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**I. Contributed entries:**

Amdo, Choné, Gyelmorong

**1) An Introduction to the Amdo Cultural Region by Gray Tuttle  
May 12, 2011)**

The Amdo (*a mdo*) part of the greater Tibetan cultural region is an area roughly the size of France in the northeastern portion of the Tibetan Plateau and is characterized by a shared language and a distinctive social structure and religious culture. This region is demarcated most importantly by a shared language, which is mutually unintelligible to people from Kham (*khams*) and Central Tibet (people from Ladakh [*la dwags*] have an easier time understanding the Amdo language, because the regions farthest from Central Tibet preserved certain elements of ancient Tibetan speech from the imperial period). Even within Amdo there is a great variation of dialects, but in general Amdo Tibetans can communicate with one another. Amdo's social structure is defined most importantly by the basic community units of *tsowa* (*tsho ba*), which consist of groups of families (only rarely of a single clan) that share a responsibility to support each other on important social occasions such as marriage and funerals. Amdo's religious culture is characterized by a remarkable lack of conflict between the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, which have co-existed without any recorded armed conflict in this region. Although the Geluk (*dge lugs*) tradition dominates most of northern-eastern (farming) Amdo, the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) tradition is also well-represented there and in Golok (*mgo log*) through the presence of key monasteries and, more importantly in some areas, village Mani (*ma ni*) or Tantric Halls that serve a lay community of practitioners. The Sakya (*sa skya*) and Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) traditions were strong in Amdo from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, but they were gradually replaced in almost all of Amdo by the Geluk tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Jonang (*jo nang*) Tibetan Buddhist and Bön (*bon*) traditions also have a significant presence in Amdo, especially in the southeastern regions.

Amdo's environment is incredibly varied, ranging from soaring mountain ranges and deep forested valleys much like the Canadian Rockies (though populated with pandas) to high altitude grasslands to lower river valleys (2000 meters) and barren wastes. In general, the higher altitude regions to the south and west (Golok, Ngawa [*rnga ba*], etc.) are inhabited by nomads, while in the lower elevations of the north and east (Tsongkha [*tsong kha*], Choné [*co ne*], etc.) there are farming communities. The main river running through the region is the Ma River (*rma chu*, Huanghe, Yellow River), the main lake is the vast Tso Ngön (*mtsho sngon*, Kokonor [Mongolian], Qinghai, Blue Ocean), and the highest mountain range is the Anyé Machen (*a myes rma chen*) range. The geographic center of the continental People's

Republic of China's territory is just east of the Amdo cultural border, near the town of Linxia.

Amdo is distinguished by incredible ethnic diversity, especially at the northern and northeastern edges of the Tibetan plateau, which made in-migration fairly easy compared to the rest of the plateau. Chinese, Kazakhs, Salar Muslims originally from Central Asia, ethnic Chinese, Mongol (Dongxiang and Bao'an), and Tibetan Muslims, Monguor, Mongol, Uighur and Chinese (maybe as many as 150,000) Tibetan Buddhists represent some of the many ethnic and religious groups that have intermixed in this area for centuries.

In terms of cultural and intellectual contributions to Tibetan civilization, Amdo was home to the three scholars of the post-imperial period who managed to preserve Tibetan Buddhist traditions that were driven out of Central Tibet in the ninth century. They passed these traditions on to Gongpa Rapsel (*dgongs pa rab gsal*) who then transmitted the teachings to students from Central Tibet who returned there to reintroduce Buddhism in Ü (*dbus*) and Tsang (*gtsang*). In the fourteenth century, Tsongkhapa Lozang Drakpa (*tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*), the founder of the Gelukpa (*dge lugs pa*) tradition was born in Amdo, though he lived his adult life in Central Tibet. Two lamas famous for the poetic songs came from the Rebgong (*reb gong*) region of Amdo, Kelden Gyatso (*skal ldan rgya mtsho*) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and Zhapkar (*zhabs dkar*) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century Gelukpa intellectuals from Amdo, such as Sumpa Khenpo (*sum pa mkhan po*), the Cangkyä (*lcang skyä*), Tukwan (tuguan) and Tsenpo (*btsan po*) incarnations, made important contributions to religious doxographies, world geography, history, and religious biography. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama were both born in Amdo as well. Also in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Amdo has become an important source for modern Tibetan literature, from the early work of Gendun Chopel (*dge 'dun chos phel*) to Dondrup Gyel (*don grub rgyal*) to Jangbu (*byang bu*) and many others. Amdo leads the Tibetan regions in the numbers and diversity of literary magazines, both secular and religious in origin.

Politically, the Amdo region has never been home to a single polity that ruled the entire region, nor has it ever been a distinct state or province of any other polity. While the Tibetan empire dominated the region for centuries and its impact shaped the region for over a millennium, the Tsongkha kingdom at the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century was the only Tibetan polity based in the area that ever dominated the region. During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the Coné kingdom and the Kagyü tradition's Drotsang (*gro tshang*) monastery represented significant centers of power. The Qoshud Mongols starting with Gushri Khan ruled the region from 1638 to 1724, though they gave significant command over local land and subjects to monasteries such as Gonlung. During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) the Coné kingdom and Labrang (*bla brang*) Monastery respectively also ruled over large territories on the eastern edge of Amdo, while the Golok federation dominated much of the southwestern highlands. The political history of Ngawa is largely unstudied and deserves more attention.

