THE FIVE ROYAL PATRONS AND THREE MAITREYA IMAGES IN BASGO

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Summary

Three Maitreya images and their temples were constructed in the sacred Basgo valley of Ladakh by the Kings Takpa Bumde, Tshewang Namgyal, Jamyang Namgyal & his Queen Khatun - the Balti Princess, and King Sengge Namgyal in the period 1450-1650 C.E. Although in neglected condition, the extraordinarily beautiful images and mural paintings within the temples are still visible and are very important from cultural and artistic viewpoints. The temples and their contents are in immediate need of preservation to protect them from collapse due to erosion. The author earnestly asks for patrons to help in this restoration project.

The author clarifies and corrects the statements of previous Western and Ladakhi scholars on the chronology of the construction and patronage of these temples, and the reigns and lifetimes of the five main patrons. Two appendices are based on incidents in the life of one patron and a Basgo hero.

Introduction

Basgo valley, the ancient capital of Ladakh, is very important in the history of Ladakh. It is about four miles in length, varying in width from a mile to some few hundred yards, situated about 11,000 to 11,500 feet above sea level. The lower part is widest and it narrows to its upper part where many springs originate, all having the good qualities of coolness, delicious taste, etc. Flowing through the valley, these springs provide water for both drinking and irrigation.

At the sides of the valley there are many hills, cliffs, and mountains, standing as though competing with each other, astonishing the eyes of the viewer. Especially impressive is the rocky mountain of Ngang pa looming over the east side of the valley, considered both gracious and holy as it is surrounded by many ancient hermitages.

At the bottom of the valley the mighty Indus flows from east to west and, in the summer, it roars loudly with spectacular waves. At this time the valley is full of terraced fields growing wheat, barley, beans, peas, mustard, as well as other crops. There also can be found many kinds of trees, such as willows and poplars, as well as fruit trees producing apricots and apples. Throughout, there are hundreds of

1. As it has been stated in the commentary of Abhidharmakosa by Yashomitra:—
   The eight-fold good qualities of water are as follows: cool, good tasting, light, smooth, clear, pure, and neither harmful to the stomach nor to the throat.
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chortens (*mchod-rten, Skt. *stupa*), strung like ornaments of the valley, standing on roadsides to bless passing travellers. In the ancient period before the Dogra invasion of the 1830s, family houses were built below the royal castle inside the fortified wall, but now they are scattered throughout the countryside. There are more than 150 families containing about 800 inhabitants.

The magnificent ruins of the ancient royal castles of Ladakh stand on the eastern cliffs, in the central portion of the valley. Among these ruins one finds three temples to the bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha. In these temples there are many priceless images, beautiful murals, and sacred manuscripts of the Kanjur and Tanjur produced by highly skilled artisans and craftsmen and consecrated by holy persons many centuries ago. The patrons of these images and paintings were the Kings Grags pa 'Bum ide, Tshe dbang rNam rgyal, 'Jam dbyangs rNam rgyal, the Balti Princess, and King Seng ge rNam rgyal. Scholars have proposed various chronologies for the royal patrons, but the following table is based on the best current evidence.

## A TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY

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<th>King</th>
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<td>Grags pa 'Bum Ide</td>
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<td>Original builder of the big Maitreya at Baago.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tshe dbang rNam rgyal</td>
<td>circa 1580-1600</td>
<td>Brother of 'Jam dbyang rNam rgyal. Had Maitreya temple painted.</td>
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<td>'Jam dbyangs rNam rgyal</td>
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<td>Senge rNam rgyal</td>
<td>circa 1616-1642</td>
<td>Completed the gilded Maitreya image.</td>
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3. There is still a Kanjur set among these, and the valley people bring them down to the villages and read them once a year in the spring.
4. The set of Tanjur, written in gold, is incomplete due to robbing by the attackers from Jammu in 1830s. See Yoseb, p. 594.
Grags pa 'bum lde

Cunningham and Yoseb do not include a date for Grags pa 'bum lde, while Francke and Tashi Rabgyas put his date at c. 1400-1440 C.E. and Petech gives c. 1410-1435 C.E.

