WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN 1450 AND 1550 AD?
and other questions from the history of Ladakh.

Neil Howard
27, Clarendon Road,
Birmingham B16 9SD, U.K.

Summary
A number of important developments in the history of Ladakh took place during the years between approximately 1450 and 1550 AD, and yet we know almost nothing about the dynastic history of Ladakh during that time. This survey of the readily available historical material suggests that the period of 100 years under discussion was one of widespread political instability in the western Himalaya, that it has a number of causes which have not been thoroughly explored and that it may be possible to reconstruct some, at least, of the missing dynastic history of Ladakh.

The years between approximately 1450 and 1550 AD seem to have been of the greatest importance in the history of Ladakh, yet we know almost nothing about them. At the beginning of this period Ladakh was apparently still ruled by the "Lha Chen" Dynasty, as it had been for the previous 500 years, according to the rGyal-rabs; but when it ended the second or "rNam-rgyal" Dynasty was coming to the throne, or had recently done so. No reliable details of the dynastic change are available to us today.

Approximately half of all the great monasteries of Ladakh (except Lamayuru) was founded, or refounded, by the Gelugpa before this 100-year period was fully under way: Spitok, Likir, Tikse, Karsha and Phugtal; and Matho was founded by the Sakyapa before 1450 too\(^1\) (Shakspo 1988 p.8). Soon after the end of the period, the Drikingpa monastery of sGan-sngon-bKra-shis-chos-rcdzong was founded at Phyang and the Dukpa influence began to be felt in Zanskar (Schuh 1983b). The great Dukpa monasteries all belong to the 17th century: Stakna, Bardan, Hanle, Himis, Chimrê. The same pattern seems to be revealed in the history of the building of the great fortresses: their defences and their principal temples and palaces seem to have been

---
\(^1\) I am grateful to Mr Jamyang Gyaltsan for the information that the foundation of Matho monastery during the reign of Grags-'bum-Idje is recorded in an incomplete document in Matho monastery.
Neil Howard

built either in the early 1400s or (with considerable rebuilding and new work) in the later 1500s (Howard 1989). If we consider the spread of Islam in Ladakh, we find that between the 1380s and the early 1500s three great teachers are believed by Ladakhi Moslems to have made converts in greater Ladakh, particularly in Purig and Baltistan: Sayyid Ali Hamadanî, Sayyid Muhammad Nur Bakhsh and Shams ud Din, and there must have been other missionaries. Mosques in Mulbhe, Padum and Shay are believed to have been founded at this time. Whether or not Islam received a set-back later, we cannot say; but it is noticeable that Mirza Haidar does not record the presence of Islam in Ladakh during his campaigns there from 1532 to 1535. The advance of Islam seems to have been resumed during the reign of Jam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal.

In which ever field we look, we seem to find at this time a break in the historical development of Ladakh. In this paper I shall suggest that the years between 1450 and 1550 were a time of great political instability in Ladakh and that the instability was not confined to Ladakh alone but also affected a number of her neighbours. Some of the possible causes of that instability will be identified as having their origins outside Ladakh; and further questions - historical problems awaiting solutions - will be elaborated. Finally, the paper proposes a speculative outline reconstruction of the dynastic history of Ladakh during the second half of these 100 years.

THE DYNASTIC CHRONICLES

The dynastic chronicles of Ladakh and its neighbours contain some interesting similarities and will be briefly examined first.

LADAKH

From the La-dvags Rgyal-rabs we learn of the following kings spanning the 15th and 16th centuries (Francke 1926 pp 99-108). Francke's estimated dates of their reigns will not suffice in the light of more recent research and Prof. L Petech's are preferred here (Petech 1977); also his suggestion of 25 years for the average length of a reign has been used where no other information is available (Petech 1977, p 20). All dates are in the Christian Era, AD.

Grags-'bum-lde - ruled c.1410-1435 (Petech) He appears to have relocated the capital of the kingdom to Leh and he was the builder of several religious monuments and monasteries. He received an emissary from Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Gelugpa sect, who died in 1419, and he was a patron of Byang-sems Shes-rab-bzang-po. He may be the mNa'-bdag-pa, king of Mar-yul stod, who donated revenues from land in Rupsbo to Phugtal monastery (Schuh 1983a PH
History of Ladakh

I 75,76; PH II 16,17; PH III 3,4,5).

Grags-pa-bum - ruled c.1410-1435? He was the brother of Grags-'bum-Ide and the ruler of Lower Ladakh who built a new capital at Temisgam. The Rgyal-rabs, if it should be so interpreted, tells us that he rejected the emissaries of Tsong-kha-pa who therefore went to his brother.

Blo-gros-mchog-Idan - ruled c.1435-1460 (Petech) He was the son of Grags-'bum-Ide. The only information about him in the Rgyal-rabs is that he conquered Ngaris and received enormous tribute. Petech tells us that he was a patron of gSan-phu-ba Lha-dbang-blo-gros who was a pupil of, and therefore younger than, mKhas-grub-rje (1385-1438) and that he sent presents to the First Dalai Lama (1391-1475).

