

TAWANG

MONASTERY

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PREFACE

Arunachal Pradesh has 61,400 Buddhists among its total population of 4,67,511 according to the 1971 census. The scheduled tribes population of Arunachal Pradesh is 3,69,408 and 41,430 of these are Buddhists. The Monpas, with a population of 28,209, are the largest Buddhist tribe and 1284 Sherdukpens among its total population of 1639 profess Buddhism.

The Tawang monastery is the fountain-head of the spiritual life of the Gelugpa followers of the Monpas and Sherdukpens. It has capacity for housing five hundred lamas. It stands on the spur of a hill, about 10,000 feet above the sea level, offering a commanding and picturesque view of the Tawangchu valley and is surrounded on all sides except on the east by mountains with snow peaks and pine forest below. This 17th century monastery was studied in my field-investigation in 1971 and 1979 and its historical background, descriptive account and monastic system are treated in this book.

I am greatly indebted to the lamas of this monastery, who generously helped me in my field-investigation. Among the monastic officials, I was much helped by late Rigya Rimpoche, who adorned the office of the *khempo* (abbot). Lhosang Phumcho and Chakjoeh Lama Phunchu, two senior lamas of this monastery, were also of great help. In my field-investigation, I was very ably assisted by two Political Interpreters of Tawang, Shri Pema Thinley and late Tsering Dorji. I am grateful to Shri R. N. Bagchi, Art Expert, Arunachal Pradesh, for designing and executing the jacket of this book. I am indebted to Shri B. Suklabaidya, Draughtsman, for making out the sketch map. My grateful thanks are due to Shri P. K. Singh for typing out the manuscript.

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Niranjan Sarkar

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This monastery at Tawang is the fountain-head of the spiritual life of the Gelugpa¹ followers of the Monpas and Sherdukpens.² Though it has capacity for housing five hundred lamas, the actual number of resident lamas was two hundred and fifty in 1979. The monastery comes into view from a great distance and stands like a fort as if guarding its votaries in the Tawangchu valley³ below. And the impression is not totally devoid of substance in view of the hostility its founder faced from the Karmapas⁴ and Nyingmapas then dominant in this area and more so from the Dukpas⁵ of Bhutan. The Dukpas of Bhutan made several attempts to capture Tawang.

¹ During the development of Buddhism in Tibet, four sects—Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kargyupa and Gelugpa—arose with the passage of time. The Nyingmapa, Sakyapa and Kargyupa gave rise to various sub-sects under them.

² The Monpas and Sherdukpens are two Buddhist tribes of Kameng, the westernmost district of Arunachal Pradesh.

³ This valley was previously known as Tsosum. Long long ago three Monpas, who were brothers, opened up the three settlement areas of Shar, Sheru and Lhau of the Tawangchu valley. Shar was opened up by the eldest brother, Sheru by the middle and Lhau by the youngest one. The area comprising the three villages came to be known as Tsosum (*tso*=area; *sum*=three) literally meaning three areas.

⁴ It is one of the sub-sects of the Kargyupa.

⁵ It is another sub-sect of the Kargyupa.

This explains the strategic location as well as the structures purely defensive in nature incorporated in the lay-out of the monastery, which remains not only a strong base for propagation of religion but in the past was also a military post against the Dukpa attacks. Mera Lama, its founder, gave so much importance to the second aspect that he lifted all prohibitions against military activities from the inmates of the monastery. This attitude is also reflected in the quantum of monthly rations. Out of the monthly allowance of thirteen *bres*¹ of cereal, as much as ten are said to be given as an inducement to actively join in the defence of this area. Isolation of the monastic life from the village life is considered conducive to the pursuit of religion undisturbed by worldly temptations. So at the beginning there was no village nearby but one has grown up later. The Tawang township is about one kilometre to the north-east of the monastery.

To judge its place in the history of Buddhism in this region, it is very essential to know something about the history of the introduction and spread in this region of the Gelugpa sect, to which this monastery belongs. The history of the Gelugpa in this region starts with Thangston Gyalpo, a Gelugpa lama from Tibet. He lived from 1385 to 1462.² He was a fellow-disciple and associate of the first Dalai Lama, Gedun-drub (1391-1475 A. D.). According to Waddell, 'One

¹ The *bre* is a local unit of measurement of cereal, equal to about one kilogram of wheat.

