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**Historical Profile
of
Dechenphu Geynyen Neykhang**

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To the Founding of the First Tshechu
Honouring Geynyen Jagpa Melen
on the 10th Day of the 9th Month of Water Sheep Year
Corresponding to November 3, 2003
by the Fourth Druk Gyalpo

Historical Profile of Dechenphu Geynyen Neykhang

Dungchen Sangay Dorji and Karma Ura

Various literary sources that provide scattered information on Dechenphu (means cave of consummate bliss) show that it is a significant sacred place in general, and the most important place of the protector deity for the followers of Drukpa Kargyu. There is no consolidated account of Dechenphu; pieces of information about it have to be assembled from various sources, in particular from the hagiographies of the successive abbots of Druk Ralung, the hagiographies of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo and his immediate descendants. Lhoi Choejung, the famous history of Bhutan written by Penchen Tenzin Chogyal, the 10th Je Khenpo, contains some information about Geynyen. Because of the widespread belief in Geynyen in Tibet, a Tibetan lama, Jamyangje Drupwang Drodul Dorji wrote a booklet on him. The Late Dudjom Rinpoche was another author who composed *drupchog* for Geynyen.

The hagiographies of the successive abbots (bla phreng) of Druk Ralung pertaining to information on Dechenphu are of the nine abbots whose names end with 'Sengye'. The first chief abbot of Druk Ralung was Onrey Dharma Sengye (1177-1237), the nephew of Tshangpa Jarey.

The chief disciple of Pelden Drukpa Tsangpa Jarey (1161-1211) was his nephew Onrey Dharma Sengye, and the chief disciple of Onrey Dharma Singye was Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. When he was 40, in 1224, Phajo

Drugom Zhigpo arrived in Bhutan. Among the many estates he founded, Tango Choeying dzong is the most important because it is where Yidam Tandin appeared before him in person and delivered precepts to him. The Tandin Yidam also prophesied that he would establish a place for the meditation of Tandin at Tango, that he would marry Khando Sonam Peldon, and that he would be the first person to lay the foundation of the doctrines of Drukpa Kargyu in Bhutan.

After Phajo Drugom Zhigpo reached Wang area, he went to meditate at Draphu Sengye Gyaltshen for six months, located at the foot of Dagala, across Gaynen Tshochen. While he was in retreat in Draphu Sengye Gyaltshen in subservience to the prophesy of Guru Rinpoche, young ladies of Wang Chumdo, which is a village located a little short of Chhuzomsa bridge, used to go there regularly to collect fuel wood and leaf-litter. Among the young ladies was an emanation of Yeshey Khandoma named Achog who offered her pack-lunch and -tea to Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. She also offered rice and flour to Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. A relationship developed between the two and she conceived his child.

Phajo Drugom Zhigpo moved from Draphu Sengye Gyaltshen to Dodena, the place next to the bridge on the approach road to Cheri and Tango. At the time of his departure, Phajo secretly advised Achog that in the following year she will give birth to a son and he should be name Dampa. Until then, he advised her, she should be cautious to avoid any pollution because the baby boy would be the emanation (trulpa) of the Indian mahasiddha Pha Dampa Sangye. Phajo left for Dodena with his consort Sonam Pelden who was the emanation of Machig Labdon (1055-1153).

In the following year, as predicted by Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, a baby son named Dampa was born to Achog. But Dampa was not brought into contact with any of other sons of Phajo Drugom Zhigpo from his wife Sonam Pelden till very late in Phajo's life. Based in Dodena, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo had become an authority amongst the *chipons* and patrons after his triumphs against Lama Lhapa whose power was entrenched up till that point of time in this area. At this point of time, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo sent his Nyeney (butler) Khampa Sonam Gyalpo to fetch his son, Dampa to Tango. By then Dampa was 15 years old. Phajo introduced Dampa to his other four sons and enjoined them to accept him as their eldest brother as well as an extraordinary person, being the emanation of Pha Dampa Sangye. Phajo Drugom Zhigpo delivered a complete set of teachings and empowerment to his sons. Phajo Drugom Zhigpo was able to post his four sons as leaders in different places: Gartom to Sha, Wangchuk to Goen, Nyima to Chang and Lama to Paro as both chieftains and lamas. He then installed Dampa as the abbot of Tango while his other sons were sent away to become leaders in other places.

