

## INTRODUCTION

Überhaupt geht bei uns nichts vom Zentrum aus, sondern wir ziehen aufs Geratewohl einen Kreis und suchen dann für diesen einen Mittelpunkt.

Friedrich Hebbel

“Chaque chose sacrée doit être à sa place,” notait avec profondeur un penseur indigène. On pourrait même dire que c’est cela qui la rend sacrée, puisqu’en la supprimant, fut-ce par la pensée, l’ordre entier de l’univers se trouverait détruit.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*

### I. The Position and Classification of the Khra-’brug Temple in the Tibetan Tradition

In the celebrated statement of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama Thub-bstan rgya-mtsho (1876–1933 A.D.) of February 1913, the suzerain initiated his proclamation with the formulation that happiness and peace of the country is ensured through protecting the Buddhist faith, wherefore it is essential to preserve all Buddhist institutions in Tibet, first and foremost “the Jo-khang and Ra-mo-che temples in lHa-sa, bSam-yas and Khra-’brug in southern Tibet, and the three great monasteries [of sKyid-shod, i.e. ’Bras-spungs, Se-ra and dGa’-ldan]” (cf. Shakabpa 1967: 247). This enumeration thus lists three well-known groups of key institutions stemming from different epochs during the country’s Buddhist history.

The three “great monasteries” (all from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century) would emerge as the leading colleges in the country and eventually become important grooming sites for its spiritual leadership and the clerical establishment of dGe-lugs-pa policy; their seats in sKyid-shod at the same time signalled a significant bond to the area’s older history. They were said to mark an area described in the founding story of the Jo-khang (i.e. Ra-sa’i ’Phrul-snang) as a *maṅḍala* that circumscribed the same zone around the holy shrine.

The Jo-khang and the Ra-mo-che are the two seats of “the lHa-sa (or lHa-ldan) Jo-bo *gnyis*” (the two Jo-bo Brother Idols of lHa-sa) and they represented from the earliest post-dynastic time the spiritual centre of the country, with the Jo-khang as the “life-pole” (*srog shing, yaṣṭi*) of Tibet. Their maintenance became a political issue of significant importance at the latest in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Tshal-pa hegemony of sKyid-shod (end of 12<sup>th</sup> – end of 14<sup>th</sup>/ begin of 15<sup>th</sup> century), the heritage of which was transferred to the Phag-mo gru-pa and then to the dGe-lugs-pa, was founded not least upon political access to the maintenance, custodianship and patronage of both dynastic temples.

The traditional listing of the Jo-khang along with bSam-yas and Khra-'brug in the final analysis refers to the group of three key *dharmacakra*-s of Central Tibet (i.e. the *chos 'khor gnas gsum* or the “Three Holy Sites of ‘the Wheel of the Law’”), alternatively denoted as the *gaṇḍhola gsum* or the “Three Holy Shrines [*dri gtsang khang*],” which represented the three leading holy sites or pilgrim sites in imperial Tibet. The division and arrangement goes back to the period immediately following the erection of bSam-yas *vihāra*, at the latest at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when at a number of key sites formal offerings for the Three Baskets were introduced, as part of a calendrical and oratorical festival celebrating the Tripitaka in which selective parts or indeed the entirety of such future canonical texts were recited. The lay population too was involved in such large-scale propitious festivals mainly as spectators, though they did provide certain appropriate offerings. Throughout the entire medieval period these sites would retain their great prestige, with such gatherings being staged at regular periods throughout the year, as can be witnessed from numerous sources. In the dGa'-ldan pho-brang *gzhung* period of the Fifth Dalai Lama, they attracted renewed attention under the ambitious state-based religio-political programme known customarily as *bod 'bangs bde thabs rim gro* (*bod bde thabs* for short), or “state rites executed for the prosperity of the Tibetan people.” This included a regular comprehensive ritual and involved substantial refurbishment and maintenance of these key sites as well as other sites of similar supraregional importance, such as the “border-suppressing temples” (Ru-bzhi mTha-'dul Yang-'dul) of the empire, the foremost among them being Khra-'brug. The above declaration of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama much later apparently alludes to this tradition. All in all it rings like a standard formula concerned with the physical maintenance of the institutions in question, yet in actual fact it reflects a tradition deeply embedded in the conviction that the fate of certain sites in the country was intimately linked to the fate of the country as a whole. It was maintained – *pars pro toto* – that if any of these imperial temples decayed Tibet would decay, and conversely, if they were restored or properly maintained, Tibet would prosper.

The present book will deal with the vicissitudes of Khra-'brug, the royal temple of Yar-lung, the name and characteristics of which in one of our sources can be summarized as follows:

... the name of this temple called g.Yo-ru Khra-'brug is derived from the shape of a *bya khyung* bird that subdued the *klu*; it is universally known as Byams-pa Mi-'gyur gyi gling and is more excellent than any other holy site [in Tibet]. Among all the temples in Tibet, it is the first that was [ever] erected. In the future, although lHa-sa and bSam-yas should deteriorate, still the sMu-lugs lha-khang and troves of precious items [concealed] under this very [temple] shall be opened and eventually turn into objects of veneration for humans as much as for deities. Therefore, its deterioration will be [forever] postponed. This [temple] is [thus] an extraordinary sacred site (*gnas rten*) on which [formerly] the Dharmarāja, *paṇḍita*-s, *grub thob*-s set foot and has been consecrated by many Buddha-s.

The *bya khyung* (Garuḍa) bird mentioned emerges in the founding legend as the “Thundering Falcon,” and it was after this mythic figure that the site in the heart of Lower Yar-lung was named. The temple surfaces for the first time under this name in an edict dating from 779 A.D., namely as Khra-'brug gi bKra-shis lha-yul gtsug-lag-khang; the form Byams-pa Mi-'gyur-gling (or [g.Yo-ru] Khra-'brug bKra-shis Byams-snyoms, Byams-snyoms mi-'gyur, *alias* Khra-'brug Byams-pa Mi-'gyur lhun-gyis grub-pa) was a later post-dynastic designation for the main temple.

At the same time, it was a subsequent name for the birth-place of the founder king, Srong-btsan sgam-po (born 605? in rGya-ma of Mal-gro; d. 649 in 'Phan-yul). The name Khra-'brug was of ancient, imperial origin, and this secondary use would signal the close mythic bond between the king and the temple – a nexus that constituted a substantial element in the subsequent cultic tradition of Khra-'brug.

The identification of Khra-'brug as Tibet's oldest recorded temple is most regularly reported in sources that date from the early post-dynastic time. With the erection of the temple, according to the sources, began the project of erecting twelve (or more) border *vihāra*-s to serve collectively as a support for the Jo-khang *sanctum* by nailing down the Tibetan territory, depicted as resembling the body of a *srin mo* or *rakṣasī* demoness. Evidently this identification as a primary temple erected during imperial times was grounded upon the specific qualities of the treasures originally concealed there, qualities which marked it out against other *dharmacakra* sites. The temple would, following the above citation, always survive since it was considered the primary support or life-pole of Tibet.

The above citation is taken from the *Guide Book* to the temple and to the pilgrimage site compiled and subsequently printed by a certain *dge slong* Tshul-khrims chos-'byor a decade or so after the proclamation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, and in the wake of a partial renovation of Khra-'brug that had been executed at the instigation of the ruler of Tibet. The date of this renovation is important to ascertain. From the biography of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (*DL13* 616, 657–58), we are informed that in 1922 and again in around 1928, a renovation and supplementary refurbishment of the key monastic centres in Tibet (*sa gnad kyi me btsa' mtha' 'dul yang 'dul ru gnon rnams kyi gtsug lag khang*) including g.Yo-ru Khra-'brug bKra-shis Byams-snyoms gtsug-lag-khang took place – following a thorough renovation of the key *sanctum* Ra-sa 'Phrul-snang already in 1919–20. There are obvious reasons to assume that the guidebook had been compiled after these restorations, in other words, initially compiled and subsequently printed either in 1922–23 or following the last renovation in 1928 (or at the latest in 1929). The Khra-'brug guide – akin to similar guidebooks met the devotional needs of peregrinating visitors. It essentially offers a brief survey of the mythically layered building history of the temple, its numerous objects of veneration and the holy sites located in the surrounding area. For our purposes, this book forms a useful basis for a first study of Khra-'brug, the precise history of which until now has remained little known.

## II. Sources and Subject Matter

### II. 1 *Text A*

The Khra-'brug *Guide Book* titled *Khra 'brug gnas bshad* is one of in all six sources (*Texts A – F*) that were composed during different epochs, each containing various descriptions of uneven length and each of a distinct genre. In the current study *Texts A – E* will be presented in the form of an annotated translation of the relevant passages, whereas *Text F* will take the form of a brief synopsis. The informative and hitherto unpublished *Khra 'brug gnas bshad (Text A)* will furthermore be presented in facsimile. The translation is based upon the printed edition of the text, taken from a micro-film copy of the print acquired by Guisepppe Tucci during his 1948 Italian expedition to Central Tibet. The copy was purchased by him in Khra-'brug (see his *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*: 84, fn. 130). The copy is now kept in Rome (no. 830 in the *Catalogue of the Tucci Tibetan Fund in the Library of the IsIAO*)<sup>1</sup> and was placed at our disposal with the kind collaboration of Dr. E. de Rossi Filibeck. A somewhat inferior copy print of the same text (from Khra-'brug) was photographed in 1999. Finally, we also could avail ourselves of an incomplete handwritten copy of the same text, acquired in 1997 in Khra-'brug.

The full title of the text:

*dPal mi 'gyur lhun gyis grub pa'i gaṇ ḍho la gsum gyi nang tshan g.yo ru khra 'brug  
gsug lag khang gi gnas bshad Dad pa'i sgo'i byed*

A Guide to the Pilgrimage Site of the Khra-'brug *vihāra* of g.Yo-ru, One of [Tibet's] Three Glorious, Unchanging and Self-created *Gaṇḍhola*-s, [also denoted] the Opener to the Faith.

The text comprises 33 folios in total, six lines of text to the page, with the exception of folios 1b, 2a, 3a (with four lines), 2b (five lines) and folio 33a (four lines). These pages are illustrated with frontispieces (*dbu lha*) and miniature drawings of religious saints and deities, all occupying a significant position in the history and cultic tradition of the temple:

- 1b [I] *Inga brgya'i gtsug nor* Atiśa, or Atiśa as the Crest-jewel of the [Last] Five Hundred [Years of a Degenerate Epoch]
- [II] *'Dren pa mnyam med* Śākya'i rgyal, or Peerless Guide, Prince of Śākya – Śākyamuni.
- [III] *grub dbang* Padmasambhava
- 2a [I] *rgyal ba gnyis pa* (second Buddha), or bTsong-kha-pa
- [II] *rgyal mchog* Thub-bstan rgya-mtsho, or the Thirteenth Dalai Lama
- 2b [I] *Tshe dang ye shes* dPag-med-lha, or Amitāyus, Lord of Infinite Life and Wisdom (*aparimitāyurjñāna*)
- [II] rNam-par snang-mdzad *rigs Inga'i gtso*, or Vairocana, the Principal Deity of the Group of Five [Buddha] Families
- 3a [I] sGrol-ma gSung-byon-ma, or Speaking Tārā
- [II] 'Jam-dpal Dharmadhātu (Mañjuśrī from the group of the eight *bodhisattva* sons)

<sup>1</sup> See vol. 2: 361.

- 33a [I] mGon-po phyag-bzhi-pa, or the Four-armed Protector Mahākāla  
 [II] *gnas srung* Tshangs-pa
- 33b [I] *ma gcig* dPal-ldan lha-mo-che, or One Mother, Great Śrī Devī  
 [II] Ye-shes mgon-po Phyag-bzhi-pa, or the Four-armed Lord of Wisdom [= Mahākāla]  
 [III] *gnas srung* Tshangs-pa Dung-thod-can, or Tshangs-pa with the Conch Head Ornament  
 (a form of *chos skyong* Tshangs-pa dkar-po [*dharmapālā* Sita-Brahmā (White Brahmā)],  
 the chief protector deity and *srung ma* of Khra-'brug

With the frontispiece of Thub-bstan rgya-mtsho (1879 identified as 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama), we naturally have an indirect indication of the date of the otherwise undated text. We can narrow down the date further through the last chronological reference in the text, the 15<sup>th</sup> *rab byung* (ab 1867), in connection with the activities of the lHo *spyi khyab* Ye-shes thub-bstan. The position of lHo[-kha] *spyi khyab* (gouverneur general of lHo-kha province, or southern Central Tibet) with its seat at rTses-thang / sNe'u-gdong was set up in 1917 at the latest (see *Text A*, fn. 146), so that the text arguably was compiled in around the year 1920. Under Ye-shes thub-bstan's supervision, Khra-'brug underwent its last recorded renovation in 1922 (completed in 1928, as mentioned above) and also structural alteration, as mentioned in the text, which here refers to a refurbishment and renovation, both proclaimed and subsequently executed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.



Fig. 1. The 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama  
 (2a-II)

Our pilgrimage text closes with the remark that the blocks are kept in the rTse-tshogs-pa monastery, the neighbouring monastery in Yar-lung that dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and traditionally was in charge of Khra-'brug. Following a rotational principle, its monks were regularly deputed or commissioned to serve at Khra-'brug. The compiler and author, Tshul-khrims chos-'byor, who is identified in the concluding verses as a *gnas 'dzin*, that is a warden or overseer, may have been one of the Khra-'brug *bla ma*-s of rTse-tshogs-pa.

The *gNas bshad* shows some striking resemblances to similar pilgrimage books both in content and lay-out. This is most evident in the well-known *bSam yas dkar chag* composed by bShad-sgra dbang-phyug rgyal-po (1854). The author mentions that for his presentation of Khra-'brug he made use of older authoritative sources; he cites in fact a number of *sūtra* und *tantra* writings employed in connection with prophecies related to the introduction of Buddhism as a result of the activities of Srong-btsan sgam-po: namely *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* and *Vimalaprabhā-vyākaraṇasūtra*; further, Avalokiteśvara texts (mentioned in connection with the pictorial description, namely scenes from the *sPang skong phyag rgya'i mdo*, known as one of the texts of the *gnyan po gsang ba*). His sources also included celebrated writings popular not least in dGe-lugs circles and used by the author to describe the merits to be accumulated when circumambulating the holy site: standard sources like *mChod rten bskor ba'i mdo*, *gSal rgyal gyis zhus pa'i mdo*, *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and *sKor tshad Byang chen bgrod pa'i myur lam*, the latter authored by *sde srid* Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho.