² D. Snellgrove and H. Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (London, 1968), p. 42.

of the popular saints is the famous engineer, T'añ-toñ rGyal-po, whose image or picture is often found in Lamaist temples. He lived in the first half of the fifteenth century A. D ., and is celebrated for having built eight iron-chain suspension bridges over the great river of Central Tibet, the Yaru Tsañ-po ; and several of these bridges still survive.¹ He came to a place called Chankhargor and meditated in a cave there. It is near the village of Kraling about seven miles to the south-east of Tawang. Here also he constructed an iron-chain suspension bridge called Chaksam bridge over the Tawangchu river connecting the Mukto area with the Kitpi area of Tawang, and this bridge still survives. There is a Monpa hamlet called Berkhar near Kraling. Berkhar Targe was a householder of this hamlet. Thangston Gyalpo gave his begging-bowl, full of country wine, to Berkhar Targe and told him that if he kept it carefully, seven intelligent and valiant sons would be born to him. Berkhar Targe had seven sons born to him and as they were intelligent and valiant, his household became popularly known as *Poudun* (*pou*=intelligent and valiant ; *dun*=seven) or the household having seven intelligent and valiant sons.² His second and seventh sons went to the Tashilhunpo monastery in Tibet for religious training. Their family-names are not

¹ L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 385.

² This famed house is still there. It is a two-storied building of the local architecture. Shri Tashi Khandu of this illustrious family is the present owner.

remembered by the local people, but the names they were given when they were ordained were Tanpei Dronme and Lopsang Khechun for the second and seventh brothers respectively. They had their training under Changton Hrolpei Dorje, a disciple of the first Dalai Lama.

Tanpei Dronme went to the Sera monastery for training, after which he met the second Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatso (1475-1543), and it was he who shaved his head, ordained him as the *gelong* or monk and gave him his religious name of Tanpei Dronme. The second Dalai Lama asked him that after completion of his training he was to take his fellow-disciple and brother, Lopsang Khechun, with him and proceed to Lho-Mon (*Lho*=south ; *Mon*=lowland) or the lower country in the south inhabited by the Monpas, build temples and monasteries and establish the Gelugpa sect there.

Tanpei Dronme came back with his brother to the Monpa area and built many Gelugpa temples such as Brakar Gonpa, Ariakdun Gonpa, Lhangaten Gonpa, Sanglamphe Gonpa, Tadung Gonpa, Taidung Gonpa, Surchung Gonpa in the Tawang area and the Talung Gonpa at the Monpa village of Sanglem in the south-western part of Kameng district. He also built two temples in eastern Bhutan, Tashi Tselling Gonpa and Dungsham Gonpa in the villages of Sakten and Mera respectively. He built his monastery, Galdan Tselling Gonpa, in the village of Mera and took his residence there. Here he died at the age of 99 years.

The Gelugpa sect, thus introduced by Tanpei Dronme, was sustained, consolidated and extended in the areas, inhabited by the Monpas and Sherdukpens, by a series of his incarnations. According to custom the incarnation comes to the property of his preceding birth. The fourth of his incarnation was Lodre Gyatso, who was born in the household of *Poudun*, already hallowed by Tanpei Dronme. He was a descendant of one of the five brothers of that great ancestor who had continued in lay-life. Lodre Gyatso had his education at Tashilhunpo and then at Sera and Gyume monasteries in Lhasa. He was the holder of the degree called *Geshe* ('Friend to Virtue').¹ Information reached him there at Lhasa that the Dukpas of Bhutan had directed their attack against his religious establishments there. Not knowing what to do, he went to the fifth Dalai Lama, Nagwang Lobjang Gyatso (1617-1682) and sought his advice. He placed before him a plan of constructing a new monastery as a centre of the Gelugpa. With the blessings of the Dalai Lama, he came to the Galdan Tseling monastery and stayed in it for some years. At this time he came to be popularly known as Mera Lama from

¹ It was the highest doctor's degree, conferred only by the three leading Gelugpa monasteries of Tibet, namely Galdan, Drepung and Sera. A *geshe* was regarded to have mastered all the exoteric learning and it was only those monks with this degree who were eligible to take up the tantric studies at Gyume and Gyuto, the two centres of esoteric learning in Tibet to reach the zenith of the lamaist career. These twin academies of tantric studies were affiliated to the Galdan monastery.

the name of the village of Mera where his monastery was situated. The Dukpas, however, had gained sufficient ascendancy to continue the harassment. They even tried to kill him.