Phajo Drugom Zhigpo ordered Dampa to construct 21 Drubkhang and a lhakhang with five doors at Dodena. Dampa coordinated the labour force during the construction. Many people from Dagala came to work: one of them was a jop lady, Budrenma, popularly known as joop Budrenma. Dampa had an affair with jop Budrenma and their son jop Kuenzang Dorji was soon born. But the existence of illegitimate son, jop Kuenzang Dorji, was concealed from Phajo Drugom Zhigpo. Phajo Drugom was coming to the end of his life, and about a

year before his death, Phajo Drugom Zhigpo asked Dampa to bring jop Kuenzang Dorji to Tango. He was given teachings by both Phajo Drugom Zhigpo and Dampa. In course of time jop Kuenzang Dorji was made the chief lama of Tango in place of Dampa. Dampa had by then gone to Paro to establish Chang Namkor Monastery. Later, he lived in his newly founded monastery at Dechenphu.

Dampa lived for about 100 years. The site at Dechenphu was dedicated to Geynyen from immemorial times. But it was not recognized as Geynyen's Ney by either Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, or his son, Dampa. The place was just another wilderness. It was, however, Dampa who first established a monastery and drubdeys at Dechenphu after he went to visit the valley.

Towards the end of Dampa's long life, he invited his son jop Kuenzang Dorji to Dechenphu lhakhang to be its chief abbot, thus making jop Kuenzang Dorji the second chief abbot of Dechenphu monastery. During the period when jop Kuenzang Dorji was its chief abbot, he established more drubdeys in Dechenphu in addition to the Dechenphu lhakhang, which Dampa had founded. At the moment of Dampa's death, jop Kuenzang Dorji cried and prayed to his father to live longer. In response, Dampa promised that he would return as jop Kuenzang Dorji's son, which did happen the following year when jop Kuenzang Dorji had a son. Dampa passed away at Dechenphu.

Jop Kuenzang Dorji's son was named Damtrul Loden Gyalpo, and when he was three years old he gave a clear account of his previous life as Dampa. Damtrul Loden Gyalpo, was therefore, enthroned as the third chief

abbot of Dechenphu. Damtrul Loden Gyalpo could only get modest teachings from Yab Kuenzang Dorji who was quite aged when Damtrul Loden Gyalpo was growing up. Therefore, Damtrul Loden Gyalpo went to Druk Ralung to receive transmission of precepts. When he was at Druk Ralung, he found that Jamyang Kuenga Sengye (1314-1347) was the seventh chief abbot of Druk Ralung. As mentioned earlier, Tshangpa Jarey had prophesied that there would be nine successive chief abbots of Druk Ralung whose names would end with 'Sengye'.

Damtrul Loden Gyalpo seems to have stayed for a long time in Druk Ralung in close association and service of Jamyang Kuenga Sengye. Jamyang Kuenga Sengye became abbot at the age of 13 and remained on the abbot's throne for 21 years. Damtrul Loden Gyalpo invited Jamyang Kuenga Sengye to his place at Dechenphu in 1345.

When Jamyang Kuenga Sengye stayed at Dechenphu, Damtrul Loden Gyalpo and Jamyang Kuenga Sengye built the present structure of Neykhang of Geynyen and installed inside the statue of Geynyen. During that occasion Geynyen appeared in person to Jamyang Kuenga Sengye, and Jamyang Kuenga Sengye administered *Kago Damzha* on Geynyen while directing Geynyen to be the principle protector of the doctrine of Palden Drukpa. As Jamyang Kuenga Sengye was the abbot from the age of 13 till two years before his death, and he visited Bhutan in 1345 and died in 1347, we can attribute the construction of the present structure of Neykhang of Geynyen to the years between 1345 and 1347. This is the closest we can get to ascertaining the year of construction of the present structure of

Geynyen's Neykhang. Damtrul Loden Gyalpo also built drubdeys below newly constructed Geynyen Neykhang. The present Geynyen Neykhang was built lying below the house where Dampa and Damtrul Loden Gyalpo lived and above the drubdeys. All the structures built above and below the present Geynyen Neykhang have disappeared, although traces of foundation can be seen.

