

Bulletin of Tibetology



VOLUME 50

No. 1 & 2

Special Issue

2014

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
GANGTOK, SIKKIM

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Annual subscription rates: South Asia, Rs150. Overseas, \$20.

Correspondence concerning bulletin subscriptions, changes of address, missing issues etc., to: Administrative Officer, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok 737102, Sikkim, India (directornitsikkim@gmail.com). Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor at the same address.

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PRINTED IN INDIA AT VEE ENN PRINT-O-PAC, NEW DELHI

BULLETIN OF TIBETOLOGY

Volume 50 Number 1 & 2 2014

SERIES 2

**THE DRAGON AND THE HIDDEN LAND:
SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES ON SIKKIM
AND BHUTAN**

BHUTAN-SIKKIM PANEL HELD AT THE 13TH SEMINAR OF
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TIBETAN STUDIES,
ULAAN BATAAR, MONGOLIA, 2013

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THE MONASTERY BKA' BRGYUD DGON GSAR IN THE
CHUMBI VALLEY:

THE 'BA' RA BA BKA' BRGYUD PA SCHOOL AND ITS
CONNECTION WITH SIKKIM¹

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Introduction

Gro mo, the present-day Chumbi valley, is nestled between Sikkim and Bhutan in Southern Tibet. On several occasions, this area was important in a political context, for example in 1904, when the British, who lead an expedition to Lha sa, were entering Tibet from Sikkim via the Chumbi valley. Nowadays, it is part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and thus a border region between China and India. While for China today it might merely serve as a strategic point, for the British it was also of economical relevance. This region had long been an important place for traders, as old caravan routes passed through going from Tibet to Bhutan and Sikkim and from there onwards to West Bengal. The routes were not only frequented by traders but also by accomplished masters and pilgrims. One Buddhist school, whose followers often travelled to or through this valley, was the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school. Important sites related to this school were situated in Tibet as well as in Bhutan and in Sikkim. In order to reach those locations, the members of this school used the ancient caravan routes and thus passed through the Chumbi valley. During the twelfth Tibetan *rab byung*, that is the time between 1687 and 1746, two 'Ba' ra ba monasteries were built in the Chumbi valley. They became an important contact point for pilgrims who travelled from Tibet to Bhutan and Sikkim or vice versa.

¹ I would like to thank Anna Balikci-Denjongpa and Jenny Bentley for organising the Sikkim Bhutan panel. Unfortunately, I could not participate as I was unable to travel during the time of the conference. All the more, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the proceedings. Furthermore, I am indebted to Prof. Franz-Karl Ehrhard, who first arose my interest in the studies of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school, and to Prof. Petra Maurer. Last but not least thanks are due to Tashi Tsering from the Amnye Machen Institute who brought the articles written by Lobsang Champa to my attention.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate the connection of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school with Sikkim. Up to now, the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa has not received a lot of attention although their teachings and traditions have been upheld since the fourteenth century. First, a short introduction to this school will be given. Second, it will be shown why Sikkim became a pilgrimage site for followers of the 'Ba' ra ba school. Finally, the relationship between Sikkim and the bKa' brgyud dgon gzar monastery in the Chumbi valley, which once belonged to the Sikkimese kingdom, will be illustrated. This monastery served as former main seat of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku.²

The 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school

The bKa' brgyud pa is one of the main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The expression bKa' brgyud pa refers to the orally transmitted tantric teachings, which are passed from teacher to disciple. The great scholar Pad ma dkar po (1527-1592) pointed out that the term dKar brgyud would be more appropriate, as it means white lineage. Members of this school often wear white robes as a sign of an ascetic life. Nevertheless, it seems that the designation bKa' brgyud gained more acceptance.³ The term bKa' brgyud pa summarises several lineages going back to Dwags po lha rje, the disciple of Mi la ras pa, who is also known as sGam po pa (1079-1153).⁴ The different lineages going back to sGam po pa and to his nephew are divided into the four major (*che bzhi*) and the eight minor branches (*chung brgyad*). The 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa is one of the eight minor branches. It was founded by Gling ras pa Pad ma rdo rje (1128-1288). The 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud can be sub-divided into further branches, the sTod 'brug bKa' brgyud, founded by rGod tshang pa (1189-1258) being one of them. The Yang dgon bKa' brgyud branch, which was established by rGyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213-1258?), is again an

² This article is an outcome of my studies on the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa, which I am currently undertaking at the University of Munich as a Ph.D. project.

