material available on Spiti, such that when I began to articulate these points, there was very little to build upon. However, this is changing, as more scholars turn their attention to the region. In May 2016, Oxford's Wolfson College hosted the First International Conference on Spiti, entitled "The Spiti Valley: Recovering the Past & Exploring the Present." One may suppose an international conference marks a subject as having garnered a certain amount of attention and scholarly inquiry sufficient to warrant such an event. If so, it seems that Spiti is no longer quite such a "remote Buddhist enclave in the Indian Himalayas."⁵⁸⁰ Among the different papers presented at the conference, was new work on the Pin Valley and the Nyingma tradition in Spiti by Namgyal Henri, Pascale Dollfus, and Patrick Sutherland, as well as an overview of the restoration work Melodie Bonnat is undertaking at the Old Lhakhang in Kungri. Their work joins Cathy Cantwell's recent studies of some of the textual corpus from the Pin Valley.⁵⁸¹ Their ongoing work will certainly expand

⁵⁸⁰ Yannick Laurent, "Welcome" Conference program, *The Spiti Valley: Recovering the Past & Exploring the Present*. Wolfson College, Oxford. May 2016.

⁵⁸¹ Cathy Cantwell, "Re-Presenting a Famous Revelation: Dudjom Rinpoche's Work on the 'Ultra Secret Razor Lifeforce Vajrakīlaya' of Pema Lingpa," *Buddhist Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (2017): 181–202.

what we know about Buddhism and its history in the Pin Valley. What is at stake now is how the burgeoning field of Spiti studies will proceed, and what kinds of scholarship it will support.

I had the opportunity to present some of the material from Chapter 4, including the new temple in Gyu Village. In the Q&A following the presentation, an audience member adamantly argued that the new temple in Gyu should be built from traditional materials, mud and wood, rather than concrete, so as to preserve the local cultural and architectural practices, and that I—as the researcher—should encourage them to do so. This comment struck me at the time and has certainly stayed with me. I return to that point often when reflecting on the possible significance of the project I attempted to sketch here.

Even as early as 1997, Deborah Klimburg-Salter noted the way that “the extreme change in climate” was wreaking havoc on buildings in Spiti.⁵⁸² Each year the rainfall seems to increase. More roofs leak, more walls collapse. With this increase in precipitation, local architectural forms are no longer as functional as they were in the past. They are also no longer as necessary, insofar as they are no longer the only option. In his account of the process of building the Guru Lhakhang in Spiti, Kunzang Namdrol from Pin described the rigor of construction, detailing how Yomed Dorje carried massive trees from Kinnaur over high mountain passes to Spiti to support the temple’s roof. If the rapid changes in Spiti have been enabled by any one thing, concrete would be a contender. Concrete has enabled the expansion of monasteries as well as new schools, hospitals, and homes. Concrete marks a new technology, the “the arrival of development,” and a world of possibilities. Disallowing concrete in Spiti would be a material-technical reiteration of the series of Five-Year Plans, with their efforts to control time, to

⁵⁸² Klimburg-Salter and Luczanits, *Tabo*, 28.

simultaneously slow down and speed up Spiti's development.⁵⁸³ In today's changing conditions, to insist that Spiti preserve the past unchanged may result in the slow destruction of that which is meant to be preserved.

Given the conference's charge to recover the past and explore the present, it is worth considering the kind of present and future scholarship about the past enables. My hope is that this project attends to the ways in which religious traditions in the region have adapted and changed over time without passing judgment on that change, that it reckons with both Spiti's past and its dynamic present, without suggesting that one should take precedent over the other in shaping Spiti's future.

⁵⁸³ For a discussion of the Five-Year Plans as they relate to religion in Himachal Pradesh, see Elmore, *States of Religion*, 185, 244, 368.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Buddhist Manuscript Dedication Colophons from Pin Valley

The colophons are arranged chronologically based on the approximate dates for each ruler. Catalogue numbers refer to the Himalayan Manuscripts and Documents Archive (HMDA). The sectarian affiliation designation is based on the text title, the figures mentioned in the verses of praise, and/or a specific reference to the tradition by name.

Table 1: Buddhist Manuscript Dedication Colophons from Pin Valley

Catalogue Number	Date (approximate)	Ruler (approximate or exact dates of rule)	Primary Donor	Donor Village	Sectarian Affiliation	Text Title
OLK 03	1630–1642	Senge Namgyal (1616–1642)	Norbu Wangdul	Mud	Nyingma	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> <i>Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra</i> <i>'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde 'i</i> <i>dbyang po 'i rgyal po</i>
OLK 23	1630–1642	Senge Namgyal (1616–1642)	Tsewang Lodro	Kungri	Nyingma	<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> <i>Pad+ma bka' thang</i>
GCL 24	1642–1684	Demchok Namgyal (1642–1694, 1684)	Jangpa Gyaltsan	Kungri	Nyingma	<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> <i>Pad+ma bka' thang</i>
Khar 13	1642–1684	Demchok Namgyal (1642–1694, 1684)	Tsering Tashi	Kye ¹ hermitage	Unknown	<i>[Jewel] Casket Sūtra</i> <i>Kāraṇḍavyuha-sūtra</i> <i>mDo sde za ma tog [bkod pa]</i>
Khar 18	1642–1684	Demchok Namgyal (1642–1694, 1684)	Tsering Tashi	Gongma ²	Nyingma	<i>The Five Chronicles</i> by Orgyen Lingpa <i>Thang yig sde lnga</i> ³

¹ This is an unidentified location in the Pin Valley that the colophon spells two ways, *skye dbyen* and *kye yen*. This is possibly a misspelling for hermitage (*dben*), of which there are several in Pin.

² Tangti Gongma, or Upper Tangti. Upper (Gong ma) and Lower ('Og ma) Tangti are two adjacent villages in the Pin Valley, variously spelled in the colophons: *Tang ti*, *sTeng sti*, *sTang sti*, *Dang ti*, *sDeng ti*, *sDing di*.

GCL 02	1684–1705	Desi Sangye Gyatso ⁵⁸⁷ (1684–1705)	Tashi Budren	Guling	Nyingma	<i>Stainless Confession Tantra</i> <i>Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa 'i rgyud</i>
OLK 01	1694–1729	Nyima Namgyal (1694–1729)	Lopde	Tangti	Geluk	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> <i>Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra</i> <i>'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde 'i dbyang po 'i rgyal po</i>
OLK 20	1694–1729	Nyima Namgyal (1694–1729)	Lopde	Tangti	Geluk	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> <i>Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra</i> <i>['Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]</i>
GL 02	1694–1729	Nyima Namgyal (1694–1729)	Lobde	Tangti	Geluk	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> <i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> <i>'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa</i>
Bar 01	1694–1729	Nyima Namgyal (1694–1729)	Norbu Sangya	Tsud	Geluk	<i>Diamond Sūtra</i> <i>Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> <i>'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa</i>
Khar 20	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	Paljor Tsering	Khar	Unknown	Multiple possible titles. ⁵⁸⁸
Khar 21	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	Paljor Tsering	Khar	Kagyü/ Nyingma	Possibly the <i>Stainless Confession Tantra</i> <i>Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa 'i rgyud</i> ⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁶ The colophon refers to other texts sponsored by these donors: the *Diamond Sūtra* (rDo rje gcod pa), *Confessing Sin* (sdig bshags), *Chronicle of the Scholars and Translators* (Lo pan bka 'i thang yig), *Biography of Mitrayogi* (mi tra dzo ki = Thugs rje chen po mi tra dzwo ki 'i rnam thar), *Story of Drime Kundan* (Dri med kun ldan gyi rnam thar).

⁵⁸⁷ This colophon refers to the ruler only as the Desi (*sde srid*), with no proper name. However, the colophon also indicates that the Desi is based in Lhasa, making it likely a reference to the Desi Sangye Gyatso. The full line reads: *dge bcu khrim gnyis ldan pa 'i rgyal sa lha sa rtser/ chos rgyal chen po sde srid mi dbang chen pa 'i dbu smog tho zhing chab srid rgyas gyur cig*.

⁵⁸⁸ This colophon contains three possible titles. The colophon is bound with a cover for *The Clear Mirror Royal Genealogy* (Rgyal rab kun gsal me long) but references a different title within the verses, possibly indicating the colophon was at one point bound to a different cover or was produced at the same time as several other texts. The colophon refers to the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Rdo rje gcod pa*) and the *Biography of Milarepa* (*Mi la 'i rnam thar*) but not to *The Clear Mirror*.

Sagnam 04	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	Tsering Lhundrup	Sagnam	Nyingma	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> <i>Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra</i> 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbyang po'i rgyal po
Sagnam 01	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	Tsering Jora	Sagnam	Nyingma/ Geluk	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> <i>Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra</i> ['Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]
Sagnam 05	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	Tsering Jora	Sagnam	Nyingma/ Geluk	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> <i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa
Khar 03	1734–1753	Tashi Namgyal (1734–1753)	none	Khar	Unknown	<i>Diamond Sūtra</i> <i>Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa
GCL 23	1753–1782	Tsewang Namgyal (1753–1782)	Lobzang Chophel	Khar	Nyingma	<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> <i>Pad+ma bka' thang</i>
These texts currently held in the Pin Valley have a colophon that does not refer specifically to a location within Pin.						
OLK 02	ND	NA	NA	NA		<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> <i>Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra</i> ['Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]
OLK 21	ND	NA	NA	NA		<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> <i>Pad+ma bka' thang</i> by Orgyen Lingpa
OLK 22	ND	NA	NA	NA		<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> <i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa

⁵⁸⁹ This colophon is grouped with a loose cover page for the *Stainless Confession Tantra* (*Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud*). However, since the title page and colophon are not bound together, and the colophon itself does not provide a text title, it is not certain that the colophon is associated with this text.

GCL 22	Earth-Snake year ⁵⁹⁰	NA ⁵⁹¹	NA	NA ⁵⁹²	NA	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka' thang by Orgyen Lingpa</i>
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⁵⁹⁰ Possible dates for an Earth-Snake year: 1629, 1689, 1749, 1809, 1868.

⁵⁹¹ This colophon refers to a “Ladakh Gaga Gada Tsering,” who may provide a date if identified. Francke mentions a Gaga Tsering Tashi, who would have lived in the nineteenth century. August Hermann Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, India. Archaeological Survey. [Reports] New Imperial Series, Vol. XXXVIII, L (Calcutta: Superintendent government printing, India, 1914), 275.

⁵⁹² This colophon refers to donors from only one village in Pin (Tangti) but names several villages in Spiti (Mane, Kibber, Drangkhar). It is possible this colophon was produced in Spiti Valley rather than in Pin.

Appendix 2: Buddhist Manuscripts from Pin Valley

In addition to manuscripts with colophons, there are also manuscripts in Pin that lack a datable colophon but likely date to the same broad period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The colophons themselves often refer to other manuscripts sponsored at the same time as the appended texts, which presumably no longer exist. These additional titles are often the same as those of the surviving manuscripts but also provide some new titles. Some of the texts referenced are themselves collections, with multiple titles glossed by a single colophon. Adding those subsidiary titles provides some new details about the texts prevalent in Pin at the time. These manuscripts are currently held by private families and in temple collections in the Pin Valley. The titles are organized by catalogue number.

Table 2: Buddhist Manuscripts from Pin Valley

Cat. No.	Text Title	Date (approximate)	Notes
Bar 01	<i>Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa</i>	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
GL 02	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa</i>	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
Khar 01	<i>Stainless Confession Tantra, Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa 'i rgyud</i>	ND	no colophon
Khar 02	<i>Hundred Thousand White Nagas, Klu 'bum dkar mo[po] zhes bya ba bcom ldan 'das kyis kun dga' bo la gsungs pa</i>	ND	no colophon
Khar 03	<i>Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa</i>	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Khar 05	<i>Magical Display of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities [in the] Buddha-lineage, Bcom ldan 'das rgyu[d] 'phrul zhi khro rab 'jam</i>	ND	no colophon
Khar 11	<i>Register of the Reliquary of Rangrik Repa, Bal yul mchod rten 'phags pa shing kun dang de 'i gnas gzhan rnams kyi dkar chag</i>	ND, terminus post quem 1683	no colophon

Khar 12	<i>Account of the Origins and Contents of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa by the Fifth Dalai Lama, Lha ldan sprul pa'i gtsug lag khang gi dkar chag shel dkar me long bzhugs</i>	ND, terminus post quem 1682	no colophon
Khar 13	<i>[Jewel] Casket Sūtra, Kāraṇḍavyuha-sūtra, Mdo sde za ma tog [bkod pa]</i>	(1642–1694)	datable colophon
Khar 18	<i>The Five Chronicles by Orgyen Lingpa, Thang yig sde lnga</i> ⁵⁹³	(1642–1694)	datable colophon
Khar 20	Multiple possible titles. ⁵⁹⁴	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Khar 21	<i>Possibly the Stainless Confession Tantra Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud.</i> ⁵⁹⁵	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
OLK 01	<i>Golden Light Sūtra, 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa</i>	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
OLK 02	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra [Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]</i>	ND	no colophon
OLK 03	<i>Golden Light Sūtra, 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa</i>	(1615–1650)	datable colophon
OLK 04	Unidentified text, <i>Dge snyen mkha' ri yab yum kyi gsol mkha' bzhugs so</i>	ND	no colophon
OLK 19	<i>Clear Crystal Garland Treasury Instructions by Pema Lingpa, Khrid kyi kha byang gsal ba'i shel phreng</i> ⁵⁹⁶	ND	no colophon
OLK 20	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra [Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]</i>	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
OLK 21	<i>The Chronicle of Padma, Pad+ma bka' thang</i> by Orgyen Lingpa	ND	no colophon
OLK 22	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses Aṣṭasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa</i>	ND	no colophon
OLK 23	<i>The Chronicle of Padma, Pad+ma bka' thang</i>	(1630–1642)	datable colophon
Sagnam 01	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra, Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra</i>	(1734–1753)	datable colophon

⁵⁹³ The colophon refers to other texts sponsored by these donors: the *Diamond Sūtra* (rDo rje gcod pa), *Chronicle of the Scholars and Translators* (Lo pan Bka'i Thang Yig), *Biography of Mitrayogi* (mi tra dzo ki = thugs rje chen po mi tra dzwo ki'i rnam thar), *Story of Drime Kundan* (Dri med Kun ldan gyi Rnam thar), and *Confessing Sin* (sdig bshags, full title = ?).

⁵⁹⁴ This colophon presents three possible titles. The colophon pages are bound with a cover for *The Clear Mirror Royal Genealogy* (rGyal rab kun gsal me long). However, the text of the colophon refers to the *Diamond Sūtra* (rdo rje gcod pa) and the *Biography of Milarepa* (Mi la'i rnam thar) and not to *The Clear Mirror*.

⁵⁹⁵ This colophon is grouped with a loose cover page for the *Stainless Confession Tantra* (Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud). However, since the title page and colophon are not bound together, and the colophon itself does not provide a text title, it is not certain that the colophon is associated with this text.

⁵⁹⁶ This text is from Pema Lingpa's *terma*. Padma Gling pa. "khrid kyi kha byang gsal ba'i shel phreng pad+mas sbyar ba/." In *Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa'i Zab gter Chos mdzod Rin po che*. TBRC W21727. 4: 3–11. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976.

[http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW26196\\$W21727](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW26196$W21727)

	<i>[’Phags pa ’dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]</i>		
Sagnam 02	<i>Mahāśītavāna-sūtra, ’Phags pa bsil ba’i tshal chen po’i mdo</i>	(1734–1753)	volume within Sagnam 01
Sagnam 03	<i>Mahamayuri Mantras, Rig sngags rgyal mo rma bya chen mo</i>	(1734–1753)	volume within Sagnam 01
Sagnam 04	<i>Golden Light Sūtra, Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra ’Phags pa gser ’od dam pa mdo sde’i dbyang po’i rgyal po</i>	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Sagnam 05	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses, Aṣṭasāhasrikā- Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ’Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa</i>	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Sagnam 06	<i>Lama Jewel Ocean, Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho</i> by Pema Lingpa ⁵⁹⁷	ND	no colophon
Sagnam 07	<i>Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, ’Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa</i>	ND	partial text, no colophon
GCL 28	<i>Catalogue of Prophecies from Cycle of Dzogchen practice of the Nyingma, Lung byang bka’i them,</i> ⁵⁹⁸ by Rigzin Gokyi Demtru	ND	no colophon
GCL 04	<i>Self-Liberation through Recognizing the Signs of Death from Profound Dharma of Self-Liberation through the Intention of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities</i> ⁵⁹⁹ by Karma Lingpa	ND	no colophon
GCL 22	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka’ thang</i> by Orgyen Lingpa	Earth-Snake year ⁶⁰⁰	partial colophon
GCL 23	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka’ thang</i>	(1753–1782)	datable colophon

⁵⁹⁷ Pema Lingpa, Pad+ma gling pa. “Bla ma Nor bu Rgya mtsho /.” In *Rig ’dzin Padma gling pa’i Zab gter Chos mdzod Rin po che/*. TBRC W21727. 1: 5 - 899. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW25987\\$W21727](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW25987$W21727)

⁵⁹⁸ Rigzin Gokyi Demtru, rGod kyi ldem ’phru can. “lung byang bka’i them: (pa).” In *dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor/*. TBRC W4CZ1106. 1: 235 - 238. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1979. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395\\$W4CZ1106](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395$W4CZ1106)

⁵⁹⁹ Karma Lingpa, Kar+ma gling pa. “zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las: ’chi ltas mtshan ma rang grol.” In *mo dpe phyogs bsodus snang srid gsal ba’i me long*. TBRC W29669. : 197 - 220. [Bylakuppe].Karnataka: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, 2001-2002. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149\\$W29669](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149$W29669)

⁶⁰⁰ Possible dates for an Earth-Snake year: 1629, 1689, 1749, 1809, 1868.

**Appendix 3: Dedication Colophon for the *Golden Light Sūtra, Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra,*
'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbyang po'i rgyal po, (1630–1642)**

Section 1: English translation

1. *Om Swasti Sidham*

Homage to the true three jewels and
to the Buddha who accomplished the two benefits (of self and other),
to the excellent Dharma refuge that dispels the darkness of the two obscurations,
and to the noble *Samgha* endowed with both lineage and liberation. How wonderful!

2. I bow at the feet of the *gurus* who have wisdom, compassion, and power:
Dhanakosha Padmasambhava,
Avalokiteśvara the protector on mount Potala,
Dharmakāya Amitābha of infinite light.

3. I respectfully prostrate to the Buddha [whose]
body produces acts of perfect virtue,
speech satisfies infinite mountains of beings,
mind sees everything without remainder just as it is.

4. I respectfully prostrate to the lama who is the assembly of the three bodies:
boundless light Samantabhadra, who is the all pervading *dharmakāya*;
Vajrasattva Avalokiteśvara, who is the all pervading *Sambhogakāya*;¹
Padmasambhava, Garab [Dorje], and Śri Sing[ha], who are the all pervading emanation body.

5. The gracious root teacher:
a beautiful crown ornament on top of the head,
a guide out of the hell realms,
a great treasury for all the faithful.

6. Homage to all the kings and ministers who
protect all sentient beings and Tibetan subjects,
shining the great lamp of the excellent doctrine
in this dark borderland, Tibet.

7. Homage to all the translators, scholars, and masters,
who expound the Buddha teaching in the ten directions,
translate the Buddha's words and their commentaries,

¹ This could also read “Vajrasattva and Avalokiteśvara, who are the all pervading *Sambhogakāya*.”

and are ornamented with the three trainings and are a source of benefit and happiness.

8. The place where the excellent dharma spread from Bodhgaya,
The supreme land of snow emanating from Shambala,
The shine of the beautiful azure sky beryl,
The beautiful eight petal lotus on top of the earth,
The place uniting both heaven and earth [like an] amulet box.⁶⁰²
On the great southern continent of Jambudvīpa,
The Land of Snow [where] the teachings spread.
The slopes of Mount Kailash, dwelling place of the Arhats,⁶⁰³
The banks of the turquoise Lake Manasarovar, the Naga King's dwelling place,⁶⁰⁴
The magnificent building on the summit,⁶⁰⁵ the great Leh palace,⁶⁰⁶
On the right-hand bank of the turbulent Indus River.
Kinsmen of the Sun,⁶⁰⁷ the lineage of Ikṣvaku,⁶⁰⁸
The great fearless dharma king Sengge,⁶⁰⁹
May his helmet be high and his dominion expansive!

9. May the rule, teachings, and life-span
of the wise protector Nono Kalzang, father and son,⁶¹⁰ flourish!
The great governor at the capital Drangkhar, a castle mighty on the heights,
[maintains] internal rule and conquers external enemies.
[and] the governor here, in this good subordinate [region] Spiti, at the capital the high castle
Drangkhar.

10. Here, the happy and prosperous land of Pin Valley
is like a hidden realm if seen from the outside,
and like an inexhaustible treasure of riches if seen from the inside.
The great monastery Sangnag Chöling
is surrounded by an iron mountain if seen from without,
and enclosed by a silk curtain if seen from the front.
From above it is like an endless ambrosia stream,
from below it is like a lake of healing medicine that is never dry,

⁶⁰² Stein translates this phrase as “Between heaven and earth which are united (like a closed box, *ga'u kha sbyor gnam sa gnyis kyi bar*)...” Stein and McKeown, *Rolf Stein's Tibetica Antiqua*, 161.

⁶⁰³ Francke reported finding this same phrase inscribed in the region, “I had repeatedly found in inscriptions with references to the Kailasa mountains:--dgra bcom bzhugs gnas Tise...” August Hermann Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, India. Archaeological Survey. [Reports] New Imperial Series, Vol. XXXVIII, L (Calcutta: Superintendent government printing, India, 1914), 37.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ma dros pa* is the Naga King Anavatapta said to reside at the lake. His name means “who never warms up.”

⁶⁰⁵ Heller leaves this term untranslated as a proper noun, “the prominent Palkhang household” for *sa la 'bur dod dpal khang byer dga' der*. Heller, “Preliminary Remarks on the Manuscripts of Gnas Gsar Dgon Pa in Northern Dolpo (Nepal).”

⁶⁰⁶ The Leh palace is on a mountain peak above the city of Leh.

⁶⁰⁷ *snyen* = *gnyen*, *nyi mai gnyen* is an epithet of Śhākyamuni.

⁶⁰⁸ This is an epithet of Śhākyamuni.

⁶⁰⁹ Senge Namgyal was the king of Ladakh ca. 1616–1642.

⁶¹⁰ The term *yab sras* could be father and son or master and disciple. In the context of Spiti, *Nono* functions both as a hereditary title and as a family name, making the former translation more likely than the latter.

and from within is like a river of many different flowers.

May the teachings, realm, and activities flourish [during] the lifetime of the great master Lhasal Dramdul!⁶¹¹

11. Praise to the great master Lhasal Dramdul!

[He] displays the horse-hoof banner⁶¹² on the outside,
and a *pang* of the law on the inside.

Endowed [with] compassion, he remains chiefly for the benefit of others:
merely seeing his body produces faith,
merely hearing his speech bestows blessings,
merely [his] mind benefit for the sake of all beings.

12. May the domain and teachings flourish
during the lifetime of the great governor Nono Tsering Tsebhel,
in this place the Pin Khar⁶¹³ at the high mighty fortress!⁶¹⁴

13. In this prosperous land of Mud,
all the barley ripens like tree leaves.
Through the accumulated merit of former lives,
we achieved a precious human body.

14. Lord Norbu Wangdul's⁶¹⁵ faithful offerings and
Lady Nomo Gadruk's donations are given
for the sake of fulfilling the intentions of the Buddhas,
in order to be continually guided by teachers in the next life,
in order to elevate the rule of all the ministers and kings,
in order to repay the kindness of [our] kind parents,
for the sake of the six kinds of sentient beings traversing the final path, and
in order to pacify obstacles caused by our/my own transgressions.
[The donors] established a statue of a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara,
[a copy of] the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*,⁶¹⁶
[a copy of] the *Golden Light Sutra*, and
many [copies of] the five great types of *dhāraṇī*.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹¹ This is an unidentified person. His name appears in one other colophon from Pin, Bar 01 (1694–1729).

⁶¹² The meaning of phrase *rmig gi rgyal mtshan* is unclear.

⁶¹³ Here *mkhar* could be a proper name, referencing the village called Khar in Pin Valley, or else be a reference to the fort or castle at Khar. A more accurate translation in the first sense might read, “in Khar [Village], Pin [Valley],” while the second sense would be, “at the Pin Castle, the high mighty fortress.” I aimed for a translation that leaves room for either interpretation.

⁶¹⁴ *rtsan pa* = *brtsan pa*

⁶¹⁵ If Lhasal Dramdul is the leading Buddhist figure in Pin, then he might be the *Nono*'s younger brother, Nono Tsering Tsebhel in this case. This would be in accordance with the system of inherited positions within the *Nono* family, in which the older son becomes the *Nono* and the younger son becomes head of the monastery.