Damtrul Loden Gyalpo had two sons: Drungdrung Gyalchog and Drungdrung Gyalzom. The title Drungdrung is similar in meaning to Zhabdrung; those who were regularly in audience with a higher authority in Tibet were known as Drungkhor. Both Gyalchog and Gyalzom were always in audience with Damtrul Loden Gyalpo, hence the title Drungdrung given to them. Drungdrung Gyalzom became the fourth abbot of Dechenphu monastery and thereafter his descendants held the abbot's post of Dechenphu. Drungdrung Gyalchog went to Druk Ralung to study, and later went to settle at Hungrey in Paro. Drungdrung Gyalchog came to be known as Hungrey Drungdrung of Paro who built Paro Rinpung Dzong. When Drungdrung Gyalchog was in Druk Ralung, the chief abbot of Druk Ralung was Gyalwangje Kuenga Peljor (1428-1478) who was the first incarnation of Palden Drukpa Tsangpa Jarey. Drungdrung Gyalchog invited Gyalwangje Kuenga Peljor to Dechenphu and Gyalwangje Kuenga Peljor in fact lived for four months in Dechenphu. Once again, Jewangje Kuenga Peljor administered *kago damzha* on Geynyen. Thereafter, Drungdrung Gyalchog and Gyalwangje Kuenga Peljor left for Paro. Drungdrung Gyalchog was to carry on his life in Paro by establishing the main line of his descendants as Hungrey Lamas. Given the fact that Geynyen was bound by oath by various lamas such as Damtrul Loden Gyalpo, Jamyang

Kuenga Sengye (1314-1347) and Gyalwangje Kuenga Peljor to serve the doctrine of Pelden Drukpa, Geynyen was found working in person for various Drukpa hierarchs who visited Bhutan. For example, when Drukchen Ngawang Chogyel (1465-1540), half brother of Drukpa Kuenley, was in Bhutan, Geynyen was in attendance. Likewise, when Drukchen Ngawang Chogyel's elder son Thethok Tenpai Gyaltshen also known as Ngawang Drakpa (1506-1530) who founded Fangyul Dagye Goenpa in Wangdi, was in western Bhutan, Geynyen was constantly in attendance, guiding Thethok Tenpai Gyaltshen out of dangers and inconveniences.

Drukchen Ngawang Chogyel's younger son was Ngagi Wangchuk (1517-1554). The son of Ngagi Wangchuk was Mipham Chogyal (1543-1606) and Mipham Chogyal's son was Mipham Tenpai Nyima (1567-1619). Mipham Tenpai Nyima's son was Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. All of these hierarchs of Pelden Drukpa starting from Dampa, the son of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo, were guarded, protected and supported incessantly by Geynyen. Geynyen is a protector of all Buddhist doctrine but especially of Pelden Drukpa.

Geynyen Jagpa Melen is actually the emanation of Yidam Tandin. However, he was born as a product of Noejin Yobshue and Sinmo Dongmar. Hence, his conduct was not very virtuous. In order to transform him, the first *kago damzhag* was delivered on Geynyen by Yidam Tandin. Geynyen also received *kago damzhag* from Guru Rinpoche at Yangleyshey. This leads to an account of the control that Guru Rinpoche exerted on various malignant spirits in the Himalayan region,

including Geynyen, before they became protector deities.

During the first visit of Guru Rinpoche to Bhutan, Guru returned to India from Bumthang. There was no contact between Geynyen and Guru Rinpoche. Some 12 years after Guru Rinpoche visited Bumthang, Guru was at Yangleychey in Nepal on his way to Tibet. As the malignant spirits of the mountains of Himalayas came to know of Guru's intention to subdue them, they got together to obstruct his plans. However, four Geynyens, such as Geynyen Kula Khari, Damchen Dorji Lekpa and Geynyen Jagpa Melen (as Dechenphu Geynyen is called) decided to be in support of Guru Rinpoche who bestowed *kago damzha* on them at Yangleychey. This was the first occasion when Guru and Geynyen came into contact. Later, Guru came to this country, including Cheri and Tango, from Tibet. Guru bestowed *kago damzha* on Geynyen for the second time. But Dechenphu was not marked by any structure at that time.

Besides the Neykhang at Dechenphu, there are seven Neykhangs of Geynyen: Samye Chinphu, Tisi in Joe Ngari, Puri in Tsari Kongpo, Dueyul Khura Gogu, Monyul Dungla Kar, Tsenyon Zangthang Marpo and Drug Ralung. But it seems that Dechenphu is the only one with such an old and august structure. Very often, no matter where in the Himalayas and Tibet invocations and rituals of Geynyen are conducted, in visualizations, he is envisaged arising and coming from Dechenphu in Bhutan. Because of this Dechenphu Geynyen Neykhang is of importance to the whole Mahayana Buddhist world.