³ See Karma Phuntsho (2013), p. 138 and Miller (2005), pp. 369-70.

⁴ The bKa' brgyud pa schools going back to sGam po pa are also called Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa. Additionally, Khyung po mal 'byor founded the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud pa which, however, is not directly related to those schools of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa. For further information regarding the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud pa see Kapstein (1980), pp. 138-44 and Smith (2001), pp. 53-6.

offshoot of the sTod 'brug bKa' brgyud, whereas the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud developed from the Yang dgon bKa' brgyud pa.⁵

'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1310-1391) is regarded as founding father of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa. He was born in 'Ba' ra brag in the Shangs valley, about 30 km from Shigatse (gZhis ka rtse). This bKa' brgyud offshoot received its name from that place. rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po studied under the most renowned masters of his time, for instance under Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) and Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361). Thus he himself became an important master. He also brought the 'Ba' ra ba teachings to Bhutan, to where he undertook several journeys and did not only spread his teachings but also acted as a kind of mediator between local chieftains. As gestures of gratitude, and probably to make him stay in Bhutan, monasteries were built. One of those was the monastery Dranggye Gonpa ('Brang rgyas kha), which was built for him in Paro (sPa gro) during the fourteenth century. After he had passed away in this monastery, it became a main pilgrimage site for his followers.⁶

His successors spread the 'Ba' ra ba teachings in Tibet. Nam mkha' rdo rje (1486-1553), a native of Mang yul Gung thang, studied in the Shangs valley under Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1475-1530), who was regarded as the incarnation of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po. Then he returned to his home region and established the 'Ba' ra ba teachings in south-western Tibet, while Nam mkha' dpal 'byor (sixteenth century), one of his disciples, spread them to Gu ge in Western Tibet.⁷ During the seventeenth century, the 'Ba' ra ba teachings reached present-day Sikkim: dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (1601-1687), a native of Grwa in Mang yul Gung thang, established the first monasteries following the 'Ba' ra ba tradition there.

The 'Ba' ra ba teachings reach Sikkim

The accomplished master dKon mchog rgyal mtshan played an important role in the spreading of the 'Ba' ra ba teachings to Sikkim. His root teacher Karma gSal byed (d.1658), the second 'Ba' ra ba sPrul sku,

⁵ See Ehrhard (2000), p. 51, Ehrhard (2009), pp. 184-8, and Smith (2001), pp. 44-5. For further reading on the different bKa' brgyud pa branches see among others Smith (2001), pp. 39-46.

⁶ See Aris (1979), pp. 181-4, Ardussi (2002), pp. 5-16, Ardussi (2011), p. 32, Baruah (2000), pp. 256-8, Ehrhard (2000), p. 52, Ehrhard (2009), p. 189, note 13, and Karma Phuntsho (2013), pp. 130-1 and pp. 182-4.

⁷ See Ehrhard (2000), pp. 55-66 and Ehrhard (2009), pp. 193-4.

instructed him to travel to the previously opened sBas yul 'Bras mo ljongs, that is present-day Sikkim. Following this instruction, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan embarked upon a journey to Sikkim, where he visited the sacred site of Tashiding (bKra shis sding). Then he met the first Buddhist ruler of that country, the previously installed king Phun tshogs rnam rgyal (1604-1670). The king wanted dKon mchog rgyal mtshan to stay at the sacred site of Tashiding but since some monks showed him little respect he refused.⁸ Thereupon, the king provided him with some donations and dKon mchog rgyal mtshan went to 'Dam bzung. There he found many donors and was able to build his own monastery in the *mon* style. The monastery comprised a temple and a great assembly hall. A golden statue of Vajradhāra, containing sacred substances from India and Tibet, was placed in the assembly hall.⁹