It is known from the history of Bhutan that the Dukpa sub-sect was introduced there in the thirteenth century by a Tibetan monk named Lama Phajo. In 1616, Ngawang Namgyal, of the house of Gya at Ralung in Tibet, arrived in Bhutan. He finally succeeded to consolidate the supremacy in Bhutan of the Dukpa over the other sects. He established his temporal as well as spiritual control over Bhutan and came to be known as Shabdung Rimpoche or Dharma Raja having a momentous reign of thirty-five years. He was a contemporary of Mera Lama and it was he, 'who forced into submission or exile the chief exponents of rival sects....'¹

Mera Lama, finding it impossible to continue his stay in his monastery there, came to Tsosum as Tawang was known in those days and made the Sanglamphe Gonpa his residence. There he planned for a Gelugpa monastery. At that time there was a Karmapa temple called the Gangardung Gonpa in this area. This temple still stands, about three miles east of Tawang, small in size though it is under the charge of the Gelugpa nowadays. At that time it was under the jurisdiction of the Drosangatsolling Gonpa, the Karmapa centre in Tibet. There was also the Thechpa

¹ G. N. Mehra, *Bhutan : Land of the Peaceful Dragon* (Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Kanpur, 1974), p. 77.

Gonpa, a Nyingmapa temple, at Tsosum. It was established by a lama, Thechpa Rimpoche, who came from the Mindollin monastery in Tibet. The Karmapa and Nyingmapa lamas contrived to foil the plan of Mera Lama. This opposition was consequent to their experience in Tibet, where the emergence of the Gelugpa sect had been at the cost of these sects. The people of Tsosum also were then under the influence of these two sects. So Mera Lama could not achieve much. He went to Lhasa disappointed and reported to the fifth Dalai Lama his failure and its causes and prayed for his help.

The Dalai Lama issued a mandate to all the villages of Tsosum area to help Mera Lama in his project. He gave Mera Lama a ball of yarn and told him that the boundary lines of the site of his monastery should be of the same length as the yarn of the ball. Mera Lama was given freedom of choice of the site in other respects. Mera Lama returned to Tsosum and to the Sanglamphe Gonpa. He was greatly worried over the right choice of the site. One day he went to a hill called Bramdongchung, three miles north of Tawang, where there was a cave. He went in leaving his horse outside and sat down to pray for divine light. When he came out after the prayer, he did not find his horse. This was strange as the horse had never strayed away from its master. He followed the hoof-marks and came to a place known as Tana Mandekhang, where once stood the palace of one of the Tawang kings called Gyalpo Kala Wangpo and his horse was there. He at once

perceived that the divine help had come and that was the site for his monastery. In recognition of the part played by his horse, who had led him to it, he called it Tawang (*ta*=horse ; *wang*=chosen) or the place chosen by horse.

The people of Tawang gradually gathered round Mera Lama and were ready to help in the construction of the monastery. The area of the monastery was measured with the yarn of the ball given by the Dalai Lama. Each village constructed a part of the outer wall. Even today they maintain their own parts and repair when necessary. Similarly the villages constructed a building each for the resident lamas and each still maintains that building it built. The villages of Tawang and Lumla areas constructed the lower part of the building housing the *dukhang* (assembly hall) and are responsible for its maintenance. The part above this was constructed by Pangchen-Dingdruk or north-west Tawang and Lebuchosie areas. But the people of Lebuchosie area cannot come for maintenance work as they are in Tibet. The full name of this monastery is Tawang Galdan Namgye Lhatse (*Tawang*=site chosen by horse ; *Galdan*=paradise ; *Namgye*=celestial ; *Lhatse*=divine) or the celestial paradise of the divine site chosen by horse. But it is referred to in short as Tawang Gonpa.

Mera Lama again went to Lhasa with a happy report of the success of his mission. He prayed that the Dalai Lama bestow a memento to be preserved in the monastery, lay down rules of conduct for the resident lamas, grant resources

for their board and appoint an abbot and few monastic officials for the governance of the establishment. The Dalai Lama gave him a painting of goddess *Paldan Lhamo*¹ to be kept in the monastery; the manuals called *Chai* and *Chebamarna*, the latter a work by himself, that contained the rules to be followed by the resident lamas; deputed a learned and pious monk as the abbot and two monastic officials as the *niertsang* (steward) of the monastery and directed the *dzongpen* (governor) of Tsona area in southern Tibet to supply it with provisions. It became affiliated to the Drepung monastery.² Mera Lama would have the Dalai Lama to pay a visit to the Tawang monastery, but the latter regretted his inability to do so then. He promised to visit it later³.