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck initiated the most significant restoration and rehabilitation works on Geynyen Neykhang and its surroundings, without compromising the principles of conservation and preservation of the Neykhang which has great historical, architectural and religious values. The restoration of Dechenphu Neykhang complex started on 18 January 1996 and concluded in 1998. Only some of the major elements of the restoration can be cited here. The mud plaster work exterior of the Neykhang and the goma-rabseys (window-galleries) outside of the liturgical rooms on the second and the third floors; the wooden cornices of the Eastern and Southern sides of the Nyekhang; and the roof-timber were restored. Further, the wooden columns, girders, beams and the ceilings of the ground floor of the Geynyen Neykhang were restored, as were the window boards on the first floor. During the restoration and rehabilitation of the Gyenyen Neykhang complex, a large two storey house was constructed in front of the Geynyen Neykhang for the resident monks of Dechenphu at the site where a kitchen stood. This grand house was built also to provide space for the increasing numbers of pilgrims going to Dechenphu to pay their homage to Dechenphu Geynyen. In addition, landscaping around the Dechenphu complex was carried out, and the path to the Neykhang itself was changed to allow a better perspective when approaching the Nyekhang.

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck envisioned the institution of a sacred festival for the public to honour the beneficence of Geynyen Jagpa Melen, the chief deity of Pelden Drukpa. At the time of restoration, the courtyard was

expanded considerably by shifting the compound wall outward and a bigger courtyard-cloister created. At the personal initiative of His Majesty, a Tsechu dedicated to Geynyen Jagpa Melen was fulfilled by starting it on the 10th Day of Ninth Month in Water Sheep Year corresponding to November 3, 2003 at his Abode of the Cave of Consummate Bliss.

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2. **Skyabs rje bdud 'joms** gyis mdzad pa'ibtsan rgod jagpa melen gyi dmar chen gtor ma'I las rim dgra bgegs tshar gcod ces bya ba bzhugs so/ ff.14.
3. **Rdzong kha gong 'phel lhantshog** kyis spyilo 1999 lor dpe bskrun 'bad mi phajo 'brug sgom zhigpo'i rnam thar/
4. **Bla mkhyen pra dza shari bha dras** mdzad pa'i grub mchog hum ral drung drung yab sras kyis rnam thar mdo tsam gleng ba rinpochei do shal/
5. **Sngags 'chang bsam rgyal kha ches** mdzad pa'i 'jam dbyangs kun dga' senge'i rnam thar/ ff.184-5th line to 185.
6. **Ava duti pa rinchen rnam rgyal** gyis mdzad pa'i rgyal dbang kun dga dpal 'byor gyi rnam thar ngo tshar bdud rtsi'i thigpa/
7. **Sgrub pa po bsod rnam mchog ldan** gyis mdzad pa'i dpal ldan blama dampa'i mdzad pa rmad du byung ba bcu'I tshul du gsal bar ston pa ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thigpa/ (rgyal dbang rje kun dga dpal 'byor)
8. **Kun mkhyen Padma dkarpos** mdzad pa'i dpal ldan blama ngag dbang chos kyis rgyal po'I rnam thar ngo mtshar 'od brgya pa/
9. **Byar po'i sgomchen chos rgyal bsodnam rgyal mtshan** gyis mdzad pa'i mtshungs med rje'i rnam par tharpa yid bzhin norbu'i 'phreng ba dngos grub rgyam mtsho'i byin 'bebs/ (ngag dbang grags pa)
10. **Rje mkhan khri rabs 69 pa rje dge 'dun rinchen** gyis mdzad pa'i dpal ldan 'brug pa'i gdul zhing lho phyogs nags mo'i ljong kyis chos 'byung blo gsar rna rgyan/
11. **'Brug gi rgyal yongs dpe mdzod mdo chen pama tshe dbang** gyis mdzad pa'i 'brug gi rgyal rabs mun sel sgron me/

12. **Rgyal sras gcung rinpoche'i** rnam par tharpa snyan ngag gi bung ba rnam par rtse ba zhes bya ba/ (kun mkhyen pad dkar kyis thad pa)
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14. **RGOB/UNESCO.** Conservation of Dechenphug Lhakhang. 1996.