Bhagan - ruled c.1460-1485? or earlier. Bhagan was, according to the Rgyal-rabs, "very fond of fighting" and combined with the people of Shay to depose "the sons of the king of Leh", Grags-'bum-Ide, viz: Blo-gros-mchog-Idan, Drung-pa A-li and Slab-bstan-dar-rgyas.

He was the grandson of Grags-pa-bum, the ruler of Lower Ladakh, and the son of his son Bara about whom we are told nothing. The Zanskar Chronicles might lead us to place Bhagan earlier than 1460 (see below) in which case it is possible that Bara is fictitious. Bhagan's reign could possibly, therefore, be set earlier than 1460-1485 but not later.

bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal - ruled c.1555-1575 (Petech). According to Inscription 10 in the Sum-tsek temple at Alchi, bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal was born in Alchi, defeated Mon and Hor and ruled a territory extending from Dras and Suru to Ngaris, including Nubra, Zanskar and Spiti (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980 p 149). This is confirmed by the Rgyal-rabs which lists other meritorious works, and states that he drove out the Hor (Turks or Mongols from Central Asia) - perhaps finally?

The Rgyal-rabs tells us he was the younger son of Bhagan; that he blinded his older brother and usurped the throne; and that he then set his brother to breed an heir in Lingshet - we are not told why he did not have heirs of his own to follow him on the throne. He invited the rdor-'dzin-pa lDan-ma Kun-dga'-grags-pa to be his mulaguru, who founded the sGang-sngon-bKra-shis-chos-rdzong monastery at Phyiang; Francke's Inscription no. 179 records offerings made by bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, in Temisgam, Basgo and Leh, on lDan-ma's death (date not known). We can accept that lDan-ma was in Ladakh in late 1550s (Petech 1977 pp 29-30). The reign of bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal cannot be moved far from the dates suggested by Petech, on the basis of the available evidence, but it is not impossible for it to have begun a
little earlier.

Tshe-dbang-rnam-rgyal, rNam-rgyal-mgon-po and 'Jam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal - ruled c.1575-1616 (Petech). 41 years may be the maximum total one could expect for the successive reigns of these three brothers, one generation. We know from Diogo d'Almeida that 'Jam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal was king in 1603; we know he corresponded with sTag-tshang-ras-pa in 1613. It is therefore difficult to place the accession of Tshe-dbang-rnam-rgyal earlier than 1575.

ZANSKAR

Fragmentary chronicles of the rulers of Padum and Zangla in Zanskar have been published by Francke, Schuh and Dargay (Francke 1926 pp 151-162; Schuh 1983a; Dargay 1987). From them we learn of the following rulers:

Seng-ge-l Dor/lde - ruled c. late 14th century? He had three sons: one (un-named) received Kishtawar; Blo-bzangs-lde received Padum and the south; and Khri-nam-(dpal-)lde received Zangla and the north.

Zangla

Khri-nam-(dpal-)lde c.1400+?

Rin-chen-dpal-lde (or Rin-po-che dpal-lde) - ruled c.1425-1450? Son of the above. He was a patron of Byang-sems- Shes-rab-bzang-po (a pupil of Tsong-khapa) who was still active in Ladakh in the 1450s (Petech 1977 p 168).


Nam-kha-dpal-lde - ruled c.1475-1500? (according to Dargay, ruled in the early second half of the 15th century). Son of the above. His religious works involved people in sTong-sde and Sa-ni (which were in the southern kingdom - does this indicate a decline in the power of Padum?).

It must be noted that Francke also provides a "Register" of the Zangla rulers which bears little resemblance to the above (Francke 1926 pp 163-166). Much work is needed before a proper understanding of the history of the early rulers of Zangla can be arrived at.

Padum

Blo-bzangs-lde - ruled c.1400+? He had three sons:

Tshang-rgyal-po (or Tshe-dbang-rgyal-po). Schuh suggests 1430-1460 for his reign (Schuh 1983a p 34); but as he was a cousin and therefore a contemporary of Rin-chen-dpal-lde of Zangla, perhaps
History of Ladakh

he ruled slightly earlier, c.1425-1450? He ruled Padum and was also a patron of Byang-sems Shes-rab-bzang-po.

Ra-dug-rgyal-po - ruled c.1425-1450? He ruled sTong-sde. He was also a cousin of Rin-cen-dpal-lde. The only known event of his reign is his war with Bhagan of Basgo (Schuh 1983a PH I 64, PH II 12-16).

Bde-mchog-skyabs-pa. He ruled Ste-sta.

Tshang-rgyal-po II - ruled c.1530-1550? During his reign Mirza Haidar raided Zanskar c.1532-352.

