

THE FASCINATING LIFE OF LAMA CHANGCHUB TSÖNGRÜ (1817-1856) ACCORDING TO HIS BIOGRAPHY*

FRANCOISE POMMARET

Changchub Tsönggrü (*Byang chub brtson grus*) is known in Bhutan to have been the lama of the Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyal (1825-1881), to have given a prophecy about his ascension to power and to have invented the "Jarog dong cen" (*bya rog gdong can*) headgear to protect him.¹ I therefore assumed- wrongly- that Changchub Tsönggrü came from Tibet to Bhutan at the invitation of Jigme Namgyal, became his lama and died in Trongsa. In fact, his biography relates how he was associated with Bhutan at a young age and spent most of his life travelling between Tibet and Bhutan, and especially between Lhodrak and Bumthang.

While reading Changchub Tsönggrü's biography, one marvels constantly at his incredible activity and what he achieved in such a short span of time. He was a free spirit, travelling almost incessantly, interested in teachings from different religious schools, and detached from material possessions. He also appears to have been a powerful- and much sought after- lama, able to subdue two categories of spirits, the *lu (klu)* and the *gyelpo (rgyal po)*.

The importance of this Tibetan lama in the political and religious life of Bhutan in the mid-19th century cannot be underestimated.

This paper will present the socio-religious background of the lama and will concentrate on his activities in Bhutan, as presented in his biography. The intent, here, is not to give a complete picture of the life of this fascinating figure but to present some events from his biography. I will simply try to highlight the important passages of the biography, interfering as little as possible in the story as told and only for clarity. My comments are in the notes and the biography folios numbers are in brackets. It is hoped that this short introduction will encourage

* I would like to thank Prof. Samten Karmay for his assistance in reading difficult passages of the biography and for informing me about the Wensa Nyengyu lineage, of which little is known. See Prof. Karmay's forthcoming article "A Rare *dGe lugs pa* Work Kept in O rgyan chos gling, Central Bhutan", IATS, Oxford 2003.

Tibetan names are given in transcription to make them more easily read by people unfamiliar with the academic transliteration. However, rare terms or nouns are also transliterated in parentheses.

researchers to explore the biography as well other sources if they come to light, including oral traditions regarding the lama's personal life.

Presentation of Sources

The biography dated 1859 was written by one of the lama's Bhutanese disciples, Kunga Pelzangpo Shenphen Rolpe Dorje (*Kun dga' dpal bzang po gzhan phan rol ba'i rdo rje*). It is included in his collected texts, entitled *Changchub Tsönggrü Kanbum*, which also contains a number of short texts (each between 3 and 18 folios), mostly instructions and rituals. So far, there is no biographical information available on the author of the biography apart from the fact that he was a close disciple.

I have seen three copies of the *Collected Works*, which all include the biography. One is in the National Library in Thimphu, the second in the library of Ogyenchöling and the third in the Library of the Musée Guimet in Paris. More copies exist in the American universities libraries as the reprinting of the *Collected Works* was part of the project PL 480 of the Library of Congress directed by the great Tibetologist Gene Smith in New-Delhi.

Lam Nado speaks of Changchub Tsönggrü when relating the life of Jigme Namgyal (1986: 177-178), and later Lam Pemala deals with him in his chapters on Jigme Namgyal and the crown in his *History of Bhutan* (1994: 485-487 and 559-562). Both historians used the biography as a source. Parts of the texts by Lam Nado and Lam Pemala were translated and used by Michael Aris for the chapter on Jigme Namgyal in his *Raven crown* (1994: 54-57). Tibetan sources do not appear to mention this lama but, of course, his name could always come up in material that I have not had the chance to examine. On the impressive web site of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, directed by Gene Smith, Changchub Tsönggrü has the reference number P 862.

Changchub Tsönggrü's Outstanding Personality and Life in Bhutan as Presented in His Biography

Changchub Tsönggrü was born in 1817 (Fire Bull year) at Olka near Gyantse in Upper Tsang (central Tibet). His childhood name is not known. His father, Tandin Wangyal, was the son of a tantrist priest (*sngags pa*) named Pel Dorje,² whose lineage was traced to Yung tön Zhonu Pel (*g.Yung ston rdo rje zhon nu dpal*).³

² This could be the same person as dPal rdo rje, a religious figure of the *siddha* type, known to have followed these teachings. Karmay, 1988: 145.

³ This could be the same person as g.Yung ston rdo rje dpal (1284-1365). cf. TBRC: P 1454. This lama, who was a disciple of, among others, the great scholar Bu ston, received teachings of the Kalacakra and *rDzogs chen*. He went to China and Mon sPa gro, and he is credited with supra-

His mother, Dorje Drölma, belonged to the famous Zur lineage of 'Ug lung⁴ and had among her ancestors the great Nyingmapa lama Zur Chöyin Rangröl (1604-1669), one of the masters of the 5th Dalai Lama. Her father was also a tantrist (*sngags pa*) called Kunzang Rangröl (folio 4b). Therefore both his parents claimed prestigious religious Nyingmapa ancestry.

