

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present book represents a study of a historical space in Tibet that from the outset of historical recording in the 7<sup>th</sup> century proved decisive for the fate of the Snowland: sKyid-shod – the core district of northern Central Tibet, in the heart of which Lhasa is situated, the cultural and political centre of Tibet. In this protracted valley through which its name-giver, the alluvial sKyid-chu river cuts its winding way, the monastic complex of Tshal Gung-thang (erected late 12<sup>th</sup> century) spreads out, located at the eastern edge of present-day Lhasa township, a temple today partly in ruins. Essentially, the book deals with the eventful history and vicissitude of this monastic centre, and with the political supremacy of its polity, the Tshal-pa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It pays due heed to the historical and hegemonic development both in the narrow and wider environs encompassing the Lhasa Valley and in particular the so-called epicentric Lhasa Maṅḍala Zone, both prior to the foundation of Tshal-pa as well as in the post-Tshal-pa epoch, where local polities and ruling houses competed for sovereignty over the valley until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The sheer abundance of historical sources and reference materials consulted during this lengthy study bears witness to the existence of an hitherto unknown historical density in the area since early times, a melting pot and home of a complex network of clans, ancestral and religious lineages, eventually populated by local secular powers in steady interaction and communication with one another along much-trodden paths connecting the many religious institutions that gradually surfaced in the area from the onset of the Renaissance Period in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. A point of reference in this highly charged universe of intense and contentious relationships was the two famed temples of the “Lhasa Lords” (*lha sa jo bo gnyis*), precious sanctuaries that represent a pre-eminent heritage and constitutive legacy of the imperial epoch. From the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, they were under the special ritual protection and political management of the Tshal-pa. In the center of the Tshal-pa polity – as its compelling and towering figure – stood its redoubtable founder, the charismatic ascetic, yogi, uncompromising warlord and religious head Gung-thang Bla-ma Zhang (1123–1193 A.D.). The present work in its complex totality teeming with (some might want to say burdened by) minute details then – it is hoped – shall allow the reader to immerse himself into a world born from this truly audacious Tibetan master.

The book may be regarded as an extensive contribution to the historical study of early and late medieval Tibet, and thematically constitutes a follow-up of two previous works published by the same authors in 2000 and 2005 (*Civilization at the Foot of Mount Sham-po* and *Thundering Falcon*, both ÖAW, Vienna). It is the continuation of a more than decade old, on-going fruitful cooperation between European and Tibetan researchers. The authors also here pursued a strict methodological approach that combines in-depth textual analyses, philology, anthropological inquiries with extensive *in situ* fieldwork, thereby creating a new approach within the field of Tibetan historical study. In addition and pursuant to the extensive textual elaborations offered, special priority was given to identify and localize all relevant toponyms. The many detailed cartographical works open up for a new dimension to historical studies or to what might be labelled informed historical geography, shedding light on the formative historical development and its repercussions and ramifications in the hinterlands of the political and religious centres. Starting from the history of the Tshal-pa – in the 13–14<sup>th</sup> centuries exerting religious and political hegemony over sKyid-shod

– the present study offers new insight into the relations and interactions between clans, territories, religious lineages and local ruling houses within this region around Lhasa in the period from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Part 1 of the book (= volume 1 of the present edition) is a translation of a basic text concerning the history of Tshal Gung-thang. Interwoven is a detailed annotation of the text, drawing upon a host of (partly rare or hitherto unknown) comparative sources on the earlier history of this region. Part 2 comprises five appendices: four lengthy individual studies on various aspects of the history and cultic tradition of Tshal-pa and the Lhasa valley, as well as a compilation of several historical tables. This part includes numerous clan genealogies, lists of religious institutions, or of names, such as the numerous teachers and disciples of the Tshal-pa founder, abbatial lineages of neighbouring monastic powers and, not least, genealogical tables of the regional hegemonies of the post Tshal-pa era. An extensive cartographical and photographic documentation (including rare historical photos) as well as a facsimile of two Tshal-pa texts complete the present work, which *in toto* provides the reader with compelling insights and absorbing testimonies of the fragile interdependence of religion and politics. In particular the history of the Lhasa valley – a first systematic study of the site – is dealt with at some length, demonstrating for the first time how the climate of the valley (constituting a so-called forest climate) has suffered from human-induced environmental changes throughout the last 4000 years and that it was precisely this climate and its challenges that played a constitutive role in the formation of politics concerning Lhasa with its sacred environment.