Seng-ge-lde - lived 1525-1561? His name, only, is given in a biography of Ngag-dbang-tshe-ring of Dzongkhol (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980 p 11). He may have been the unnamed king of southern Zanskar (lived c.1525-1561) who became a Dukpa monk under the religious name of gZhan-phan-bzang-po and a follower of Padma-Dkar-po (who lived 1527-1592); possibly also his nickname was 'Bo-go-so-to, because of his dropsy, and therefore he was the Zanskar king who became first a Gelugpa monk before converting to the Dukpa3 (Schuh 1983a pp 14-15; Schuh 1983b pp 7-8; Evans-Wentz 1935 pp 153-154, 251).

Tshe-ring-dpal-lde - reigned some time between 1575 and 1610? He was the son of Seng-ge-lde (Schuh 1983a pp 14-15).

Suru-Kartse

From Hashmatullah Khan (Khan 1939), and Kaju Sikander Khan (Khan 1987) who copies him here, we learn of the following kings of Suru-Kartse, descended from the line of "Nyati Astani" who came from Tibet. These kings seem to have ruled Suru and Purig as one kingdom, and are presented to us as ruling in the following dated sequence (in Hashmatullah Khan's spellings4).

Rgyal Bum-lde - 1345-1400. His wife was Muslim Begum, née Ganga Rani, daughter of a ruler of Kashmir. He ruled all the land from Suru to Mulbhe, in which latter place he built the original Kachay Masjid (Kashmiris' Mosque). (Khan 1939 p 694) He and his brother (see below) are said to have converted to Islam in Kashmir. Unfortunately Hashmatullah Khan does not give his sources. Could Rgyal Bum-lde be the same as Grags-pa-'bum? - in fact ruling a kingdom which stretched from Basgo to Suru with capitals at Temisgam and at Mulbhe where a chos rgyal 'Bum-lde (but which

2. or late 1540s, see Schuh 1983a p.34.
3. I am grateful to John Crook for putting me on to this interesting ruler's history.
4. I am most grateful to Dr Rohit Vohra for the opportunity to study the Suru section of an English translation of Hashmatullah Khan's book upon which he is working.

125
one?) has left a Buddhist inscription? (Francke 1906 p 75)

*Chos Bum-lde* - 1400-1430 The brother of the above, married
to a Buddhist. No further information.

*Yng-lde* - 1420-1470. Son of Chos Bum-lde

*Thong-lde* - 1470-1530. Son of Yng-lde.


Very pious, he gave up his throne to become a lama in Tibet.

**Lobzang Gyalpo** - 1530-1560. The younger brother of the
above and a lama before becoming king. During this reign, according
to Hashmatullah Khan, occurred the attack on Purig by 'Jam-dbyangs-
rnam-rgyal (c.1575-1616); but Lobzang Gyalpo's name receives no
confirmation from the Rgyal-rabs and Lobzang Gyalpo's dates are
inconsistent with those of 'Jam-dbyangs-rnam-rgyal as calculated by
Petech. Lobzang Gyalpo left the throne to his nephew and became a
lama again.

**Konchok Sherab Stan** - 1560-1600. The nephew of Tonba
Gyalpo. He divided his kingdom amongst his five sons; one Kungda
Namgyal received Suru-Kartse.

**KULU**

The *vansavalis* provide a long list of rulers in the time before
15th century, whose regnal dates are almost universally unknowable
(Hutchison and Vogel 1933 pp 413-473). Then we learn of:

*Raja Urdhan Pal* c. early 15th century (Hutchison and Vogel).
This king's name is found in two inscriptions in Jagatsukh, dated 1418
and 1428.

*Raja Kelas Pal*. His dates are unknown but he was the
successor of the above.

*Raja Sidh Singh* c.1500 (Hutchison and Vogel). This date is
derived from the authors' study of the *vansavali*. After a period of
exile of the ruling family, Sidh Pal, a descendant of the last king,
reclaimed the throne and changed his dynastic name suffix to Singh.

*Raja Bahadur Singh* c. mid 1500s. This ruler's name occurs in
two documents, dated 1533 (perhaps doubtful) and 1559, the year of
his death (Hutchison and Vogel 1933 pp 454-457). There is also an
inscription of his, dated 1553, on the Hidimba Temple in Manali.

*Raja Partap Singh* 1559-1575 (Hutchison and Vogel). He is
followed by an apparently complete succession down to the 19th
century.

**WHAT CAUSED THE POLITICAL DISRUPTIONS OF
THE PERIOD c.1450-c.1550?**

The lists of kings summarised above for Ladakh, Zanskar and
History of Ladakh

Kulu have one striking characteristic in common: a gap covering the period of the second half of the 15th century, which in the case of Ladakh and Zanskar runs on into the 16th century. We know nothing of any independent rulers who might have existed contemporaneously in Spiti and Lahul; and the currently incomplete lists for Guge (Petech 1980) cannot at present be interpreted as being especially incomplete in this period. But Hashmatullah Khan’s sequence of rulers for Suru-Kartse (including Pashkyum and Mulbhe) arouses suspicion because he provides only 7 rulers covering a period of 250 years, which suggests that some names have been lost here too. Since the records of royal dynasties are likely to be lost only when those dynasties themselves suffer severe disruption, taken all together even the information we have can be interpreted as pointing towards the period c.1450 to 1550 as being one of unusual instability in the western Himalaya.