The place where Changchub Tsöngrü first went as a young monk is in itself interesting. It was Wensa Gonpa *alias* Wengon (*dBen dgon*), a small Gelugpa monastery not far from Shigatse, famous for the Wensa Nyengyu (*dBen sa snyan brgyud*), a particular lineage of transmissions dating from Je Tsongkhapa. It was propagated by Wensapa Lobsang Dongrub (1504/05-1566)⁵ who was a student of Gedun Gyatsho (1476-1542). The latter would be named retroactively as the Second Dalai Lama.

The Panchen Lama Lobsang Chögyen (1567-1662) was found to be a reincarnation of Wensapa Lobsang Dongrub; he was brought up at the Wensa monastery and later moved to Tashilunpo for his studies but continued to visit the monastery throughout his life.⁶ Wensa was not far from Tashilunpo monastery and the Panchen Lama upheld the Wensa teachings, calling them Geden Kagyu (*dGe ldan bka' brgyud*). They became a source of discord between him and his pupil the Fifth Dalai Lama, who rejected them.⁷

The Wensa Nyengyu lineage of teachings was largely ignored by the mainstream Gelugpa lamas as it was considered not to be orthodox and it survived mostly in Wensa, its monastery of origin. However, a great exponent of these teachings was Gunthang Konchog Tenpey Dronme, who lived from 1762 to 1823⁸ and was therefore still active when Changchub Tsöngrü was born.⁹

normal powers as well as "inventing" the gShin rje religious dance. For a short resumé of his life, cf. Rörich, 1976: 149.

⁴ Located in gTsang, south of the gTsang po river, in an area between Gyantse and Shigatse. It was the seat of the Zur lineage coming from Zur po che Shakya 'byung gnas, also called 'Ug pa lung pa, a great tantric master who lived for sixty-one years in the 11th century. cf. Ferrari, 1958: 70.

⁵ TBRC: P 997.

⁶ Panchen lama's autobiography, 1990: 10-12.

⁷ The 5th Dalai Lama wrote: "Surely it would be good if the dGe lugs pa kept themselves to themselves. What is the good of pushing in among the bKa' brgyud pa?" This was a criticism of the Panchen lama's famous work called *the dGe ldan bka' brgyud rin po che'i phyag chen rtsa ba rgyal ba'i gzhung lam* in which he explains the *dBen sa sNyan brgyud* doctrinal position, which is close to the *rDzogs chen*. On this particular aspect and the controversy with the 5th Dalai Lama, see Karmay, 1988: 144-146.

⁸ Karmay, 1988: 145.

⁹ For the Wensa Nyengyu (*dBen sa snyan brgyud*), see Lokesh Chandra, *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*, Rinsen Book co., Kyoto, 1981, 775-778.

Changchub Tsönggrü, in the Year of the Sheep (1823), entered the Wensa monastery where he took his vows of Genyen and received the name Palden Tashi (9a). His mother and step-father/uncle (*a khu*) supported him materially from the age of seven till he was eighteen years old (10b). In the Year of the Monkey (1824) he took his vows of *Getshul*-which he would keep until he was twenty-one-, and was given the name Changchub Tsönggrü (11b). He received all the Wensa religious instructions (13a -31b) at the monastery from lama Yeshe Chödra and often visited the monastery of Tashilunpo (33a). He also received instructions in Dzogchen teachings and in the *Lama Gondu* rediscovered by Sangye Lingpa (14th century).

From this short socio-religious overview, one can assume that Changchub Tsönggrü was already in a religious atmosphere that was far from dogmatic or held a sectarian religious position. His own non-sectarian tendency would increase during his life, leading to his implicit refusal to be categorized. In that sense, we could say that Changchub Tsönggrü was in Central Tibet at the "avant-garde" of the Rime (*ris med*) "eclectic" religious movement that would develop in Eastern Tibet.

One day while Changchub Tsönggrü was resting at a *chorten* during his round of the Tashilunpo monastery, he met a trader called Yeshe from Paro in Bhutan. He asked the trader where he could find a teacher for *The Six Yogas of Naropa*. The man replied that there was one Lopen Decki in Paro who performed extraordinary deeds. Then Changchub Tsönggrü received a prophecy from a lama from Tashilunpo that it would be beneficial for his religious practice if he went to Paro (34a-34b).

So, much against his family's wishes, he left (35a) for Phari in the Chumbi valley and from there went on to Paro where he placed himself under the protection of the governor Tsultrim Tharchin.¹⁰ From Paro dzong, he went up to Gorina monastery where the Head abbot Sherab Gyeltshen (25th Je Khenpo: r. 1836-1839) resided. Changchub Tsönggrü became his disciple and with other monks from the Drukpa monk-body (*gzhung grova tshang*) and Paro Rinpong Dzong, he listened to the Je Khenpo teaching on the great Drukpa scholar, Padma Karpo (1527-1592). According to his biography (35a-35b), Changchub Tsönggrü created quite an impression on the Je Khenpo by arguing with him on the validity of Padma Karpo's views. The Je Khenpo then explained *the Six Yogas of Naropa* and Drukpa teachings, which Changchub Tsönggrü received with the other monks (35b).

