

A SOCIO-HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE KINGDOM OF
SDE-DGE (DERGE, KHAM) IN THE LATE
NINETEENTH CENTURY:

RIS-MED VIEWS OF ALLIANCE AND AUTHORITY

Lauran Ruth Hartley

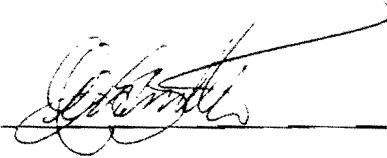
Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies,
Indiana University

November 1997

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana
University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to thank Professor Elliot Sperling. I have waited four graduate years for this chance to somehow express my gratitude for his instruction and on-going support. Though perhaps best known for his Tibetan historiographical rigor, Professor Sperling also exemplifies an integrity and forthrightness in academia such as the stuff that inspires authors of *jig-rten-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos* (treatises on how to conduct oneself in worldly affairs.)

I am also grateful to the other members of my committee: Professor Christopher Beckwith for his thoughtful feedback and meticulous reading of this text, and Professor William Fierman for his unfailing encouragement (despite my never studying Uzbek.) I am indebted to Pema Bhum for the many hours he endured helping me translate the *Rgyal-po 'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos*, transcribing interviews, and reminding me of the need to view “*ris-med*” impartially. I wish to thank Professor Michael Walter for his generosity in agreeing to work on the *Rgyal-po 'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos* during one fine summer course; Lu Shaowen for her assistance translating Chinese sources; and John Hollingsworth of the Geography Department who kindly guided my first venture into cartography. If this paper were dedicated to anyone, it would be to Elizabeth and Lodeo, whose friendship led me to wonder about their *pha-yul*. And finally, I would like to acknowledge Professor Christopher Atwood whose ideas and encouragement more than two years ago sowed the seeds for what eventually became this thesis.

CONVENTIONS OF TRANSCRIPTION

I have primarily used the Wylie system to transliterate Tibetan personal names, terms, titles and toponyms. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with Tibetan orthography, I have included a rough phonetic rendering in parenthesis at the first appearance of important proper nouns and terms. In a very few cases I have simply used popular English spellings – such as “Lhasa.”

Chinese names, terms and toponyms are given in the Pinyin system. I have also included the Chinese characters in parenthesis at the first appearance of certain proper nouns and terms.

In instances where Tibetan personal names and toponyms were rendered in Chinese, I have used the original Tibetan name -- even in directly quoted passages -- for the sake of consistency and the reader's ease. At the first appearance of the name, I have included the Chinese form either parenthetically or in a footnote, depending more on my own aesthetic judgment than on any stylistic guideline. In a few cases where Tibetan names were rendered in Chinese, I was regrettably unable to determine the original.

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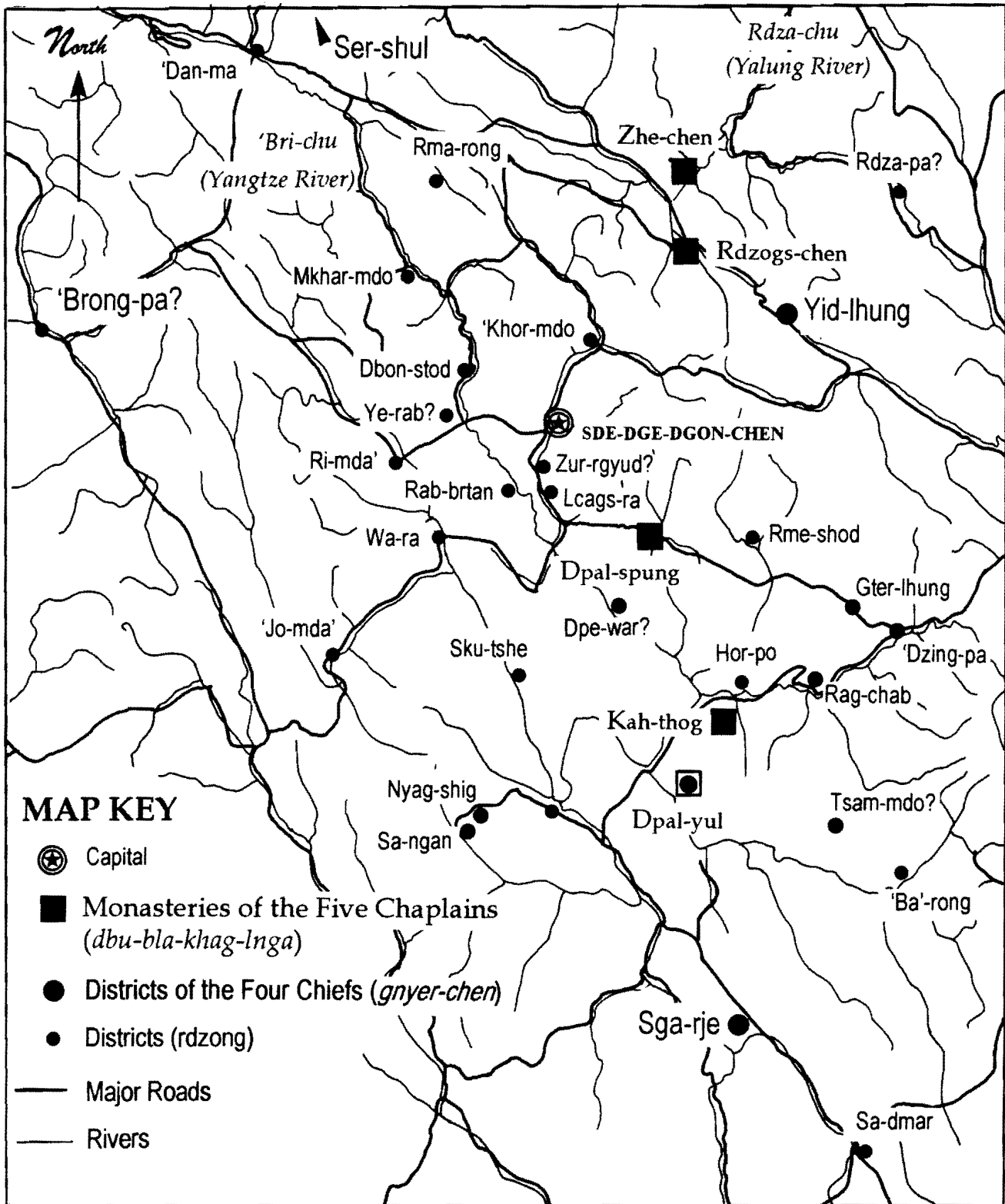
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DISTRICTS AND CHAPLAIN MONASTERIES IN THE KINGDOM OF SDE-DGE



This map is based on information provided in Karma-rgyal-mtshan, ed., *Mdo-smad chos-rgyal Sde-dge'i rgyal-rabs las 'phreng 'pa'i chos-kyi-byung-tshul mdo-tsam brjod-pa gzur gnas blo-ldan dgyes-pa'i tambu-ra*, Ganzi: Xianggang Yazhou Chubanshe, 1994.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most frequently cited characteristics of traditional Tibetan society is "the merging of religion and politics," which Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las (Dungkar Lobsang Thinley) explicitly traces in his work, *Bod-kyi chos-srid zung-'brel skor bshad-pa*.¹ This history and others² that focus on Central Tibet reveal the manner in which secular leaders -- including Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese and Manchu leaders -- allied themselves at any given time after the fragmentation of the Tibetan Empire in the ninth century with one of the four major Tibetan Buddhist traditions³ in order to wield greater influence. These alliances varied in strength and form, manifesting in religious patronage, the granting of land and economic privilege, and outright military alliance. Ultimately, from the mid-seventeenth century until the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the middle of this century, Dge-lugs-pa (Gelukpa) hierarchs came to dominate both the religious and political affairs of Central Tibet, a merging of spiritual and secular power epitomized in the establishment of the Dga'-ldan Pho-brang (Ganden Podrang) Administration centered in Lhasa.

My primary intent in this paper is to offer a case study which calls for broadening our understanding of religio-political alliances in Tibet beyond the more sectarian view that arises by generalizing from historical developments in Central Tibet. Specifically, I will discuss the

¹ Dung-dkar Blo-bzang-'phrin-las, *Bod-kyi chos-srid zung-'brel skor bshad-pa (On the Merging of Religion and Politics in Tibet)*, Pe-cin: Mi-rigs Dpe-skrun-khang, 1981.

² See, for example, Goldstein (1989) and Shakabpa (1967).

³ For the greater part of Tibetan history, five religious traditions prevailed in Tibet: Dge-lugs (Geluk), Sa-skya (Sakya), Bka'-brgyud (Kagyu), Rnying-ma (Nyingma) and Bon (Bön). Most followers of the latter now identify as Buddhist and claim that the Bon-po priests who performed ceremonial rituals in the Tibetan imperial court were their predecessors. Be that as it may, the Bon-po do not seem to have played a critical role in nineteenth century Sde-dge politics and are mentioned only briefly in this paper.

sociopolitical situation during the nineteenth century in the Kingdom of Sde-dge (Derge, Kham) -- the largest principality in Eastern Tibet. Though in population and size it is but a fraction of Central Tibet (which constituted an entire *chol-kha*⁴), the administration of Sde-dge in the last century provides an example of religio-political alliance at the local level which cannot be grasped by a model that highlights a single sectarian affiliation. On the contrary, one strategy for securing rule in Sde-dge seems to have been precisely for the king *not* to maintain an exclusive relationship with one tradition, but to form close ties with monasteries of different traditions. While the king of Sde-dge had a special relationship with Lhun-grub-steng (Lundup Teng), the Sa-skyapa (Sakyapa) monastery situated in his administrative compound, he also maintained close ties with *dbu-bla* (üla, chaplains) from five *dbu-dgon* (ügon, head monasteries) which were Rnying-ma-pa (Nyingmapa) and Bka'-brgyud-pa (Kagyupa). This was one significant way in which the link between secular and religious authority in this area of Khams differed from the religio-political system of the Dga'-ldan Pho-brang Administration where the Dge-lugs-pa predominated almost exclusively.

My second objective in this paper is to provide evidence to counter the perception of Tibet as characteristically "stateless." This has been asserted most explicitly by Geoffrey Samuel (1982) who argues that because large monastic and aristocratic estates were relatively autonomous, "Tibet historically has been a region where centralized political regimes were barely achievable."⁵ Samuel asserts, "During the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries the nearest things to states to develop in Tibet were unstable alliances between aristocratic rulers and

⁴ A traditional Tibetan province, of which there were three: Dbus-gtsang (Central Tibet), A-mdo (Northeastern Tibet) and Khams (Eastern Tibet).

⁵ Samuel (1982): 219.

monastic orders."⁶ He notes as exceptions the Tibetan Empire until its fragmentation during the middle of the ninth century, the "quasi-state" formed during the Mongol—Sakya alliance in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and certain "small states in East Tibet." While other scholars have also noted the existence of "semi-independent tribes, states, and monastic principalities"⁷ in Eastern Tibet, it is difficult to find details on how these were administered. Carrasco (1959), who provides an extensive study of Tibetan polities based on secondary sources, highlights Sde-dge as one of the independent states in Khams.⁸ It may well be that Samuel would include Sde-dge among his exceptions.⁹ However, in observing that secular rulers often form alliances with monasteries in order to strengthen their own position, he emphasizes the "explicitly monastic" quality of the Dalai Lama regime and a number of the small states of Eastern Tibet.¹⁰ This generalization obscures the existence of religio-political alliances that were not limited to a single sect. Furthermore, it glosses over the critical and long-standing role of secular leaders in states such as Sde-dge where administration at the local level was highly dependent on the cooperation of local chieftains or headmen. In nineteenth century Sde-dge, for example, the king could trace his royal lineage back for more than forty-seven generations. Nevertheless, it was imperative that he maintain a working relationship with some thirty local chieftains who met as a council once or twice a year in the capital, Sde-dge-

⁶ Ibid.: 221.

⁷ Aris (1992): 13.

⁸ Carrasco (1959): 223.

⁹ Samuel (1982) does not specify the criteria by which a polity could be classified as a "state." However, his concern with centralization implies that this is a definitive feature for him. If one accepts the possibility that a highly decentralized administration could nevertheless constitute a state, one might easily reach a different conclusion than Samuel.

¹⁰ Samuel (1982): 221.

dgong-chen (Derge Gonchen). Chieftains were granted land in exchange for administrative service and held a great deal of power in their respective districts.

This study is offered in response to Samuel's concluding remark: "What one would eventually wish to reach is an understanding, for each local situation within and outside Tibet, of the interplay of religious and political structures in their historical specificity" (p. 221). In the first half of this paper, I will focus on the relationship between the king and the local chieftains of Sde-dge, drawing upon historical sources for evidence of who wielded effective authority. I will also discuss the influential role of monastic institutions in Sde-dge, including their political and economic privileges. In the second half of this paper, I will discuss the special relationship that the king maintained with certain monasteries of different sects. This development had its parallel in a concomitant philosophical trend -- what has been called "the *ris-med* (rimay, eclectic) movement." There is also evidence to suggest that the general population itself embraced a "*ris-med*" view of monasteries and teachers in the area and did not have a "guru" mentality centered on a single charismatic teacher, as Samuel suggests is characteristic for Tibetan Buddhism in general.¹¹ Finally, I will briefly discuss the text, *Rgyal-po'i lugs-kyis bstan-bcos* ("A Treatise on Kingship"), written by 'Ju Mi-pham Rgya-mtsho for the king of Sde-dge in 1895, focusing on its portrayal of the traditional role of a king and its philosophical emphasis on *impartiality*.

In short, I intend to show how ties between the religious and the secular in Sde-dge took a form different from that of the religio-political administration in Central Tibet. In Sde-dge the links appear to have been less centralized, less institutionally structured, and distinguished more by inclusion than by exclusivity. I would conclude from historical evidence

¹¹ Ibid.: 217, 225.

that the decentralized nature of government in Khams necessitated fluid conceptions of alliance and patronage, particularly during the nineteenth century when Sde-dge was wrought with internal struggles and increasingly engaged with outside forces -- neighboring principalities, expeditions from Lhasa, and Manchu imperial troops from Sichuan.

PART ONE:
SIGNS OF AUTHORITY

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1. THE KINGDOM OF SDE-DGE (DERGE)

1.1 Background

While the political designations of Sde-dge have varied from "principality," "kingdom," and "district,"¹² to "quasi-autonomous state,"¹³ "independent state,"¹⁴ and even "a self-contained kingdom... which was almost autonomous,"¹⁵ all sources attest to this territory's long history and cultural significance. In this paper, I will focus on the period from 1862 when Sde-dge was attacked by a neighboring principality to 1910 when the Chinese commander Zhao Erfeng established direct imperial rule in Sde-dge. I refer to Sde-dge as a "kingdom" given that the local ruler of Sde-dge was traditionally referred to as a *rgyal-po* ("king") and *sa-skyong* ("protector of the land"). The appellation "Sde-dge" is said to be an abbreviation for "*Sde-bzhi-dge-bcu*" ("the four accomplishments and the ten virtues"), a title bestowed by 'Phags-pa upon a celebrated lama of a local ruling family in the thirteenth century.¹⁶ While the House of Sde-dge (Sde-dge-tshang) officially accepted the teachings of the Sa-skya religious tradition at

¹² Rockhill (1891): 227.

¹³ Aris (1992): 17.

¹⁴ Carrasco (1959): 223.

¹⁵ Ford (1990): 49.

¹⁶ Li (1947): 279. This lama, Sgam-ston Bsod-nams-rin-chen, subsequently established a monastery for one thousand monks in the southern part of what came to be the Sde-dge kingdom. According to the *Zangzu chuantong wenhua cidian* (1993): 797, he had served as the *gsol-dpon* ("housekeeping official," who attends to important domestic affairs, travel arrangements, etc.) of the great 'Phags-pa. See van der Kuijp (1992): 288-292, for a discussion of this position and what it may have entailed in different courts and at different times. Based on his findings, I would translate *gsol-dpon* here as "major domo." Once Bsod-nams-rin-chen received the appellation "Sde-dge," the name was adopted by his family who ruled what would become the territory of Sde-dge.

that time, the influence of the royal family and the sect reached its peak only after acquiring adjacent territories with the assistance of Gushri Khan in the mid-seventeenth century, at which point the kingdom's territory extended over 78,000 sq. km.¹⁷ With the establishment of its central monastery Lhun-grub-steng (Lundup Teng), the capital of Sde-dge-dgon-chen began to thrive. Long famous for its fine saddles, copperware and silverwork, by the mid-eighteenth century the kingdom became equally renowned for its printery and the publishing of many important texts.¹⁸ The dialect of Sde-dge was regarded as the standard for Kham dialect (*Khams-skad*) and even a special Sde-dge style of calligraphy developed. Traversed by the northern and more arduous of two trans-Khams routes, Sde-dge was more likely to be visited by monk/scholars, pilgrims and traders than by political or military envoys who preferred the southern route which had more settlements and supplies, and where resistance to outsiders was less common.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the kingdom had strong cultural and religious ties to Lhasa and the Sa-skya principality in Central Tibet, and the House of Sde-dge traced its ancestry back to Mgar Stong-btsan, the renowned minister of the Tibetan Empire during the seventh century.²⁰

Sde-dge was reportedly the most densely populated and the "richest agricultural and manufacturing district of eastern Tibet."²¹ According to most sources, the population of Sde-dge at the turn of this century was roughly 45,000.²² Nomadic families comprised less than 30

¹⁷ Carrasco (1959): 144.

¹⁸ Kolmaš (1988): 121; and Stein (1972): 82-3, 287.

¹⁹ Adshead (1984): 55.

²⁰ Kolmaš (1988): 121. C.f. van der Kuijp (1988), who identifies inconsistencies among various accounts of this genealogy.

²¹ Rockhill (1891): 227.

²² Li estimates the population at that time to have been 48,500 (Li 1947: 280). Carrasco cites a figure of 45,500 from official British documents of 1910 (Carrasco 1959: 144). Traditionally, Sde-dge

percent of the population.²³ Rockhill (1891), estimated the population to be about 32,000 (8,000 families) with an additional monastic population of 10,000. This suggests that nearly one-fourth of the population were religious clerics,²⁴ a figure that accords with two more recent Chinese reports.²⁵

1.2 Relations with Lhasa and Peking

In terms of Sde-dge's relationship with earlier regimes in China, contact from the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries was characterized by imperial patronage of religious teachers in Sde-dge. This changed -- at least from the perspective of the Manchu court -- in 1727 when imperial policy dictated the partitioning of Khams, so that areas west of the Yangtze-Mekong²⁶ divide fell under Tibet and the jurisdiction of the Lhasa *amban*,²⁷ while east

was said to comprise "*khri-skor bdun*" (seven units of 10,000). (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol [*alias* Sde-dge *sras-mo*], interviewed by the author, Chengdu, PRC, 1 September 1997.) However, we should keep in mind that the population unit "*khri-skor*" was a rough estimate based on varying family sizes and first used for census purposes in Tibetan areas during the Yuan Dynasty. Given the otherwise general concurrence, it seems likely that this "calculation" should be considered more figuratively.

²³ Li (1947): 283. This estimate is based only on the territory of Sde-dge located east of the 'Bri-chu River. See n. 25 below.

²⁴ Rockhill observed there were "very few nuns in Eastern Tibet" (Rockhill 1891: 212). This is supported by Li who recorded a total of only 88 nuns in eastern Sde-dge (Li 1947: 285).

²⁵ In *Sichuan sheng Ganzi zhou Zangzu shehui lishi diaocha* the population in 1958 was recorded as 22,000 of which 5,700 were monks; see (SSGZ: 106). Li reports that the total population of Sde-dge in the 1940's was only 11,172 people, of which 2576 were monks (Li 1947: 283). In real terms, these figures are much lower than Rockhill's, because they include only the territory of Sde-dge lying east of the 'Bri-chu (Yangtze River; Chin. Jinsha jiang "Golden Sand River"). By the Kah-tog Agreement of 1932, land west of the river was placed under Lhasa's jurisdiction and eastern Sde-dge was incorporated into Xikang. In addition, extensive fighting embroiled most of Khams in the early twentieth century, significantly reducing Sde-dge's population with death and emigration. For one account of what transpired in Sde-dge, especially in the monasteries, during the Chinese Communist takeover, see Chögyam Trungpa (1966): 116-7.

²⁶ These rivers are locally referred to as the 'Bri-chu and the Rdza-chu, respectively.

²⁷ See Jozef Kolmaš (1994) for a chronological summary of the *ambans* or representatives of the Manchu imperial court sent to Tibet from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century.

of the divide was governed indirectly through local rulers. The latter territories were considered tributaries under the Sichuan governor-general, but practical imperial presence was limited to the commissariat officers and escorts at Litang, Batang and Chamdo, along the southern road.²⁸ Imperial efforts at a two-fold political division of Khams were further complicated by an overlay of monastic alliances, through which important monasteries in central Tibet appointed abbots and collected taxes in their affiliate monasteries of eastern Khams, for example as did the Sa-skya in Dar-rste-mdo, Hor and Sde-dge.²⁹

Nevertheless, contact between the imperial court and Sde-dge-dgon-chen increased -- along with Manchu imperial patronage -- and Sde-dge flourished as a cultural center. In 1728, the 44th king of Sde-dge, Bstan-pa Tshe-ring (1678-1739), received the title "Pacification Commissioner of Derge" from the Yongzheng Emperor. In 1733, this was changed to "Goodwill Commissioner."³⁰ At the same time, financial support from the Manchu court assisted in the construction of the Sde-dge printery in 1729, and the subsequent printing of the entire *Bka'-gyur* (Kanjur) and *Bstan'-gyur* (Tanjur), as well as the complete works of five Sa-skya teachers.³¹ When the Qianlong emperor had 10,000 sets of the *Bka'-gyur* and *Bstan'-gyur* distributed among Mongol and Tibetan princes and lamas in 1793, the provincial government

²⁸ Adshead (1984): 29. From that time on the extreme north of Khams administratively fell under the Xining amban, and the extreme south under the Yun-gui governor-general.

²⁹ Ibid.: 56.

³⁰ Li (1947): 281. The first of these two titles was probably *anfushi* (安抚使), a title of rank 5b awarded to chieftains of southwestern aboriginal tribes; see Hucker (1985, p. 104). The subsequent title was likely *xuanweishi* (宣慰使), a commissioner of rank 3b and one of the most prestigious titles granted during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties to local hereditary chiefs along China's southwestern border; see Hucker (1985): 251. Cf. Petech (1988) for a discussion of this position in Khams during the Yuan Dynasty.

³¹ See Kolmaš (1971): 13-9.

of Sichuan was ordered to allocate 180,000 taels of silver, weighing 800 pounds, to Sde-dge for the printing of additional copies.³²

Despite these imperial influences, direct Chinese administration was never established in Sde-dge until 1908 when Zhao Erfeng captured the capital, Sde-dge-dgon-chen. During most of the Qing dynasty, Manchu imperial authority was limited to patronage and titles granted by the court to local rulers.³³ Lhasa's influence was also limited, though Sde-dge was technically under the jurisdiction of the Dga'-ldan Pho-brang government from 1865 to 1908.³⁴ Yet, even during this period, Rockhill pointedly observed that the presence of Chinese settlers was limited and that control by either Lhasa or Peking was virtually non-existent. Skye-dgu-mdo, just north of Derge, was "the only town in that region where Chinese merchants are allowed to reside."³⁵ Limited Chinese influence is also attested in other travel accounts,³⁶ including a survey conducted as late as 1940 which found that in only two of 103 Sde-dge households were both parents Chinese.³⁷ Rockhill summarized the situation in 1890

³² Li (1947): 281-2.

³³ Rockhill (1891): 349; and Ge Le (1984): 260. For more detail, see note 30 above.