We cannot guess at any single cause of that instability but we can discern a number of historical developments which may have taken advantage of the weakness of these states and have contributed to its continuance. Something of the range of threats to the stability of Ladakh and its neighbours may be illustrated from the following.

Firstly, there are the expeditions of the Muslim rulers of Kashmir, beginning back in the 14th century with attacks on Little Tibet (Baltistan), probably, during the reigns of Shihab ud Din and Sikander. Better known is the great raid or conquest by Zain ul Abidin which included Sheya-desa (Shay), Goggadesa (Guge) and Kuluta (Kulu, but the exact parts not known) (Sahni and Francke 1908 pp 188-189). He may himself have led another raid against Ladakh towards the end of his reign (Hasan 1959 p 72); meanwhile in 1451 his son Adham Khan raided Little Tibet. During his reign he received tribute from Manasorawar (Briggs’ Firishta 1910 p 470) which coincides interestingly with the list of tribute received from Guge by Blos-gro-mchog-ldan - perhaps the Ladakhi ruler accompanied him on his campaign against Goggadesa? In 1483 Jahangir Magre and Sayyid Hasan raided Ladakh. But thereafter a succession of feeble rulers and violent internal struggles kept Kashmir weak until Mirza Haidar conquered it for Humayun Padshah in 1540. In (possibly) 1544 he raided Ladakh, taking several unnamed places including "Looshoo" (Suru?) (Elias and Ross 1895 Introduction p 20) and in 1548 he reimposed his rule on Baltistan and Ladakh and appointed governors. In 1551, after his death, a party of his followers under Sabr Ali were killed endeavouring to cross Ladakh to the safety of Yarkand and

Kashgar (Hasan 1959 p 142) (is this one of bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal's victories over the Hor?).

Secondly, there was recurrent danger from the Hor (Mongols, Turks) from Central Asia, Turkistan, to the north. Again their incursions begin before our period, for example Shihab ud Din is said to have defeated a Kashgari leader in Little Tibet. But in 1447-1448 there was an invasion, by Hor from Yarkand or Khotan, of Western Tibet, Guge and "Man-yul", which was repelled by the lama Thang-stong-rgyal-po; later, in 1459, he is said to have visited some 60 villages in Ladakh which had been settled by Hor (Petech 1980 p 102). Mirza Aba Bakr of Kashgar raided or conquered "Tibet" sometime after 1499 (Elias and Ross 1895 pp 253-4) (for the Mongols, Tibet included all the lands between the borders of Kashmir and the eastern Tibetan border with China, but here greater Ladakh is probably intended). In the years before his defeat and death in 1514 Aba Bakr's minister Mir Vali raided "Bolor and Tibet as far as Kashmir", presumably the Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit district and Baltistan (Elias and Ross 1895 p 320). When Mirza Aba Bakr was defeated by Sultan Said he fled to "Tibet" where "he found that all the forts which he had garrisoned had been abandoned by his men" but he was still able to leave his wife and family there in safety. Since he fled via Khotan, "Tibet" in this case must mean Ladakh (Elias and Ross 1895 p 324). In 1517 a follower of Sultan Said, called Mir Mazid, was killed in "Tibet" during another raid. Mirza Haidar's activities in Ladakh will be discussed in more detail below, but he states that before his entry into Ladakh in 1532 there had been a number of earlier raids under the orders of Sultan Said (Elias and Ross 1895 p 403). All these pieces of information may be a clue to the statement Lata Jughdan and Tashikun, rulers of "Maryul", made to Mirza Haidar that they had always been, or should have been, loyal subjects of the Hor (Mongols) (Elias and Ross 1895 p 460). The last notice of a Hor raid into Ladakh tells us of the death there of its leader, the third son of Sultan Rashid (Rashid was the son of Sultan Said) sometime before 1565-1566 (Elias and Ross 1895 Introduction p 121). Inscription 10 at Alchi may be celebrating the fact that bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal had finally rid the country of a long-standing Mongol nuisance.

Thirdly, while these events were happening in Ladakh, the kingdom of Lo (Mustang) under its rulers A-ington-bzang-po (Petech 1978 p 320) and bKra-shis-mgon (Jackson 1984 p 148) exerted some sort of suzerainty, however temporary, over Purang and Guge - roughly second and third quarters of the 15th century.

Finally, in Kulu, following the end of the reign of Kelas Pal, the state of Suket extended its power over all the Beas valley south of
approximately the present town of Kulu. Meanwhile the eastern side of
the valley north of that, up to the Rotang Pass, may have been held by
people of Tibetan or Ladakhi origin known to history as the Piti
Thakurs. They may have been in uninterrupted occupation of their
district since the time of Utpala of Ladakh or they may have recently
expanded from a base to the east, to occupy this part of Kulu; they are
presumed to be the Tibetans whom Zain ul Abidin found occupying
Kulu during his raid (Sahni and Francke 1908 pp 188-189). What is
certain is that the central power of Kulu, after centuries of
uninterrupted rule, had collapsed.6

WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN C.1450 AND C.1550 IN
LADAKH?