⁶¹⁶ The line translates literally as “one hundred-thousand speech supports,” which could refer to something other than the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* text, possibly 100,000 copies of some other text. It seems rather strange that the scribe would not have used the actual name of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, if this is what is intended.

⁶¹⁷ This may refer to creating prayer flags, possibly copying a text, or writing *dhāraṇī* on paper for use in consecrating other objects. Yael Bentor, “On the Indian Origins of the Tibetan Practice of Depositing Relics and

[They] carved one thousand *mani* stones for the sake of traversing the final path,
and acted sincerely towards the dharma like [their] parents,
how wondrous [is it that the donors] gave the accumulated [donations] for the sake of the
dharma!
How excellent!

15. Chogyur Shejor's father,⁶¹⁸
Chogyur Tsad's uncle,
Chogyur Tsad's mother,
Chogyur Butrid's *abhi*,
the daughter Chogyur Chakshungma,
Yang Chakma, and Chozom.
May [all the above] properly care for this scripture!
How excellent!

16. How wonderful the offerings that the Lady Gatruk,
the consort of Avalokiteśvara [of] the joyous lineage of Kongjo,
gave to the officiating priest,
ambrosia for human nourishment.
The deeds of the faithful accrue white virtue,
similar to drawing milk from an ocean of faith.
Assembled like birds in the forest,
like gathering a sweet taste from dirt.⁶¹⁹

Donations were received⁶²⁰ from Mud: Hungra, Darjo, Abhe Shejor, Gopa, Dorje Chopel,
Shangpa Damtri, Dorje Chopel, spouse Wangyal, the learned⁶²¹ Chogyal, spouse Drakshung,
Meme Phagpa, Rangdrol, Wangchuk, Tsering Dorje, Tsering , Rigzin Chodrak, little friend,
Kyambel, Ane Yodron, Zangmo, Meme Rigzin; from Sagnam: Azhang Tashi, spouse Sangdrup,
Nono Sangdrup, Konchok, spouse Tsang, Meme Dzomchungje; from Guling: Wangchuk; from
Bar: Nono Phuntsok; from Kungri: Dondrup; from Ensa: Angdul; from Kungri: Meme Norbu;
from Tiling: Mipham, Dondrup, Tsering Wangchuk, Ngodrup; from Khar: Api Yeshe, Meme
little friend,⁶²² from Sagnam: elder Nono, Azhang Rikden, "Chopa" (monk) Wangchuk; from
Ensa: Buchen Urgyan Dondru.

Dhâraṇīs in Stūpas and Images," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 2 (April 1995): 248; Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism* (BRILL, 1996).

⁶¹⁸ This verse could instead read: Their [the donors'] father Chogyur Shejor, their [the donors'] uncle Chogyur Tsad.

⁶¹⁹ Unclear what *bong ba* is meant to be but if it is corrected to *bong nga* then earth or dirt seems to fit the verse's imagery.

⁶²⁰ Given the length of this section, I have not listed each donation following individuals' names. Individuals donated white grain, tea, meat, beer, and alcohol.

⁶²¹ If *grag tog = grags thob* then this is "learned man."

⁶²² It is possible that *grogs chung* is a younger/second spouse, if *che grogs* is taken as first or older spouse.

7. ཕན་བདེའི་འབྲུང་གནས་སློབ་གསུམ་བརྒྱན་གྱི་མངོས།
 བཀའ་དང་བསྟན་ཚམས་དག་རྒྱུར་བསྟན་ལ་འཕགས།
 མངས་རྒྱས་བསྟན་པ་ཕྱོགས་བཅུར་རྒྱས་མངོན་པའི།
 མཁས་གྲུབ་ལོ་པན་རྣམས་ལ་བྱུག་འཚལ་ལོ།

8. རྩོམ་གདན་ནས་དམ་ཚམས་དར་བའི་ས།
 ཤམ་བཏུ་ལ་ནས་སྐྱལ་པ་གངས་ཅན་མཚོག
 དགུང་སློན་བཀོད་ལེགས་བེད་ཅུའི་འོད།
 ས་གཞི་བཀོད་ལེགས་བསྐྱེད་འདབ་བརྒྱད་ཤེང།
 ཀའུ་ཁ་སྐྱོར་གནས་ས་གཉིས་ཀྱི་བར།
 རྒྱུང་གི་མཚོག་འགྲུར་སློའི་འཛམ་བུ་སྤོང།
 བསྟན་པ་དར་རྒྱས་ཁ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་སྤོངས།
 དག་བཅོམ་བཞུགས་གནས་ཏི་སེ་གངས་ཀྱི་མགུལ།
 མ་གྲོས་བཞུགས་གནས་མ་པང་གཡུའི་འགམ།
 སེང་གི་ཁ་འབབ་འཕུགས་པའི་གཡས་ཕྱོགས་ན།
 སོ་བྲང་ཆེན་པོ་སླེ་ཆེན་དཔལ་ཁང་ཅེར།
 བྱ་རམ་ཤིང་གི་གདོན་རྒྱུད་ཉི་མའི་སློན།
 ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ཆེན་པོ་མེ་འཛིག་ཚོས་ཀྱི་སེང་གི་ཡི།
 ལྷ་རྩོག་སོ་ཞིང་ཆབ་སྤོང་རྒྱས་འགྲུར་ཅིག

7. phan bde'i 'byung gnas slab⁶²⁶ gsum brgyan gyi
 mdzes/
 bka' dang bstan bcos⁶²⁷ dgra⁶²⁸ rgyur bstan la
 'phags⁶²⁹/
 sangs rgyas bstan pa phyogs bcur rgyas mdzad
 pa'i/
 mkhas grub lo pan rnams la phyag 'tshal lo/

8. rdo rje gdan nas dam chos dar ba'i sa/⁶³⁰
 sham+bha+la nas sprul pa gangs can mchog
 dgung sngon bkod legs bee d'u rya'i 'od/
 sa gzhi bkod legs pad+ma 'dab brgyad sheng⁶³¹/
 ga'u kha sbyor⁶³² gnam sa gnyis kyi bar/
 gling gi mchog 'gyur lho'i 'dzam bu gling/
 bstan pa dar rgyas kha ba can gyi ljongs/
 dgra bcom bzhugs nas⁶³³ ti se gangs kyi mgul/
 ma gros [ma dros] bzhugs gnas ma pang gyu'i
 'gram /
 seng ge kha 'bab 'khrugs pa'i g.yas phyogs na/
 pho brang chen po sle chen dpal khang rtser/⁶³⁴
 bu ram shing gi gdon rgyud⁶³⁵ nyi ma'i snyen/
 chos rgyal chen po mi 'jig⁶³⁶ chos kyi seng ge yi
 dbu rmog⁶³⁷ mtho⁶³⁸ zhing⁶³⁹ chab srid rgyas gyur⁶⁴⁰
 cig

⁶²⁶ slab = bslab or slob

⁶²⁷ This colophon and a second from Pin read *bstan chos* but the *Rgyal Rabs gsal ba'i me long* reads *bstan bcos*.

⁶²⁸ The *Rgyal Rabs gsal ba'i me long* reads *sgra*.

⁶²⁹ phab = 'phags (from other colophons) the *Rgyal Rabs gsal ba'i me long* reads 'bebs.

⁶³⁰ This verse is added in the margin at the bottom of the page. This might imply that the scribe is copying these stanzas from another document and realized the omission after the fact.

⁶³¹ sheng = steng?

⁶³² ka'u kha sbyor = ga'u kha sbyar

⁶³³ nas = gnas

⁶³⁴ This line is added in the margin.

⁶³⁵ gdon rgyud = don rgyud?

⁶³⁶ mi 'jig = mi 'jigs

⁶³⁷ u rmog = dbu rmog

⁶³⁸ tho = mtho

⁶³⁹ tho = mtho

⁶⁴⁰ 'gyur = gyur cig

9. འདིའི་མངའ་ཞབས་བཟང་པོའི་སྤྱི་ཏི་འདིར།
 སྐྱ་མཁར་ཐོ་ལ་བརྩམ་པ་རྒྱལ་ས་གང་མཁར་བརྩེར།
 མཁར་དཔོན་ཆེན་པོ་ཕྱིའི་དགའ་འདུལ་ནང་གི་ཁྲིམས།
 སྐྱོང་མཁས་འོ་འོ་སྐལ་བཟང་ཡབ་སྲས་ཀྱི།
 སྐྱ་ཚེ་བཟུན་ཞིང་ཆབ་སྲིད་རྒྱས་འགྲུར་ཅིག

10. ཡུལ་ལ་གྲང་ཆངས་སྦྱིད་པ་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ལུང་པ་འདིར།
 ཕྱི་ན་བཟུན་སྐྱས་པའི་ཡུལ་དང་འདྲ།
 རང་ནས་བཟུན་ན་མི་ཟད་གཏེར་ལ་ལོངས་སྦྱོད་འདྲ།
 མགོན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་གསངས་ལྷགས་ཚོས་སྦྱིང་ན།
 ཕྱི་ན་པ་ལྷས་ན་ལྷགས་རི་བསྐོར་བ་འདྲ།
 མདུན་ནས་བཟུན་ན་ཡོལ་བ་བཅད་པ་འདྲ།
 རྟེན་ན་བདུད་ཅི་རྒྱན་མ་ཆད་པ།
 འོག་ན་སྐྱེན་དག་གི་མཚོ་མ་སྐྱམས་པ།
 རང་ན་མེ་ཏོག་སྐྱ་ཚོགས་གམ་པ་འདྲ།
 དཔོན་སློབ་ཆེན་པོ་ལྷ་གསལ་གམ་འདུལ་གྱི།
 སྐྱ་ཚེ་བཟུན་ཞིང་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྒྱས་འགྲུར་ཅིག

11. ཕྱི་དུར་མིག་གི་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
 རང་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་པང་མཛད།
 བྱམས་སེམས་ལྷན་པ་གཞན་དོན་གཙོ་བོར་བཞུགས།
 སྐྱ་མཚོང་བ་ཚམ་གྱིས་དད་པ་སྦྱིས།
 གསུང་ཐོས་པ་ཚམ་གྱིས་བྱིན་རྒྱལ་འཇུག
 ལྷགས་མཁྱེན་པ་ཚམ་གྱིས་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་མཛད།
 དཔོན་སློབ་ཆེན་པོ་ལྷ་གསལ་གམ་འདུལ་ཁོང་ལ་བསྟོད།

12. མཛོང་ཐོ་ལ་རྩན་པ་སྦྱིན་མཁར་གཞུང་ཡུལ་འདིར།
 མཁར་དཔོན་ཆེན་པོ་འོ་འོ་ཚེ་རིང་ཚེ་བལ་གྱི།
 སྐྱ་ཚེ་བཟུན་ཞིང་ཆབ་སྲིད་རྒྱས་འགྲུར་ཅིག

9. di'i mnga' zhabs bzang po'i spyi ti 'dir/
 sku mkhar mtho⁶⁴¹ la btsan⁶⁴² pa rgyal sa grang
 mkhar rtser⁶⁴³/
 mkhar dpon chen po phyi'i dgra 'dul nang gi/
 khirms skyong mkhas no no skal bzang yab sras
 kyi/
 sku tshe bstan zhing chab srid rgyas gyur⁶⁴⁴ cig/

10. yul la gyang chags skyid pa sprin gyi lung pa
 'dir/
 phyi na bltas na sbas pa'i yul dang 'dra/
 nang nas bltas na mi zad gter la longs spyod 'dra /
 mgon pa chen po gsangs sngags chos gling na/
 phyi na pa ltas na lcags ri bskor ba 'dra/
 mdun nas bltas na yol ba bead pa 'dra/
 steng na bdud rtsi rgyun ma chad pa/
 'og na sman drag gi mtsho ma skam pa⁶⁴⁵/
 nang na me tog sna tshogs gram pa 'dra/
 dpon slob chen po lha gsal gram 'dul gyi/
 sku tshe bstan zhing 'phrin las rgyas gyur⁶⁴⁶ cig

11. phyi dur rmig gi rgyal mtshan/
 nang tshul khirms kyi pang⁶⁴⁷ mdzad/
 byams sems ldan pa gzhan don grtso bor⁶⁴⁸ bzhugs/
 sku mthong ba tsam gyis dad pa skyes/
 gsung mthos pa⁶⁴⁹ tsam gyis byin rlabs 'jug/
 thugs mkhyen pa tsam gyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad/
 dpon slob chen po lha gsal gram 'dul khong la
 bstod/

12. rdzong mtho la btsan pa sprin mkhar gzhung yul
 'dir/
 mkhar dpon chen po no no tshe ring tshe bhel gyi/
 sku tshe bstan zhing chab srid rgyas 'gyur cig

⁶⁴¹ tho = mtho
⁶⁴² brstan = btsan
⁶⁴³ brtser = rtser
⁶⁴⁴ rgyur = gyur cig
⁶⁴⁵ skams pa = ?
⁶⁴⁶ 'gyur = gyur
⁶⁴⁷ pang = ?
⁶⁴⁸ grtso bo = gtso bo
⁶⁴⁹ mthos pa = thos pa

13. དུལ་ལ་དབྱངས་ཆགས་མུད་གྱི་འབྲུ་ཡུལ་འདིར།
 ཕུ་རུ་རྩི་བཅུད་རྒྱས་ཤིང་མདོ་རུ་འབྲུ་རྣམས་སྟེན།
 ཚོ་སྟོན་བསོད་ནམས་བསགས་པས་མི་ལུས་རིན་ཆེན་ཐོབ།
 རྒྱུན་པ་རྩོགས་མེད་བཏང་བས་ལོང་སྟོད་ཤུགས་ལས་འབྱུང་།
 ལས་དང་བཀའ་བ་ལྷན་བས་དམ་པའི་ཚོས་ལ་མོས།
 མི་རིགས་ཁྱུང་བཅུན་ལྗང་ལོ་ཅན་གྱི་རྒྱུད།

13. yul la dbyangs chags⁶⁵⁰ mud kyi zhung⁶⁵¹ yul
 'dir/
 phu ru rtsi bcud rgyas shing mdo⁶⁵² ru 'bru rnams
 smin/
 tshe sngon bsod nams bsags pas mi lus rin chen
 thob/
 sbyin pa phyogs med btang bas long spyod shugs
 las 'byung/
 las dang bka' ba ldan bas dam pa'i chos la mos /
 mi rigs khung⁶⁵³ btsun ljang lo can gyi rgyud/

14. དད་ལྷན་ཡོན་གྱི་བདག་པོ་ནོར་བུ་དབང་འདུལ་དང་།
 རྒྱུན་པའི་བདག་མོ་ནོ་མོ་དགའ་དུག་གིས།
 རྒྱས་བ་གོང་མའི་ཐུགས་དགོངས་རྫོགས་ཕྱིར་དང་།
 ཡང་འདྲེན་ལྷ་མའི་སྐྱ་ཚོ་བཟུན་ཕྱིར་དང་།
 རྒྱལ་སྟོན་རྣམས་ཀྱི་དབུ་ཚོག་མཐོ་ཕྱིར་དང་།
 དྲིན་ཅན་པ་མའི་དྲིན་ལན་སོབ་ཕྱིར་དང་།
 རིག་དུག་སེམས་ཅན་མཐར་ལམ་འགོ་ཕྱིར་དང་།
 རང་གི་མགལ་རྒྱུན་བར་ཆད་ཞི་ཕྱིར་དུ།
 སྐྱ་ཡི་རྟན་དུ་ཕྱག་སྟོང་སྟེན་སྟོང་།
 གསུང་གི་རྟན་དུ་བརྒྱ་སྟོང་པ་དང་།
 གསེར་འོད་རྟོག་གཟུང་དང་།
 གཟུངས་ཚེན་གྲ་ལྷ་རྣམས་བཞིང་།
 ཕྱི་མ་མཐར་ལམ་དུ་འགོ་ཕྱིར་དུ།
 མ་ནི་སྟོང་ར་ཅན་གཅིག་དོར་ལས་རྟོས།
 པ་མ་བཞིན་དུ་ཚོས་ལ་དཀར་བར་མཛོད།
 བསགས་པ་ཚོས་ཕྱིར་དོང་བ་ངོ་མཚར་ཆེ།
 ཀྱི་ལེགས།

14. dad ldan yon gyi bdag po nor bu dbang 'dul
 dang⁶⁵⁴
 sbyin pa'i bdag mo no mo dga' drug gis /
 rgyal ba gong ma'i thugs dgongs rdzogs phyir
 dang/
 yang 'dren bla ma'i sku tshe stan⁶⁵⁵ phyir dang/
 rgyal blon rnams kyi dbu rmog mtho phyir dang /
 drin can pha ma'i drin lan sob phyir dang /
 rigs drug sems can mthar lam grod⁶⁵⁶ phyir dang /
 rang gi mgal⁶⁵⁷ rkyen bar chad zhi phyir du/
 sku yi rten du phyag stong spyang stong/
 gsung gi rten du brgya stong pa dang/
 gser 'od tog gzung⁶⁵⁸ dang/
 gzungs chen gra⁶⁵⁹ lnga rnams gzhen⁶⁶⁰/
 phyi ma mthar lam du grod⁶⁶¹ phyir du/
 ma ni stong ra can gcig rdo las rkos/
 pha ma bzhin du chos la dkar bar mdzod/
 bsags pa chos phyir dong ba⁶⁶² ngo mtshar che/
 kye legs/

⁶⁵⁰ dbyangs chags = gyang chags
⁶⁵¹ zhung = gzhung?
⁶⁵² mdo = mlo
⁶⁵³ khung = khungs
⁶⁵⁴ Added from margin.
⁶⁵⁵ stan = bstan?
⁶⁵⁶ grod = 'grod pa, grod pa
⁶⁵⁷ mgal = 'gal
⁶⁵⁸ gzung = gzungs, gsung
⁶⁵⁹ gra = grwa
⁶⁶⁰ gzheng = bzheng ba?
⁶⁶¹ grod = 'grod pa, grod pa
⁶⁶² dong ba = brdzong ba?

15. ཨ་པ་ཡི་མཚོག་འགྱུར་ཤེས་འབྱོར་དང་།
 ཨ་དགུའི་མཚོག་འགྱུར་འཚད་དང་།
 ཨ་མའི་མཚོག་འགྱུར་འཚད་དང་།
 ཨ་བེའི་མཚོག་འགྱུར་བྱ་བྱིད་དང་།
 བུ་མོ་མཚོག་འགྱུར་ཕྱག་ཤུང་མ་དང་།
 ཡང་ཕྱག་མ་དང་།
 ཚོས་འཛིན་དང་།
 གསུངས་རབས་འདི་ལ་ཞབས་རྟོག་ལེགས་པར་གྱིས་།
 གྱེ་ལེགས་།

15. A pha yi mchog 'gyur shes 'byor dang/
 a dgu'i mchog 'gyur 'tshad dang /
 a ma'i mchog 'gyur 'tshad dang/
 a bhi'i mchog 'gyur bu drid dang/
 bu mo mchog 'gyur phyag shung ma dang/
 yang phyag ma dang/
 chos 'dzom dang/
 gsungs rabs⁶⁶³ 'di la zhabs tog legs par gyis/ kye legs/

16. ཀོང་བྱོའི་རྒྱུད་འཛིན་དགའ་བའི་དཔལ་མོ་ཆེ།
 མཚངས་ལ་ལྷུལ་ཆགས་ནི་བཅུན་སྣའི་སྲས་།
 རྒྱུན་གྱི་བདག་མོ་དགའ་འདུག་གྱིས་།
 མེའི་ཟས་ལ་སྣའི་བདུད་ཚི་སྦྱར་།
 མཚོད་ནས་ཞལ་དུ་གངས་པ་ངོ་མཚར་ཆེ།
 རྒྱུན་པའི་མཚུལ་དུ་འདབ་ཆགས་བྱ་བཞིན་འདུས་།
 སྦྱང་ཚི་རོ་ལས་བོང་བ་འདུས་པ་བཞིན་།
 དད་པའི་མཚོ་ལ་འོ་མ་ལེན་དང་ཚུངས་།
 ཀ་རུ་དགེ་སི་བྱེད་པའི་དད་ཚན་རྣམས་།

16. kong byo'i rgyud 'dzin dga' ba'i dpal mo che/
 mdzangs la khrul⁶⁶⁴ chags ne btsun lha'i sras/
 gyon gyi bdag mo dga 'drug gyis/
 mi'i zas la lha'i bdud rtsi sbyar /
 mchod nas zhal du grangs pa ngo mtshar che/
 ljon pa'i mtshul du 'dab chags bya bzhin 'dus/
 sbrang rtsi ro las bong ba 'dus pa bzhin/
 dad pa'i mtsho la 'o ma len dang tshungs/
 ka ru dge si byed pa'i dad ldan rnams/

⁶⁶³ rabs = rab
⁶⁶⁴ khrul = 'khrul?

Appendix 4: Images of the Dedication Colophon for the *Golden Light Sūtra*, *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*, 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbyang po'i rgyal po, (1630–1642)



Figure 35: *Golden Light Sūtra* cover

Appendix 5: Dedication Colophon for *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born, Orgyan guru padma 'byung gnas kyi rgyas pa gser gyi 'phreng ba, (1630–1642)*

Section 1: English translation⁶⁶⁵

Guru Sangye Lingpa⁶⁶⁶ revealed the *terma* from the Crystal Cave of Puri Phugmoche, which is called *The Golden Garland Chronicles of the Lotus Born Guru [from] Orgyen*,⁶⁶⁷ This is no *terma* fabricated by others. There are four in this [collection]: the *namthar* of Orgyen Rinpoche, fifty-five different *mi gcig pa*,⁶⁶⁸ Mandarava, Namkhai Nyingpo, Yeshe Tsogyal, etc. Also, [there are] many amazing histories, Nubchen Rinchen Palzang at the lake, *namthar* that are arranged differently, arranged in 153 chapters. These books were spread in the land of Lowo⁶⁶⁹ and Shang.⁶⁷⁰ The great minister Shang⁶⁷¹ composed in detail the *Mizepa Gragpa namthar*. This is also a *chöd terma*.

Homage to the object of refuge, the three jewels:
the Buddha who manifests as the three bodies,
the excellent dharma that is the wealth of the three baskets,
and the monastic community that is ornamented with the three trainings.
Kye legs!

In the Snowy Land (Tibet) where the teachings later spread,
On the great southern continent of Jambudvīpa,
Surrounded in all directions by a string of white mountains,
Is Mount Tise (Kailash), the dwelling place of the arhats,
and the turquoise Lake Mapham (Manasarowar), the Naga King's dwelling place.
In the great palace on the summit [in] Leh Palkhang,
Near the turbulent Lion's Mouth (the Indus River),

⁶⁶⁵ This particular colophon is damaged, making some sections illegible. As a result, some sections of the translation are incomplete.

⁶⁶⁶ Sangya Lingpa (1340–1396).

⁶⁶⁷ For a discussion of this text see Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, 54–55; August Hermann Francke, *First Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from Ladakh Himalaya* /, 1st ed. (Delhi :, 2003), 51, 53, ; Yo seb Dge rgan and s s editor gergan, *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter*, 1st ed. (New delhi: Sterling publishers, 1976).

⁶⁶⁸ This phrase might possibly read: fifty-five different versions or fifty-five different texts.

⁶⁶⁹ *blo bo* = *Glo bo*, Mustang.

⁶⁷⁰ Shangs could be several locations. Possibly Shang in Tsang, or a reference to Zhangzhung (Zhang zhung).

⁶⁷¹ “Zhang blon chen po” means great minister and according to Sorensen can refer to a particular family in early Tibet (the Zhang clan). Sorensen notes that “The official titulation maternal uncle (zhang) was, as is known, accorded to leading members of a clan from which a Tibetan king had chosen a queen who then bore him a heir” (Sorensen 1994, 363 footnote 1171). There is also a Zhang blon sNa chen po mentioned in the *rGyal ba 'i me long*. Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan and Sørensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*, 363.

Where the great ruler Sengge Namgyal⁶⁷² and
 Queen Kalzang,⁶⁷³ “the emanation of Tara,” reside.
 May [his] kingdom be expansive and the firm helmet high!
 May the teachings spread during the lifetime of the religious minister Akhu Garmo,⁶⁷⁴
 who protects everyone like his own children and keeps them in mind,
 At his domain in the capital Drangkhar,
 The land where the ten virtues gather in the Pin Valley,
 and in Kungri, the central place rising prominently.

Having achieved a favorable human rebirth through merit accumulated in previous lives,
 motivated by veneration for the perfect excellent dharma,
 and from the power of wealth that is given freely as a donation,
 The lord Abha Tsewang Lodro of the noble human lineage of the clan Nyanyeldru,
 sponsored the excellent doctrine, *The Chronicles of Padma*, in order to:
 in order to block the obstacles of all the minds of the masters and students,
 for the sake of the six classes of sentient beings traversing the path of liberation,
 for the sake of the superior rule of all the kings and ministers,
 in order to repay the kindness of his gracious parents,
 in order to be continually guided by teachers in the next life,
 and for the sake of fulfilling the intentions of the Buddhas.
 How amazing!