In terms of the current administrative units of the People's Republic of China, the core of Amdo is in Tso Ngön (*mtsho sngon*, Qinghai) province, though few Tibetans inhabit areas very far west of the great lake Kokonor, and Yülshül (*yul shul*,

Yushu) prefecture to the south is part of the Kham cultural region. In Gansu, the autonomous county of Pari (*dpa' ris*, Tianzhu) marks the northeastern-most extension of the Tibetan culture, though Tibetan culture at one time reached Liangzhou (Wuwei) as late as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In southern Gansu, Kenlho (*kan lho*, Gannan) prefecture is composed of Tibetan autonomous counties. Some remnants of the previous spread of Tibetan culture extend beyond the eastern borders of Kenlho, in areas that are now Muslim or Chinese in culture, such as Linxia (formerly ruled by Tibetans). A significant portion of Sichuan province is also part of Amdo, mostly in the northern and eastern parts of Ngawa (Aba) prefecture, though excluding the areas of Gyelrong (*rgyal rong*), and including Sertar (*gser thar*, Seda) county in Kandzé (*dkar mdzes*, Ganzi) prefecture. In terms of major cities, the capital of Qinghai province, Ziling (*zi ling*, Xining), is the only large city in Amdo, though both Xining and Lanzhou are home to minority nationality universities with significant Tibetan studies programs. Other important towns include Rebgong (Tongren), Labrang (Xiahe), Tsö (*gtsos*, Hezuo), and Chapcha (*chab cha*, in Gonghe county), as all have vibrant Tibetan communities and Tibetan teachers' colleges.

## 2) The Kingdom of Choné by Gray Tuttle (July 3, 2011)

### The Basics

Choné (*co ne*) was an important historical polity in the northeast of the Tibetan plateau. It was ruled by the Gatsang (*dga' tshang*) family, and the ruler was the Choné King (*co ne rgyal po*). Its name derives from the name of a tree, the Jiaoxiang tree (交相树, also known as the Masson Pine 马尾松, lit. "horse-tail pine"). The pronunciation of Chinese "jiao" is close to that of the Tibetan "cho" (Tib. *co*), while Tibetan "ne" (Tib. *ne*) is pronounced locally as "ni" (from Tibetan for two: *gnyis*).<sup>[1]</sup>

### Early History

Although mention of Tibetans being sent to this area is made in Dunhuang documents, and the Ga (*dga'*) family is mentioned in Tibetan historical sources, the first source to link the events of the imperial period with the local Ga (*sga*, *dga'*) ruling family seems to have been the *co ne bstan 'gyur dkar chag* (*The Index to the Choné Canonical Collection of Commentaries*), completed in 1773.<sup>[2]</sup> This source reports that in the time of the Tibetan empire, during Tri Relpachen's (*khri ral pa can*) reign, the interior minister or nanglön (*nang blon*) Ga Yeshé Dargyé (*sga ye shes dar rgyas*) and his retinue of ten thousand soldiers were sent to Choné in Domé (*mdo smad*). He is said to have ruled an area south of Choné in what is now Ngaba (*rnge ba*, Ngawa in Standard Tibetan pronunciation), Zungchu (*zung chu*, Ch. Songpan), and Dzögé (*mdzod dge*), all in present-day Sichuan Province, Ngaba Prefecture.<sup>[3]</sup> Ga Yeshé Dargyé's lineage gave rise to great military leaders (makwön, *dmag dbon*), the second of which was Ga Pangtülchen (*sga spang thul can*), from whose lineage the kings (*gyelpo*, *rgyal po*) of Choné are said to have issued.<sup>[4]</sup> More detailed history of the Tibetan involvement in this region is linked to the rise of Mongol power some time around the 1250s, when the Sakya hierarchs

and Qubilai Qan met nearby. In 1269, when Pakpa (*'phags pa*) passed by this area on the way to Beijing, he left one of his disciples, Sakya Geshé Shenrap (*sa skya dge shes shes rab ye shes*, Ch. Xiri Yixi 希日益西), who converted the existing monastery to the Sakya tradition and became the abbot and simultaneous ruler of the area. One source says that it was he, and not the imperial Tibetan leader sent to Amdo (*a mdo*), who was the first generation ancestor of the later ruling family of Choné.[\[5\]](#)

### **The Kings of Choné**

By 1379, Chinese sources report that the 18 divisions of Tibetans in this area became subordinate to the Chinese prefectural seat of Taozhou 洮州. A Horse and Tea Trading Station (Chama si 茶马司) was set up near here (in the Tiebu Valley, south of Choné) in 1404 to trade with the 18 clans of the Tebo (*the bo*) Tibetans. This gave the Choné Tibetan leader (and first king of Choné) Shidü (*shis bsdus*, Ch. Shijiadi, Xiedi) the opportunity to be recognized as the ruler of these people by the Chinese. The Ming state awarded him and five others with the position of chiliarch (Ch. *qianhu* 千户, Tib. tongpön, *stong dpon*), or "leader of a thousand households."[\[6\]](#) According to the leader of Choné in 1925, his family had moved to the area and taken possession of it in 1404, whereupon they informed the Ming Emperor Yongle of this fact and were recognized as local rulers, and were given a seal of authority and the surname Yang. [\[7\]](#) Most sources agree that the family moved into the area in 1404, but all written sources agree that recognition did not come until 1418 and that the family's power endured for twenty generations until 1949.

From the Chinese sources, the first *tusi* (local official) of Choné was granted authority (i.e. his authority was recognized) over some 18 clans (*zu*) in 1418, under the Ming Yongle Emperor. By at least the fifth generation, the ruling family (the kings) took the Chinese surname Yang and the leadership was passed on to the 20<sup>th</sup> generation: Yang Fuxing 杨复兴; this correspond to the twenty figures listed above.[\[9\]](#)

### **Religion and Politics in Choné**

This polity was ruled by joint religious and political rule, with the elder son taking the role of king and the younger son becoming the head lama. If there was only one son, he would hold both positions. By the Qing period, the family intermarried with the female offspring of the local ruling Mongol khans, the Khoshut Qinwang.[\[10\]](#) In modern times, the king's territory seems to have been limited by the growth of Labrang (bla brang) Monastery's influence. The king's seat of power was also named Choné, and in 1925 it was a village of about 400 families (2,000 individuals) with few Chinese inhabitants.[\[11\]](#)