³⁴ This occurred in the aftermath of the Nyag-rong Campaign which will be discussed below.

³⁵ Rockhill (1891): 205-6. Cf. Kozlov (1947): 279, who reported that ten Chinese, primarily traders from Sichuan, were living in Sde-dge-dgon-chen at the turn of this century.

³⁶ See, for example, the account of one Russian explorer who describes how his Chinese guide feared for his life upon arriving in Sde-dge and neighboring areas in 1899. See Kaznakov (1907): 67.

³⁷ Li (1947): 292-3. In a sample survey taken near Sde-dge-dgon-chen in 1940, Li identified three types of households on the basis of ethnicity. :

Tibetan families:	7 households w/ male head
	55 households w/ female head
	22 matrimonial households
Sino-Tibetan families:	17 households -- 38 males, 45 females
Chinese families:	2 households -- 6 males, 7 females

accordingly:

...the position of the Chinese throughout this part of the country is still extremely precarious, especially in Dér-gé. T'ung-shih [*tongshi* 通使, agent or envoy]³⁸ from Hsi-ning and Ch'eng-tu visit this region yearly to collect the 'horse tax' of eight tael cents (about ten cents of our money) for each family, the only one payable by this people to the Chinese government. Once in five years the chiefs under the governor-general of Sichuan send a 'little tribute' mission to Ch'eng-tu and every ten years a 'great tribute' mission to Peking. Unlike the Mongol chieftains, who are obliged to go in person when paying tribute, those of eastern Tibet hardly ever visit the capital, sending their stewards or some small officer in their stead.³⁹

There were only six Manchu imperial military posts in the Khams region, three of which were not established until the 1880s, and none were in Sde-dge. These officers were reported to "have absolutely no authority over the native chiefs, their duties being confined to protecting and administering the Chinese trade, reporting to Tachienlu on the condition of the country, forwarding government couriers, officials, troops, funds, etc."⁴⁰ While officers were occasionally appealed to by native chiefs to arbitrate disputes, their decisions were not binding. Finally, Rockhill noted that throughout much of Khams, "Chinese silver bullion was not received; only Indian rupees were current."⁴¹ At the same time, he remarked "The gandan tranka⁴² of Lh'asa is not current in eastern Tibet except at a heavy discount."⁴³

³⁸ Matthews (1969): 969.

³⁹ Rockhill (1891): 222.

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 221-2.

⁴¹ Rockhill (1891): 208.

⁴² དགའ་ལྷན་རྒྱུ་རྩིས་ཀྱི་མཚན་ལོ་མཚན་གྱི་མཚན་ལོ་མཚན་། This refers to traditional Tibetan coins which were recognized by other countries as having exchange value with the Indian rupee. Hoffman (1986) notes that from 1750-1790 a Nepalese coin called a "tamka" was used in Tibet. In 1792, the Ddga'-ldan Pho-brang administration discontinued use of the Nepalese *tamka* and established its own system of currency with coins bearing a Tibetan inscription – apparently, the first "dga'-ldan tamka." By 1890, paper notes called "srang" were introduced. These appeared in denominations equivalent to five, ten, twenty-five and one hundred tamkas. See Hoffman (1986): 185.

In his study of political administration in Sichuan, Adshead (1984) concludes that for the Qing dynasty, Khams was a "mosaic of mountain principalities, neither China nor Tibet, which controlled the roads between Chengtu and Lhasa, the lifeline of the Chinese presence in the Dge-lugs-pa theocracy."⁴⁴ Rockhill also concluded that Sde-dge was one state in Eastern Tibet that was "independent of both China and Lhasa."⁴⁵ However, when rulers of Sde-dge increasingly found their kingdom under attack by neighboring states, or challenged internally by opposing factions, one strategy the king used to secure his rule was to appeal to either Peking or Lhasa for support. Ultimately, this strategy would in itself compromise Sde-dge's sovereignty.

1.3 The Nyag-rong (Nyarong) Campaign

In 1862, the state of Nyag-rong, bordering Sde-dge to the southeast with similar claims to *de facto* independence, invaded Sde-dge territory under the leadership of Nyag-rong chief Mgon-po Rnam-rgyal (Gonpo Namgyal). Within a year, troops from Nyag-rong had seized the capital of Sde-dge. I would contend that such acts of aggression from neighboring states led to a significant shift in the balance of power for the formerly self-governing states in northern Khams in relation to both Peking and Lhasa. The situation in Sde-dge after the Nyag-rong campaign illustrates how local rulers in Khams were more frequently compelled to seek an alliance with either the Lhasa Dga'-ldan Pho-brang government or the Sichuan provincial administration in order to maintain their increasingly compromised autonomy. Furthermore,

⁴³ Rockhill (1891): 208, n.1. Cf. the remarks of Baber (1882): 104.

⁴⁴ Adshead (1984): 20.

⁴⁵ Rockhill (1891): 218.

both Lhasa and Peking readily took advantage of the ensuing internal struggles to assert greater control in the area.

With reference to several primary sources, Tashi Tsering (1985) notes that the Nyag-rong army had reached the peak of its campaign in 1862 and had conquered all of Sde-dge by early 1863. He adds that the tribes of Sde-dge offered little resistance, especially those along the eastern border who were on favorable political terms with Nyag-rong. Once the resistance centered in the western 'Bri-chu (Yangtze) area was defeated, the queen of Sde-dge, Chos-dbyings-bzang-mo, and her son, 'Chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje (Chime Tagpay Dorje) were taken hostage and the capital Sde-dge-dgon-chen seized.⁴⁶ Suspecting the whole of Sde-dge would rise in revolt, the Nyag-rong chief also took many high incarnate lamas and important Sde-dge officials hostage in Nyag-rong. Among these were Dpal-spungs Dbon-rgan Rinpoche, a few lamas from Rdzogs-chen and Kah-thog monasteries, and some of the *mdun-skor* and *hor-'dra* officials. It is said that the lamas and the *mdun-skor* officials were thrown into the Nyag-rong River.⁴⁷ Several ministers of Sde-dge fled to Lhasa,⁴⁸ along with refugees from three of the Hor states bordering Sde-dge who also sought military assistance against Nyag-rong.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Tashi Tsering (1985): 199; and Petech (1973) 178. Petech says that the queen was "widowed" and that the prince was her son. Thus, we would have to understand that the "prince" was already king at this time. This is supported by Ge Le who cites the *Xikang jian sheng ji (Records of the Establishment of Xikang Province)*, noting that 'Chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje "lost power for one year when Zhandui [Nyag-rong] tribes seized power" (Ge Le 1984: 285). C.f. the recollection of the queen's own granddaughter, who currently lives in Chengdu. She insists that she has never heard of any such abduction, though she is aware such claims appear in contemporary historical accounts. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol [*alias* Sde-dge *sras-mo*], interview.)

⁴⁷ Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 56-7.

⁴⁸ Tashi Tsering (1985): 198-9.

⁴⁹ Petech (1973): 120-1. Interestingly, the kingdom of Gling-tshang did not face such advances by Mgon-po-rnam-rgyal, for the reported reason that the aggressor's daughter was married to the Gling-tshang king. (Jigme Lingsang [*alias* Gling-tshang *sras*], interviewed by the author, Chengdu, PRC, 1 September 1997.)

At this opportunity to extend its influence in Khams, the General Assembly in Lhasa passed a resolution to intervene and *Bka'-blon* Phun-lung Phun-tshogs-tshe-dbang-rdo-rje (Phuntsok Tsewang Dorje) was chosen to lead an expedition to Nyag-rong. He left with troops on February 9, 1863, recruiting a substantial number of men enroute from the ecclesiastical states of Ri-bo-che, Brag-g yab, and Chab-mdo.⁵⁰ According to Petech, the Nyag-rong chief was hard pressed in Sde-dge by "both Chinese and their local allies...(but) held out successfully for quite a time and *enrolled in his forces many lamas of the monasteries subject to Sde-dge*."⁵¹ By September 1864, Phun-lung and his Lhasa forces occupied Sde-dge and forced Mgon-po's troops back to Nyag-rong.⁵² However, the Lhasa troops reportedly looted and inflicted much violence upon the local Sde-dge population.⁵³ Significantly, Petech adds, "An unpleasant aftermath of the victory *was a widespread purge of rNyid-ma-pa elements*, suspected of collusion with mGon-po-mam-rgyal."⁵⁴

In June 1865, Lhasa made further advances upon Nyag-rong, whereupon the abducted queen, her son, and Dpal-spungs *dbon-rgan* Rinpoche escaped to Sde-dge.⁵⁵ Within two months, the Nyag-rong fortress was surrounded and set on fire. Mgon-po Rnam-rgyal and his

⁵⁰ Tashi Tsering (1985): 209.

⁵¹ Petech (1973): 120; italics added.

⁵² According to Jigme Lingsang, it was a member of the powerful Bya-rgod-tshang family in Sde-dge (*Blon-po* Pad-ma-rnam-rgyal?) who feigned loyalty to Mgon-po-mam-rgyal but then contacted Lhasa for assistance. Jigme Lingsang [*alias* Gling-tshang *sras*], interview.

⁵³ *Da Qing lichao shilu*, Mu-tsung (134.25a-26b, 147.30a-31a), cited in Petech (1973): 120.

⁵⁴ Petech (1973): 121; italics added.

⁵⁵ According to Smith, the queen, her son and Dpal-spungs Dbon-sprul were released after Kong-sprul Rinpoche, also a victim of the purges, healed an important Dge-lugs-pa lama. This helped ease the adamant manner in which some Dge-lugs-pa clergy had been urging the Lhasa troops to raze Dpal-spungs monastery; see Smith (1970): 33.

two sons died in the blaze, and his followers were arrested.⁵⁶ Lhasa then insisted on an indemnity of 200,000 taels from Peking before withdrawing. Adshead suggests that Lhasa was fully aware that the responsibility for payment would belong to Chengdu and that the provincial governor would be unable to pay this amount. Lhasa promptly placed Nyag-rong under its permanent administration.⁵⁷ The high commissioner (*spyi-khyab*) appointed by Lhasa to Nyag-rong also exercised jurisdiction over Hor and Sde-dge.⁵⁸ Carrasco cites two sources which note that Sde-dge paid a tribute in silver, and provided labor, transport, and a body-guard to the Tibetan commissioner in Nyag-rong. Evidence of the king's closer ties with Lhasa can also be found in Ge Le (1984):

Throughout this incident, 'Chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje⁵⁹ completely leaned towards the Tibetan authorities. It is said that after he was released from the Xinlong (新龙) prison, he took more than 1000 loads of gold, silver and property to Tibet and offered expensive gifts to Tibetan government officials in thanks for the Tibetan troops having saved his life and to gain the [continued] attention and protection of the Tibetan government. Also, he was allowed to bring officials of all levels and their entourages to visit various places in Tibet to make religious offerings.⁶⁰

Perhaps to further strengthen his new alliance with Lhasa, in 1870 king 'Chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje married Tshe-brtan-grol-dkar (Tseten Dolkar), daughter of Tibetan general Mdo-mkhar *sras* Tshe-dbang-nor-bu who helped lead the expeditionary force from Lhasa.⁶¹ Baber (1882) provides details of their wedding, the preliminaries of which "included a contract by

⁵⁶ Petech (1973): 121; and Tashi Tsering (1985): 211.

⁵⁷ Adshead (1984): 57; and Teichman (1922): 5.

⁵⁸ Adshead (1984): 57; and Petech (1973): 256.

⁵⁹ Chin. Jiagemā (甲格马).

⁶⁰ Ge Le (1984): 259.

⁶¹ Petech (1973): 76-7; Adshead (1984): 86; and Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 57.

which the Debas [*sde-pa*, chieftains or headmen] ‘tied their heads’ (*go-btags*) to Lhasa, without, however promising to aid openly in the annexation of their territory.”⁶² Reportedly, most people of Sde-dge were “disinclined” to acknowledge this “submission.” According to Baber’s informant, the decision to turn to Lhasa for assistance in the Nyag-rong war followed “a vain appeal for assistance to the Chinese government.”⁶³ From the accounts above, we can see how the independence of Sde-dge as it approached the twentieth century was increasingly compromised *vis-à-vis* outside forces.

2. SECULAR AUTHORITY IN SDE-DGE

In the wake of the Nyag-rong Campaign, two factions arose during what are referred to in the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* as “various periods of chaotic and uncontrolled thinking among members of the Sde-dge royal family, the chaplains (*dbu-bla*) and the district chiefs.”⁶⁴ According to Ge Le, this conflict began during the trip that king 'Chi-med-rdo-rje made with his thirty chiefs (*da touren*, 大头人) to thank Lhasa for its support during the Nyag-rong affair.⁶⁵ These chieftains are the same reluctant “*sde-pa*” to whom Baber referred above. The following section examines the role of local chieftains and other players in the administration of Sde-dge, which in its totality possessed the characteristics of an “internally differentiated” state apparatus which “exercised its power over a territorially demarcated area” and which itself

⁶² Baber (1882): 99.

⁶³ *Ibid.*: 98.

⁶⁴ Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 57.

⁶⁵ Ge Le (1984): 259.

constituted “a site of power struggle” – all qualities that have been used to define a “state.”⁶⁶

2.1 Land Administration and the Officialdom

The system by which land in Sde-dge was granted to hereditary officials in exchange for administrative responsibilities constituted a decentralized bureaucracy, the highest levels of which employed more than two hundred aristocrats. There were four types of land management systems in the kingdom:⁶⁷ land held directly by the king for his own subsistence, land allocated to the top two ranks of officials under the king, land granted for monastic estates, and land leased directly to *khral-pa* (taxpayers). *Khral-pa* paid three types of dues for the land which they essentially leased: 1) dues in grain; 2) dues in kind (butter, hay, etc.) per household and in gunpowder, fuel, fodder, and money for printing books which was assessed on a village basis; and 3) labor services, which entailed land cultivation, construction, transportation and military service.⁶⁸ Some of the wealthier *khral-pa* employed *khol-pa* (servants) to work their land. However, the majority of *khol-pa* worked for officials who were reportedly granted these with their land by the king.

⁶⁶ These characteristics are drawn from Schwarzmantel (1994): 8-11. This is, of course, only one perspective on what constitutes a modern “state.” What Sde-dge lacked was “centrality,” emphasized by both Schwarzmantel and Samuel (1982). Perhaps one better versed in political theory than I could use the evidence that cases such as the administration of Sde-dge provide to challenge the notion that “centrality” need be a defining feature of a “state.”

⁶⁷ Chen Hanseng (1949) provides valuable information regarding land administration from a 1940 survey of Khams. For his discussion of Sde-dge, Carrasco (1959) relied on Chen’s survey and on the observations of Rockhill. The summary here directly draws upon these three works and Du Yongbin. The latter identifies only three systems, grouping monastic estates with the land allotted to nobles (Du Yongbin 1991: 67).

⁶⁸ Carrasco (1959): 145.

The territory of Sde-dge was divided into twenty-five districts (*rdzong-kha* or *sde-phyogs*)⁶⁹ headed by local chieftains (*sde-pa*) whose official tenure ranged from seven years to life-long.⁷⁰ Most chieftains held a hereditary and life-term position and some were "practically semi-independent."⁷¹ The highest secular political body in the king's court was the council of ministers (*gnyer-chen*) which was comprised of the chief or head official from each of four designated districts: Yid-lhung in the east, Sga-rje in the south, 'Brong-pa in the west, and Ser-shul in the north.⁷² Along with the *phyag-mdzod* (treasurer), *drung-yig* (secretary), and *gsol-dpon* (major domo), they constituted the first rank of officials and spent most of their time in the capital itself.⁷³

According to the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* ("Religious History of Sde-dge"), the second strata of officials consisted of thirty-three *rdzong-sgo* ("district headmen"):

⁶⁹ Ibid.: 145; and Teichman (1922): 208.

⁷⁰ Carrasco (1959): 144.

⁷¹ Teichman (1922): 208.

⁷² Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 77. The role of four "chief ministers" (*gnyer-chen*) was also mentioned by Dhong-thog Rinpoche (interviewed by the author, Bloomington, Indiana, January 1997) and in an autobiographical piece on Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche; see Orgyan Topgyal Rinpoche, *Khyentse Özer: International Journal of the Rigpa Fellowship*, vol. 1, (August 1990): 13. However, the term "*blon-chen*" is also used for this position in some works, such as the *Sde-dge'i-rgyal-rabs*. Cf. Petech (1973): 8, who notes that "*blon-chen*" was used to designate the chief ministers in Lhasa. Note that Sga-rje and Ser-shul are two of Sde-dge's largest districts.

⁷³ Chen (1949): 82. According to the *Sde-dge sras-mo* (princess), the king traditionally appointed two *phyag-mdzod* to his court and they were considered senior to the *snyer-chen*. She also clarified that what is referred to by Chen as "*gsol-dpon*" was more commonly called a *gzim-dpon* (chamberlain), the most favored among the king's servants and the only one allowed access to the ruler's sleeping quarters. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview.)

LOCAL CHIEFS OR HEADMEN (*rdzong-sgo*)

<i>Sde-dge chos-'byung</i> ⁷⁴	<i>Teichman (if cited)</i> ⁷⁵	<i>Sde-dge chos-'byung</i>	<i>Teichman (if cited)</i>
Sku-tshe		Rma-ror	Marong
Mkhar-mdo	Kargung?	Rme-shod	Mesho
West Mkhar-mdo		Tsam-mdo	Tsando
'Khor-mdo		'Dzam-thog	
Lcags-ra		'Dzing-pa	Dzenko
'Jo-mda'		Rdza-pa	Tzako
Nyag-shig	Nyashi	Rdzogs-chen	Dzogchen
Gter-lhung	Dehlung	Wa-ra	
'Dan-chos-sde		Zur-brgyud	
'Dan-ma		Ye-rab	
Dpal-yul	Beyu	Rag-chab	Racha
Dpe-war		Rab-brtan	
West Dpe-war		Ri-mda'	
Spo-lu	Spo-lu	Sa-ngan	
Dbon-stod		Sa-dmar	
West Dbon-stod		Hor-po	Horbo
'Ba'-rong	Barong		

I am quite certain that these district officials are the same thirty major headman (*da touren*) mentioned in Du Yongbin (1991)⁷⁶ and in Ge Le (1984) where he writes of thirty chiefs who accompanied the king to Lhasa after the Nyag-rong Campaign. In other sources,

⁷⁴ Karma-gyal-mtshan (1994): 77. Note that the districts of the four chief ministers (*gnyer-chen*) are not included here.

⁷⁵ Teichman (1922): 208. Teichman also includes a district called "Desho," which would appear to be Sde-shod, but which was not included among the districts listed in the *Sde-dge chos-'byung*.

⁷⁶ Du Yongbin (1991): 68.

they are referred to alternately as the "thirty ministers,"⁷⁷ "thirty hereditary clan leaders,"⁷⁸ or "sde-pa" (chiefs or headman).⁷⁹ I am unable to account for why the number of *rdzong-sgo* (thirty-three) exceeds the number of districts (twenty-five). Perhaps some districts were further divided into sub-districts. According to the Sde-dge *sras-mo* and her son, Sde-dge was comprised of thirty districts (*rdzong*) each headed by a "duke" (*blon-po*). However, in a few additional districts which had no traditional *blon-po*, the king would select a *rdzong-dpon* from among the *hor-'dra* or *mdun-skor* (see below) to administer the district.⁸⁰ This might account for the discrepancy between the thirty-three *rdzong-sgo* listed in the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* and the thirty "chiefs", "*da touren*," "ministers," or "hereditary clan leaders" mentioned in other sources. I can find no other satisfactory explanation for the discrepancy. According to Rockhill, each district official had a *dmag-'dpon* (military officer)⁸¹ and the privilege of hosting high officials traveling across the land which provided a considerable source of income.⁸² But, the position of district officials in nomadic communities was more limited:

⁷⁷ Orgyan Topgyal Rinpoche, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Cited in Carrasco (1959): 145. According to Carrasco, this second rank of officials were called *tingkoo* (Tib. *lding-dpon?* or *lding-sku[-tshab]?*), from whom he claims the most talented were selected as *gnyer-ba*.⁷⁸ This contradicts information provided in the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* which specifies four districts from which the *gnyer-chen* were selected. The Sde-dge *sras-mo* confirmed that "*gnyer-pa*" are one and the same as "*gnyer-chen*" and that these were selected by district. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol; interview.)

⁷⁹ Evidently, a clear treatment of these terms could constitute an entire article in itself. Baber (1882) -- one of the earliest sources cited here -- refers to the king of Sde-dge as the "Chief Deba" and the local chiefs as simply "Debas" (Baber 1882: 97). Tashi Tsering also uses "*sde-pa*" when referring to the leaders of 'Ba' and Li-thang (Tashi Tsering 1985: 199). Rockhill mentions a *sde-pa* of Sde-dge being locally addressed as "*dpon-po*" (Rockhill 1891: 185). C.f. Petech (1973): 12, who notes that district governors in the Lhasa government were originally referred to as "*sde-pa*" but later called "*rdzong-dpon*."

⁸⁰ Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol and Jigme Lingtshang, interview.

⁸¹ Rockhill (1891): 219.

⁸² *Ibid.*: 191-2.

All the pastoral tribes called in Tibetan drupa or drukpa [*'brog-pa*] are ruled by chiefs called deba [*sde-pa*], who have no other officials under them. They have, as far as my observation goes, very little authority; in case of war they lead their men, and in time of peace they see that the pasture lands of their tribes are not encroached upon; they levy the various taxes for China, for Lhasa or Derge, as the case may be, and sometimes arbitrate quarrels among their clansmen, but generally the people settle such matters between themselves.⁸³

The *Sde-dge chos-'byung* lists an additional forty-one aristocratic retinue appointees:

THE ARISTOCRATIC RETINUE (*mdun-skor khag*)⁸⁴:

Dil-mgo	Phu-ma	Phyag-tsha
A-thub	Bye-thol	Gces-pa
Dran-'khor	Gnas-ra	Jo-'khong
Chu-rdo	'Ju-chen	Rnam-sras
Ya-log	'Ju-chung	Ya-mgo
Dbon-thog	Zhi-mo	Ngan-'phrad
Lho-ru	Sog-mo	Ngan-chung
Bya-rgod	Gru-mo	Ri-phug
Sa-dkar	Dbu-rtsa	Mkhar-mdo
Ma-log	Bre-'bod	Mkhar-mdo Ma-thang
Lcags-rta	A-khri	Brag-yab
Ho-cho	Gnas-gzhi	Rnam-chung
Ja-ra	'Og-ma	Ra-ru
Lug-ra	Rgya-mkhar	

The *mdun-skor* also included *phyi'i-dpon-'go* (“outer officials”) from Rga-mong-sna Sog-mo-tshang, Nyag-shig Se-tsha, and Go-'jo Bsam-'grub. They were specifically noted to be exempt from the military service tax. Presumably, the remaining *mdun-skor* officials were responsible for providing soldiers to protect Sde-dge's borders when necessary. This list seems to consist of important family names which were primarily derived from or used as the toponymic identifying where the family's estate was located.

⁸³ Rockhill (1891): 189.

⁸⁴ See Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 78-9.

Finally, there were eighty local representatives (*hor-'dra*)⁸⁵ who held this title in exchange for functioning as a local representative or deputy. These are apparently the same “village headmen” discussed by Carrasco,⁸⁶ who notes that they were selected from the third rank of officials and their position was often hereditary.⁸⁷ As representatives of the king, the village heads were responsible for administering *u-lag*, the corvee tax consisting of supplies provided by the local people for transporting officials, outsiders and their loads. They could also grant land to *khral-pa* on the king's behalf.⁸⁸ One traveler reported that the village headmen were nearly all hereditary and responsible for presiding over the assemblies of the people, communicating orders from superior authorities and deciding the share of each villager in the labor services.⁸⁹ Based on the statement in Ge Le (1984) of there being more than one hundred “*da xiao touren*” (“big and petty chiefs”) in Sde-dge, I would conclude that the *hor-'dra* are identical to the minor officials (*xiao touren* 小头人) mentioned in his account and those of others.⁹⁰ The village heads were assisted by *'go-pa* (leaders?) who were selected from among the common people to assist in collecting taxes, managing the labor services and requisitions, and other affairs; but the *'go-pa* had no official rank. According to Carrasco,

⁸⁵ Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 79-80. The Sde-dge sras-mo described the *hor-'dra* as deputy “police” who served under the *blon-po* (district officials). They were responsible for administering taxes and, in some instances, were promoted to the position of *rdzong-dpon*. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview.)