In order to ward off the obstacles of this life, the *siddha* Chokyi Gyaltzen upholds the teachings.

Section 1: The Tibetan text⁶⁷⁵

U rgyan ghu ru pad+ma 'byung gnas kyi rgyal [rgyas] pa gser gyi 'phreng bzhes bya ba/ bu ri
 phug me [mo] che shel gyi brag phug nas/ ghu ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas gdan drangs pa /
 gzhan gyis bcos pa sna cig kyang med pa'i gter ma bzhugs so/ 'di la gzhi byas U rgyan rin po
 che'i rnam mthar / mi cig pa lnga bcu rtsa lnga / ma+a+n dhar ba / na mkha' snying po/ ye shes
 mtsho rgyal la sogs pa'i rnam thar/ gzhan yang lo rgyus ngo mtshar che ba mang po/ snub chen *
 * [rin chen?] dpal bzang gi shangs [shang?] rgya mtshor tha dad sbrig (sgrig?) par gnang pa'i
 rnam thar zhabs 'degs mar grags pa / le'u brgya dang lnga bcu nga gsum bzhugs pa/ blo bo dang
 shangs lung par dar/ 'di tshor ma spyi sleb bam byung/ rang rang gi yul du 'du/ sta? tho yod pa /

⁶⁷² Senge Namgyal, king of Ladakh ca. 1616–1642

⁶⁷³ This is Senge Namgyal's wife, a Balti princess named Kalzang Drolma. She dedicated a temple at Basgo, Ladakh in 1642. Several thangka depict probable portraits of her, including one of White Tara in the Koelz Collection at the University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, *White Tara* Item No. 17458. Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, 56; Snellgrove and Skorupski, *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*, 97; Carolyn Copeland and University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology, *Tankas from the Koelz Collection, Museum of Anthropology, the University of Michigan* (University of Michigan, Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1980), 25.

⁶⁷⁴ The minister Akhu Garmo is mentioned in two inscriptions dating to the reign of Senge Namgyal. In these, he is given the title “chief minister” (*chos blon chen po*). Inscriptions 51, 57. He also appears in a colophon reprinted in Gergan. August Hermann Francke, *First Collection of Tibetan Historical Inscriptions on Rock and Stone from Ladakh Himalaya*, (Delhi :, 2003) No. 51, 55.; Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, 55.; Yo seb Dge ryan, *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1976), 392–394.

⁶⁷⁵ Asterisks indicate an illegible word and question marks indicate partial legibility or an unclear spelling.

slob dpon kyi bcug pa yang mang po 'dug pa/ gter ma rnams bcos na byin brlabs nyams gsung
bas bzhags pa lags so/

gter kha ba shis? che ba sogs la yang nam thar rgyas 'bring bsdus gsum yong gi 'dug pas/ kun
gyis gjigs (gzigs?) rtog mdzad zhu // zhang blon chen po mi zad par sgrabs (grags?) pa'i nam
thar rgyas par bkod pa bzhugs shyo/ 'di yan chod (chos/gcod?) gter ma yin/ /

// O A hum Ba+dzra ghu ru pad+ma si dhi hum//

sku gsum mdon [mngon] du gyur ba'i ston pa sangs rgyas dang/ sde snod gsum kyi phyug pa'i
dam chos dang/ slob ba gsum gyi mdzes pa'i dge 'dun ste/ skyabs gnas dkon gchog [mchog]
gsum la gu sum la gus phyag 'tshal / kye legs//

gling gi mchog 'gyur lha'i 'dzam bu'i gling/ bstan pa phyi dar kha ba can gyi ljongs/ rab dkar
gangs ri 'phreng ba ku[n] nas bskor/ dgra bcom bzhugs gnas gangs dkar ti se yin/ mal bros [ma
dros] bzhugs gnas ma phang [pham] gyu'i mtsho/ seng ge kha 'bab 'brug pa'i gyas phyogs na/
pho brang chen po gle chen dpal khang rtser/ mi dbang chen po seng ge gnam rgyal dang/ sgrol
ma'i nam sprul skal bzang rgyal mo bzhugs/ bzhugs pa dbu rmog mtho zhing chab srid dar
rgyas cig/ rje'i thugs 'dzin 'khor rnams bu bzhin skyong/ chos blon A khu 'gar mo sku rtse bstan
gyur cig/

khong gi chab 'og rgyal sa brang khar du/ [erased verse] yul la dge bcu 'dzom pa spin gyi lung
pa ru / sa la 'bur du dod pa gzhung yul gong ri ru/ tshe sdon bsod nans [nams] bsags pas dpa'
pbyor [dal 'byor] mi lus thob / sbyin pa phyogs med btang bas longs spyod shugs las 'byung/
thugs dgongs rnam * [par?] dag pas dam pa'i * [chos] la mes [mos]/ mi rigs khungs btsun rus
chen nya[m] snyel gru'i rgyud/ [dad ldan] yon gyi bdag po 'a bha tshe dbang blo gros kyis /
rgyal ba gong ma'i thugs dgongs rdzogs phyir dang/ yar [yang?] 'dren bla ma'i sku tshe bstan
phyir dang/ drin can pha ma'i sku drin sab [sob] phyir dang/ rgyal blon rnams kyi dbu rmog tho
[mtho] phyir dang/ rigs drug sems can thar lam bgrod phyir dang/ yab sras rnams kyi thugs kyi
'gal rkyen bzlog phyir du/ dam chos khyad 'phags pad+ma bka'i thang yig sbyang ma [sbyad
ba?] mdzad pa ngo tshar che/

chos kyi rgyal mtshan sgrub pa [grub pa?]'i bstan pa 'dzugs / tshe'i d'i rkyen bzlog/

Appendix 6: Descriptions of the Pin Valley

The manuscript dedication colophons often contain poetic descriptions of the Pin Valley. These verses are iterations of a known style found in colophons from other locations. At the same time, they are specific to Pin and contain unique elements. Three selections are included below, beginning with the verse from the *Golden Light Sūtra* from Appendix 3.

Golden Light Sūtra, Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra, 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbyang po'i rgyal po (1616–1642), OLK 03

Here, the happy and prosperous land of Pin Valley
is like a hidden realm if seen from the outside,
and like an inexhaustible treasure of riches if seen from the inside.
The great monastery Sangnag Chöling
is surrounded by an iron mountain if seen from without,
and enclosed by a silk curtain if seen from the front.
From above it is like an endless ambrosia stream,
from below it is like a lake of healing medicine that is never dry,
and from within is like a river of many different flowers.

The Chronicle of Padma, Pad+ma bka' thang (1753–1782), GCL 23

Here in the Pin Valley, the prominent place,
on the right-hand are upright indestructible mountains,
on the left-hand diverse lotus flowers beautifully adorn the mountains,
in the front a turquoise lake flows,
in the lower valley all the barley ripens and in the upper valley the sweet plants ripen.
How wondrous is the prosperity and happiness in this land!

sa la 'bur du thon pa sprin gyi lung pa 'dir /
gyas ri rdo rje brag las bsrang ba yod/
gyon ri padma'i me tog sna tshogs mdzes par spras/
mdun na gyu ba'i mtsho mo 'khyil ba'i/
phu ru rtsi beud rmin cing mdo ru 'bru rnams smin /
yul la gyang⁶⁷⁶ chags skyid pa ngo mtshar che/

⁶⁷⁶ *gyang* is possibly an error for *gyad*.

Diamond Sūtra, Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa (1694–1729), Bar 01

Here in the prosperous land the Pin valley [and]
the great monastery Sangnak Tashi Chöling [are]
behind mountains that are like a white silk curtain,
in front of mountains that are like a king seated on a throne,
the lower valley juncture is like joined hands,
behind is a lake of *rag ta*⁶⁷⁷ that is never dry,
in front the realm itself is never disturbed,
in the center all the *vidyadhara* dwell freely.

yul la gyang chags sprin gyi lung pa 'dir/
mgon po chen po gsang sngags bkra shis chos gling dir/
rgyab ri dar dkar yol ba rkyangs pa dra/
mdun ri rgyal po bzhugs khir bzhugs pa 'dra /
mdo ni phyag rgya snol ba 'dra/
sku rgyab na rag ta'i mtsho ma skams pa /
sku mdun na dkyil 'khor gyi rdzas ma 'khrugs pa /
dbus su rig[s] 'dzin rnams gyis bzhugs bral /
rdzogs pa chen po thugs su rjes pa /
sngags 'chang chen po lha gsal dgra 'dul gyis /
sku tshe bstan zhing 'phrin las rgyas gyur cig /

⁶⁷⁷ Unidentified term.

Appendix 7: The Old Lhakhang in the Pin Valley

The Old Lhakhang in Pin, also called the Peling Lhakhang, is one of a cluster of buildings situated in Kungi Village. The temple complex is located slightly apart from the village itself and runs along the cliff edge that descends to the Pin River. The temple complex as a whole contains multiple structures with differing origins and functions. The Old Lhakhang is attached to some of these other structures, including sharing a wall with an adjoining later temple. The overall site may have housed earlier structures, but the Old Lhakhang seems to be the oldest extant building.⁶⁷⁸

The temple was likely built in the mid to late seventeenth century, based on the content and style of the temple's interior murals. During this period, Spiti was nominally governed by the Namgyal Dynasty of Ladakh, which primarily patronized the Drukpa Kagyu tradition, and this influence is evident in the temple.⁶⁷⁹ The temple can also be dated based on its relationship to the Pema Lingpa *terma* tradition, which was introduced to the Pin Valley in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Indeed, the temple today is called both the Old Lhakhang and the Peling Lhakhang, owing to its relationship to the Pema Lingpa *terma* tradition. Contemporary oral history in Pin generally attributes the temple site—and the Old Lhakhang itself—to the eighth century, based on the view that the eighth-century Indian figure Padmasambhava was responsible for establishing Buddhism in the valley. This date is occasionally repeated in popular and scholarly sources on the region.⁶⁸⁰

The rectangular temple is oriented on an east/west axis, with the entrance on the east wall and the main altar on the west wall. The entrance itself is reached through a short hallway that provides access to it and an adjoining temple. All four interior walls of the temple contain murals. They begin about two feet off the ground and extend to the ceiling. All of the interior murals are obscured by smoke damage, locally attributed to an attack by the Gurkhas in the nineteenth century, but also likely a result of the constant use of butter lamps and incense in the small, almost entirely enclosed space. Much of the east entrance wall and part of the western wall are further damaged from a ceiling leak or collapse, which deposited a layer of mud and grit on the paintings' surface. A large wooden altar occupies the center of the west wall, covering the mural's central figure. A large bookcase covers half of the mural on the north wall. There is evidence of preservation or restoration attempts on some of the mural surfaces.⁶⁸¹ In addition to the murals and main altar, there are a large number of statues of varying sizes, as well as metal

⁶⁷⁸ The Old Lhakhang shared the site with at least one other temple, which was dismantled to make space for the new monastery, constructed in the late 1990's.

⁶⁷⁹ For a brief period in the late seventeenth century, Spiti also came under the control of Lhasa.

⁶⁸⁰ See for example August Hermann Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, India. Archaeological Survey. [Reports] New Imperial Series, Vol. XXXVIII, L (Calcutta: Superintendent government printing, India, 1914); Omacanda Hāṇḍā, *Buddhist Monasteries in Himachal Pradesh* (New Delhi: Indus Pub. Co., 1987).

⁶⁸¹ One area on the southern wall appears to be covered with a varnish. Several sections of the murals have residual evidence of circular wiping, perhaps to clean mud off of the surface. Several rectangular patches on the east and south walls indicate a more deliberate cleaning, likely a result of the efforts of a French conservationist, Melodie Bonnat, who began work on the site in 2014.

chorten, all positioned on a raised platform at the rear of the temple. The raised platform spans the entire western wall with short arms extending along the north and south walls.

The Inscription

At some point in the mid-nineteenth century, a series of statues were installed on what appears to be a purpose-built raised platform along the west wall of the temple. A dedication inscription along the upper edge of this raised platform provides some information about the circumstances of the renovation (Figure 43). The inscription and its translation are included in Appendix 8 and Appendix 9. It includes names of the donors and two lineage holders in the Pema Lingpa tradition. The Pema Lingpa lineage figures enable dating the dedication to the late nineteenth century. It is possible that the raised platform predates the inscription. It is also possible that the statues themselves predate the inscription, if one interprets the inscription as describing repairing, painting, or some other ritual act surrounding the statues, rather than the production of new statues. However, this seems less likely than the inscription and statues both being produced at the same time, given the content of the inscription itself.

The inscription is painted in *u-chen* (*dbu can*) or headed script, along the upper edge of the raised platform on the west wall. It consists of four rows of text a few inches high and extending perhaps twenty inches in length.⁶⁸² The inscription extends for some sixty lines, with most lines containing nine syllables.⁶⁸³ The inscription contains four parts. The first section contains general praises for the *dharma*, particularly the *trikāya* and the Buddha Śhākyamuni. Then it describes the Nyingma tradition and the Pema Lingpa lineage specifically. The second section describes the primary donor's motivation and a dedication of merit. The third section provides some details regarding the statues, including a reference to the sculptor. The last section is a further dedication of merit and ends by listing food and drink donations, presumably for the ritual installation of the statues.

The Pema Lingpa Hierarchs

After opening with a few lines of general praise for the Buddha and the three jewels, the first section of the inscription emphasizes the importance of the Nyingma tradition and the person and teachings of Pema Lingpa in particular. This supports the idea that the Pema Lingpa tradition continued to be a core practice in the valley from its introduction in the seventeenth century up to the present. The inscription then highlights two important figures in the Pema Lingpa tradition, presumably alive at, or shortly prior to, the time of the inscription. The text glosses Pema Lingpa as “the great tertön dharma king Pema Lingpa.” It then refers to “the superior speech emanation Kunzang Tenpai Nyima” and “Kunzang Zilnon [Zhepa] Tsal.” The first of these figures, Tenpai Nyima (1843–1891),⁶⁸⁴ was the Eighth Peling Sungrul, or “speech emanation” (*gsung sprul*), a reincarnation line of Pema Lingpa. The second figure, Kunzang Zilnon Zhepatsal (b. ca. 1825),⁶⁸⁵ was the Eighth Peling Tukse or “heart son” (*thugs sras*). The *sungrul* and *thukse* are two of the

⁶⁸² It is difficult to get a sense of the size and appearance of the inscription as a whole, because much of it is blocked by a large *chorten*.

⁶⁸³ The inscription may run more than sixty lines, since the writing is not fully visible and is damaged in several areas. The nine-syllable structure varies in several places, typically when names or other details of the statue installation are included.

⁶⁸⁴ Peling Sungrul Tenpa Nyima (1843–1891) TBRC P2707

⁶⁸⁵ Peling Thugse Kunzang Zilnon Zhepa Tsal (b. 19th c. after 1825) TBRC P2706

three incarnation lineages associated with Pema Lingpa (the third is the Peling Gyalse). Thus the inscription names two of the three main lineage holders for the Peling *terma* active in Tibet at the time.

Tenpai Nyima in particular was an active figure in the incarnation lineage as a whole, as well as within the Peling tradition in the nineteenth century. He authored, among other texts, a collection of biographies of the preceding Peling lineage holders called *Peling Trungrab Tokjod* (*Pad gling 'khrungs rab kyi rtogs brjod*). The biographies describe the Peling hierarchs up to his predecessor, the Seventh Peling Sungrul.⁶⁸⁶ Tenpai Nyima primarily resided at Lhalung,⁶⁸⁷ the main seat of the Peling lineage holders in Central Tibet, which had been granted to the Second Peling Sungrul Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669) by the Fifth Dalai Lama.⁶⁸⁸ Much less is known about the Eighth Peling Tukse, Kunzang Zilnon Zhepatsal.

The inscription then refers to a student of the two Peling lineage holders, a Kunzang Rigzin Gyurme Tsewang. He is otherwise unknown, but presumably also lived in the late nineteenth century. Since he is the last figure named in the inscription and is described as a student rather than a teacher, it seems likely that the inscription was composed during his lifetime. This would date the inscription and the temple renovation to the late nineteenth, or perhaps early twentieth century.⁶⁸⁹ It also seems likely that this person had some connection to the Pin Valley, either being from Pin himself and studying with Tenpai Nyima in Central Tibet, or else being from Tibet and later traveling to Pin. Accounts of Tenpai Nyima's life do not indicate that he traveled to Western Tibet or to Spiti, making it much more likely that this student, or perhaps the primary patron subsequently named in the inscription, traveled between Pin and Tenpai Nyima's seat at Lhalung.

While the dedication inscription does not definitively state that there was a connection between the Peling hierarchs in Tibet and the Peling practitioners in the Pin Valley in the nineteenth century, it seems likely that there was some interaction. Most accounts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries describe regular exchange between Spiti and Tibet, including pilgrimages and extended retreats in Tibet.⁶⁹⁰ Perhaps some of those travelers from Pin visited Lhalung in the course their pilgrimages to Lhasa.

The Donors

⁶⁸⁶ The Seventh Peling Sungrul was Kunzang Nawang Chokyi Lodro (1819–1842) P2697. Dudjom Jigtral Yeshe Dorje later wrote an addendum to Tenpai Nyima's biographies, updating it to include Tenpai Nyima himself, and the other Peling incarnations who lived after Tenpai Nyima's time. It is possible that he utilized information from the documents he read in the Pin Valley, which include biographies of a few earlier Peling hierarchs.

⁶⁸⁷ TBRC G9

⁶⁸⁸ The other main seat for the Peling lineage is in Bhutan.

⁶⁸⁹ It seems unlikely that the inscription would date to a period later than the late nineteenth century. The six figures mentioned in the inscription who were likely from Pin are not known to any of the current residents of Pin, who are frequently able to name and identify family members going back several generations. Nor do any of the figures mentioned appear in documents or inscriptions from Pin dating from the 1920s onward. While this does not rule out the possibility of a later date, important names, like those of the artist, major donors, and regional leaders like the *Gaga* and *Nono*, are usually involved in the rituals and circumstances documented in those sources.

⁶⁹⁰ Indeed, most individuals interviewed from Pin could name one or more family members who had traveled to Tibet prior to the 1950s. Several of these trips took place in the 1910s and 20s. It seems likely that such trips also occurred in the 1890s.

The second section of the inscription concerns the main patron, a woman called “the faithful benefactor Mingzom.”⁶⁹¹ The inscription also names her daughters, Chokgyur Tsering Norgyang and Tsezom Tashi Zangmo Phuntsok. It is interesting to note that the donor and her family members are all women. It is also possible that the inscription identifies Mingzom as a consort. In the text she is called the *chakgya dākinī* (*phyag rgya bde skyid dak ki ni*). If this line is taken to indicate she is a consort, then her likely partner is Kunzang Rigzin Gyurme Tsewang, the last figure named in the preceding verse.

The renovation inscription references a Tsewang Namgyal, who is called the Gyajin Gaga (*brgya bzhing ga ga Tshe dbang Rnams rgyal*). It is unlikely that this is a reference to the king of Ladakh named Tsewang Namgyal, since the dates of his rule are 1753–1782. It seems more likely that this Tsewang Namgyal was the Nono of Pin, particularly given the title *gaga gyajin*. The *nono* family was associated with a temple in Kungri called the Gyajin Lhakhang (*brgya byin, brgya bzhing*) and the Nono was occasionally glossed as *Gyajin* (regarding this temple, see Appendix 10). Thus far the name of the Pin Nonos in the late nineteenth century are unknown, nor has the name Tsewang Namgyal occurred in the other sources from Pin. In 1863, Egerton attested to the existence of the Pin Nono, but referred to him only as the “little” or “*chota*” Nono. Francke reports an inscription found in Rangrik Village in Spiti, which referenced a Nono Tenzin Namgyal (1865–1878), who Egerton likely met.

The Wall Paintings

All four of the temple’s walls contain mural paintings. In some areas, the images are covered by structures (the main altar on the West wall and a bookshelf on the North wall). All of the walls are obscured by damage, with some areas badly washed away. This, and the lack of light, make photography difficult.

The temple entrance is on the East wall (Figure 47). The door is flanked by two large wrathful figures. The South wall (Figure 44) has three large wrathful or *yidam* figures covering a little over half of the surface. Above them are a row of buddhas. A few red-robed monastic figures appear in between the wrathful figures. On the western area of the wall, closest to the central altar, is kneeling figure—perhaps a *naga*—facing an image of Padmasambhava in an architectural structure, likely meant to represent his Copper Colored Mountain paradise (Figure 41). Just below the image of Padmasambhava is an image of a cluster of buildings, possibly mean to depict a monastery or village (Figure 42). The wall below Padmasambhava is blocked by the raised platform. The West wall (Figure 45) is largely obscured by a wooden altar, which stands floor to ceiling. On the southern side of the wall is an assembly of lineage figures surrounding two bodhisattvas. On the northern side of the wall is a damaged figure—possibly another image of Padmasambhava—and lineage figures. A partially visible standing figure facing the central image (which is entirely blocked) gives some indication that the central image may be of Śhākyamuni. There is a vining leaf motif partially visible through slats in the altar. The dedication inscription appears along the edge of the platform on the southern side. The North wall (Figure 46) is also largely obscured by wooden shelves. There are two visible and likely two hidden figures. They are also surrounded by lineage figures. There are dozens of these figures in the wall murals (Figure 43). They are scattered around the larger images of the main deities on the South and North walls, and cover much of the West wall. They are almost all

⁶⁹¹ The name *dzom* seems to be a common name in Pin. It appears frequently in lists of donors contained in the colophons.

depicted wearing red robes and red hats, although some deviate from this. Among them one finds the portrait of Taksang Repa (Figure 10) on the North wall. There is evidence of an attempt to clean some of these figures.

The statues on the raised platform and the platform itself have been repainted, probably in recent decades, given the type of paint. Drips of paint from this renovation are visible on the dedication inscription. Although obscured by the new paint, the platform and the sculptures on it appear to have been installed at the same time. The statues include a four-armed Avalokiteśvara, a medicine Buddha, and Padmasambhava on the southern half of the platform. On the northern half of the platform are statues of Vajrasattva, Maitreya, and Padmasambhava in the form of Guru Dragpo with consort. Around these primary statues, the platform is crowded with smaller portable statues, ritual implements, and several *stūpa*. These statues and objects make it difficult to see and photograph the West wall of the temple.



Figure 40: Padmasambhava's Copper Colored Mountain, South wall of temple, ca. late seventeenth century.



Figure 41: A cluster of buildings possibly depicting a monastery or village, South wall of temple, ca. late seventeenth century.



Figure 42: Section of the dedication inscription.



Figure 43: Monastic figure holding a white box, possibly a *terma* chest, West wall of temple, ca. late seventeenth century.

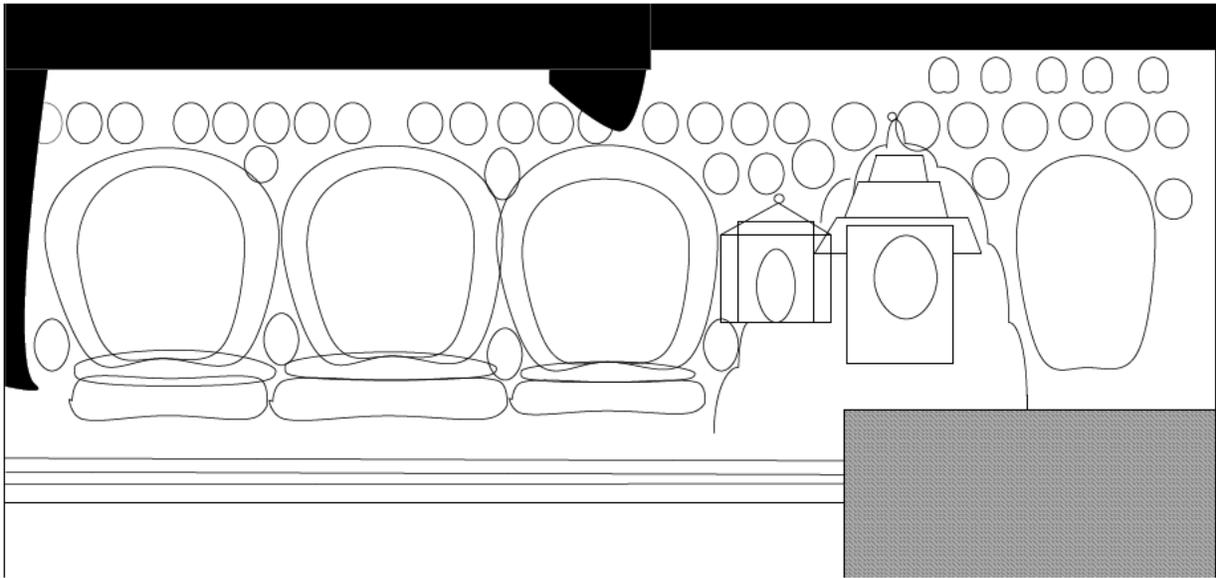


Figure 44: Diagram of South wall of temple.