An error which is made in The Chronicles of Ladakh continues up to the latest histories of Ladakh5 by Luciano Petech and Tashi Rabgyas. This is in regard to the two ascetic messengers who are sent to king Grags pa 'bum lde or his younger brother Grags pa 'bum by Tsong khapa himself with a miniature of Amitayus made of Tsong khapa's nasal blood.

There are couple of reasons to doubt this statement:

Firstly Tsong khapa would not make such an image of Amitayus Buddha with his own nasal blood because traditionally no Tibetan Lama would openly represent himself as holy. Of course, having great faith in Tsong khapa and in the Buddha, his disciples could make such a holy object and send it to a pious Buddhist.

Secondly, about four decades after Tsongkhapa's death, the two ascetics were sent to Ladakh by dGe 'dun grub pa, the posthumous first Dalai Lama (1391-1474 C.E.), in order to raise funds for the construction of a Maitreya image in Tashilhunpo monastery. One of the ascetics was really practicing the bodhisattva path, as Ye shes rTse mo tells us. 6

According to The Chronicles of Ladakh, the ascetic messengers were not successful in meeting Grags pa 'bum, the younger king, in Nubra, but later on they were received by Grags pa 'bum lde, the elder king, with great honor in Leh. 7

According to Ye shes rTse mo, the ascetic messengers brought back a huge turquoise as an offering from Grags pa 'bum lde, 8 as well as other wonderful offerings made by the people of the region. The date given for the ascetics' return to Tashilunpo is the lCags mo sBrul [1461 C.E.]. 9

Grags pa 'bum lde's dates are connected to the Te se ru (Te'u

5. Petech, pp 20-22
6. Ye shes rTse mo became the abbot of Tashi lhun po and composed dGa' 'dun grub biography in 1698.
8. Ye shes rTse mo calls him the king of Western Tibet (mNga' ris), Lord (Jo bo) Grags 'bum lde.
9. Ye shes rTse mo, f. 37a
ser po) stupa temple, namely the Te'u bKra shis 'Od 'phro (Te'u Auspiciousness Radiating Light) at Leh. Neil Howard wrote me that this had a similar structure to the Great Stupa Temple at Gyangtse, which was built in 1427 C.E. according to the chronicles of Tibetan events in the *Tibetan Chinese Dictionary*.  

According to the regent, Sangs rgyas rGya mtsho, Gyangtse Monastery was founded by mKhas grub Chos rje dGe legs dPal bzang po (1385-1438) and Rab brtan Kun bzang 'phags, the local chieftain. The regent also mentions that the renovation of the dPe thub (Spituk) monastery was done by gSang phu pa, Lha dbang bLo gros, a disciple of mKhas grub rje. 

Therefore, we can conclude that being a disciple of mKhas grub rje, Lha dbang bLo gros had been in rGyal rtse (Gyangtse) and had seen the great stupa. Then, he might have advised king Grags pa 'bum Ide to build a similar stupa at Te'u ser po at Leh. When Grags pa 'bum Ide died, his son bLo gros mchog Idan became the patron of the Lama, Lha dbang Blo gros. This would seem to establish the reign of King Grags pa 'Bum Ide as having occurred between approximately c. 1450-1490 C.E.

Petech and Rabgyas tell us that Blo gros mChog Idan made great offerings to the first rGyal ba (Dalai Lama) dGe 'dun grub and Tashi lhun po. It seems that their source was the defective passage of Vaidurya ser po of the regent regarding bLo gros mchog Idan. The Tibetan text is as follows: *Mang yul stong ba'i* (sic, it should be: *Mar yul stod pa'i*) rgyal po blo gros mchog Idan pas mKhas pa la dbang blo gros pa'i sbying bdag mdzad/ 'gTsang du rje bla ma'i yang srid gong ma pan chen dgy grub la 'bul chen phul // The translation of this passage should be as follows: "The king of upper Mar yul (Ladakh), bLo gros mchog Idan pa became a patron of the savant Lha*.