The 100-year gap in the history of the kings of Ladakh was
first revealed in 1895 by N Elias and E Denison Ross in their edition
of The Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Mohammed Haidar Dughlat (p 418).
A H Francke managed to hide it again by calculating regnal dates on
the basis of impossibly long reigns for those kings whose dates were
not given in the Rgyal-rabs. Prof. Petech brought the gap to notice
once more in 1977 and Dieter Schuh discovered a similar gap in the
available chronicles of Zanskar (Schuh 1983a p 34). Of the few
sources available to help us fill in part of the 100-year gap in the
dynastic history of Ladakh, the most intriguing is The Tarikh-i-Rashidi
and Petech has considered this evidence; but there seems to be room
for a different interpretation.

The relevant parts of Mirza Haidar’s career in and around
Ladakh can be summarised as follows (Elias and Ross 1895 pp 417-
423, 442-464). He was a Mongol, born in Tashkent in 1499/1500; at
approximately the age of 15 he entered the service of Sultan Said Khan
and quickly rose to a position of prominence; in 1514 Sultan Said
defeated his relative Mirza Aba Bakr and became the ruler of
Kashgaria and thus the northern neighbour of Ladakh. In July 1532
Mirza Haidar led 2000 of the Sultan’s men into Nubra where he
defeated the Ladakhi leader who opposed him and then advanced to
"Maryul", ie. presumably the district of Leh and Shay. Here he found
that "there were two rulers, one called Lata Jughdan and the other
Tashikun. They both hastened to wait on me". He then joined forces

6. Since writing this I have considered the chronology of the Piti Thakurs further and
come to the new conclusion that their period of power in upper Kulu may have
lain in the late first and early second millenium AD, that they were of no
political significance (perhaps no longer there at all) in the late 15th century, and
that there must be doubt whether Zain ul Abadin ever campaigned in Kulu —
see N.F.Howard 1995 "The Fortified Places of Upper Kulu, India" in South

129
with Sultan Said and his 3000 men, the Sultan already suffering from
the altitude sickness which was eventually to lead to his death. During
the winter the Sultan and 1000 of his men wintered in Baltistan while
Mirza Haidar took the remaining 4000 plus a number of "Tibetans"
(Ladakhis) via the Zoji La to Kashmir, which they plundered.

In the spring of 1533 the Mongols occupying Nubra were
faced with a rebellion and were forced to take refuge in Maryul where
Mirza Haidar found them on his return from Kashmir. He put to death
one Tashikun for aiding this revolt whom we may presume from the
context was a Nubra chief and not the Tashikun of Maryul who
appears again later.\footnote{pace Petech 1977 p 26; and not 1535, presumably a misprint for 1533.}

In May of the same year Mirza Haidar left Kashmir by way of
Lar, "as we had come" (and by the Zoji La, presumably). He was
generally welcomed "on the frontiers of Tibet" except in the case of
"Karsa, a district of Tibet", which refused to pay tribute, thinking
itself safe at the end of a deep, narrow - and therefore easily defended
- ravine. Karsa must be Kartse, the seat of the principality of Suru and
apparently at the time the dominant power in Little Tibet. But the
resistance was overcome and then tribute was collected from "Purik"
(Purig). And so they arrived at Leh where Sultan Said deputed Mirza
Haidar to sack "the idol temple of Ursang" (Lhasa) with 2000 troops.
Meanwhile the Sultan set off for Yarkand but died on the journey.

In the autumn of 1533 Mirza Haidar gave up his attempt on
Lhasa and turned back, reaching Guge in January 1534. While he was
collecting tribute there most of his army deserted him on instructions
from Sultan Said's successor, Rashid. With 50 men who were still
loyal, of whom 40 or so suffered frostbite, he struggled back during
25 days to Maryul where "the chui (jo, plural) of Maryul, named
Tashikun and Lata Jughden ..... hastened out to wait upon us. Since we
had [on a former occasion] treated them with violence, both plundering
and killing [their people], I was inwardly in great fear of them". But
they professed loyalty to the Yarkandis saying they had always been,
or should have been, their loyal subjects. "They gave us the castle of
Sheya (ie Shay), which is the capital of Maryul".

There some of his deserters returned to him and Rashid,
seeking to mend his broken relationship with Mirza Haider, sent 200
men under Maulana Kudash, so that by the end of winter in 1534 he
had 700 under his command "and most of Tibet submitted". So they
raided Baltistan to collect tribute.