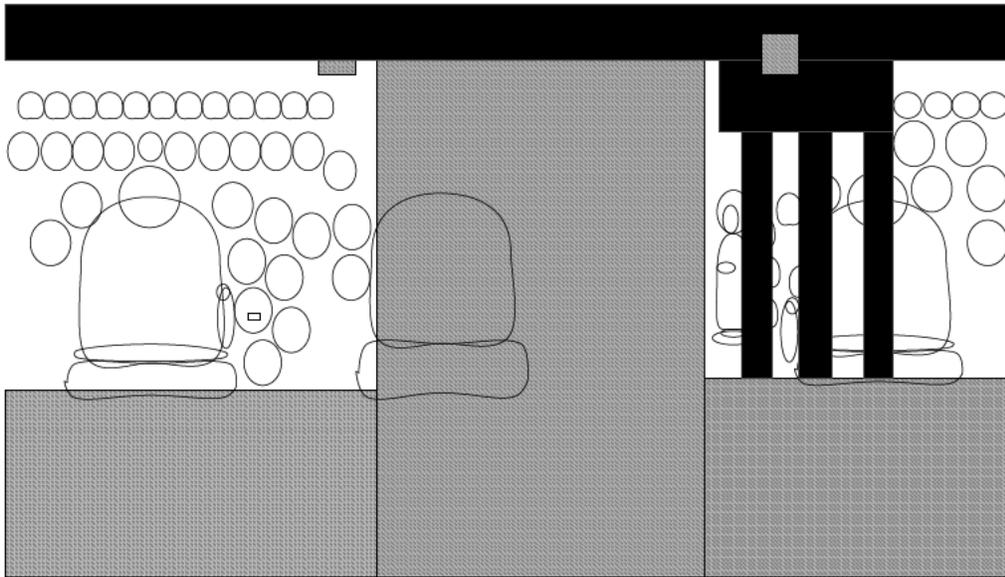


Figure 45: Diagram of West wall of temple.

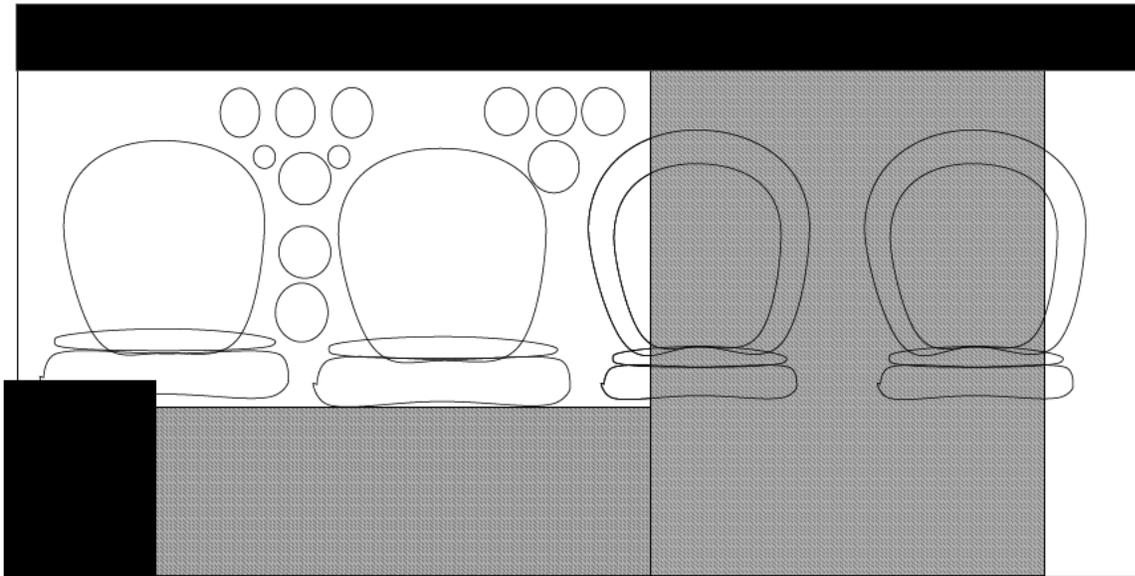


Figure 46: Diagram of North wall of temple.

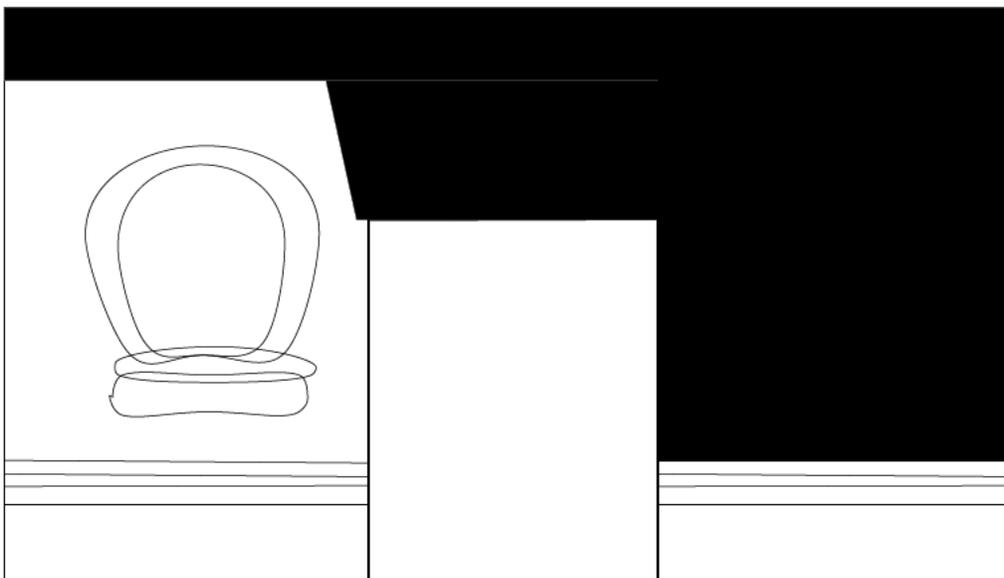


Figure 47: Diagram of East wall of temple.

Appendix 8: Translation of the Renovation Inscription in the Old Lhakang in Spiti

Nama ratna guru bho!

[I prostrate to:] the infinitely luminous *dharmakāya*,
the endlessly manifesting lord of *sambhogakāya*,
the *nirmāṇakāya* expediently manifesting everywhere,
the Buddha Śhākyamuni [who is] indivisible from the three jewels,
the incomparable doctrine that frees countless beings [like the] sun's rays,
the essence of the teachings, the Secret Vajra Vehicle,
the Nyingmapa, the general and specific Ancient Translation,
the Buddha born from the stainless lake (Padmasambhava),
[who is] wondrous and exalted, refined like gold,
the great *Tertön* Dharma King Pema Lingpa,
the superior speech emanation Kunzang Tenpai Nyima,⁶⁹²
Kunzang Zilnon [Zhepa] Tsal,⁶⁹³ the two [who are the basis for] freedom,⁶⁹⁴
and their student Kunzang Rigzin Gyurme Tsewang,⁶⁹⁵
and to the compassionate lineage of teachers,
These statues are reverently offered.
I respectfully prostrate to the vast ocean of refuge.
May I quickly achieve enlightenment from this merit!

As a sign of that happiness and fulfillment,⁶⁹⁶ the generosity and virtue, called *dākinī* Mingzom,
for [those who] take as reality the things accumulated
in ordinary worldly possessions, analogous to name and meaning,
for the sake of purifying the two obscurations and perfecting the two accumulations,
for the sake of the masters and disciples' full accomplishment,⁶⁹⁷
for the fulfillment of the dharma brothers and sisters,
for the countless sentient beings who traverse the path of liberation,
for the benevolent parents whose kindness we cannot repay,
for the men and women who have taken the first step (on the) path,
the faithful benefactor Mingzom and the assembled gathering,⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹² Peling Sungtrul Tenpa'i Nyima (1843–1891) TBRC P2707

⁶⁹³ Peling Thugse Kunzang Zilnon Zhepa Tsal (b. 19th c. after 1825) TBRC P2706

⁶⁹⁴ *Dral* could indicate they both died and are free from samsara, or along with *gnyis* could mean that the two incarnation lines are connected, Sungtrul and Thugse.

⁶⁹⁵ Unidentified figure.

⁶⁹⁶ The phrase *de'i phyag rgya bde skyid dak ki ni ming 'dzom* could also mean “The *dākinī* consort of that (lineage)...”

⁶⁹⁷ I.e. for the sake of the masters and disciples who have died.

⁶⁹⁸ This could also translate to “the field of merit,” perhaps meant to encompass all the figures listed in this dedication.

Chokgyur Tsering Norgyang and Tsezom Tashi Zangmo Phuntsok, who are daughters [of Mingzom],

and all who helped prepare meat, alcohol, and dough for the tantric feast, [we] fully offer the merit from these statues.

Dharmakāya Amitābha and

Saṃbhogakāya Avalokiteśvara and

Nirmāṇakāya Padmasambhava,

all the relics of the *dharmakāya* inside [the statues],

[line damaged] ...the faithful benefactors here, [the one] called Mingzom,

[who] erected the statues of the three victorious ones,

[line damaged] offered forty silver coins

for the upkeep of the artist, the great Khar⁶⁹⁹ master,

the excellent objects of worship delightfully done.

This virtuous benefactor, having made this expression,

[because of] the virtues and merits accumulated in the three times,

and for the sake of the complete realization of the illustrious lama,

offered [these statues] for [his] longevity, now and during his lifetime.

The accumulated virtue and blessings that arise from this [act] and

all the pure merit, the good connections, and

[for] the earth, water, grass, wood, etc., food and drink, and

concordant with the assistance and help,

to make happy in mind and pleasant in speech,

to keep in mind the connection [resulting from] not clinging to wealth, and

together with everywhere [in] this land... unhappy

... enemies of the faithful... [line damaged]

all who wear fur and feathers, eat flesh and drink blood, and

all seeking fortunate births, [those who] drink yogurt, spread death,

the six classes of beings [who are our] parents,

may the lord of the desire realm be achieved by [them]!

Food and drink received from Gyajin Gaga Tsewang Namgyal,⁷⁰⁰

Food and drink received from the young monk [from] Seling,⁷⁰¹

Food and drink offerings were received from all around Kungri.

⁶⁹⁹ Khar is a village in the Pin Valley.

⁷⁰⁰ This is likely the name of the *Nono* of Pin.

⁷⁰¹ Seling is a village in the Pin Valley.

Appendix 9: Tibetan text of the Renovation Inscription in the Old Lhakang in Spiti

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. །།ན་མ་རཏྭ་གུ་ཅུ་བོམ། 2. འོད་སྣང་མཐའ་ཡས་ཚོས་སྐྱེ་འགྱུར་མེད་པ། 3. རང་རྩལ་འགག་མེད་ལོངས་སྤོང་རྫོགས་པའི་བདག། 4. གང་འདུལ་ཅེར་ཡང་རོལ་བ་སྐྱུལ་པའི་སྐྱེ། 5. མཚོག་གསུམ་དབྱེར་མེད་རྣམ་འདྲན་བཞི་པ་ཡི། 6. གཞུང་ལུགས་མེ་འདྲ་ཚ་ཟེར་གངས་འདས་གྱི། 7. བསྟན་པའི་སྣང་པོ་གསང་སྟགས་རྩོ་རྩེ་ཐེག། 8. སྤྱི་དང་ཁྱད་པར་ལྡན་འགྱུར་རྟེན་མ་པ། 9. མངལ་དྲི་མ་གོས་མཚོ་སྐྱེས་རྒྱལ་བ་ཡི། 10. རོ་མཚར་ཁྱད་འཕགས་གསེར་གྱི་ཡང་འཁྱུ་**⁷⁰²། 11. གཏེར་ཚེན་ཚོས་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་བདེ་སྤོང་། 12. གསུང་སྐུལ་གོང་མ་ཀུན་བཟང་བསྟན་པའི་ཉི་མ། 13. ཀུན་བཟང་ཟེལ་གཞོན་ཅ*⁷¹⁹[རྩལ་]་བྲལ་གཉིས། 14. དེ་ཡི་དོས་སྟོབ་ཀུན་བཟང་རིག་འཛིན་འགྱུར་མེད་ཚོ་དབང་
དང། 15. རིམ་བར་⁷⁰³རྒྱུད་པ་བབྱམས་པ་ལུགས་རྩེ་ཚེ། 16. སྐྱེ་རྟེན་རྣོས་ཞབས་རྟོག་ལེགས་པར་སྤུལ། 17. དེ་ཡི་དགོ་བས་སངས་རྒྱས་སྐུར་ཐོབ་ཤོག། 18. སྐབས་གནས་བརྒྱ་མཚོར་གུས་བར་ཕྱག་བཞུགས། 19. དེའི་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བདེ་སྤོང་དཀ་ཀའི་མིང་འཛོམ་ཞེས་པ་དགོ་ལ་
གཏོང་མོད་ཅན། 20. མིང་དོན་མཚུངས་པ་འཛིག་རྟེན་པལ་ལོ་ལ། 21. བསགས་པའི་ཟང་ཟེང་སྣང་པོར་ལེན་པའི་ཐབས། | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Nama ratna guru bho!</i> 2. [I prostrate to] the infinitely luminous <i>dharmakāya</i>, 3. the endlessly manifesting lord of <i>sambhogakāya</i>, 4. the <i>nirmāṇakāya</i> expediently manifesting everywhere, 5. the Buddha Śhākyamuni [who is] indivisible from the three jewels, 6. the incomparable doctrine that frees countless beings [like the] sun's rays, 7. the essence of the teachings, the Secret Vajra Vehicle, 8. the Nyingmapa, the general and specific Ancient Translation, 9. the Buddha born from the stainless lake (Padmasambhava), 10. [who is] wondrous and exalted, refined like gold, 11. the great <i>Tertön</i> Dharma King Padma Lingpa, 12. the Sungtrul Kunzang Tenpai Nyima,⁷¹⁹ 13. Kunzang Zilnon [Zhepa] Tsal,⁷²⁰ the two [who are the basis for] freedom,⁷²¹ 14. and their student Kunzang Rikzin Gyurme Tsewang,⁷²² 15. to the compassionate lineage of teachers, 16. These statues are reverently offered. 17. May [I] quickly achieve enlightenment from this merit! 18. I respectfully prostrate to the vast ocean of refuge. 19. As a sign of that happiness and fulfilment,⁷²³ the <i>ḍākinī</i> called Mingzom, endowed with generosity and virtue, proclaims: 20. for [those who] take as reality the things accumulated 21. in ordinary worldly possessions, analogous to |
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⁷⁰² Illegible syllable, possibly *gyis*.

⁷⁰³ *rim par = rim pa*

⁷¹⁹ Peling Sungtrul Tenpa Nyima (1843–1891) TBRC P2707.

⁷²⁰ Peling Thugse Kunzang Zilnon Zhepa Tsal (b. 19th, after 1825) TBRC P2706.

⁷²¹ *dral* could indicate both figures had died, which would place the date after 1891, or if it is paired with *gnyis* could mean that the two incarnation lines are connected, Sungtrul and Thugse.

⁷²² Unidentified figure.

⁷²³ The phrase *de'i phyag rgya dak ki ni ming 'dzom* could also mean “The *ḍākinī* consort of that (lineage)...” possibly indicating a connection to the Peling Sungtrul and Thugse lines.

22. ཚོགས་གཉིས་རྫོགས་ཤིང་སྤྱོད་གཉིས་སྦྱོང་བྱིང་ཐབས།
23. ལྷ་སྦོལ་དཔོན་དགོངས་པ་རྫོགས་བྱིང་ཐབས།
24. མཚེད་ལུམ་མཚེད་གྲོགས་དྲི་ཚོག་གསོལ་པའི་ཐབས།
25. ལམའ་མཉེས་སེམས་ཅན་ཐར་ལམ་སྦྱོང་པའི་ཐབས།
26. དྲིན་ཅན་པ་མ་འི་དྲིན་ལན་བསབ་པ་ཐབས།
27. བྱ་དང་བྱ་མོས་ལམ་སྤྲོ་ཟེན་པའི།
28. སྤྱིན་བདག་མིང་འཛོ་དང་བསྟེན་ཚོགས་ཞིང་ལ་
29. སྤྱ་མོའི་མཚོག་གྱུར་ཚེ་རིང་ཞོར་གྱུང་དང་
30. ཚེ་མཛོས་བགྱིས་བཟང་མོ་ལུན་ཚོགས་དང་
31. ཁོང་དོ་⁷⁰⁴རྣམས་གྱིས་རོགས་རམ་⁷⁰⁵ག་ཚང་⁷⁰⁶ཟན་བསྟུ་ཚོགས་
ས་ འཁོར་སོགས་བཅས་⁷⁰⁷།
32. སྤྱ་རྟེན་འདི་ལས་བཞབས་⁷⁰⁸རྟོག་ལེགས་པར་ལུལ་⁷⁰⁹།
33. ཚོས་སྤྱ་སྤྱང་བ་མཐའ་ཡས་དང་།
34. ལོངས་སྤྱ་ལུགས་རྗེ་ཚེན་པོ་དང་།
35. སྤྱལ་སྤྱ་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་བཅས་།
36. རང་དུ་ཚོས་སྤྱའི་རིང་སྤྱིས་རྣམས་།
37. **མེད་བཞག་***དང་ལྷན་ཡོན་གྱི་སྤྱིན་བདག་*གནས་
མིང་མཛོམ་ཞེས་པ།
38. རྒྱལ་པའི་སྤྱ་གསུམ་བཞེང་བའི།
39. དཔོན་ཚེན་མཁར་མིང་ལྷ་བཟོ་ལ་ཡོན་ཟས་*
40. *སྤྱ་དངུལ་སྟོར་⁷¹⁰བཞེ་བཅུ་ལུལ།
41. **⁷¹¹མཚོད་གནས་མཉེས་པར་བྱས་པ་ཤིན་དུ་ལེགས་།
42. སྤྱིན་བདག་དགེ་བ་འདི་ཡིས་མཚོན་བྱས་ནས་།
43. རྫོན་བསག་དགེ་དང་དུས་གསུམ་བསགས་པའི་དགེ།
44. དཔལ་ལྷན་གླིའི་ལུགས་དགོངས་རྫོགས་བྱིང་དང་
45. ད་ལྟ་ཞལ་བཞུགས་ཞབས་པད་བརྟན་བྱིང་འབྱུལ།
46. དེ་ལས་བྱུང་པའི་བྱིན་རླབས་དགེ་ཚོགས་དང་།
47. རྣམས་དཀར་དགེ་བ་འདི་ལ་བཟང་འབྲེལ་ཞིང་།

- name and meaning,
22. for the sake of purifying the two obscurations and perfecting the two accumulations,
23. for the sake of the masters and disciples' full accomplishment,⁷²⁴
24. for the fulfillment of the dharma brothers and sisters,
25. for the countless sentient beings who traverse the path of liberation,
26. for the benevolent parents whose kindness we cannot repay,
27. for the men and women who have taken the first step [on the] path,
28. the faithful benefactor Mingzom and the assembled gathering,⁷²⁵
29. who are daughters [of Mingzom], Chokgyur Tsering Norgyang
30. and Tsezom Tashi Zangmo Phuntsok, and
31. all who helped prepare meat, alcohol, and dough⁷²⁶ for the tantric feast!
32. [We] fully offer the merit from these statues.
33. *Dharmakāya* Amitābha and
34. *Sambhogakāya* Avalokiteśvara and
35. *Nirmāṇakāya* Padmasambhava
36. All the relics of the *dharmakāya* inside [the statues],
37. [line damaged] ...the faithful benefactors here, [the one] called Mingzom,
38. [who] erected the statues of the three victorious ones
39. for the upkeep of the artist, the great Khar master,
40. [line damaged] offered 40 silver coins
41. the excellent objects of worship delightfully done.
42. This virtuous benefactor, having made this expression,
43. [because of] the virtues and merits accumulated in the three times,
44. and for the sake of the complete realization of the illustrious lama,
45. offered for [his] longevity, now and during his lifetime.
46. The accumulated virtue and blessings that arise

⁷⁰⁴ Unidentified misspelled word.

⁷⁰⁵ *rog ram* = *rogs ram*

⁷⁰⁶ *'chang* = *chang*

⁷⁰⁷ *bces* = *'ches*, *'ches ba*

⁷⁰⁸ *bzhabs* = ?

⁷⁰⁹ *'phul* = *phul*, *'bul*

⁷¹⁰ *dgor* = *sgor*

⁷¹¹ Illegible word, possibly *bla'i* for *bla'i mcho*.

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| 48. ས་ཚུ་ཚུ་ཤིང་ལ་སོགས་ཟས་སྤང་འབྲེལ་། | from this [act] and |
| 49. ཕན་ཐོགས་རོགས་རམ་བྱེད་ཅིང་རྗེས་མཐུན་དང་། | 47. all the pure merit, the good connections and |
| 50. ལ་བཟང་སྣ་ཞིང་ཡིད་ལ་དགའ་བྱེད་པ་། | 48. the earth, water, grass, wood, etc., food and drink, |
| 51. དྲན་པའི་འབྲེལ་བ་རྒྱ་ཟས་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་མེད་། | 49. concordant with the assistance and help, |
| 52. མི་དགའ་མི་***712་ཞིང་ཚོག་ཚོན་**713་ཡུལ་དུ་ཡུལ་འ
དི་སྐྱོགས་འབྲེལ་ | 50. to make happy in mind and pleasant in speech, |
| 53. ***མིད་པ་714་*****ལ་མི་***དང་ལྡན་པའི་དགའ་ | 51. to keep in mind the connection [for] not clinging
to wealth, and |
| | 52. together with everywhere [in] this land... unhappy |
| 54. ཤ་ཁྲག་སྐྱ་པགས་ཟ་སྤང་གྲོན་པ་དང་། | 53. ... enemies of the faithful... [line damaged] |
| 55. བསད་དར་འི་715་ཞོ་སྤང་དང་ཞེན་སྐལ་རིགས་། | 54. All who wear fur and feathers, eat flesh and drink
blood, and |
| 56. ཕ་མ་དུག་པའི་རིགས་དུགས་སེམས་ཅན་གྱིས་། | 55. All seeking fortunate births, [those who] drink
yogurt, spread death, |
| 57. མཉུར་716་དུ་མདོད་མའི་མགོན་པོ་ཐོབ་པར་ཤོག་། | 56. the six classes of beings [who are our] parents, |
| 58. བརྒྱ་བྱིན་717་ག་ག་ཚེ་དབང་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་འདོན་སེངས་བྱུང་། | 57. May the lord of the desire realm be achieved by
[all the above]! |
| 59. ས་ལིང་དགའ་མིང་བཅུན་པ་ཅུང་འདོན་སེངས་། | 58. Food and drink received from Gyajin Gaga
Tsewang Namgyal, 727 |
| 60. གུང་རི་ཡུལ་སྐྱེ་ནས་གོ་གར་འདོན་སེངས་718་ཅེས་བྱུང | 59. Food and drink received from the young monk
[from] Seling, 728 |
| | 60. Food and drink offerings were received from all
around Kungri. |

⁷²⁴ i.e. for the sake of the masters and disciples who have died.

⁷²⁵ This could also translate to “the field of merit,” perhaps meant to encompass all the figures listed in this dedication.

⁷²⁶ The three foods required for a tantric feast.

⁷¹² Illegible word(s).

⁷¹³ Illegible word(s), possibly *tshom dge*, *dog*, *deg*, *kheg*, or *dug*.

⁷¹⁴ Illegible syllable, possibly *mad pa*.

⁷¹⁵ Illegible.

⁷¹⁶ Illegible.

⁷¹⁷ *brgya bzhing* = *brgya byin*

⁷¹⁸ This phrase for donations of food and drink appears frequently in the manuscript dedication colophons from Pin, variously spelled: *gro gar 'dun si*, *gro gar 'don sings*, or *'don sings gro gar*. It is also the name of a field in Pin.

⁷²⁷ This is likely the name of the Gaga or Nono of Pin, given the title *Gyajin*.

⁷²⁸ Seling is a village in the Pin Valley.

Appendix 10: Records of Transmission from the Gyajin Lhakhang (*brgya byin lha khang*), Pin Valley

The Gyajin Lhakhang (*brgya byin, brgya bzhing*) was a temple in the Pin Valley that was dismantled in recent decades.⁷²⁹ A rather substantial body of assorted materials from the temple were preserved following its demolition, including a large number of documents called records of transmission (*thob yig*). These documents record the particular teachings an individual received and the lineage of teachers who transmitted the teachings to the recipient. The *thob yig* typically terminate with the individual who most recently received the transmission (and likely penned the associated text).