¹⁰ Lopen Nado does not include this governor in his list of Paro *dPon slob*, 1986: 148-149. It is not found either in the list of the Paro governors published by the National Museum, 2001: 27-28. Tsultrim Tharchin might have had two names.

Changchub Tsönggrü then returned to Tsang and met with Jampel Dorje, the reincarnation of Barawa Gyaltshe Pelzang (1310-1391), the famous Kagyu figure who had been to Bhutan in the 14th century. It is Barawa Jampel Dorje who would give Changchub Tsönggrü permission to have consort (35b).

If I have dwelt on these formative years, it is because they demonstrate that Changchub Tsönggrü was determined, always in quest of religious knowledge without any sectarian view, and not in awe of the hierarchy. This trait would remain constant throughout his life.

The period that followed immediately was distressing, as Changchub Tsönggrü became entangled in problems involving the denunciation of Barawa Jampel Dorje to the Tsemoling regent in Lhasa by one of his disciples, apparently jealous of the lama's favours to Changchub Tsönggrü. Barawa died, perhaps of despair (36a).

After this event, in the Year of the Wood Horse (1834), Changchub Tsönggrü started travelling all over Central Tibet, Khams, Tsari, Kongpo, Nepal, Mount Kailash and the region bordering Kashmir. He also visited Bodhgaya, Bengal and Sikkim (49a). These incessant travels were pilgrimages in pursuit of religious teachings.

His connection to Bhutan was renewed when he met Ogyen Namgyal, a lama from Khams¹¹ from whom he received numerous teachings, including teachings on Pemalingpa (1450-1521), Karmalingpa (14th c.) and Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405), as well as initiations on various protectors, among them Gesar as a warrior-deity (*dgra lha*) (59a). This lama told him that of all these teachings, those of Dorje Lingpa- who was an emanation of Vairocana the great translator of the 8th century- were the most profound and extensive, and should be propagated far and wide. He, the lama, was now too old and could not do it but Changchub Tsönggrü, as he was young, must do it (59a).

Changchub Tsönggrü left for the monastery of [Chukhyer] Gönsar¹² near the mount Kulakhari in Lhodrak, which had been a seat of Dorje Lingpa. There he taught the cycle of Dorje Lingpa to some thirty people, including the lama of the lineage (*gDung brgyud*) of Dorje Lingpa, who resided in Gönsar, and lamas from Buli and Dranla in Bhutan, with their servants (59a). He gave the teachings from the texts that were available at Gönsar and for those that were not, he gave them by heart. In particular,

¹¹ I could not identify him.

¹² The monastery of Gönsar (dGon gсар) is at Chukhyer (Chu mkhyer), and marked as such on the maps. It is located between Langdo and Sekhar (Sras mkhar) in Lhodrak (lHo brag), on the Tibetan side of the Monla Karchung (Mon la dkar chung) pass and at the foot of Mt Kulakhari (sKu bla mkha' ri).

he gave the instruction on the *Tawa Long Yang* (*lTa ba klong yangs*) a famous Dzogchen text discovered by Dorje Lingpa.

He went back to Tsang and visited Tashilunpo; while he was in Tsang at a village near the Tsangpo river, he had a vision of a black man who scolded him for giving so many public teachings and then slapped him. Changchub Tsönggrü was not feeling well and performed a fire ritual, after which the black man appeared again and told him he was Gönpö, protector of the religion of the North (*Byang mgon*) (61a).

Then Changchub Tsönggrü travelled to the Lhasa region and to the three Gelugpa monasteries of Ganden, Drepung and Sera where he stayed in a hermitage, as well as visiting the holy places in Lhasa (61a). At this point in the biography one gets the feeling that Changchub Tsönggrü was preparing for an important event.

He then left for Phari (61b) where the monastery's choir master (*dbu mdzad*) was a friend and then went to Sikkim where he visited the temple of Drakar Tashiteng (Tashiding). From there he went to Bhutan. He visited Taktshang and Chumophug in Paro before moving onto Thimphu where he paid homage to the holy places and met the 26th Je Khenpo Yonten Gyamtsho (r. 1839-1841) (61 b) to whom he gave various teachings, including some of Tshongkhapa (61b).

This event is important because it allows us to date the second visit of Changchub Tsönggrü to Bhutan, as this part of the biography is quite imprecise regarding dates. It also shows that Changchub Tsönggrü was not an ordinary wandering lama, but could access the top of the hierarchy in Bhutan, as well as teach.

Changchub Tsönggrü then returned to Phari (62a) and from there seems to have gone straight to Lhodrak for a pilgrimage, visiting the places blessed by the great Treasure discoverers: Lhalung monastery,¹³ the lake of Pemaling,¹⁴ Guru lhakhang,¹⁵ Drowalung,¹⁶ Sekhar Guthok,¹⁷ Karchu¹⁸ and Khoting lhakhang¹⁹ (62a).