Other citations employed in the text, which displays a traditional compositional structure, probably were gleaned from an older *dkar chag* or local history book. One source of some relevance for the monastic inventory of Khra-'brug *vihāra* and the founding history of the temple is the *Deb ther Phan bde'i dpag bsam 'dod 'jo* composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1678 in Potala and contained in his informative *gSar bzhengs dkar chag II* (SK 241a1–268a6). It was written on request (and probably the ghostwriting assistance) of the *mchod dpon pa* or “local master of ceremonies” Ngag-dbang shes-rab of Khra-'brug.<sup>2</sup>

Our source commences with a brief outline of the vita of Srong-btsan sgam-po. His date of birth is given as *sa mo glang* year 569 A.D., a dating commonly regarded as chronologically unrealistic and which – as already discussed elsewhere – arguably originated in the milieu of the former g.Ya'-bzang-pa (in Upper Yar-lung), but which also is mentioned in gZhon-nu-dpal's *Deb sngon*, and indirectly also in other texts (including the *rGyal rabs gsal*). It has the king passing away in 650 at the age of 82 (cf. CFS Gyalbo *et al.* 274f.). The assessment of the age is based upon an interpretation of the celebrated prophecy in the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*, which is also cited by the author of the *gNas bshad*.

A short description of the foundation of the Jo-khang together with a general listing of the border and demoness-suppressing temples is offered. For the latter the author follows a version known to us for the first time in the *rGyal rabs gsal* (of 1368 A.D.), and *inter alia* also later in the *Bod kyi deb ther* of the Fifth Dalai Lama. In the following section, the *gNas bshad* provides us with exclusive details on the temple history, beginning with the founding legend of the Thundering Falcon *vihāra*, in the course of which the distinct and numerous *lha khang*-s of the temple complex (chambers or annexes for deity statues) are enumerated, its artistic inventory detailed, and important aspects of the building structure or the history of individual statues and icons occasionally pointed out. Four out of a total of 21 *lha khang*-s are altogether lacking in the description, possibly since they had no function anymore at the time of writing, although one of these, the Mañi lha-khang is one of the few segments of the temple complex which in substance has been retained almost intact (including its wall-paintings); the other three, located outside the central upper courtyard (= **R-19** – **R-21**) are currently in the process of being restored (2003–04). (For the numbering of the 21 chapels, see App. IV.) A number of buildings were located adjacent to the central temple, among which the author merely mentions the mChod-rten dBu-lnga (~rTse-lnga), famous and renown far beyond the borders of Yar-klung, but which deplorably was demolished in the 1960's. It counted as the very first *stūpa* ever erected in Tibet, wherefore its loss must be characterized as all the more regrettable. Alluding to its mythic provenience, the text offers a variant version of the renowned legend describing the encounter between the monarch Srong-btsan sgam-po and a Buddhist monk.

The guidebook – which thus resembles an Indian *mārgadarśaka* or *māhātmya* as traditional pilgrim guide genre – closes with an enumeration of the sanctuaries of Yar-lung, expanded in comparison to other sources and arranged according to the *rten gsum*, *gnas gsum*, *'bum gsum* and *phug la phyi nang gsang gsum*.

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<sup>2</sup> DL12 638 unspecifically lists a *lam yig* of Khra-'brug. A “karchag (*dkar chag*) of Khra-'brug” is cited in V. Chan's description of the temple (Chan 1994: 533–38). The existence of such a “third” document, however, is nowhere else reported.

## II. 2 Texts B – F

*Texts B, C and D* provide us with narrative segments and passages concerning Khra-'brug gleaned from historic sources (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, *rGyal po bka' thang* and *bKa' chems Ka khol ma*); they all form important supplements to the data delivered in the *gNas bshad*. These texts partly diverge in terms of the names and structure of the temple's older sections. This may be explained by the circumstance that these descriptions originated in and reflected different epochs. Particularly relevant and informative are the descriptions of the *gter ma* concealments contained in O-rgyan gling-pa's *rGyal po bka' thang*, which apparently contains descriptive and narrative elements of an authentic transmission that goes back to the dynastic period.

*Text E* is the famous inscription of the Khra-'brug temple bell, for the first time photographed by Tucci during his 1948 expedition, and subsequently presented in translation by H. Richardson. The bell was cast at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, a period during which a dependency or branch *vihāra* of Khra-'brug, the bTsan-thang g.Yu'i lha-khang located in the western part of the valley (along with some of the other 18 Yar-lung sanctuaries), was erected. There is an issue of contention in the bell inscription relating to the question of sponsorship, allowing for a number of possible candidates.

*Text F* is a 84-folio-long *bskang gso* text from the 18<sup>th</sup> century dedicated to the protector gods of the temple (*gnas srung ma*). According to the colophon, it is based upon former descriptions compiled by the Fifth Dalai Lama and Sle-lung bZhad-pa'i rdo-rje. The latter was active for a long time in Yar-lung and Khra-'brug at the outset of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Among his many treatises (in *Sle lung gSung 'bum*), we find, aside from the ritual and esoteric descriptions of the most important protective deities of Khra-'brug, also contemporary documents which chronicle events at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. the destruction of the temple by the Dzungars and the beginning of the temple's renovation).



Fig. 2. *Tshangs-pa* (33a-II)

The local *gnas srung ma-s* are headed by *Tshangs-pa dkar-po* (Fig. 2) which also emerges as the personal god (or *skyes lha*, birth god) of *Srong-btsan sgam-po*, an ascription that in the context of a story of “historic remembering” resembles the well-known affiliation between the bSam-yas protector *Pehar* and King *Khri Srong-lde-btsan*. The principal *srung ma* assumes the key position during the most important annual festivals, particularly the fifth-month festival *Me tog mchod pa* (Flower Offering), whose origin evidently goes back to dynastic times, when the Three Basket Offerings were staged.

The *gnod sbyin* bSe-sku serves *Tshangs-pa dkar-po* as acolyte and minister. This figure allegedly had arrived at Khra-'brug from the Yar-lung bKra-shis chos-sde, a Sa-skya monastery and teaching centre belonging to the influential Tshar-pa school. The orally transmitted story arguably corresponds to an incident in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Fifth Dalai Lama appropriated relevant visions based upon the teachings and precepts of the Tshar-pa school in

Yar-lung and subsequently incorporated and adapted them to dovetail with his own teachings – another example of the ability of the Great Fifth to enrich his own teachings through inclusivism, and an example of the syncretistic religio-political programme of the lNga-ba chen-po (see Karmay 2002). In this case, it involved the inclusion of *chos 'khor* Khra-'brug as one of the leading and most prestigious state temples, and the establishment of the Khra-'brug state oracle, which functioned as the medium of Tshangs-pa dkar-po and bSe-sku, and which regularly was consulted by the central government (*gzhung sa rin po che*).

## II. 3 Appendices

Appendix I forms a detailed discussion and (compared to earlier studies) offers an expanded tabular survey of the distinct transmissions of the Srong-btsan sgam-po period temples, first and foremost the group of geomantic temples associated with the imagery of the supine *rakṣāsī* (*srin mo gan rkyal du nyal ba*). A critical comparison and collation of the relevant sources permits us to present a number of elaborations on and modifications to Michael Aris's basic study of 1979 and the therein proposed "original" scheme of 12 border temples. Specific treatment is given to a *srin mo gan rkyal du nyal ba* painting arguably from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and currently kept in the Tibet Museum in lHa-sa (Fig. 94).

The story of the *gnas srung ma-s*, their functions and positions in the symbolic arrangement of the temple and its immediate surroundings will serve as part of a longer study dedicated to the cultic history of the temple and to traces of these deities in the local history and the older history of the Yar-lung house (App. II in this study). Important data could be extracted from interviews *in situ* with older generations of monks and, more generally, a host of ethnographic data could be collected during a number of lengthy visits to Yar-lung beginning in 1995.

Appendix III contains further tables, among others an annotated survey of the genealogy of the Yar-lung Jo-bo-s, whose residences (from the 11<sup>th</sup> century) to a large extent were situated in the lower Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po areas. They would, similarly to the local house of the princes of Bug-pa-can in Yar-stod, dominate the local political landscape until the period of the Phag-mo gru-pa, and in some cases beyond.

The architectural documentation of Appendix IV (Plan 1–4 by R. Herdick) is based upon both ground and elevation drawings of the temple made during two lengthy stays in Yar-lung (1999, 2002). A somewhat primary outline with relevant measurements including data relevant to the essential building phases can be found in Suolang Wangdui (ed.) (1986: 7–17), more simplified ground maps of the temple and its twenty-one chambers are found in recent western guide books (Chan 1994; Gyurme Dorje 1998). The drawings and the photographs offer a documentation of the present status of the temple, even if only little has survived from the general conditions prevailing prior to 1959 and prior to the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's (in particular, the wall-paintings). Since the late 1980's the temple has been witnessing constant renovations. In this connection, a part of the inventory that was considered lost in the 1960's, originally kept in Khra-'brug and rTse-tshogs-pa, has fortunately surfaced again, and some of these highlights today count as major tourist attractions.



The book contains a number of illustrative satellite maps (Sat-Maps 1–8). The reader is advised when using the maps to turn in different directions in order to better appreciate their distinct topographical features.

The DVD included in the present book contains a short illustrative video record that offers a brief documentation *cum* circumambulation of the temple complex, as recorded 2002, as well as selections from the main passages of the Me tog mchod pa dances recorded in 2001. Both recordings are only briefly commented upon and may primarily serve to concretize the respective descriptions presented in the book.

### III. Historico-geographical Delimitations

#### III.1 The Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po Districts and the Position of the Temple in Lower Yar

On recent administrative maps, the Yar-lung area covers the counties (*xian*) of sNe'u-gdong and 'Phyong-rgyas, two of a total of thirteen counties of the lHo-kha prefecture, which is administered from rTses/rTse-thang (the old town at the entrance to the valley, also spelled rTsed-thang, i.e. “Playground [of the monkey descendants and first human beings]”). Khra-'brug village represents one of the 11 sub-district centres (*xiang*) of present-day sNe'u-gdong county (see Sat-Map 1).

When in the sources Yar-lung (Yar-klungs, Yar, Yar-khyim) is mentioned, it either refers to the Yar-lung valley in a narrow sense (divided into Upper and Lower Yar) or describes a larger area which includes 'Phyong-po (*alias* P[h]ying-ba/lung) and its side valleys (see CFS Gyalbo *et al.* 12f.). The site of rGod-thang-'bum-pa (Sat-Map 2) forms the traditional border between the two districts, an establishment which is said to go back to the settlement of a land dispute in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The two districts are described in this context as the turquoise and golden lands of Yar-klungs (*yar klungs g.yu gser lung gnyis*; i.e. 'Phyong-po [W] and Yar [E]), which designates here the separation of two territories within a greater historico-geographical unit (*Text A*, fn. 270).

Both valleys are connected geographically through the confluence of the 'Phyong-po and Yar-lung rivers at mKhar-thog in Lower Yar, a mythic place which according to the founding legend can be identified with the abode of the local lake and flood monster. The latter is a manifestation of the five-headed or hydra-like *nāga* (*klu*), whose realm was conquered by the demiurgic Thundering Falcon. The territorial *klu* body is marked by four *klu* sites along its sides, its symbolic centre being represented by the temple. The two mountains (and famous sanctuaries) Shel-brag-ri and Gong-po-ri (or mGon-po-ri) are the dominant ones overlooking the fertile valley bottom and its central shrine. This maṇḍala-like position of Khra-'brug constitutes a Buddhist reclassification of an archaic settlement area, which in the older sources is designated as Yar-mo sna-bzhi and known as the scene of a number of fundamental civilizing events, first and foremost the Tibetan anthropogeneses and the appearance of the first ruler of the Tibetans, gNya'-khri btsan-po.

As the erstwhile homeland of the Tibetan kings, Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po from the earliest time formed a unity with Yar-lha Sham-po Mountain as their common terrestrial or telluric god. Accord-



Sat-Map 1. The Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po area (Corona Satellite 1970)

## Notes on Sat-Map 1

Geographical positions of the headquarters of the sub-districts (*xiang*) of sNe'u-gdong (N1–N11) and 'Phyong-rgyas counties (P1–P8) as given in the *Xizang Dimingzhi II* (XD 2aff.; 76aff.)

## sNe'u-gdong county (N):

- N1 = rTse-thang [29°14'N 91°46'E] (the district around rTse[s]-thang township, the capital of lHo-kha; it comprises the northern part of lower Yar-lung (from Bya-sa (W) up to Nya-sgo (E) and Khra-'brug (S)) and includes the mountain ranges of the Shel-brag-ri and Gong-po-ri).
- N2 = Khra-'brug [29°11'N 91°46'E] (the position of the temple is 29°11'531"N 91°46'341"E (alt.: 3595m); the district includes the eastern portion of the valley as far as Pu-nub lung-pa in the south).
- N3 = mKhar-thog [29°10'N 91°44'E] (the village close to the confluence of the Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po rivers; the district covers the western portion of the lower Yar-lung valley, from bTsan-thang in the north up to the Mi-la-rtse-ri in the south).
- N4 = Pho-brang [29°07'N 91°50'E] (the traditional border between Upper and Lower Yar; the district includes the ancient sites of lHa-ru, 'Phang-thang, Bug-pa-can and rTag-spyan [in the east]).
- N5 = bDe-zhing [29°04'N 91°51'E] (the district around the old Phag-gru *gzhi kha* of Ha-lo-sgang where the ancient site of *pho brang* lDan-mkhar is located).
- N6 = Chos-sde-'og [28°58'N 91°53'E] (the village named after the monastery from the 17<sup>th</sup> cent. is situated in the Bar-thang area of Yar-stod; the district includes also the Tshe-spong valley).
- N7 = Chos-sde-gong [28°55'N 91°54'E] (the Yar-stod village where the 17<sup>th</sup>-cent. monastery of Chos-sde-gong is located at the confluence of the Ra-mo-chu and Yar-lung rivers (Yar-lha Sham-chu, i.e. the Yar-khyim or Yar-mo River of the older sources); the district includes also the Gri and Ra-mo valleys and the greater part of the Yar-lha Sham-po area).
- N8 = So-drug [28°52'N 91°53'E] (the district covers the area of the upper course of the Yar-lha sham-chu up to the border of mTsho-smad county [the position of N8 appears to be misrepresented in XD; it is inserted on the map at the level of g.Ya'-bzang-dgon]).
- N9 = sKyer-pa [29°13'N 91°50'E] (the district covers the 'On valley [from the old site of Nya-mgo Gru-kha gTsang-po ferry to upper 'On]; it formed the traditional route to the rGya-ma and gZi-sbug valley of Mal-gro district; the name of the district may be related to the ancient dGyer clan; below, chap. V.2.1).
- N10 = rDo Pho-brang [29°19'N 91°41'E] (the district of the rDo valley east of Brag-dmar bSam-yas).
- N11 = Bying-klu [29°13'N 91°37'E] (the Bying valley along the western spur of Shel-brag Mountain, east of the old Phag-gru estate of Mon-mkhar/dga' rNam-sras-gling; see Chan 1994: 484f.).