⁸⁶ Carrasco (1959): 71. The duties for the village headmen as described by Carrasco are notably similar to the duties of Tibetan *hor-'dra* as defined in the *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod-chen-mo* (1986): 3071.

⁸⁷ Chen (1949): 82; Rockhill (1891): 219, and Carrasco (1959): 72.

⁸⁸ Carrasco (1959): 72; and Rockhill (1891): 219.

⁸⁹ Launay, cited in Carrasco (1959): 71.

⁹⁰ For example, Du Yongbin (1991): 68.

third-rank officials also included bureaucrats who resided in the capital and served as assistants to the *gnyer-pa*.

Carrasco has contrasted the independent character of a landed nobility in Sde-dge with the bureaucratic aristocracy of the Lhasa government where, "instead of local chiefs performing duties in the central government, we have officials of the central government paid in land."⁹¹ He notes that the growth and development of the bureaucratized nobility and monk officials reduced the chance for local leaders to become excessively powerful. Officials in Central Tibet were less likely to set themselves up as territorial rulers in their estates, because the larger and more centralized Dga'-ldan Pho-brang administration often required the presence of its nobility in Lhasa. Carrasco views the Central Tibetan administration as having developed from an organizational structure based on territorial chiefs to a bureaucratic one where "personal estates even if hereditary become, rather than small principalities, salary lands easily resumable by the state if the need arises."⁹²

On the contrary, in the small states of eastern Tibet, such as Sde-dge, hereditary *sde-pa* or *blon-po* maintained a high degree of local power. Though the land of Sde-dge was allegedly considered the property of the king and granted to these first two ranks of officials in exchange for administrative services,⁹³ the king's four chief ministers (*gnyer-chen*) and many of the local chieftains wielded a significant degree of authority. Eric Teichman, the British consul stationed at Dar-rtse-mdo (Tachienlu) in the early twentieth century observed that the chieftains of the three "largest and most important" districts -- Sga-rje, Ser-shul and "Adu" -- were

⁹¹ Carrasco (1952): 222.

⁹² Carrasco (1952): 226.

⁹³ Ibid.: 28, 144.

“exceptionally powerful.”⁹⁴ A more recent Chinese source reports that the seven most important districts were Yid-lhung, Dbon-po-stong, Mkhar-sum-mdo, Rme-shod, Sku-tshe, Spo-lu, and “Chita.”⁹⁵ The *Sde-dge chos-’byung* notes that only the chieftains of Mkhar-mdo, Dbon-stod, Dpe-war and Ye-rab were *rdzong-dpon* within the Sde-dge system.⁹⁶ Presumably the other chiefs had their own indigenous and local authority. Chen (1949) notes that, because of the king’s presence in Sde-dge, the administrative system there was more centralized than in other areas of Khams.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the division of land among hereditary local chiefs enabled alternative foci of power which could counter the authority of the king. This would place the king *primus inter pares*, if local districts became exceptionally powerful or allied with one another.

2.2 Internal Dissent after the Nyag-rong Campaign

Further evidence for the authority wielded by local chiefs can be found in oral histories recorded by Dge-legs (Chin. Ge Le) in his 1984 study, *Ganzi Zangzu zizhi zhou shi hua* (“*Oral History of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture*”). Again, it was Ge Le who claimed that the succession struggle that would engulf Sde-dge for nearly forty years began during the trip that king ‘Chi-med-rdo-rje made with his thirty chiefs to thank Lhasa for its support during the

⁹⁴ Teichman (1922): 208. I was not able to positively identify “Adu,” which Teichman says is located in the north. However, Jigme Lingsang mentioned parenthetically in our interview that A-du (sp?) was a “Hor-pa state.”

⁹⁵ Du Yongbin (1991): 68. I am unable to ascertain the Tibetan name for “Chita,” but it may refer to “Chu-rdo,” as listed among the *mdun-skor*.

⁹⁶ Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 77. In the Tibetan text, the complete list of *rdzong-sgo* is followed by
 ་བཅས་ལས་མཁར་དོན་གཉིས་དང་། དཔེ་ཅར་དང་ཡེ་རབ་བཅས་ལྟར་ལྷོ་དགེ་རང་ལུགས་རྫོང་དོན་ལྟོ་ལོ།།

⁹⁷ Chen (1949): 83-4.

Nyag-rong affair.⁹⁸ During this excursion, a member of the king's entourage killed a staff member of the Manchu imperial bureau in Shigatse. The Manchu imperial *amban*⁹⁹ in Lhasa ordered that the assassin be handed over, but the thirty chiefs refused. Reportedly fearing the *amban*'s wrath, the king himself handed the assassin over. When the party returned to Sde-dge, the chiefs contested the king's authority. In order to mediate the conflict, the king called all the chiefs to his administrative compound in Sde-dge-dgon-chen for a council. However, not only did the thirty chiefs refuse to attend the meeting, they severely beat the king's father-in-law.¹⁰⁰ Allegedly, 'Chi-med-rdo-rje angrily announced, "I only want the common people, I don't want the thirty chiefs." According to Ge Le's sources, the chiefs at that time evidently wielded considerable power *vis-à-vis* the king:

It is said that the thirty chiefs then organized many people to gather in front of the palace of the *tusi*,¹⁰¹ dancing a *guozhuang* (锅庄)¹⁰² which used satirical lyrics to ridicule the *tusi*:

"The beautiful sky is a guesthouse in paradise;
the moon and stars are its happy travellers;
and one by one, clouds are the farewell gift.
The beautiful site of Gong-ya? (龚亚)¹⁰³ is a guesthouse in paradise;
the thirty chiefs are its happy travellers,
and thirty embroidered belts are the farewell gift."

⁹⁸ Ge Le (1984): 259.

⁹⁹ See note 27.

¹⁰⁰ Recall that this probably refers to the Tibetan general Mdo-mkhar-sras Tshe-dbang-nor-bu who helped lead the expeditionary force from Lhasa into Sde-dge to defeat the Nyag-rong chief. See note 59.

¹⁰¹ "*Tusi*" (土司) is the Chinese term for local leaders allegedly appointed to administer lands in the southwestern frontier. Here it refers to the king. In actuality, most *tusi* were already powerful local leaders to whom the Manchu imperial court granted a title with varying degrees of impact -- usually very little -- on the actual administration of the area. See van der Kuijp (1988): 10, for a discussion of the earliest Tibetan attestations of this title and its implications.

¹⁰² This most likely refers to a *sgor-bro* dance in Tibetan.

¹⁰³ This is the Chinese name for the capital, Sde-dge-dgon-chen.

After this song, they threw thirty belts at the palace front and abruptly left. Henceforth, the *tusi*'s relationship with the chiefs was completely broken. When the thirty chiefs returned to their own villages, they each governed on their own and officially declared that they would not obey 'Chi-med-rdo-rje's rule.

As 'Chi-med-rdo-rje was not able to exercise his power as *tusi*, he became angry and sent a mission to the Governor-general's office in Sichuan in order to petition the following: "The Emperor himself has granted [the title of] *xuanweishi* to [the] Sde-dge [king]. The thirty chiefs' present betrayal of the *tusi* was an illegal action, a rebellion. Governor-general, please send troops to suppress them."¹⁰⁴

The governor-general of Sichuan, Lu Chuanlin, had already been seeking to incorporate the lands of the various *tusi* of northern Khams into a single territory.¹⁰⁵ The policy of incorporation he sought -- *gaitu guiliu* (改土归流) -- was customary administrative practice for the Ming and Qing imperial courts in the area along China's southwestern border. It entailed replacing the local hereditary ruler, king or chief (Chin. *tusi*) with a non-hereditary appointee from the central government, thus bringing the area under direct control. Having already sent General Zhangji to Nyag-rong, Lu Chuanlin then ordered his advance upon Sde-dge to subjugate it militarily:

The Qing troops entered Sde-dge and were stationed in Zechenlong [Tib. Zhechen-lung]. The Qing military commander ordered the thirty chiefs to Zechenlong for a meeting. When the thirty chiefs arrived in Zechenlong, the commander Zhangji ordered that they be arrested. The chiefs resisted and opposed him. The Qing troops opened fire and killed one of the chiefs, named "Zhuomo" (卓莫). The remaining chiefs hurried back to each of their administrative villages, organized the people, declared a rebellion, and led the local people to surround the Qing military encampment. They cut off their water supply, forcing the Qing to agree to negotiate. At the negotiation table, the chiefs proposed the detainment of 'Chi-med-rdo-rje and his wife. The Qing troops had to do as they were told and arrested 'Chi-med-rdo-rje, his wife and

¹⁰⁴ Ge Le (1984): 260. According to the Sde-dge *sras-mo*, her father (Rdo-rje-seng-ge), was summoned to Chengdu, but never imprisoned. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

the two sons, who were all taken to Chengdu and interrogated [circa 1895]. Shortly after, 'Chi-med-rdo-rje and his wife died in the Chengdu prison [circa 1898]. The two surviving sons were named Baba and Ajia (some sources say Jiangbai Renqing [Tib. 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen] and Duoji Cengge [Tib. Rdo-rje Seng-ge]). They were released and welcomed back to Sde-dge. Rdo-rje Seng-ge inherited the position of *tusi* becoming the 48th *tusi*.... 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen became a monk.¹⁰⁶

Ge Le (1984) notes that there are both official and local oral accounts of this affair, though other accounts discussing the royal family's deposition¹⁰⁷ do not include the story of the chiefs satirical demonstration in front of the king's palace. Additional evidence for the relative autonomy of several local chiefs can be found in Babar (1882) who cites an account by T. T. Cooper who in 1868 noted that the people of Sde-dge were "very warlike, and appear to be divided into several clans, constantly engaged in deadly feuds with each other, but uniting in one common cause against attacks from without."¹⁰⁸ Another source notes that as late as 1942, when king Tshe-dbang-bdud-'dul (Tsewang Damdul) died and the Situ Rinpoche of Dpal-spungs monastery was selected to administer Sde-dge, a powerful chief named "Xiake Daodeng" (夏克刀登; Tib. Shar-dge ??) opposed this appointment and had Situ Rinpoche ousted after just one month.¹⁰⁹ Having examined the administration of land in Sde-dge, one sees how such concentrations of local authority might arise -- or rather, how strongholds were accommodated in a decentralized administration where the king's power was not consummate.

¹⁰⁶ Ge Le (1984,): 260.

¹⁰⁷ These accounts include Adshead (1984): 86; Teichman (1984): 6-7, 26; and Petech (1973): 194-5. Petech also cites the *Da Qing lichao shilu*, 410.10a-11a, 412.1a-2a, which I have not personally consulted.

¹⁰⁸ Babar (1882): 101.

¹⁰⁹ SSGZ: 110.

3. RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN SDE-DGE

Considering that only tangential reference was made to the involvement of any monks in the Nyag-rong Campaign in the accounts above, one might be surprised to read the following observation by Rockhill some twenty years later:

From Jyekundo [Skye-dgu-mdo] to Tachienlu [Dar-tshe-mdo], a distance of about 600 miles, I passed forty lamaseries, in the smallest of which there were 100 monks, and in five of them from 2000 to 4000. Although the greater part of K'amdo [Khams] is not under their direct rule, *they are everywhere the defacto masters of the country*. In their hands is nearly all the wealth of the land, acquired by trading, donations, money-lending, and bequests. Their landed property is enormous, their serfs (*mi-ser*)¹¹⁰ and bondsmen (*tshe-yo*) swarm."¹¹¹ (Italics added.)

Given that Skye-dgu-mdo lies just north of Sde-dge and Dar-rtse-mdo lies 588 miles east of Sde-dge-dgon-chen, Rockhill's observation must have applied to a significant part of Sde-dge's territory. What lay behind his assessment? By what means did the monasteries of Sde-dge wield authority and how did their position *vis-à-vis* the king differ from that of the lay chiefs?

3.1 Land Administration and the Monasteries

Monasteries held estates in much the same way as did the noble officials, but in a more "corporate"¹¹² sense, rather than as individuals or families. Monastic estates in Sde-dge were worked by peasants, called *lha-bran*, who either leased land and had their own equipment or worked the land as servants.¹¹³ According to Carrasco (1959), the *lha-bran* generally lived

¹¹⁰ The translation of the term *mi-ser* as "serf" continues to be a controversial topic. Rockhill's account is one of the earliest to use the term "serf."

¹¹¹ Rockhill (1891): 215-6. Italics added.

¹¹² Carrasco (1959): 219.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*: 147.

under better conditions than the *khral-pa* subject to district and local chiefs. He adds that they were often protected by their monastic lords from the oppression of the chiefs.¹¹⁴ Sometimes a monastery was exempt from land taxes, in which case its subjects were more affluent, but the living standard of most *lha-bran* remained at or below subsistence level.

A useful source for information regarding the political and economic privileges enjoyed by monasteries in Sde-dge is *Sichuan sheng Ganzi zhou Zangzu shehui lishi diaocha* (“*A Socio-Historical Investigation of the Tibetans in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province*”). This work is the result of a 1958-59 survey and largely concurs with what is cited in Carrasco (1959). According to *SSGZ*, monasteries held 24 percent of Sde-dge's total land area¹¹⁵ and were granted labor for maintaining their estates. This source mentions that Dpal-spungs monastery -- one of the largest in Sde-dge -- held 2,000 *mu*¹¹⁶ of land and had a few hundred taxpaying households. An earlier source claims that the same monastery held more than 6,000 *mu* of land with 400 households of *khol-pa*.¹¹⁷ Ten percent of these holdings were tilled by *khol-pa* who gave a percentage of their yield solely to the Sde-dge king, 25 percent were tilled by *khol-pa* who split their yields evenly with the monastery, and 45 percent were tilled by *khol-pa* who offered 40 percent of a pre-determined yield to the monastery. The remaining 20 percent of the monastery's land was reportedly “managed and tilled without any pay by *khol-pa*.”¹¹⁸ Lhun-grub-steng, the main monastery of the capital, was reported to have collected

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 149.

¹¹⁵ *SSGZ*: 106.

¹¹⁶ 1 *mu* = .16 acres of land.

¹¹⁷ Kuang Haolin (1991): 130.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 135-6.

134,000 *jin*¹¹⁹ of barley each year. Monasteries in nomadic areas, such as Rdzogs-chen monastery, had the right to control pastures nearby.

3.2 Monastic Bureaucracies and the Community

Monasteries often served as a sort of community center with a variety of functions. Information provided in *SSGZ* supports Rockhill's observations of the monastery's financial activity, which included special offices for business and usury. While monastic estates had no courts or jails, they did have military equipment as attested above. This furthered the monastery's ability to serve a fortress-like role in protecting the local population. As Samuel (1982) notes, "Monasteries in East Tibet into the twentieth century served as places where local peasants and nomads could store their produce safely and where they themselves could take refuge against bandits. The monasteries also mediated in disputes between nomadic groups."¹²⁰ Lamas were generally more numerous in agricultural areas than in nomadic areas.¹²¹ Yet, Rdzogs-chen monastery, one of the largest in Khams, was located in a nomadic area. In his discussion of this *dgon-pa*, Rockhill notes that nomads (*'brog-pa*) are "so exposed to forays of the Golok¹²² who are distant only two days ride to the east, that many prefer to live near villages or large lamaseries, where they can find refuge in case of need, even if the grazing is not so good."¹²³

¹¹⁹ 1 *jin* = .5 kilogram.

¹²⁰ Samuel (1982): 221, n. 10.

¹²¹ Li (1947): 289.

¹²² *Mgo-log* is the name of a nomadic tribe which had an exceptional reputation as fighters. For an interesting article on its leadership in the early twentieth century, see Lhoday Lhawang (1994).

¹²³ Rockhill (1891): 232-3.

According to Carrasco, monastic hierarchs could participate in governmental affairs. While they could not appropriate their office in the same way as did hereditary lay officials, it was not uncommon for more influential lamas to be related to Sde-dge officials or aristocratic families in neighboring territories. A monastic hierarch could not obtain personal revenue from the land in the same way as an individual land-owner, but several held considerable financial and political power, which was bolstered militarily:

Nor do the lamas confine themselves to the use of peaceful means in furtherance of their policy; there is as much of the soldier about them as there was in the Templars, with whom they offer many points of resemblance. The larger lamaseries are rather fortified camps than the abodes of peace-loving Buddhist monks; every lama is well-armed, well-mounted, and always ready for the fray, whether it be to resist the local chiefs or the Chinese, or to attack a rival lamasery. Their declaration of war is unique of its kind. In times of peace lamas wear no trousers, only a long kilt called *shamta*, so when about to start on a military expedition, when they will be for days in the saddle, a nether garment becomes indispensable, and the order goes forth to convert their shawls (*zan*) into breeches. I was assured that frequently when the weaker party learns that its enemy has thus made clear a determination to fight, it sues for peace without waiting for the attack.¹²⁴

Accordingly, the possibility that religious clerics were involved in the Nyag-rong campaign is less surprising than one might suppose. Further evidence of their worldly capabilities can be seen in the organization of the monasteries themselves, which were highly bureaucratized and included personnel responsible for military affairs.

The following summary of the monastic organization is based largely on information found in *SSGZ* and Carrasco (1959).¹²⁵ Most of the larger monasteries (*dgon-pa*) were comprised of several *grwa-tshang* (Chin. *zhongyuan* 中院), within which were various *khang-tshan* (Chin. *xiaoyuan* 小院). Each *khang-tshan* elected a *dge-bzang?* (Chin. *gesang* 格桑)

¹²⁴ Rockhill (1891): 216-7.

¹²⁵ See *SSGZ*: 106-112; and Carrasco (1959): 147-151.

who then collectively elected a *mkhan-po* (abbot; Ch. *kanbu* 堪布) from among the high lamas of the monastery or would invite an abbot from another monastery. The abbot was also called a *dgon-dpon* (“monastery official”) and generally held the position for a three or four-year term. He supervised the monastic bureaucracy which included the following monk officials:

- The *gnyer-ba* (Chin. *xiangzi* 相子, *guanjia* 管家) was the main administrator in charge of economic affairs.
- The *dge-skos* (Chin. *gegu* 格古) was responsible for enforcing the monastery’s code of law, in particular ensuring that monks adhered to monastic rules.
- There were two to four *dge-g.yog* (Chin. *geyao*, *geyue* 格约) in the larger monasteries. They helped the *dge-bskos* enforce the law and were responsible for military-related work. They were chosen from among the *gesang* and had a term of one year.
- The *dbu-ma* (Chin. *zhangjing lama* 掌经喇嘛) was responsible for leading the recitation of scriptures and explaining them.
- The *lha-ba* (Chin. *fashen lama* 法神喇嘛) was responsible for invocations, prognostications, and divinations.
- The *tshong-dpon*, also called a *gnyer-pa*, managed the business-related activity. This post was held by a wealthy merchant in the area who was either publicly elected or appointed.

The *Sde-dge chos-'byung* provides an extensive list of monasteries in Sde-dge, representing all five traditions: 61 Rnying-ma-pa monasteries; 44 Sa-skyapa monasteries; 26 Bka'-brgyud-pa monasteries; 18 Dge-lugs-pa monasteries; and 10 Bon-po monasteries.¹²⁶ Li

¹²⁶ Karma-rgyal-ntshan (1994): 80-3. See Appendix B for a full listing of these monasteries. C.f. Li (1947): 283-5, who recorded thirty-four monasteries in the area of Sde-dge lying east of the 'Bri-chu (Yangtze River) and classified them on the basis of their nomadic or agricultural location. A useful source for tracing these names is Peter Kessler, *Die historischen Königreiche Ling und Derge*, Rikon: Tibet-Institut, (1983): 115-132.

(1947) provides figures regarding the monastic population at selected monasteries. However, Li's figures differ significantly from those found in other accounts, such as Dpal-sprul Rinpoche's record of Rnying-ma monasteries, and I can find no satisfactory explanation for these discrepancies. For example, the monastery of Rdzogs-chen is said to traditionally have had more than 850 monks,¹²⁷ yet Li reports only 257 monks.¹²⁸ In another example, Li cites the population of G.yag-ze monastery as sixty-two, while Dpal-sprul Rinpoche has recorded a total of 225.¹²⁹ While some monks may not have been in residence and fighting against Chinese incursions must have taken a large toll in fatalities, this figure seems severely underestimated.

Li cites a total resident monastic population in Sde-dge of only 2,576, of whom eighty-eight were nuns.¹³⁰ Be that as it may, most nuns apparently resided in Dsa-khog, Yid-lhung

Communities in

Pastoral Areas:

	<u>Tibetan name</u>	<u>Number of Monasteries</u>
1. Yidlung	Yid-lhung	6
2. Dsogchen	Rdzogs-chen	2
3. Ba-og	'Ba'-rong	-

Agricultural Areas:

4. Palpung	Dpal-spungs	2
5. Mechod	Smad-shod	2
6. Gingchen	Zhe-chen?	2
7. Cagsra	Lcags-ra	3
8. Pewar	Dpe-war	1
9. Khordo	'Khor[-lo]-mdo	3
10. Yena	Ye-na	1
11. Dbontod	Dbon-stod	2
12. Karsudo	Dkar-gsum-mdo?	2
13. Marong	Rma-rong ?	1
14. Dsa-khog	Rdza-khog	7

¹²⁷ Dpal-sprul Rinpoche (n.d.): 79.

¹²⁸ Li (1947): 285.

¹²⁹ Dpal-sprul Rinpoche (n.d.): 86.

¹³⁰ Li (1947): 283.

and Dpal-spungs, the only places reported to have nunneries.¹³¹ Whereas the largest numbers of monks were between the ages of 20-29, nuns were concentrated between the ages of 55-64.¹³² This reflects the social structure in Khams, where women were often in charge of estates and more likely to take vows only at a later age. According to *SSGZ*, there were a total of 5,700 lamas in Sde-dge, comprising 24 percent of the population and 52 percent of the male population, of whom only 2500 live in monasteries.¹³³ However, as discussed above, this would mean a total population of 22,000 people, far less than earlier estimations for the larger territory of Sde-dge. According to *SSGZ* and several other sources, the Sa-skya monasteries were “most powerful” among the monasteries of Sde-dge. However, *SSGZ* also points to a special relationship that the king had with the *wu da jia miao* (五大家庙, “five major monasteries”).¹³⁴ The significance of this relationship, in a kingdom where authority was relatively decentralized, will be the topic of Part Two of this paper.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*: 285.

¹³² *Ibid.*: 288.

¹³³ *SSGZ*: 106.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

PART TWO:

SIGNS OF ALLIANCE

PART TWO: SIGNS OF ALLIANCE

I have demonstrated in Part One that the monasteries of Sde-dge (Derge) played an important role in the communities and that they enjoyed economic and political privileges which were largely secured by their position as "corporate land-holders." It is my primary intent in Part Two to examine the links between the king and the monasteries more closely; specifically, to question the assumption that the Sa-skya (Sakya) Tibetan Buddhist tradition has always been the primary religious power with whom the king of Sde-dge was aligned. We will see that in the nineteenth century the king also maintained a special relationship that crossed sectarian lines with five monasteries in his territory. This contrasts the religio-political structure in Lhasa, which was not only linked to, but primarily run by, Dge-lugs-pa (Gelukpa) hierarchs. The Dga'-ldan Pho-brang (Ganden Podrang) administration is frequently used as a model to conclude that a general pattern for Tibetan rulers was to ally with a single sect to the exclusion of other traditions.