In the following years, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan travelled back and forth between Tibet and Sikkim. His last journey brought him to northern Sikkim: As he arrived at bTsun mo rin chen thang, that is present-day Chungthang, demons caused mischief and because of that, the villagers suffered, for example due to the lack of water. dKon mchog rgyal mtshan subdued a lake-spirit by giving various blessings. Thereby a new spring appeared and the villagers were again provided with water. Additionally, he saw a stone appearing, which looked like the head of a snake. He identified it as an evil demon and tamed it by erecting a monastery. dKon mchog rgyal mtshan spent his last years in Chungthang. The snake-like stone can still be seen today. It is located near the present-day monastery of Chungthang, which nowadays follows the rNying ma tradition.¹⁰

dKon mchog rgyal mtshan was the first master to bring the 'Ba' ra ba teachings to Sikkim shortly after the opening of the land to the Buddhist doctrine. His incarnations were also closely related to Sikkim as it will be shown below. So far it was believed that only followers of the rNying ma tradition acted in Sikkim soon after the land was opened to

⁸ See *gSer-phreng/a*, Vol. III, 112.5-116.3 and Erschbamer (2011), pp. 39-43.

⁹ See *gSer-phreng/a*, Vol. III, 116.3-117.4, Erschbamer (2011), p. 44, and Erschbamer (2013). It is not entirely certain where exactly this monastery was built. It is likely that the place 'Dam bzung refers to an area not far from Kalimpong in West Bengal, which is called Dāmsāng by local Lepchas; see Ardussi (2011), p. 36 and Mullard (2011b), p. 54.

¹⁰ For a complete hagiography of dKon mchog rgyal mtshan see *gSer-phreng/a* and *gSer-phreng/b*. See Erschbamer (2011) for a complete translation of the hagiography. The part dealing with his journeys to Sikkim was edited, see *BJG*, 26-39. For more details regarding dKon mchog rgyal mtshan and about how the 'Ba' ra ba teachings reached Sikkim, see also Erschbamer (2013). For some notes on dKon mchog rgyal mtshan compare Ardussi (2011), p. 36 and Ehrhard (2009) p. 196, note 26.

Buddhism. However, the teachings of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa also spread in Sikkim at that time. Nevertheless, the 'Ba' ra ba school did not have such a strong presence as the rNying ma pa and the teachings were not as popular as those of the latter.

bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery - main seat of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku in the Chumbi valley



The monastery of bKa' brgyud dgon gsar in the Chumbi valley, 1938¹¹

Two new monasteries were erected in Gro mo, the present-day Chumbi valley in Tibet, during the time of the twelfth Tibetan *rab byung*, that is between 1687 and 1746. These were named bKa' brgyud dgon gsar and

¹¹ From the collection of Bruno Beger, Schaefer Expedition, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok.

mTshams brag dgon. They became important bases for followers of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud tradition, who were on their way from Tibet to the main pilgrimage sites in Sikkim and Bhutan. Furthermore, bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery developed into the main seat of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku, the incarnations of the aforementioned master dKon mchog rgyal mtshan. These monasteries stayed in close relationship with Sikkim. In those days, parts of the Chumbi valley belonged to the Sikkimese kingdom, among them also the area where these monasteries were built. In 1792, these parts were annexed by the Chinese Amban. Even so, Sikkimese were still given access to the Chumbi valley during the summer months. They were allowed to herd their cattle and thus Sikkimese taxpayers resided in this area. Additionally, from 1780s to 1888, the summer palace of the Sikkimese royal family was located there.¹²



Entrance to bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery, 1936¹³

¹² See Bajpai (1999), pp. 16-19, Mullard (2011a), p. 40 note 25, and Mullard and Wongchuk (2010), pp. 85-90.

¹³ From the collection of Sir Evan Yorke Nepean Baronet held at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok.

The monastery bKa' brgyud dgon gсар in the Chumbi valley is also known as bKa' dgon tше [m]chog gling or as Gro mo bKa' brgyud. It is nestled on a hill of pines west of the village Shar gsing ma in the district of Gro mo rdzong in south-western Tibet, and still exists to this day.¹⁴ It was built by one Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag in order to prevent misfortune among the nomads living there during the twelfth Tibetan *rab byung*.