The book attempts to explore new territories too, we hope, by paving the way for new promising perspectives in Tibetological research in the future. It addresses one of its most pressing desiderata, given the nature of the Tibetan medieval society: the documentation and identification of the numerous clans that populated its rugged territories, delineating their complex migratory and settlement history, a survey that shall allow us a far better appreciation of the historical and political development and eventually enable us to draw more reliable, periodic historical maps of Tibet, such as maps known from neighbouring disciplines. On account of its size, the study may also be regarded as a reference work on the history of sKyid-shod area and the Lhasa Valley. Easy access and reference are ensured through comprehensive indices that include all personal names and toponyms mentioned in the two volumes.

It is a great pleasure in the first place to extend our thanks to the institutions that enabled us to carry out the Gung-thang research project, either by providing the financial means or by enabling us to carry out the necessary fieldwork: The German Research Council (DFG) and the Austrian Funds for the Promotion of Scientific Research (FWF). An essential share behind the successful implementation of the project (not least what concerns the lengthy fieldwork expeditions) stems from the long-standing academic cooperation with the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences (TASS) in Lhasa, with which the authors are directly and actively involved for many years now, made possible within the framework of the academic agreement between TASS and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). The present study finally was carried out within the framework of a research project over many years attached to the Institute of Indology and Central Asian Studies of the University of Leipzig (Germany), in part also linked to a project originally attached to the Austrian Academy of Social Sciences, and we are thankful to the leading representatives in

Lhasa, Vienna and Leipzig for their patient support and for providing the necessary institutional accommodation. Especially Prof. Ernst Steinkellner, Prof. Andre Gingrich (both Vienna) and the then president of the TASS, Prof. Tsewang Gyurme should be mentioned in this connection.

Various colleagues and institutions have aided us on the long path to completion and we have been extremely fortunate during the book's gestation to receive all sorts of unstinted help from the individuals that are too many to be listed or mentioned here – to all we collectively express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude. Thanks to our Tibetological colleagues Franz-Karl Ehrhard (Munich, Kathmandu), Christoph Cüppers (Lumbini), L. van der Kuijp (Harvard), who among others generously supplied us with texts, references or with long-sought textual material, not least from Nepal and China. The same goes for our dear friends Roberto Vitali and Matthew Akester (Kathmandu). L. van der Kuijp also generously gave permission to publish the biography of sMon-lam rdo-rje. A number of institutions and museums around the world have been very collaborative and responsive. We are grateful to the British Museum for placing at our disposal a number of rare historical photos belonging to the Hugh Richardson Archive and for allowing us to reproduce these. To the Pitts River Museum in Oxford for permission to publish rare photos from the Charles Bell Collection. Our gratitude goes to Dr. Olaf Czaja (Leipzig) for precious help in indexing the book – a tedious and certainly herculean labour as well as to Mag. Ralf Kramer (formerly the Bodlean Library Oxford). Tsering Shakya (London) and Vladimir Uspensky (St. Petersburg) proved very helpful and generous. Thanks are also due to Anna Hazod (Vienna) and Jan Seifert (Leipzig) for their help in improving graphical documentation and the lay-out of the present book, and to David Westacott for his editing the English text of parts of the book. Ngodrop Tsering and Dungkar Pempa (both of TASS) functioned as co-researchers during several field-work trips and we would like to express our gratitude for their assistance and contribution. We have incurred a special note of gratitude to a number of helpful colleagues for their cordial cooperation. To Mag. David Holler (Berlin, Lhasa) for up-dating our library by occasionally purchasing for us the newest publications issued in Lhasa when it was needed the most. To Gene Smith of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in New York, we are very grateful for his expert help in tracing numerous sources. To Christian Luczanits (Berlin) for establishing contacts to the art collector Ernst Jucker who promptly granted his permission to reproduce one of his fine *thangkas*. For permission to reproduce the pictures of statues and *thangka* of Bla-ma Zhang, we extend our gratitude to the RMA and Carlton Rochell of New York, and to Oliver Hoare of London and the Hahn Kwang-ho Collection in Seoul. Finally, we thank U. von Schroeder of Switzerland for allowing us to publish a few of his excellent photos kept in his extensive documentary archive. Our dear colleagues, Orna Almogi and Phuntshog Dorji (of Hamburg) provided us with a copy of the entire Samdo Gonpa Mss-Collection of Bla-ma Zhang's extensive writings – a tremendous donation. At a final stage of the work, particular mention must be recorded: Phillip Pierce and Matthew Akester (Kathmandu) for proof-reading sections of the work. We also gladly acknowledge our debt to Dr. Dan Martin (Jerusalem), who – always collaborative – at an early point saw the importance of the text and hence placed at our disposal his own preliminary transliteration of the *Gung thang dkar chag*. It probably was Dan's special and long-standing interest in the unusual and controversial character of Bla-ma Zhang that originally inspired us to dive into the fascinating world of this truly enigmatic medieval Tibetan master and his religious legacy.