Sde-dge in the nineteenth century provides at least one example which challenges the applicability of such a model across all Tibetan areas. Rather, Sde-dge seems to have been characterized by a system of rule which accommodated the various sects and patronized monasteries of different traditions. Moreover, one can see parallels between this administrative strategy in the political realm, and what has been called "the eclectic (*ris-med*) movement of Eastern Tibet"¹³⁵ in the nineteenth century, of which the most prominent teachers were based in Sde-dge.

¹³⁵ Smith (1970): 1.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KING AND THE MONASTERIES

As illustrated above, the king of Sde-dge was a territorial ruler with greater and lesser chiefs who also held their own land and political power. I would contend that these chiefs were in a position to directly contest the authority of the king, especially when allied with each other, as evident in the events following the Nyag-rong Campaign. Thus, monasteries, which were sufficiently bureaucratized and endowed as corporate land-holders, offered the king an opportunity to maintain relationships that could effectively balance the power of local hereditary chiefs. At the same time, monastic hierarchs, who were often born of aristocratic families and had their own interests with regard to supporting their monasteries, could accordingly secure the political and financial means to protect these interests through a special relationship with the ruler.

4.1 Lhun-grub-steng and the Sa-skya Tradition

The Sa-skya (Sakya) monastery of Lhun-grub-steng (Lundup Teng) located in the administrative compound of the capital of Sde-dge was completed in the mid-seventeenth century by *Bla-chen* Byams-pa-phun-tshog.¹³⁶ Baber (1882) reported the presence of three hundred monks at Lhun-grub-steng *circa* 1877.¹³⁷ While the palace itself was called Chos-sde Pho-brang (Chö-day-po-dang), the monastery compound and entire town was popularly called “*Sde-dge-dgon-chen*.” The monastery compound contributed to the ruling family's influence and remained an important cultural center for the whole of Khams. Moreover, until the early nineteenth century, the king of Sde-dge usually served as abbot of the monastery.

Traditionally, if there were two princes, upon succession, the elder would serve as king and the

¹³⁶ Kolmaš (1988): 221.

¹³⁷ Baber (1882): 97.

younger as abbot.¹³⁸ Religious lama-scholars were often invited by Sde-dge rulers and engaged as teachers and chaplains (*dbu-bla*) of the royal family. Beginning in the eighteenth century, scholars of pan-Tibetan significance were active in Sde-dge, regarding which Kolmaš (1988) has remarked, "If nothing else this is a reason why Sde-dge deserves to be studied by scholars dealing with Tibetan history, science, culture and religion."¹³⁹ He provides a list of the most prominent teachers based in Sde-dge:

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Tshul-khrims-rin-chen	1697-1769
Si-tu Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas	1700-1775
<i>Ngor mkhan-chen</i> Dpal-ldan-chos-skyong	1702-1758/9
'Jig-med-gling-pa Mkhyen-brtse'i-'od-zer	1729-1798
Padma-nyin-byed	1774-1853
Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'yas	1813-1899
'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po	1820-1899
Mchog-gyur-gling-pa	1829-1870
Mi-pham-rgya-mthso	1846-1912
Blo-gter-dbang-po	ca. 1856-ca.1914
Kah-thog Si-tu Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho	1880-1925
Dpal-spung Si-tu Padma-dbang-rgyal	1886-1952
'Jam-dbyangs-chos-kyi-blo-gros	1896-1959

The fact that Sa-skya, Rnying-ma and Bka'-brgyud lamas are all represented here reflects the expansion of Rnying-ma and Bka'-brgyud influence in the late 1800's and the presence of several of these hierarchs at Sde-dge-dgon-chen.

Though the aristocrats of Sde-dge were said to be reliable patrons "without pronounced sectarian convictions,"¹⁴⁰ certain sects came to enjoy the recognized patronage of particular noble families. The Ngor-pa subset of the Sa-skya tradition had such a preferential

¹³⁸ The generations of Sde-dge rulers were counted beginning with Mgar Stong-btsan. Bstan-pa-tshe-ring (1678-1738), whose brother died young, was the 40th ruler and concurrently the fifth abbot of Lhun-grub-steng. He established official contact with the Manchus, built new monasteries and temples, patronized scholarship, and initiated the printing of texts. This period has been heralded as Sde-dge's "Golden Age;" see Kolmaš (1988): 130. One of Bstan-pa-tshe-ring's sons married a sister of the Seventh Dalai Lama. The prince who succeeded as the 41st ruler, Blo-gros-rgya-mtsho (1722-1774), married a niece of the Seventh Dalai Lama. Interestingly, their daughter, Dbyangs-can-sgrol-ma, served as the eight abbess of Lhun-grub-steng from 1774 until her death in 1786.

¹³⁹ Kolmaš (1988): 120.

relationship with Sde-dge's royal family and a large sector of the aristocracy (*mdun-skor*). However, in the late eighteenth century, this focus shifted and the famous Rnying-ma hierarch 'Jigs-med-gling-pa (Jigme Lingpa, 1730-1798) and his disciple became "the most influential chaplains of Derge."¹⁴¹ During his time blocks for printing the *Rnying-ma'i rgyud-'bum* ("Collection of Nyingma Teachings") were first carved¹⁴² and the teachings of Klong-chen-pa (Lomgchenpa) and 'Jigs-med-gling-pa printed.¹⁴³ This was primarily through the patronage of the 42nd ruler's queen, Tshe-dbang-lha-mo (Tsewang Lhamo) who served both as regent and as abbess of Lhun-grub-steng when her husband died in 1790. Tshe-dbang-lha-mo was from a noble family (*dpon-tshang*) of Sga-rje with close Rnying-ma-pa connections.¹⁴⁴ She herself was recognized by 'Jigs-med-gling-pa as the reincarnation of Khri-srong-lde-btsan's (Trisong Detsen) wife, popularly regarded as a great Buddhist queen.¹⁴⁵ Tshe-dbang-lha-mo's support of the Rnying-ma spurred the jealousy of the Sa-skya hierarchs and some of their aristocratic patrons including ministers at Chos-sde Pho-brang. A civil war erupted in 1798. The queen and the younger Rnying-ma chaplain Rdo-ba-grub-chen, purported to be her lover, were first imprisoned and later exiled. Many Rnying-ma supporters were executed or forced to leave.¹⁴⁶

The young prince, Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje-rig-'dzin (Tsewang Dorje Rigzin, b. 1786) began his reign in 1804 as the 43rd generation king¹⁴⁷ and was brought up under strict Sa-skya influence. He is the author of the famous *Sde-dge'i rgyal-rabs* (*Genealogy of the Derge Kings*) which covers much of this earlier history. In 1826, while writing the work, he became a

¹⁴⁰ Smith (1970): 23.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Smith (1970): 9.

¹⁴³ Ibid.: 24, n. 49.

¹⁴⁴ Kolmaš (1988): 131.

¹⁴⁵ Smith (1970): 24.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

monk at Lhun-grub-steng where he had officially served as abbot since 1798.¹⁴⁸ Smith (1970) considers this work, "one of the first statements of the *Ris-med* trends. While restating the time-honored special relationship that existed between the House of Sde-dge and the Sa-skyapa sects, the king-turned-monk reaffirms that a commitment to tolerance and generous patronage to all schools should be the basis of the religious policy of Sde-dge and, by implications, of any well-governed state."¹⁴⁹ Few Tibetan sources discuss the political history of Sde-dge after this time. This includes Sde-gzhung Rinpoche's continuation of the *Sde-dge'i rgyal-rabs*, though as a religious history listing the Sde-dge royal lineage and the *dbu-bla* of each king, this brief and interesting work provides further evidence that the kings of Sde-dge maintained close relationships with hierarchs of more than one sect.¹⁵⁰

4.2 The Royalty of Sde-dge and their Chaplains (*dbu-bla*)

According to Sde-gzhung Rinpoche, Tshe-dbang-lha-mo, the queen and abbess of Sde-dge exiled in 1798, had taken the following lamas -- in addition to the chaplains of her predecessor -- as her *dbu-bla*: 'Jigs-med-gling-pa, Kah-thog Zhing-skyong, Khye-bo gter-ston, Rgyal-rong Sku-skye-bla-ma Nam-mkha', Dge-rtse-pa^衲 ita, and Rdo-grub Phrin-las-'od-zer. While this list shows strong Rnying-ma influence, Sakya teachers predominate among the *dbu-bla* of her son, the 43rd ruler Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje-rig-'dzin: Thar-rtse *mkhan-chen* Byams-pa-

¹⁴⁷ Kolmaš (1988): 131.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. His monastic name was Sangs-rgyas-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-ntshan; see Li (1947): 281-2; and Byams-pa-kun-dga'-sangs-rgyas-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-ntshan; see Kolmaš (1988): 121.

¹⁴⁹ Smith (1970): 25.

¹⁵⁰ Sde-gzhung Rinpoche was born in 1906 in Li-thang. He studied in Sde-dge for seven years. His teachers included Mi-nyag Gangs-dkar Rinpoche, Rdzong-gsar Mkhyen-brtse 'Jam-byangs-chos-kyi-blo-gros (1896-1959), Gzhan-phan-chos-kyi-snang-ba (1871-1927), and Dil-mgo Khyen-brtse Rab-gsal-zla-ba. A detailed and well-annotated biography has been compiled by David Jackson which is scheduled to be published shortly. One of Sde-gzhung Rinpoche's most outstanding students was E. Gene Smith, whose writings were the source for much of the information presented herewith.

between the prince and his younger brother, Ngag-dbang-'jam-dpal-rin-chen (Ngawang Jampal Rinchen), note that the latter held the throne for several intervals until 1908.¹⁵⁴ The younger prince was also called Ba-pa or Byams-pa'i-rin-chen. Sde-gzhung Rinpoche simply notes that he became a monk and later married.

Rdo-rje-seng-ge and 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen officially took the following as their chaplains:¹⁵⁵

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Sect (if known)</u>
1820-1892	'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po	Rnying-ma
1813-1899	Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas	Bka'-brgyud
1829-1870	<i>Gter-chen</i> Mchog-gyur-gling-pa	Rnying-ma
? -1865	Sa-skya Bdag-chen Rinpoche Bkra-shis-rin-chen	Sa-skya
1887-1894	'Jigs-med-dbang-rgyal	Sa-skya
1866-1887	Kun-dga'-bsod-nams	Sa-skya
1895-1915	'Dzam-gling Ched-dgu-dbang-sdud	Sa-skya
1835-1895?	Ngor <i>mkhan-chen</i> Ngag-dbang-bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan	Sa-skya
19th century	Ngor <i>mkhan-chen</i> Kun-dga'-bstan-pa'i-blo-gros	Sa-skya
19th century	Dpal-ldan Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan	Sa-skya?
19th century	'Jam-dbyangs-rin-chen-rdo-rje	?
1811- ?	<i>Ngor dpon-slob</i> 'Jam-dbyangs-ngag-dbang-legs-grub	Sa-skya
1856-1914?	<i>Dpon-slob</i> Rinpoche Blo-gter-dbang-po	Sa-skya
1846-1912	Mkhas-mchog Mi-pham-rgyam-thso	Rnying-ma
1886-1952	Dpal-spungs Si-tu Pad-ma-dbang-rgyal	Bka'-brgyud
1880-1925	Kah-thog Si-tu Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho	Rnying-ma
19 th century	First and Second emanations of Rdzogs-chen sprul-sku	Rnying-ma

As will be seen, a special relationship existed between several of these hierarchs and the younger prince. The four teachers who head the list held a considerable amount of power in Sde-dge during this time and were considered great teachers by students from all traditions. They have since been called key figures of "the *ris-med* movement" which will be discussed

¹⁵⁴ See Ge Le (1984): 261-2; and Adshead (1984): 86-7, who relies primarily on the account of General Fu Sung-mu which he cites as "enclosed in British Foreign Office Records," F.O. 371/1610, Jordan to Grey, April 2, 1913." My own notes of this account were drawn from records at the India Office of the British Library collection, L/PS/10/149, P2129, 1913. See also Teichun (1922): 24-6.

¹⁵⁵ Sde-gzhung Rinpoche, cited in Kolmaš (1988): 142. In Tibetan: ལྷོ་དགོ་རྒྱལ་རྒྱལ་མཁའ་ལྷན་པའི་རྒྱལ་གྱིས་སོགས་དབྱུགས་བརྗོད། These dates are compiled from various sources.

below. The list also demonstrates that the power of the Sa-skya was not supreme, as it had been during earlier times, nor was the Dge-lugs-pa sect the dominant tradition as it was in Central Tibet. This might be one reason why, in contrast to the commonly expressed view that the Sa-skya sect dominated Sde-dge in the late nineteenth century, Rockhill reported, "The Nyimapa or red-capped sect of lamas predominate in this country, their greatest lamaseries being at Derge dron-cher [*grong-khyer*] and Zo-ch'en [*Rdzogs-chen*]."156

4.3 The Position of the Dge-lugs-pa in Sde-dge

For Sde-dge and other principalities in Khams, the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterized by greater confrontation with the Dge-lugs-pa (Gelukpa) sect which sought to make advances in eastern Tibet. Yet, the position of "the yellow hat sect" in Khams never knew the extent of its influence in Lhasa. As Carrasco notes, "The most important one [sect] in Central Tibet is the dGe-lugs-pa, of which the Dalai Lama is the head. In other Tibetan states, such as Ladak, Sikkim, Bhutan, sDe-dge, and so forth, the older orders dominate and the dGe-lugs-pa monasteries are fewer or not found at all."157 Rockhill also notes, "The red, or red-capped lamas (*dja-mar*) are especially numerous in Derge, the yellow throughout the rest of the country."158 While observing that the district of Sde-dge enjoys centers of the Bon-po, Rying-ma-pa and Bka'-brgyud-pa, in addition to the Sa-skya, Li (1947) does not mention the Dge-lugs-pa. In the same vein, Smith (1970) specifically notes, "Sde-dge and its dependencies didn't particularly favor the Dge-lugs-pa, whose influence in Khams was

¹⁵⁶ Rockhill (1891): 227.

¹⁵⁷ Carrasco (1959): 122.

¹⁵⁸ Rockhill (1891): 217.

limited primarily to Lithang, Bathang, and Chamdo. Only in the nineteenth century does the Dge-lugs-pa church and Lhasa government begin to expand into a weakened Derge."¹⁵⁹

This expansion strained the relationship between the Dge-lugs-pa and other monasteries in Khams. In 1848, open warfare between the great Dge-lugs-pa convent of 'Ba' Chos-sde and the Bka'-brgyud affiliate of Dpal-spungs, Spungs-ri-dgon-nang, resulted in the slaying of the Lcags-mdud sprul-sku.¹⁶⁰ Following the Nyag-rong war, the Dge-lugs-pa monasteries of Brag-gyab, Go-'jo and Ri-chab insisted that Dpal-spungs monastery be leveled and its estates and property transferred to them. As Smith observes, "The Dge-lugs-pa factions were availing themselves of the presence of the victorious Lhasa army under Phu-lung-ba to settle old scores with the other sects and to extract the maximum advantage from their new position of strength" (p. 33). We may now recall Petech's reference to the purging of Rnying-ma supporters after the Nyag-rong campaign and Smith's observation that the famous Bka'-brgyud hierarch Kong-sprul Rinpoche was also a victim of the purges.¹⁶¹ These events all followed a tendency which had begun to intensify in the eighteenth century when the Lhasa government sought greater control in Eastern Tibet through measures including the dispatch of representatives and the Dalai Lama's claiming the right to recognize and invest all important incarnations.¹⁶² At the same time, the Dge-lugs-pa tradition had begun to codify their scholastic manuals and "the refutation of a doctrine, a teacher or a spiritual experience came to be simply a problem of identification [with a particular tradition]."¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Smith (1970): 25, n. 51.

¹⁶⁰ Smith (1970): 32.

¹⁶¹ See page 15, herewith.

¹⁶² Smith (1970): 55, n. 2.

¹⁶³ Smith (1970): 26.

5. A “*RIS-MED*” APPROACH

In the nineteenth century teachers basing themselves on intellectual roots reaching as far back as the fourteenth century began to collectively emphasize an eclectic approach to scholarship. This tendency has been called the “ris-med [rimay] movement” and was largely centered in Khams – in particular, Sde-dge.¹⁶⁴ Smith (1970) suggests that this move toward scholastic eclecticism represents a reaction against the religious rivalry and persecutions by the Dge-lugs-pa and the Central Tibetan government discussed above. At the same time, it was an effort to reorient Tibetan religious life to the “higher ideals and mutual understanding that had been the rule with the great teachers of the past” (p. 23). Smith identifies four of the most influential proponents of the “eclectic” approach:¹⁶⁵ 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul (1813?-1899), 'Jam-byangs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (1820-1892), 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho (1846-1912), and Mchog-gyur-gling-pa (1829-1870).¹⁶⁶ Kong-sprul Rinpoche was traditionally viewed as an emanation of Vairocana, and often likened to Mañjuśrī by his contemporaries and disciples. Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (Khyentse Wangpo) was regarded as an emanation of Khri-srong-lde-btsan and an incarnation of Mañjuśrī. Mi-pham (Mipham) was also considered an incarnation of Mañjuśrī.¹⁶⁷

The chief literary sources for what Smith (1970) considers “the most important development during the nineteenth century in the lamaist world”(pp. 2-3) are generally characterized by their presentation of the history and philosophical positions of the four

¹⁶⁴ Smith's monograph (1970) on “the *ris-med* movement,” which comprises a large part of his introduction to Kong-sprul's *She-bya-khun-khyab* (“*All-Encompassing Knowledge*”) is perhaps the most thorough discussion on the topic available in English.

¹⁶⁵ Smith (1970): 36.

¹⁶⁶ Smith (1970): 77.

¹⁶⁷ Smith (1970, p. 56, n. 5, and p. 58).

Buddhist traditions,¹⁶⁸ while stressing the essential unity of these sects as embodied in the concept of *gzhan-stong*. This view of "other-emptiness" is found particularly among the Karma Bka'-brgyud, the Zhang-pa Bka'-brgyud, the Rnying-ma and, originally, among the Jonang lineage of the Sakya sect.¹⁶⁹ It asserts the inseparability of the subjective mind and objective existence; i.e., that conventional phenomena lack an inherently independent existence.¹⁷⁰ These works largely represent

a reorientation back to the classical Indic shastras, which were to be thoroughly understood with all of their implications, in order to eliminate the controversies which had arisen between supporters of certain interpretations of these texts by different Tibetan exegetes. It especially mocked those who emphasized religious affiliation in order to determine their position in debate.¹⁷¹

Many of these teachers were affiliated with the "Ancient Translation (*snga-'gyur-rnying-ma*) School."¹⁷² At the same time, they attempted to reconcile their position with the *gsar-ma-ba* of the "New Tantric Transmission School."¹⁷³ In particular, Kong-sprul Rinpoche and Mi-pham upheld the Rdzogs-chen Atiyoga approach of the Rnying-ma-pa school as the ideal method for practice that embodied an eclectic approach.¹⁷⁴

Kong-sprul's *Shes-bya-kun-khyab* ("All-Encompassing Knowledge"), the first "treasury" of his works which are collectively called the "*Mdzod-Inga*" ("Five Treasuries"), is considered by Smith (1970) to be "the earliest statement of *ris-med* thought"(p. 5). This work includes one śāstra and three volumes of commentary. Also called the *Shes-bya-mdzod*

¹⁶⁸ The Bon-po tradition was not usually included and sometimes explicitly excluded.

¹⁶⁹ Pedron Yeshe and Jeremy Russell, eds., "Nyingma Monasteries," in *Chö-Yang* (1991): 32.

¹⁷⁰ Tsepa Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (1993): 231.

¹⁷¹ Smith (1970): 26-7.

¹⁷² For the history of this tradition, see Bdud-'joms 'Jigs-bral-ye-shes-rdo-rje (1991).

¹⁷³ These were opponents of the Rnying-ma who were deeply involved in a thirteenth century cultural "reawakening" of Central Tibet, which stressed authenticity of lineage and the purity of practice. See Smith (1970): 6.

¹⁷⁴ Smith (1970): 4, 36.

(“*Treasury of Knowledge*”), it was completed in 1864 at the behest of Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and Lama Nges-don. Similarly, the fourth of Kong-sprul's "five treasuries", the *Gdams-ngag-mdzod* (“*Treasury of Instructions*”), begun about 1886 and finished in 1899, is a systematic presentation of the most important instructions of all of the Buddhist sects of Tibet. (p. 63) Other “*ris-med*” works include Kong-sprul’s *Ris-med chos-kyi 'byung-gnas mdo-tsam smos-pa blo-gsal mgrin-pa'i mdzes-rgyan* (“*Ornament of the Articulation of a Clear Mind: A Brief Oral Teaching on the Origins of Ris-med*”) and the fifth volume (*ca*) of the *Thun-mong-ma-yin-pa'i mdzod* (“*Uncommon Treasury*”) written in 1839 at the request of Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po;¹⁷⁵ the *gsung-'bum* (collected works) of Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po first xylographed at Rdzong-gsar Monastery through the efforts of 'Jam-dyangs-chos-kyi-blo-gros; and the *Rgyud-sde-kun-btus* (“*Compendium of Tantras*”) – a 32-volume record of important tantric initiations of the *gsar-ma-ba* (the later or "new" tantra schools), compiled by order of Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po circa 1892.¹⁷⁶ Finally, Smith points to the *Sgrub-thabs-kun-btus* (“*Compendium of Sadhanas*”) a collection of sadhanas taken from many traditions, largely of the *gsar-ma-ba*. This work was collected by the Sa-skya lama, Ngor *dpon-slob* Blo-gter-dbang-po, at the inspiration of his teacher, 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po.

It would be interesting to further explore what “*ris-med*” signified for these teachers, especially the extent to which they self-consciously conceived of themselves as comprising a “movement.” Given that the practices of transmission and empowerment in Tibetan Buddhism make the relationship between disciple and teacher a primary concern, it is conceivable that students in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were conscious of the bond they shared with others who had studied with the same “*ris-med*”-professing teacher. However, Smith

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: 67-71.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 2, n. 6.

himself acknowledges, "the roots of eclecticism and tolerance go as deep into the soil of Tibetan tradition as those of sectarianism and bigotry" (p. 5) Smith cites several examples of earlier teachers, including the Fifth Dalai Lama, who studied with teachers from many traditions and/or had students from all the traditions.¹⁷⁷ Likewise, there are innumerable references in earlier texts to tolerance or a non-biased perspective -- signified by the terms "*phyogs-med-pa*," "*ris-med-pa*" or "*phyogs-med-ris-med*" -- as being an ideal, the sign of a more highly realized mind and a praiseworthy quality of any great teacher. Smith translates "*ris-med*" as "eclectic" which seems to reflect the actual situation better than the more literal "non-sectarian" which is how the term is more frequently rendered. By the same reasoning, "non-partial"¹⁷⁸ also seems more accurate, because at day's end each of these "*ris-med*" teachers would return to their particular monastery, whether it be Rnying-ma, Bka'-brgyud or Sa-skya.

That 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (1820-1892) played a critical role in the contemporary intellectual activity is evident in the references above. Smith focuses on the religio-historical developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but makes the following provocative observation concerning the political situation:

During the postwar period [after the Nyag-rong Campaign], 'Jam-dbyaṅs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbañ-po (1820-1892) and Koṅ-sprul became the real power in Sde-dge. They quickly gained the respect of Lhasa officials posted in the East and were the natural leaders for the distressed people of Sde-dge.¹⁷⁹

Likewise, he notes:

In 1870 a princess from the house of Ra-ga-śar (Mdo-mkhar-ba) arrived in Sde-dge as a bride for the heir. This alliance led to one more troubled

¹⁷⁷ Smith (1970): 19-21.