Furthermore, during the twelfth Tibetan *rab byung* [that is between 1687 and 1746], the nomads of Gro mo were in great danger due to wild animals such as tigers, leopards, and bears. A rich person of that region, called Rin sgang sgom rtsa ba, approached [equipped] with a sling to a meditation cave called Nyi brag khung bu, where [someone] practised. [He] went to meet Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag, whose retreat helpers were non-humans. [He] spoke about the history of harm caused by the wild animals. Then [he] asked for help. Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag said: 'If you give me the nomad region called dGun mal, I will be able to send the wild animals such as tigers, leopards etc. to Assam.' In accordance [with that] the nomad region called dGun mal was given to the Bla ma. The Bla ma chased out the wild animals such as tigers and leopards to Assam.¹⁵

Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag established bKa' brgyud dgon gсар monastery at the spot which he was given by the nomads. The monastery comprised an assembly hall with four beams and eight pillars, a temple flanked by two beams, and a building containing the one storey high statue of Vajradhāra made of gold and copper. To the west of the assembly hall one could find a shrine of the protector's deity Ye shes mgon po. Behind that building there was a small house containing the *Rin chen gter mdzod* collection. Furthermore, there were shrine rooms of

¹⁴ See the map provided at the end of this article indicating the most important places mentioned herewith.

¹⁵ *GLY*, p. 48: *de'ang bod rab byung bcu gnyis pa'i dus 'og tsam du gro mo'i 'brog sder stag gzig dom dred sogs gcan gzan gyi 'jigs pa che bar byung bas / khul de'i phyug bdag rin sgang sgom rtsa ba zhes pas sna thod la dang nye bar nyi brag khung bu zhes pa'i sgrub phug tu bsnyen sgrub mdzad cing mtshams g.yog mi ma yin gyis mdzad pa'i grub dbang mtshams pa mnga' bdag ces zhu ba zhig yod de'i mdun bcar te gcan gzan gyi gnod pa byung tshul dang de las skyob pa'i skyabs 'jug zhus pas / grub dbang mtshams pa mnga' bdag gis khyod kyi 'brog sa dgun mal zhes pa de nga la sprad na ngas stag gzig la sogs gcan gzan rnams a sam du brdzang chog ces gsungs pa bzhin dgun mal zhes pa'i 'brog sa de bla mar phul / bla mas stag gzig la sogs pa'i gcan gzan dug pa can rnams a sam du bskrad / . See also *GKG/a*, p. 174 and *GKG/b*, p. 84.*

gNas chung and bDe ba chen po as well as a temple of rGyal po sku lnga.¹⁶

Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag invited his teacher bsTan 'dzin nyi zla (d.1753) to the newly established monastery. This teacher was the incarnation of dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, the master who brought the 'Ba' ra ba teachings to Sikkim.¹⁷ After some time, he established a small monastery in the vicinity of bKa' brgyud dgon gsar.

At first, [bsTan 'dzin nyi zla] stayed at the present monastery and in the vicinity. [He] was allowed to practise faultlessly the three basic rituals along with one monk and eight followers [in] a dwelling place with four beams. That practise place was named mTshams brag dgon.¹⁸

bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery, which is the larger one of the two monasteries, became the main seat of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku, that is the incarnation of dKon mchog rgyal mtshan. This sPrul sku had his own residence within the monastic compound.

Between the big kitchen and the dharma school is a huge gate. From there, after more than twenty steps in northern direction, one reaches the residence of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku, which is located on a mountain slope. In this large building, which is completely fascinating, are located some smaller bedrooms, an assembly hall, a treasury room, a room for servants, a kitchen, a storeroom, and horse stables. Bla ma A jo'o mtshams pa rdo rje [twentieth century] resided there and there were always about thirty monk's quarters for meditation.¹⁹

¹⁶ See *GLY*, p. 48, *GKG/a*, p. 175, and *GKG/b*, p. 85. The *Rin chen gter mdzod* is an important collection of *gter ma* literature. This collection is part of the five great treasures (*mdzod chen lnga*), which were composed by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899). For further reading see Schwieger (1990), Schwieger (1995), Schwieger (1999), Schwieger (2009), and Schwieger (2010), pp. 321-35

¹⁷ His incarnation status was confirmed by dKon mchog rgyal mtshan's disciple Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan; see Ehrhard (2009), p. 200, note 32.

¹⁸ *GLY*, p. 48: *thog mar da lta'i dgon de dang nye bar bzhugs te bzhugs gnas ka bzhi dang 'khor brgyad grwa gcig dang bcas gzhi gsum gyi phyag len mi nyams pa gnang / dgon gnas kyi mtshan la mtshams brag dgon zhes zer /*. See also *GKG/a*, p. 175 and *GKG/b*, pp. 84-5. The three basic rituals (*gzhi gsum*) refer to the purification and reconciliation ceremony (*gso sbyong*), the summer or rainy season retreat (*dbyar gnas*) and the ceremony for releasing the summer retreat (*dgag dbye*).