## 'Phyong-rgyas county (P):

- P1 = 'Phyong-rgyas [29° 01'N 91°40'E] (the county seat; the district in the central part of 'Phyong-po includes the Mu-ra-thang [site of the royal tombs] and the Don-mkhar valley).
- P2 = 'Phyong-'go [28° 59'N 91°41'E] (the upper part of the 'Phyong-po valley).
- P3 = rGyas-sman [28° 58'N 91°33'E] (it refers to the middle and upper part of the rGyas-sman valley, also called sPyan-g.yas valley after its main monastery).
- P4 = sPun-gsum [28° 59'N 91°37'E] (situated in the lower part of rGyas-sman).
- P5 = Shar-bsus [29° 03'N 91°43'E] (the district north of 'Phyong-rgyas appears to include the western half of northern 'Phyong-po, south of 'Phyos).
- P6 = Thang-po-che [29° 07'N 91°43'E] (the district around the village and monastery of [Sol-nag] Thang-po-che; it includes also the area of Zhang-mda', site of the Zhang-mda'i bang-so).
- P7 = lHa-yul [29° 08'N 91°39'E] (the district around sBas-sna includes parts of northern 'Phyos and borders on mKhar-thog district [N3] in the east).
- P8 = Chang-khyim [29° 07'N 91°37'E] (the district comprises the main part of the 'Phyos valley and its southern tributaries; from here routes lead to Bying and the Grva-phyi area).

\* = the site of the *vihāra* of Khra-'brug

ding to the information derived from the position of the tombs of the former Yar-lung *rgyal po*-s (beginning with the genealogical group of the seven gNam-khri), it can be assumed that the narrow homeland of the ruling lineage was located in the area of Grang-mo and Nga[r]-thang (Drang-mo, Dar-thang and other spellings) – probably to be localized on the upper course of 'Phyong-po, south of 'Phyong-rgyas. It perhaps was the original home of “Tibet’s first minister” and king-maker, the Yar-lha Sham-po son known as Ngar-la-skyes, who made a scion or descendant of the Phyva house the ruler of the country. The ruler is listed as the ninth king, sPu-lde gung-rgyal, after whom the sPu-rgyal dynasty is named. It formed one of several pre-historic ruling dynasties in the IHo-kha region, the common progenitor of which was gNya'-khri btsan-po, a mythic figure who is reflected in a number of representatives of the ruling lineage of Yar-lung; so also in lHa Tho-tho-ri gnyan-btsan, the 27<sup>th</sup> pre-historic ruler, who descended from Phying-lung Dar-thang and whose famous castle Yum-bu-bla-mkhar also served as the seat of gNya'-khri btsan-po. The genealogical succession of 27 rulers here dovetails with the chronology of the 27 places of arrival, which according to one tradition defined the journey of the royal ancestor from Kong-po to Yar-lung, culminating in the erection of the first castle. The latter towers over the southern part of Yarmo sna-bzhi. In addition, three further *sku mkhar* associated with the pre-historic Yar-lung rulers castles are said to have existed, but are deplorably no longer extant (see Part 1 of App. II).

### III. 2 The Royal Path: From Yar-lung over rGya-ma to lHa-sa

According to conventional Buddhist historiography, the history of Buddhism in Tibet is said to have begun with the emergence of Yum-bu bla-mkhar and of King lHa Tho-tho-ri gnyan-btsan as detailed in the legendary narrative of the arrival from heaven of sacred objects and scriptures of the Buddhist Teaching, subsequently kept by the ruler as “awesome objects of veneration” (*gnyan po gsang ba*). These precious objects later would be transferred to Khra-'brug, according to *Text C*, where they counted among the *gter ma* treasures of the temple, which were kept in a place that corresponds to the previously mentioned depot of sMu-lugs lha-khang of *Text A*. In the highly mythic descriptions of the *vita* literature of the king, representative manifestations of the *gnyan po gsang ba* emerge even prior to the foundation of the first Buddhist temple (more precisely, cult and ritual symbols specific to Avalokiteśvara, such as the *yi ge drug*, i.e. his six syllable mantra, considered to represent the “very essence of the teachings”). Here a significant chronological and geographical relationship can be established. The geographical stages can be found along a route which may be regarded as historic stations in the first phase of the foundation of the empire under gNam-ri srong-btsan, and then under his son and successor, that was leading its trail from Yar-lung over rGya-ma (in Mal-gro) into sKyid-shod, until it finally ended in lHa-sa (for details, see App. II, Part I, Chap. 2).

In the secondary literature we occasionally come across the somewhat imprecise formulation according to which the conquerer gNam-ri srong-btsan governed his realm from Yar-lung. It is also said that at a later point, during his successor’s rule, “the headquarters or capital” was transferred to lHa-sa. Disregarding the fact that the word “capital” somewhat inadequately reflects the political structure during the dynastic period, to all appearances the main royal residence during this epoch of the first emperor was located in rGya-ma, *alias* sNon or Yar-snon. According to *Ka khol ma*, it was there that the ruler erected his residential site *pho brang* Byams-pa Mi-'gyur-gling, having arrived from Bug-pa-can, a site in the area of the Pho-brang district of northern Yar-stod. This

event antedates the other deeds of the king in this post-dynastic narrative. It is therefore tempting to view the rGya-ma foundation in connection with the military expedition of the Yar-lung *rgyal po* towards the north, as detailed in the *Dunhuang Chronicles* (see Map 3 of App. II). The fertile side valley of sKyid-chu was the actual homeland of the young Srong-btsan sgam-po, and it is from here that his route can be traced along the sKyid-chu River between Mal-gro and lHa-sa. We may conclude that a number of (mobile) camps of the royal court existed and that the narrow lHa-sa valley (with the *sku mkhar* on dMar-po-ri but also other sites) only counted as one out of a number of locations visited and occupied by a travelling royal court. Probably lHa-sa did not provide a permanent residence to the emperor and there was a situation which the *Dunhuang Annals* describe for the later generations (*ab* 650 A.D.), according to which the court used to move around in the occupied territories or the areas that had sworn allegiance. This in no way contradicts the Buddhist project of founding temples and of simultaneously seeking territorial reorganization and stabilization, with lHa-sa as an idealized symbolic centre.

According to legend, the Jo-khang project, which owed its origin to the Nepalese princess, was brought to a successful completion after she called in the assistance of the Chinese consort. The latter realized that the erection of the central “heart” temple was conditioned on a prior erection of the territorial temples representing the body and limbs of the supine demoness. A text from g.Ya’-bzang (namely the genealogical document concerning the later Bug-pa-can-pa, i.e. *Bug pa can pa gdung rabs*) mentions a date for the first body temple – Khra-’brug – namely 639 A.D., itself a contradictory piece of information since the Chinese princess did not arrive in Tibet before 641. In this text, the Jo-khang was completed three years later (CFS Gyalbo *et al.* 36). dBu-ru Ka-tshal *vihāra* is registered as the second geomantic temple erected, according to the lists; Richardson terms it an “authentic building from the seventh century” (1998: 307). Its location in Mal-gro, at the confluence of the Mal-gro gTsang-po and sKyid-chu, thus may serve as a last indication that – independently of the question of dating – an older chronology had been taken into account, one which captures the first steps towards the unification of the country (see App. I).

#### IV. Old Khra-’brug – Successive Phases of the Building History

If an attempt is undertaken to reconstruct the older phases of the architectural history and its structural development, we are immediately confronted with a number of difficulties since, as with so many temples in Tibet, precious little of the older building has survived. The relevant sources, as stated, diverge dramatically when it comes to both the names and the inventorial description of the older parts of the temple, and evidently already in the founding legend data deriving from both earlier and more recent epochs have intermingled. The chronologically critical points in the architectural history occur, in particular, in its initial phase.

The earliest descriptions available to us of the Khra-’brug *vihāra* delivered by Western visitors emphasize its architectural and structural similarity to the lHa-sa Jo-khang. S. Ch. Das, who visited Yar-lung in 1881, describes it as a “a copy, on a small scale, of the Jo-khang of Lhasa” (Das 1988 (repr.): 230). G. Tucci (1987 (repr.): 180), who erroneously dated the temple foundation as coeval with the installation of the temple bell, added that the lay-out of the [Khra-’brug] *gtsug lag khang*

reminded him of the lHa-sa temple. And Richardson (1998: 318) noted: “It is an echo of what the lHa-sa Jo-khang may originally have looked like.” Similar observations we find in descriptions left behind by Tibetan pilgrims, the last the one by Tshong-dpon Kha-stag 'dzam-yag, who in the winter of 1947/48 passed through Yar-lung (almost simultaneously with G. Tucci, it appears). The temple, he concludes, outwardly resembles that of the lHa-sa Jo-khang (*Tshong dpon gnas bskor* 102; cf. also Chayet 1994: 123). What the observers here allude to is the characteristic and basic lay-out of both temples: a central separate building housing the *sanctum* (*dri gtsang khang*; *garbhagr̥ha*) flanked by two chambers, to which is added an arcade-like courtyard circumscribing it, along the sides of which additional chambers or annexes (*glo 'bur*) were erected. A half-roofed assembly hall (*'du khang*; *maṇḍapa*) was later placed in the centre of it.<sup>3</sup> However, we shall argue that this particular lay-out reflects – at least in the case of Khra-'brug – a later building phase.

The textual tradition mentions that the part of the temple erected during the epoch of Srong-btsan sgam-po was known as sGo-drug Ka-drug (“Six Doors, Six Pillars”), which as the basic component constitutes the innermost part, occupied by the three *lha khang*-s (**R-1**, **R-2**, **R-3**) of the main building (Khra-'brug dBU-rtse) plus four lateral chambers (**R-4** to **R-7**). The locals claim that **R-6** and **R-7** originally constituted only one “door” (the chamber **R-3a** (= the *klu khang*) arguably later was separated from **R-3**). It still remains uncertain what exactly the six pillars refer to. The present entrance area of sGo-drug Ka-drug comprises three times six pillars, whereas the text (*Text A*) mentions nine pillars (i.e. eight plus the central pillar, *ka ba'i srog shing*). The concept “sGo-drug Ka-drug” is well known in the architectural context, where it indicates a rich and affluent household (akin to *ka bzhi gdung brgyad* – also indicating a perfect or complete house(hold)). It may here be a symbolic designation for a site which – not least in the cultic representation of it – was seen as a residence of the court (of king, queen and minister; cf. App. II).

The locals differentiate between three phases in the erection of oldest recorded parts of Khra-'brug:

- the *lha khang* of the sMu/dMu tradition (i.e. the underground sMu-lugs lha-khang mentioned above)
- the temple[-complex] of the Chinese tradition (rGya-lugs lha-khang = sGo-drug Ka-drug) and
- the sGrol-ma zhing-khams (= sGrol ma lha-khang; **R-1**).

This tradition apparently describes a vertical arrangement and order of the sGo-drug Ka-drug complex, with the sGrol-ma lha-khang (*alias* dBU-rtse dBus-ma, i.e. gTsang-khang) as the section located on an elevated level (for the designation rGya-lugs lha-khang, see App. II, Part 1, Chap. 1).

The *nang skor* or inner roofed ambulatory runs around the main block of the dBU-rtse, resembling the larger one circumscribing the *gtsug lag khang* of lHa-sa, which is externally surrounded by another block (see e.g. Larsen and Sinding-Larsen 2001: 114). If we follow the information given in the founding legend, the original building was restricted to the gTsang-khang (**R-1**); this would suggest that the dBU-rtse with its division into three rooms (today Chos-rgyal lha-khang (**R-2**), sGrol-ma

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<sup>3</sup> In India since the 5<sup>th</sup> century basic temple structure with internal ambulatories are documented, and the structure with a square-shaped sanctum with roofed ambulatory and attached assembly hall is shared by many imperial-time constructions in Tibet. Cf. most recently Alexander 2005.

lha-khang (R-1), Thugs-rje lha-khang (R-3)) and the expansion through three/four lateral chambers of the sGo-drug Ka-drug represent subsequent building phases (see *Text A*, Diagram 3).

One also finds this simple architectonic form, a *sku mkhar* like residential building circumscribed by a *skor lam* or circum-ambulatory as the basic structure of the dBu-ru Ka-tshal *vihāra*, which in the estimation of Richardson represents “the only temple attributed to Srong-btsan sgam-po which appears to have been virtually untouched” (1998: 179). The same design (in which Richardson sees parallels to a temple in Taxila) is also to be observed in other later dynastic *vihāra*-s, such as bTsan-thang g.Yu'i lha-khang or the Bya-sa lha-khang (Diagram 1).

The architects of Khra-'brug are reported to have been craftsmen from Nepal (as explicitly stated in *Text D*); it also finds expression in the lay-out of the temple: its main entrance is oriented directly towards the Kathmandu Valley (see App. I). The manufacture of the stone statues of the Buddha Pentad (rGyal-ba rigs-nga, with Vairocana in the centre) is ascribed to Nepalese sculptors (today only fragments are extant), while the flanking *bodhisattva* statues (i.e. the Eight Close Sons; Nye-ba'i sras-brgyad), according to the transmission, together with the rJe-btsun Tārā and other statues were brought along as trophies of a military campaign in Khotan (Li-yul lCang-ra smug-po). One of the eight *bodhisattva* son statues is said to have come from Ramo in Yar-stod, having allegedly swum to the lower part of Yar. The statue is the highly blessed Mañjuśrī Dharmadhātu (Fig. 4). The link to old Khotan was reinforced by the post-dynastic establishment of the *Me tog mchod pa* ceremonial site named Li-yul lCang-ra smug-po, which originally was situated due west outside the temple complex, where purportedly the gods of Khotan would annually arrive – so the legend tells us – to attend the ceremonies. Significantly, this platform was erected on a site that previously may have contained the old workshop and foundry, to which the name still in use, Lugutong (i.e. *lugs [su] gtong*), seems to refer (App. II, Part 2, Chap. 1). According to *Text B*, the statues were the result of Khotanese craftsmanship.