The main monastery at Choné is called Choné Gönchen Ganden Shedrupling (*co ne dgon chen dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling*) or Tingdzin Dargyeling (*ting 'dzin dar rgyas gling*, Ch. Chandong si), and during the early 15<sup>th</sup> century boasted some 3,800 monks, though this number had dwindled to a (still substantial) 700 by 1925. The monastery also received support from the Qing emperors, such as the Kangxi emperor.[\[12\]](#) The ruling family also took advantage of its connections with the Qing emperors to gain a great deal of power in Central Tibet, where one of the four regent

incarnations, who essentially ruled Tibet between 1777 and 1895, was consistently drawn from these loyal subjects of the Qing empire. The first Tsomönling (*mtsho smon gling/ tshe mon gling*) incarnation Ngawang Tsültrim (*ngag dbang tsul 'khrims*, 1721-1791, r. 1777-1781) was from Choné. He became imperial preceptor (*dishi*) to the Qianlong emperor in 1762, and served as abbot of Yonghegong Monastery in Beijing. He was appointed regent (*gyeltsap, rgyal tshab*) for the 8<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, and received the title Erdeni Nomun Khan in 1777, a position he held until 1781.<sup>[13]</sup> He became the 61<sup>st</sup> Ganden Tripa (*dga' ldan khri pa*) in 1778 and had close connections to Sera (*se ra*) Monastery. He was reappointed regent of Tibet in 1790, but died the next year after serving in this position for only four months. The second Tsomönling Ngawang Jampel Tsültrim (*ngag dbang 'jam dpal tsul khrims*, 1792-1862/1864)<sup>[14]</sup> was also from Choné, from the Ga clan (Yang *tusi*) ruling family. He was best known by his Mongol name, Galdan Shiregetu Samati Bakshi. He became the regent for the 10<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama in 1819. He has been called "by far the most forceful character in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Tibet."<sup>[15]</sup> He held this position for a quarter of a century, though he was away in Beijing in 1829, where he was honored by the Taoguang emperor with the privilege of being able to remain mounted on horseback within the Forbidden City. In 1837, when he became the 73<sup>rd</sup> Ganden Tripa, he was apparently also put in charge of all Tibetan affairs.<sup>[16]</sup> In 1844, with the support of the rival regent lamas, who had been denied power for too long, he was impeached by the Amban Qishan. His supporters among the Sera monks freed him, but he submitted to the Qing orders, was banished to Manchuria for some time, and died at Choné.<sup>[17]</sup> The third incarnation Ngawang Lozang Tenpai Gyeltsen (*ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, 1844-1919) must have been recognized shortly after his predecessor was impeached and removed from his position. He also played an important role in Central Tibetan politics. He was the 87<sup>th</sup> Ganden Tripa from 1907-1914, which left him to take the reigns of power as the sikyong letsap (*srid skyong las tshab*) while the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama was in exile in India.<sup>[18]</sup>

The monastery was also famous for once having been home to a rare Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) (*The Coné Canonical Collection of Commentaries*), a copy of which was fortunately purchased by Joseph Rock and deposited in the Library of Congress shortly before the blocks were destroyed.<sup>[19]</sup> The monastery was a fortified complex, as so many monasteries on the ethnic frontier were.<sup>[20]</sup> The monastery was famous for its dances and butter sculptures, well documented by Rock in 1925.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Sources

The most important early primary historical works for this polity include the *Ming shi lu* 明实录 (*The Veritable History of Ming Dynasty*), records compiled at the end of each emperor's reign; the *co ne bstan 'gyur dkar chag* (*The Index to the Coné Canonical Collection of Commentaries*) completed by the second Jamyang Zhepa (*'jam dbyang bzhad pa*) Könchok Jikmé Wangpo (*dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po*) (1728-1791) in 1773; the 1865 *deb ther rgya mtsho* (*mdo smad chos 'byung*) by Könchok Tenpa Rapgyé (*dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas*); Bao Yongchang and Zhang Yandu's 1877 *Taozhou ting zhi* 洮州厅志, which cites earlier Chinese records; and

the *Qing shi lu* 清实录 (*The Veritable History of Qing Dynasty*) compiled in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century based on earlier records of the Qing. One source not yet examined is called simply Zhou ni san zhong 卓尼三种 (Three Kinds [of Texts?] about Choné) in vol. 24 of Zhang Yuxin, Zhang Shuangzhi bian zuan. *Minguo Zang shi shi liao hui bian* 民國藏事史料彙編. *Zhongguo Zang xue Han wen li shi wen xian ji chen* 中國藏學漢文歷史文獻集成 Beijing shi: Xue yuan chu ban she, 2005. See also the more recent survey: mgon po dbang rgyal, *co ne sa skyong gi lo rgyus*. lan kru'u : Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1997.

## Notes

- [1] Yang Shihong 杨士宏. Zhuoni Yang tusi zhuanlüe 卓尼杨土司传略. Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe. 1989: 1.
- [2] Yang 1989: 3-4; TBRC W1GS66030.
- [3] Yang 1989: 3.
- [4] Source of this is apparently the *Co ne bstan 'gyur dkar chag* (*The Index to the Coné Canonical Collection of Commentaries*), and summarized in *Bod kyi gdung rus zhib 'jug*.
- [5] Pu Wencheng 蒲文成. 1990. *Gan-Qing Zangchuan Fojiao siyuan* characters [*Gansu and Qinghai Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries*]. Xining 西宁: Qinghai minzu chubanshe 青海民族出版社 [Qinghai Nationalities Press], 530-1.
- [6] Yang 1989: 21-22, citing the *Ming shi lu* 明实录, 107 juan, page 2.
- [7] Rock, Joseph F. "Life Among the Lamas of Choni," *National Geographic Magazine*, vol. LIV, November 1928, pp. 569.
- [8] *Bod kyi gdung rus zhib 'jug*.
- [9] See: Yang 1989, which also includes chapters on each of the 20 generations of Co ne's rulers (p.16-132), as well as their Chinese names.
- [10] For details about this lineage see the appendix in Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol; Matthieu Ricard, Constance Wilkinson, and Michal Abrams, trans. *The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogi*, 1994.
- [11] Rock 1928: 572.
- [12] Rock 1928: 576.
- [13] Luciano Petech 1959. "The Dalai-Lama and Regents of Tibet: A Chronological Study." Vol. 47, *T'oung-pao*. (Reprinted in L. Petech. 1988. *Selected papers on Asian history, Serie orientale Roma; vol. 60. vol.60.*), 141-142. See also TBRC Person RID: P332.
- [14] He was also known by the title: Ganden Sherabtu Sharmar Depa Keshi. See: Zheng Qingyou. 1991. "Qishan and Tsemonling Nominhan." Vol. 2, *Tibet Studies*.
- [15] Petech 1959: 141.
- [16] For details of this and other titles he was awarded by the Taoguang emperor in 1825, 1834, 1839, etc. see: Zheng Qingyou. 1991. "Qishan and Tsemonling Nominhan." Vol. 2, *Tibet Studies*.
- [17] Petech 1959: 141-142. See also TBRC Person RID: P4533.
- [18] See TBRC Person RID: P4532.
- [19] Rock 1928: 581.