But Suru, "a department of Balti" refused to accept occupation
although its people offered to send whatever tribute was demanded to Mirza Haidar's camp. This is the second year's levy and is not to be confused with the first. Maulana Kudash, however, insisted on collecting the levy personally and was killed along with 24 of his men by the people of Suru; and Mirza Haidar was too poor and too short of arms to avenge them.

In summer he moved with his army to Zanskar in order to collect tribute when the harvest ripened. Here he received a proposal from "Tangi Sakob" the chief of Sod, whom he describes as "one of the chui of Balti", that they should jointly raid Suru in revenge. However negotiations with this chief of Sod and the death of his cousin Mahmud Mirza caused Mirza Haidar two months' delay and in the end only a party of 70 men was sent to raid Suru under the leadership of Maulana Darvish Muhammad Kara Tagh. This expedition too was a failure and its leader was killed by one Baghan "a chui of the provinces of Tibet". Baghan seems also to have been killed, but the translator acknowledges that this passage is unclear.

Mirza Haidar and his remaining men retreated again to Maryul "at the commencement of the cold season" and suffered greatly during the winter of 1534-1535. The following summer he gave Ladakh up and went first to Badakhshan, then via Kabul into the service of the sons of his late cousin, the Padshah Baber, in Lahore.

Although the geographical context of these events is generally recognisable and may be presumed to be accurate, there are imprecisions which prevent firm identifications being made. However, two conclusions seem at least worth suggesting. The first is that Tashikun and Lata Jughdan were the rulers of upper Ladakh - at least - and in possession of Shay fortress, the twin capital with Leh. The fact that their title is given as "chui", ie jo, chief, rather than a version of rgyal-po, king, need not worry us too much if Mirza Haidar found greater Ladakh, indeed all of the "Tibet" in which he campaigned, in a generally weak state with local rulers holding the only effective power. Chui is the title he gives to all rulers whom he mentions.

The second is that although Baghan might at first sight appear to have been a chief of Suru, Mirza Haidar does not say that, nor does he say where Maulana Darvish Muhammad Kara Tagh was killed; and he might be understood to be saying that his men had attacked Baghan instead of attacking Suru as was intended. The passage reads: "Meanwhile a messenger arrived from the party which I had dispatched against Suru, saying that .....[they]..... had gone to attack Baghan, who was a chui of the provinces of Tibet". Note that he does not call him, either, a chui of Maryul, of Balti, or of any other named province. If Baghan's province were lower Ladakh (Basgo to
Neil Howard

Temisgam) he would not have found it either difficult or improper to conduct warfare over the mountains into Zanskar or Purig or Suru in summer and autumn.

In order to fill in the names of the missing kings from c.1500 to c.1555 Petech first accepted that Tashikun is a clear transcription of the Ladakhi name bKra-shis-mgon and he recalled two inscriptions containing a king of that name, at Nyar-ma (next to Shay) and at Matho. He concluded that bKra-shis-mgon was only a local ruler although perhaps in some way independent. But he was reluctant to accept that Lata Jughdan is a transcription of Blo-gros-mchog-ldan and proposed that an unknown Lata Jughdan was king "of the main portion of Ladakh" and suggested the dates c.1510-1535 for his reign, although neither Mirza Haidar nor any other source indicates why such a reign should end in 1535. Finally he introduced a lha-chen Kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal of the Taru inscription (Francke's no. 102) as the ruler of Ladakh from c.1535-1555, on the basis that he is mentioned in the company of his minister Phyag-rdor-jo who also served under bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal (Petech 1977 pp 26-27).

Stepping further along the path of speculation, we may propose the following alternative - and emphasise that it is pure speculation - that Lata Jughdan is a transcription of Blo-gros-mchog-ldan and that Tashikun was known, perhaps at different stages in his life, as both bKra-shis-mgon and as Kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal, his full name being bKra-shis-kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal. In this case, at the time of Mirza Haidar's invasion Lata Jughdan/Blo-gros-mchog-ldan was the Father King and Tashikun the Young King. A similar relationship existed between the old king bDe-ldan-rnam-rgyal and his son bDe-legs-rnam-rgyal in the later 17th century (Petech 1977 p 69), and between Tshe-dpal-rnam-rgyal and the mChog-sprul in the 1830s (Petech 1977 p 137 quoting Gergan). Perhaps when he became sole king, Tashikun took, or was known by, the formal name of Kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal?

Over what territory did Lata Jughdan and Tashikun/Kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal rule? In theory they may well have claimed suzerainty over upper and lower Ladakh, all Purig and even Baltistan, as their predecessors had done; but by Mirza Haidar's time they may in practice have ruled upper Ladakh only. It should be noted that Taru is the most westerly village of upper Ladakh. The ease with which Mirza Haidar conducted his operations in most of greater Ladakh suggests that it was under no firm rule. He commented himself that the fortresses of Guge would have been very difficult to capture and the fortresses of Ladakh are no less strong (Howard 1989). Except briefly, he never had more that 2000 men under his command in Ladakh and
History of Ladakh

for most of the time far fewer.