¹*Paldan Lhamo* (Sanskrit, *Devi* or *Sri Devi*) is 'The Goddess or the queen of the warring weapon', and the patron deity of the Dalai Lama.

²H. E. Richardson, *A short history of Tibet* (New York, 1962), p. 117 and pp. 149-150.

³It was to redeem this promise, the local people believe, that the Dalai Lama had his sixth rebirth in the person of Tsangyang Gyatso (1683-1706) in the Tawang area. A party of senior monks and officials of the Dalai Lama's establishment at Lhasa came to Tawang to take the sixth Dalai Lama to Tibet. When the party, on way to Lhasa via Bumla, got almost to the top of the mountain range to the north of the Tawang Gonpa, the Dalai Lama turned back to have the last view of the monastery, to visit which he got incarnated in this area but which he could not do as the authority of the monastery failed to extend an invitation for his visit there. So dejected, he put one of his feet on a rock there and his foot-print got miraculously inscribed on it. This rock bearing his foot-print, about five miles from Tawang Gonpa, is known as Lama-jabjeih.

A date and time, however, was fixed when Mera Lama would perform a rite at Tawang and the Dalai Lama would consecrate it from the roof of Potala, his palace at Lhasa.

Mera Lama passed his last days in the monastery he had built.

The lamas of this monastery could not give the year of its construction.¹ According to them, there was a record on the history of its establishment, but they lost it and many other sacred books and monastic records in two unfortunate incidents. In old days, the lamas of Tsona monastery used to come down in winter with their sacred books and other belongings and live in the Tawang monastery. This helped them to avoid the rigours of the winter in the higher altitudes where their own monastery was situated. In summer, it was the turn of the lamas of Tawang monastery, who would go to the Tsona monastery and pass the summer in the cooler climate there. Once the Tsona lamas made a very strange demand that the richly-gilded seated image of Buddha, about 26 feet high, of the Tawang monastery should better be taken to their monastery and kept there. But the Tawang lamas could not comply with such a demand to dispossess them of the prized possession of their monastery. At that very moment many sacred

¹ Rahul gives the year of its construction as 1680. However, he has not indicated the source of his information. (Ram Rahul, *Modern Bhutan*, Vikas Publications, Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Kanpur, 1971, p. 29).

books and records of this monastery were in Tsona and the Tsona lamas, frustrated at their attempt to get hold of this image, refused to return these. Again in 1951, the two *niertsangs* of Tawang monastery took away some of its records with them. A lama of this monastery later prepared an account on the establishment of this monastery from his memory, but it is rather sketchy and does not give the year of its construction. All that the lamas of this monastery could say was that it was already constructed when the Mongol forces led by one Sokpo Jomkhar¹ came in this area at the instance of the fifth Dalai Lama to help the Monpa followers of the Gelugpa sect in their struggle against the Dukpas of Bhutan, who even attacked the Tawang monastery more than once and tried in vain to capture this area. The lamas still show some bullet marks, said to have been fired by the invading Bhutanese forces, on the south-eastern gate of the monastery. The Monpas refer the Mongols as *Sokpo* and Jomkhar was the commander of the Mongol forces.

Sokpo Jomkhar also helped the Gelugpas in their local struggle of supremacy against the Nyingmapas and Karmapas. In that campaign, he destroyed the three oldest temples of this area, which belonged to the Nyingmapas and were

¹A mural painting of Sokpo Jomkhar is seen with others adorning the eastern wall of the assembly hall of the Tawang monastery. He is said to have visited the monastery and donated a set of *Kanjur* texts. The *Kanjur* is the canon containing the translation of the Buddha's precepts.

named Urgyeling, Sangeling and Tsorgeling.¹ The then incarnation of Thechpa Rimpoche, the leading Nyingmapa lama of this area, became very apprehensive about the safety of his temple and more so about the *kudung* or the stupa enshrining the earthly remains of Thechpa Rimpoche. In his desperation, he approached his very sectarian rival, the authority of Tawang monastery, with a proposal that if they would agree to keep the *kudung* in their monastery for some time ; then Sokpo Jomkhar, even if he would attack and destroy his temple, would not know the whereabouts of the *kudung* and thus it would escape his fury. The authority of Tawang monastery agreed to the proposal and the *kudung* was transferred there. Though it may seem strange in the background of the sectarian rivalry, it is a fact and we find that the Tawang monastery is having among its treasures this *kudung* of Thechpa Rimpoche, its arch rival. This five feet high *kudung* is in the rear chamber of the ground floor of the assembly hall. Though Lama Urgyan, the preceptor of the present Thechpa Rimpoche, claims it to be the *kudung*, the lamas of Tawang monastery assert that it is the *dungten*—which is also a stupa containing the personal possessions of the departed—of Thechpa Rimpoche.