Contacts between Tibet and Khotan (Li-yul) may have existed during the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po (one of his six consorts allegedly was a lady from Li-yul); yet the forcible inclusion of this farthest north-western neighbour into the Tibetan dominion, as spoken of in the legendary description of the acquisition of the statues, may historically refer to a later epoch (that of the sons of *blon chen* mGar, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century; between 665 and 670 according to Beckwith; cf. *Text A*, fn. 93; it may also have had a narrative precursor in the story of the forcible acquisition of the famous Jo-bo statue in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when it was brought from Kucha to China; cf. TBH

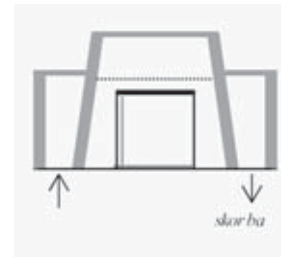


Diagram 1. The “Ka-tshal design”



Fig. 3. Vairocana (2b-II)



Fig. 4. 'Jam-dpal Dharmadhātu (3a-II)

Sørensen 81, 506–07; *Text A*, fn. 93). We do possess references according to which relations with Khotan in the founding epoch of lHa-sa and Khra-'brug, as detailed in the Srong-btsan sgam-po vita literaure, reflect events that actually occurred in the period of Khri lDe-gtsug-btsan (*alias* Mes Ag-tshoms; r. 712–755). We may assume that the celebrated episode of the journey of the two Khotanese monks to the Tibetan court (first mentioned in *dBa' bzhed* 3a–b) has an historic parallel in the story of the reception and hospitality accorded to monks from Khotan by Queen Gyim-shang Kong-jo (Kim-sheng Kong-co) in the late 720's and 730's (see here the source references and discussion in TBH Sørensen 303ff., 577–579, 584; Beckwith 1983: 7; R. Vitali 1990: 2–16). One major building project of the 8<sup>th</sup> century was the [lHa-sa] mKhar-brag *lha khang*, which was considered one of the five Mahāyāna chapels of Mes Ag-tshoms,<sup>4</sup> and still in the vita literature of Srong-btsan sgam-po it is registered as a foundation of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (ascribed to Queen Mong-bza'). The temple was destroyed in the throes of the Bon-po – Buddhist conflicts of the 750's (*lDe'u 1* 121.8–9), an event which evidently served as model for later descriptions in Bon-po sources, where it is said that as a result of the king's (i.e. Srong-btsan sgam-po) practice of Buddhism (in lieu of Bon), the lHa-sa'i mKhar-chung (= mKhar-brag) was destroyed by lightning. Shortly thereafter the king passed away (merely 36 years of age), a victim of a series of plagues (*nad, mug*) that followed in the trail of fire (see Karmay 1972: 79). The site (due east of lHa-sa?, see App. I, B-1) is evidently identical with the mKhar-p[h]rag of the *Dunhuang Annals*, where it is repeatedly registered during the reign of Mes Ag-tshoms. The Chinese queen (possibly the actual architect behind Ra-mo-che; see App. I) resided at least once a year in lHa-sa (see *dBa' bzhed* 4a). Beyond that she would have maintained close bonds to Yar-lung, at least according to the oral tradition, according to which the well-known story of the rivalry between sNa-nam-bza' and the Chinese Kong-jo over the question of the motherhood of Khri Srong-lde-btsan took place. Her residence was the palace of Yar-stod 'Phang-thang, a fortress which emperor Mes Ag-tshoms had erected for her. He for his part temporarily resided in (Yar-lung) lDan-mkhar/dkar. In addition, he is said to have founded two temples in Yar-lung (i.e. the *lha khang* of lHa-ru and rGya-sar-sgang (both south of Khra-'brug), the latter also designated as rGya-bza'-khang, "house of the Chinese spouse [Gyim-sheng Kong-jo]"; *Text A*, fn. 263, 269). It is worth mentioning that the destination of the two Khotanese monks is registered differently in the sources: either sTod-lung (or Dan-'bag, i.e. the western entrance to the lHa-sa valley) or Yar-lung Khra-'brug (also called Yar-lung dBu-ra), or also they are both mentioned (*Text A*, fn. 93). The curious description of the *two* monks who arrived in *two* different places arguably reflects historical circumstances, namely that separate groups of Khotan monks in the period of Mes Ag-tshoms served at the two dynastic sites of lHa-sa and Yar-lung, and more specifically in the close environs of the queen's residence of lHa-sa (Ra-mo-che, mKhar-brag?) and 'Phang-thang.

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<sup>4</sup> I.e. 'Ching-bu/phu Nam-ra (mChims-phu Na-ral), Brag-dmar Kva-chu, [Brag-dmar] 'Gran/m-bzang (~ mGrin-bzang [known as the birth-place of Khri Srong-lde-btsan]; see the photo in *Lhoka* 35), [lHa-sa] m'Khar-brag and sMas-gong (Ma-sa-gong, according to Nel-pa's chronicle located at the foot of [Brag-dmar] lDal-po-ri [= Tal-po-ri = Has-po-ri; MTP Uebach 97, 99; thus evidently identical with the site of the (later) queen's palace of bSam-yas Mal-gong (see *bKa' thang sde lnga* 256.2) or Ma-sa-gong gi pho-brang (*lDe'u 2* 347.6; cf. also *dBa' bzhed* 25b: Brag-dmar Ma-gong]). See *dBa' bzhed* 4a (P. Wangdu and H. Diemberger 33–34); TBH Sørensen 352–53. Thus four of the five chapels were located in the vicinity of Brag-[d]mar or Red Cliff, one of the chief residential sites of the Tibetan emperors in the late 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> century – where *inter alia* the young rGyal gTsong-ru received his royal name Khri lDe-gtsug-rtsan (i.e. was enthroned) in 712 A.D. (*DTH* 20.38–21.1).



The story of the two monks from Khotan, in our view, illustrates how the 8<sup>th</sup> century ruler (prophesied by King Srong-btsan sgam-po as his *saddharma*-disseminating successor) assumed the position as the first *dharmarāja* (cf. also App. I, fn. 1). This also appears to apply to the introduction of the cult of Vairocana, the cosmic Buddha of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, which rather should be situated in the “second *Saddharma* phase.” In any case, the presence of Vairocana as the central deity in Tibetan temples can hardly be dated to before the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> According to this assessment, the Vairocana statues of lHa-sa mentioned in connection with the founding period, namely in the rock-temples of Phag-sna-gdong (in lower sTod-lung valley) and of Brag-lha klu-sbug (App. I) must be dated to a later period, similarly the Vairocana statues mentioned in connection with the geomantic temples, such as mKho-mthing or Khra-'brug. The Vairocana presence makes itself felt not only in the imposing stone statues of the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga group, but also indirectly in the famous dBu-lnga-pa account, a narrative chronicled in numerous sources in connection with the story of the Khotanese monks: The king meets a beggar-priest at the *mchod rten* dBu-lnga of Khra-'brug and presents himself as the son of Amitābha and as a *cakravartin*, but the disguised beggar in this encounter surpasses him by putting on display a godly assemblage residing in his opened breast. The description of this godly assemblage differs according to the version; *rGyal rabs gsal* for instance mentions the gods of Vairocana (*Text A*, fn. 245).



Fig. 5. *sGrol-ma* (3a-1)



Fig. 6. *Amitāyus* (2b-1)

In the present narrative, what is referred to is the installation of the first *mchod gnas* (chaplain or ritual caretaker) of a royal temple, an event assigned in the chronicles to the period during the first *dharmarāja*, but which we see as a later (i.e. Mes Ag-tshoms period) element in the Buddhist history of the temple (the narrative itself may have been formulated for the first time in the post bSam-yas period).

If we assume that the main support (*rten gtso*) of the Khra-'brug dBu-rtse in reality is an 8<sup>th</sup> century product, the question of the original central deity of the temple must be mooted. The “unspoiled” Ka-tshal *vihāra*<sup>6</sup> – this the appraisal of Richardson – again may deliver a clue to this question: Here we find behind the dBu-rtse altar the oversized statue of Byams-pa (the future

<sup>5</sup> The dominance of Vairocana with specific or underlying associations of cosmocratic rulership is assumed by other scholars to date from the period of Khri Srong-lde-btsan and the foundation of bSam-yas (Richardson, ‘The Cult of Vairocana’, 1998: 177f. and most recently Kapstein 2000: 58–65), perhaps a somewhat too late dating.

<sup>6</sup> Its “unrenovated status” indeed may be questioned. We have information that Ka-tshal was repeatedly renovated down through history, foremost by the 'Bri-gung-pa, who considered the imperial-era temple their site. In the early 1520's, Ka-tshal and the surrounding districts were put to the torch and thoroughly destroyed by a joint sNe'u-gdong

Buddha Maitreya), a deity which forms the main support in other geomantic border temples (*Text A*). In the description delivered in *Text C*, a smaller statue of Byams-pa was installed in Khra-'brug in front of the Vairocana Buddha Pentad (*pañcakula*), which may indicate a positional and ideological shift in the cosmology and cult of the temple idols in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Richardson, 'The Cult of Vairocana'; on the relation between rNam-srang and Byams-pa, see in this context also Heller 1994, 1997). It appears that the designation – known only from post-dynastic sources – for the central temple of Khra-'brug dBu-rtse, namely the Byams-pa Mi-'gyur-gling, or the "Continent of the Immutable Maitreya," is the authentic original name of Tibet's first temple.

The mChod-rten dBu-Ingma, demolished in 1960's, was located in the southern direction, having been built outside the temple complex; it is recorded that it had been raised in order to atone the sins of having killed the five-headed *klu* monster of the founding story. Tucci saw in this complex of five *stūpa*-s (which actually included a sixth one) a foundation of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, evidently a somewhat late dating. Still, the establishment *in toto* must be seen as a product of the post-dynastic period. This famous "first *stūpa* of Tibet," *inter alia* mentioned in the Padmasambhava vita, may either refer to a re-establishment of a former site or to a later replica of the original dBu-Ingma. It could also denote the *caitya* located in the first (= upper) courtyard (*khyams stod*) of the gTsug-lag-khang. According to tradition, this *caitya* was made from the bodily substances of the five-headed *nāga*.<sup>7</sup> It forms the southernmost of the two *caitya*-s between which the sGo-drug Ka-drug complex opens out towards the west (Diagram 2). According to *Text A*, both *mchod rten*-s mark the actual border of the Srong-btsan sgam-po period part of the temple, an assessment which we must revise somewhat, since this particular lay-out of sGo-drug Ka-drug may already reflect a second stage in the development of the Khra-'brug *vihāra* executed under *btsan po* Khri lDe-gtsug-btsan, in connection with an expanded systematization of the image of a ruler in the form of a *cakravārtin*.

One of the ministers of Srong-btsan sgam-po is reported to have erected the annex temple of Rigs-Ingma lha-khang, but we do not possess any hard information from the early period to verify this. The temple is commonly regarded as the forerunner of the later O-rgyan lha-khang (**R-8**), the central statute of which was the celebrated image of Padmasambhava known as "My likeness," allegedly commissioned by *lha sras* Mu-khri btsan-po (possibly better: Mu-tig btsan-po; see *Text A*, fn. 163). During the same period or somewhat later, the above-mentioned great votive bell of Khra-'brug was set up, a casting of Chinese origin dedicated to Emperor Khri lDe-srong-btsan Sad-na-legs (r. 804–815/17) and fabricated a few decades after the bSam-yas bell. As far as can be established

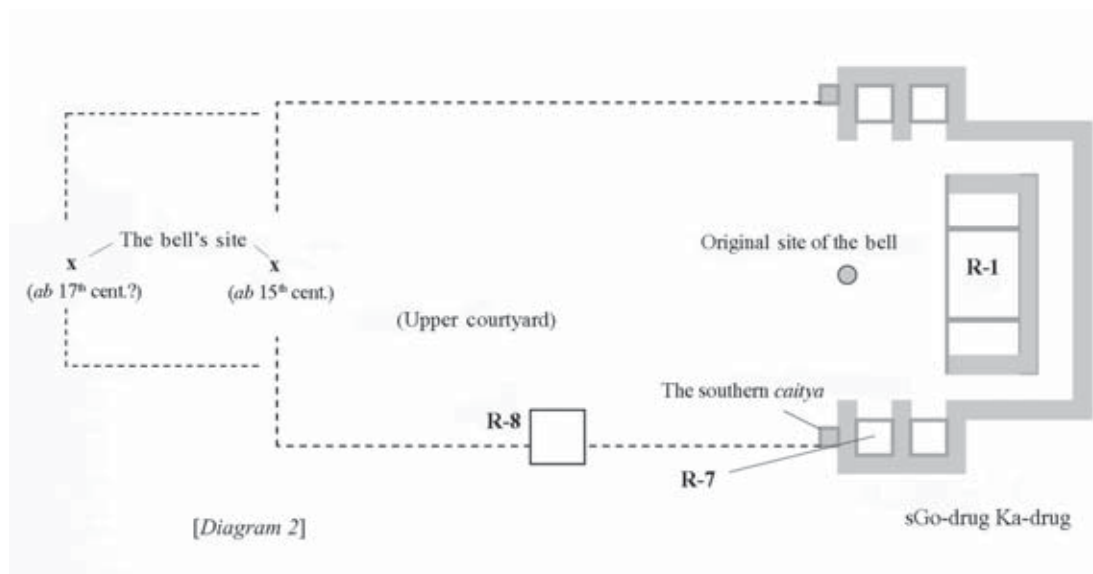


Fig. 7. Padmasambhava  
(1b-III)

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army. In 1544, the Sixteenth 'Bri-gung throne-holder, Rin-chen phun-tshogs renovated it, no doubt in an attempt to bolster his position in the struggle over the cult of Srong-btsan sgam-po (see below, V.2). The outer structure (walls etc.), however, may have survived the destruction.

<sup>7</sup> M. Akester (in a forthcoming and improved retranslation of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-rtse dbang-po's celebrated *Guide*) advances the theory that originally the pentadic dBu-Ingma *caitya* ensemble was set up in front of the central temple, quite in keeping with Newari models, also suggested by their position on the *Srin mo gan rkyal* painting.



from the sources, the new religious (and socio-economic) establishments associated with the period of the founding of bSam-yas (i.e. the beginning of the monastic tradition) did not lead to any major changes in the building structure of the *chos 'khor* Khra-'brug. Tradition holds that the temple bell, which Tucci in 1948 observed in the outer gateway, at an earlier period had been hanging in the entrance hall to the main temple and originally was installed in the vestibule of the sGo-drug Ka-drug (Diagram 2). The shifting of place would seem to coincide with the construction and renewal of the courtyard complex, probably in the early Phag-mo gru-pa period, when the chamber **R-7** dedicated to the Medicine Buddha (evidently separated from **R-6**) was established anew (see also below, V.2). In other words, the building complex which Atiśa (mid-11<sup>th</sup> century), bTsong-kha-pa (in 1380 A.D. he was ordained in Yar-lung, see below) and in fact countless other masters of medieval Tibet visited basically was identical with that of the 8<sup>th</sup>-century sGo-drug Ka-drug temple. Everything which architecturally went beyond this basic structure, aside from the Upper Courtyard, the second or lower courtyard and the entire roof complex, must be considered products of the 17<sup>th</sup> century or later – called “the Dalai Lama Section” of the temple by the local people. They maintain that “what is conducted ritually in one part of the temple also concerns the other part,” pointing to the ultimate identification or equation of the two decisive political founders in Tibetan history: Srong-btsan sgam-po and Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho, the Fifth Dalai Lama.