At the farthest limits of speculation, we may suggest that lower Ladakh (Mar-yul-smad-pa, Petech 1977 p 28) was at that time as independent in practice as Baltistan, and Purig and Suru, and that its ruler - its chui - was Baghan with twin capitals at Basgo and Temisgam. Two items of information point to this suggestion. The first is the welcome which Mirza Haidar received from Lata Jughdan and Tashikun when, much to his surprise and despite his obvious weakness, he was given the castle of Shay. Although he tells us nothing about it, Lata Jughdan's and Tashikun's most likely reason for befriending this outstanding Mughal soldier was that they hoped for his help against their enemies. The second is the Rgyal-rab's short entry for Lha-chen Bhagan, that he was "very fond of fighting, he and the people of Shay, having formed an alliance, deposed and subjected the sons of the King of Leh......Blo-gros-mchog-ldan, etc". In other words Bhagan and Baghan are variant spellings of the same name and the rulers of Leh (and Shay) feared for their throne and were prepared to accept any help they could get, at whatever cost. We can now accept that bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal was Bhagan's (Baghan's) son, as the Rgyal-rabs says.

The foregoing solution to the second half of the problem of the missing 100 years (that is the years from c.1500 to c.1555) has the demerit of being more complicated than Petech's and much more complicated than Francke's. Francke's must be abandoned since it is based on impossibly long reigns and conflicts with the findings of later research but Prof. Petech's solution, the fruit of deep and lifelong scholarship, may yet stand the test of time. The solution being proposed here has at least the merit of answering more questions than did the previous attempts but it must be recognised that it raises just as many new questions.

The first question must consider the possibility: could Tashikun be King bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal? I believe this is impossible because the pusillanimous behaviour of Tashikun (and Lata Jughdan) towards Mirza Haidar is quite uncharacteristic of the vigorous, military king bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal described in the Rgyal-rabs and the Alchi inscription. Furthermore he cannot be both the son of Bhagan or Baghan and the joint ruler with Lata Jughdan/Blo-gros-mchog-ldan who was deposed by Bhagan; nor can he have been on the throne from 1533 to 1575 without having a reign of unlikely length, since his nephews and successors cannot be estimated to have come to the throne before 1575.

The second question is: can we accept two kings called Blo-gros-mchog-ldan in the lists? This is acceptable. There were two kings
called Tshe-dbhang-rnam-rgyal, two kings called bKra-shis-mgon (including Tashikun) and three kings called Grags(-pa)-lde; further part-repetitions may be found among the combinations of name elements in the list. The list of Guge kings is even more repetitious.

The third question is: how can Bhagan and Baghan be the same person when as much as 100 years separates their lives? They are not; and there may even have been four rulers bearing these names. Some Ladakhi historians derive the name Bhagan from bha-gan, old bull (eg. Shakspo 1988 p 10). If they are correct then Bhagan, alone of the kings of Ladakh who are known to us, is remembered by a nick-name whereas all the others have good religious Tibetan manes, with the exception of Lha-chen rGal-po and Lha-rgyal, which are good Tibetan titles. Most western Tibetologists would prefer Francke’s suggestion that Bhagan may be a corruption of the Sanskrit Bhagavan(t) (Francke 1926 p 102) and Petech’s that he came from a Hindu state (Petech 1977 pp 25-26) although we have no suggestion of from where he might have come. One wonders if the first Bhagan might have married the female heir of lower Ladakh? This original Bhagan can be accepted as having ruled in the middle of the 15th century, or a little earlier, and as being the Bhagan who attacked sTong-sde in Zanskar. Reverting to speculation again: it is possible that Bhagan then became the dynastic name of the rulers of Lower Ladakh, much as bTsan-po was used to refer to the ancient kings of Tibet, Khri-sultan for various rulers in Purig and Suru and Akabat Mahmud Khan for the kings of Ladakh since the nominal conversion of bDe-ldan-rnam-rgyal to Islam - all being names used by outsiders. Thus Baghan is merely Mirza Haidar’s spelling of what he thought was the name of the third or fourth ruler of lower Ladakh to bear Bhagan as a dynastic title-name.

This latter speculation is prompted by the appearance of the Rgyal-rabs as it has come down to us in Francke’s Antiquities of Indian Tibet and Petech’s further researches. The reader is struck by the fact that of all the kings in the first dynasty only Skyid-lde-ni-mamgon, Lha-chen Utpala, Lha-chen Dnos-grub, Lha-chen Grags-bum- lde and Blo-gros-mchog-ldan are presented to us with any quantity of distinctive detail - 5 kings out of a total of 19, and more have been lost completely (eg. Petech 1977 p 20). But from bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal onwards each king is presented with a considerable quantity of information about his deeds. One must conclude that large amounts of detail from the earlier periods have been lost. Prof. Petech observes that the Rgyal-rabs was "compiled probably in the 17th. century, but continued later till the end of the kingdom and beyond". (Petech 1977 p 1). The first writer of the Rgyal-rabs as we have it must have known
who bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal's father was since he knew about the blinding of his brother and he must have known something of his ancestry. His readers would have known too, it not being long before; which is why he was not able to hide this discreditable element of the story. Therefore we can believe his statement that bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal's father was called, or used the title, Bhagan. However, this first writer, or a successor, desired to extend the history of the kings back to the founding of the Ladakhi kingdom and to the ancient kings of Tibet but he did not have a complete set of records covering the 600 years preceding bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal's accession. He did the best he could; but he confused the two Bhagans and the two Blo-gros-mchog-ldans - and thus 100 years fell out of the history.