From Lhodrak, he crossed into Bumthang via the Monla Karchung pass (5316 m) and arrived in the valley of Chökhör in Bumthang. He visited all the holy places in Chökhör: Shugpadrag, Zhabjethang, Kurje,

¹³ Residence of the Peling Thugse (Pad gling thugs sras) and Peling sungtrul (Pad gling gSung sprul).

¹⁴ A holy lake near the Mt Kulakhari (sKu bla mkha' ri).

¹⁵ Residence of the Treasure discoverer Guru chos dbang (1212-1270).

¹⁶ Residence of Marpa (1012-1096).

¹⁷ Residence of Milarepa (1040-1123)

¹⁸ Residence of Lama Nam mkha'i snying po.

¹⁹ The demoness-subduing temple where the Treasure Discoverer Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1136-1204) discovered texts.

Jampa lhakhang, Pema lhakhang, Tamshing and Chagkhar. In Bumthang Jakar (*Bya dkar*) dzong, he met with the then Tongsa Penlop Ugyen Phuntsho, who was from the lineage of Pemalingpa in Tamshing and became Changchub Tsönggrü's first lay patron (*sbyin bdag*) in Bhutan. Changchub Tsönggrü also made a pilgrimage through the Tang valley, visiting Ta Rimocen and other temples, as well as Pephug and Bumthangphug (today in Narut and Sarmed villages) (62b). He finished his tour of Bumthang with the Ura valley (63a).

Then – probably after going back to Tang, though this is not mentioned – he went, via the Rodungla pass, to Kurtö and stayed two weeks at Tangmachu where he gave teachings (63a). Deleg, the Garshong Zhelngo was his host. He then went to the house of the Wangshing Chöje (63a) before moving to Trashiyangtse to see Chorten Kora (Rinchengang chorten).

Then he left for Tibet, apparently from there, and went to central Tibet, Khams, Eastern India (63 a) and the Kathmandu valley. He then travelled in southern Tibet, in Kyirong, Nyalam and Lapchi. It is in this region of the border between Tibet and Nepal, on a hillock, that he met Tagri Dzogchenpa Kunzang Rangröl, who was travelling with a lot of books. From this lama he obtained many dzogchen and tersar teachings, as well as the Peling teachings on the Kunzang Gongdu, Guru Dragpo and Norbu Gyamtsho (67a).

Changchub Tsönggrü next went to Phari to meet his friend Tashi, the choir master (*dbu mdzad*) and mentioned that at Phari there is a college dedicated to King Gesar, with many books on the epic (67a).

After travelling all over central Tibet, he went to meditate at the hidden place of Khenpalung Tsheringjong in Lhodrak (77a). There he was visited by Dzinpa Wangdu, the Gönsar lama descendant of Dorje Lingpa (77b). The Gönsar lama received teachings from Changchub Tsönggrü and served for a while as his secretary, noting down several texts on paper.

Then Changchub Tsönggrü wandered around the Yamdrok lake and finally, at the end of 1844, the Year of the Wood Snake, after a retreat in Talung near the Yamdrok lake, he went back to Gönsar in Lhodrak (81b). He was twenty-nine years old at this time and travelling with a consort and their son.

Near Gönsar, at Lhopu Chetsen where he stayed, he met lamas who had links with Bhutan. The Gantey Trulku Ogyen Delek Namgyal received an initiation from him, and the Peling Thugse Rinpoche from Lhalung (probably the 8th Thugse Kunzang Zilnön) invited him to come to Bhutan (81b).

Then Changchub Tsönggrü, with his wife and son, established a residence in Khenpajong (82a).

In the meantime, Thugse Rinpoche went to Bhutan where he met the Petsheing Tulku Jigme Tenpe Gyaltshen, and went on to visit Gantey and Tongsa dzong (82a). Thugse Rinpoche then left again for Tibet: first Lhalung, then Kongpo and finally Powo, where he met the Bakha Trulku (probably the 6th, Kunzang Rigzin Dorje) at his monastery of Sangnga Chöling (82a).

Then a lama from Khams, Rigzin Gyamtsho, came to meet with the two Peling incarnations at Lhalung²⁰ and they invited Changchub Tsönggrü to come from Khenpajong (82a). Khamtrul Rigzin Gyamtsho gave numerous teachings from Nyingma Treasure tradition to Changchub Tsönggrü and all the other lamas and monks (82b).

After a pilgrimage to Tsari, where he met the Eleventh Dalai Lama's mother (86a), Changchub Tsönggrü was invited to Lhalung by Rinchen Pelmo, the mother of the Eighth Peling Sungtrul Rinpoche Kunzang Tenpe Nyima (1843-1891), who was still a child (89a-b). Rinchen Pelmo was the wife of Ugyen Phuntsho, a lay-patron of the lama, and the then Tongsa Penlop. Their daughter Pema Chökyi would marry Jigme Namgyal in 1853.