Historical research and writing (based upon in-depth philological enquiries, and topographic and cartographic evaluations) often are solitary enterprises, conducted in strict self-absorbing solitude

over lengthy periods, a circumstance that goes a long way in explaining the long period the book was in its making. The book, like the earlier ones, could not have been made if the nature of the collaboration (of a truly complementary nature) and the chemistry between its authors were not so excellent: The present research team – over long period residing in Leipzig and Hummelberg (the research hermitage of Hazod) when they were not underway in Tibet – worked together in a fruitful way, a collaboration (one may also say intellectual cross-pollination) that allowed us to exchange stimulating views and insights or to test still inchoate hypotheses and unripe assumptions before they transmuted into workable theses and viable analyses. The working process throughout all phases was truly collaborative, where individual works have been written (so in the appendices) by any of its two main authors, these are indicated by name. By scrutinizing a large number of sources, written and physical ones, we have been able to gather a fairly rich harvest of information on Tshal Gung-thang and – albeit far from exhaustive – been able to sketch out the rough historical outline of this medieval polity and monastic establishment down through history. The working process chosen was time-consuming, and our time-table would have looked very different had electronic mail not been invented, which enabled us, unlike former times, to dispatch large amount of written material and documents between our separate research caves.

Careful readers will inevitably detect a number of typos. For remaining mistakes and blunders – and in order to anticipate any subsequent criticism for carelessness – without objection we readily hasten to acknowledge these and collectively express our *mea culpa* (*gyi na pa'i skyon*).

In the making of the book and in particular during fieldwork, we were again able to sap uncommonly significant information and received practical help and assistance from the locals. We feel immensely grateful to numerous nameless Tibetan informants for their prompt assistance, guidance and excellent contributions throughout the fieldwork. More often than not, the local informants were seemingly unaware of the truly precious information they handed over to us – their often fragmentary recollections that stemmed from oral tradition, their references to obsolete or now-lost toponyms, or to recondite historical persons, cults or remote events, the information gathered later proved significant, not seldom serving as a final (or missing) link in a long chain of evidence. It should never be overlooked by researchers that the local people, their places and native homes constitute both the starting point and the end point in any historical and socio-anthropological inquiry. The present study is not least dedicated to the people inhabiting those remote villages and valleys – with this book we hope a number of fragments and otherwise lost mosaics in the historical jigsaw puzzle now could be reassembled and reinstated in their proper context.

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