Fig. 8. Atiśa (1b-1)



Fig. 9. bTsong-kha-pa  
(2a-1)

## V. Political and Religious Developments in the Yar-lung Area and their Reflection in the Temple History

### V. 1 The Centre of g.Yo-ru during the “Dark Period” and the Revenge of the Monk-Minister Bran-ka dPal gyi Yon-tan

The Khra-'brug bKra-shis lha-yul *gtsug lag khang* counts among the five temples in which copies (*dpe*) of the important edict of 779 that both documents and reconfirms the Buddhist order under Khri Srong-lde-btsan were kept. The others are the two temples of lHa-sa (i.e. Ra-mo-che and the 'Phrul-snang) and the two then newly erected temples of Brag-dmar, namely bSam-yas and the neighbouring Kham-gsum Myi-ldog-sgrol.<sup>8</sup> Among this group, the Ra-mo-che and Khra-'brug enjoyed the particular status of being a “centre” of their respective regions or zones, namely the dBu-ru (the Central Horn province) and g.Yo-ru (the Left Horn province), an ascription from the time following the establishment of the four horns (first mentioned in the *Annals* for 733 A.D.). The precise meaning of “centre” as well as the question whether or not a (specific) administrative office or post was associated with it still remains unclear. The use of the term nevertheless points up the symmetric territorial organization of Tibet proper during the 8<sup>th</sup> century (i.e. the four ru-s, four centres), as found reflected in the parallel scheme of the border-suppressing temples, despite the circumstance that the key Ru-bzhi sites here are differently named. Within Yar-lung, the Khra-'brug temple belonged to the *yul sde / tshan* of Yar-mda', one of the sub-districts in Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po areas, which in turn are registered as two of the ten chiliarchies (*stong sde*) of g.Yo-ru. During the founding phase, the sources speak of a minister of/from Khra-'brug; he is specified as a minister of the interior (*nang blon*) – mentioned by name are the *nang blon* sNachen-po (a key figure in the Srong-btsan sgam-po vita) and a certain *nang blon* Ral-pa-'dzin of the dGyer clan in Yar-lung (possibly one and the same minister; see below, chap. V.2.1; *Text A*, fn. 178; *Text D*, fn. 7) – which may indicate that the administration and maintenance of the royal *vihāra*-s were assigned to the domestic wing in the court administration.

The second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, which saw the foundation of bSam-yas and the monastic traditions evolving from there, brought about not only the well-known series of internal religious reforms and cultural renewal, but also far-reaching socio-economic and political changes. With the distribution of land (sanctioned by the *btsan po*) and rural households for the subsistence of the monk communities (cf. e.g. D. Schuh 1988: 5f.) and the appointment of members of the clergy to the highest administrative position, the pre-conditions were given for the rise of a new political and societal (economically autarkic) force, one that eventually threatened to undermine the old alliance between the aristocratic clans and the royal throne, hitherto the structural nucleus of the government (*chab srid*). The events in the 9<sup>th</sup> century commonly described as the persecution of Buddhism, beginning with the assassination of Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan, the monk-minister of the pious monarch Khri Ral-pa-can, were less directed towards religion than towards the elimination of the privileged clergy, whose influence, particularly during the reign of this monarch, increased dramatically – a ruler about whom it was said that he handed over (i.e. forfeited) the authority to rule (*dbang*) to the religious community (see most recently Karmay 2003).

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<sup>8</sup> See H. Richardson, “The First Tibetan *chos 'byung*.” See also *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* 372.

In the immediate post Glang Dar-ma period, when the central part of Tibet fell apart as a result of the warring conflict between the two sons of the “sinful king,” Yum-brtan and ’Od-srungs, Yar-lung was the very core land in the southern tier of disputed territories. It was the domain of Khri gNam-lde ’Od-srungs (born in Yum-bu bla-mkhar), who evidently resided in the neighbouring ’Phang-thang, where at the close of the 9<sup>th</sup> century (the dating still unclear) he allegedly died from poisoning. His court chaplain founded mKhar-thog, as recorded in one source, evidently alluding to a temple, and his successor, dPal-’khor-btsan (born in ’Phang-thang) would also erect a temple, namely the later significant Bya-sa *vihāra*. All in all, these are indications that at the close of the 9<sup>th</sup> century monk communities still existed intact in the vicinity of Khra-’brug. The Bya-sa foundation can be dated to just before the outbreak of the civil or clan-led rebellion (*kheng log*) in g.Yo-ru and other areas, in the wake of which dPal-’khor-btsan was assassinated in one of his gTsang residences (the events apparently had been anticipated by a brief local hegemonic intermezzo acted out by a member of the Yum-brtan *brgyud*; cf. CFS Gyalbo *et al.*). This *kheng log* revolt constituted no more than a logical galvanizing of powerful separatist forces in a situation portending civil war in the 9<sup>th</sup> century; in other words, the movement was radically anarchistic and decentralized to the point where any issue related to Buddhism carried little or no weight.

The last datable dynastic foundations of mKhar-thog and Bya-sa later formed, together with the edifices of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (bTsan-thang, rTag-spyan, Rol-khang, etc.), key sites in the religious and political geography of the country, which began with the post-dynastic history of the return of descendants of ’Od-srungs and Yum-brtan. The dynastic sites (including Khra-’brug) are to a large extent registered as dependencies and establishments of the ruling Yar-lung *jo bo-s*, under whose auspices at first the Vinaya schools flourished (communities primarily issuing from the discipleship of Klu-mes). These established their communities from the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century followed in turn by the local bKa’-gdams-pa movement, upon the demise of Atiśa. The Yar-lung *jo bo-s* were descendants of dPal-’khor-btsan from gTsang, who mainly occupied the areas of ’Phyong-po and Lower Yar. Scions of the Yum-brtan *brgyud*, on the other hand, were represented in Yar-lung by the so-called Bug-pa-can-pa who occupied settlements in Upper Yar-lung. They are known from the 11<sup>th</sup> century as active patrons of the pioneering figure Grva-pa mNgon-shes and were subsequently closely associated with the monastic hegemony of the g.Ya’-bzang-pa (see CFS Gyalbo *et al.*). The recurrence of the dynastic or royal lineages in Yar-lung followed – at least this was the case for the Yar-stod rulers – upon invitations issued by old local clans, including among these also a number that had played a leading role in the anarchistic *kheng log* revolt. The decision to forward an invitation to a scion of Yum-brtan was made by the clans during a conference held in the heart (*mithil*) of Yar-lung, that is, the core area of Lower Yar around Khra-’brug. The new *jo bo* or *btsad po* dynasties and principalities of Yar-lung and ’Phyong-po replaced the brief period of the *rje’i dpon tshan*, whose regional power had emerged in the wake of the aforementioned *kheng log*. Two among the six (or seven) Central Tibetan *rje’i dpon tshan-s* were in Yar-lung (in sNa-mo and ’Phyos; *Sat-Map* 1), which according to the descriptions in the *lDe’u* chronicles and by dPa’-bo gtsug-lag was the cradle of the (g.Yo-ru) *kheng log* revolt.

In this *kheng log* document, we come across the surprising involvement of the 9<sup>th</sup>-century monk minister Bran-ka dPal gyi yon-tan whose spectacular political career and hapless fate during his reign served as a swaying bridge to the dynastic phase: the spirit of the assassinated dPal gyi yon-tan is depicted as the initiator of the *kheng log*, as a Mahākāla-like manifestation who called

upon the local gods (i.e. the people) to eliminate all rulers from the country (App. II, fn. 108). The complex story behind this role and the ensuing events has been poignantly analyzed only recently (Dotson, *forthcoming*): it was the old telluric or territorial deities, headed by Yar-lha Sham-po, who would put an end to the anarchistic and chaotic circumstances and successfully influenced dPal gyi yon-tan to support the (new) *rje'i dpon chen* project.

The descriptions of these important events transmitted to us are based upon the still deplorably non-extant 11<sup>th</sup>-century *Lo rgyus chen mo* that was compiled by the eccentric Thang-po-che abbot and Atiśa disciple Khu-ston brTson-'grus g.yung-drung (1011–1075 A.D.). He would prove instrumental in inviting the Indian master to Yar-lung, where the latter was active at Thang-po-che, Khra-'brug (which at that point stood under the custodianship of the “lord of Khra-'brug,” see below), Bya-sa and other sites. Yar-lung chronologically was the first station where Atiśa and his groups sojourned for a longer period; however, Atiśa had found the situation there to be too unruly and the area in general too inhospitable to choose as a permanent residence. He therefore responded to the invitation of Bang-ston Byang-chub rgyal-mtshan, who proposed that he settle down in sNye-thang (of sKyid-shod), also known as sNye-thang 'Or[-ma]. A site known as 'Or-ma/mo (*Text A*, fn. 197) is registered as settlement of a branch line of the Khra-'brug-pas, and it cannot be excluded that a connection existed between the master's visit to Khra-'brug (or to the Khra-'brug-pas) and the residential seat in sKyid-shod (App. III; Table II, fn. 30).

With respect to the events during the “Dark Period,” one aspect in the Atiśa biography deserves closer attention: the [re-]appearance of the Bran-ka demon. The master formerly had pacified an evil spirit in ['Phan-po] Lan-pa – it is related – a site located not far from Yer-pa (itself a key site in the ritual history of lHa-sa and sKyid-shod), and according to tradition it was the place where dPal gyi yon-tan was killed. H. Richardson (1998: 147) refers to a local tradition of sNye-thang according to which the skin of the corpse of dPal gyi yon-tan was stripped of, cut into two pieces and subsequently thrown into the sKyid-chu river. The upper part was pulled onto the shore at sNye-thang, where it reportedly was used to coat the statue of *dpa' bo* Blon-chen kept in sNye-thang sGrol-ma lha-khang, while the other piece got stranded at rTses-thang, in Yar-lung (App. II, fn. 108). The fate of the second half remains unclear; still, we easily recognize in this mythic rendition a significant temporal and spatial link. The “territorial body” of dPal gyi yon-tan – the embodiment, ring-leader and ideological mastermind behind the preceding *kheng log* conflict – connects the northern and southern half of Central Tibet, where the chief sites of Atiśa's activity back and forth between Yar-lung, 'Phan-po and sNye-thang can be situated. The dPal gyi yon-tan narrative indeed contains some significant elements related to the story behind the origin and expanding influence of a Tibetan protector god (and oracle god, respectively; see App. II, Part II: Chap. 4.2), and it is quite conceivable that a close link existed with the later establishment of local oracles in sNye-thang and Yar-lung and to Thang-sag dGa'-ldan Chos-'khor-gling (the monastery of central 'Phan-yul where Bran-ka functioned as chief *srung ma*). The actual content and meaning of these connections, however, will only emerge from a more precise investigation. Still, we immediately recognize in the story a transition myth of the “Dark Period,” set in the milieu of the early bKa'-gdams-pa and *phyi dar* protagonists: the retaliation on the part of the monk-minister, whose death was seen to herald the end of the Buddhist era, forcing a detour by way of the *kheng log* and the encounter with Atiśa to the Buddhist revival in Central Tibet. Yar-lung and the heart of g.Yo-ru evidently played a central role in this decisive process.

## V. 2 In the Service of the Temple – Historical Connections in the Post-imperial Period

### V.2.1 The dGyer Lineage: Ancient Clan-historical Links to Khra-'brug

The temple of the Thundering Falcon and its environs, probably at least until the 13<sup>th</sup> century belonged to the domain of the so-called Khra-'brug-pa, a royal line that had settled in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and about five generations of which the *lDe'u* chronicles offer us. The “lord of Khra-'brug” mentioned in the *rnam thar* of Atiśa probably represents the first generation of this Jo-bo sub-lineage, which descended from one Da-ra dbang-phyug, one of the six or seven grandsons of *mes* Khri-chung, the founding father of the Yar-lung jo-bo-s (App. III). Concerning the Khra-'brug-pa themselves we possess precious little information. On the contrary, a clan in this connection came to the fore, being active within the political domain of the Jo-bo and evidently was related to this local ruling house: the dGyer (*var.* sGer, [s]Gyer-mi) clan who in this period held the position of steward in charge of overseeing the daily affairs and the administration of the temple, in Khra-'brug traditionally designated as *dpon gnyer*, or *dkon gnyer dpon*. We find a reference to this in the biography of dGyer-sgom Tshul-khrims seng-ge (1144–1204), the founder of the bKa'-brgyud-pa centre of Shug-gseb in sKyid-smad, who is said to have served in his early years as *dpon gnyer* in Khra-'brug. *Deb sngon* reports that he was of the “Khra-'brug-pa *dpon rgyud*” and specifies that his father was married to a daughter of royal blood, indicating an affinal relation with the Jo-bo line. The sub-line he belonged to, the dGyer Be-gu branch, not only occupied the abbatial seat of Shug-gseb until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but also served as local *dmag dpon*-s or military commanders in Yar-lung (for references, see App. II, fn. 59; App. III, fn. 29). The same clan should produce the leading family of the early rGya-ma Rin-chen sgang-pa, who with some certainty were also involved in the early post-imperial (cultic) history of Khra-'brug (see the following chapter).

There are good reasons to assume that the appearance of the dGyer in Khra-'brug resumes here a clan historical link, which goes back the founding phase of the temple. A number of sources (see *sGer gyi gdung rabs* 128–29; *SK* 254b; *Bod kyi deb ther* 158f.; *DL5 II* 127a2–129a5; *DL6* 431; *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig* 452–53) chronicle that this prominent clan people, which seems to have been affiliated with the ancestral bSe proto-clan, early ramified into three distinct branches (each with separate settlements disseminated throughout Central Tibet). Among these, the “inner” (i.e. central) patriline (*nang sger*) was the [Yar-lung dGyer] line of one sGer Ral-pa-'dzin who functioned as the interior minister (*nang blon*) of Srong-btsan sgam-po in the context of the foundation of Khra-'brug. Later history has moreover depicted him as a mythic figure whose initial fame apparently rested with the spread in Tibet of large quantities of so-called sundry “Precious Ornaments” (*rin rgyan*) that mainly consisted of specific precious turquoises and prolonged ear-ornaments studded with such stones (e.g. *bla g.yu*, *rna rgyangs*). These objects originally were brought along by him from the lands of the Turk people (Dru-gu); much later they should come in the possession of the Rin-spungs-pa, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in turn passed into the hand of the emerging dGa'-ldan pho-brang government (they were kept in the Potala treasury and worn during the Lo-gsar Festival by the “Rin-rgyan-pa” officials; see Richardson 1993: 16f.; *Dungkar tshig mdzod* 1910b; Fig. 90; also the *thugs rgyan* of the Jo-bo statue in Jo-khang are described as Rin-spungs-pa ornaments; cf. *DL9* 708f.). It is evident that the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Rin-spungs-pa, being of the dGyer clan, were treasuring these precious objects or stones as a sort of family heirloom of the dGyer clan since early time (much parallel to the celebrated heirlooms and insignia of the royal house (*rje'i can dgu*) which originally constituted

“clan regalia;” cf. CFS Gyalbo *et al.* 192ff.). In the aforementioned *Phan bde'i dpag bsam 'dod 'jo* (in *SK* 254b1–5) and in his *Bod kyi deb ther* (158.21–159.6), the Fifth Dalai Lama offers an adjacent story to this historically somewhat nebulous *nang blon* Ral-pa-'dzin, where it is mentioned that these or similar precious stones were donated (as symbolic insignia or capital) to the founder king. The brief account contains at the same time an echo of a much older version of the Khra-'brug foundation: Here the sGer line initiates with one sGer dPal-legs-'od who lived [in Yar-lung] at the time of *rje* Sha-khri btsan-po (evidently meaning sPu-lde gung-rgyal, the 9<sup>th</sup> king of the royal genealogy), then *nang blon* sGer Ral-pa-'dzin arrived in the 25<sup>th</sup> generation (which corresponds to the reign of the Khra-'brug founder) who by order of Srong-btsan sgam-po brought along from Gru-gu-yul seven loads (or shipments; *gzings bdun*) of precious turquoises. [Back in Yar-lung,] the hero defeated the mGo-lnga-pa *nāga* monster by means of magical power. Subsequently, at this very site (specified as the place of [Tibet's] first earth moxibustion; *sa'i me btsa' la snga ba*) the g.Yo-ru Khra-'brug *vihāra* (including the *mchod rten* mGo-lnga) was founded etc. (cf. also App. II, fn. 52). The story not only directly reminds us of the celebrated founding myth of the Thundering Falcon, but possibly represents its actual precursor, a narrative that originated within the milieu of this local Yar-lung clan and centered around a historical kernel which is absent in the classical version. It can be concluded from the context that the place of the temple originally belonged to the clan dominion of the dGyer-pa and this may be the reason why a representative of the dGyer (and at the same time minister and trader of the precious stones) acted as it were on behalf of the king as the (demiurge) founding figure in the temple foundation. Moreover, it evidently forms the background for the later appearance of the lineage in the 11–12<sup>th</sup> century when the question should rise to introduce the office of a steward to the then re-established temple.