In the case of the texts from Pin, the collection of *thob yig* are related to the Pema Lingpa tradition. They seem to have belonged to a few individuals who studied the Pema Lingpa teachings in Tibet and then settled in the Pin Valley. Their associated *thob yig* indicate that they studied with the most important Pema Lingpa figures of their day, typically receiving their teachings or transmissions directly from one of the three Peling hierarchs: Gyalse Pema Trinle (1565–1642), Sungtrul Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669), or Tukse Tenzin Gyurme Dorje (1641– ca. 1702). These three incarnation lines are all associated with Pema Lingpa: the Peling Sungtrul (*gsung sprul*) or “speech emanation,” the Peling Tukse (*thugs sras*) or mind emanation, and the Peling Gyalse (*rgyal sras*), considered both the body and activity emanations.⁷³⁰

Given the dates of the Peling hierarchs, the recipients of the transmissions likely lived in the mid-seventeenth century. They are likely the same figures responsible for introducing the Pema Lingpa Terma to Pin in the latter half of the seventeenth century. The tradition was certainly well established in Pin by the 1750s, since Pema Lingpa’s name is incorporated into manuscript dedication colophons from Pin dating to that time. The two individuals whose names appear most frequently are Pema Samten and Changchub Zangpo. Other figures mentioned include Tashi Tsering, Tenzin Jigme, Jampa Gyaltsen, Orgyen Tsultrim, and Bonlung Choje. Not all of

⁷²⁹ The temple is also sometimes called the Gyajin Chökhang (*brgya byin mchod khang*), the Jindag Lhakhang (*byin bdag lha khang*), or the Lenta Chökhang, *Brgya byin gling thar mchod khang*. It previously stood where the monastery guest house is today. Interview with Meme Sonam Phuntsok, 2013.

⁷³⁰ The Peling Sungtrul and the Peling Thukse lines have their monastic seat at Lhalung in central Tibet. The Peling Thukse line derives from Pema Lingpa’s son, Dawa Gyaltsen (1499–1587). The Peling Gyalse line derives from Pema Lingpa’s grandson, Pema Trinle (1564–1642). Their monastic seat is Gangteng in Bhutan. Details regarding the Pema Lingpa hierarchs are drawn from Kun bzang bde chen rdo rje Bstan pa’i nyi ma, “Pad gling ’khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa’i me tog,” in *Rig ’dzin padma gling pa’i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che, the rediscovered teachings of the great padma-glin-pa*, vol. 14 (Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975), 511–600; Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*; Holly Gayley, “Patterns in the Ritual Dissemination of Padma Gling Pa’s Treasures,” in *Bhutan: Traditions and Changes*, ed. John Ardussi and Françoise Pommaret, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, v. 10/5 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 97; Gayley, “Introduction”; Padma-glin-pa and Sarah Harding, *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2003); Unknown Author, *Tshul Khrims Rdo Rje’i Rnam Par Thar Pa’i Tshul Sgrub Med Ston Pa’i Me Long / Biography of the Third Padling Sungtrul Tsultrim Dorje (1598-1669)*, n.d.

these figures are necessarily connected to the Pin Valley, however it seems likely that Pema Samten and Changchub Zangpo are, given the large number of their *thob yig* that survive in Pin today. It is possible that some or all of these individuals were part of a group referred to as the Garzha Yogins. Garzha is another name for Lahaul, a region just north of Spiti.

Transmission recipients:

The “Garzha Yogins” (gar zha gi bya bral ba)

- The group referred to as the Garzha Yogins is referenced in GCL_46 and may refer to some or all of the transmission recipients listed in other sources. It reads, “This song of experience (*nyams kyi glu chung*) was composed by Tulku Tsultrim Dorje at the request of Bonlung Choje and some Garzha Yogins.”
- GCL 46: *zhes pa’i nyams kyi glu chung ’di bon lung chos rje dang gar zha gi bya bral ba ’gas bskul ba’i ngor / sprul pa’i sku mchog mchog kun mkhyen gnyis tshul khrims rdo rjes rces?/ dpal za’? (zan?) lung bde gsher (gshegs) ’gyas pa’I spreng pa’I dang mkhro sprin star (?) ’gya (’gyu?) ba’i gnas su sbyar ba’o / dge’o / khus dag (zhus dag)*

Bonlung Choje

- This figure’s name appears alongside the group called the Garzha Yogins, perhaps indicating that he was not part of that group but was present for the same teaching. His name appears in GCL 46, translated above.
- **Translation:** This song of experience/vision (*nyams kyi glu chung*) was composed by Tulku Tsultrim Dorje at the request of Bonlung Choje and some Garzha Yogins.

Tashi Tsering

- From GCL 40, a Rahula wang (*bja’ yi thob yig yod*):
- *sngags ’chang sha gya? Bzang po / zhang ston tshe [b]dag [r]nam [r]gyal / sngags nag gsang sngags rdo rje / Rig ’dzin bgyad ’dzoms rdo rje / rigs ni?nam? dbang sa’i sde? / rtsa ba’i bla ma mtho? ’tshun? ’phri las las rnam rgyal / rgyal sras pad ma ’phrin las / des bdag (po) bkra shis tshe ring la kho / dge zhing gnang ba’o / gza’ yul gyi lung yang thob*

Tenzin Jigme, the “beggar”

- Tenzin Jigme may not be part of the Garzha Yogins group, as he is described as from Shigatse and his name appears only once, in GCL 45”
- ... *zhes pa nyan [gnyen] gzhis ka nas nang po chos mdzad bstan ’dzin ’jigs me ga/go chos dgos zer ba tshul stogs (rtor, rtogs, rgor, rgogs) gyi(s) abrog ri(ti?) ba bro *pa? sgras? pa’o*

Tashin Tsering

- His name appears in GCL 01:
 - *sprul pa’i sku mchog tshul khrims rdo rje/ des bdag sprang po bkra shi tshe ring la snang pa’o/*

Jampa Gyaltzen

- His name appears in GCL 30:

- ... *sprul sku pad ma gling pas / bum thang ri mo can nas gdan drangs pa'o zhus dag/ bdag byams dpa' (r)gyal mtshan gyi dri pa lags so/*

Orgyen Tsultrim

- Orgyen Tsultrim may not be part of the Garzha Yogins group. He is described as from “Kawache,” possibly referring to Kashmir. His name appears in GCL 37:
 - ...*Om nag po ka la rak sha rnad(?) / pod pod phyung phyung spra gri zang zang (?) / lcags kyi srer mos 'byung po'i snying la za / na ga byi ra ya sod/ na ga byi ma li pod sangs gyas kun kyi ngo bo / klu / O rgyan tshul khrims ka ba bcad nas dbus rtsang dkor nas * * yin * stog che (tshe) ba sprul pa yin sprul pa rang gi sems la byung*

Pema Samten

- This is one of the most frequently occurring individuals, with more than half a dozen records of transmission. He often refers to himself as a beggar, (*sprang pan Padma bsam bstan*).

Two transmission lineages for Pema Samten:

Pema Kathang, Life of Padmasambhava, GCL 13

1. O rgyan Pad+ma
2. Ye she tsho gyal
3. Sangs rgyas gling pa
4. Bla ma Ye shes rdo rje
5. 'Od gsal klongs yangs
6. Rgya rma sti Bsod nams rin chen
7. Thang chung dpon no(?)
8. Gnas gong pa Bsod nams bzang po
9. Rab mdzams Dge ba'i blo gros
10. Bstan 'dzin kun dga' nor bu
11. Rgyal sras Bstan pa'i 'byung gnas
12. Rgyal sras Padma phrin las
13. Sprul pa'i sku mchog Tshul khrims rdo rje
14. des bdag Padma bsam bstan la

Pema Kathang, Life of Padmasambhava, GCL 13

1. Padmasambhava
2. Yeshe Tsogyal
3. Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396) P5340
4. Yeshe Dorje (b. 14th c.) P7183
5. 'Odsal Longyang (b. 15th c.) P8773
6. Sonam Rinchen (b. 15th c.) P4682
7. Thangchung Ponno (unidentified)
8. Sonam Zangpo from Nāgong (unidentified)
9. Gewai Lodro, (unidentified) possibly Yanpa Lode (1536–1597) P2654
10. Tenzin Kunga Norbu
11. Tenpai Chungne (b. 16th c.) P2658
12. Pema Trinley (1565–1642) P2659
13. Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669) P1692
14. **Pema Samten** (17th c.)

Five Chronicles of Orgyan Lingpa, GCL 49

1. O rgyan padma
2. Mkha' 'gro Ye shes mtsho
3. O rgyan gling pa
4. Rdo rje gling pa
5. Thugs sras Padma rgyal po
6. Drin Bsod nams dpal 'byor
7. gdung rdud(?) Snyan grags dbang po
8. Khyung tshang slob dpon Dpal ldan

Five Chronicles of Orgyan Lingpa, GCL 49

1. Padmasambhava
2. Yeshe Tsogyal
3. Orgyan Lingpa (b. 1323)
4. Dorje Lingpa (1346–1405) P6164
5. Thukse Pema Gyalpo
6. Sonam Paljor
7. *gdung rdud(?)* Nyandrak Wangpo
8. Palden from Khyuntsang (15th c.)

9. Sprul pa'i sku Sna tshogs rang grol
10. Rgyal dbang Bstan 'dzin grags pa
11. Rgyal sras padma phrin las
12. sprang pan pad+ma bsam bstan

P2909⁷³¹

9. Natsok Rangdrol (1494–1570) P1702⁷³²
10. Tenzin Drakpa (1536–1597) P2654
11. Pema Trinle (1565–1642)
12. **Pema Samten** (17th c.)

Changchub Zangpo

- This is the most frequently mentioned individual. The documents salvaged from the temple contain nearly a dozen of his records of transmission.

Two transmission lineages for Changchub Zangpo:

Peling Padmasambhava Namthar GCL_38

1. Dga' rab rdo rje
2. Shri sing ha
3. O rgyan pad ma 'byung gnas
4. Mkha' 'gro Ye shes mtsho rgyal
5. Ba he ro tsa na
6. Rig 'dzin pad ma gling pa
7. Grub pa kun 'dus
8. Rgyal sras rgyal sras Pad ma 'phrin las
9. Sprul pa'i sku mchog Tshul khriims rdo rje
10. des bdag **Byang chub bzang po** la gngang

Peling Padmasambhava Namthar GCL_38

1. Garab Dorje
2. Shri Singha
3. Padmasambhava
4. Yeshe Tsogyal
5. Bairotsana
6. Pema Lingpa (1450–1521)
7. Drupa Kundu (b. 15th c.) P2655
8. Pema Thrinle (1565–1642) P2659
9. Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669) P1692
10. **Changchub Zangpo** (17th c.)

Padma Kathang, Life of Padmasambhava, GCL 42

1. Bstan 'dzin kun dga' nor bu
2. Rgyal sras Bstan pa'i 'byung gnas
3. Rgyal sras Padma phrin las
4. Sprul pa'i sku mchog Tshul khriims rdo rje
5. des bdag sprang ba **Byang chub bzang po** la dgongs pa

Padma Kathang, Life of Padmasambhava, GCL 42

1. Tenzin Kunga Norbu
2. Tenpai Chungne (b. 16th c.) P2658
3. Pema Trinley (1565–1642) P2659
4. Tsultrim Dorje (1598–1669) P1692
5. **Changchub Zangpo** (17th c.)

⁷³¹ Not certain of this identification.

⁷³² A student of Pema Lingpa, although Pema Lingpa is not listed in this transmission lineage.

Appendix 11: Students, Teachers, and Pilgrims: Members of the Namkha Khyung Dzong Community, 1900–1959

Etaraja's students (some of whom were also his teachers) whose names appear in his *Collected Works* are arranged here alphabetically. They are identified when possible.⁷³³

- Chatral Trinley Chopal (Bya bral phrin las chos dpal)
- Chozin Tsezin Nānyalling, a monk (*btsun pa Chos 'dzin tshe 'dzin gnas nyal gling*)
- Dege Lama⁷³⁴ (Sde dge'i bla ma)
- Drime Ozer, (1881/2–1924) (Dri me 'od zer) Dudjom Lingpa's son, P707
- Getse Tokdan (Dge rtse'i rtogs ldan)
- Jamyang Dragpa, a monk ('Jam dbyangs grags pa)
- Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (Bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje), Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987)⁷³⁵
- Khyuntrul Jigme Dorje (1897–1956) P1656
- Lhaje Karma Konchok Tenzin from Horse Ear in Kham (Lha rje karma dkon mchog bstan 'dzin), possibly a doctor (*lha rje*)
- Lobzang Changchup (Blo bzang byang chub)
- Lobzang Paldrag, a monk (Blo bzang dpal grags)
- Namgyal Dorje, a novice monk (*ban chung Rnam rgyal rdo rje*)
- Namkha Dorje from Ladakh (Nam mkha' rdo rje)
- Ngawang Jigme, a yogi (*rnal 'byor Ngag dbang 'jig med*)
- Ngawang Khyenrab Wangdu Rinpoche, throne holder (*khri 'dzin Ngag dbang mkhyen rab dbang sdud Rin po che*)
- Padma Chopal Tenzin (Padma chos dpal bstan 'dzin)
- Padma Gepal, from Nakchu (Nag chu Padma dge dpal)
- Pema Thadral (Padma mtha' bral)
- Rangjung Dorje, a yogi (*rnal 'byor Rang 'byung rdo rje*)
- Rolpai Dorje from Nangchen (Rol pa'i rdo rje)

⁷³³ Etaraja taught many students in addition to those listed in his *Collected Works*, they include: the Eighth Drukpa Yongzin Tokdan Pagsam Gyatso (b. 19th c.) (rtogs ldan dpag bsam rgya mtsho), who was a student of Śākya Śrī and traveled to Namkha Khyung Dzong with the Seventh Choje Tulku; the Seventh Choje Tulku, who completed six years of retreat under Etaraja (his monastic seat is in Chumar, Ladakh); Sonam Senge Wangchuk (1873–1928), his wife Chime Drolkar (1895–1963), and their son is Khyenrab Lekshay Gyatso Chogye Trichen Rinpoche (1920–2007), who went on pilgrimage to Kailash between 1924–1927; and Lama Chime Rinpoche (1920–2012).

⁷³⁴ This is possibly Derge Lama Kunga Palden (19th-20th Centuries), who counted Khunu Lama Tendzin Gyaltzen and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche among his students.

⁷³⁵ Etaraja records that he composed a text at the request of Dudjom Rinpoche Jigral Yeshe Dorje. I have not pinpointed when these two may have met, other than when the latter was recognized as the reincarnation of Dudjom Lingpa, but it was perhaps when Dudjom Rinpoche was studying in Central Tibet, particularly during his time at Mindroling. In Etaraja's text, he refers to him as Kunkyen Yeshe Dorje.

- Śri Wanratisa (Shri Wan ra tai sa)
- Sonam Norbu (Bsod nams nor bu)
- Trinley Chopal, a monk (Phrin las chos dpal)
- Tsezang Wangmo, a nun (*dge ma* Tshe bzang dbang mo)
- Tsezin, a nun (*a ne* Tshe 'dzin)
- Utpala Zangmo, a nun (*a ni* U ta pa la bzang mo)
- Yana Badra, the tantric priest (*sngags btsun* Ya na ba+dzra)
- Yesang Wangmo, a nun (*btsun* Ye sangs dbang mo)
- Yeshe Palden, from Spiti (d. 1942) (Ye shes dpal ldan)

Pema Lungtok Gyatso's *namthar* records interactions with many students, teachers, and pilgrims. They appear here alphabetically with relevant years and corresponding page numbers, marking their appearances in the *namthar*.⁷³⁶

- Adzom Drukpa (1842–1924), aka Drodul Pawo Dorje (A 'dzom 'brug pa, 'Gro 'dul dpa' bo rdo rje) TBRC P6002. Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in 1910, 15
- Choktrul Rinpoche (Mchog sprul rin po che), Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him at Shelri, 1946, 93; Choktrul goes to Namkha Khyung Dzong, 95; Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in India, 1960, 107; 1964, 110, 111, 112
- Damkye Lama, 1946, 95; 1955, 104
- Dephel Dorje, *chakzöd* “steward” (Bde 'phel rdo rje) 1939, 80
- Dudjom Rinpoche Jigral Yeshe Dorje, Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in India, 1960, 107
- Gelong Karkyab Tulku Tsewang Kunzang Gyatso (*dge slong* Kar skyabs sprul sku tshe dbang kun bzang rgya mtsho), 1946, 92
- Gelong Sonam from Dunchu, in Tso Pema, 1939, 81; 1955, 102
- Gen Namkha Drosal 1946, 95
- Getsul Trime Gyatso in India 1962/3, 109
- Gojo Lama, camp (*sgar*) supervisor (Go 'jo bla ma, 1899–1910), 8–15; 1939, 81;
- Gonpo Tashi (Mgon po bkra shis), 45, 78
- Goser Onpo Khyenrab Gyatso, a student of Dudjom Lingpa and an early teacher of Pema Lungtok Gyatso at Zhichen
- Gyangdrak Lama, 1954, 99
- Jigme Dorje, monastic disciplinarian (*chos khrims pa*) 1939, 81
- Karma Dongag Tenzin (Kar+ma mdo sngags bstan 'dzin) 1934/5, 72; 1939, 79
- Karma Wangyal from Shemen (*Shes man*) 1946, 94
- Khenpo Khushab Chöden Rinpoche (*mkhan po sku zha bs* Chos ldan Rinpoche) in 1938 (76)
- Khyuntrul Jigme Dorje (Khyung sprul 'Jigs med nam mkha'i rdo rje, 1897–1956) P1656, 1939, 80; 1954, 101
- Lama Chime Rinpoche (1920–2012), born in Ngari near Pretapuri. Studied the Dudjom Tersar with Etaraja. Later became a student of Dudjom Rinpoche. In 1940 he offers a maṇḍala to Pema Lungtok Gyatso, 1940, 83

⁷³⁶ Tshe dbang rdo rje, *Padma lung rtogs rgya mtsho rnam thar*.

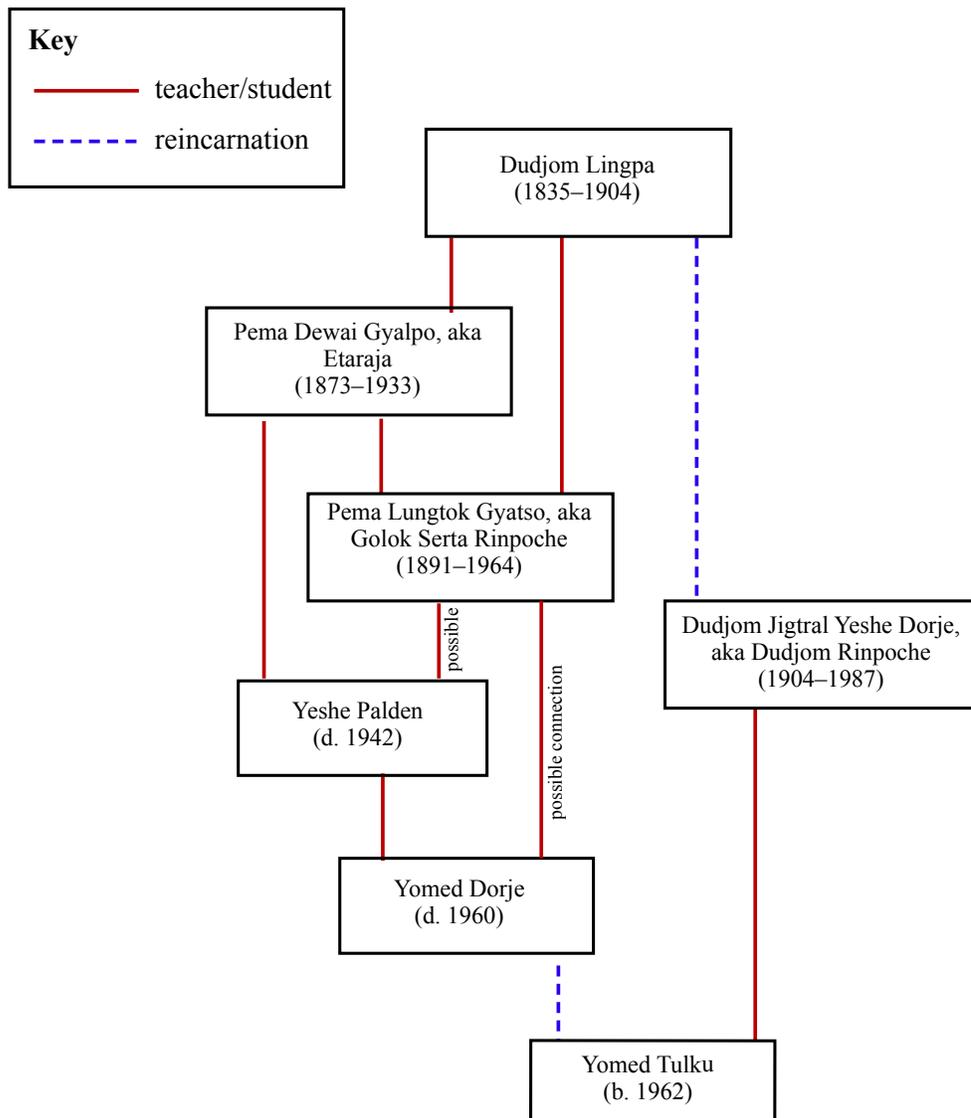
- Lama Jampa Rabgye from lower Mustang, Lo Chumik, he received Pema Lungtok Gyatso on a horse in 1946, 90
- Lama Karma Trinley, 1946, 92
- Lama Khyentse Dorje, 1946, 92, 93
- Lama Tsechok Dorje from Karma, Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in India, 1960, 107
- Lobzang Chopel Shangpa Rinpoche ,Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in Chaknak in Chang(thang) 1946, 94
- Ngawang Namgyal *umze* “chant master,” 1939, 81;
- Ontrul Rinpoche (Dbon sprul rin po che), 1952/3, 98; 1954, 99;
- Pema Kundrol, 1952, 97
- Pema Jigme Chöying Rangdrol, Second Degyal Rinpoche, Pema Lungtok Gyatso’s son (1937–c. 1987), 1937, 79
- Rigzang Dorje, 1952, 97
- Sherig Dorje-nön (Shes rig rdo rje mnon), 1964, 110
- Shangpa Rinpoche. He taught the Rinchen *terzöd* in Ngari, Pema Lungtok Gyatso offered him paper, 1951, 96
- Shalu Rinpoche, 1939, 80 received Troma empowerment
- Thekchok Dorje, a cook, 1939, 81
- Tengyu Tulku, 1946, 93
- Tenzin Chopel, Sent Pema Lungtok Gyatso a letter inviting him to Tso Pema in 1952, 97; in Tso Pema, 1955, 102
- Tokden Shakya Shri (Rtogs ldan shakya shri, 1853-1919), TBRC P620 Pema Lungtok Gyatso meets him in 1910, 16
- Tretruk Lama, 1946, 93
- Tsultrim Gyatso, head cook, 1939, 81
- Yeshe Dorje, 1939, 80

He also interacted with government officials, mostly in Ngari.

- a government official had a son born with wondrous signs in Mustang, 1937, 76
- district official Damdrak of Shemen (*Shes man*)
 - he tells Pema Lungtok Gyatso the road to a cave is bad, 1946, 92
- the district official Nyima Tsering
 - Pema Lungtok Gyatso stays at his house ca. 1946, 93
- Garpon
 - the Garpon and the “grandson of the local authority” (*sa gnas*), 1952, 96
- Garpon
 - told Pema Lungtok Gyatso he could not stay in a cave, 1954, 99
- government official Amchi Wangchuk of Draktsa (Brag rtsa’i Am Chi dbang phyug)
 - 1954, 99; 1955/6, 104

Appendix 12: Chart of the Dudjom Tersar tradition's relationships to figures from Spiti

Figure 48: Chart of the Dudjom Tersar tradition's relationships to figures from Spiti



Appendix 13: Yellow Dedication Inscription in the Guru Lhakhang, Kungri

The Guru Lhakhang was built in the late 1930s, prior to 1942. This inscription is located in the temple vestibule, above the entrance. It comprises twenty-eight lines of text on yellow paint, encased by a decorative frame of bells, scrollwork, scarves, pearls, etc. Illegible characters are indicated with an asterisk.