It is already known from the history of Tibet and Bhutan that the struggle of supremacy between the Dukpas of Bhutan and the Monpa

¹The Nyingmapas rebuilt the Urgyeling and Sangeling Gonpas afterwards. After the birth of the sixth Dalai Lama at the Urgyeling Gonpa, the Gelugpas took it over. The Tsorgeling Gonpa is still in ruins as the Mongols left it.

followers of the Gelugpa sect started in 1643. We have already seen that this sectarian struggle between the Dukpas and Gelugpas forced Mera Lama to abandon his monastery, Galdan Tselling Gonpa, in the village of Mera in eastern Bhutan. He came to Tawang and founded the Tawang monastery. '... After Gusri Khan¹ and Sonam Chospel (chief attendant of the fifth Dalai Lama and chief administrator) had investigated the situation...'² '... the Mongol troops of Gusri Khan invaded Bhutan in 1644...'³ In 1646, Tibet and Bhutan arrived at a peace agreement restoring the status quo as existed prior to the break out of hostility.⁴ But hostility again broke out and Mongol-Tibetan troops came again to assist the Monpa forces in 1647. So Sokpo Jomkhar of the legendary fame here must have been the Mongol commander of one of these two bodies of troops. If that be the case, it can be inferred that the Tawang monastery was constructed some time between 1643 and 1647.

Lopsang Thapkhe, the fifth incarnation, enlarged the modest structures of the assembly hall of the monastery to its present size.

With the establishment of the Tawang monastery, the Gelugpa sect gradually but steadily gained

¹This Mongol prince invaded Tibet in circa 1641 at the request of the fifth Dalai Lama and established the supremacy of the Gelugpa over the other sects there.

²Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1967), p. 112.

³Rahul, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

⁴Shakabpa, op, cit., p. 113.

supremacy and the other sects lost their hold. The Karmapa completely disappeared, only the Nyingmapa lingers and that too mostly among the village priests.

The temples of Sakti, Momang, Manjing and Kharung in Lumla area, Ugyeling, Changbu, Shermang, Khromten, Ariakdun, Brakar and Kimnash in Tawang area and Namchu in Dirang area are affiliated to the Tawang monastery. The abbot deputed monks from his establishment on application for three years to run the affairs of these temples for that period for the benefit of the laity. They get their provisions from the monastery. In addition to that, the villagers provide them with scheduled quantities of certain articles and food-stuff. This contribution varies from village to village and depends on the arrangements at the time of deputation. The Talung Gonpa in the Kalaktang area used to be in this arrangement. But as the people have stopped their contribution for some time, the monk has been withdrawn.

There are two nunneries (*ane gonpa*) at Tawang. Mera Lama had one sister who was a nun (*ane*). As no woman can reside in the Tawang monastery, a nunnery was constructed on a hillock about four miles north for her. It is known as Giangong Ane Gonpa. She got her provisions from the monastery. That arrangement still continues for the present thirty-six *anes* and each of them draws a monthly allowance of ten *bres* of cereal from the monastery. The nuns perform minor chores in the monastery as and when desired by the monastic authority.

The other nunnery, Pramo Dongdzung Ane Gonpa, depends on the charity of the laity.

The monastery used to run two *dzongs*, one at the village of Dirang and the other near the Talung Gonpa in the village of Sanglem in southwestern Kameng. A *dzong* is something of an administrative centre and each one was run by two senior monks of the monastery for a term of three years and they were called *dzongpen*. They settled local disputes referred to them and levied taxes from the villages under their control for the monastery. The expenses of the *Dungjur* festival, performed every third year in the monastery, were met from the tax levied from the *Talung-dzong* area and those for the first two days of the *Monlam Chenmoh* ceremony, performed in the monastery in the first Monpa month called Dawa Dangpo,¹ from taxes paid by Dirang area. With the establishment of the administration, these *dzongs* had ceased to function and the loss of the tax is made up nowadays from other sources and internal adjustments.