In Khra-'brug, the post of the *dkon gnyer dpon* was traditionally also entrusted with certain ritual functions (related to the cult of the temple guardian; App. II, Part II, Chap. 5) and it may be speculated to what extent this or other certain cultic arrangements of the temple history, like for instance the connection between the Tshangs-pa dkar-po minister bSe-sku and the so-called four original families of Khra-'brug (see below) possibly could be linked to the older dGyer[-bSe] story (App. II, fn. 82). What we nevertheless can conclude from the sources is a significant parallel between the founding period and the early post-dynastic phase, where in each case a dGyer lineage functioned as minister clan to the royal house, in 11–12<sup>th</sup> century represented by the Khra-'brug-pa. If we disregard individual references (see App. III, fn. 29), the traces of the dGyer clan in Yar-lung (parallel to the Khra-'brug-pa) are somehow lost in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century; they then re-appear as leading lineages of the early Phag-gru government. The clan not only constituted the powerful lineage of the Phag-gru minister Nam-mkha' rgyal-po, the founding father of the Rin-spungs-pa, but *inter alia* also the line of the governor Nam-mkha' bzang-po of sNe'u (i.e. the powerful outpost or *rdzong* of central sKyid-shod). Significant for the later development in the narrow Yar-lung area was that it was Rin-spungs-pa Ma-sangs mTsho-skyes rdo-rje (1462–1510)

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<sup>9</sup> sGer Ral-pa-'dzin (The Maned One) may be seen as a sort of “Turquoise minister” to the king responsible for trading this precious commodity from the most important trade-marts along the Silk Road. The gem's place of origin, Dru-gu (Ch. Tujue, a generic name for the Turks), constituted at some point one of in total three Khrom or “military districts” under Tibetan control in the north-west (possibly referring to the Uigur-Turks in the Turfan area). Tibetan chronicles describe it as the key mart for the treasured *g.yu* gems (cf. *lDe'u-2* 264, 273; *Nyang ral chos 'byung* 395). Monopolizing this “azur-blue” gem-stone for the Tibetan market may have ensured the dGyer clan prominence at court. Tradition holds that the clan in Tibet should be considered the initiator behind the custom of donating (*sprod srol*) such precious gems.



of the dGyer clan who should return to the clan's homeland in Yar-lung and there appropriate the mKhar-thog *rdzong*, a locale of great significance and symbolism for the Khra-'brug foundation. From 1491–99 – during a period when his nephew Don-yod rdo-rje was the unrivalled ruler of dBus and sKyid-shod – he should act as regent to the Phag-mo gru-pa state (see *Text A*, fn. 65).

### V.2.2 Cultic and Religious Re-occupations of the Temple in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Century

The temple is not registered in the lists of the first *phyi dar* establishments of the early 11<sup>th</sup> century (The same holds true for lHa-sa, incidentally). Among the three doctrinal centres or *dharmacakra* temples, it was bSam-yas which served as the meeting point for the sMad-'dul groups (i.e. the Vinaya renewers arriving in Central Tibet from the east). The reason was evidently that bSam-yas was ruled by a local ruler or *mnga' bdag* Tsha-na Ye-shes rgyal-mtshan, who had entertained close contacts to the West Tibetan *phyi dar* movement, and therefore could ideally serve as a common temple for the sMad-'dul restoration. After their arrival in bSam-yas, the Glag Ba-lam-pa Klu-mes Tshul-khrims shes-rab and his group established from there the initial Vinaya settlements in sKyid-shod (in Yer-pa, Ba-lam and the La-mo valley), and it is also recorded that Klu-mes erected a *lha khang* in rTses-thang and in neighbouring Grva-phyi. To what extent the former Vinaya school in Yar-lung, which was disseminated by the disciples of Klu-mes (see App. III, Table III), also entered Khra-'brug at that point is still largely unclear.

The actual re-occupation and the cultic re-organization of the dynastic temple to all appearances took place in the post-Atiśa epoch. It resembled the development which Jo-khang would undergo, and immediately was associated with the (resumption of the) mystification of its royal founding figure. The architects of this came out of the milieu surrounding the successor lineages of Atiśa and the devotees of the Avalokiteśvara cult (former bKa'-gdams-pa but also rNying-ma-pas). This circle also spawned the editors or transmitters of the royal vita (TBH Sørensen 14ff.). The temple in this context acquired the status of a *thugs dam* (“heart-vow”) temple of the first *dharmarāja*; according to the sources, it along with Jo-khang was considered a depository of the royal testaments (*rgyal po'i bka' chems*; cf. *Text A*, fn. 126 and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* 455). The events reported in the sources relating to Khra-'brug, however, are utmost fragmentary and generally difficult to verify. Only a few names appear to have a direct bearing on Khra-'brug. Among these are sKor Jo-sras, abbot of Yar-lung rTag-spyan, about whom it is said that (in the wake of visions of the Lord of Compassion in the g.Yo-ru border retreat of Sha-'ug sTag-sgo) “he caused the influence of Khra-'brug to increase.” To judge by context, this allusion refers to Avalokiteśvara-specific architectural and cultic renewals. These activities can firmly be situated to mid- or late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to this point, we merely have one reference to Rva *lotsāva*, who during a lengthy propitiatory tour through Yar-lung there met a 'Phyong-rgyas sTag-rtse *rtsad po*, or “local ruler,” and is recorded as having carried out the renovation of some wall paintings at Khra-'brug (*Rva lo rnam thar* 300–02)<sup>10</sup> – the earliest post-imperial record of any renovation at Khra-'brug. Although his biography is notoriously unreliable in terms of chronology, the event may tentatively, but not unrealistically, be dated to the end of 11<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>10</sup> This leads us to the conclusion that the original wall-paintings in Khra-'brug (including famous narrative depictions of vita episodes of the founding king) may date from the 8–9<sup>th</sup> century at the latest. The *ldebs ris* in question, moreover, may feature the enthronement episode originally depicted in the Chos-rgyal lha-khang (R-2); *Text A*, fn. 34.

The aforementioned Jo-sras was a pupil of *dge bshes* sKor-chen, who had renewed the old rTag-spyan temple and who figures as the founder of the important monastery of rTe'u-ra in gNyal (renowned as the residence of both masters from Chag[s]-yul (in gNyal), namely Chag[s] dGra-bcom (1153–1216 A.D.) and his nephew, Chag[s] *lotsāva* Chos-rje-dpal [1197–1264]). sKor-chen-po belonged to the bKa'-gdams-pa disciple line of sNe'u-zur-pa (1042–1118) which was represented in Yar-lung and neighbouring areas just as the pupil line stemming from *dge bshes* Po-to-ba (seated in Bra-gor of gNyal) or the discipleship of Rin-chen snying-po and the sPyan-snga-pa disciple Bya-yul-pa gZhon-nu-'od (1075–1138), all names – discounting here Po-to-ba – that appear in the list that transmitted the royal testaments of *Ka khol ma*. The bKa'-gdams-pa tradition of rGya-ma also derives from sNe'u-zur-pa (and Bya-yul-pa), whose founding fathers, namely dGyer-sgom gZhon-nu-grags (1090–1171) and his nephew dBon-ston Rin-po-che (1138–1210), patrilineally stemmed from a dGyer family of Yar-lung 'Phyong-po. At some point in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, this dGyer line resettled in sNon/rGya-ma, where they married into a local house of bTsun-mo-tshal. We shall assume that in the environs of these early rGya-ma-pas, the decisive impetus to establish a cultic link between the Srong-btsan sgam-po sites of rGya-ma / bTsun-mo-tshal and Yar-lung Khra-'brug was provided: namely an identity in the name-giving of the Khra-'brug temple and birth-place of the king in rGya-ma (i.e. Pho-brang Byams-pa Mi-'gyur-gling).

One prominent figure among the bKa'-gdams-pa and Vinayadhara circles of Yar-lung was the young g.Ya'-bzang-pa Chos kyi smon-lam (*alias* gNubs 'dul-'dzin, 1169–1233 A.D.), the later founder of the powerful bKa'-brgyud-pa centre of g.Ya'-bzang in Upper Yar. Prior to the foundation of his monastery (1206 A.D.), he appeared in Khra-'brug as a successful revealer of temple *gter ma*-s,<sup>11</sup> and subsequently designated or regarded himself as an incarnation of Srong-btsan sgam-po. Neither the objects nor the writings discovered by him are named in this context, but they must bear some relation to the above-mentioned Khra-'brug copy of the royal testament. The relevant prophecy is embedded in a document (evidently composed and manipulated by g.Ya'-bzang-pa personally), a manifesto known as the “Azur-blue Testament” (*bKa' chems mTho[ng] mthing ma*). As detailed elsewhere, his privileged access to the temple treasures may here have served as a pre-requisite for the subsequent hegemonic aspirations which the g.Ya'-bzang-pa patriarch pursued within g.Yo-ru (see CFS Gyalbo *et al.* 147ff.).

The example of g.Ya'-bzang-pa points up a specific characteristic and phenomenon in the political history of the temple. The heart of g.Yo-ru is not specifically the site where political initiatives were launched; far more importantly, it served – not least because of its immense symbolism and its prestigious imperial background – as a supra-regional (and denominationally all-embracing) melting-pot, where political potentates and representatives of religious movements convened to cultivate common interests or develop close bonds. As far as g.Ya'-bzang-pa is concerned, he did not, from what we can see, leave behind any visible traces in the architectural or inventorial history of the temple (this may hinge upon the circumstance that g.Ya'-bzang as a seat of learning and religious institution had limited impact). Still, such traces should not entirely be absent. Chos kyi smon-lam does appear in the representative *bskang gso* text (*Tshangs pa mchod bstod*; *Text F*),

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<sup>11</sup> Later revealers, such as rDo-rje gling-pa and *rig 'dzin* Chos-rje gling-pa (1682–1725), made extensive *gter ma* discoveries in Khra-'brug. Cf. *gTer ston lo rgyus* 448-50; *Gu bkra chos 'byung* 412–415; *Nor bu 'i do shal* 321–324.

and he is, significantly, mentioned in connection with Yar-lha Sham-po. This possibly reflects an historical event: the old territorial god of Yar and protector of g.Ya'-bzang entered Khra-'brug as a temple guardian. He belongs to the group of Khra-'brug protectors (*gnas srung ma*), headed by Tshangs-pa dkar-po, the “birth god” of Srong-btsan sgam-po – a cultic representation arguably formulated in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

### V.2.3 rTse-tshogs-pa and the Establishment of other “Support Monasteries” in the Period of the Presence of the Sa-skyapa, dGe-lugs-pa and other schools (13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> cent.)

In the Yüan Sa-skyapa period, the territories of Yar-lung and 'Phyong-po were split up among the myriarchies of the g.Ya'-bzang-pa and the Phag-mo gru-pa, and along with these the Thang-po-che *khri skor* (or *stong skor*) and the estate of 'Phyong-po rGyas-sman, the latter an enclave considered a part of the Tshal-pas. The Lower Yar was part of the Phag-mo-gru-pa jurisdiction, with its administrative centre at sNe'u-gdong founded in 1254 or 1258 by rDo-rje-dpal, the political founding father of the Rlangs Phag-mo gru-pa and the later ruler of Tibet. Concerning the political fate of Khra-'brug and the Khra-'brug-pa lineage during this epoch of territorial relocations and restructurings, we possess no precise information. According to *Yar lung [jo bo] chos 'byung* (written in 1376) and other sources, different branches of the Yar-lung jo-bo-s (in particular Bya-sa-pa-s) making their presence felt in local policy and Phag-mo gru-pa rule until at least the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, we come across descendants and branch lines stemming from the royal lineages still holding local administrative posts as *sde pa*-s. Yet the Khra-'brug-pa disappeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, evidently being absorbed into other local families. We may assume that a close link existed with the founding history of rTse-tshogs-pa (early 13<sup>th</sup> century), chronologically the first in a series of monasteries whose monks were put in charge of the monastery in the post-dynastic period (this role, it appears, had been the province of the neighbouring bTsan-thang g.Yu'i lha-khang in the dynastic period, which specifically was erected as a support ('*chong*) (i.e. dependency) of Khra-'brug). A member of the rTse-tshogs-pa monk community was selected to hold the position as *dkon gnyer dpon* or temple steward, up into modern times a tradition which arguably reaches back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, replacing the Khra-'brug-pa and dGyer lineages. To an appreciable extent they were in charge of the ritual supervision and enactment regularly executed in the individual *lha khang*-s (among these, the three main chambers of the *gtsug lag lkang*, i.e. **R-1** to **R-3** of the Khra-'brug dBu-rtse). The specific bonds between the two institutions are also reflected in the relationship to their chief protector. rTse-tshogs-pa is the residence of bSe-khrab-can, one of the most significant figures among the protector gods of post-dynastic Central Tibet. In Khra-'brug he acted as an individual deity alongside with or as an acolyte to Tshangs-pa dkar-po, and at the same time served as the wrathful form of the Khra-'brug protector.

The political or ritual circumstances that led to the historical links between the two institutions are deplorably still little known. We suspect the influence of the Sa-skyapas, who were increasingly present in the Yar-lung area from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and who also entertained close relations with the Tshogs-pa schools. The monastery was founded as a residence of one of the four Buddhist groups (Jo-gdan Tshogs-pa/sde-bzhi) established by the Kashmirian master Śākyaśrībhadrā (1140's–1225). In 1211 A.D. he was active in Yar-lung (at the main-seat of Thang-po-che) and in a number of neighbouring bKa'-gdams-pa sites (in gNyal, rGya-ma, etc.). Among the most

precious objects of rTse-tshogs-pa, for instance, is a relic of his most influential disciple, Sa-skyā Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251 A.D.), and it is said that an imposing preaching chair (the *sa paṇ bzhugs khri*) existed in the vicinity of Khra-'brug.