Figure 49: Yellow Dedication Inscription in the Guru Lhakhang, ca. 1940

The Inscription:

ལྷ་མོ་མཚོ་སྐུ་འཛིན་ལམས་རྒྱལ་དང་རྒྱལ་སྐུ་རྒྱལ་གཅིག་སྟེང་རྒྱལ་ཉིད་གངས་***འཚོ་འོང་བཞུགས།།
 ལྷ་མོ་རྒྱལ་ཀུན་གསལ་གསལ་ཕྱིན་ལས་འཁོར་ལམ་འོ་དབང་ལྷག་རྒྱལ་བ་མཚོ་སྐུ་རྩི་ཆེ་འཆང་ཆེན་དཔལ།།
 ལྷ་མོ་ལང་སྐུ་བསམ་གྱིས་མི་ལྷུང་གངས་མེད་འཛིན་རྟེན་ལམས་ཀྱི་འདུལ་བྱ་དབྱིངས་སུ་དགྲི་བ་ཡི།།
 ལང་འདུལ་ཡི་ཤེས་སྐྱེ་འཁྲལ་རོལ་བའི་རབ་འབྱམས་རྒྱལ་བ་སྐུ་དང་བཅས་པ་མ་ལུས་ལུས་མེད་ལ།།
 བདག་སོགས་མཁའ་ཉམ་གྱོ་ཀུན་འོང་རྒྱལ་གངས་མཉམས་ལུས་སྐུ་མི་ཕྱི་དང་བརྒྱུ་སྐོ་ཉམ་ཕག་བཞུགས།།
 འཁོར་འདས་ཚས་ཀུན་གདོད་ནས་མཚོག་སྐྱིན་རང་ཤར་མིན་མོད་སྟག་སྐོའི་སྐང་སམ་ཏེ་རབ་ཏུ་འཕུལ་བར་བྱ།

ཅ་བ*ང་ལག་དམ་ཚོག་ཉམས་ཚག་མདོར་ན་ཕྱིག་པ་མི་དགེའི་ཡས་གྱུར་ཐམས་ཅད་སྡིང་ནས་བཤགས་།
 རྒྱལ་པའི་ཞལ་གསུང་ཟབ་གསང་དམ་ཚོས་ཚུལ་བཞིན་དགོངས་མཛད་དགེ་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་ལ་རྗེ་སྲུ་ཡི་རང་དོ།
 ཕྱོགས་དུས་ཀྱི་དུ་རྒྱལ་འདྲེན་རྒྱལ་སྐུ་ཚོགས་ཀྱི་སླ་མེད་ཐེག་དགུའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐོར་དུ་གསོལ།
 རྒྱལ་བསྟན་འཛིན་སྐྱོང་སྡེལ་པའི་སྐྱེ་ཆེན་འཕགས་ཚོགས་ཐམ་ཅད་སྐྱ་ཚོ་ཞབས་བད་བསྐལ་བརྒྱུ་བསྟན་བཞུགས་གསོལ།
 རྒྱལ་པའི་སྐྱ་གཟུགས་གསེར་དངུལ་བཞེངས་རིན་ཆེན་རྒྱན་ལྷན་འདྲིའི་མཚོན་འཁོར་འདས་ལམ་གསུམ་དགེ་ཅ་ཀྱི།
 འཁོར་གསུམ་ཀ་དག་དབྱིང་སྲུ་གོལ་ཞིང་སྐར་ཡང་སྐྱལ་བ་བསམ་འདས་**བྱའི་དཔལ་དུ་བྱོན་པར་བཟློ།

འདི་ལྟར་བད་འོད་ཞིང་མཚོག་ར་ཏ་ན་འི་སྡིང་།
 བཤོད་འདོད་སྐལ་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་བུ་དེད་དཔོན་རྣམས་།
 དང་པའི་ཕྱག་མཚོད་གྲུ་གཟིངས་བསྟེན་མཛོད་ཅིག།
 དམ་པའི་ཐུགས་བསྐྱེད་སྤིང་མཚོའི་པ་རོལ་འགོ།

ཨོ་རྒྱན་མདས་རྒྱས་གཉིས་པའི་སྐྱ་བསྟན་ཁྱུང་པར་ཅན་འདི་བཞིན་བཞེངས་པོར་མཛད་པ་པོ་རང་གི་ཅ་བའི་སླ་མ་དཔལ་ལྷན་
 ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྗེ་རྗེ་⁷³⁷མཚོག་ནས་གསར་དངུལ་ཡུ་བྱ་ཅུ་ལྷ་ཏི་ག་སྡེ་ཤེལ་སོགས་རིན་འབའ་སྐོར་མོར་གངས་སྲུ་པབ་སྟེ་ཁྱི་ཕྱི་སྐག་མང་
 པོ་ཡོད་པ་རྣམས་དགོན་པའི་བཀའ་དེབ་ནང་དུ་འཁོད་ཡོད།⁷³⁸

དགོན་པ་གཞུང་ནས་སྐོར་སྡིང་སྡིང་སྐྱོང་ཅིག།⁷³⁹ སྐོར་གསར་ཅིག་སྡིང་ལྷ་བརྒྱ། སྡིའུ་འབྲུ་ཁལ་བརྒྱ་ཅུ།
 སོག་འབྲུ་ཁལ་ལྷ་བརྒྱ། སྐོ་ཁལ་བཞི་བརྒྱ་འབྲས་ཁལ་གསུམ། བཟང་བ་འབྲུ་དང་ལྷག་གསུམ། ཐ་ཇ་སེར་གསུམ་ཅུ་སོ་ལྷ།
 མར་ཕྱེ་དུག་ཅུ་རེ་ལྷ། ཤ་རྒྱར་ར་ལྷག་བརྒྱ།

དད་ལྷན་སྐྱེན་བདག་ག་ག་⁷⁴⁰ནས་འབྲུལ་འབབ་བྱུང་རི་རྣམས་ཐོ་བཀོད་པར་ཐོག་མར་ལྷག་གོང་⁷⁴¹ཆེན་མཉམ་མ་རྗེས་ནས་མ
 དུ་ནི་ལའི་ཁ་བརྒྱན་ལེགས་བག་ཅིག། གསེར་ཏི་ལ་གཅིག་སྐོར་སྡིང་རྒྱ། ཆར་སྡེ་⁷⁴²དཔོན་ནས་གསེར་ཏི་ལ་གཉིས།
 སྐོར་སྡིང་ལྷ་བརྒྱ་སྐྱག་དགོན་པ་⁷⁴³ན་སྐོར་སྡིང་གསུམ་བརྒྱ། ལྷག་རྗེ་རྗེ་སྐོར་སྡིང་བརྒྱ།
 ལྷ་མ་བསོད་པ་ནས་སྐོར་སར་གསུམ་བརྒྱ་རྒྱ་བའི་ལྷ་མ་⁷⁴⁴ནས་སྐོར་སར་བརྒྱ་སྡིང་སྡིང་ལོ་ལོ་⁷⁴⁵སྐོར་སྡིང་བརྒྱ་སྐོར་སར།
 ཏྲང་འདི་⁷⁴⁶ལྷ་རྒྱན་ཚོ་བརྟན་⁷⁴⁷ནས་སྐོར་སར་སྡིང་བསྐོར།

⁷³⁷ “From my root Lama Palden Yeshe Dorje (d. 1942)...”
⁷³⁸ “...are written in the monastery’s book.” This book is known to the elders from Kungri but its location is unknown. As of 2014, it was last seen over a decade ago.
⁷³⁹ “To erect the *gonpa*, two-thousand and ten coins of the old currency, one-thousand and five-hundred coins of the new currency, one-hundred and ten weight (*khal*) of *snyi* grain, fifty weight of *sog* grain, forty weight of wheat (*gro*), three weight of rice (*bras*), “good” grain and three tea [bricks], thirty-five *tha* tea, sixty-five measures of butter, ten measures of sheep and goat meat [were gathered].”
⁷⁴⁰ The phrase “the faithful benefactor Gaga” may refer to a person named Gaga or else to a person with the title Gaga. In the latter case, this may indicate that the administrative position of Gaga was still in place in Spiti in the mid-twentieth century.
⁷⁴¹ Lhug (Lhag) Village is likely related to Lhagpa Gonpa, a monastery with which Yeshe Palden was affiliated in Ngari. For the location, see TBRC G2LS545.
⁷⁴² Charti (Char sti), unidentified location, possibly in Poo Tehsil, Kinnaur.
⁷⁴³ Lhagpa Gonpa, a monastery with which Yeshe Palden was affiliated in Ngari. See TBRC G2LS545.
⁷⁴⁴ This could refer to a person with the title or designation of Gyu Lama, or else meant to refer collectively to the all the lama from Gyu Village.

ཉེན་འདྲིར་སྟོ་བོ་བ་ཚེ་རིང་ནས་གསར་དོ་ཨ་ན་གསུམ་གྱི་ཉེ་ལ་དང།⁷⁵⁴ ལྷོར་རྗེ་བཞི་བཅས་འབྲེལ་བ་ལུལ།
 བོ་བོ་བ་སྟོ་བ་བཟང་དོ་རྗེ⁷⁵⁵ ལ་སྲུང་འདུབ་བད་རག་ཁ་བརྒྱན་བྱས་པ་གཅིག།
 ཡང་བོ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སྐྱ་ཚེ⁷⁵⁶ རོག་ན་སྟོར་བྱེད་ལྡ་བརྒྱ་འབྲེལ་བར་ལུལ།
 གསོལ་རས་དང་སྐྱུན་འབྲེད་སྟོམ་སྟོར་ལྡ་བརྒྱ་བྱང་།
 ལྷ་ཆ་⁷⁵⁷ལ་སྟོར་ཉེན་འདྲིར་འབྲེལ་ཐོབ་བསོད་ནམས་སྤྱིན་ཆེན་ལས།
 རི་མྱིད་བདུད་ཚི་ཆར་རྒྱན་རབ་ཏུ་འབབ།
 དེ་མྱིད་འགྲོ་ལུན་**གཉིས་དྲི་མ་དག།
 ཕུམ་གཅིག་པདྨ་འོད་དུ་བསྟོད་པར་བསྟོ།
 དེར་ཉི་རྒྱལ་དབང་པདམའི་ཞལ་རས་གེ་སར་བཞད་འཇལ་བཀྲ་རེ་ཤིས།
 ལྷོན་གྲོལ་གདམ་དག་ཟེལ་*བསྐལ་བཟང་བུང་བ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤིང་།
 བདུད་ཚི་ལྷོང་གྲོལ་ཐེག་ཆེན་སྐྱ་དབྱངས་ལུར་ལུར་བཀྲ་ཤིས་དེ།
 ཉེན་ཏུ་སྟོགས་ཤིང་སྐྱ་དང་ཡེ་ཤིས་ཉི་མཁའ་བཞིན་བརྟལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཤོག །།

⁷⁵⁴ “For making these statues, Tsering gave 3 anna.” An anna is a unit of currency equal to one-sixteenth of a rupee; usage ceased in India in 1957.

⁷⁵⁵ Lobzang Dorje the craftsman

⁷⁵⁶ སྐྱ་ཆ = སྐྱ་ཆ for the craftsman’s wages

⁷⁵⁷ སྐྱ་ཆ = སྐྱ་ཆ

The inscription transliterated:

Line 1: E ma ho / Snang srid chos sku'i zhing khams rgyal dang rgyal sras rdul gcig steng rdul nyid grangs *** 'tsho zhing bzhugs/ /khyad par rgyal kun gsang gsum phrin las 'khor lo'i dbang phyug rgyal ba mtsho skyes rdo rje 'chang chen dpal // sprul ba lang sprul bsam gyis mi khyab grangs med 'jig rten khams kyi 'dul bya dbyings su dkri pa yi/ /gang 'dul ye shes sgyu 'khral rol ba'i rab 'byams rgyal

Line 2: ba sras dang bcas pa ma lus lus med la/ bdag sogs mkha' nyam gro kun zhing rdul grangs mnyams lus sprul mi phy* dad brgya'i sgo nyas phag bgyi'o/ 'khor 'das chos kun gdod nas mchog sprin rang shar min mod lhag blo'i blang sam* te rab tu 'bul bar bya/ rtsa ba*an lag dam tshig nyams chag mdir na sdig pa mi dge'i yas gyur thams cad snying nas bshags / /rgyal pa'i

Line 3: Zhal gsung zab gsang dam chos tshul bzhin dgongs mdzad dge tshogs kun la rje su yi rang ngo/ phyogs dus kun du nram 'dren rgyal sras tshogs kyi bla med theg dgu'i chos kyi 'khor lo bskor du gsol/ /rgyal bstan 'dzin skyong spel pa'i skye chen 'phags tshogs thams cad sku tshe zhabs bad bskal brgyar bstan bzhugs gsol/ /rgyal pa'i sku gzugs gser dngul bzhengs rin

Line 4: chen rgyan ldan 'di'i mtshon 'khor 'das lam gsum dge rtsa kun/ /'khor gsum ka dag dbying su grol zhing slar yang sprul ba bsam 'das **bya'i dpal du byon par bsngo/ | / 'di ltar pad 'od zhing mchog ra ta na'i gling/ /bgrod 'dod skal ldan skyes bu ded dpon rnam/ /dang pa'i phyag mchod gru gzings bsten mdzhod cig/ /dam pa'i thugs bskyed srid mtsho'i pa rol 'gro/ | O rgyan mdas

Line 5: rgyas gnyis pa'i sku brnyan khyad par can 'di bzhin bzhengs por mdzad pa po rang gi rtsa ba'i bla ma dpal ldan ye shes rdo rje mchog nas gsar dngul ** yu byu ru mu ti ga spo shel sogs rin 'ba' sgor mo grangs su phab ste khri phrag mang po yod pa rnam dgon pa'i bka' deb nang du 'khod yod/ | / dgon pa gzhung nas sgor snying stong phrag cig / sgor gsar cig stong lnga brgya/ snyi'u 'bru khal brgya cu/ sog 'bru khal lnga bcu/ gro khal

Line 6: bzhi bcu 'bras khal gsum/ bzang b 'bru dang sbag gsum/ tha ja ser gsum cu so lnga/ mar bre drug cu re lnga/ sha rgyur ra lug bcu/ /* dad ldan sbyin bdag gaga nas 'bul 'bab byung ri rnam tho bkod par thog mar lhug grong chen mnyam rdor nas I*mda ni la'i khra brgyan legs bag cig / gser to la gcig sgor snying rgya/ / char* sti dpon nas gser to la gnyis / sgor rnying lnga bcu / lgug [lhag] dgon pa na sgor

Line 7: rnying gsum bcu/ lhag rdo rje sgor rnying bcu/ bla ma bsod pa nas skor sar gsum brgya/ rgyu ba'i bla ma nas sgor sar bcu/ skyid gling no no sgor rnying bcu/ sgor sar / rtang 'di U rgyan tshe brtan nas sgor sar rnying bsgor/ bsam chos 'phel nas sgor rnying sgor sar nyi shu 'bru khal/ 'ga' drug tshe ring sgor/ phur bu sgor sar/ me me sman lags sar / grong stod gs** 'phel sgor sar 'ru khal / tshe bstan bu khrid sgor rnying // [added line above]

Line 8: zla ba bu khrid sgor sar / bstan 'dzin sgor sar/ nyi ma dngos grub sgor rnying / me me tshe ring stom ldan nas sgor sar / yon ldan pa sgor / dkar b*d ba ** pa sgor / no mo cung 'ja' / gong ma bkra shis sgor / ar ma sgros ma sgor / byam ba tshul khriims sgor / bsam 'ga' drug sgor

sar nyi shu sgor rnying / mkhar tshe dbang 'ga' drug sgor sar / sgor rnying ** tse brtan sgros ma sgor / tshul khirms sgor rnying sgor sar / slob bzang sgor sar

Line 9: sgor rnying/ 'jam nya sgor/ kun bzang mnam sgrol sgor sar sgor rnying/ U rgyan sgor / dmig dmar sgor sar/ btsun * sgor/ rtam 'byung sgor sar/ Padma tshe dbang sgor sar/ tshe dbang sgor 'gru khal / me me ngag dbang sgor sar sgor rnying / chos 'dzin dbang mo sgor 'ja' / phur bu sgor / bsod nam 'ga' drug bsam gtan chos 'phel gnyis skram ra / tshul lim bzang mo gu la tshe 'dzom tshe ring

Line 10: bsam stom ldan sar/ *** 'ga' drug bzhi'i sgor/ klong gsal nas pha ma'i don du sgor rnying/ bston nams btsun pa cung na sgor rnying/ bu brid bzang mo rdo rje ma bsam btan dbang mo skyid 'dzom bzhi nas sgor/ bu brid dpal rdzom sgor/ nor rgyas sgor / tshe dbang sgor/ no mo che sgor/ btsun cung pa sgor/ me me hri dar sgor/ na mkha' sgor dang ja bag chung/ se led ma sgor phyed/ ti ling

Line 11: ** skor *** bstan 'dzin chos gro sgor rnying lnga bcu nga gcig sgor sar lnga bcu yang sgor bzhi bcu'i 'dub bu/ gyu spa shal/ blo blo sgor/ sangs rgyas dngo grub sgor/ bsod nams sgor/ 'ga' drug bzang mo gyu cig/ 'ga' drug pa sgor/ 'jigs med chos 'byor gnyis nas sgor/ ti ling yul lha nas sgor phyed drug dang lhar/ thar lam rdo rje sgor/ tshul khirms sgros btsun pa sgor/

Line 12: ma'i sgor sar / 'gar mo sgor / bu khrid dbang mo sgor gyu cig/ bkra sis sgor rnying dang gyu gcig/ tshing skyid 'dzom gyu/ bsod nams pa sgor/ slob bzang phun tshogs *'u/ sa 'grub sgor sar/ tshe brgyad 'ga' drug slob bzang bkra shis pa sang bzhi'i sgor/ me me sa nas lug/ tshe ring mi 'gyur 'ga' gnyis sgor re/ smud tshe dbang nas sgor rnying

Line 13: sgor sar zhe gcig/ tshe ring bkra shis sgor/ dkar rgyud ma sgor/ 'ga' drug nor g.yang bkra shis don grub gsum ma skram re re/ 'gyur med sgor/ tshe rten cho spel sgor/ dngos grub chos gro sgor/ sgros ma tshe ring sgor/ rnam sgrol sgor gyu/ rdo rje rnam rgyul sgor/ chos nyid sgor/ rdo rje sgor/ brtan 'dzin sgor/ bkra shis sgros ma sgor/ gyu/ bsod nam tshe ring sgor /

Line 14: dkar rgyud na sgor/ chos bzang na sgor/ bkra shis nas sgor brgyad/ kun ldan sgor/ rdzo nas skram/ dngos grub ma skram/ tshid g.yur 'dzom sgor/ bskal bzang ma skram/ 'gyur med nas g.yu chung gnyis/ padma bzang mo 'ja'/ sangs rnams me me ol nyog sgor so / 'brub rgyas sgor rnying sgor sar/ mon zhi'i sgor/ yon tan kon ta ya/ gu ru nas sgor/ 'jigs med sgor/

Line 15: bsaM gtan dngos grub sgor/ tshing dngos grub sgor ga/ Aurgyan tshe ring sgor/ tshe dpal sgor/ tshe dbang sto brgyas sgor/ bsod nas 'ga' drug sgor/ non sgrub sgor/ bstan pa tshe ring sgor/ tshe btan dngos grub sgor/ bu chen gu ru sgor bstan 'dzin 'ga' drug sgor/ chos sgor sgor / bstan 'dzin *ngos grub sgor/ tshe dbang ma sgor chos skyid byu/ tshe rdo

Line 16: rje sgor/ btsun pa sgor / rdo rje bzang mo sgor phyed gnyis/ sku 'dzom bu brid sgor padma chos sgro *ya/ no cung 'un sgor/ dkon mchog bzang mo grogs tshe 'das don sgor/ tsob ga ti sgor/ bstan 'jon glo gros sgor/ skyid 'dzom sgor/ padma sgu 'dzom sgor/ rdzo no che **/ sgros ma *dza'/ dpal rjom zu zid sgor byu ru/

Line 17: smon lam sgor/ bkris bzang mog.yu/ tshing phun tshogs sgor/ kun shang sgor/ g.yur
'dzom bu brid skri/ smi* drag sgor/ bsaM tshe sgron 'ja/ no ching dngos grub sgor g.yu khra/
padma tsho mo sgor/ rgyu tshang gong ma bzang mo sgor/ nal se sgol sgol sgor/ baM baM ka
naM can sgor/ don 'grub che rang sgor rnyi pa *** *s kha tshe ring sgor/ sgros ma tshe ring sgor/

Line 18: no cang sgor/ no mo cung sgor tshing dgos 'byor sgor/ phyag chung tshe bsgrub rdo rje'
sgor rnying/ grub thob sgor/ gung ri padma dngos grub sgor phyed/ 'ga'ra tshe ing sgor rnying/
'jam dpal sgor rnying/ 'gryur med d* ba gyi thur ma/ phun tshos sgor rnying/ jo ba tshe dbang
**/ smag ba sgor/ Aor rgyan chos sgro sgor/ * yi shes sgor/ rdo rje sgor/ 'jigs med sgor/ dkon

Line 19: bu brid sgor */ 'ga' drug sgor/ bsaM gtan tshe bsgrub sgor/ mE bla ma sgor/ dbang
phyug sgor rnying/ ching 'grub sgor *dzi/ tsud padma dbang rgyal sgor/ tshe brgyad skor/ dal
'byor sgor rnying/ btsun pa sgor/ bsod nams dbang bsdu sgor/ mE po le sgor rnying phun tshoT
rnam rgyal sgor/ tshe dbang sgros m sgor sar/ me ching stom ldan sgor/ dbos grub ma sgor/ tshe
dbang dgos brub sgor/ ser po sgo sar

Line 20: yang mkhar kun thub bu brid gnyis 'ja' rE/ bkris bzang mo g.yu/ g.yur 'dzom g.yu/
yang sang nam sangs rgyas dngos grub sgor/ bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal sgor/ dkar sbob sgor/ dkar
rgyid chos sgro sgor/ dkon mchog dngos grub sgor/ kham pa don grub rnam rgyal sgor/ bzang po
sgor ** phun tshoT rnyam rgyal sgor/ bar na * la khirms sgor rnying sgor sar/ rdo rje dngos grub
sgor/ bsam kun 'dzom

Line 21: yar len g.yu byur bcas/ 'jigs med 'ja'/ bkris tshe rtan sgor/ bkris bzang mo sgor/ rtam
'grin tshe 'das don sgor/ cho* sgros sgor/ dkar rgyud 'ja'/ bu tshe 'das sgor/ tshing rtam mgrin
sgor/ bskal bzang sgor/ tshe dbang sgor/ slob bzang dar rgas sgor/ rtam mgrin mgon po sgor/
btsun pa sgor/ tshing sgul sgor/ tshe jing sgor/ byang 'dren sgor/ Aol nyog sgor/ dpal rdzom po
shal

Line 22: byam ba sgor/ bas ma dpal mo sgor/ nga ddbang sgor/ bsod naMs dngos grub sgor
tsheng sgrol dkar sgor/ skyin 'dzom sgor phyed/ rdzo rnyon pa sgor 'ja'/ ja ni sgor rdo dngos
grub sgor/ bsaM 'bel sgor lnga/ bkris bzang mo sgor/ sa ling mE kun bzang skor/ bkris sgor/
skyin 'dzom g**** gyi yar len gnyis/ mgon po gser zho gang * zla ba sgor

Line 23: dbur rgyan sgor/ bu brid bzang mo sgor/ gu ling *no no* kun bzang gtam 'bel sgor g.yu
mu tig/ **** sgor/ nor bu tshe ring sgor/ bkris tshe rtan sgor/chos 'phel sgor tsheng rtan dpal *
**d byangs gas 'g.yu/ btsun pa sgor/ bsam chos phal sgor/ skyaM 'bel sgor/ tshe dbang* brid
**/tshe dbang stem ldan sgor/ rdo sgro sam sgor/

Line 24: *me me* btsun pa sgor/ rdzo rdo rje sgor/ bar kun bzang sgor/ tsha bstan sgros ma sgor/
yang kham pa **** ba rdo * ring tshe 'dasdon sgor brgya dang she ra gcig phul/ yang blugs pa
** jo laT mthal rdo rje nas gser dd ** chen po gzher sgor * gcig bcas phul/ gsum 'dra bye ba
mang chang nas 'phu** brgyad d 'og lus chag cig bcas phul

Line 25: la ri dri med rdo nang tshang nas phi sgor brgya bcu dang 'bru khal nyi shu bcas phul/

Line 26: rten 'dir lha bzo ba tshe ring nas gser rdo * na gsum gyi tol dang/ sgor rnying bzhi bcas
'brel **** bzo * slob bzangrdo rje na sur bdub pad rag khri brgyan byas ba gcig? yad bzo ba *
mas kyi * cha'i thog na sgor phyed lnga brgya 'brel bar phul/

Line 27: rten 'dir 'brel thob bsod naMs sbrin chen las/ ji' spid bdud rtsi* char rgyun rab tu'bab/
de srid 'gro gun*** gnyis dri ma dag/ phyam gcig padma 'dod *grod par bsngo// der ni rgyal
dbang padma'i zhal ras ge*r bzhad 'jal bgre re shis/ smin grol gdam ngag zil ** bskal ba bang
bung ba bkrashis shing bdud *** grol theg chen sgr dbyangs 'ur 'ur bkra shis de rtag tu sgrogs
shing

Line 28: sku dang yes nyi mkha' ba zhin brdal bkris shog //
gsol ras dang spyen 'byon sdom sgor lnga brgya byung/

Appendix 14: The Tibetan text of documents regulating offerings

Document banning *marchö* (red offering) with two entries and fingerprint: iron dragon year and iron ox year, 1940 and 1961, OLK 05.