The purpose of dwelling on this part of Changchub Tsönggrü's life is to show that at that time he was quite a well-known lama in southern Tibet and had connections with lamas linked to Bhutan and Khams, which formed a spiritual network engaged in teachings on the tradition of the Treasures-texts (*gter ma*). Through these lamas, he met with Bhutanese from noble religious lineages who would become his lay patrons. Understanding this nexus of relations is paramount to the assessment of Changchub Tsönggrü's later influence on the Bhutanese political and religious scene.

I will now skip over his ensuing travels in central Tibet, just mentioning that Changchub Tsönggrü was invited to Lhasa to perform some long-life rituals for the young Eleventh Dalai Lama (1838-1856) (93b).

In the Year of the Earth Rooster (1849), Changchub Tsönggrü left Gönsar for Bumthang via the Monla Karchung pass (95b). He was invited by Rinchen Pelmo, the Peling Sungtrul's mother, to her estate of Tashi Peling, near Zangling in upper Chökhör, and he was received at Ngang

²⁰ The text speaks of Khams sprul rinpoche Rig 'dzin rgya mtsho but at that time the 5th Khams sprul was called sGrub bryud Nyi ma. One may wonder if our text is not referring to an eminent master from Khams called Rig 'dzin rgya mtsho who taught the *gter ma* tradition. He stayed in Ka thog and Min srol gling and his students were 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899) and mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892) (TBRC P 6031).

Ihakhang (96a). According to the biography, it was the first time that the auspicious door was opened to disseminate teachings in this country.

While at Tashi Peling, he received a visit from Jigme Namgyal, then the Trongsa chamberlain who was going to Lhuntshe, and he gave a blessing to all the people, including Jigme Namgyal. This was the first encounter between the two men. Changchub Tsönggrü then gave blessings in Jakar Dzong, where the *dzongpon* was the Tsakaling Chöje, and later went to Trongsa Dzong, where the Penlop— who was Tshokye Dorje (alias Wangchen Dorje) from Ogyenchöling— had formally invited him. During his stay in Trongsa Dzong he had the Zimkhang Thubwang temple built (96b). However, although the Penlop was his lay patron, problems developed between Changchub Tsönggrü's servants and those of Trongsa Dzong, and Changchub Tsönggrü left for Khenpajong (97a) where he established a meditation place (*grub gnas*).

Later he went back to Kurje for a month to pray for the Eleventh Dalai Lama and remembered that he was previously born in Bumthang as a king called Ösung Pel. It was on this occasion, in the Year of the Iron-Dog (1850) (97a), that the author of the biography met Changchub Tsönggrü and became his disciple.

On his way back to Trongsa, Jigme Namgyal went to see Changchub Tsönggrü at Kurje and asked him for a *yidam*. Changchub Tsönggrü explained to Jigme Namgyal that he had a problem with a malevolent spirit (*rgyal 'gon*). He should therefore worship Tandrin Sangyang, an aspect of Hayagriva, and recite his mantra as well as a short text that he composed for the occasion (100a).

Tsöndru Gyeltshen, who was the son of Trongsa Penlop Tshokye Dorje and who had become Jakar Dzongpon, invited Changchub Tsönggrü to give initiations, and his father, the Trongsa Penlop, invited the lama to Tang Ogyenchöling (102a), which was their estate (*gzhis ka*) in Bumthang.

On the way, at Ta Rimochen in the Tang valley, Changchub Tsönggrü met a lama, Donlung Trulku, who was related to Ashi Yeshe, Tshokye Dorje's daughter. This Trulku asked for the Demchog initiation and Changchub Tsönggrü told him he would give it in Ogyenchöling.

Once there, he was pleased with the reception given to him. He gave the Demchog initiation in detail and in the Wensa Nyengyu tradition to several members of the household. Ashi Yeshe also received the initiation and Changchub Tsönggrü considered it a good omen that thirteen people attended the ritual, as there were thirteen deities in the Demchog mandala (102b & 103a). While at Ogyenchöling, Changchub Tsönggrü also subdued two spirits, a *lu* and a *gyalpo*, which were harming Ashi Yeshe.

Then he left for the monastery of Petsheing where he met with the Rinpoche Jigme Tenpe Gyaltshen who was old and sick. He continued on

down to Tamshing where he saw the Gantey Tulku's mother who was sick and performed rituals for her (104a-b).

Tashi Dorje was the 37th civil ruler (*sde srid*) at that time and the country was not stable. The Trongsa Penlop Tshokye Dorje requested the lama to give prophecies for Bhutan and for the power that Trongsa would hold in the future. Changchub Tsönggrü declared: "After the political power of the one who rules Trongsa [Tshokye Dorje] is exhausted, a short man with a black mole on the face [Jigme Namgyal] will take over the power. There are signs of conflicts concerning Trongsa; in order to prevent them, the Kanjur must be read thirty times". Tshokye Dorje had the ritual performed and the problems were thus avoided (104b-105a).

In the meantime, the 37th civil ruler Tashi Dorje- who was sick-resigned and died in 1850, and Wangchen Gyalpo was appointed to this post that same year. In Jakar Dzong Changchub Tsönggrü taught the "discovered treasures" of Dorje Lingpa to Tshokye Dorje and his son, to the Tamshing Chöje Ugyen who later became Jakar Dzongpon, to the Ogyenchöling Chöje Trinle and to the retired Jakar Dzongpon, Tsakalingpa.