[20] See Rock 1928: 603, for an image of the massive walls and gate.

[21] Rock 1928.

### 3) An Introduction to Gyelrong by Gray Tuttle (May 13, 2011)

Like other Tibetan cultural-linguistic regions, the Gyelrong (*rgyal rong*) region might be best defined by the original extent of a set of four related Gyelrong languages, which some have argued is an entirely different language family than Tibetan. Whatever the case may be, these four languages are farther removed from Central Tibetan than either Kham (*kham*s) or Amdo (*a mdo*) languages, though they are clearly closely related to the other main Tibetan languages. For example, from a set of a thousand basic words in Tibetan, almost 75% were shared with other Tibetan languages. Gyelrongwas (*rgyal rong ba*, people from Gyelrong) currently speak a range of different languages, including Gyelrong, Kham Tibetan, Amdo Tibetan, and Sichuan Chinese, which tends to serve as a common language now. This linguistic range also represents the ethnic composition of the region, with Amdo and Kham Tibetans, Han Chinese (some residents since the 18th century military colonies were established) and the Qiang people (mostly to the southeast part of Ngawa Prefecture [*rnga ba bod rigs cha'ang rigs rang skyong khul*]) bordering and intermixing with the Gyelrongwa. Despite obvious linguistic differences, Gyelrongwas are lumped together with Tibetans by the Chinese state's ethnic classification, largely because they share cultural features with the Tibetans. For this reason, it is difficult to find an accurate count of the number of Gyelrong people, but their numbers probably run into the hundreds of thousands.

The name Gyelmo Rong (*rgyal mo rong*) can be translated as Valley of the Queen, or "Queendom," which hints at the significant history of the region having been ruled by women. The region is famous in Chinese historical literature and now popular culture as the "Nüguo" or "country (ruled by) women." "Gyelmo Rong" is the abbreviation of "shar gyelmo tsawa rong" (*shar rgyal mo tsha ba rong*), meaning "The Hot Valley of the Queen in the East." Gyelrong is simply an abbreviation of this longer name, though it could also be translated as "Valley of the Kings," which would be appropriate now given the eighteen kingdoms in the region. Finally, the term Gyarong (*rgya rong*), which could be translated as "Chinese valley," has sometimes been used to describe this region, but this seems to be a misnomer. Since the region is best known as Gyelrong, that is the term that will be used in this short essay.

One way of defining the Gyelrong region is by its past political history, namely by reference to the territory of the eighteen kingdoms of Gyelrong. The Chakla King (*lcags la rgyal po*, Mingzheng tusi) with his capital in Dartsendo (*dar rtse mdo*, Kangding) was at one time the most powerful and ruled the largest territory, especially after the Central Tibetan government and military was driven out of the region in 1700 until the rise of the Rapten/Chuchen (*rab brtan/ chu chen*, Jinchuan) kingdom in the mid-1700s. In the early 18th century the Chakla kingdom's territory covered most of southern and western Gyelrong: all of present county of Gyezur (*brgyad zur*, Jiulong), and parts of Dartsendo, Tau (*rta'u*, Daofu), Nyachukha (*nya chu kha*, Yajiang), and Rongdrak (*rong brag*, Danba) counties. The other historically important kingdoms were located in the northern part of Gyelrong and

include Tsenlha (*btsan lha*, Xiaojin), Trokyap (*khro skyabs*), and Rapten/Chuchen, southeast of Dzamtang (*'dzam thang*). The other minor kingdoms were Gotang (*mgo thang*), Gomé (*mgo smad*), and Gotö (*mgo stod*) east of Dartsendo; Drakteng (*brag steng*), Pawang (*dpa' dbang*), Geshitsa (*dge shis tsa*), Gyelkha (*rgyal mkha*), Okzhi (*'og gzhi*), Lunggu (*lung dgu*, Wenchuan), and Muchi (*mu phyi*) in the center of the Gyelrong region; and Somo (*so mo*), Choktsé (*cog tse*), Dzingak (*rdzi 'gag*), and Tenpa (*bstan pa*) in the northeastern part of Gyelrong, referred to as as the Four Tusi (*thu'u si*, Situ, 四土), in present day Barkham (*'bar khams*, Ma'erkang). As a result of frequent fighting between a number of rival kingdoms, Gyelrong is famous for its distinctive architecture of dramatic stone towers in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

In terms of the modern administrative units that include parts of the Gyelrong region, they are located in the most eastern and southeastern parts of Kandzé Prefecture (*dkar mdzes bod rigs rang skyong khul*) and the most south and eastern parts of Ngawa Prefecture. In Kandzé Prefecture: parts of Dartsendo, Tau, Nyakchukha, and all of Rongdrak, Chakzam (*lcag zam*, Luding) and Gyezur counties, though Chakzam has become so Sinified that its historic connection to Gyelrong is mostly forgotten and Gyezur is now thought of as more a part of Kham. In Ngawa Prefecture: Rapten/Chuchen, Tsenlha, and Barkham counties, and parts of Lunggu/Tritsang, Trashiling (*bkra shis gling*, Li), and Trochu (*khro chu*, Heishui) counties, though in these latter two kingdoms the Gyelrong kings ruled over substantial populations of Qiang people and Amdowas (*a mdo ba*), respectively. The current division of the Gyelrong between these two Tibetan autonomous prefectures may have something to do with the orientation of these regions toward Kham and Amdo, respectively, as well as geographic features, such as the mountain range that divides Kham from Gyelrong along the Ngawa/Kandzé boundary. To get a sense of the greatest extent of political territory under the rule of Gyelrong kingdoms in history, see this link (in the case of the eastern and western-most counties, only parts of them were included): **contemporary map of counties that comprise Gyelrong cultural region**.