THE CHANGE OF DYNASTIC TITLE/NAME FROM LHA-CHEN TO RNAM-RGYAL

Since Francke's time it has been widely accepted that the name change took place when Bhagan deposed the last ruler of the first dynasty. He suggested that Bhagan named himself Lha-chen Kun-dga'-rnam-rgyal when he became king (Francke 1926 p 102). This is pure speculation on Francke's part for which there is no proof in the Rgyal-rabs, particularly now that we recognise that there is a 100-year gap in the records at the very time when this change took place. Furthermore, we may note that Blo-gros-mchog-ldan is not given the title Lha-chen but Lha-chen Kun-gda'-rnam-rgyal has both. Resolution of this matter of the dynastic name change must await the discovery of more source data.

CONCLUSION

The period of Ladakh's history which runs from the middle of the 15th to the middle of the 16th centuries is of the greatest interest. It not only contains - and currently hides - the events surrounding the change of dynasties but it is a period during which the fortunes of Ladakh may have been closely bound up with those of her neighbours. Yet we know almost nothing certain about the history of the period. We need new sources. They may lie forgotten in Ladakh still. In monasteries, in family boxes, in the minds and memories of the old people are great stores of history and tradition - in Ladakh, in Nubra, in Purig, in Suru and in Zanskar. Progress has been made; but there is much more to do and time is running out, as old people die, old records decay or are lost and as young people turn to the excitement of the cinema, the television and the transistor radio. The traditional culture of the region will, of course, live on but the facts of its history are slipping away. Facts are what we need. We must all make haste.
Acknowledgement: the author very gratefully acknowledges the generous financial support which he received from the Society for South Asian Studies in the preparation and presentation of this paper.

POST SCRIPT

After writing this, I have read Dr Jamspal's extremely interesting paper and had correspondence with him in which he has generously provided me with further information. It is my opinion now that the reign of King Grags-'bum-lde should, perhaps, be moved forward one generation or so. This may have implications for the dating of other dynasties; and it reduces the length of the break in Ladakhi history which I have been trying to fill - but it does not remove it.

REFERENCES


ELIAS, N. and ROSS, E. Denison 1895 The Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, Dughlat. London.


——— 1926 Antiquities of Indian Tibet. India (reprinted S. Chand and Co. New Delhi 1972, and others).


HUTCHISON, J. and VOGEL, J. Ph. 1933 History of the Punjab Hill States. Lahore.


Khan, HASHMATULLAH 1939 Tarikh Jammun, Kashmir, Laddakh aur Baltistan. Lucknow.

Khan, KACHO SIKANDER. 1987 Qadim Laddakh tarikh va tamaddun. Published by the author, India.

PETECH, L. 1977 The Kingdom of Ladakh c. 950-1842 AD. Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Rome, Italy.


History of Ladakh


——— 1983b "Frühe Beziehungen zwischen dem ladakhischen Herrscherhaus und der südlichen Brug-pa-Schule". In Archiv...etc, Heft 2 (as above).


### Table Summarising the Dynastic History of Ladakh, Zanskar, Suru-Kartse and Kulu Between 1400 and 1600 AD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladakh</th>
<th>Zanskar</th>
<th>Suru-Kartse</th>
<th>Kulu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sen-ge-dor</td>
<td>Rgyal-Bum-ide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upper</strong></td>
<td><strong>Padum</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zangla</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Bla-bzang-ide</td>
<td>Khri-nam-ide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grga-pa-bum</td>
<td>Grga-bum-ide</td>
<td>Choa-Bum-ide</td>
<td>Urdhen Pel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1425</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tshang-rgyal-po</td>
<td>Rin-chen-dpal-ide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(+ brother Redug)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelas Pel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Bare?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bla-gros-mchog-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>idan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1475</td>
<td>Bhagan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nam-kha-dpal-ide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Bhagan II?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lelajugden/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bla-gros-mchog-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>idan II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thong-ide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sidh Singh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1525</td>
<td>Bhagan III?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baghan?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tshikun/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kun-dga-nam-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gyal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tshang-rgyal-po II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1550</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Lha-dbang-mam-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rgyal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1575</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tshe-dbang-mam-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rgyal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jem-dbyangs-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mam-rgyal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB: names in oblique type are the author's speculative additions to the royal chronology of Ladakh.*

---

**Neil Howard.** The dynastic history of Ladakh etc. 1400-1600 AD.