¹⁹ *GKG/b*, p. 85: *chos ra dang thab tshang chen mo'i bar la sgo chen zhig yod pa nas gom pa nyi shu lhag tsam yod pa'i byang ngos ri ldebs su bka' brgyud sprul sku rin po che'i bla brang thog brtsegs can der gzim chung khag dang / tshom chen / phyag mdzod khang / zhabs phyi khang / gsol tab / gnyer tshang / chibs ra sogs cha tshang mdzes sdug ldan yod pa dang / rang byung bla ma a jo'o mtshams pa rdo rje sogs bzhugs yul*

The bKa' brgyud sPrul sku was the only tantric monk. In other words, he did not always reside in the monastery but he had an own family and lived outside the monastic complex in the village most of the time. For ceremonies or gatherings he came to the monastery.²⁰

The monastery was financed by taxpayers from the lower Chumbi valley and from eastern regions of Sikkim. Among the Sikkimese regions which paid for the bKa' brgyud dgon gsar, were Rinak (Ri nag), Lamaten (La mag steng), and Lingtam (Li 'dam). The sons of the taxpayers were free to enter the monastery as monks, whereas this privilege was refused to others.²¹



Monks in the courtyard of bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery with the abbot Ajo Rinpoche in white robe, 1936.²²

bsam gtan lugs kyi grwa shag sum cu tsam snga phyir chags yod /. See also *GKG/a*, pp. 175-6.

²⁰ See *GKG/a*, p. 177 and *GKG/b*, p. 87.

²¹ See *GKG/a*, p. 177 and *GKG/b*, pp. 86-7. These places are even today linked with the 'Ba' ra ba. A monastery following 'Ba' ra ba tradition is located in Rinak, whereas small village monasteries belonging to the 'Ba' ra ba are situated in Lamaten and Lingtam. As the lower Chumbi valley once belonged to the Sikkimese kingdom and as the summer palace of the Sikkimese royal family was situated there, it is not surprising that the main seat of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku, which was also located in this area, was financed by Sikkimese taxpayers.

²² From the collection of Sir Evan Yorke Nepean Baronet held at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok.

In the nineteenth century, the twelfth Dalai Lama 'Phrin las rgya mtsho (1856-1875) renamed the two monasteries. mTshams brag dgon pa became dGa' ldan bstan rgyas gling and bKa' brgyud dgon gsar was renamed to dGa' ldan tshe [m]chog gling.²³

Four different departments (*bla khag*) or transmission lines were established within the monastery during the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. They were named Shar ri'i chu bzang Bla ma, Rin sgang btsun sgar Bla ma, Chu 'bi gstang mkhar Bla ma, and Yul gsar steng pa Bla ma. In 1959, they were dissolved and the various members of the departments went abroad.²⁴

Due to the political situation, the late bKa' brgyud sPrul sku was also forced to leave Tibet in 1959. Only a few monks stayed behind and the monastic complex slowly fell into decay. After the Cultural Revolution, some parts of the monastic complex were renovated.

Within a short time, between the years 1983-6, upper and lower parts of nine temples, as well as the assembly hall were renovated. Furthermore, five monk's quarters, a kitchen, and a storage room were newly erected. A reservoir made of cement was erected in a canyon in a distance of about 11,900 meters. Iron pipes for water supply were laid. The significance of offerings and water supply was decided.²⁵

Furthermore, some statues were newly erected and additional frescos painted. Some monks following the bKa' brgyud tradition were invited to reside and practise in that monastery. Unfortunately, recent publications do not specify further to which of the many different schools among the bKa' brgyud pa tradition these two monasteries once belonged. It seems that it has been generally forgotten that those monasteries were important sites for the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school or even part of it. More recent documentations concerning the bKa' brgyud dgon gsar cannot clearly allocate the monastery to a specific tradition. According to some texts the monasteries were part of the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud pa, in another text they are given the name 'Bar ba, an abbreviation of 'Ba' ra ba, but that term could not be identified as

²³ See *GKG/a*, pp. 175-6 and *GKG/b*, p. 85.