¹⁷⁸ Aris (1977): 206.

¹⁷⁹ Smith (1970): 33.

generation when Mkhyen-brtse and later Mi-pham would be forced to exercise the real temporal authority.¹⁸⁰

The following section will discuss the period of this "troubled generation."

6. THE SUCCESSION STRUGGLE

If the reader will recall, this marriage occurred after the king's visit to Lhasa. According to Ge Le (1984), the chiefs refused the king's authority shortly after this time, as evidenced in the beating of the king's father-in-law and their satirical pageant. Allegedly, the king then asked for Manchu imperial assistance, but the royal family itself was detained in Chengdu at the chiefs' insistence. Ge Le's account is somewhat misleading, when one considers that twenty-five years passed between the marriage in 1870 and the royal family's deposition in 1895. Are there more details about these intervening years? Ge Le notes, "As for the reason why the 47th [sic]¹⁸¹ Derge *tusi* 'Chi-med-rdo-rje was arrested and brought to Chengdu to be imprisoned, there are some slight differences between the local oral accounts and the historical materials written in Chinese." Basing himself on the *Luhuo tunzhi* (炉霍屯志) --- a gazeteer of Luhuo, located just east of Sde-dge – Ge Le reports that the king had an affair with a non-noble woman, which led to a conflict with his wife. General Fu Songmu concurs with Ge Le, but adds that the king's affair was with a "Chinese married woman." Li (1947) reports 'Chi-med-rdo-rje had two wives, but it seems more likely that the daughter of the aristocratic Ra-kha-shag family whom he married in 1870 gave birth to the eldest prince,

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.: 34.

¹⁸¹ Ge Le (1984): 261. According to original Tibetan sources, including the *Sde-dge'i-rgyal-rabs* Chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje was the 45th generation ruler; see Kolmaš (1968): 51; and Kolmaš (1988): 132. The numeration of the generations of kings in Ge Le (1984) and Li (1947) is higher by two generations. Perhaps their count is based on the actual number of rulers; i.e. on two occasions it was necessary that a

Rdo-rje-seng-ge, and then bore another son, 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen, perhaps by a different father.¹⁸² According to Li, "The second wife dominated her lord through the influence of the Lhasa official dispatched to Nyarong."¹⁸³ Whether she was the king's "second wife" or only wife, Li is probably referring to Tshe-brtan-sgrol-dkar and her father. Ge Le adds, "Once Ngadbang-'jam-dpal-rin-chen grew up, he and his mother allied with several high ministers, and [went] to the Han officials to sue 'Chi-med for illicit behavior."¹⁸⁴ All sources agree that two factions formed in Sde-dge with the king and Rdo-rje-seng-ge on one side, and his wife and 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen on the other. Taking advantage of this, the Sichuan governor-general Lu Chuanlin promised the king to expel the wife and the younger son and ordered troops into Sde-dge. However, upon their arrival in 1895 – after alleged negotiations with the local chiefs -- the king, his wife, and both sons were all seized and deported to Chengtu.¹⁸⁵ The elderly king and queen died shortly thereafter.¹⁸⁶ Upon the father's death, two Manchu officials protested to Peking that Governor Lu was seeking personal glory at Tibetan expense in having memorialized the Imperial Court to adopt Chinese administration in Sde-dge and make it a

second member of the same generation replace the eldest brother as king.

¹⁸² See Li (1947): 282. C.f. accounts that say he had only one wife from Lhasa: e.g. Sde-gzhung Rinpoche, cited in Kolmaš (1988): 132; Teichman (1922): 6; Ge Le (1984): 68; Adshead (1984): 86; and a report on the creation of Xikang Province by General Fu Songmu cited in L/PS/10/149, P2129, 1913 at the India Office of the British Library. The sources which refer to 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen not being the son of the king include Adshead (1984): 86, who says he was "not recognized as his son by the king;" Teichman (1922): 6, who says that he was "popularly supposed to be the offspring of an influential headman and the Chief's wife;" and Fu Songmu who says that the queen had "an intrigue with the headman...(and) bore an illegitimate son, Kiangpai ['Jam-dpal]." According to the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* (1994): 57, both sons were born of Tshe-brtan-sgrol-dkar and no other wife is mentioned. Though the *Sde-dge sras-mo* is aware of such "gossip," she maintained that it was baseless and her father (Rdo-rje-seng-ge) and 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen were born of the same parents. (Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview.)

¹⁸³ Li (1947): 282.

¹⁸⁴ Ge Le (1984): 261.

¹⁸⁵ See General Fu Songmu, cited in L/PS/10/149, P2129/1913, India Office, British Library; Teichman (1922): 6-7; and Li (1947): 282. The latter says that this occurred in 1897, though all other sources say that the family was deported in 1895. According to the *Sde-dge sras-mo*, her father was summoned to Chengdu, but never imprisoned; see n. 104, herewith.

¹⁸⁶ According to Sde-gzhung Rinpoche, the father died in 1898; see Kolmaš (1988): 132. Some sources say this occurred in prison, others that he died after being released.

regular district. Lu was condemned and Zhangji exiled to Turkestan.¹⁸⁷ The two sons were sent back to Sde-dge.

When the two princes returned and Rdo-rje-seng-ge inherited the throne in 1903/04,¹⁸⁸ his reign was short-lived. According to Li (1947), he "was too weak in character to control his younger brother." Be that as it may, the struggle which ensued between the two heirs involved all of Sde-dge. Ge Le (1984) includes more detail on the conflict than do most sources:

After Rdo-rje-seng-ge took power, he brought the daughter of an aristocrat of fourth rank, 'Phan-po Rgyal-rong-sras [?]¹⁸⁹ back from Tibet to be his queen. Because the husband and wife's relationship was not good, Rdo-rje-seng-ge returned to Tibet and married another woman, though she was of lower rank.¹⁹⁰

The *Sde-dge chos-'byung* provides additional information regarding these events.

Though Rdo-rje-seng-ge had been made heir,

actual power was held by Sku-tshe Khams-gangs-bde-chen and Sman-shod 'Ju-chung 'Jam-dbyangs-phun-tshogs.¹⁹¹ Because Rdo-rje-seng-ge and 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen had policy disagreements, the Sde-dge family's state policy (*gzhis-chus*) weakened considerably. Two factions formed -- the Bya-rgod Family (*tshang*) and the Sde-dge Family (*tshang*); and the different *hor-'dra* and *mdun-skor* [officials] joined on either side. At that, the Chinese General Commander posted in Sichuan Zhao Erfeng went to Sde-dge to mediate, but there was no resolution and Rdo-rje-seng-ge had to go to Lhasa.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Li (1947): 282.

¹⁸⁸ The Water-Rabbit Year of the 15th *rab-byung*; see *Sde-dge chos-'byung* (1994): 57.

¹⁸⁹ Chin. Pengbo Jiarongcai (彭波甲 绒赛).

¹⁹⁰ According to Sde-gzhung Rinpoche, Rdo-rje-seng-ge married Karma-chos-skyid from Rgyal-rong and her younger sister; see Kolmaš (1988): 132. See n. 153, herewith.

¹⁹¹ We can surmise from events described below that these two chiefs supported Rdo-rje-seng-ge, at least as a puppet ruler.

¹⁹² Karma-rgyal-mtshan, ed. (1994): 58-9. The formation of two factions was positively confirmed by the Sde-dge *sras-mo*, who also offered the following details. The younger of the two brothers was supported primarily by the Bya-rgod family/clan, who were based in Yid-lhung, as well as by the 'Bre-'pong family/clan based in 'Dzing-pa. As we will come to see, he was further supported by "half of the monks at Sa-skya dgon-chen [the monastery in the palace compound]." See page 56, herewith. The elder of the two brothers, Rdo-rje-seng-ge, was supported firstly by members of the Lcags-rta family/clan, who were based in Lcags-ra and led in this struggle by an official named Seng-ge-bzang-po. Additional

When Rdo-rje-seng-ge left for Lhasa, the younger brother ‘Jam-dpal-rin-chen took the throne. But apparently, “he spent his entire time in Sman-shod Sog-mo-pho-brang. Not only did he not have matters under control, but Sku-tshe Khams-gangs-bde-chen and ‘Ju-chung ‘Jam-dbyangs-phun-tshogs tried to take power.”¹⁹³

Ge Le (1984) continues the story:

One of the chiefs close to Rdo-rje-seng-ge, Khams-gang-bde-chen,¹⁹⁴ was not pleased about this [the younger brother’s taking reign]. He knew that ‘Jam-dpal Rin-chen was controlled by his minister, Shar-dge Bkra-shis Rnam-rygal.¹⁹⁵ Thus, he killed Bkra-shis Rnam-rygal by poisoning his food. This aroused ‘Jam-dpal Rin-chen’s anger, and in a rage he killed Rdo-rje-seng-ge’s chief, Khams-gang-bde-chen. From that time forth, the entire region of the Sde-dge *tusi* was consumed by the power struggle over the inheritance of the *tusi* position and two factions formed. The struggle on both sides was intense and often involved fighting with weapons, including as many as seven occurrences of large-scale fighting. Throughout the affair, several thousand people died or were wounded. Most of the common people suffered a huge loss of lives and property. Each time the fighting ended, the victor would take the *tusi*’s administrative seat to rule and the loser would organize another violent rebellion. In this way, the *tusi*’s position was extremely unstable. The longest period of rule was no longer than three years; the shortest period lasted only three or four months. The two sides continued fighting up until the time of [the] Xuanton [emperor] at the end of the Qing Dynasty.¹⁹⁶

This account concurs with the *Sde-dge-chos-‘byung* which describes how the younger brother was ultimately led to seek assistance from the Qing court:

In 1906, Ngag-dbang-‘jam-dpal-rin-chen appealed to the Qing emperor for actual authority over the throne at Lhun-grub-steng and the Tibetan troops stationed in Nyag-rong went to Sde-dge to support him. However, Sku-tshe Khams-gangs-bde-chen and others were insistent in their protests. ‘Ju-chung ‘Jam-dbyangs-phun-tshogs and ‘Dan A-sdug Phrin-las-rnam-rgyal immediately went to Lhasa and called Rdo-rje-seng-ge back, telling him that he needed to take the Sde-dge throne. It

support came from the Jo-khong family/clan. I am not clear as to where they were based, but note their inclusion among the *mdun-skor* officials listed on page 22, herewith.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Chin. Jiangkong Dejie (降孔得且).

¹⁹⁵ Chin. Xiage Zhaxi Langjia (夏格扎西朗甲).

¹⁹⁶ Ge Le (1984): 261.

is said that Ngag-dbang-'jam-dpal-rin-chen found out about this and killed Khams-gang-bde-chen in Sman-shod.

Rdo-rje Seng-ge and his entourage left from Lhasa, gathered troops west of the 'Bri-chu and led them to the Sog-mo palace where Jam-dpal-rin-chen was staying. They killed several of Jam-dpal-rin-chen's supporters, but left Jam-dpal-rin-chen in Sman-shod. Then, per the wishes of the *mdun-skor* and *hor-'dra* [officials] from 'Dan-khog, Go'jo and 'Jom-mda, etc., that Rdo-rje-seng-ge take the throne and 'Jam-dpal Rinchen be a lama, Rdo-rje-seng-ge took responsibility for state policy.

However, 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen went to Ser-shul and took control of a group of Sde-dge's villages located there. Rdo-rje-seng-ge deliberated and then told the Qing commander stationed in Dar-rtse-mdo about this. The Commander General ordered that the Qing Emperor's official Zhao Erfeng who was in Phyag-phreng at the time needed to immediately change the system of rule in Sde-dge. In 1908, this official led Qing troops into Sde-dge and utterly defeated Ngag-dbang-'jam-dpal-rin-chen.¹⁹⁷

Ge Le (1984) provides further details about this campaign:

Zhao Ehrfeng led troops into Sde-dge, implemented [the policy of] *gaitu gui liu* (改土归流)¹⁹⁸ and supported Rdo-rje-seng-ge as Sde-dge *tusi*. It is said that in order to be rid of 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen's power, Zhao Ehrfeng led more than 500 Qing soldiers, in addition to the several thousand soldiers of the *tusi* Rdo-rje-seng-ge, and jointly they advanced on Shiqu (石渠) [Ser-shul]. They encountered 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen's forces at Zhamazhukangduo (扎麻朱康朵) in Ser-shul. The two parties engaged several times in intensive battles. Up to a thousand people were either killed or wounded. Ultimately, due to the huge disparity between 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen's group and the other side, he ultimately led the few who remained and the injured and escaped to Xining in Qinghai.¹⁹⁹

This account largely accords with other sources. As one would expect, there are variant renditions of the struggle. One source claims that 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen "abducted Rdo-rje's concubine."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Karma-ryal-mtshan, ed. (1994): 59-60.

¹⁹⁸ See page 26, herewith.

¹⁹⁹ Ge Le (1984): 262.

²⁰⁰ General Fu Songmu, cited in document L/PS/10/149, P2129, 1913 at the India Office, British

Adshead (1984) depicts this struggle as a fight between two sides each supported by either Lhasa or the Sichuan provincial governor and claims that 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen was "the Tibetan candidate in the Derge dispute."²⁰¹ However, the alliances that the local leaders made with outside forces at that time were not so rigidly maintained. For example, Rdo-rje-seng-ge was recognized as king by the Dalai Lama in 1900²⁰² and had the support of Lhasa troops in 1906 when he returned to Sde-dge to oust his brother.²⁰³ However, by 1908 he had petitioned the Sichuan governor for military assistance, which General Zhao Erfeng was only too willing to provide.²⁰⁴ As had happened to his father, Rdo-rje-seng-ge was tricked and ultimately deposed after Zhao Erfeng arrived in 1908 promising to secure Rdo-rje-seng-ge's reign from the younger brother. According to Teichman, Rdo-rje-seng-ge was allowed to return to Sde-dge-dgon-chen only in 1917, and even then as a private individual.²⁰⁵ 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen, on the other hand, first escaped to Ser-shul and then to Mgo-log territory in 1909,²⁰⁶ ultimately seeking assistance from 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa at Bla-brang-bkra-shis-'khyil in Amdo. Since the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was in Bla-brang at that time, on his way from Beijing to Lhasa, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa asked the Dalai Lama to appoint the Sde-dge prince to a suitable position in the Central Tibetan government. 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen was made an official (*dpon-po*)

Library.

²⁰¹ Adshead (1984): 86.

²⁰² Teichman (1922): 7.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ See Teichman (1922): 7, 24-7. C.f. Li (1947): 283, whose account is of a dubious nature on this matter when he claims that, "Dorje Senge became tired of the difficulties of ruling. He requested that Dege be put under direct Chinese control." For details of Zhao Erfeng's campaign in Derge and elsewhere in Khams, see Sperling (1976): 10-36; and Kolmaš (1964): 88-91.

²⁰⁵ Teichman (1922): 26. However, c.f. Ge Le (1984): 262 who writes that shortly after 1911, troops from Lhasa occupied Sde-dge, captured Rdo-rje-seng-ge and his wife, and took them to Lhasa where they were isolated for a long time and eventually died.

²⁰⁶ Teichman (1922): 26.

of Nag-chu, but not granted the title “Tibetan government official” (*Bod-sde-pa-gzhung-gi-dpon*).²⁰⁷

Other than these few details, no account mentions the involvement of religious figures in the succession struggle, with one exception. Teichman (1922) writes that when Rdo-rje-seng-ge went to Lhasa in 1900 to have his rule confirmed, “the faction of the younger brother, named Ngawang Champe Rincha, which consisted mostly of powerful lamas, made an attempt to install the latter as chief.”²⁰⁸ This was confirmed by the Sde-dge *sras-mo*, daughter of Rdo-rje-rin-chen, who made the following observation in our interview: “Although religious hierarchs were not exceedingly involved in the struggle, half of the monks from Sa-skya dgon-chen [Sde-dge-dgon-chen] actively sided with the Bya-rgod-tshang faction [in support of ‘Jam-dpal-rin-chen.]”²⁰⁹ Teichman notes that ‘Jam-dpal-rin-chen and “his lama supporters” raised another rebellion a few years later, and the elder brother was forced to withdraw for a time to Lhasa, returning only in 1906 with troops provided by Lhasa.²¹⁰

Is there additional evidence to suggest that an important element in ‘Jam-dpal-rin-chen's support was the religious clergy? If so, what was the nature of this alliance? Was ‘Jam-dpal-rin-chen a puppet of monastic hierarchs who “actually held power?” I am still not able to answer the last question satisfactorily, having not yet found any source which explicitly describes the religio-political relationship in Sde-dge at that time. The political accounts cited above generally lack details about religious factors, and religious or biographical accounts include almost no reference to the political turmoil. In the following sections of this paper, I attempt to reconcile these religious and political accounts by identifying some of the institutions

²⁰⁷ This information is drawn from the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* (1984): 61; and Ge Le (1984): 262.

²⁰⁸ Teichman (1922): 7.

²⁰⁹ Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview.

²¹⁰ Teichman (1922): 7.

and traditions through which more powerful monasteries could influence the king, the limits on their role, and finally how the traditional notion of kingship supported such alliances.

7. THE MONASTERIES OF THE *DBU-BLA-KHAG-LNGA*

Many of the sources I consulted unequivocally assert that the Sa-skya were predominant in Sde-dge. While the "*chos*" (religion) of "*chos-srid-zung-'brel*" (the merging of religion and politics) in Central Tibet refers largely to the Dge-lugs-pa sect, such an exclusive relationship does not seem to have been the case in the kingdom of Sde-dge. Rather, what was characteristic of Sde-dge was the king's special relationship with Lhun-grub-steng and five additional monasteries. In this relationship, three sects were represented, but not the Dge-lugs-pa.²¹¹ The five special monasteries -- or, more accurately, the *dbu-bla* (chaplains) associated with them -- were called in Tibetan the "*dbu-bla-khag-lnga*" ("Five Chaplains").²¹² This is rendered in Chinese as the "*wu da jia miao*" (五大家 庙, "Five Major Monasteries") and comprised the following:

<u>Tibetan</u> ²¹³	<u>Chinese A</u> ²¹⁴	<u>Chinese B</u> ²¹⁵	<u>Affiliation</u>
Kah-tog	Gatuo 噶拖	Gangtuo 岗托	Rnying-ma
Rdzogs-chen	Zhuqing 竹箐	Zuoqin 佐钦	Rnying-ma

²¹¹ This contradicts *SSGZ* (1985): 106, which states that the *wu da jia miao* represented all four sects.

²¹² I am grateful to the venerable Thub-bstan-nyi-ma, from whom I first heard the Tibetan term for this relationship, during our discussion in London, July 1995. I have subsequently seen this confirmed in Karma-rgyal-mtshan, ed., *Sde-dge-chos-'byung*, 1984, 76.

²¹³ As recalled by Thub-bstan-nyi-ma, interviewed by the author, School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London, July 1995.

²¹⁴ As cited in *SSGZ*: 106.

²¹⁵ As cited in Huang Xieqi, *Zangzu chuangtong wenhua cidian*, (1993): 797.

Dpal-spungs	Babang 八邦	Babang 八邦	Bka'-brgyud
Zhe-chen	Xieqing 协庆	Xiqin 西钦	Rnying-ma
Dpal-yul	Baiyu 白玉	Baiyu 白玉	Rnying-ma

Lhun-grub-steng is often mentioned along with these, but was not considered one of the five. Perhaps this was due to the historically unique relationship that Lhun-grub-steng had with the administration. According to the twentieth century *Sde-dge sras-mo*, “Due to their presence in the palace compound, the relative influence of religious hierarchs at Sa-skya-dgon-chen [Sde-dge-dgon-chen] was on par with the influence of the *dbu-bla-khag-nga*.”²¹⁶ The following is a brief background on each of the five monasteries which enjoyed this special role *vis-à-vis* the king and his administration.²¹⁷

1. Kah-thog Rdo-rje-gdan is also one of the six great Rnying-ma monasteries; however, it is less affiliated with Smin-sgrol-gling, than are Rdzogs-chen and Zhe-chen monasteries. Established in 1159 or 1164 and expanded in 1656, it had about 800 monks and seven incarnating lamas.²¹⁸ It is noted for its high-level of scholarship and the establishment of Khams-byed college in the early twentieth century.²¹⁹ It reportedly has 112 branch monasteries throughout Tibet, China (including Wutaishan and Yunnan), Mongolia, Sikkim, and India.²²⁰

2. Rdzogs-chen-rud-dam-bsam-gtan-chos-gling was the largest of the six main learning centers of the Rnying-ma tradition. Located at the foot of a large mountain on the watershed between the 'Bri-chu and the Rdza-chu, it was surrounded primarily by nomadic

²¹⁶ Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol, interview.

²¹⁷ The *Sde-dge sras-mo* volunteered a hierarchical ordering of the monasteries starting with that considered most influential due to its early establishment and seemingly other factors that she did not specify. (Ibid.) Accordingly, I have used this ordering to list the monasteries herewith.

²¹⁸ See Smith (1969): 6, n. 15, who cites two different sources: “1159 (Dpal-sprul Rinpoche) or 1164 (Dong-thog Rinpoche).”

²¹⁹ See Blo-gros-pliun-tshogs, “Khams-byed bshad-grwa'i lo-rgyus mdo-tsam brjod-pa,” *Krung-go'i Bod-kyi shes-rig*, (1992.2): 118-25.

territory and often viewed by the local people as a site for refuge during times of fighting or strife. This monastery was founded in 1685 by Pad-ma-rig-'dzin (1625-1697) less than a decade after the establishment of its "mother-monastery," Smin-grol-gling, south of Lhasa. Rdzogs-chen monastery had over 850 monks, 11 reincarnate lamas²²¹ and 215 branch monasteries.²²² As some indication of the relative importance of Rdzogs-chen Monastery for the Rnying-ma sect, its "mother-monastery" had less than half of the monastic population of Rdzogs-chen itself.²²³ Its college, Shri Singha Shedra, was founded in the nineteenth century by a teacher of 'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, but reached its peak during the time of Dpal-sprul Rinpoche (1808-1887) and one of its most famous scholars, 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho (1846-1912).

3. Dpal-spung Monastery was a Karma Bka'-brgyud monastery relatively near Sde-dge-dgon-chen. It was founded in 1727 by Situ Bstan-pa'i-nyin-byed²²⁴ and was the monastery of the famous 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul (1813?-1899) whose teachers included Rnying-ma lamas, as noted above. According to one source, this monastery had 1,050 monks in 1959.²²⁵ Mkhan-chen Bkra-shis-'od-zer (1836-1910) served as abbot of the monastery during the period with which we are concerned here.

4. Zhe-chen-bstan-gnyis-dar-rgyas-gling, established in 1735 by Rab-'jam Gyur-med-kun-bzang-rnam-rgyal, is another of the six main Rnying-ma monasteries and is closely tied to Smin-grol-gling. Located in 'Dan-khog, a thriving region of Sde-dge, it housed 200

²²⁰ Pedron Yeshi and Jeremy Russell, ed., op. cit.

²²¹ Dpal-sprul (n.d.): 79. Cf. Li (1947): 285, who reports that there were only 257 monks.

²²² Side, Dominique, ed., "Dzogchen Monastery rebuilt in South India," *View*, no. 3 (1995): 11.

²²³ See Smith (1969): 9, n. 17, who notes it housed 400 monks.

²²⁴ Kolmaš (1971): 14.

²²⁵ Pedron Yeshi and Jeremy Russell, ed., op. cit.

monks and 9 incarnations.²²⁶ This was Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brste's monastery,²²⁷ and 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho's first monastery, 'Ju Monastery, was a branch of Zhe-chen Monastery. Its great teacher, Zhe-chen *dbon-sprul* 'Gyur-med-mthu-stobs-rnam-rgyal, is said to have "dominated the scene during the first four decades of the nineteenth century."²²⁸ His students included Kong-sprul, Dpal-sprul and 'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, all of whom became very influential in Sde-dge.