A number of teaching centres or seminars related to the Sa-skyā-pa emerged in the area of Lower Yar; their founding dates are, however, not in all cases fully known. Two of them were established in the former dynastic sites of Bya-sa and bTsan-thang. New foundations from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century included bSam-gtan-gling and bKra-shis[-rtse] chos-sde, the latter renowned as a seat of the esoteric Tshar-pa tradition, which the Fifth Dalai Lama would later adopt (leading to the transference of the basic texts from Yar-lung bKra-shis chos-sde to lHa-sa). The foundation of the monastery as a local centre of the Tshar-pa school is ascribed to Yol mKhan-chen gZhon-nu blo-gros (1527–1599/1600) (found. date 1591 A.D.); however, it appears that a religious seat at this site existed already at an earlier point (*Text A*, fn. 282). The later dGe-lugs-pa nunnery (*ab* 18<sup>th</sup> cent.) of bSam-gtan-gling ultimately grew out of a meditation site of Bla-ma dam-pa bSod-nams rgyal-mtshan and his pupil Yar-lung-pa Seng-ge rgyal-mtshan; it is located to the north of the hill of sNe'u-gdong-rtse in present-day rTses-thang and represents one of four establishments – namely the sPyan-ras-gzigs pho-brang – which mark out the virtual *maṇḍala* of Zo-thang Gong-po-ri. It can be firmly assumed that Sa-skyā groups participated in the formation of this Avalokiteśvara mountain sanctuary as well as in the formation of the pilgrimage route of lower Yar (App. II, Part II).

rTse-tshogs-pa is situated on the western spur of the sNe'u-gdong-rtse (or Kun-bzang-rtse) hill, the latter a foothill of Zo-thang Gong-po-ri (the site of the later sNe'u-gdong *rdzong* may be identical with the location of the pre-historic *sku mkhar* of Zo-thang-ri, one of the four citadels of Yar-mo sna-bzhi; see above; App. II, Map 2). In the vicinity of rTse-tshogs-pa, along the southern ridge of the hill, stands the rNying-ma-pa monastery of Ban-tshang, which allegedly goes back to Yar-rje O-rgyan gling-pa, the author of *Text C*. Like the bKra-shis chos-sde, it too counted among the institutions monks were deputed from to serve at Khra-'brug. The monastery guardian, sNe'u-gdong Brag-btsan, belonged to the group of Khra-'brug *gnas srung ma*. Among the sacred objects of the monastery, we find a *zhabs rjes* (footprint) of Bla-ma dam-pa and the reliquary of O-rgyan gling-pa. The latter is a later addition. The bodily remains (*sku gdung*) of the great *gter ston* were brought at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from its original site in Dvags-po to Ban-tshang, where it later, upon the request of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, – was enshrined in a new precious wooden reliquary. This constituted a return to the primary site of activity of O-rgyan-pa, who following his celebrated discovery of textual treasures at Shel-brag-ri (*alias* Padma-brtsegs-ri) for the first time conducted a ritual opening performance in Khra-'brug.

Bla-ma dam-pa's presence in Yar-lung was during the period when the great Sa-skyā scholar headed the religious council of rTses-thang held in 1373 (under the auspices of the sNe'u-gdong *sde srid* 'Jam-dbyangs Śākya rgyal-mtshan). By then rTses-thang and sNe'u-gdong were had long since become the political, economic and (with the foundation of the rTse-thang *grva tshang*) also the spiritual seat of the Phag-mo gru-pas, whose hegemony over dBus and gTsang was administratively reorganized by *ta'i si tu* Byang-chub rgyal-mtshan already from mid-1350's. At this point at the latest, the royal temple of Khra-'brug and its affiliated monastery came under the formal political jurisdiction of sNe'u-gdong. This patronship evidently included control over internal affairs which, among other things, found expression in the *ta'i si tu*'s objection to the

performance of O-rgyan gling-pa in Khra-'brug, given the political allusions in his texts, and this led to a discontinuation in the opening of the doctrine and to his exile from the country.

These events evidently took place shortly after the expansion of the Khra-'brug temple, sometime around 1351 (1351 is also the year when the foundation stone of rTses-thang monastery was laid; App. III, Table III). This constituted one of the first large architectural refurbishments of Khra-'brug in the post-dynastic period (and included the building of the annex chapels adjacent to the sGo-drug Ka-drug; the erection of the 'du khang in the area of the upper courtyard arguably goes back to this building phase; see above). It also coincided with the architectural expansion of rTse-tshogs-pa, registered for the year 1356. One of the most precious monastic donations of rTse-tshogs-pa to be dated to this period of renewal is the *mu tig thang ka*, or the "pearl-studded *thangka*," the basic material for which allegedly had been donated by the consort of Byang-chub rgyal-mtshan. Another (local) tradition identifies it as among the dowry of the Chinese princess who wed the king and founder of Khra-'brug – a thoroughly "consistent" tradition, which simultaneously sheds light on the position of the *ta'i si tu*, the new "Tibetan king" of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

It may be characterized as significant that in 1380 the founding father of dGe-lugs-pa, Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa, received his ordination in rTse-tshogs-pa (more precisely, in the neighbouring rNam-rgyal gser-khang temple under the then Jo-gdan Tshogs-pa abbot dKa'-bzhi-pa Tshul-khrims rin-chen; see *Tsong kha pa rnam thar* 155). This site had long served as a portal to Khra-'brug, and opposite was located the quarters of sNe'u-gdong, the power base of the future patrons of the great reformer on his way to lHa-sa in sKyid-shod, which would one day be occupied by the new order.

Political developments during the Phag-mo gru-pa hegemony spawned a number of significant events in Yar-lung and central sKyid-shod linked with one another. Both displayed a similar density of (dGe-lugs) monastic foundations in beltlike zones around both key dynastic temples. In Yar-lung, these included a series of monasteries that mushroomed during the founding efforts of the disciples of Tsong-kha-pa – in particular, Ri-bo Chos-gling and Ri-bo bDe-chen, the communities of which rendered service to Khra-'brug. From the 1430's on, the political separation of the Rin-spungs governors of gTsang (accompanied by inner conflicts in the leading circles of the Phag-gru-pa as well as certain autonomous tendencies harboured among different governor families of sKyid-shod) led to a labile power constellation in Central Tibet, which lasted well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The outcome often was warring conflict between dBus and gTsang, which ultimately vied for supremacy over the lHa-sa Valley and privileged or exclusive access to its key sanctuary. The Yar-lung area would partake of these events in the form of a number of invasions from gTsang, which temporarily annexes sNe'u-gdong at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was accompanied by a strengthening of the position of the Karma-pa (i.e. the allies of the Rin-spungs-pa and later of the gTsang *sde srid*), who for a short time held seats at rTses-thang, bKra-shis chos-sde and mKhar-thog (see App. III, Table I) as well as other establishments in Upper and Lower Yar, propped up not least by influential local ruling houses such as the Yar-rgyab *dpon sa* nobles.

Two statues in the Khra-'brug temple that flanked the entrance pillars of the sGo-drug Ka-drug had a facial orientation towards sKyid-shod, their gaze supposedly being fixed upon the devastating

fire of the Gung-thang temple of the lHa-sa Valley, a catastrophe that has entered history as the Gung-thang *me 'bar* of 1546 A.D. This temple was the spiritual centre of the Tshal-pa (founded by Gung-thang Bla-ma Zhang), a religious seat and political base, and in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries a myriarchy. The Tshal-pa not inappropriately were addressed as rulers of sKyid-shod and of the lHa-sa Valley during their heyday. In dGe-lugs-pa historiography, the great fire is linked with other events of dire consequence, namely the transfer of the later state protector god Pehar from Tshal Gung-thang to 'Bras-spungs in the lHa-sa Valley, where earlier the Second Dalai Lama had established their new power base (i.e. the dGa'-ldan pho-brang). A statue similar to the one in Khra-'brug was set up in the Jo-khang (the so-called Gung-thang me-shor). The narrative statues and the disaster itself thus signal a decisive new phase in the political and cultic history of the dGe-lugs-pa-s, in which the southern *dharmacakra* temple in Yar-lung, it appears, was meant to serve as the primary point of reference in this region.

For the remaining 16<sup>th</sup> century, we again merely possess stray information concerning the Yar-lung temple. We are told that in 1520–21 A.D. the temple again underwent restoration (cf. *'Bri gung gdan rabs* 187; *Rin chen phun tshogs rnam thar* 185.6–187.5, 245.5–6), evidently conducted by one dKar-po-ba Kun-dga'-grags.<sup>12</sup> The ensuing initiation feast (*rab ston*) was attended by the young and later extremely powerful 'Bri-gung master Rin-chen phun-tshogs Chos kyi rgyal-po (1509–1557 A.D.). Both he and his ambitious son, *chos rgyal* Phun-tshogs bkra-shis (1547–1602 A.D.) were among the most serious adversaries of the dGe-lugs-pa in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, challenging the latter's authority in the lHa-sa Valley at a time when their hegemony there was still weak. Among the domains of the 'Bri-gung-pa within sKyid-shod, as we have already seen (above fn. 6), was the old imperial dBu-ru Ka-tshal temple; moreover, they entertained family relations with the ruling house of the rGya-ma-pa-s, with the local Phag-gru families, and, in matters spiritual, with the leading Karma-pa hierarchs, while also maintaining close bonds with certain rNying-ma-pa circles, such as the important *byang gter* lineage-holder, brothers mNga'-ris Paṅ-chen and Rig-'dzin Legs-ldan rdo-rje, as well as the *chu rags pa* and lHa-sa ritualist Zhig-po gling-pa, himself a teacher of leading Karma-pa hierarchs. The aspirations entertained by the charismatic *gter ston* and *dharmarāja* Rin-chen phun-tshogs to control lHa-sa as his spiritual seat and his interest in the the cult of the Great Compassionate One (cf. RCP Sørensen *et al.*, App. II, *forthcoming*) can also be extrapolated – if in no way so explicitly – to include Yar-lung (in particular, mKhar-thog, where he was invited by *sde pa* mGon-po rgyal-mtshan). He should be

<sup>12</sup> Aside from his supervision of the Khra-'brug renovation in 1520–21, the rNying-ma master dKar-po-ba Kun-dga'-grags, a renowned *gsang sngags bstan 'dzin pa*, in 1515 had delivered teachings at sTag-lung to the 15<sup>th</sup> throneholder bSod-nams ye-shes dpal-bzang-po (1462–1520 A.D.). In addition, he was famous for having restored bSam-yas, too (in 1508–09 A.D.). His *floruit* may be placed at the close of the 15<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; cf. *sTag lung chos 'byung* I 498; *gTer ston chos 'byung* 276f.; *mChog ldan mgon po rnam thar, passim*; *Text A*, fn. 285. He had followed in the pupil-line of one lHun-grags dKar-po-ba (i.e. Kong-po lHun-brag [dgon-pa] *sngags sde*, the “White Gowned” Mantrin Tradition) gZhon-nu sangs-rgyas *alias gter ston* Dri-med kun-dga' Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (b. 1347) who is otherwise known for the transmission of the celebrated and popular Avalokiteśvara cycle known as *Thugs rje chen po Ye shes 'od mchog*. It was in the fourth line from this figure that *thugs sras* dKar-po Kun-dga'-grags emerged; cf. *Gu bkra chos 'byung* 465–67; see also Ehrhard 2003: 21. One may assume that the true motive behind the temple renovation was linked to the Cult of the Great Compassionate One and its prominent position at Khra-'brug, recalling its importance for Dri-med Kun-dga'. For the link between the dKar-po-pa tradition and the 'Bri-gung-pas, see also *Nor bu'i do shal* 250f.; on Kun-dga'-grags, cf. also *Padma gling rnam thar* 310f., 345, 364, 502.

regarded as a self-professed manifestation of *lha sras* Mu-tig btsan-po, the dynastic prince under whom the history of the treasure concealments in Yum-bu bla-mkhar and Khra-'brug of the early 9<sup>th</sup> century began. The emergence of the 'Bri-gung-pa as a ritualist in Khra-'brug and temporarily (*ca.* 1545) as ministerial official (*nang blon*) with his seat in bKra-shis chos-sde possibly should be seen in connection with the attempt to establish a political link to the old dynastic site. A relic of the 'Bri-gung hierarch, incidentally, is kept in rTse-tshogs-pa.

#### V.2.4 The Temple in the Period of the “Precious Government”

The most successful attempts to establish permanent bonds to the old centres of the dynastic period must be ascribed to the central dGa'-ldan pho-brang government in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their consolidation consisted in a partly traditional, partly unique combination of political calculus and ritual. The constitutive spiritual charter of the government, often simply addressed the “Precious Government” (*gzhung sa rin po che*) to underscore the sacred origin and nature of the dual theocratic rule, presupposed a policy that carried obvious national overtones. It set out to an appreciable extent to emulate attempts at state-building in Tibet's chequered past. Promised on the autonomous character of this state formation, it espoused a revival of Tibet's glorious dynastic period, starting with the founding figure Srong-btsan sgam-po and followed by the independent-minded Phag-mo gru-pa in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This stance also accounts for why dGe-lugs sources persistently emphasized that the hegemony of the Phag-gru-s and the ensuing dGe-lugs rule were of an identical nature (*srog gcig*). And looking further back in history, an effort was made to incorporate the legacy of former rulers and spiritual masters who, as we have already seen, were active in the lHa-sa area. The government also considered itself a natural political and ideological successor of the Bla-ma Zhang hegemony of the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century – an added reason why the Tshal Gung-thang monastic complex was appropriated by the new regime. It thus was both an adaptation as much as it was a reconstruction of the divine heritage and seamless spiritual genealogy of rule and representation, and as such the new regime and its head considered themselves the true and rightful perpetuators of the Buddhist tradition in Tibet. It was this ritual charter – involving questions, such as the lasting quality of the lHa-sa site, its mythic background and the underlying “testamentary” literature (of Srong-btsan sgam-po and Padmasambhava), that constituted the rationale behind the renewal – which would define the decisive issues behind the logic of state formation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, issues that were then integrated into the ritual calendar and national charter drawn up by the Fifth Dalai Lama and by the successive regents *sde srid* bSod-nams rab-brtan and Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho under their ambitious national project.

One of the most spectacular steps taken in order to underpin and realize this goal was the previously mentioned territorial *sa gnad gso thabs* remedial programme, implemented in order to revitalize a number of key sites in the country. It drew its inspiration from visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama during the 1660's, but had predecessors in similar visions and programmes implemented by celebrated and innovative visionaries like 'Bri-gung Rin-chen Phun-tshogs or Thang-stong rgyal-po – the latter supported by the former Phag-gru lords – and even earlier Bla-ma Zhang, the true harbinger of territorial and mythic hegemony in Central Tibet. The sites mentioned in this connection were spread all over dBus and gTsang, but most can be found in the politically sensitive region of Central Tibet, where again by far the largest number are situated in the vicinity of the dynastic sites of lHa-sa and Yar-lung (*Text A*, fn. 238). One of these key

sites was designated “Khra-’brug and the other holy sites of the border-taming temples [from the period of Srong-btsan sgam-po].” The Fifth Dalai Lama here evidently linked himself to an even older concept of Tibetan territorial history.