༺ ལུགས་གཉིས་གོང་མ་ཁྲིམ་བདག་**པོ་ཆེ་ཤ་ཞབས་དུང་དེར།

ལྷོ་འབྲུག་རྒྱ་ཤ་པ་ཆེ་༢༤་སློ་སྐང་འགྲུར་མེད་གྱི་གན་འཛོན་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་སུ་ལུལ་སྤོང་དོན་ཅ་ རྩོན་ལྷོན་ལུལ་སྤོང་འདྲི་
 ལུ་མདོ་བར་གསུམ་ལ་དམར་མཚོད་གྱི་ལས་ངན་ཆེར་ཡོད་ཀྱང་
 སྐད་དུ་ལྷོ་པོ་ཆེ་བཟང་པོའི་སྐྱ་ལོག་ལ་ལུ་མདོ་བར་གསུམ་གྱི་འདྲེ་གདོན་རྣམས་ རྩར་གཅད་བཀའ་སློམ་དྲི་ལལ་བཏུ་ཤིང་
 དམར་མཚོད་གྱི་ལས་ངན་ཅ་བ་ནས་གྱིས་མི་ཚོགས་པར་གསུང་ཏེ་ ལུལ་སྤོང་སྐད་བར་གསུམ་གྱིས་དྲི་བཅའ་སྐྱབས་
 དགོན་པའི་བཀའ་བསྐྱུང་ཆོས་སྤོང་རྣམས་ལ་བཀའ་སློམ་མཉམ་ཡིག་སྐྱུར་ ཀུན་ཀྱང་དགེ་བཅའི་ཁྲིམ་ལ་གནས་ཤིང་
 དམར་མཚོད་གྱིས་ལས་ངན་ཅ་བ་ནས་མེད་པར་མཛད་ཀྱང་ དེང་སང་ཆེར་སྤོང་གྱིས་དུས་ཚོད་དུ་སྤོང་བའི་རྒྱུ་
 འག་ཚུལ་འདྲེ་བདུད་རྣམས་ཁ་དར་བའི་རྒྱུ་ སྐར་ཡང་སྤོང་ཡོ་ཤེས་དཔལ་ལྷན་གདན་འདྲེན་ཞུས་ནས་ ལུ་མདོ་བར་གསུམ་གྱིས་
 འདྲེ་གདོན་གདུག་པ་ཅན་རྣམས་ཚར་གཅད་རྗེས་འཛོན་གྱིས་ཤིན་ལས་བཀའ་སློམ་དྲི་ལ་བཞག་
 དེ་ལྟར་ལུལ་སྤོང་སྐད་བར་གསུམ་གྱིས་སྐྱ་གསེར་སྤུལ་བྱུར་མཚོགས་སྐྱུ་སུ་ཐད་ནས་དམར་མཚོད་ཅ་བ་གཏན་ནས་མི་གྱིས་བ
 འི་དྲི་བཅས་དུག་པོ་སྐྱབས་ དེ་ལྟར་ཁར་བའི་མེ་ལྷ་བར་བའི་ཤུག་རྒྱུང་སྤོང་ཡིང་གི་བཅུ་གསུམ་དག་ལྷ་
 སྐད་ཏེའི་བསྐྱུང་མ་སང་རྣམས་བའི་གཏེར་བསྐྱུངས་ སྐད་བའི་བསྐྱུངས་མ་སོལ་ལུལ་སྤོང་རྣམས་གྱིས་ཀྱང་
 དྲི་བཅའ་དུག་པོ་སྐྱབས་ཏེ་ལུལ་ཁྲིམ་གཙང་མར་གྱུར་ཏོ་
 གལ་ཤིང་འདི་དོན་ལྷ་མི་སྐྱ་སེར་སྤུལ་བྱུར་མཚོགས་དམན་⁷⁵⁸སུ་ཐད་ན་འགལ་རིགས་ཉིས་ཆག་བྱུང་ཆེ་ཉེ་ཆད་དགོན་པ་ལ་བཞ
 ད་རྩོན་སྤོང་གསུམ་རྒྱ་མིས་པ་དང་སྐང་བཤུར་རྒྱ་ཚར་ གདུལ་དར་ཚོགས་གང་མང་བཅས་འབྲུལ་གཙང་མར་ཞུ་
 གོང་གསལ་ལུལ་སྤོང་དུག་དང་ལྷ་བཅའི་ཆད་པོ་སྐྱབས་
 ཏེའི་ཆོ་རྣེས་དང་ལུལ་འཚོ་བརྒྱུད་གྱིས་དོ་བདག་ཆད་པོ་རྒྱུད་སོལ་ན་མི་འགྲུར་བའི་རྟེན་ [print] ༺

ལྷོ་སྐང་ལོ་རྒྱུ་བ་གཉིས་པའི་ཆེ་༢༣་ལ་ཀུན་མཛོན་གཡོག་པའི་དབང་ལྷུག་ས་སྐར་མཚོད་ལ་འགལ་སུ་བྱུལ་⁷⁵⁹འབྲུང་ནས་
 མགོན་པ་སྐར་ཚོས་སྤོང་ལ་བཤུར་རྩོན་ལ་རྩ་བུ་གཉིས་ནས་འདྲི་ཁ་
 སྐྱ་སེར་མི་སེར་ཆང་ལུངས་སྐོར་༥༠་ལྷ་བཅུ་སུལ་པ་ཡིན་ ལྷོ་སྤོང་མཚོད་པ་ལྟར་གནས་འཇུག་ཡིན་
 རྒྱ་ཀུན་བཟང་དབང་ལྷུག་རྟེན་ ལྷ་མཛོད་**⁷⁶⁰སུ་སྤོང་བཅུན་བ་རྟེན་
 ཀུན་བཟང་དབང་ལྷུག་ དབུ་མཛོད་རྒྱ་ཁྲིམ་དོ་རྗེ་རྟེན་

⁷⁵⁸ This appears to read ལྷན་ but མཚོགས་དམན་ makes more sense in context.
⁷⁵⁹ ལྷ་བྱུལ་ = ?
⁷⁶⁰ Illegible.

མི་དགོ་གཡོ་རྫོང་*གྲིས་ [seal] མེན་སྐྱ་སེར་མི་སེར་གྲིས་

ས་ལིང་ཚོ་དབང་གིས་སྐྱུག་པ་ཀུན་བཟང་གི་ས།

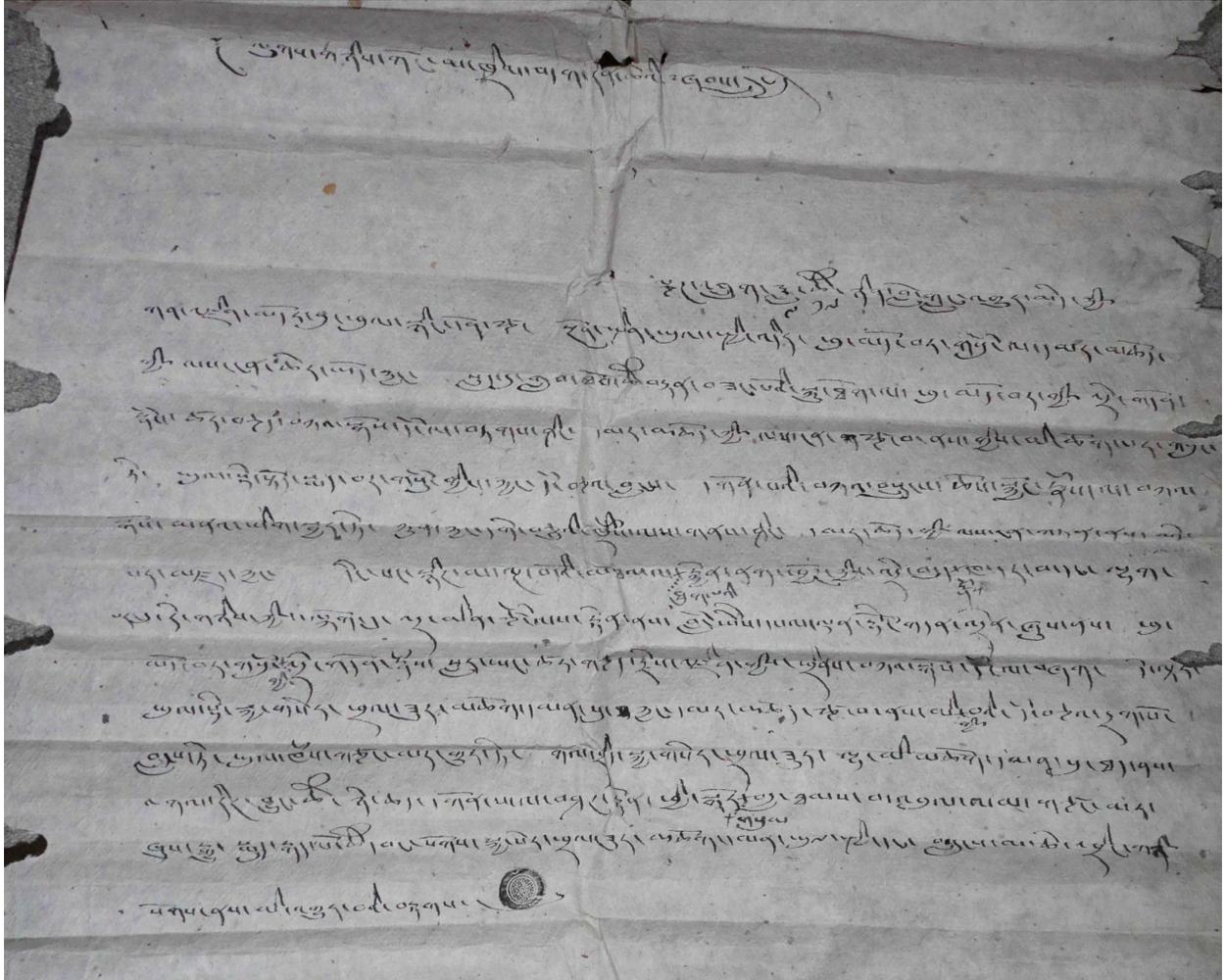


Figure 50: Document banning *marchö* (red offering) with conch seal: iron dragon year, 1940

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a legal document or fine levied. The text is written on aged, yellowed paper. A prominent red circular seal is visible in the lower middle section of the document. The script is dense and covers most of the page.

Figure 51: Document levying a fine with double vajra seal: wood horse year, 1954.

Appendix 15: Translations of documents regulating offerings

Document banning *marchö* (red offering) with two entries and fingerprint: iron dragon year and iron ox year, 1940 and 1961, OLK 05.

In the presence of the precious one, the supreme judge of the two traditions:

The main point presented in this document on the 26th day of the 7th month of the iron dragon year (1940). Before, in this land of Pin, the evils of the red offering increased in the three regions: upper, middle, and lower. However, later in the lifetime of the *siddha* Tse Zangpo,⁷⁶⁴ the three regions, upper, lower, middle, designated by oath and public order to completely cut off all the negative influences and said the harmful actions of the red offerings were absolutely not allowed. The three regions of the land, upper, lower, middle, took the vow and composed a written promise to all the dharma protectors and the order of monastery. Moreover, if the root evils of the red offering are not eradicated and a foundation for the laws of the ten virtues made everywhere, increasing degeneration will bring about the return of bad conditions and spread evil darkness and all the demons.

Again, Lama Yeshe Palden⁷⁶⁵, invited by the three regions, upper, lower, and middle, established a command. Accordingly, the three regions of the land, upper, lower, and middle, took an ardent vow. Accordingly, the Seb god of Khar, the small juniper of Bar, the thirteen gods of Teling, the guardian of Tangti, the *terma* guardian of Sagnam, and the protector of Mud, all the local gods also took a firm oath, and the region became purified.⁷⁶⁶

Suppose on this point an offence or violation occurs, regardless of whom, god or human, lay or monastic, high or low. The present fine⁷⁶⁷ [is that] atonement rituals and three hundred foreign dollars are to be given as confession to the monastery as a pure offering. The six local deities mentioned above and the fifty old men, Tse Namgyal of Tangti, the eight local deities (*yul tsho*), and so on, made a mark which is immutable. [print]

On the 23rd day of the second month of the Iron Ox year (1961), there was an offering violation [that] appeared, as [it had] previously.⁷⁶⁸ Fifty coins and beer [for] drinking and the choice from two horses⁷⁶⁹ were offered to the monastery lay and ordained people, as a confession to the Sangnag Chöling Monastery. In the future, [as with] earlier offerings, it is a settled topic.

⁷⁶⁴ This is an unidentified figure whose name appears in one other document from Pin.

⁷⁶⁵ Yeshe Palden (d. 1942) was from Gyu Village, Spiti.

⁷⁶⁶ Khar, Bar, Teling, Tangti, Sagnam, and Mud are all villages in the Pin Valley with an associated local deity. Usually Guling and Kungri are added to this list to make eight *yul lha* in Pin.

⁷⁶⁷ Or the fine for violations in the current period *tshé nye chad*.

⁷⁶⁸ This line is somewhat unclear. “at the Lord/Wangchuk place [to] the lord who was beautifully covered,” or perhaps, the phrase means that the transgressor was a person called Kunze.

⁷⁶⁹ The exact meaning of is unclear.

Lama Kunzang Wangchuk's⁷⁷⁰ mark, the Umdze Guling Monk's mark, Umdze Tsultrim Dorje's mark, the fifty elders, Tsewang Gartruk's mark, the eight elders⁷⁷¹ of the valley's marks, Tseten Gatruk.

In the future, if this happens again, one must offer as confession to the monastery Sangnag Chöling 1000 foreign currency. It is settled so that no one may bear that darkness.

Palden Dorje is the writer of the document.

Document banning *marchö* (red offering) with conch seal: iron dragon year, 1940, OLK 06.

In the presence of the precious one, the supreme judge of the two traditions:

The main point presented in this document is established permanently on the 17th day of the 9th month of the iron dragon year. Previously, in the whole land of Pin, the evils caused by the red offerings were increasing. However, later, in the time of the *siddha* Tsetan Zangpo, the three regions, upper, lower, and middle, made a pledge to completely cut off all evil spirits and said it was absolutely not allowed to cause evil through the red offering. The upper, lower, and middle land, took the vow, established in writing the oath to all the dharma protectors and the monastery Everywhere, the good laws of the ten virtues abided and the evils of the red offering were entirely eradicated. However, these days, the dark conditions that are encountered in the extremes of the five corruptions are spreading all the evil spirits.

Having invited the Lama Yeshe Palden,⁷⁷² the three upper, lower, middle regions established a vow in writing to fully cut off again all the evil spirits. Accordingly, the people of the region, lay, monastic, landowner, high, low, etc., also took a firm vow to absolutely not do the red offering, and the land became purified.

Suppose, with regard to lay, monastic, taxpayer, non-taxpayer, gods, people, high, low, etc. a transgression occurs in the near future. The transgressor must make a confession and pay a fine of eight hundred foreign currency to the Gompa. The Mud headman Tsewang, etc. lay, monastic, taxpayer, non-taxpayer, high, low, the whole land, the protectors both large and middle-sized, etc., establish this permanently.

[seal with conch]⁷⁷³

⁷⁷⁰ Kunzang Wangchuk was the *lama tripa* and the younger brother of the Pin Nono. He appears in documents dated to 1940, 1951, and 1961.

⁷⁷¹ This likely refers to each of the head men of the eight villages in Pin: Khar, Bar, Teling, Tangti, Sagnam, Khar, Mud, Guling.

⁷⁷² This line could read "having invited Lama Yeshe Palden [from] Dorjeden (Bodh Gaya)." However, none of the individuals who spoke to me about Yeshe Palden's life mentioned a trip to Bodh Gaya or even India. It is possible he went. He was said to travel widely around the Western Himalayas. The other *marchö* document referencing Yeshe Palden does not contain the word "*rdo rje*," making it likely the scribe was copying the earlier document and made an error.

⁷⁷³ The conch seal appears to be Yeshe Palden's.

Document levying a fine with double vajra seal: wood horse year, 1954, OLK 07.

During the 3rd month of the wood horse year, [it was] said that Saling⁷⁷⁴ Tsewang made offerings to the Rong *lha*.⁷⁷⁵ As a result, there is a confession fine of 100 rupees [to be paid] after confessing to the monastery, together with the lama and Khartse *lha*.⁷⁷⁶

Now, regarding later fines, all of the people of Pin, lay and monastic, gathered together along with Lama Gelong Yomed Dorje,⁷⁷⁷ the community of noble ones, the deities of each region, the Khartse *lha*, and the *dākinīs* and Dharma protectors, and chiefly Seling Tsewang, let it not arise that anyone similarly said [there was] an offering (*gsol kha*) to the lower direction (*'og phyogs*), not only *lha*, lama, *jowa*,⁷⁷⁸ *mopa*,⁷⁷⁹ and whoever, lay, monastic, subjects. Whoever similarly talks about this, lay, monastic, subjects, will [make a] donation.

[double vajra seal]⁷⁸⁰ [Signed] by Pin's monastic and lay people.

Signed by Seling Tsewang and Makpa Kunzang.

⁷⁷⁴ Saling is a village in Pin, so Saling Tsewang is identifying Tsewang as from that village.

⁷⁷⁵ This could also read that Seling Tsewang said someone else made an offering to the Rong *lha*.

⁷⁷⁶ It is unclear if the phrase “*dgon par mkhar rtse lha dang bla ma lhan rgyas*” indicates that the fine is to be paid to the *gonpa*, the Khar *lha*, and the lama, or if the Khar *lha* and the lama are also paying a fine to the monastery. Rong as a place name may be connected to the Tashigang Rong Gonpa at the juncture of the Spiti and Sutlej Rivers, or to Rong in Ladakh, or Rong in Guge. There is a *Rong lha* mentioned in Nebesky-Wojkowitz that seems unrelated.

⁷⁷⁷ Yomed Dorje (d. 1960) is the prior rebirth of the current Yomed Tulku.

⁷⁷⁸ These are astrologers and ritual specialists in Pin.

⁷⁷⁹ Those who tell *mo* or divinations.

⁷⁸⁰ This seal is likely associated with Yomed Dorje, since it is a double vajra.

Appendix 16: Governors and Rulers of Spiti and Pin

There are several different titles applied to the various governors and rulers of Spiti and Pin. While the duties and the scope of authority of some of these titled positions are more well understood than others, as a whole there is still relatively little known about them. I include here any figures described as *Nono*, *Gaga*, *Garpon*, *Dzongpon*, or *Kalon* in the primary and secondary sources at my disposal. I also include the names of known *Lama Tripa* or younger *Nono* sons from Pin, who held positions of religious authority.

Table 3: Chart of *Nonos* and similar figures in Pin and Spiti from the seventeenth century to the present.

	Spiti (Drangkhar, Kyiling)	Pin (Guling, Khar, Kungri) ²
pre-1630	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Śākya Thubpa, possible historical person.³ • Gaga Khenrab possible historical person.⁴ • Nono Namgyal Dondrup⁵ 	

¹ “Rulers” is used somewhat loosely here to refer to any position of political or administrative authority. The extent to which the *Nono* or *Garpon* could be characterized as “rulers” is certainly debatable.

² Another relevant title or category of person in Pin is the big house/little house or taxpayer/non-taxpayer distinction. In Pin, I was told there were either six or seven *khang chen* households: Chowa (*jo ba*), *Garpon* (*dgar dpon*), *Drongthö* (*grong thod*), *Yongma* (*yong mal’og ma*), *Parma* (*par ma*), *Kyimse* (*khyim mtshes*). Informants varied over including *Thori* (*grog ris/tho ri*), since it was a relatively new *khang chen*, whose lands were acquired under the government initiated land reforms called *nautor*.

³ Śākya Thubpa is a figure mentioned in the *Chronicles of Zanskar* as a ruler from Spiti and Guge. The *Chronicles* reads “...Spi ti’i gu ge’i phyogs nas lha chen Shaa+kya Thub pa zer ba zhig gdan zhus nas zangs dkar pp kun gyis rgyal por khur...” Francke’s translation reads, “But, as a great *mkhas dman* arose also, he invited the great god (king) Śākya thub pa from Spyi-ti and Gu-ge. All the people of Zangskar acknowledged him as their king.” Roberto Vitali identifies this figure as the Ngari King ‘Od lde (11th c.), based on a passage in the *Ngari Gyalrab*. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:156; Roberto Vitali, *Dpal-ye-śes*, and Tho-liñ gtsug lag khañ, *The kingdoms of Gu-ge Pu-hrang: according to Mgna’-ris rgyal rabs by Gu-ge Mkhan-chen Ngag-dbang-grags pa* (Dharamsala, India: Tho-liñ dpal dpe med lhun gyis grub pa’i gtsug lag khañ lo 1000 ‘khor ba’i rjes dran mdzad sgo’i go sgrig tshogs chuñ gis dpar skrun zus, 1996), 282.

⁴ Francke mentions a Gaga Khenrab (*Ga ga Mkhyan rab*), who he states was “supposed to have been the first No-no of Spyi-ti.” Francke does not specify his source but presumably it was Shuttleworth. Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, 55.

⁵ A colophon Tucci collected from Tabo Monastery, dated to the reign of either Lhawang Namgyal (father) or Tsewang Namgyal (son) (r. ca. 1575-95). Both names are listed but Tsewang Namgyal is called the king “*sa skyong*,” possibly indicating he is ruling, not his father. Spiti is categorized as part of Ngari, since this is prior to the advent of Ladakhi control. Drangkhar is specified as the capital of Spiti. Elena De Rossi Filibeck, “Due Foglio Manoscritti Da Tabo Conservati

1630–1650 reign of Senge Namgyal (ca. 1630–1642)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Nono Kalzang⁷⁸⁶ (OLK 03) • Garpon Gaga Tenzin Namgyal⁷⁸⁷ • Minister (<i>chos blon</i>) Akhu Garmo⁷⁸⁸ (OLK 23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Nono Tsering Tsebhel (Khar) (OLK 03) • Nono Sangdrup (from Sangnam) (OLK 03) • Nono Phuntsok Drokar (from Bar) (OLK 03) • Dagpo Abha Tsewang Lodro (not called Nono) (OLK 23)
1650–1694 reign of Demchok Namgyal (1642– 1694)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dzungpon Chenpo Namkha Gyaltsan, Kalon, Garpon, (Khar 13, GCL 24), active 1671⁷⁸⁹ • Garpon Chenpo Padma Tsering (Khar 18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dakpo Tsering Tashi (not called Nono) (Khar 13, Khar 18) • Dakpo Jangpa Gyaltsan⁷⁹⁰ (not called Nono) (GCL 24) • Nono Debar, Norbu Öbar⁷⁹¹ (GCL 24) • Dagpo Namkha Dorje Ngore⁷⁹²
1684–1705 period of Central Tibetan control under Desi Sangye Gyatso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dzungpon Chenpo Depa Norbu Gyatso (GCL 02) • Dzungpon Thang Grongpa⁷⁹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dakmo Tashi Budren and Tsering Budren (no Nono specified) (GCL 02)
1694–1729 reign of Nyima Namgyal (ca. 1694–1729)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dzungpon Chenpo Nono Kalzang (Bar 01) • Garpon Chenpo Nono Kunga (OLK 01, OLK 20, GL 02) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Guling Nono Tenzing Tsephel (Bar 01) • Nono Chozin, Gaga Chozin from Guling (OLK 01, OLK 20, GL 02) • Nono Thutan, Gaga Thubtan from Kungri (OLK 01, OLK 20, GL 02)
1734–1753	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Gaga Tenpa Gyatso, Dzungpon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Gaga Thubtan (Sagname 05, Sagname 04, Sagname 01)⁷⁹⁵

Nel Fondo Tucci,” in *Le Parole e i Marmi: Studi in Onore Di Raniero Gnoli Nel Suo 70. Compleanno*, ed. Raffaele Torella, Serie Orientale Roma (Roma: Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 2001), 237–246.

⁷⁸⁶ His title is the most elaborate from among the Pin colophons. He is called “the Great Governor [who] protects in accordance with the internal rule (or doctrine) and conquers external enemies, the wise Nono Kalzang” (*Mkhar dpon chen po phyi’i dgra ’dul nang gi khrims skyong mkhas No no* Skal bzang).