5. Dpal-yul Monastery is located in the district of Dpal-yul, which was under Sde-dge's jurisdiction until 1909. Founded in the mid-seventeenth century by Rig-'dzin-kun-bzang-shes-rab,²²⁹ this is also one of the great six Rnying-ma Monasteries.²³⁰ According to Smith (1969), it had about six hundred monks and seven lamas.

Patronage, administrative responsibilities, religious prayers and offerings, requisitioning services, granting titles, advising and selecting reincarnations were all ways in which the links between the royal family and the monasteries were manifest. As has already been discussed, one of the key religio-political links in Sde-dge was through the abbacy of Lhun-grub-steng Monastery. According to SSGZ,²³¹ the king helped to ensure that young monks would enter the monastery. Among the king's subjects, from households which had two sons, one was sent to become a monk. The king even gave the residential records of Dgon-chen village to Lhun-grub-steng for them to manage and to use for recruiting new young

²²⁶ Dpal-sprul (n.d.): 74.

²²⁷ Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse (1906-1987) was head of the Rnying-ma tradition and succeeded by Bdud-'joms Rinpoche (1904-1987) and later Pad-nor (Penor) Rinpoche, whose seat is Dpal-yul monastery.

²²⁸ Smith (1969): 7, n. 20.

²²⁹ Citations for the exact year include 1632, 1665 and 1675, depending on the source.

²³⁰ The sixth great Rnying-ma monastery, the only one not mentioned here is Rdo-rje-brag, located in Central Tibet.

²³¹ SSGZ: 110.

monks by household. However, there were other ties, foremost of which was the favor accorded to the monasteries of the *dbu-bla-khag-lnga* and to Lhun-grub-steng. These monasteries had the privilege of sending high-level monks to participate in the political business of the king. "Every year, the *tusi* took turns visiting each of the five main monasteries to make offerings and to distribute gifts. Through these they had a strong relationship with each other."²³² In turn, if the *tusi* got sick, every big monastery gave a grand prayer service for him. If there was a wedding or death in the royal family, representatives from the five major monasteries personally visited the administrative seat.

On the other hand, the king had the means to check the power of the monasteries. The royal family was able to requisition the services of talented monk-officials and could assign the major local chiefs to help administer the monasteries.²³³ This was most likely through the important bureaucratic position of the *gnyer-ba* at each of the monasteries, which handled the finances of the monastery. While the king could requisition the services of talented clerics, his prerogative was not as supreme as one might suspect. Smith relates the following account:

"The Dpal-spuñs authorities expected that the Government of Sde-dge would requisition the services of their talented new monk just as they had taken him from Zhe-chen. *There was an unwritten rule that incarnations of a monastery were exempt from obligatory service.* It was imperative, therefore, that Koñ-sprul be named an incarnation of Dpal-spuñs."²³⁴

In the end, Situ Rinpoche of Dpal-spungs Monastery, recognized him as the reincarnation of his predecessor's servant.²³⁵ This servant was an accomplished monk from Bam-stengs in Kong-po, named Kong-po Bam-stengs sprul-sku, later shortened to Kong-sprul. As hinted at

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Smith (1970): 31, italics added.

²³⁵ Ibid.: 58.

in the citation above, monasteries could likewise use their authority to requisition popular monk clerics from other monasteries. Smith (1970) reports the following: "It would seem that the Rñin-ma-pa were still operating under considerable strictures because in 1833, the Dgon-rgan sprul-sku of Dpal-spuñs requisitioned the services of Kon-sprul as his secretary. The relations seem to have been quite strained between the Zhe-chen Rñin-ma-pa and the Dpal-spuñs Karma-pa." The latter required Kong-sprul to take vows again, about which Kong-sprul was not pleased, but by 1843 he had studied with sixty teachers representing all of the sects and esoteric lineages.²³⁶

Teaching and writing were other ways in which lamas developed intimate links with the Sde-dge King. For example, Rdza Dpal-sprul O-rgyan-'jigs-med-chos-kyi-dbang-po (b. 1808), one of the most important lamas of the Rnying-ma tradition and "the *ris-med* movement," wrote *Gtam-pad-ma-'tshal-gyi-zlos-gar* ("Dance of the Lotus Garden: Tidings") --a moving poetical piece on the impermanence of happiness -- to console a noble of Sde-dge who had lost his spouse. Similarly, the 9th volume (*ta*) of *Thun-mong-ma-yin-pa'i-mdzod* includes an account of the Sde-dge marriage custom of the Mda'-dar as a sort of commemoration of the marriage of the Sde-dge King and the daughter of Ra-kha-shag (Mdo-mkhar) in 1870.²³⁷

Chaplains (*dbu-bla*) could also grant the king titles and recognition which enhanced his prestige. The ruler, it should be remembered, was often directly involved in monastic life as the abbot of Lhun-grub-steng. While the two feuding princes reportedly shared the long list of *dbu-bla*, it seems that the younger brother was favored by the more powerful monastic hierarchs in his kingdom. Sde-gzhung Rinpoche writes, "'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Rinpoche

²³⁶ Ibid.: 30.

²³⁷ Ibid.: 71; and Petech (1973): 77.

gave him [Jam-dpal-rin-chen] the name 'Sa-skyong Ma-ha-pa' ('Great Scholar Ruler')." It was said he had vast and excellent knowledge and had written 108 various praises for the great 'Jam-mgon Sa-skya paཤྲིཏིཏིཏི."238 His other teachers included 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and 'Ju Mi-pham-rgyam-tsho. These were the three most influential teachers in Sde-dge, lending support to the claim that 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen was supported by certain lamas. Though 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po's monastery was Rdzong-gsar, not directly among the five major monasteries, it was an important branch of Kah-thog monastery and clearly this teacher's influence spread well beyond his own monastery.

Finally, there is a traditional saying in Tibetan: ལྷ་མ་བམས་ཅད་ལྷུག་པོའི་གྲིམ་ལ་གླུམ། མེདོག་བམས་ཅད་ལྷུ་བོའི་འགམ་ལ་གླུམ། ("All lamas are born in wealthy families; all flowers grow on riverbanks.")239

Herein lies another link between secular leaders and monastic hierarchs. Certainly not every prominent religious figure mentioned above was born into a wealthy family. However, there are enough examples to suggest that one aspect of the religio-political system manifested itself through such familial influence. One of the great "ris-med" teachers highlighted by Smith (1970) was Gter-ston Mchog-gyur-gling-pa (1829-1870). He was born into a ministerial family of Nang-chen, a neighboring territory.²⁴⁰ Sogyal Rinpoche, the twentieth century Rnying-ma teacher from Khams, entered the monastery at 6 months old, only later being recognized as the reincarnation of the teacher of Gter-ston Mtsho-rgyal, a teacher of the 13th Dalai Lama and of 'Jam-dbyangs-chos-kyi-blo-gros. Connected with Rdzogs-chen monastery, which his father helped to reconstruct in southern India, Sogyal Rinpoche relates, "My father

²³⁸ Kolmas (1988): 142. In Tibetan: འཇམ་མགོན་ཀོང་སྤུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེས། མ་གྲོང་མར་པལྱི་རྩ་ཞེས་མཚན་གསོལ། མཁྱེན་རབ་རྒྱུ་ཆེ་བ་མང་ལ། འཇམ་མགོན་སྤྱུ་པཤྲིཏི་ཆེན་པོལ། བསྐྱེད་པ་འདྲ་མིན་བརྒྱུ་ཅུ་བརྒྱུད་རྩོམ་ཡིད་ཅེས་ཐོས།

²³⁹ This saying was brought to my attention by Pema Bhum (Bloomington).

²⁴⁰ Smith (1970): 77. Gter-ston Mchog-gyur-bde-chen-zhig-po-gling-pa (1829-1870), also simply called Mchog-gling was born in Khams at Lho-rgyud Yer-stod at Sgom-sde Grwa-nang.

was always very busy being Jamyang Khentse ['Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse]'s administrator, and my mother was also busy with her huge household."²⁴¹ While discussing the tragic losses of his family under Chinese occupation, he notes, "My family, Lahar Tsang, had been among the wealthiest in Tibet. Since the fourteenth century it had been famous as one of the most important benefactors of Buddhism, supporting the teaching of Buddha and helping the great masters with their work."²⁴² This story also reveals an additional pattern -- the frequent connection between a teacher's primary administrator or secretary and the *sprul-sku* recognition process, as was also evident in the case of Kong-sprul Rinpoche.

Similarly, the famous Rnying-ma-pa and Rdzogs-chen master Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse Rinpoche was born into one of the most influential families of Sde-dge. Khyentse's grandfather, Bkra-shis-tshe-ring, was the chief minister in the government. Their most important lamas were reportedly 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and 'Jam-gon Kong-sprul. Furthermore, Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse's mother was the daughter of another minister of Sde-dge. Thus, it may not be surprising that teachers from three different monasteries recognized Dilgo Mkhyentse as a reincarnation in their respective lineages. Blo-gter-dbang-po, the famous Sa-skyapa master and disciple of 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po pronounced the young boy a Sa-skyapa *sprul-sku*. The Fifth Rdzogs-chen Rinpoche Thub-bstan-chos-kyi-rdo-rje said that he was the emanation (*sprul-sku*) of a lama from the Rnying-ma-pa Rdzogs-chen monastery. Zhe-chen Rgyal-tsab Rinpoche likewise insisted that the child was "very important for Zhe-chen monastery" and should be placed in their custody. While Dil-mgo Mkhyen-brtse was still in his mother's womb, Mi-pham asked to be notified of the child's birth, upon which he recognized him as a special child. Because the family's third son had

²⁴¹ Sogyal Rinpoche (1992): 7.

²⁴² *Ibid.*: 7. Sogyal Rinpoche adds in a note that his family had been granted this name in the fourteenth century by Rje Tsong-kha-pa who was traveling to Central Tibet from Amdo.

already been recognized as the reincarnation of Nyen-pa Rinpoche whose seat was the Ben-chen monastery (a Bka'-brgyud-pa monastery), the parents were slow to react to all of these offers and reportedly sought to keep their son a layman so that he could look after the large family estate. However, in the end, Dil-mgo Mkyen-brtse was enthroned at the Rnying-ma-pa Zhe-chen monastery as one of the *sprul-sku* of 'Jam-dbyang-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po,²⁴³ and later became the head of the entire Rnying-ma-pa sect. His successor, Bdud-'joms Rinpoche, was also born into a noble family from the district of Pad-ma-bkod.²⁴⁴

This recognition of two sons as reincarnations within two different traditions is not uncommon. The Dil-mgo family itself had a Bka'-brgyud-pa lama in residence from Ben-chen monastery, yet was also a firm supporter of Rnying-ma-pa lamas at Zhe-chen Monastery. This parallels the background of A-khro Rinpoche, a Bka'-brgyud-pa teacher from neighboring Nang-chen, with whom Sde-dge had exceptionally close ties in the twentieth century.²⁴⁵ He noted how his family home had a room for visiting lamas from each sect; that is, they had five rooms reserved for teachers from each of the five traditions, including the Bon-po. A-khro Rinpoche says that this was the case, though his family primarily supported the Sa-skye and he himself was recognized as a Bka'-brgyud reincarnation.²⁴⁶ Thus, we can see that an eclectic view of sectarian affiliation in Sde-dge supported a certain eclecticism in the recognition of reincarnations. Rockhill made the same observation about religious beliefs among the general population, "The laity do not enter into these minutiae [of sectarian differences in deity

²⁴³ Tsepak Rigzin and Jeremy Russell, "Glimpses of the Nyingmapa," in *Chö-Yang*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1987): 8.

²⁴⁴ Coleman (1994): 214.

²⁴⁵ The 47th generation king of Sde-dge married a noble woman from Nang-chen; see Kolmaš (1988): 132. In an interview with A-khro Rinpoche (July 1995), he informed me that his mother was from a Sde-dge noble family and married his father who was the local chief of A-khro "Sho-kha" (?) [Chin. *xian*] in Nang-chen. In fact, Dil-mgo Mkyen-brtse Rinpoche was A-khro Rinpoche's uncle. A-khro Rinpoche recounted how his mother could read and write, because there had been in her Sde-dge home a resident teacher for the children.

worship], but avail themselves of the services of lamas of any or all of these four sects to 'beat the drum' in their houses."²⁴⁷ Even Bon-po priests, whom Rockhill notes were scorned by some lamas of other traditions, would be requested by households to perform religious services because of their "exceptionally low charges for beating the drum." Tibetans, he claims, say the Bon-po are "different only in that they walk around the stupa in a different direction."²⁴⁸

Finally, in the late nineteenth century, there was a tendency for great teachers to have more than one reincarnation, including emanations in monasteries of different sects. This was likely a reflection of (and a means to strengthen) the growing ties between monasteries where students were frequently engaged with teachers outside their respective tradition. For example, eight emanations of 'Jam-dbyangs Mkhyen-brtse were found among the Sa-skya monastery of Rdzong-gsar, the Rnying-ma monasteries of Zhe-chen, Kah-tog and Rdzogs-chen, and the Bka'-brgyud monastery of Dpal-spungs. He was also incarnated in the person of Sa-skya Phun-pho Mkhyen-brtse Khri-chen.²⁴⁹ Kong-sprul Rinpoche was simultaneously reincarnated at Dpal-spungs, Zhe-chen, Rdzogs-chen and Kah-tog monasteries.²⁵⁰ Note that both of these cases include four of the five monasteries of the *dbu-bla-khag-Ingā*.

Not least, monastic hierarchs played an important role as religious teachers and personal advisors to the king. Both the Sde-dge sras-mo and her son concurred that this was the primary means through which the *dbu-bla-khag-Ingā* wielded political power. "The *dbu-bla-khag-Ingā* had greater authority than the *mdun-skor* (aristocratic officials). People heeded their advice. You have to remember," Jigme Lingsang emphasized. "Even the king

²⁴⁶ A-khro Rinpoche, interviewed by the author, Cambridge, England, July 1995.

²⁴⁷ Rockhill (1891): 217.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Smith (1970): 74.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.: 76.

worshipped them [the five chaplains].”²⁵¹ This observation underscores the significance of the special relationship that 'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and his contemporary 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul had with 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen. Empowered by 'Jam-dbyangs-mkhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po as his personal representative (*rgyal-tshab*), 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho (1846-1912) continued this tradition amidst the succession struggle and the encroachment of outside forces.

8. MI-PHAM AND THE *RGYAL-PO'I-LUGS-KYI-BSTAN-BCOS*

In early 1895, as the succession struggle intensified, the king of Sde-dge requested his teacher, the renowned Rnying-ma monk/scholar 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho, to advise him on how a king should rule. Mi-pham responded by writing his *Rgyal-po'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos* (*A Treatise on Kingship*):

.... on that which is called the top of Dpal-ldan Lhun-grub the great realm of religious, administrative and many other affairs, where is located the palace of the kingdom of the Dharmaraja, on the greatly auspicious 14th day of the first month of the Tibetan Wood Sheep Year (1895) [I] started to write. Through the force of connections arising from good prayer, I wrote this text during breaks while giving teachings on "Byams-chos" to those who requested this text to be written, the prince (*lha-sras*) Lama Rinpoche 'Jam-dpal Rin-chen, etc.²⁵²

Mi-pham completed this work within one month "on the auspicious and well-timed second day of the first half of the second Tibetan month," while residing at the capital. The colophon offers evidence that it was the younger of the two princes, 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen, who held the throne in 1895. Though he is referred to above as "*lha-sras*" (prince), this was probably used here because his father or step-father was still alive. The addition of "*sa-skyong*" in another passage confirms his position as ruler of the realm:

²⁵¹ Jigme Lingtang, interview.

²⁵² MIPHAM: 232-3.

His eminence, the ruler (*sa-skyong*) of Mdo-khams Sde-dge, Bla-ma Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dpal Rin-chen, presented [me with] a *kha-btags* (white silk scarf) and gifts. He said not to worry about using too much space in order to compile a comprehensive *Rgyal-po['i]-lugs-kyi bstan-bcos*, and to write one which is very easily understood by anyone, high or low. He earnestly encouraged me on the basis of his desire to print it for the sake of fostering the benefit of beings in these degenerate times.²⁵³

While the text's lack of concrete administrative advice might be due to constraints dictated by the traditional literary form and expectations of the religious teacher's role *vis-à-vis* the king, it does represent a perspective on the king's responsibilities by one of the most influential religious figures of the time.

8.1 *Rgyal-po'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos*: A Literary Tradition

In the conclusion to his work, Mi-pham cites a number of traditional śāstras from which he has drawn to compose his *Rgyal-po'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos*. These include the following which I have categorized and outlined here for the reader's ease:²⁵⁴

1. *Lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos* by *Slob-dpon* Klu-sgrub (Nāgārjuna);

Shes-rab-brgya-pa [Skt. *Prajñāsataka-nāma-prakaraṇa*]

Shes-rab-sdong-bu [Skt. *Nīti-śāstra-prajñā-daṇḍa-nāma*]

Skye-bo-gso-bo'i-thigs-pa [Skt. *Nīti-śāstra-jantu-poṣaṇa-bindu-nāma*]

Rin-chen-phreng-ba (“Precious Garland”) [Skt. *Ratnamālā-nāma*]

2. Miscellaneous writings to *btsan-po* (“emperors”);

Mahārāja Kaniṣka lekha, by Māṛceta

Sangs-rgyas-gsang-ba’s letter to Tibet’s king and ministers

3. Letters and miscellaneous poetic writings in the style of Nyi-ma-sbas-pa,²⁵⁵

4. Other great works, including the following:

²⁵³ MIPHAM: 230.

²⁵⁴ MIPHAM: 231-2.

²⁵⁵ This most probably refers to *Tshigs-su bcad-pa'i mdsod ces-bya-ba* [Skt. *Āryā-koṣa-nāma*] by Nyi-ma sbas-pa (Ravigupta).

rten-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos. *Rgyal-po'i-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos* fall into the latter category of *śāstras*, namely, those regarding worldly affairs.²⁵⁸

8.2 The Portrayal of Kingship

གུན་གྱིས་ལྷ་ཁིང་རྟོགས་པའི་གནས་།
 ཡིན་ཕྱིར་རྒྱལ་པོ་རྒྱལ་པོ་རིགས་ཀྱི།
 རྒྱུད་པ་བཟང་ངན་ལྡོ་ཡང་།
 འཛིག་རྟོག་ཞེ་བཟོད་ཅིང་དཔྱོད་།

Because everyone is watching and regarding you,
 I will explain the actions --
 the good, the bad, even the small --
 of the King and his royal lineage in the world..

ས་བདག་བློ་གྲོས་ལྡན་པ་རྣམས་།
 ཡ་རབས་ལུགས་ལ་ཤིན་ཏུ་མོས་།
 འོད་ཟེར་སྣང་དང་ལྡན་པ་ཡི།
 ཉེ་མ་འཛིག་རྟོག་འདི་ན་མཛེས་།

All wise kings greatly cherish
 the noble way.
 The sun possessed of bright light
 is very beautiful in this world.

ཡ་རབས་དམ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལ་ནི།
 མི་མོས་གདོད་པའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ཅན་།
 བལ་པ་ཡིན་ཡང་མི་མཛེས་ན།
 རྒྱལ་པོའི་རིགས་ལ་སློབ་ཅི་དགོས་།

As for the way of the excellent noble ones:
 if one were a commoner and his actions were
 not popular or standard, it would not be good,
 not to mention if he is of royal lineage.²⁵⁹

Thus advises the lama Mi-pham to the acting king of Sde-dge who is rumoured to be illegitimate, who is the grandson of the general of what was an occupying force from Lhasa, and who is the younger of two living heirs to the throne. In the tradition of Sde-dge, the younger brother should remain content to be abbot of Lhun-grub-steng. I would argue that 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen's request of Mi-pham represented an effort to establish legitimacy in his

tantras." See Dpal-ldan-'jigs-med-'bangs (1991): 227-8.

²⁵⁸ Dpal-ldan-'jigs-med-'bangs (1991): 227.

²⁵⁹ MIPHAM: 3.

position which was otherwise precarious given local tradition and the challenges he faced from his brother and the local chiefs vying for power.

Coupled with the power of cakravartin imagery and placed in a Buddhist world-view, kingship in Mi-pham's work moves beyond the mundane level of its worldly trappings into a force for the furthering of positive karmic forces for all beings in his realm:

<p>ལེགས་པའི་སྲོ་དང་མངའ་བའ་བླ་བ་ལ། བསོད་ནམས་མཐུ་ཡིས་ཆེར་འཕེལ་ཞིང་། ཚུལ་དེའི་སྒོ་ནས་བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱང་། ལོང་ནས་ལོང་དུ་སྐྱེལ་བར་བྱེད།</p>	<p>A good mind and abundant domain grow through the force of merit; and in this way, merit itself will ever increase.</p>
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<p>ཉི་མ་འཆར་དང་ཚུ་གྲུང་རྒྱུན། བསྐྱེད་པའི་མེད་རྒྱུད་གི་ལྷགས། ཚོས་ལྷན་རྒྱུན་(sic)་པོའི་གཟི་བྱིན་རྣམས། ལུས་ཀྱང་དགག་ཏུ་མེད་པར་འབྱུང།</p>	<p>Sunshine, a river's stream, universal conflagration, the power of the wind and the glories of a Dharmaraja, arise hindered by none.</p>
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<p>ཚོས་དང་སྲིད་གྱི་ལེགས་ཚོགས་ཀྱུན། འཕེལ་ཞིང་རྒྱབ་པ་མེད་པ་དང་། བདེ་ནས་བདེ་བར་འགྲོ་བ་འདི། ལུགས་ལ་གནས་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན་ཡིན། ལུགས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱེད་བཅོས་རྣམ་མང་པོའི། ལེགས་བཤམ་ཚུ་གྲུང་གྱུར་འདུས་མ། མི་བདག་ཀྱང་དབང་ཚོགས་རྣམས་ཀྱི། རྟོག་གནས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེ་འདི་མེད།</p>	<p>All good religious and political accumulation will grow undiminished, and this ever increasing virtue is a quality of one who abides in the way. The gathering of all river streams, the elegant sayings of the many <i>lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos</i>, this great ocean, the foundation of all kings and Naga Kings, is wondrous.²⁶⁰</p>
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With notable similarities, Tambiah (1976) describes the dialectical relationship between the King and the *sangha* (Buddhist community) in the society of traditional Indic arthaśāstric literature:

Kingship as the crux of order in society provides the conditions and the context for the survival of sasana (religion.). They need each other: religion in

²⁶⁰ MIPHAM: 222-223.

being supported by an ordered and prosperous society is able to act as the "field of merit" in which merit making can be enacted and its fruits enjoyed, while the king as the foremost merit maker needs the sangha to make and realize his merit and fulfill his kingship.²⁶¹

The distinction that Tambiah (1976) makes between the role of kingship *vis-à-vis* Buddhism, on the one hand, and the ruling elite, on the other, is critical.²⁶² It is this notion which cannot be captured by general discussions of "the secular" and "the religious" when discussing political systems in Tibet. Only monastic hierarchs can provide the king with this charismatic vehicle for legitimacy and enhancement. They do not provide this for other secular leaders, such as local chieftains; nor can these chieftains offer such legitimizing support to the king. Yet, the characteristics of a charismatic king are closely tied to notions of acceptable behavior among the nobility. A primary emphasis of Mi-pham lies in his frequent use of the term "ya-rabs" (noble) to describe the ideal behavior of the king through which he can secure his reign. The Tibetan term "ya-rabs" holds the same ambiguity as does "noble" in English, signifying behavior which is both honorable and traditionally associated with the upper-class:

འགྲོན་ལེགས་པར་མངོས་པ་ནི།
ལམོར་དུ་གླུང་པོའི་དབང་པོ་བཞིན།

When proceeding, his full beauty is like that
of the king of elephants among his retinue.