Because parts of the historic Gyelrong kingdoms and current administrative divisions overlap so much with parts of Kham and Amdo, Gyelrong or parts of Gyelrong are sometimes included in some overviews of Kham and Amdo. For instance, Darstendo is currently thought of as being part of Kham, and there is little discussion or memory that the Chakla Kingdom was a central part of Gyelrong in such contexts. Yet the Dartsendo region retained important elements of Gyelrong identity into the late 20th century at least. Likewise, all of Ngawa Prefecture, including Gyelrong counties, is often included in surveys of Amdo, starting back at least as early as the nineteenth century, when Brakgonpa (*brag dgon pa*) wrote his Ocean Annals (*[deb ther rgya mtsho]* often erroneously called the Amdo Dharma History [*a mdo/mdo smad chos 'byung*]). This inclusion in Amdo may be related to the efforts of some Gelukpa (*dge lugs pa*) monks, with Qing imperial support, to convert the Bönpo (*bon po*) monasteries and populace of northern Gyelrong after the Jinchuan wars of the 18th century.

In terms of environment features, Gyelrong is marked by steep wooded



mountains and river valleys, some sections of which are narrow gorges. The most famous mountain, and a prominent Bön and Buddhist pilgrimage site, is Mount Murdo (*dmu rdo*) (4820 m). A single 120 mile long river basin is at the core of the Gyelrong region, though the main stem and its tributary rivers are known by many names as the river flows from north to south. The central section of the Da Jinchuan River (Great Gold Stream) is known in Tibetan as Chuchen (*chu chen*, Big River), while its eastern tributary the Tsen River (*bstan*) is known in Chinese as the Xiao Jinchuan (Small Gold Stream). Where these two rivers meet (at the seat of Rongdrak county), the confluence of them forms the Gyelmo Ngulchu River (*rgyal mo rngul chu*, Daduhe), which flows into the Min River (*min chu*, Minjiang) south of Chengdu. The upper part of the Min River is found on the eastern edges of Gyelrong.

In terms of religious history, not much has been written about Gyelrong religion in English. During the Tibetan imperial period, Vairocana was said to have been exiled in the Gyelrong region. Northern Gyelrong is also famous as a stronghold of the Bön tradition. This may partially explain why northern Gyelrong is attached to Ngawa Prefecture, as the Nangzhik monastery (*snang zhig dgon*) of the Ngawa grasslands and the Bön monasteries of Sharkhok (*shar khog*, Songpan) created natural cultural links to the northern Gyelrong region. The most important Bön monastery in the region was the Yungdrung Lhanding Monastery (*g.yung drung lha lding dgon*) in Rabten/Chuchen. During the Ming there was a Bön monastery in the Lunggu kingdom (just north of the Wolong nature preserve) called Jiakewa in Ming (Tibetan unknown, but this may be the temple known as Jinbo Si in Chaopo township of Lunggu/Tritsang county) that, along with its subsidiary monasteries, was the home institution to nearly 5,000 monks. There were also important monasteries in Tsenlha, Barkham, Drati (*sbra ti*), Trokyap (*khro skyabs*) and Choktsé. Finally, the northernmost kingdoms were closely connected to Nangzhik Monastery in Ngawa. In 1730 the New Bön tradition was introduced into the region by Sanggyé Lingpa (*sangs rgyas gling pa*) and Kundrol Drakpa (*kun bkrol brag pa*). This tradition is outside the mainstream Bön tradition partially because of its embrace Nyingma (*rnying ma*) treasure cycles and the associated narratives of Padmasambhava. The region also played an important role in the printing of Bön religious texts. During the Ming dynasty, a set of 100 Bön texts was printed in the Lunggu kingdom. In 1751 the Bön Kanjur (*bon bka' 'gyur*) of 281 volumes was printed by the Trochen King (*khro chen rgyal po*) Künga Norbu (*kun dga' nor bu*) to fulfill the intentions of the previous Trochen King Tseten Peljor (*tshe bstan dpal 'byor*). In 1764 and 1766 respectively, the Rapten and Trochen Kings sponsored the printings of a sixteen volume Bön version of the Prajñāpāramitā, called the Khamchen (*kham chen*), to which the family lineages (Dungrap, *gdung rabs*) of two of the religious kings were attached.

In terms of political history, aside from these two family lineages Gyelrong is best studied from the Chinese sources, which record contact with leading lamas from the area from the Ming dynasty as well as major wars with the Qing dynasty. From the early 15th to the middle of the 17th century the local rulers, who were mostly high lamas, participated in tributary relations with the Ming court. These monks were often actively involved in military disputes, at first with rival Tibetan groups, but by the 18th century with the Qing state itself. Both Qing wars in the

Jinchuan regions were waged to keep two Bön monk-rulers (entitled shaluoben in Chinese sources; Loppön (*slop dpon*) in Tibetan, a title often given to the reigning king's younger brother, who was often a monk) from expanding their power and enlarging their kingdoms (based in Chuchen and Tsenlha) at the expense of other Gyelrong kingdoms. The first Jinchuan war was fought from 1747-1749. The second Jinchuan war was waged between 1771-1776. The first Jinchuan campaign employed 200,000 laborers to support the military campaign, while the second employed over 400,000 laborers. The second Jinchuan campaign cost the Qing court 61 million taels, and involved almost 130,000 troops. Given that a Qing soldier or military laborer was considered well paid at the rate of two taels a month, this gives some sense of the cost of suppressing the Gyelrong region. In 1772 there was a token effort at forced conversion of Bönpo monasteries to the Gelukpa tradition but the Qianlong emperor's support was only token, and he actually did not allow the Gelukpa the freedom to convert or proselytize in this region at the conclusion of the war. Instead, many monasteries were made into barracks for Qing troops. From the current strength of the Bön tradition in this area, the Gelukpa clearly did not make significant inroads during the Qing period.