The events associated with the political unification in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century forms the decisive turning point in the post-dynastic history of the royal *vihāra*. Being designated by the Fifth as a “*phan bde rtsa lag*” of Bod-khams and a “*mes dbon gyi gnas*,” the Khra-’brug temple now re-emerge as a prestigious national institution at the core of the dGa’-ldan pho-brang government. As a later observer remarks: “the temple was held to be of such sanctity that the Tibetan government used to make a daily offering of 1,000 butter lamps, similar to the lHa-sa Jo-khang“ (Richardson 1998: 178). This new identity and cultural prestige of the royal temple was accompanied by dramatic changes in its architecture, functionality and administration. A large part of the endowment of the liturgical maintenance (*mchod pa’i rgyun btsugs*) and other ritual service was either taken over by the government or deputed to local surrogates (*DL5 I 166a1f.*). The Great Fifth in this connection sojourned twice in Yar-lung (1652, 1660; see *DL5 I 164b3-4, 165b3*) and the enormous expenses involved in the refurbishment of Khra-’brug (especially the roof construction made in part from gold) is duly reported in his biography.<sup>13</sup> We assume that the custodianship of Khra-’brug vested in the local monk communities of Ri-bo Chos-gling, Ri-bo bDe-chen or bKra-shis chos-sde originated precisely during this period, inasmuch as those parts of the temple that were regularly deputed to these communities were chambers either added or re-erected in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The person in charge of the new arrangement ultimately was *mi dbang* Blo-bzang sbyin-pa who in 1679 A.D. occupied the post of the “sNe’u-gdong *sde srid*” (prior to this point, he was regent under the Great Fifth). During this period, rTse-tshogs-pa was incorporated into the new set-up, and this led to the formulation of a new monastic law code (*bca’ khrims*). Central elements in the cult and the ritual calendar (such as the institution of the Tshangs-pa / bSe-sku medium or the annual Flower Offering) originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or assumed their final form in this period. One of the most imposing cultic figures, the deity bSe-sku from bKra-shis chos-sde (the centre of the Tshar-pa school adopted in 1649 by lNga-ba chen-po), must have arrived at Khra-’brug during this time too. Following the erection of the Tshangs-pa-lcog chapel atop the temple, he, like the other temple protectors, took up quarters in this new residence.

Another new establishment was the gSang-sngags pho-brang, a larger building erected in the second (i.e. lower) Courtyard (**R-21**). It was raised as a branch temple of O-rgyan sMin-grol-gling and was maintained by monks from the powerful contemporary rNying-ma-pa seat in Grva-phyi (founded 1670). The gSang-sngags pho-brang is most remarkably not mentioned in the *gNas bshad (Text A)* at all, just like the two *lha khang* **R-19** and **R-20** (at the southern perimeter wall) that originated during the same epoch. All the chambers are visible expression of the presence of the rNying-ma-pas, who had a strong supporter in the Great Fifth, not least because of his close relations with the sMin-grol-gling founder gTer-bdag gling-pa ’Gyur-med rdo-rje (1646–1714),

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<sup>13</sup> The renovation included the prestigious Yum-bu bla-mkhar, the *lha khang* within the former imperial residence, the maintenance of which was under monks of Ri-bo Chos-gling, an arrangement which merely goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although the temple itself is older; cf. *Text A*, fns. 266, 282.



an esoteric master also mentioned in connection with the institution of sNe'u-gdong Ban-tshang. These strong rNying-ma-pa bonds were also a reason why the temple alongside sMin-grol-gling (or the Byang-gter seat of rDo-rje-brag) became a target of unmitigated attacks and destruction from the side of the Dzungars (1717 or 1718).

Following the preliminary renovation conducted by Sle-lung in 1721–23,<sup>14</sup> and following the subsequent rebuilding and alternations initiated during the reign of the Seventh Dalai Lama – involving a large-scale restoration (*cum* dGe-lug-pa-ization) programme in Yar-lung – the temple finally attained a highly mature architectural form and functionality, as known to us from recent times: a complex with over 20 chambers. Its physical refurbishment, inventorying of its religious and artistic objects and the performance of the daily rituals were seen to by successive religious communities (ranging from rTse-tshogs-pa to sMin-grol-gling) in the vicinity of Khra-'brug who over the years had both joined and represented the temple. The monks were regularly replaced; they resided in dormitories set up in the area of the second courtyard. Upon the roof, just above the main entrance, the “Dalai Lama house” had been erected, next to the room assigned to the *dkon gnyer dpon*; on the northern side – opposite to the Tshangs-pa-lcog chamber – were located the “rooms for the *yon bdag*,” that is the lHo-kha officials who regularly resided in Khra-'brug during the annual festivals; in the east, the (now deplorably lost) golden roof construction once towered, indicating the presence of the holiest receptacle of the gTsong-lag-khang.

The entire monastic complex or precinct is circumscribed by houses, gardens and fields that belong to the families of Khra-'brug village. As may be adduced from older 20<sup>th</sup>-century photos, the present concentration of houses to the south of the complex appears to be a recent development. According to the local people, they originally were situated within the area of the present-day entrance courtyard. Twenty households of the village traditionally were allotted to the temple and its monk community (currently numbering 37 monks) in order to meet the needs of its daily maintenance and subsistence, and this reflects a custom which may ultimately go all the way back to the dynastic period (or to the beginnings of the monastic tradition in Khra-'brug in the late 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century).

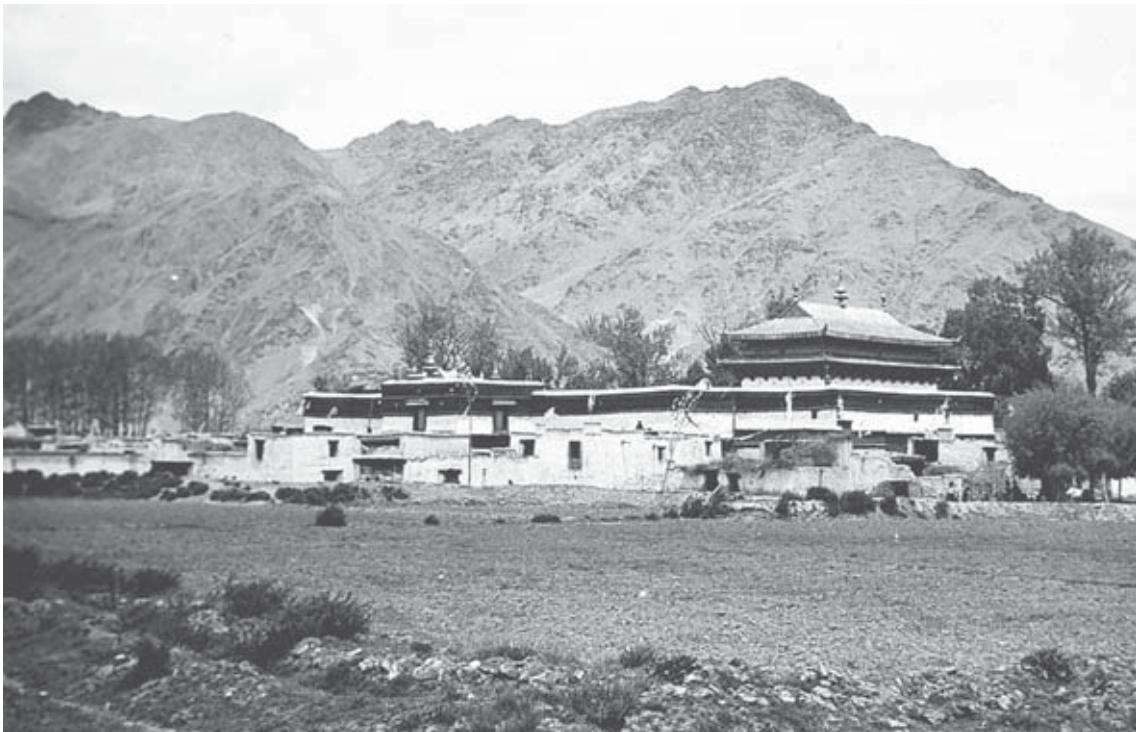
Four families traditionally enjoyed the particular status of being the “first families of Khra-'brug,” about whom it was said that their ancestors welcomed and accommodated the founder Srong-btsan sgam-po and his court in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It is at that particular point in time that connecting links must be sought to the deeper mythology, territorial concepts and local history of the country. These have left their mark on its cultic traditions. The temple's distinctive identity and milieu offer an opportunity to both discover and appreciate the underlying rationale behind its classification – to learn how and why the site came to be regarded as “Tibet's first temple.”

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<sup>14</sup> The renovation initiated in 1721 (immediately after the Dzungar demolition) was not least patronized by a number of local sponsors affiliated to Yar-stod and sNe'u-gdong, such as Rab-brtan-shar, 'Bum-thang-nas, *sde pa* Nor-bu dbang-po, bKra-shis dpal-ra-nas, *dpon sa* dPal-ldan rgyal-mo, *sde pa* Gri-mdzod, *sde pa* 'Brong-rtse-ba, Sras-mo dBang-mchog, Legs-pa-gling and Chang-khyim; see *Sle lung rnam thar* 252a1f., 261a6ff. Details can be extracted from a *dkar chag* rendered in the form of a record (*zin tho*) written by one *dka' bcu* Ngag-dbang 'jam-dpal and dBu-mdzad sras-po Tshe-dbang (*ibid.* 263a5–6) (non-extant).



*Fig. 10. Khra-'brug and its village today (October 2002)*



*Fig 11. The temple in the late 1940's from the SW*

Photo: Hugh Richardson



*Fig. 12. Khra-'brug temple with the dBu-linga caitya-s to the left (= south; 12a)*  
Photo: H. Richardson



*Fig. 13. The five-plus-one dBu-linga stūpa complex*  
Photo: G. Tucci 1948

12a



13

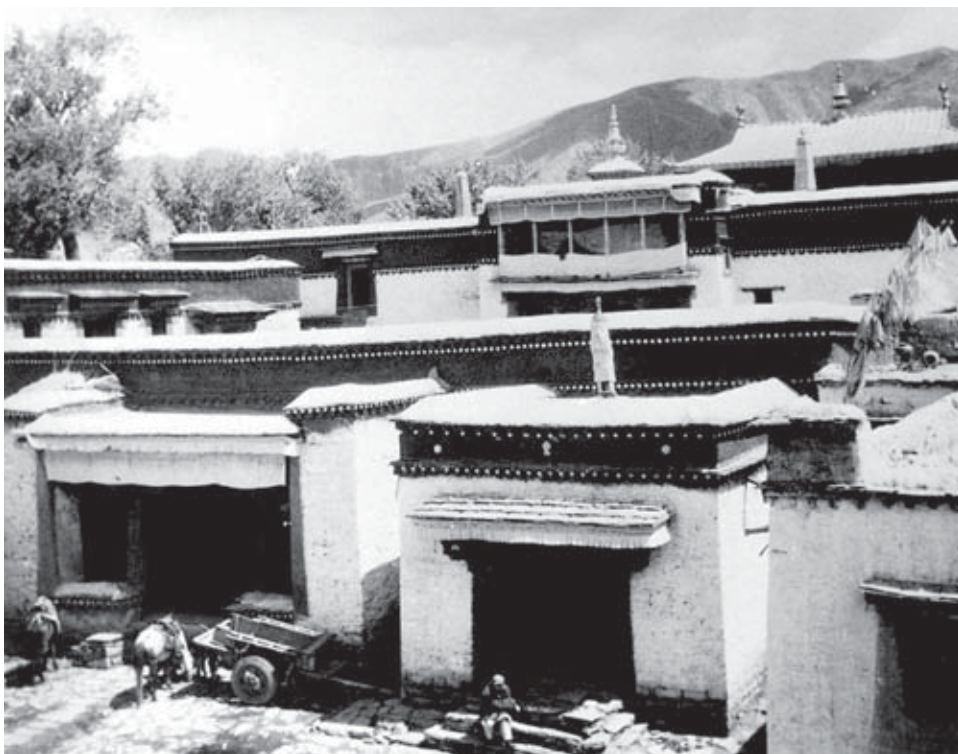


Fig. 14. The temple in the 1950's  
Photo: Wang Yi

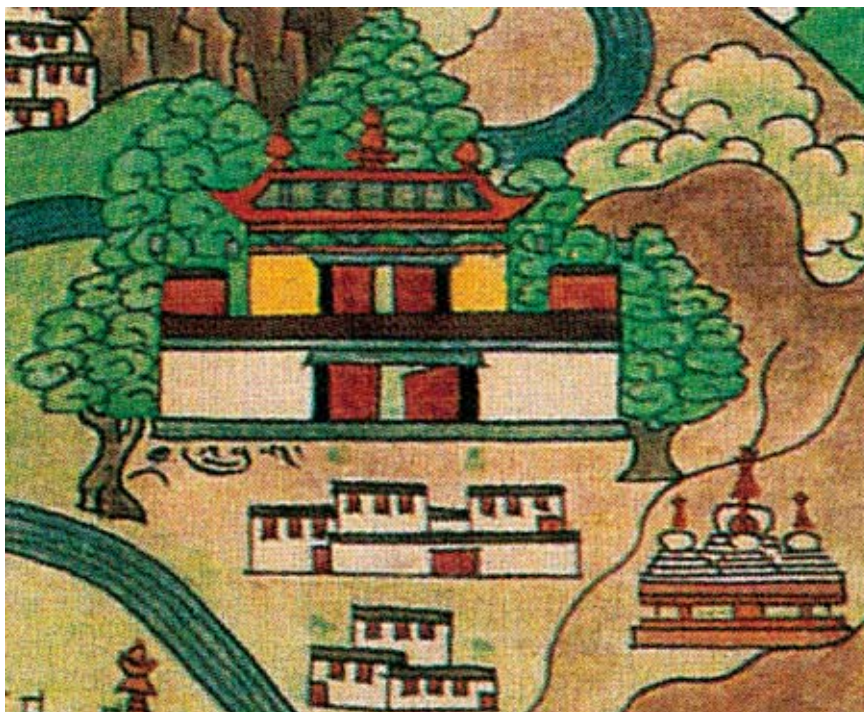


Fig. 15. Khra-'brug, Khra-'brug village and the mChod rten dBu-lnga  
Section of the *sri mo* painting, App. I, Fig. 94

*SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF KHRA-'BRUG*



*Fig. 16*

བསམ་ཡས་ཁྲ་འབྲུག་ར་སའི་གཉེན་ལག་དང་།  
རྩེད་དུ་འབྲེལ་བའི་གནས་ཆེན་སྐྱབ་པའི་གནས།  
ཞིང་མཚོག་དམ་པ་ཀུན་དུ་འང་དེ་ལས་མེད།

The [three] pilgrimage sites of bSam-yas, Khra-'brug  
and Ra-sa ['Phrul-snang]  
Combined, hermitages of spiritual realization –  
Nowhere else are more supreme and more noble  
Realms to be found!

(*Padma bka'i thang* Canto 95)

*Fig. 16. The temple complex as seen from the west*  
After *Lhoka* 2000