⁷⁸⁷ Petech, *The Kingdom of Ladakh*, 55.

⁷⁸⁸ Akhu Garmo is also mentioned in an inscription from Skur Buchan village, Ladakh, dated to the reign of Senge Namgyal. There he is called Chos dpon chen po, similar to the Pin colophon. Inscription No. 54 in Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 275.

⁷⁸⁹ The documents apply several different titles to the minister Namkha Gyaltsen. Tobden records a document from the reign of Demchok Namgyal dated to the 12th day and 3rd month of the iron female pig year, 1671 that names the Drangkhar Garpon as Namkha Gyaltsen. The decree was enacted from Drangkhar, although it is not clear if this indicates that Demchok Namgyal himself was in Spiti or if it was enacted by Namkha Gyaltsen as his subordinate. Tobdan includes a second colophon that also dates Namkha Gyaltsen to Demchok Namgyal’s reign. Tobdan, Spiti: *A Study in Socio-Cultural Traditions*, 2015, 165, 170.

⁷⁹⁰ It is possible Jangpa Gyaltsen is of the Nono family, since the *dakmo*, who is presumably the *dakpo*’s spouse, is listed in the colophon as *dakmo nomo* Kunzang (*bdag mo no mo*).

⁷⁹¹ His name appears as Norbu Öbar (Nor bu ’od ’bar), Nono Debar (No no Bde bar) and possibly as Agu Debar (A gu de bar). It is possible these are different people.

⁷⁹² Dagpo Namkha Dorje Ngore (Nam mkha’ rdo rje lngo re) lived during the reign of Demchok Namgyal and the minister Namkha Gyaltsen. Tobdan, *Spiti*, 170–171.

⁷⁹³ In Ahmad’s translation of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s history, he records that in the wood ox year, 1685, “On the day of the new moon, I gave appropriate farewell presence to [Tsetan Dorje of Khangmar who was appointed Dzungpon of Tsaparang in Guge and to Lobzang Donyod who was appointed to Taglakhar (Taklakot), and Thang Dronpa, who was appointed to Spiti.]” Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho and Ahmad, *The History of Tibet*. Vol. V, p 104b

reign of Tashi Namgyal (ca. 1734–1753)	<p>Chenpo Gaga (Sagnam 05, Sagnam 04, Sagnam 01)⁷⁹⁴</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Nono Dondrup (Khar 03, Khar 20, GCL 23) • Garpon Chenpo Gaga Thugtan (Khar 03) • Dzongpon Chenpo Tenzin Paljor, Garpon Chenpo Kalon (Khar 20, Khar 21, Khar 03, Khar 01) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dagpo Tsering Jora and Sonam Lhundrup of Sagnam (Sagnam 02)⁷⁹⁶ (not called Nono) • Dagpo Tsering Lhundrup (Sagnam 04) (not called Nono) • Garpon Chenpo Nono Dondrup⁷⁹⁷ (Khar 03, Khar 20) and Sonam Jora (Khar 03, Khar 20), also called Guling Nono Sonam Jora • Guling Nono Chonyid Drokar (Sagnam 04, Sagnam 05) • Kungri Nono Dondrup (Sagnam 05, Sagnam 04, Khar 02) • Kungri Nono Tsewang Phuntsok (Sagnam 05, Sagnam 04, Khar 02) • Dakpo Paljor Tsering and Tsewang (not called Nono) (Khar 01, Khar 20, Khar 21)
1753–1782 reign of Tsewang Namgyal (1753–1782)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Gaga Denkyong (GCL 23) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garpon Chenpo Nono Dondrup (GCL 23)
1802–1840 reign of Tsepal Dondrup Namgyal (1802–1840)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaga Dorje⁷⁹⁸ • Garpon Gaga Rabgye, (ca. 1817–1822)⁷⁹⁹ • Sultan Begh governor of Spiti, resided in Leh in 1822⁸⁰⁰ • Gaga Behum Khan resided in Kyiling, office in Drangkhar in 1822⁸⁰¹ 	

⁷⁹⁵ The Nono Gaga Thubtan from Kungri who lived during the reign of Nyima Namgyal may be the same person as the Garpon Chenpo Gaga Thubtan who lived during the reign of Tashi Namgyal. If so, this would likely place the Drangkhar Garpon Tenpa Gyatso toward the beginning of Tashi Namgyal’s reign. A Garpon Chenpo Gaga Thubtan (Ga rga Thug bstan) of Pin also appears in a colophon appended to a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* found in Tobdan, 168.

⁷⁹⁴ Garpon Gaga Tenpa Gyatso (Ga rga Bstan pa rgya mtsho) also appears in a colophon appended to a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* found in Tobdan, *Spiti*, 168.

⁷⁹⁶ Tsering Jora and Sonam Lhundrup also appear in a colophon appended to a copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* found in Tobdan, 168. That document indicates that Tenpa Gyatso (Drangkhar), Thubtan (Pin), Tsering Jora (Pin), and Sonam Lhundrup (Pin), were all contemporaries.

⁷⁹⁷ Sonam Jora and Dondrup seem to have jointly held the position of Garpon Chenpo Nono and were possibly brothers or a father and son.

⁷⁹⁸ Francke located the name on a “dedication sheet” in Kibber Village, Spiti. This Nono could have lived either prior to or after Trebeck’s visit, roughly 1802–1822, or 1822–1840, but was possibly not alive during Trebeck’s time in Spiti, since he fails to mention him. O. C. Hāṇḍā supposes that Gaga Dorje is the same Guling Nono who contributed to repair work at Tabo in 1838. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, 38, 50:275; Hāṇḍā, *Tabo Monastery and Buddhism in the Trans-Himalaya*, 46.

⁷⁹⁹ Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces*, 58.

⁸⁰⁰ Trebeck in Moorcroft et al., *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara*;

⁸⁰¹ Gaga Behum (Beghum?) Khan appears in Trebeck. Moorcroft et al., *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara*; Another colophon from Tsepal Namgyal’s reign refers to the Dzongpon Chenpo Gaga Khan, father and

1850–1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nono Kalzung⁸⁰² (active 1863) • Garpon Tsering⁸⁰³ (active 1863) • Nono Tenzin Namgyal (1865–1878)⁸⁰⁴ • Nono Dorje Tsetan (b. 1833, nono 1878–1891)⁸⁰⁵ • Nono Tashi Rinchen⁸⁰⁶ (1891–1897) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chota Nono⁸⁰⁷ (unnamed, active 1863) • Garpon (unnamed, active 1863) • Gyajin Gaga Tsewang Namgyal ca. 1850–1900 (OLK 08)⁸⁰⁸
1900–present ⁸⁰⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unknown Nono, (d. 1916)⁸¹⁰ • unknown Nono, acceded 1916. • Sonam Angdu’s grandfather (GL 01) (active 1940–50s)⁸¹¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nono Tsering Ngorup (1934, OLK 17) aka Nono Mikmar,⁸¹² (older brother) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lama Jampa, Jampa Umtse, Meme Lama (younger brother), 1934 (OLK 17), 1955 (OLK 09)

son (rdzong dpon chen po Ga ga Khan yab sras). This may refer to the same Behum Khan Trebeck meets in 1822, and to his father or son. Tobdan, *Spiti*, 171–172.

⁸⁰² Egerton refers to him as “Koolyung,” which may be an approximation of his name (Kalzung) or may refer to his village, Kyiling. Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Tibet*.

⁸⁰³ Egerton’s account implies that this person did not exercise any real authority. He seems to reside in Pin rather than in the Spiti Valley, so perhaps was the Pin Garpon rather than the Spiti Garpon, however Egerton’s account is somewhat unclear.

⁸⁰⁴ Francke found this Nono’s name on an inscription at Rangrig, Spiti. This is the Nono Egerton met. During this Nono’s tenure, the British enacted Regulation NO. I of 1873, Spiti Regulation, which described the purview of the Spiti Nono. Alfred Frederick Pollock Harcourt, *The Himalayan Districts of Kooloo, Lahoul, and Spiti* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1871), 94. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, p 276.

⁸⁰⁵ Massy, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Delhi, Jalandhar, Peshawar and Derajat Divisions of the Panjab.*, 411.

⁸⁰⁶ Tashi Rinchen was the younger brother of the preceding Nono, Dorje Tsetan. Dorje Tsetan’s son was too young to serve as Nono, so Tashi Rinchen held the position until his nephew came of age.

⁸⁰⁷ Egerton, *Journal of a Tour through Spiti to the Frontier of Chinese Tibet*.

⁸⁰⁸ This figure is mentioned in the Pema Lingpa Lhakhang inscription. The title Gyajin Gaga indicates he is probably a member of the Pin Nono family, either the Nono himself or else the younger brother. “Gyajin” was the name of the temple associated with the Pin Nono family in Kungri. This temple was demolished in the 1990s when the new monastery was built. The date for the inscription is broad and based on the lifespan of Kunzang Tenpai Nyima (1843–1891), the Eighth Peling Sungtrul, who is also named in the inscription. Thus Gyajin Gaga Tsewang Namgyal could have lived any time in the second half of the nineteenth century through the first quarter of the twentieth century.

⁸⁰⁹ Francke notes that in 1912, Coldstream met the Nono but does not provide his name.

⁸¹⁰ In 1922, Michael O’Dwyer, who was the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab 1912–1919, commented on a lecture by H. Lee Shuttleworth, that he, O’Dwyer, had met the then Nono just after he acceded to the position in 1917. The previous Nono had apparently died the year before, in 1916. O’Dwyer likely met Nono Tashi Rinchen’s grandson if the Nono who died was Tashi Rinchen’s son. If so, then Tashi Rinchen’s son was the Nono from 1897–1916. Louis Dane, Michael O’Dwyer, and W. Coldstream, “Border Countries of the Punjab Himalaya: Discussion of Shuttleworth,” *The Geographical Journal* 60, no. 4 (October 1922), 267.

⁸¹¹ This is likely the Nono of Spiti who donated to the Guru Lhakang in Pin in 1940. Tucci and Ghersi met the Nono of Spiti in 1933, noting that he was “still a youth” at the time. Sonam Angdu, Interview, interview by Joseph Leach, June 12, 2014; Giuseppe Tucci, Eugenio Ghersi, and Mary Anderson. Johnstone, *Secrets of Tibet: Being the Chronicle of the Tucci Scientific Expedition to Western Tibet (1933)*, Cronaca Della Missione Scientifica Tucci Nel Tibet Occidentale (1933) (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1935), 54.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nono Dorje Angchuk • Nono Sonam Angdu (b. ca. 1950) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nono Kunzang Tenphel, (older brother, GL 01 1940) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Kunzang Wangchuk, Lama Tripa, (younger brother) (active 1940, 1951, 1961) (OLK 06, OLK 14)⁸¹³ • Tsewang Dorje <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Lama Ngawang (b. 1980s), currently a monk at the Kungro monastery, younger brother of the current Nono.
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⁸¹² Meme Gartruk referred to him as Nono Mikmar, but that name does not appear in any documents from that period. It is possible that the Nono Tsering Ngodrup referenced in a 1934 document was a relative of Nono Mikmar, rather than being the same person, or else that Tsering Ngodrup was Mikmar's father. Meme Gartruk did not know the name of the latter's father. Meme Gartruk, Interview.

⁸¹³ For a period there was no Lama Tripa from the Guling Nono family acting as caretaker of the Peling Lhakhang. Meme Gartruk.

Appendix 17: Catalogue of the Himalayan Manuscripts and Documents Archive

These items are held in several locations throughout the Pin Valley. They were digitally documented between 2010 and 2014, and remain with their owners. For documents or texts that do not have a title, I included the first line of the content as the title. In addition to the manuscripts that appear in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, this list includes some nineteen paper documents currently held in three locations in Kungri Village. They are primarily lists of donations to the temples, contributions for Buddhist rituals, and local religious regulations. Most of them are dated or can be dated based on their contents. Most date to the twentieth-century, although a few are older. The twelve documents from the Old Lhakhang are kept together in a bookshelf on the north wall of the temple. As of 2014, they were rolled up or folded in two small bundles, some tied together with string and cloth. They range in date from approximately 1934–1962. These documents may have been rehoused since 2014, as the temple is undergoing restoration. The second set of five documents was previously kept in the Gyachin Lhakhang, which has since been demolished. They are currently housed in a metal trunk kept in the monastery. The last category of documents are inscriptions on the walls of the temples, some of which are painted on and some of which are on paper pasted or nailed to the wall. There are additional documents from the Gyachin Lhakhang not included here, as well as items documented outside of the Pin Valley, which are not relevant to the current project.

Table 4: List of items in the Himalayan Manuscripts and Documents Archive

Cat. No.	Text Title/Description	Date	Notes
Bar 01	<i>Diamond Sūtra</i> , Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
GCL 02	<i>Stainless Confession Tantra</i> , Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud	(1684–1705)	datable colophon

GCL 04	<i>Self-Liberation through Recognizing the Signs of Death from Profound Dharma of Self-Liberation through the Intention of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities</i> ⁸¹⁴ by Karma Lingpa (14th c.)	ND	no colophon
GCL 05	Document from a water bird female year	water bird female year 1933 or 1993	
GCL 06	Letter from the Guge <i>dratsang</i> (<i>grwa tshang</i>) to Pin	wood bird year, 1945, 1885, 1825	
GCL 07	Document with red cloth back and conch seal	ca. 1940's	
GCL 16	Document recording donations on blue cloth backing	ca. 20 th c.	
GCL 22	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka' thang</i> by Orgyen Lingpa	Earth-Snake year ⁸¹⁵	partial colophon
GCL 23	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka' thang</i>	(1753–1782)	datable colophon
GCL 24	<i>The Chronicle of Padma Pad+ma bka' thang</i>	(1684–1705)	datable colophon
GCL 27	Loose folio with donor illustration	likely the sixteenth or seventeenth century	
GCL 28	<i>Catalogue of Prophecies from Cycle of Dzogchen practice of the Nyingma, Lung byang bka'i them</i> s, by Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409) ⁸¹⁶	ND	no colophon
GCL 56	Loose sheet from Gyachin Lhakhang	no date	
GL 01	Yellow Dedication Inscription in the Guru Lhakhang, Kungri	ca. 1940	
GL 02	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa	(1694–1729)	datable colophon

⁸¹⁴ Karma Lingpa (14th c. P5245) . For text see . “zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las: 'chi ltas mtshan ma rang grol.” In mo dpe phyogs bsdus snang srid gsal ba'i me long. TBRC W29669. : 197 - 220. [Bylakuppe].Karnataka: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, 2001-2002.

[http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149\\$W29669](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1GS149128|O1GS1491281GS149149$W29669)

⁸¹⁵ Possible dates for an Earth-Snake year: 1629, 1689, 1749, 1809, 1868.

⁸¹⁶ Rigzin Gokyi Demtru (1337–1409, P5254) rGod kyi ldem 'phru can. “lung byang bka'i them:s (pa).” In *dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor*/. TBRC W4CZ1106. 1: 235 - 238. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1979. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395\\$W4CZ1106](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O4CZ2377|O4CZ23774CZ2395$W4CZ1106)

Khar 01	<i>Stainless Confession Tantra</i> , Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud	ND	no colophon
Khar 02	<i>Hundred Thousand White Nagas</i> , Klu 'bum dkar mo[po] zhes bya ba bcom ldan 'das kyis kun dga' bo la gsungs pa	ND	no colophon
Khar 03	<i>Diamond Sūtra</i> , Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra 'phags pa shes rab kyī pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Khar 05	<i>Magical Display of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities [in the] Buddha-lineage</i> , bcom ldan 'das rgyu[d] 'phrul zhi khro rab 'jam	ND	no colophon
Khar 06	Verses of offering for [erecting] a silk [prayer flag] dar mchog dzugs [sic] snyags smon lam gsol mchod bzhugs shyo	ND	
Khar 07	Unidentified text. Cover title: <i>Phyugs grud bta' bsngams bzhugs shyo /</i>	ND	
Khar 08	Unidentified text. Cover title: <i>Klu'i dpad gong bzhugs shyo /</i>	ND	
Khar 09	<i>Mirror Illuminating Confusion of the Five Long Life Sisters</i> by Dudjom Rinpoche, <i>Bkra shis tshe ring ma'i 'phrul mo snang gsal me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so</i> ⁸¹⁷		
Khar 11	<i>Register of the Reliquary of Rangrik Repa</i> , Bal yul mchod rten 'phags pa shing kun dang de'i gnas gzhan rnams kyī dkar chag	ND, TPQ 1683	no colophon
Khar 12	<i>Account of the origins and contents of the Jokhang temple in Lhasa by the Fifth Dalai Lama</i> , lha ldan sprul pa'i gtsug lag khang gi dkar chag shel dkar me long bzhugs	ND, TPQ 1682	no colophon
Khar 13	<i>[Jewel] Casket Sūtra</i> , Kāraṇḍavyuha-sūtra, mdo sde za ma tog [bkod pa]	(1642–1694)	datable colophon
Khar 18	<i>The Five Chronicles</i> by Orgyen Lingpa, Thang yig sde lnga ⁸¹⁸	(1642–1694)	datable colophon
Khar 20	Multiple possible titles. ⁸¹⁹	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Khar 21	<i>Stainless Confession Tantra</i> Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud. ⁸²⁰	(1734–1753)	datable colophon

⁸¹⁷ 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje and Dudjom Rinpoche Jigral Yeshe Dorje, *The Collected Writings and Revelations of H.H. Bdud-'joms rin-po-che 'Jigs-bral-yeses-rdo-rje* (Kalimpong: Dupjung lama, 1979), 18: 697–718.

⁸¹⁸ The colophon refers to other texts sponsored by these donors: the *Diamond Sūtra* (rDo rje gcod pa), *Chronicle of the Scholars and Translators* (Lo pan Bka'i Thang Yig), *Biography of Mitrayogi* (mi tra dzo ki = thugs rje chen po mi tra dzwo ki'i rnam thar), *Story of Drime Kundan* (Dri med Kun ldan gyi Rnam thar), and *Confessing Sin* (sdig bshags, full title = ?).

⁸¹⁹ This colophon presents three possible titles. The colophon pages are bound with a cover for *The Clear Mirror Royal Genealogy* (rGyal rab kun gsal me long). However, the text of the colophon refers to the *Diamond Sūtra* (rdo rje gcod pa) and the *Biography of Milarepa* (Mi la'i rnam thar) and not to *The Clear Mirror*.

⁸²⁰ This colophon is grouped with a loose cover page for the *Stainless Confession Tantra* (Dri med brgyal bo bshags pa'i rgyud). However, since the title page and colophon are not bound together, and the colophon itself does not provide a text title, it is not certain that the colophon is associated with this text.

OLK 01	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> , 'phags pa gser 'od dam pa	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
OLK 02	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra ['Phags pa 'dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]	ND	no colophon
OLK 03	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> , 'phags pa gser 'od dam pa	(1615–1650)	datable colophon
OLK 04	Unidentified text, dge snyen mkha' ri yab yum kyi gsol mkha' bzhugs so	ND	no colophon
OLK 05	Document banning <i>marchö</i> (red offering) with two entries and fingerprint ⁸²¹ ལུགས་གཉིས་གོང་མ་ཁྲིམ་བདག་**པོ་ཆེ་ལ་ཞབས་བྱུང་དེར།	iron dragon year, 1940 and iron ox year, 1961	
OLK 06	Document banning <i>marchö</i> (red offering) with conch seal ⁸²² ལུགས་གཉིས་གོང་མ་ཁྲིམ་བདག་རིན་ཆེན་ལ་ཞབས་བྱུང་དེར།	iron dragon year, 1940	
OLK 07	Document levying a fine with double vajra seal ⁸²³ ཤིང་པོ་རྩ་ལོར་དབྱེད་ཟླ་གསུམ་པའི་ནང་ལ་	wood horse year, 1954	
OLK 08	Renovation Inscription in the Old Lhakhang ⁸²⁴	no date, 19th c.	
OLK 09	Document on yellow cloth with four entries ལུགས་རྩི་ཆེན་པོ་ནས་དངུལ་བསྐྱེམ་པའི་བརྒྱ་དང་འབྲུ་ཆད་དགུ་ཡོད།	female wood sheep year, 1955	Donations for various rituals, including Dredging the depths of hell (<i>na rag dong sprungs</i>) and Rites of confession and expiation (<i>bskang bshags</i>), donations given to the Thugsje Chenpo temple.
OLK 10	Document on yellow cloth with four entries ན་རག་བསྐོང་བཤགས་ལ་བསྐྱེམ་བའི་བརྒྱ་དང་གསུམ་བརྒྱ་སོ་ལྔ་ཡོད།	wood sheep year, 1955, and fire monkey year,	donations for various rituals, including Dredging the depths of hell (<i>na rag dong</i>

⁸²¹ See Appendix 14 for the text of this document.

⁸²² See Appendix 14 for the text of this document.

⁸²³ See Appendix 14 for the text of this document.

⁸²⁴ See Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 for the text of this inscription.

			Guling Nono.
OLK 17	Document regarding fields and animals ཤིང་ཁྱི་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལའི་ཚོ་ལྷ་ཉིན་ལྷོ་སྐང་མི་འགྱུར་པའི་ཀན་བྱ་གཙང་མར་བྲིས་དོན་ལ་	wood dog year, 1934	Records animals that are “freed” and fields committed to the monastery. Refers to the Kungri Garpon, the Pin Gonpa, Lama Jampa (the younger <i>nono</i>), and Tangti Trinley Tomey.
OLK 18	Loose folios from unidentified texts དགེ་སྤོང་ཉི་མེ་བརྒྱད་སྟོང་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱང་བྱ་བ་བྱས་པ།	ND	
OLK 19	<i>Clear Crystal Garland Treasury Instructions</i> by Pema Lingpa, khrid kyi kha byang gsal ba’i shel phreng ⁸²⁵	ND	no colophon
OLK 20	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra [’Phags pa ’dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]	(1694–1729)	datable colophon
OLK 21	<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> , Pad+ma bka’ thang by Orgyen Lingpa	ND	no colophon
OLK 22	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra ’Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa	ND	no colophon
OLK 23	<i>The Chronicle of Padma</i> , Pad+ma bka’ thang	(1630–1642)	datable colophon
OLK 26	Designates which villages are responsible for maintaining the Kagyur Lhakhang བཀའ་འགྱུར་གྱིས་གཉེར་བ	no date, ca. twentieth century	“Responsibility for the Kagyur [Lhakhang]: First, it is Bar and Kungri together, then it is Mud “po-tso,” then it is Khar and Sagnam together Then it is Guling and Tangti together.”
Sagnam 01	<i>The Jewel Pinnacle Dhāraṇī Sūtra</i> , Mahāsannipātaaratnaketudhāraṇī-sūtra	(1734–1753)	datable colophon

⁸²⁵ This text is from Pema Lingpa’s terma. Padma Gling pa. “khrid kyi kha byang gsal ba’i shel phreng pad+mas sbyar ba/.” In *Rig ’dzin Padma gling pa’i Zab gter Chos mdzod Rin po che/*. TBRC W21727. 4: 3–11. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW26196\\$W21727](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW26196$W21727)

	[’Phags pa ’dus pa chen po] rin po che tog [gi gzungs]		
Sagnam 02	<i>Mahāśītavāna-sūtra</i> , ’phags pa bsil ba’i tshal chen po’i mdo	(1734–1753)	volume within Sagnam 01
Sagnam 03	<i>Mahamayuri Mantras</i> , rig sngags rgyal mo rma bya chen mo	(1734–1753)	volume within Sagnam 01
Sagnam 04	<i>Golden Light Sūtra</i> , Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra ’Phags pa gser ’od dam pa mdo sde’i dbyang po’i rgyal po	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Sagnam 05	<i>Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Verses</i> , Aṣṭasāhasrikā- Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, ’Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa	(1734–1753)	datable colophon
Sagnam 06	<i>Lama Jewel Ocean</i> , bLa ma nor bu rgya mtsho by Pema Lingpa ⁸²⁶	ND	no colophon
Sagnam 07	<i>Diamond Sūtra</i> , Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, ’phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu pyin pa rdo rje gcod pa	ND	partial text, no colophon
Sagnam 08	Unidentified text by Dudjom Rinpoche. ⁸²⁷	1960	

⁸²⁶ Padma Gling pa. “Bla ma Nor bu Rgya mtsho /.” In *Rig ’dzin Padma gling pa’i Zab gter Chos mdzod Rin po che/*. TBRC W21727. 1: 5 - 899. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW25987\\$W21727](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0005|O01CT000501JW25987$W21727)

⁸²⁷ “Written by Jigral Yeshe Dorje on the 10th day of the “miracle month” (first Tibetan month), during the waxing of the moon in 1960 at Tso Pema, because of the request by Kathog Ontrul Rinpoche. Sherab Gyatso [copied this].”

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