Gray Tuttle, with assistance from Gyelrongwas: Dareji (Yinhong) and Tenzin Jinba

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## **II. Editor for commissioned entries:**

Chentsa (included here for reference), Rebgong, Dhitsa, Huaré/Pari, Amchok Tsennyi, Ngawa

### **1) Power and Politics in Chentsa before Communist Rule by Gray Tuttle and Tsehujia (July 7, 2010)**

The Chentsa (*gcan tsha*) region has a long history dating back to the imperial Tibetan period, when this area was first incorporated into the Tibetan empire. The pre-Communist historical geography of Chentsa is not reflected in the current administrative county divisions, as Chentsa county only includes about half of the traditional Chentsa cultural region. This is especially significant because the other half of the cultural region is now included in a county that has a Muslim (Hui) rather than a Tibetan majority: Bayen (*ba yan*), also known as Hualong county. In Tibetan oral and documented histories, the territory of Chentsa starts at the Sumba Gorge (Tib. *gsum pa*, Ch. Songba Xia) and ends at the Shabo Gorge (Ch. Gongbao Xia). These are gorges along the course of the Yellow River (the former in the north at the border between Jianzha and Guide and the latter in the south end of the county on the border between Jianzha and Xunhua). Chentsa was divided by the Yellow River into two parts commonly known as Chentsa Nyisip (*gcan tsha nyin srib*), meaning the shady side and sunny side of Chentsa. Most of the sunny side is now under the administration of Hualong Country, also known as Bayen by the Tibetans. It stretches from Mount Tsongkha Kyeri (*tsong kha skyes ri*) to Gyutsa (*gyu tsha*) Valley, covering Upper Valley (Tölung, or *stod lung*), Middle Valley (Barlung, or *bar lung*) and Lower Valley (Melung, *smad lung*). There are important monasteries and towns in these valleys. Ditsa (*d+hi tsha*) Monastery (Ch. Zhizha Si) is located in Upper Valley, Jakhyung (*bya khyung*) Monastery and Chentsa Mani (*gcan tsha ma Ni*) in Middle Valley, and *Chökhör* (*chos 'khor*) (Ch. Qunke) in Lower Valley. Today the majority of the people living in these valleys are Hui Muslims (some Tibetans were converted by Ma Bufang in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). A portion of the population still speaks Tibetan, and they look ethnically Tibetan, but they are officially recognized as Hui simply because of their religious beliefs. Moreover, they see themselves as Hui.

The shady side of Chentsa is traditionally made up of Nangra Draonggyé (*snang ra grong brgyad*, the eight communities of Nangra), Hormo Khaksum (*hor mo khag gsum*, the three divisions of Hormo), and Kapuk Tsosum (*rka pug tsho gsum*, the three groups of Kapuk). It makes up the present-day Jianzha County. This area is famous for being the place where, after the fall of the Tibetan empire in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, key Tibetan historical figures such as the Khewa Misum (*mkhas be mi gsum*, the Three Scholars) and Lhalung Pelgyi Dorjé (*lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje*) revitalized Tibetan Buddhism, which is described as the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet. The Three Scholars, namely Rapsel (*rab gsal*), Gejung (*dge 'byung*), and Mar Shakyamuni (*dmar shAkya mu ni*), first arrived in Lo Dorjedrak (*lo rdo rje brag*) in Chentsa and in 844 they moved to Namdzong (*rnam rdzong*) and meditated in the caves there for about 20 years while spreading the Buddhist teachings. After assassinating Tibetan Emperor Langdarma (*glang dar ma*), Lhalung Pelgyi Dorjé fled to the area. He also meditated in a cave in Namdzong. However, no evidence shows that they met each other. Now these caves have become holy sites to which Tibetans make pilgrimage.

According to the *Jianzha Gazetteer* (Ch. Jianzha Zhi) published by Jianzha County Government in 2003, Jianzha County was established in 1953 and is one of the four counties in Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. Prior to the establishment of the county, Jianzha was under the administration of Guide Ting. An administrative system called Qianhu (a thousand households, Tib. *khri dpon*) and Baihu (a hundred households, Tib. *rgya dpon*) was used to exercise the administrative power over the area. This system was originally established by the Mongol khans and later adopted and used by the Ming and Qing dynasties to claim and exercise their control over the region. It remained effective until the Communist takeover of Amdo (*a mdo*) in the early 1950s. After a long period of time, the system prevailed in Amdo, and it became so pervasive that almost every village and community fell under the rule of either a Qianhu or Baihu, depending on the size. It is important to know that Qianhu and Baihu were essentially political titles given by the rulers (such as the Qing emperor) to powerful local Tibetans to rule the area. For example, Nangra Pönpo (*snang ra dpon po*) from Chentsa received his Qianhu title from the Yongzheng Emperor in 1734.

Moreover, all the Qianhu and Baihu title-holders were secular people, in contrast to the religious leaders who are well-known for being the dominant feature of the social and political landscape of Tibet. Before Communist rule, in Chentsa there were four such local leaders: one Qianhu, the Nangra Pönpo, and three Baihu, including the Kyareng Pönpo, the Kyaga (*skya rgya*) Pönpo, and the Kapuk (*rka pug*) Pönpo. The two divisions of Chentsa ("Chentsa Nyisip") on either side of the river could join forces for important matters. For instance, the sixteen Tibetan clans of Bayen/ Hualong county joined with the "Tibetan chieftain from Chentsa" (this must have included the Nangra Pönpo, who controlled portions of more than five counties) in resisting Chinese Communists from 1949 "until May 1952, when an expedition of 10,000 PLA troops was mounted against them." (See *Tibet outside the TAR*, p. 2178 [citing June Teufel Dreyer: "Ch'inghai" p. 7] & pp. 1700-1 [citing *Qinghai lishi jiyao* (*Outline of Qinghai History*), p. 633; and *Jiefang Qinghai*

(*Liberating Qinghai*), p. 503]; see also Mark Stevens unpublished article about the Nangra resistance, given at a Harvard conference on Amdo.