Tshokye Dorje's wife, Aum Drolma, offered him silver and jewels and he blessed her with his right foot (105a). The lama also gave teachings to lamas from Agya in Eastern Bhutan, as well as to a lama from Dungsam (Pemagatshel), Changchub Gyeltshen (105b).

Changchub Tsönggrü continued to give teachings in central Bhutan but the political situation was not peaceful. The 38th civil ruler Wangchen Gyalpo was assassinated at the end of 1850 and the lama decided to return to Tibet (107b). On the way, he stayed in Tshampa, near the border, and as it was quiet, he composed texts based on Dorje Lingpa's dzogchen writings, which he had obtained from the Gönsar Lama Wangdu (108b).

When he crossed the Monla Karchung from Bumthang into Lhodrak, he propitiated the deities of the territory, who are brothers: Jowo Ladag and Terdag Zorarakye of Khenpajong. Jowo Ladag, the elder, is peaceful, while the younger is violent. The lama then arrived at Longtö, the birthplace of the dzogchen master Jigme Pawo (b. 1682), where he stayed three nights. He then settled in Gönsar for one month, giving teachings on the treasure-texts of Dorje Lingpa, including the dzogchen text of the *Tawa Longyang* to many people, including the Buli Lama, the Dranla Lama and his choir master, and the Gönsar Lama of Dorje Lingpa's lineage. He also propagated the Wensa Nyengyu (109b).

The lama then left via Lhalung for the region of Yarbrog in central Tibet, where he meditated at Dori and also protected a lay patron from

the deity Shugden (112a-114b) with a ritual known as Gyelpo dö (*rgyal po mdos*). Also, as the Eleventh Dalai Lama's mother was sick, Changchub Tsönggrü went to Lhasa and after performing the Gyelpo dö ritual, he also performed rituals for various high officials (114b-115b).

He went back to Lhodrak and sent for his son, who was in Khenpajong (115b). First, in Gönsar, he taught him how to read and gave him initiations; then both of them left for Wensa monastery in Tsang (116a). That was in 1851 (Iron Pig year) and for many months he travelled in central Tibet and went back to Lhasa to perform rituals for the health of the Dalai Lama's family (121b).

Changchub Tsönggrü returned to Bhutan in 1853. Jakar Dzong had been damaged by a fire and after the restoration works, the lama was asked to come and perform the consecration ceremony. The name of Jigme Namgyal was now famous throughout Bhutan, as he had been appointed Trongsa Penlop. Changchub Tsönggrü was invited to Trongsa Dzong. At that time, Jigme Namgyal's chamberlain was Sonam Dhendup, the elder brother of the Shabdrung Jigme Norbu (122a).

To him and the new Trongsa Penlop, the lama gave blessings of long life but he gave the initiation of the deity Thrönag,²¹ as well as those of Lhamo Magzorma, Jang Göñ and Tshering Chenga, only to Jigme Namgyal. The Penlop then requested the lama to write his autobiography but the lama said that he would do it when he went back to Tibet.

I leave the reading of the biography briefly at this point to mention some interesting elements that appear not to be in the biography, though, of course, I cannot rule out careless reading on my part. In the *Gyelrab* of Lam Pemala (1994: 485)²² and the *Druk Karpo* (1986: 177) of Lam Nado, these historians mention that on the instructions of the lama, Jigme Namgyal had a statue of Demchog (Cakrasamvara) facing the west made and a temple built to house it in Trongsa dzong; he then obtained from Tibet a precious relic, a piece of a vertebra of Tsangpa Gyare in the form of Dorje Phagmo, and had it enshrined in a silver statue of Dorje Phagmo (Vajravahni), which is in the Thongdröl lhakhang in Trongsa dzong.

Leaving Trongsa, Changchub Tsönggrü went via Jakar to Ogyenchöling where he gave teachings to Chöje Trinle and told some of his disciples to go into retreat (122b). He then went to Gönsar in Tibet but did not stay long because his friend, the abbot of Kharchu, invited him to stay at Mutö gönkhang (*rMu stod mgon khang*).

²¹ Thrönag = Khro ma nag po is a fierce black *dakini* that is worshipped by all the schools and has links with rDo rje Phag mo (Vajravahni).

²² In *The Raven Crown*: 55, M. Aris followed Lam Pemala, 1994: 485-487.

Changchub Tsönggrü so much liked the place, which had water, junipers and grass, that he built a small house for himself (122b). He briefly left this place to go to Lhasa to perform rituals for the recovery of the Eleventh Dalai Lama, who was sick (123a). In Mutö, Changchub Tsönggrü started writing his autobiography and gave teachings to disciples coming to see him from Bhutan (128a).