In its otherwise peaceful record in its dealings with the villages of this area, the authority of Tawang monastery had to face local resistance in its plan to construct the *dzong* in the village of

¹The Monpa year is lunar and it begins with the rise of the new moon in February and the first month corresponds roughly a period between February and March and the others follow serially. The twelve months, according to the local calendar, are *Dawa Dangpo*, *Dawa Nipa*, *Dawa Sumpa*, *Dawa Jipa*, *Dawa Ngapa*, *Dawa Drukpa*, *Dawa Dumpa*, *Dawa Gepa*, *Dawa Gupa*, *Dawa Chupa*, *Dawa Chukchupa* and *Dawa Chungnipa*.

Dirang. The people of Dirang took the initiative themselves for adopting Buddhism,¹ but they refused to be under the temporal control of the monastery. So when the *dzong* was being planned to be constructed, twelve leading householders of the village opposed it. They felt that as their forefathers had established the village, they should be its masters. None other had any right to establish a *dzong* in their village and direct its affairs. This culminated into an armed clash and the twelve leaders were killed. A long memorial *mane*² wall was constructed by the bereaved kinsmen. This *mane* is still there to the north-west of the village near the school and beside the road leading to the Dirang township.

The monastery gets agricultural levy (*khrei*) twice a year—in summer and in autumn—from the area in Tawang bounded by the villages of Bongleng on the south, Shroh on the east, Sheru on the north and Pangchen area on the west. The *khrei* is for the maintenance of the monastery and the lamas and has been levied from the time of Mera Lama. The landed property of each

¹Niranjan Sarkar, *Buddhism among the Monpas and Sherdukpens* (Shillong, 1980), p. 13 for details.

²This term is used to denote a prayer-wheel as well as a religious structure erected in the shape of a stone wall of varying lengths. The setting up of a *mane* is considered as an act of piety and is believed to bring religious merit. Sometimes the bereaved kins put up a *mane* and dedicate it in the deceased's name.

family was measured at that time in terms of *khreikang*,¹ a local unit of land-measurement. Each householder pays for one *khreikang* twenty *bres* of wheat in *Dawa Ngapa* (June-July) and twenty *bres* of millet or barley in *Dawa Gupa* (October-November). When the landed property of a householder is divided among his heirs, the *khrei* is also proportionately shared by them. The householders bring the *khrei* to the monastery and deposit it with the *niertsang*. Each householder also supplies a fixed quantity of firewood to the monastery according to the old system of *khrei*. The establishment of the abbot gets fixed loads every day from the stock and the rest is used in the kitchen of the temple. The inmates of each dormitory have to collect themselves the firewood for the dormitory. The firewood for the *dratsang* or establishment of the *dratsangbuk* (estate-manager) is collected by the inmates of the *dratsang* as well as by the servants of the

¹My attempts to ascertain the area of one *khreikang* were not fruitful because some families have in one *khreikang* as small a land area as one acre or less while some have as big as five acres or more. The local people themselves pleaded inability to explain these variations. Sarat Chandra Das in a foot-note at page 86 of his book, *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet* (New Delhi, 1970), states about *kang* in Tibet, 'The ordinary *kang* is a measure of land in which about 400 lbs. of seed-grain can be sown' But Sir Charles Bell states at page 301 of his book, *The People of Tibet* (Oxford, 1928), that one *kang* in Tibet is an area of land to sow which about 1320 lbs. of seed of barley or pea are required. He makes it clear that where the soil is good, seed is sown more closely than in poor soil and so the *kang* becomes smaller in area.

monastery. The *niertsang* supplies the monthly provisions of the resident lamas on the fifth of each month from his stock of cereals as well as the food offerings in the various rites in the *dukhang* and the refreshments for the lamas attending the regular functions there.

The monastery owns some amount of real estate in the villages of Shoma and Jerguit and in small patches in some other villages. These lands are cultivated by some families from generation to generation according to traditional arrangements. The produces of these lands are equally shared between the tillers and the monastery. The *dratsangbuk* collects the share of the monastery and stores it in the *dratsang*. The servants of the monastery are paid out of this. The resident lamas sometimes arrange the reading of scriptures and performance of attendant rites independently of the schedule in the *dukhang*. The expenses of such rites are also borne by the *dratsangbuk* from his grain stock.

Among the local places of pilgrimage importance, this monastery is the most celebrated one. Small groups of people visit it almost daily. The biggest draw is the *Torgya* festival when it is visited by a large number of pilgrims.