As for religious leaders, the Zhapdrung Karpo (*zhabs drung dkar po*), Lamo Sertri (*lwa mo gser khri*, "the Golden Throne-holder of Lamo Monastery"), and the Kou Batsang (*ko'u ba tshang*) were the important lamas with political titles in the area. In Chentsa, the Zhapdrung Karpo is no doubt the highest lama. In 1558, Altan Khan's son and the royal family members extended an invitation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama, who sent the first Zhapdrung Karpo as his emissary to the Kokonor region. The first Zhapdrung Karpo was born in an area called Lamo (*lwa mo*) in Ü-Tsang (dbus gtsang) and was a highly accomplished lama. The Mongol leaders held great respect for him and treated him like the Dalai Lama himself. He was offered Ngaser Jangchupling (*rnga sger byang chub gling*), a monastery in Nangra (*snang ra*), in Chentsa. The Ming emperor Wanli granted him the title "*tsha gan no min han*." The second Zhapdrung Karpo founded Gur (*mgur*) Monastery in Chentsa in 1683. He also received the title "*tsha gan no min han*" for settling the land disputes between Bayen and Khagang (*kha sgang*) (Khagang is in Hualong County, but it is very close to Jianzha county seat and belongs to Chentsa Nyi). Dechen (*bde chen*) Monastery was founded by the third Zhapdrung Karpo, and it is one of the lama's three main monasteries. The Kangxi Emperor named the monastery Getsokling (*dge tshogs gling*). In addition to the Zhapdrung Karpo, the Lamo Sertri is the other important lama at Dechen Monastery. He was one of the eight Qutughtu (Ch. Hutuketu) based in Beijing during the Qing Dynasty. The 5<sup>th</sup> Sertri was invited to the Qing court in Beijing and served as the Qianlong Emperor's lama. He was involved in building Yong he gong Temple, which is now popularly known as the Lama Temple in Beijing. The 1<sup>st</sup> Lamo Sertri was a reincarnation of Trichen Lodrö Gyatso (*khri chen blo gros rgya mtsho*), who had his own series of reincarnation. It is interesting to note here that he was born to the brother of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Zhapdrung Karpo and studied at Dechen Monastery. He was later named Lamo Sertri, who then began a new reincarnation series.

Before the Communist Party came to rule, the Zhapdrung Karpo in principle exercised administrative power over a large territory covering the present-day counties of Jianzha, Hualong, Guide, Tongde, and Guinan. There are 25 monasteries under him and many of his monasteries are located in these places. However, it is important to point out that there were local leaders such as the Qianhu and Baihu, who ruled their own places. It is true that the Zhapdrung Karpo received titles from Mongol Khans and Qing Emperors and played a key political role, but how he negotiated power with the local secular leaders is an interesting question to probe. In the historical sources regarding the Zhapdrung Karpo, there is no mention of conflicts between him and the local leaders. Usually, his political role was limited to settling land disputes between the local leaders, who highly respected him as a lama. It is thus tempting to argue that he was able to deal with the issues successfully largely because of his religious influence, rather than the political power entitled to him. In fact one can argue that it was his religious influence that provided him political capital, which the Mongol Khans and Qing Emperors probably saw in him and used for their political ambitions in the region. Even today

important lamas are still involved in settling the grassland disputes with which the government finds difficult to deal.

Actually the relationship between the Zhapdrung Karpo and the Nangra Pönpo is an obscure one, despite the fact that in principle the lama had administrative power over a large territory, including the place that the pönpo ruled. It is worth noting here that the Nangra Pönpo received his title “qianhu” from the Qing emperor. In fact, no evidence indicates that the Nangra Pönpo submitted to the Zhapdrung Karpo and took orders from him. According to the Jianzha Gazetteer, the Nangra Pönpo was directly under the Xining Amban. Nevertheless, in one case the Nangra Pönpo helped the lama settle a land dispute between his monastery, Gur, and the neighboring community, Kyareng (*skya reng*), which had its own Baihu leader. Still, this place was considered part of the Nangra Pönpo's area. That being said, the Nangra Pönpo highly regarded the Zhapdrung Karpo as a religious leader. Every time the Zhapdrung Karpo passed through he would be warmly received.

The Nangra Pönpo was the only Qianhu in this area. Hortsang Jikmé (*hor gtsang 'jigs med*) (*mdo smad lo rgyus chen mo* 2009) points out that the Nangra Pönpo was a direct descendant of the Chentsa pönpo. Zuktor Kyap (*gzug tor skyabs*), who was a great-grandson of the Chentsa pönpo Bumyak Gyel (*'bum yag rgyal*, dates unclear), married into Nangra Drampanang (*snang ra gram pa nang*, a village in Nangra) and begot eight sons. Amongst them were Tongkor Sönam Gyatso (*stong skor bsod nams rgya mtsho*), Nawang Namgyel (*ngag dbang rnam rgyal*), and Pönpo Yummé (*dpon po yum me*). During the Yongzheng Emperor's reign, the third son, Nawang Namgyel, was given the title “Baihu,” which is equivalent to the head of 100 households. In 1734, Yummé, the fourth son, received the title “Qianhu,” the head of 1000 households, and he was considered the 1<sup>st</sup> Qianhu who assumed power over Nangra Dronggyé (*snang ra grong brgyad*, the eight communities of Nangra), including Chentsa Tang (*gcan tsha thang*), Lé Sum (*klas gsum*), Nangkhok (*nang khog*), Tsopzhi (*tsho bzhi*), Tengso (*steng so*), Lekang (*glas rkang*), and Nangra. Each of the eight drong (*grong*) has several villages within it. It is important to note that Dechen Monastery and the four surrounding villages are not included in Nangra Dronggyé, even though the monastery and these villages lie within the Qianhu's territory.