Then he again travelled to Tsang and was apparently upset because he was criticized in Lhodrak and Bhutan (145a). While he was in Tsang (149b), he received another invitation from Jigme Namgyal carried by the Shabjethang Könyer Karma Lhawang. After some reflection, Changchub Tsönggrü decided not to go to Bhutan but sent a gold statue of Gönpö (*mGon po*) to Jigme Namgyal (150a). Jigme Namgyal was very disappointed and he requested the intervention of the lama who was Changchub Tsönggrü's close disciple and who would become the author of the biography. Finally Changchub Tsönggrü agreed but he set the following conditions: The people under the jurisdiction of Jigme Namgyal must respect the five basic vows, and, especially, there should not be any more killing of animals, even the wild ones; lastly, two Kanjur must be printed at Narthang near Shigatse in central Tibet (150a).²³

Jigme Namgyal proscribed hunting, and after he had sent people to Narthang, Changchub Tsönggrü agreed to come to Bhutan. [The Kanjur copies were sent to Nyala and Drangla in the Black Mountains].²⁴

As Changchub Tsönggrü's elder brother, who was in the Thorgö (*Thor rgod*) monastery in Sikkim, had come to meet him in Tsang, they travelled back together and Changchub Tsönggrü stayed in Phari monastery (150b). There he received as a gift a mule that was the colour of Palden Lhamo and he took it as a good omen that Jigme Namgyal would have a son (150 b). With his entourage, he left for Trongsa, crossing into Bhutan via the Ja'u (*Bya'u*) pass. In Paro, he stopped at the Zangdogpelri in Taktsang, and then was welcomed by the Obgyen of Rinlung Dzong. Several religious scholars came to visit him: the Tsamdra Lama Ugyen, the Hephug Trulku Tenpey Nyima, the Pagar Geshe Chandra, Lopen Tshering and many others (150b). He gave many teachings, especially on the *Longchen Nyinthing* and Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika* (151a). In Paro he also wrote several texts (151b).

Jigme Namgyal had in the meantime sent his printing master Tenzin to tell the lama to come to Trongsa. His request came at a time when the lama was starting to develop leg problems (152a) and was anxious to go

²³ These events are summarised in Lam Pemala, 1994: 486.

²⁴ Lam Pemala, 1994: 486.

to Sikkim, as there was a prophecy saying that if he went there, he would live longer. But at the same time, the political situation in Sikkim was not good and the lama was very concerned (152a).

Changchub Tsönggrü was sad and then wanted to go to Phajoding above Thimphu but the printing master was pressing him to go to Trongsa, supported by all the lama's disciples and his consort (152b).

Changchub Tsönggrü said that he had the feeling that if he stayed in the west, he could benefit many people but if he went to the east, it was only for one person. Then he predicted that if he went east, he would not live much longer. However he would go (152b).

In fact, Changchub Tsönggrü's legs were getting worse and the printing master was worried. He decided to send for the belongings that the lama had left in Phari and as soon as his belongings arrived in Paro, Changchub Tsönggrü felt better. Finally, Changchub Tsönggrü left Paro for Trongsa via Thimphu and Wangduephodrang (152b).

On his way, in Samtengang (153a), he gave blessings to lay patrons and performed a fire ritual. As the Shabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861) was at Gantey monastery in the Black Mountains, the lama was received there in great style with a procession, songs and dances.

Garab Wangchuk, the local deity of Trongsa Dzong, appeared to him, riding on a white horse. The deity offered a white scarf to the lama and prostrated himself, requesting him to come directly to Trongsa during the 4th month, otherwise there might be tensions between the lama and Jigme Namgyal. That is why the deity came to meet the lama (153a).

The lama agreed, but the unstable political situation in China, Tibet and Bhutan made him sad, as he had heard that the Eleventh Dalai Lama Khedrup Gyatsho had died and that the Gorkhas and the British intended to move towards Bhutan (153b). The lama travelled to Drangla in the Black Mountains the next day and there gave a Guru Drago initiation according to Dorje Lingpa. He also rapidly wrote short texts about this treasure discoverer (154a).

After passing through Tsangkha village, on the 13th day of the 4th month of the Fire Dragon year (1856), he reached Trongsa, greeted by many people (154b). Although usually, as he said, a patron offered a prayer of longevity for his lama, in this case he offered a prayer of longevity for Jigme Namgyal.

After breakfast on the 15th day of the 4th month, he called his disciples and his wife and told them he was entering meditation (155 a). Everybody was upset but finally the lama came out of meditation and predicted that he would die that year. His entourage begged him not to

die; so the lama started to give teachings on the Madhyamika, the Wensa Nyengyu and the White Mahakala (*mGon dkar yid bzhin nor bu*), which his disciple wrote them down. All the members of the entourage wore white cloth during this time (156a-157 a-b).

Jigme Namgyal requested an initiation but the lama said that because of his sickness, he had dizziness and could not read for long (158a). He gave some silver to Jigme Namgyal, who had a bowl made for the lama.