སྐྱུང་ལ་གཡོ་མེད་དྲང་པོར་འདུག།
བག་ཐེབ་དལ་བུའི་སྤྱོད་ལམ་ཅན།
འདུག་ན་གསེར་གྱི་རི་བཞིན་དུ།
བརྟན་པར་གྱུར་ན་ལྷ་ལྷ་མངོས།

He is unmoving and upright upon his seat.
With a relaxed and calm comportment,
steadfast like a mountain of gold,
he is wholly magnificent when seated.

ཟས་གྱི་ཚོད་ཟིན་རྒྱུ་གི་བྱེད་ལུང་།
སྤྱོད་པར་ལྷོད་ཀྱིང་གོས་ཚོགས་བཅོས།
དུས་སྐབས་འདྲིའི་སྐབས་ལོ།

He eats in moderation and rarely runs or acts hastily.
He rises early and dresses properly.
The king who speaks when appropriate

²⁶¹ Tambiah (1976): 41.

²⁶² Tambiah (1976): 4.

མི་བདག་དེ་མིན་[sic?]་བདེ་བ་ལྡན་།

will be happy.

ཁྱིམ་བདད་རི་དུགས་གཤོར་།
སྤྲོད་འཛོལ་སྤྲོད་དང་འཁོར་མེད་པར་།
དགོན་པ་འཛིན་གསལ་སྤྱི་བརྒྱུ་པརྒྱལ་།
རྒྱལ་པོས་ནམ་ཡང་མི་བྱའོ།

A king never hunts wild animals with hunters,
nor consorts with prostitutes,
nor visits solitary forests
without his retinue.

དོན་མེད་རྒྱ་ཚེན་བརྒྱལ་བ་དང་།
སྤྲུལ་གདུག་གཅན་གཟུན་སོགས་དང་ཕྱེ་།
མི་སྤྲུལ་རྟ་ལ་འོན་པ་སོགས་།
བྱས་ན་རང་ཉིད་ཉམས་པ་སྲིད་།

If he amuses himself needlessly fording large rivers,
playing with poisonous snakes and beasts of prey,
riding wild horses and so forth,
his own decline is likely.

དེ་བས་རྒྱལ་པོ་རྒྱལ་རིགས་ཀྱི་།
ལུས་དང་སྤྱོད་ལམ་མཐའ་དག་ནི་།
བཀའ་དང་བསྟན་བཅོས་ལས་གསུངས་བཞིན་།
ལེགས་པར་བསྐྱིམས་ཏེ་བསྐྱུང་བར་བྱ།

Thus, all bodily actions and comportment
of the king and his royal family
should be maintained as stated
in the *Kanjur* and treatises.

མཐོང་བཅོམ་གྱིས་དགའ་བ་རབ་སྤྱེད་པ་རི་།
རྒྱ་སྐར་བདག་པོ་འཛི་མེད་ལམ་ནག་ནས་།
སྤྱི་རྒྱུ་རི་མིག་གི་ཡུལ་དུ་མངོན་མངོས་པ་རི་།
ས་ཡི་བདག་པོས་སྤྲོད་འདིར་ནི་རྒྱ་།
འཁོར་ཚོགས་རྒྱ་སྐར་དབུས་ན་མངོན་མཐོའི་དང་།
ལུགས་བཟང་ལྷ་ལམ་ཡངས་པོར་གནས་བཞིན་དུ་།
ཡ་རབས་སྤྱོད་པ་བཟང་པོའི་འོད་བཟང་ཅན་།
ས་ཡི་བདག་པོས་བྱས་པ་འདིས་།
ས་བྱུ་རི་ལྟ་རྒྱལ་དགའ་བ་སྤྱེད་ལུས་ན་།
ས་སྤྲོད་མི་ཡི་འགོ་བསྐྱོས་ཅི་དགོས་།

The lord of constellations²⁶³ who causes great happiness
with only a glance resides on the path of the immortals.
The lord of the land who evinces beauty in the
eyes of the multitudes proceeds here on this earth.
If the king, clearly supreme amid his retinue of
constellations, residing in the vast sky of the good way,
this full moon, lord of the earth, with the fair
luminescence of good and noble actions can generate
happiness among celestial deities,
what need is there to speak of human beings?²⁶⁵

Arthaśāstric literature, upon which Mi-pham explicitly drew in writing his *rgyal-po'i-*

lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos, enumerates seven constituent elements of political organization: the king,

²⁶³ The moon.

²⁶⁴ MIPHAM: 22-23.

²⁶⁵ MIPHAM: 22-23.

his officials and ministers, the country or rural area, the fortified or urban area, the treasury, the army and the foreign ally. These are said to be the 'limb-like elements of sovereignty.'²⁶⁶

Tambiah (1976) notes, "Arthashastric writers disputed the constituent elements, their priority, and relative weight but they used them to discuss the conditions that lead to diseased political conditions by their absence."²⁶⁷ These elements could provide a fresh and perhaps more emic criteria from which to decide whether principalities such as Sde-dge were states or not. Having based himself upon the traditional texts, Mi-pham explicitly mentions these elements as critical in his advice to 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen:

THE KING

དེ་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་རྒྱུ་ཉེར་འཚོའི་གཞི །
 རྒྱལ་པོ་རང་ཉིད་ལེགས་བསྐྱུངས་ནས །
 འབངས་རྣམས་བདེ་བར་བྱ་བའི་སྐད །
 འཚོ་བའི་ཚུལ་གྱིས་བསྐྱུང་བར་བྱ །

Thus, the king, supporter of peoples' basic needs, secures his own well-being and then for the sake of the people's welfare, administers in the manner of a shepherd.

ས་སྐྱིང་འཁོར་ལོ་བཅུ་པའི་མདོར །
 དཔེ་ཡི་ཚུལ་དུ་ལེགས་གསུང་བ །
 གང་གིས་རྒྱལ་པོའི་དཔལ་ཐོབ་པའི །
 མི་བདག་སློང་དང་ལྷན་པ་དེས །
 འདས་དང་ད་ལྟ་མའོངས་པའི །
 རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁྱིམ་ལུགས་བརྟགས་བྱས་ཏེ །
 དུལ་དེ་དེར་གནས་པའི་མཛེས་པ་རྣམས །
 ལས་གྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་གསུམ་ལ་སྐྱོར །
 དག་མཁས་ཤེས་ཤིང་རྩལ་སྐྱུང་དུ །
 འཇུག་པ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱིད་ལས་འཁོར་ཡིན །

In the *Dasācakrakṣitigarbha sūtra*, as an example, it advises that the wise one who obtains the glory of kingship, has studied the customary law of past, present and future kings. The wise ones who dwell in that realm must attend to three routine affairs: To achieve physical prowess and military skill is one routine affair for rulers.

ཞིང་ལས་དང་ནི་གནས་ཁང་གི །
 བྱ་བ་སློབ་པ་གཉིས་པ་སྟེ །

The second is knowledge of agriculture and home affairs.

²⁶⁶ Tambiah (1976): 31.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

ཚོང་དང་བཟོ་རྒྱུ་མཁུ་སྤྲོད་ཆོག་གི།
 ལས་ལ་སྒྲིབ་བཀའ་སྲོལ་ལ་བཞུགས།
 ལས་ཀྱི་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ།
 སྤྱི་ཚུ་བདེ་བར་བྱེད་པའོ།

Connections with various business and
 productive concerns is said to be the third.
 These three routine affairs will provide
 for the welfare of beings.²⁶⁸

MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS: The king's retinue is portrayed by Mi-pham as an element for enhancement.

རྒྱུ་ཚུ་བཟང་པོས་བརྒྱན་པའི།
 ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ།
 རྒྱུ་ཚུ་གྱིས་བརྒྱན་པའི།
 བདག་པོ་ཉིད་ལ་མཛེས་པ་བཞིན།

The retinue adorned in appropriate attire
 becomes a sign of greatness for their leader.
 As for decorating a horse with adornments,
 it is as if the owner himself were beautiful.²⁶⁹

However, in several verses Mi-pham frankly warns the king of potential hazards in the selection of ministers and officials:

ལྷོ་ལྷན་འཕམ་མཐོ་གྲུང་པ།
 དེ་ལྷན་ལྷན་སྒྲིབ་པ་བཟང་།
 རོར་བུ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་རྩེར་མཚོད་ན།
 དགོས་ཚུ་ཡིད་བཞིན་སྤྲོད་པར་བྱེད།

To the extent one installs the wise in high positions
 their actions will be good.
 When one offers jewels to the top of the banner,
 they will grant whatever needs you wish for.

མར་བས་མཐོ་བའི་སར་བཞག་ན།
 སྒྲིབ་པ་ལྷོ་བས་ལྷོ་བས་ལྷོ་བས།
 ཐེང་རང་ལུག་གི་ལྷན་བརྟེན་ན།
 ལུ་ལྷོ་གཞོ་ལྷན་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ།

If one keeps the ignoble in high places,
 their bad actions will become worse and worse.
 If one relies on *the'u-rang*²⁷⁰ to be steadfast deities,
 they will increasingly trick their offenders.

གུན་སྒྲིབ་པ་ལོ་སྤྱོད་རྒྱུ་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ལ།
 ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ།

One should not gather in one's retinue,
 people whose every action is bad;

²⁶⁸ MIPHAM: 150.

²⁶⁹ MIPHAM: 17.

²⁷⁰ According to de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1993): 282-3, who consulted several traditional texts, the *the'u-rang* constituted an ancient class of deities who essentially have an “evil nature.” They are said to cause disunity and quarrel and to make children ill. They are also believed to influence the weather, and especially to send hailstorms. One Amdowan with whom I spoke said that *the'u-rang* are popularly believed to reside in people’s kitchens. He characterized these spirits as “mischievous,” saying that some people try to ward them off through various means, while other families try to appease them.

ལལོར་གཡོག་པའི་སྐྱོན་དག་གིས།
རྒྱལ་པོ་ལ་ཡང་འཕྱར་གཤམ་ཏོང་།

by the evil faults of the retinue and servants
the king too will be disgraced.

ལལོར་བཟང་སྤྱོད་པ་བཟང་མཐོང་ནས།
སྐྱེ་ཁྱུ་ཀུན་གྱི་དགའ་བ་བསྐྱེད།
དེ་སྤྱིར་ཡ་རབས་སྤྱོད་པ་ཅན།
ཁོ་ན་ལལོར་དུ་བསྟུ་བར་བྱ།

Also, by seeing the good actions of a good retinue,
all beings will be happy.
For that reason, one should gather into one's retinue
only those with noble actions.²⁷¹

Specifically referring to the appointment of ministers, Mi-pham calls for discernment based on their skills and abilities:

དེ་སྤྱིར་མི་བདག་མཁའ་ལས་པ་ཡིས།
ཡོན་ཏན་དག་གི་གོ་རིམ་བཞིན།
མི་ལ་གོ་འཕང་སོ་སོར་སྤྱིན།
སྟེ་སྤྱིར་བཏགས་སྟེ་མི་བྱ།

Thus, skillful kings give various positions
to people in accord with the level of their qualities.
One shouldn't give positions by chance or
convenience.

ནད་ལ་གཏོང་བའི་སྤྱན་བཞིན་དུ།
སོ་སོའི་རང་སྐྱེའི་ཡོན་ཏན་གཞན།
ཇི་ལྟར་ཚང་བས་དོན་འགྲུབ་གྱི།
ཐམས་ཅད་འགྲུབ་པའི་མི་དེ་དགོན།

As with medicine administered for an illness,
consider each person's special qualities.
No person can fully accomplish
all responsibilities.²⁷²

Mi-pham's perception of who should be present in the royal court parallels the traditional Southeast Asian courts as described by Tambiah (1976): "Southeast Asian Buddhist monarch brahmans and not Buddhist monks served as court functionaries, as royal diviners and astrologers, as scribes and judges and interpreters of the law..."²⁷³ At times, Mi-pham's advice seems peculiarly unrelated to Tibetan culture, such as his recommendation that the king keep "eunuchs" and "brahmans" among his retainers. To better understand why these elements

²⁷¹ MIPHAM: 18-19.

²⁷² MIPHAM: 36.

²⁷³ Tambiah (1976): 53.

might exist in Mi-pham’s nineteenth century text, we should recall that allusions to Indic customs, administration, and environment had long been viewed as positive elements in Tibetan literature. Consider, as an example, what has been called Tibet’s first “novel” – *Gzhon-mu zla-med-kyi gtam-rgyud* – written in the eighteenth century. This work abounds with so many Indic references that the English translator decided to render the personal names in Sanskrit.²⁷⁴ More in keeping with Tibetan tradition, Mi-pham also ensures the role of religious hierarchs who have knowledge that a prosperous realm would require:

ཀླུ་པོ་འཛོལ་བྱང་དག་ཏུ་ནི།།	Those skilled in the sciences
ཕྱི་ས་རིག་རྣམས་ལ་མཁས་པ་དང།།	those skilled in the sciences of calculation,
གསོ་དཔྱད་རྒྱུ་ལ་བཞིན་ཤེས་པ་སོགས།།	those with proper knowledge of medicine, etc.
གཙུག་ལག་མཁས་རྣམས་ཀླུ་ནུ་བཞག།	are always retained in the palaces of kings.

སྒོ་པ་དང་ནི་ཉུག་རུ་མཔ།།	Maintain guards, eunuchs, messengers
བང་མི་བྱུང་དང་ལས་བྱེད་སོགས།།	servants, staff, and so forth,
སོ་སོའི་མཚན་ཉིད་ཇི་ལྟ་བུར།།	as dictated by their
བཤད་པ་བཞིན་ཏུ་བཞག་པར་བྱ།།	respective characteristics. ²⁷⁵

THE RURAL AREA: Mi-pham also recommends maintaining religious teachers in the court for the safeguarding of the land and environment. His recommendations would require the presence of tantric-rite practitioners to appease the local deities.

རྒྱ་མཚོ་རི་བླ་ག་ཤིང་བཟང་པོ།།	Do not ruin even slightly places where
ཡུལ་གྱི་གཞི་བདག་རྟེན་བའི་གནས།།	local deities reside – land with healthy
རུང་ཟང་ཉམས་པར་མི་བྱུ་ཞིང།།	rivers, lakes, mountains, and trees.
བཤོད་པས་བརྒྱན་ལ་གཞག་པར་བྱ།།	Maintain the landscape's beauty.

རི་མཐོས་གཉན་ཡུལ་བཟང་པོ།།	Do not let uncivilized people
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²⁷⁴ Tshe-ring-dbang-rgyal, *The Tale of the Incomparable Prince*. Translated by Beth Newman. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.

²⁷⁵ MIPHAM: 35-36.

དཔལ་དང་ལྗན་པའི་ས་ཕྱོགས་རྣམས །
མི་སྲུང་རྣམས་ལ་རང་དབང་དུ །
སྤེལ་བ་བྱེད་དུ་མི་གཞུག་གོ །

carelessly cause the decline
of these flourishing areas --
lands with good earth and high mountains.

ཚོ་རིག་ཤེས་དང་དུས་རྒྱུས་པ །
དེ་བཞིན་བསྐྱུགས་གཏོ་མི་ག་ཤེན་སོགས །
ཡུལ་ལ་ཕན་པའི་གསོལ་ཡིན་པས །
ཟ་ཐང་བསྐྱེད་ལ་ཕན་དུ་གཞུག །

Since astrologers and diviners --
and, similarly, mantras, protective rituals,
mo divination, etc. – benefit the land,
let them help increase the yield of your fields.²⁷⁶

THE URBAN AREA: The fostering of culture and education are strongly emphasized in

Mi-pham's work, both echoing Indic literature, while encouraging maintenance of the local arts, customs and traditions:

གཙུག་ལག་ཤེས་དང་རིག་བྱེད་པ །
བཟོ་གནས་པ་དང་ཚོང་ཁང་དང་།
དགེ་སྦྱོང་དང་ནི་བླ་མ་ཟེ་རྣམས །
མང་བར་གྱུར་པའི་ཡུལ་དེར་བདེ །

All is well in the realm where those learned in
the sciences, wise ones, artisans,
business people, monks and brahmans
are many.

དེ་ཕྱིར་རྒྱལ་པོས་རང་ཡུལ་དུ །
གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་རྣམས་བརྩི་གས་བྱས་ཏེ །
དགོན་མཚོག་གསུམ་གྱི་རྟེན་བཞེངས་ལ །
བཤད་དང་སྐྱབས་པའི་སྟེལ་བཙུག་ཤིང་།
འཛིག་རྟེན་སྤྱོད་དགོན་མཚོག་གསུམ །
མཚོད་ཅིང་དམན་ལ་སྤྱིན་པ་དང་།
བསོད་ནམས་བཀྲིས་བརྒྱན་འཇུགས་པའི །
ཡུལ་དེར་དགེ་ལེགས་རྒྱ་ཚེར་འཕེལ །

Thus, virtue will spread in the realm
where meritorious acts are continuously
undertaken, where the king builds temples,
establishes supports for the Triple Gem,
initiates a system of teaching and practice,
makes offerings to temporally existent lamas
and the Triple Gem,
and gives to the poor.

རིགས་གྱི་ཚན་རབས་རྣམས་དང་ནི །
ཕ་དང་མ་དག་བུ་རྒྱུད་ལ །
ཚུལ་གས་རྒྱན་དང་སྦྱོང་ལམ་ཀུན །
ཡ་རབས་དག་གི་ཚལ་སུ་བཞགས །

Respect all the older generation,
fathers, and mothers,
and maintain all dress,
ornament, and behavior in a noble fashion.

²⁷⁶ MIPHAM: 151.

ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བམ་རྟོག་ཚེལ།
 ལྷ་མཚོ་དུས་གྱི་དགའ་རྟོན་ས།
 བོ་གར་སྐྱུ་ཡི་རིག་བྱེད་སོགས།
 འཇིག་རྟེན་དགའ་བ་བསྐྱེད་ཕྱིར་བཞག།

Establish flower gardens with
 spiritual learning centers,
 places for feasts on auspicious days, dance and
 musical arts, etc. in order to increase earthly joy.²⁷⁷

THE TREASURY: Finally, Mi-pham devotes a few sections to practical affairs of state,
 such as taxation and the military. Yet, these are still tied into a Buddhist conception of right
 and wrong, reflecting the king's primary role as "merit-maker":

རོར་ཡོད་པ་ལས་འོས་པའི་དཔུ།
 མ་བྱིན་ནམ་གྱིས་སྤང་གྱུར་གྱང།
 སྤང་ན་བསྐྱབ་པའི་དཔེ་བཞིན་དུ།
 རྒྱུ་པོས་མ་བྱིན་སྤང་མི་འགྱུར།

Forcefully taking a reasonable tax from the wealthy,
 even when they haven't offered it,
 is like being compensated.
 This is not "taking what hasn't been given."

དབྱུལ་ལ་ནམ་གྱིས་སྤང་གྱུར་ལ།
 སྤིག་པ་ཡོད་མེད་གཞིས་སྲུང་བྱེ།
 རྒྱུ་པོ་སྤྲོད་འཚོང་ལ་སོགས་པས།
 ཚུལ་མིན་འོངས་སྤྱོད་རྒྱུད་ཟུབ།
 དགག་ཕྱིར་སྤང་ན་གཞིས་དོན་བྱས།
 དེ་ལ་སྤིག་པ་མེད་པར་བཤད།
 གང་གི་འོངས་སྤྱོད་མེས་ཚོགས་སོགས།
 རྒྱུད་ཟུར་གྱུར་ཚོད་དཔུ་ཡང་བྱ།

Forcefully taking from the poor
 can be either a wrongdoing or not a wrongdoing:
 In order to prevent gamblers and prostitutes
 from wasting the wealth obtained illicitly,
 if you take from them, it is said to benefit both
 and is not a wrong-doing.
 When someone has lost property through fire, etc.,
 tax them lightly.

མ་བྱས་ཐབས་བྲལ་སེམས་ཅན་དེ།
 མ་བསྐྱུངས་པས་ན་སྤིག་པར་འགྱུར།

If one doesn't care for the sentient beings
 who haven't any means, this is a wrong-doing.²⁷⁸

And similarly:

²⁷⁷ MIPHAM: 150-1.

²⁷⁸ MIPHAM: 61-62.

འོས་པའི་དབུ་ཁྲུལ་སྤྱད་པ་ཡང་།
 འབྲོར་དང་འབྲོར་མེད་རིམ་པ་དང་།
 བསྐྱེད་ནས་མཉམ་པར་སྤྱད་བྱའི།
 མི་མཚུངས་སྤངས་ན་གཤམ་སྟོམས།
 ཁྲུལ་འདེད་བྱ་བའི་འབངས་ཀྱི་ནལ།
 ཡུལ་དུས་འབྲོར་པ་དང་བསྐྱེད་ཏེ།
 གཞིས་ལ་གཞོན་པ་མེད་པར་སྤྱད།
 མི་ལྷོགས་པ་ཡིས་མཚར་མི་བྱ།
 བ་འཛེམ་ཏེ་གཤམ་ཚུལ་དུ།
 ཅུ་བ་ཉམས་པར་བྱ་མི་རིགས།

If one doesn't collect taxes which are reasonable,
 nor take equally from the rich and poor
 according to their situation, is this just?
 From all subjects who pay taxes
 take in accord with their land,
 the season, and their wealth,
 without harming their home.
 Do not burden them unbearably.
 In the manner of a cow eating grass,
 one shouldn't destroy the roots.²⁷⁹

With regard to military affairs, Mi-pham recommends the following:

སྲ་བརྟན་གོ་ཆ་བཅོན་རྫོང་དང་།
 མགྲོགས་འགྲོ་སྒྲུ་ཚོགས་མཚོན་ཆའི་རིགས།
 ལྷ་རྩལ་ཤེས་ཤིང་དཔའ་མཛེས་ཀྱི།
 ལྷོ་བོ་སོ་སོའི་གནས་སུ་བསགས།

Accumulate in one's own land strong armor,
 weapons and forts, various horse carts for artillery,
 weapons, and brave clever people with knowledge
 of the military arts.

ལྷོ་ལྷན་སྟོམས་ཤིང་བསམ་དཀར་རྣམས།
 ཡུལ་གྱི་སྤྱི་འདུན་འཕུས་མིར་བཞག།
 དམག་དང་དམག་དཔོན་གོ་ཆར་བཅས།
 བམ་དགོས་པའི་འཕྲལ་དུ་ཤོལ་མེད་བྱ།

Keep those with impartial wisdom and pure hearts
 as representatives of the common will of the land.
 Do not avoid immediately employing an army,
 generals, armor and weapons whenever needed.