²⁴ See *GKG/a*, p. 176 and *GKG/b*, p. 86.

²⁵ *GKG/b*, p. 87: 1983-1986 *lo bar dus thung nang du 'du khang sogs steng shod lha khang dgu nyams gso byas shing / grwa shag lnga dang / thab tshang / gnyer tshang bcas gsar du brgyab pa dang / rgyang thag rmid (= smi) khri chig stong drug brgya lhag tsam gyi ri khug tu ar 'dam las grub pa'i chu gsog rdzing bu bskrun cing / lcags sbub kyi chu ka la gsar du 'then te dgon pa'i mchod pa dang 'thung chu'i gnad don thag gcod gnang zhing /*. See also *GKG/a*, p. 178.

sub-school of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud. Instead, an editor's note suggests that 'Bar ba refers most likely to the 'Ba' rom school. However, even though the most commonly known sources do not make it evident, without any doubt the monasteries and the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku can be connected to the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school. Followers of the 'Ba' ra ba built and maintained them until they were forced to leave Tibet in the late 1950s and the main seats were then re-established in exile.²⁶

Sikkim - new home of the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku

The late bKa' brgyud sPrul sku 'Jigs med ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1939-2007), being the seventh in his line, was born in the Chumbi valley. His incarnation status was recognised by the sixteenth Karma pa Rang 'byung rig pa'i rdo rje (1924-1981) and Sa skya khri 'dzin Ngag dbang mthu stobs dbang drag (1900-1950). He studied under several masters in Gro mo, sKyid grong, and in rTsis ri.

Due to the difficult times and political changes, the seventh bKa' brgyud sPrul sku had to leave his monastery bKa' brgyud dgon gsar and Tibet in 1959. As the Chumbi valley once belonged to the Sikkimese kingdom, it is not surprising that the monks of the bKa' brgyud dgon gsar in the Chumbi valley always stayed in close connection with Sikkim, where there still were practitioners of their tradition and where some monasteries held the tradition alive. This might also be one reason, why the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku went to Sikkim. In Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, he found his new home. He established a monastery, which was named Tshe [m]chog gling in order to commemorate the abandoned one in the Chumbi valley.²⁷ This monastery is located in Chandmari, Gangtok. The Sikkimese monasteries of Papyuk (sPa phyug), Tsangyek (rTsa brngas), and Rinak (Ri nag) are affiliated to that monastery.

²⁶ See *GLY*, p. 49, *GKG/a*, p. 176, and *GKG/b*, p. 85. The monasteries in the Chumbi valley are mentioned in various hagiographies of different 'Ba' ra ba masters as being an important site. Due to its position it became a significant place for members of the 'Ba' ra ba school who were on their way from Tibet to Bhutan or to Sikkim and vice versa. The 'Ba' rom bKa' brgyud pa school is one of the four major branches (*che bzhi*) of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa, whereas the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa school is a sub-school of the 'Brug pa, which in turn is one of the eight minor branches (*chung brygad*). Both, the Shangs pa and the 'Ba' ra ba, have their origin in the Shangs valley, but they are two independent schools.

²⁷ As mentioned before, Tshe [m]chog gling or dGa' ldan tshe [m]chog gling was another name for bKa' brgyud dgon gsar monastery, which it received from the twelfth Dalai Lama in the nineteenth century.

Concluding remarks

Ever since the 'Ba' ra ba teachings reached Sikkim in the seventeenth century, followers of that sub-school of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa kept close relations with Sikkim. The great master dKon mchog rgyal mtshan was the first to build a 'Ba' ra ba monastery in the country. In the course of time further establishments followed mainly in the eastern region. The incarnation line of dKon mchog rgyal mtshan became known as the bKa' brgyud sPrul sku. The monastery bKa' brgyud dgon gsar in the Chumbi valley, which was established by Grub dbang mTshams pa mnga' bdag during the twelfth Tibetan *rab byung*, that is between 1687 and 1746, became their main seat. In 1959, the late bKa' brgyud sPrul sku was forced to leave Tibet and to go to Sikkim as a result of the difficult political situation.