Then the lama gave him a "skull without partition" or "a piece of skull" (*dbu thod tshal gcig*) and told him to make a "base/mounting" (*gdan*) out of gold. This Jigme Namgyal did immediately. The lama was happy and said "It is a little thin, but it is precious and it is a good omen" (158a).²⁵

The lama added that in Tsang, the deity Jangdü (*Byang bdud*) had taken possession of a medium and said that, "in Trongsa Dzong he should get an offering of chang made of rice and a good horse, which would be adorned with many things". So the lama ordered that all the "supports" that are dedicated to this deity, should be purified (158a)²⁶.

Changchub Tsönggrü also recalled that the Nechung (*gNas chung*) oracle had come to see him and told him that at the death of the Eleventh Dalai Lama, the treasure of the government was almost exhausted because the offerings and prayers to Nechung had not been enough. Therefore, the lama said that a gyelkhang (*rgyal khang*) should be built in Trongsa, facing the east, and then the prosperity of Trongsa Dzong would increase (158b)²⁷. Later, Jigme Namgyal made large offerings in gold and silver to the lama.

The lama also ordered his disciple to think about editing the texts of Dorje Lingpa that were in Drangla monastery (158b).

Jigme Namgyal also requested the lama for the initiation of Heruka (159a). All the preparations were quickly made, including a mandala, and Changchub Tsönggrü gave the initiation and teachings to the Penlop (159b).

As Jigme Namgyal was planning to go away, Changchub Tsönggrü wanted to go into retreat in a hermitage, but Jigme Namgyal told him to stay in the Trongsa Ta Dzong. On the 9th day of the 5th month, Changchub Tsönggrü went to Ta Dzong. He had before received a

²⁵ The sense of this sentence is not clear.

²⁶ This passage is not very clear. It is probably to this passage of the biography that Lam Pemala refers in his *History of Bhutan*, 1994: 561, which was then included by M. Aris in *The Raven Crown*, 1994: 56. It is possible that Lam Pemala had access to sources other than the biography.

²⁷ Again this passage is not very clear. A *rgyal khang* can be different things, including a large offering in the shape of a *dö* (*mdos*).

prediction saying that he would die in a place where willows were growing. And there were many willows around Ta dzong. Changchub Tsönggrü felt sick (161a) but he still gave teachings and initiations to his wife, his disciples (161b) and to Jigme Namgyal, who had decided to leave for Jakar (162a). On the 15th day of the 5th month, Jigme Namgyal left in pouring rain and the lama thought the Penlop would suffer a lot during his trip. However, there was good news in that Jigme Namgyal's wife was expecting a son, conceived during the 4th month (this would be Trinley Tobgye) (162a).

His disciples started to ask the lama if he would reincarnate. He did not reply (163b). He sent Jigme Namgyal a ceremonial white scarf and butter for one hundred lights, which the Penlop should offer in Jampey Lhakhang. Then for one week he did not get up (163b). When he finally got out of bed, he said that he had bad dreams and that the situation would be tense for three days (164a). He did breathing exercises but did not eat (164b). He died at Ta Dzong of Trongsa Dzong in the 5th month of the Fire Dragon year, 1856 (164b). He was only thirty-nine years of age.

The next folios deal with his cremation in front of Jampey Lhakhang in Bumthang (168a). Before his death he had asked that rituals should be held for him in this temple (169a) and he had predicted that the Chöje Trinley from Ogyenchöling would come. Of course, Jigme Namgyal was present. The cremation was accompanied by auspicious signs; in particular, a blue bird surrounded by other blue birds circled the structure containing the body.²⁸ After the cremation, there were many relics, like pieces of skull and teeth, which were distributed. Jigme Namgyal received a bone with a Heruka (169b).

In accordance with his wishes, many offerings were also made in different temples of Tibet, including Wensa in Tsang, Sekhar in Lhodrak and Nepal (170a).

Eight large *choeten*, with a *tashigomang* as the principal one, were made by the government of Bhutan (170b).²⁹ The Trongsa Penlop Jigme Namgyal- named as Sherab Drime (170b & 171b), which was probably his religious name- requested the lama's close disciple, Kunga Pelzang po Shenphen Rolpe Dorje, to write the lama's biography.

The biography was finished in the Year of the Earth Sheep (1859) and the woodblocks were made on the Penlop's order in the Trongsa Dzong press by Dokham Lama and Lopen Tenzin (172b).

²⁸ This could be taken as Mahakala as Jaro doncen (Bya rog gdon can).

²⁹ Here the text speaks of 'Brug gzhung, which is usually the seat of the government in Punakha. However, given the might of the Tongsa Penlop at that time, one wonders if the author did not mean the Tongsa Penlop. This is not clear.

Conclusion

This short resumé of the life of the great lama Changchub Tsönggrü does not do justice to the wealth of religious and historical information contained in his biography. More research is required on certain aspects, especially his son, who seemed to be much linked to Khenpajong (*mKhan pa ljongs*) in north-eastern Bhutan. However, the style and a certain lack of logic from the author make certain passages ambiguous and quite difficult to understand.

This biography is of great interest because of the personality of this lama, the picture of the religious atmosphere at that time, and his encounter with Jigme Namgyal, but also because it provides us with insights into the politics of Bhutan in the mid-19th century, a period for which primary sources for Bhutan are scarce.

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