རྒྱལ་རིགས་དགོས་འདོན་རྣམས་ལ།
 སྲ་ནས་ཉེར་བསྟོག་ཤེས་པ་དག།
 དུས་སུ་བབ་ཚེ་བགྱི་བཞི།
 གང་ལ་འང་ཐོགས་མེད་འཇུག་པར་རུས།

Kings who are prepared from early on,
 having assembled all that is needed,
 are able to accomplish any act
 without hindrance when the time is right.²⁸⁰

In this section, I have cited excerpts from Mi-pham's work, using the model
 suggested in traditional arthaśāstric literature, which includes the seven elements of the king,
 the ministers, the rural area, the urban area, the treasury and the army. I would like now to

²⁷⁹ MIPHAM: 107.

address the wider question of the relevance of this text in the administration of the realm amidst the troubles facing 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen in 1895. The political scientist or sociologist reviewing Mi-pham's work for a how-to-guide to administration in nineteenth century Khams or for clues as to the realities of rule in a realm facing the unrest detailed above would be sorely disappointed. Having turned to Mi-pham's text with such hopes, I found the following observations by Tambiah pertinent if not comforting. Having presented the Buddhist conception of kingship in its own terms as a cultural account, he writes:

Let me now distance myself and ask one critical pragmatic question concerning this discussion of the ethic of the righteous king. To what extent did the early literature attempt to propound rules of statecraft and effective kingship that go beyond the exhortations to ideal conduct to a more practical realm of strategies and instructions?²⁸¹

If Mi-pham were holding power at this time, as Smith (1970) suggests, it would be virtually impossible to reach such a conclusion from the content of his advice in the *Rgyal-po'i lugs-kyi bstan-bcos*. In July 1995, I interviewed three reincarnate lamas from Khams. All of them were quite familiar with Mi-pham's writings and the religio-intellectual culture of Sde-dge. However, none provided information on the political involvement of the religious masters in the area. In the first interview, I thought that the teacher was politely refusing to answer my questions when he asserted that there was no link between religion and politics in Khams. However, the two subsequent interviews bore similar results, though both lamas appeared willing enough to concede that there might be some possibility of a religio-political connection. In this regard, Thub-bstan-nyi-ma's remarks were helpful. He himself is recognized as a reincarnate lama of two monasteries in Mi-nyag, Khams, one Bka'-brgyud-pa, the other Rnying-ma-pa. He is also co-editor of the dictionary, *Bod-rgya-tshig-mdzod-chen-mo*, and

²⁸⁰ MIPHAM: 152-3.

²⁸¹ Tambiah (1976): 51.

was able to quote spontaneously from Mi-pham's work.. He emphasized that Mi-pham's main intent was that the king stay on-track, as it were, and rule in keeping with the dharma (*chos*). He concluded that Mi-pham essentially saw behaving in the way of the "*ya-rabs*" (noble) as a way to stay in power and to keep the kingdom calm, by maintaining the local tradition and acting as appropriate to expectations.²⁸²

One of Mi-pham's biographies includes comments about his sectarian affiliation that might cause us to reconsider what "*ris-med*" actually entails. While noting that Mi-pham took life in order to help *all* sentient beings, his biographer adds that such sacrifice was especially for the sake of the Rnying-ma-pa. Whether this comment reflects the bias of the author or the subject, one can't be certain. However, we do have the following quote by Mi-pham himself regarding how various sects should be regarded in the kingdom:

<p> རྫོགས་སུ་མ་ལྟར་བསྟོམས་བྱས་ན།། མཐོ་དམན་སུས་ཀྱང་བཀའ་ལ་བརྟེ།། རྒྱལ་པོ་ཀུན་གྱི་བྱམ་མོང་ཕྱིར།། བྱམ་རྫོགས་སུ་མ་ལྟར་ཞིང་།། རྫོགས་ཞེན་ཅན་གྱི་རག་མི་སྟེ།། </p>	<p> If one acts impartially, not taking sides, the high and low, whoever, will listen to you. Because the king is for all people, do not take to partisan actions, and do not speak of having affection for one side. </p>
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<p> གཏོང་ལའང་རྫོགས་ཞེན་མི་བྱའོ།། རང་གི་ཚོས་ལུགས་གཙོ་ར་བཟུང་སྟེ།། བསྟན་ལ་ཕན་འདོགས་ཅི་བྱས་ཀྱང་།། དེ་ལ་གྲུབ་མཐའི་གཞན་ལ་ལུན།། རྒྱལ་པོའི་སྟོན་མིན་ལ་ལོར་གྱི་སྟོན།། </p>	<p> Whatever you bestow, do not be partial. <i>If one makes his own religious system primary for the benefit of the doctrine and other sects resent this, this is not the king's fault, but the fault of those around him.</i> </p>
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<p> རང་གི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་གཅེས་བྱུང་ནས།། གྲུབ་མཐའ་གཞན་ལ་གཞོན་བྱེད་ན།། དེ་ལ་ལུ་བཅི་བྱུང་ཡང་།། ལ་ལོར་གྱི་སྟོན་མིན་རྒྱལ་པོའི་སྟོན།། </p>	<p> If one cherishes his own sect while harming other sects, and resentment arises, this is fault of the king, not the fault of those around him. </p>
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²⁸² Thub-bstan-nyi-ma, interview.

དེ་སྤྱིར་སྤྱིར་ལ་སྤྱི་སྤྱི་གསུམ་ཚུན་།
རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཡུལ་ན་གང་གནས་པའི་།

Thus, the king also defends, as they were before,
each of the ancient sects that dwell

གནའ་པོའི་སྤྱུ་བ་མཐའ་རང་རང་གི་།
སྤྱི་ཚུལ་དེ་བཞིན་རྒྱལ་པོས་བསྐྱུང་།

in the king's realm,
including any outside heterodox [groups].²⁸³

For as lofty as the notion of *impartiality* might sound, this verse may have been one of the more concrete pieces of advice which Mi-pham offered. In light of the local power of many chiefs, the events which followed the Nyag-rong campaign, and the succession struggle in which 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen was involved, *impartiality* in the political realm was exceptionally pertinent. Thus, Mi-pham further advised:

གང་ན་རྒྱུ་འབྲས་མི་བསྐྱོལ་ཞིང་།
སྤྱི་ལ་སྤྱི་མཐའ་པའི་སེམས་ཡོད་པ་།
དེ་འདྲ་དཔོན་དུ་བསྐྱོས་གྱུར་ན་།
གོང་རམ་གོང་ཆུང་དག་ཏུ་བདེ་།

When one appoints as ministers people
who never cross cause with effect
and whose minds are impartial with respect to all,
whether in a remote area or town, there is peace.

འདི་དག་རྣམས་ལས་བསྐྱོགས་པ་ལ་།
གང་གྱུར་གོ་ས་སྤྱིར་གྱུར་ན་།
སེམས་ལས་དོན་མི་འགྲུབ་ཅིང་།
རྒྱལ་སྤིང་དམའ་བའི་རྒྱུ་རུ་འགྲོ་།

If one were to haphazardly give a position
to one who is contrary to this,
their not being able to handle the various affairs
will become the cause for decline of the king's rule.²⁸⁴

Thub-bstan-nyi-ma felt that it was the kings and the ministerial chiefs (*blon-po*) of Sde-dge who primarily held effective authority. However, he acknowledged that when he was young, there was a period in which, "There arose a group of lamas and a group of monasteries who supported the Bya-rgod [family], and also a group of lamas and monasteries who were of

²⁸³ MIPHAM: 109, italics added.

²⁸⁴ MIPHAM: 36.

the queen's faction."²⁸⁵ We may now recall Smith's observation that "during the postwar period [after the Nyag-rong Campaign], 'Jam-dbyaṅs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbañ-po (1820-1892) and Kon-sprul became the real power in Sde-dge. They quickly gained the respect of Lhasa officials posted in the East and were the natural leaders for the distressed people of Sde-dge."²⁸⁶ If we look at the alliances which were formed following the invasion of Sde-dge by Nyag-rong, we can identify two main sides in the conflict: The king and his son Rdo-rje-seng-ge, supported perhaps by certain ministers and turning alternately to both the Manchu Imperial Court and to the Lhasa Dga'-ldan Pho-brang government for support against the opposing faction. Most active among Rdo-rje-seng-ge's challengers were his younger [half-?]brother, 'Jam-dpal-rin-chen, his mother from Lhasa and likely her father, one of the Tibetan military commanders sent by the Dga'-ldan-pho-brang administration to subdue the Nyag-rong chief. Finally, it seems likely that included among the supporters of this second faction were some of the most influential teachers in Sde-dge during the nineteenth century. Without further interviews, it would be difficult to determine from the sources included herewith what was the exact nature of this alliance. Certainly a key element was the role that these teachers played as advisory chaplains in the Sde-dge court. Yet, there is evidence that Nying-ma-pa and Bka'-brgyud-pa hierarchs suspected of aiding Nyag-rong were purged by Lhasa forces. Whether these teachers were initially considered a threat because of the authority they wielded, but later recognized as ideal allies to counter the challenge posed by the numerous ministers and chieftains on the other side, remains to be determined. Such information does not appear to be available in the written sources that I consulted. Yet, there is evidence for religio-political

²⁸⁵ Thub-bstan-nyi-ma (London, 1995). In Tibetan: བྱམ་ལྗེ་ལྟུང་གློ་མ་གྱི་བྱེད་མཁུན་གྱི་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་འགྲུབ་ལས་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་དུ། ཡལ་ལྷེ་དགའི་བུའི་མོ་གི་ཕྱོགས་ནས་ལྟུང་གློ་མ་གྱི་བྱེད་མཁུན་གྱི་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་འགྲུབ་ལས་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་དུ།

²⁸⁶ Smith (1970): 33.

alliances that cut across sectarian lines and responded flexibly to the several internal and external forces bidding for rule in the kingdom of Sde-dge during the nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION

With regard to using the term "*ris-med*" to describe the religio-intellectual position of several renowned teachers in Eastern Tibet during the nineteenth century, the following perspective expressed by Dil-mgo Mkhjen-brtse Rinpoche may be instructive:

There are two kinds of non-sectarianism. In one case a high lama, scholar or adept may follow a non-sectarian approach. He may first study the texts of all the four schools Sakya, Kagyu, Nyingma and Gelug, then he might receive initiation. For example, I myself am fundamentally a Nyingmapa, however if I was to receive initiations, transmissions and so forth from the Kagyu, Sakya or Gelug traditions and then put them into practice, that would be excellent. In the case of ordinary lay people it would be good to offer their faith and respect to all the four schools; this would be a good non-sectarian tradition.²⁸⁷

With a touch of irony, Smith describes the long-term effect of such teachings espoused from Eastern Tibet, "Although the *ris-med* movement did engender reactions characterized by intolerance and the denigration of other traditions of Buddhist practice, even these sectarian responses must now be couched in the language of eclecticism and unity."²⁸⁸ He adds that the challenge for Mkhjen-brtse and Kong-sprul as they developed their views was to understand,

How far, how fast, can tolerance and synthesis proceed before they reach that subtle point, where, if they pass beyond, they will efface the traditions they would mingle?²⁸⁹

Does not this same risk of effacement arise when we look at political systems characterized by a high degree of decentralization? In some cases, this has led to the assertion that Tibetan society is essentially "stateless." While this position, as argued by Samuel (1982), hinges upon the extent to which one sees centralization as the *sine qua non* of a "state," the

²⁸⁷ Tsepak Rigzin and Jeremy Russell, "Glimpses of the Rnying-ma-pa," *Chö-Yang*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1987): 14.

²⁸⁸ Smith (1970): 5.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

situation in Sde-dge prior to the Nyag-rong Campaign of 1863 would suggest that a bureaucracy encompassing a great deal of local control can nevertheless show other characteristics of state apparatus. Rooted in a specific local tradition which recognized a shared history, culture and the hereditary position of its ruler for nearly fifty generations, the people of Sde-dge knew what borders to defend and once upon a time possessed the military strength to do so. Perhaps Sde-dge is one of the "quasi-states"²⁹⁰ of East Tibet to which Samuel refers. If so, in light of the balance of powers discussed in this paper, it would seem erroneous then to characterize the Sde-dge administration as "explicitly monastic." Nor could we conclude that "there were no effective secular authorities" to inhibit lamas and monasteries from assuming a political role in what would otherwise be a power vacuum. I would argue that a "constant process of negotiation between local authorities" does not negate the possibility of maintaining a state apparatus.

At the same time, Sde-dge offers strong support for Samuel's assertion that "secular rulers formed alliances with monasteries to strengthen their own position." This would apply to the king of Sde-dge with regard to his primary position at Lhun-grug-steng and his special relationship with five powerful monasteries in his realm. Likewise, local chiefs were able to secure a connection with monasteries through patronage and the reincarnation process. However, it would seem misleading to exaggerate the importance of a "monastic center and a personally 'charismatic' lama" in Sde-dge. Not only does there appear to have been several religious "centers" that interacted with each other as fostered by a philosophy and social milieu that promoted "eclecticism," but a relatively high degree of bureaucracy and institutional structures supported the role that these great teachers played in more worldly affairs.

²⁹⁰ Samuel (1982): 221.

One then wonders what was the "glue" that dissolved in the late nineteenth century leaving an irreparably factionalized society in which a state structure had turned in on itself, effacing the traditions which it would otherwise have "mingled." Outside forces certainly increased the pressure on internal alliances, which had perhaps been better served during earlier times by their flexibility and pluricentric structure. Alliances with either Lhasa or Peking further compromised the position of the king. These finally deteriorated into the incorporation of Sde-dge by the governor-general of Sichuan and the administration of Sde-dge by military officials from Lhasa. Carrasco (1959) identifies two major classes of traditional Tibetan society: the holders of estates who constitute the ruling class organized into a state; and the peasantry, holders of family allotments.²⁹¹ He then divides the ruling class in Tibet into three types: territorial chiefs, bureaucratic nobility and the "corporate land-holders" of monastic estates. The larger and more centralized administrative structure of Central Tibet depended on a "bureaucratic nobility." Here, the ruling class possessed hereditary estates and jurisdictional rights, but this was not its main political function. The estates of the ruling class could be considered a "salary" as recompense for service to the state, but these aristocratic officials were mostly expected to reside in the capital, Lhasa. In contrast, the administration of "territorial chiefs," which is how Carrasco classifies the rulers of the "petty states of Khams," is characterized by a system in which land and political function are closely connected. This applies not only to the king in general, but also to each local chief, to the extent he or she²⁹² ruled and resided in his or her own territory from which income was drawn.²⁹³ To the extent that the local chieftains of Sde-dge enjoyed such opportunities, we could characterize the

²⁹¹ Carrasco (1959): 207.

²⁹² The district of Spo-mo was ruled by a female chief. There are other accounts of territories governed by women, not to mention the periods when the queens of Sde-dge held power.

²⁹³ Carrasco (1959): 215.

kingdom of Sde-dge as a principality in which a hereditary territorial chief, or in this case, a king, headed a highly decentralized administration, which depended on lesser chiefs and village headmen to fulfill certain responsibilities.

The local power which accrued to the *sde-pa* in such a system could also accrue to monastic estates as "corporate land-holders," who were granted certain privileges by the king of Sde-dge. However, monasteries were also firmly rooted in the community at large, some quite powerful in the various roles that they played: fortress, storage house, community haven, financier, agricultural estate, educational center, and places of prayer. Their monastic hierarchs often served simultaneously as head administrators, educators, writers, philosophers, doctors, and as authorities who could enhance the ruler's legitimacy. The central role of some monastic hierarchs -- namely, the *dbu-bla-khag-linga* and the hierarchs of Lhun-grub-steng -- has been a focus of this paper. To the extent that these six monasteries accrued power and crossed sectarian lines, it is not surprising that the king was reported to have "adopted an attitude which both accepted and accommodated each sect."²⁹⁴

In short, religio-political ties in the kingdom of Sde-dge appear to have been much less direct or institutionalized than they were in Lhasa. Alliances were not made exclusively with a single sect, but left room for accommodation. Furthermore, in contrast to Central Tibet, there was a high degree of secular involvement by local hereditary chiefs who together constituted a kingdom, perhaps even a state where power was highly decentralized. In the late nineteenth century, during which the kingdom of Sde-dge was rife with internal struggles and faced the encroachment of outside powers, these parties needed to be flexible in their pursuit of

²⁹⁴ SSGZ: 106.

allies. In this study, I have attempted to show how the nature of alliances formed during this era -- both internally and externally -- had their religio-intellectual and socio-cultural parallels in what some have called a *ris-med* ("eclectic") view.

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LECTURES

Lama Ugyen. Tape recording of his talk on Mi-pham's life, teachings and influences, Kathmandu, 1992.

Kra-'gu Rinpoche. Tape recording of his talk on the *Rgyal-po'i lugs-kyi bstan-bcos*, Nova Scotia, Canada, July 1995.

INTERVIEWS

Jigme Lingtsang [*alias* Gling-tshang *sras*] (Chengdu, PRC). A member of the People's Political Consultative Conference of China. Jigme Lingtsang is the son of the Sde-dge *sras-mo* (see below). Interview conducted at his home in Chengdu, PRC.

Skal-bzang-chos-sgrol [*alias* Sde-dge *sras-mo*] (Chengdu, PRC). Born circa 1912. Her father was Rdo-rje-seng-ge, the king of Sde-dge. She was married to the King of Gling-tshang and was thus also known as the Gling-tshang *btsun-mo* (queen). Interview conducted in her home in Chengdu, PRC.

Ven. *A-khro Rinpoche (Cambridge)*. A Bka'-brgyud lama whose monastery is Nezang Dgon-pa in his birthplace Nangchen. His monastery is closely affiliated with the Dpal-spungs monastery in Sde-dge. Interview conducted at his home in Cambridge, England, July 1995.

Ven. T.G. Dhongthog Rinpoche (Seattle). A leading Sa-skya teacher, founder of Sapan Institute in Seattle, Washington. Interview conducted in Bloomington, Indiana, January 1997.

Ven. *Khra-'gu Rinpoche (Oxford)*. (b. 1933) His monastery is Khra-'gu dgon-pa in Nangchen and is Kar-ma Bka'-brgyud. He has served as the abbot of Rumtek Monastery in Gangtok, Sikkim. Interview conducted at Thrangu House, Oxford, July 1995.

Ven. *Thub-bstan-nyi-ma (London)*. Co-editor of the *Bod-Rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*. He is the Rinpoche of both a Rnying-ma-pa and a Bka'-brgyud-pa monastery in Min-yags, Khams. Interview conducted at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London, July 1995.

VERSIONS OF THE *RGYAL-PO 'I LUGS-KYI BSTAN-BCOS*

1. [MIPHAM]: Mi-pham Rgya-mtsho. *Rgyal-po'i lugs-kyi bstan-bcos*. No publisher, no date.

The copy I used appears to be hand-copied from the edition published in 1936 and stored at the Sne'u House in Lhasa. The work is catalogued at Indiana University Library as follows: "Dharamsala: Bod-gzün-śes-rig-par-khañ, 1970?" with a note that it is a "lithograph copy of a print from the 1909 Lhasa Sne'u-sag blocks."

Note: After comparing this edition with the following two Tibetan editions and determining that there are no significant differences in the excerpts quoted herewith, I have simply transcribed this first edition and included it in the text for the reader's ease.

2. *Rgyal-po lugs-kyi bstan-bcos sa-gzhi-skyong-ba'i rgyan*. Delhi: Gelong Jamyang Ladakh Institute of Higher Studies, 1968.
3. U-rgyan-chos-phel, ed. *Rgyal-po-lugs-kyi-bstan-bcos-sa-gzhi-skyong-ba'i-rgyan*. Lhasa: Bod-ljongs-mi-dmangs-dpe-skrun-khang, 1983.
4. *Guowang xiushenlun*. Lhasa: Xizang Renmin Chubanshe, 1987.

APPENDIX A

The Kings of Sde-dge¹

<u>Reign Period</u>	<u>Name</u>
? -- 1738	Bstan-pa-tshe-ring
1738-1774	Blo-gros-rgya-mtsho
1774-1790	Kun'grub-bde-ga'-bzang-po
1790-18??	Tshe-dbang-rdo-rje-rig-'dzin
18??- ?	Dam-tshig-rdo-rje(-tshe-ring-rnam-rgyal) (b. 1811- d. ?)
18??-1898	Dpal-ldan-'chi-med-rtag-pa'i-rdo-rje <i>alias</i> Blo-gros-phun-tshogs
18?? -1894	Ngag-dbang-'jam-dpal-rin-chen
1894-1908	'Jigs-med-rdo-rje-seng-ge (1) (b. 1877-d. 1926)
1908-1918	Chinese occupation
1918-1926	'Jigs-med-rdo-rje-seng-ge
1926-c.1946	Tshe-dbang bdud-'dul (b.1916-d.1942)
1946-	U-rgyan-bdud-'dul <i>alias</i> U-rgyan-rig-'dzin-'jigs-med-gar-gang (b. 1938)

¹ The sources for this list are Golzio (1985); and Kolmas (1988).

APPENDIX B

The Monasteries of Sde-dge²

Rnying-ma-pa Monasteries

Rdzong-'go	Drod-chen	Nyin-dgon
Rdor-brag	Dge-gong	Brag-dmar
Gnam-brag	Rdza-rgyal	Khang-dmar
E-wam	Dpon-ru	Stag-mo
G.yag-ze	Khra-skyabs	A-'dzom
Rgya-rong	A-se	Mda'-kho
U-gur	Phug-khung	Yid-legs
Ka-thog	Sgrol-ma lha-khang	Ki-'gu
Le-dgon	Rmog-rtsa	Rag-chab
Rtsa-shul	Rmug-sang	Yang-le
Ba-rod	Bsam-'grub	Dgon-phug
'Ju-nang	Sib-mdal	Drung-yig
Ra-skor	Khre-se	Bar-khyim
'Bum-rnying	Khro-dge	Jo-mo
Dung-dkar	Rgya-shod	Bde-chen
Gu-lung	Smyo-shul	Ka-thog
Dge-mang	Dza-ka	Drwag-dkar
Ba-thul	Sog-mo	Mnyam-skyid
Dre'u-dkar	'O-thang	Zla-yi-dgon
Phya-tsa	Khams-dbang	Sbra-thog
'Go-tsha		

Sa-skyapa Monasteries

Dgon-chen	Rdzong-sar	'Khor-mdo
Dra-ma	Dpe-war	Sga-len
Dbod-stod	Mgon-gzigs	Lha-rgyal
Ye-na	Mkhar-mdo	Seng-'gying
Lcags-ra	Maṇḍala	Rdzong-mdal

² This list of monasteries is drawn from Karma-rgyal-mtshan (1994): 80-3. The author of the *Sde-dge chos-'byung* acknowledges that he may have missed some monasteries or made errors. However, this is the most comprehensive list that I have seen to date.

Lha-sa-steng
Sa-skya
Ma-rgan-dan
Dkar-mo-stag-tshang
Dgon-chen-thang-rgyal
Glang-sna
'Dan-chos-'khor
Gro-bdrung

Spo-lu
Rab-chu
Gser-ljongs
Dgon-sar
Gu-re
Rma-yon
Dung-mdo
Wa-ra
Dam-chos
Rab-brtan

Bkra-shis
Mdo-srib
Shang-tho
'Dam-thog
Sbra-mtho
Spom-'rdzom
Rdo-kho
Bkra-tshe
Rnam-rgyal
Khri-'du-skal-bzang

Bka'-brgyud-pa Monasteries

Dpal-'byor
Ja-chung
Chos-dbu
Re-'gu
Bstan-'phel
Sātsatsha
Pad-rnying
Zog-pa-bstan-'phel
Rtse-ri
Rin-chen-gling

Dmar-dris
Dka'-phu
Dran-thang
Shug-ra
Rnam-rgyal-gling
Chos-dpal
Dgon-phu
Wam-dgon
Chos-nyid
Gur-phu

'Khro-phu
Gtser-ston
Chos-sgrub
'Dzi-sgar
Rtis-phu
Rgyu-ne
Drung-ram
Skyabs-ce
Rdzong-shod
Khyung-ngu

Dge-lugs-pa Monasteries

Sgon-gsar
Nya-'gugs
Bsam-'grub
Spang-dor
Dgon-gsar
Jo-bo
Ser-shul

Ka-bzhi
'O-grod
Mang-dge
'Ju-mang
Thar-shul
'Bum-gsar

Rdo-dgon
'Bab-dar
Dkar-'od
'Bam-gling
Byang-chub
Dbon-po

Bon-po Monasteries

Steng-chen
Sman-rgyal
Dgon-chung
Khro-thung

'Bum-smad
Zer-'phro
Lcang-lung

Brda-dbon
Ru-dpon
Kha-rag