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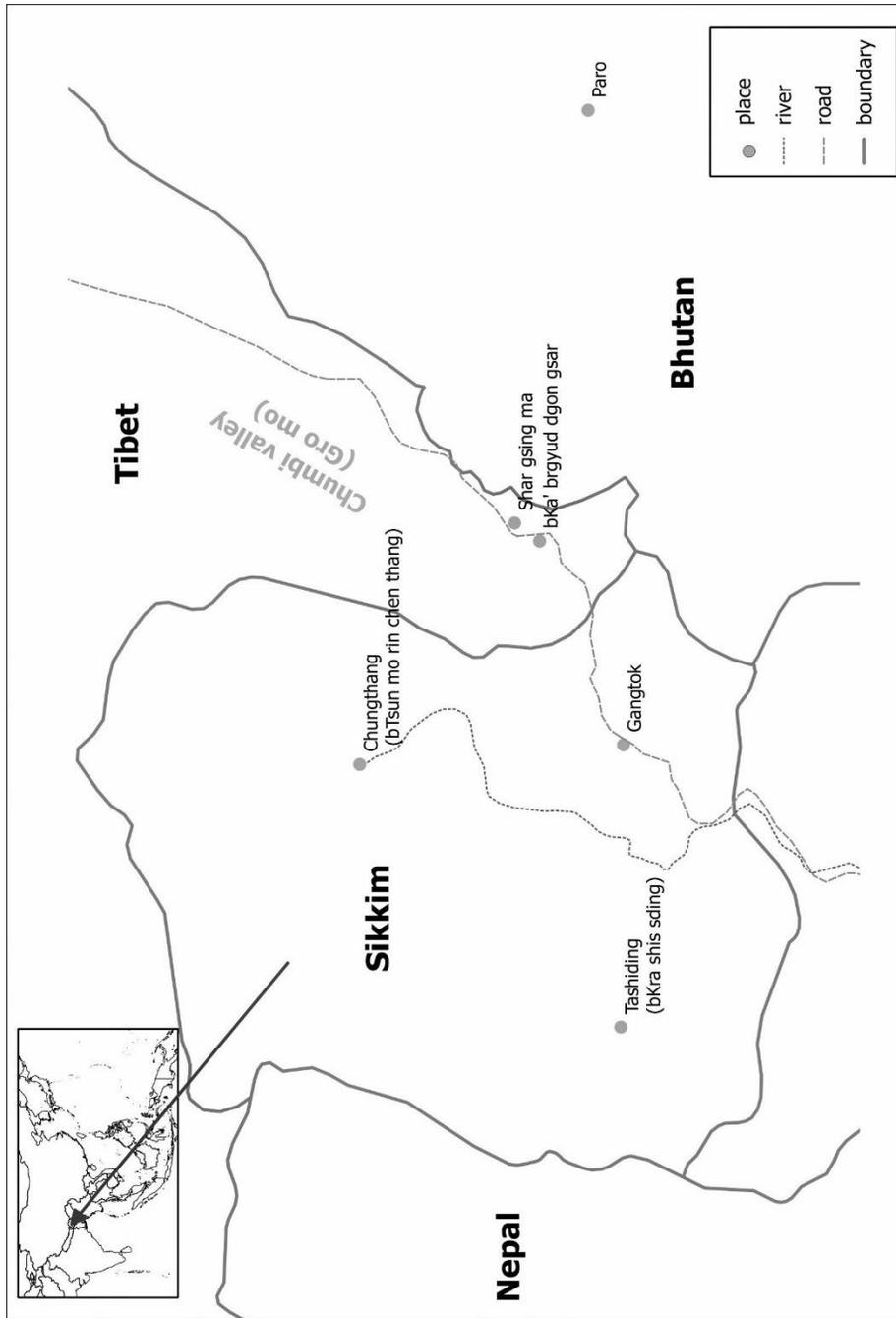
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List of abbreviations

BJG	<i>'Bras ljongs nang dgon sde khag gcig gi chags rabs yig cha</i>
GKG/a	<i>Gro mo bka' brgyud dgon pa'i chags rabs</i>
GKG/b	<i>Gro mo bka' brgyud dgon dga' ldan tshe chog gling gi lo rgyus</i>
GLY	<i>Gangs can bod kyi gnas bshad lam yig gsar ma</i>
gSer-phreng/a	<i>bKa' brgyud gser phreng chen mo</i>
gSer-phreng/b	<i>Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs</i>



Map of important places mentioned in the paper
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