Surprisingly, Rongwu Nangso (*rong bu nang so*), the leader of Repgong (*reb gong*), was also related to the Chentsa Pönpo. According to the *Mdo smad lo rgyus chen mo* (2009:210), in the early thirteenth century a physician named Lhajé Draknawa Kunga Döndrup (*lha rje brag sna ba kun dga' don grub*) came to Amdo (*amdo*) and married a woman from Chentsa and started his family there. He treated many sick children and received a lot of respect from the Chentsa Pönpo. At the time, there was no pönpo in Repgong. In his book, Hortsang Jikmé mentions that the physician was offered some land above Gurung (*dgu rung*), which is on the border between Chentsa and Repgong. Since Physician Lhajé Draknawa was related to the Sakya (*sa skya*), who at the time ruled Tibet, and because he was a highly capable physician, he was regarded as the leader of Repgong. The physician's son, Rongchen Dodebum (*rong chen mdo sde 'bum*), married the daughter of the Chentsa Pönpo, Lhayak Drölma (*lha yag sgrol ma*), and begot nine sons and one daughter. Rongchen

Dodebum became acquainted with a Mongol Khan and was offered an ivory seal as a token of friendship. Because of this he was commonly referred to as "Rongwo Nangso" (*rong bo nang so*). The second Jamyang Zhepa (*'jam dbyangs bzhad pa*) Könchok Jikmé Wangpo (*dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po*, 1728-1791), who played a key role in building up Labrang (*bla brang*) Monastery as well as founding Amchok Demotang Ganden Chökhörling (*a mchog bde mo thang dga' ldan chos 'khor gling*) in southern Gansu, was also from Chentsa's Nangra Serkhang (*snang ra gser khang*), the temple associated with the Nangra family (see TBRC Person RID: P169).

The title "Qianhu" was passed down through male heirs. In 1876, the 6<sup>th</sup> Nangra Pönpo, Lhagöntar (*lha mgon thar*), was born; he was known to be a pious person. He built Nangra stupa and added walls around the temple of Nangra Serkhang (*snang ra gser khang*). He promoted religious practice and ritual in the villages under his rule. Even today these religious rituals are still practiced in these places. He died in 1943. The 7<sup>th</sup> Qianhu, Wangchen Döndrup (*dbang chen don grub*), was born in 1904 and came to power in 1929, at the age of 25. He was famous for his resistance against the Communist rule in the early 1950s. Interestingly though, he served as the first leader (Ch. Xianzhang) of Jianzha County after he succumbed to the Chinese Communist Party.

Today, the Nangra Dronggyé still functions as one coherent community, despite the fact that it is divided into four or five different townships. The traditional idea of the Nangra Dronggyé remains strong and people voice solidarity with it. One recent incident demonstrates this point. Approximately seven years ago, a fight broke out between some Tibetans and Muslims in Jianzha town, and eventually it turned into a violent conflict between the two ethnic groups and had to be settled with the involvement of the PLA soldiers from Lanzhou. After the incident took place all the communities that are traditionally associated with Nangra Dronggyé came together and prepared to fight as one whole against their longtime enemy, the Muslims across the river. Nangra people still claim that the land that the Muslims occupy now was once their territory and so feel strong animosity towards them. Therefore, in Chentsa, there are frequent conflicts between the Tibetans and Muslims. (It would be interesting to study the relationship between the Nangra Pönpo and the Ma Family, who ruled Qinghai for 40 years and converted many Tibetans into Muslims. However, I have not found any material on it yet).

In addition to the Nangra Dronggyé, there are other polities that are centered around major monasteries in Chentsa. In the past, from time to time these polities clashed over land because they are adjacent to each other. One such polity was the Hormo Khaksum (*hor mo khag sum*, the "three divisions of Hormo"), who had their own leader. It is said that they had had a thousand households in the past, even though their leader, Kyareng Pönpo (*skya reng dpon po*), was only a Baihu. Before the Communist rule, the religious and political leader of Hormo Khak was Kou Batsang (*ko'u ba tshang*), who was the head lama of Kou Ba (*ko'u ba*) Monastery. The monastery was founded in 1340, and it has received patronage from the areas known as Hormo Khaksum, Chö Tsangma (*chos gtsang ma*) and Tsodruk (*tsho drug*). One of the early reincarnations of Kou Ba received the title "*tsha gan no min han*." This is the only monastery in Chentsa that is not associated with or subordinate to Dechen Monastery.

In Chentsa (including both the shady side and sunny side), there are 28 monasteries, tantric temples (*nakkhang*, *sngags khang*), and holy sites, among which are famous monasteries such as Lamo Dechen Chökhörling (*lwa mo bde chen chos 'khor gling*), Deutsa Tashi Chöding (*lde'u tsha bkra shis chos sding*), Kou Bashedrup Dargyeling (*ko'u ba bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling*), and Jakhyung Thekchen Yönten Dargyeling (*bya khyung theg chen yon tan dar rgyas gling*).

Like any other place name, the name "Chentsa" contains meaning. There are several different interpretations of the name deriving from the two Tibetan words in the name. "Chen" (*gcan*) means "beasts," and "tsa" (*tsha*) means "hot" or "dangerous." Following this, the most popular interpretation of "Chentsa" is a dangerous place infested with beasts that were unique to hot regions. The other interpretation is based on kinship. It is said that people of this area belonged to the Tsarik (*tsha rigs*), one of the 18 great Dongtsa Chen (*ldong tsha chen*) clans. Therefore, once it was called Tsayül (*tsha yul*). There is also another less-known interpretation. Hortsang Jikmé says that in the 9<sup>th</sup> century a minister of Emperor Tri Relwa (*khri ral ba*) came to Amdo to collect taxes and became the ruler of the area while serving as lachenpa (*la gcan pa*, "tax collector"). He also notes that Changkya Rolpai Dorjé (*lcang skya rol ba'i rdo rje*), a famous monk-scholar of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, spelled the name "Tsendza" (*btsan rdza*). Today the area is officially called Jianzha in Chinese. Apparently, the official name is the transliteration of the Tibetan and it does not have any particular meaning.

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