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11. Sde srid, p. 244.
12. Ibid. p. 280
13. "This king still continued to make offering to dGe 'dun grub, the incarnation (Tib. yang srid, sprul sku) of the Lord Lama," the regent Sangs rgya rGya mtsho says. However, in his statement there is a mistake when he mentions dGe 'dun grub pa is the incarnation of Lord Lama. dGe 'dun grub pa was not recognized as a reincarnation of any former lama in his lifetime. The regent himself could not make such a mistake, it had to be the informant about dPe thub monastery and not the regent.
The Patrons of Maitreya Images in Basgo
dbang bLo gros. He, the king, made a great offering to the incarnation of the Lord Lama, the former Savant dGe 'dun grub pa in the gTsang province. Francke states that "Probably during the reign of this king (bLo gros mChog Idan) the expedition of the Kashmir king Adam Khan to Tibet took place. This king is also mentioned in the Ta'rikh-i-Rashidi as still living in 1532; probably his descendants are called by his name. There his name is spelt Lata jughdan" [Francke, p.101]. Petech's study refers to the same events, although Petech is probably more correct when he says the invader came from Central Asia, while Francke states that he came from Kashmir. According to Petech, when Mirza Haidar invaded Ladakh in 1532, Haidar mentioned the names of both Jo bo Bhagan and Lata Jughdan (bLo gros mChog Idan?). Neither Francke nor Petech accept that these were Bhagan and bLo gros mChog Idan of the chronology of Ladakh.\footnote{15}

I have tried to prove that King Grags pa 'bum Ide's reign was as late as 1490, and that the two Jobos of Ladakh during Haidar's invasion of Ladakh must have been bLo gros mChog Idan and Bhattan who are written about in the Ladakhi Chronicle. Also it is possible that the author of the history of Mirza Haidar's invasion of Ladakh miscalculated the year of the invasion as 1532, some years too late.

To prove this point the following passage is very important. In the Biography of the saint Thang stong rGyal po who lived in the 15th century (written by 'Gyur med bDe chen in the beginning of the 17th century), there is a passage implying the possibility of the two kings being bLo gros mChog Idan and Bhagan who were mentioned by Mirza Haidar. The translation of the passage is as follows:

"The great saint [Thang stong rGyal po] together with about twenty of his disciples, who had renounced attachment to their own lives, visited Maryul [Ladakh] in order to subdue the Mongols of the West. The saint pacified the dispute of the two kings of upper and lower Maryul through his clairvoyance and miracles. He bestowed the transmission of Om mani padme hum to the Western Mongol people, who settled in about sixty settlements in Maryul. Through using meditation he subdued the Western Mongol army, he caused rains of mice in the country of the Mongols and destroyed their grain, so famine and bubonic plague occurred. Thus he destroyed the opportunity of the Western Mongols to enter the Nation of the Snow Land [Tibet]."\footnote{16}

\footnote{15} Petech, pp. 26-27. 
\footnote{16} 'Gyur med bDe Chen, Biography of Thang stong rGyal po gyi rnam thar, p.309.
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Although this is legendary in part, the author does have the historical knowledge of the dispute of the two kings of Maryul and the invasion of Ladakh by Western Mongols (Central Asians). Thus the two kings must have been bLo gros mChog Idan and Bhagan. Only during these two kings did Upper and Lower Ladakh dispute, then finally Bhagan united the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Ladakh.

In dGe 'dun grub pa's life time, there was no custom of choosing an incarnation (yang srid or sprul sku) by most of the monasteries, although some Kargyud pa Lamas did so. However, when dGe 'dun grub pa passed away in 1474 C.E., a boy born in 1475 in gZhis ka rtse district was chosen as incarnation of him. This is the first incarnation of the dGe lugs pa. He was named as dGe 'dun rGya mtsho, and from his age 11 up to 19 he studied at Tashilhunpo monastery. At age 19 (1494) he left for 'Bras spung monastery and studied there. Around 1509 he was preaching all over central Tibetan and lived again in Tashilhunpo for several years.

Therefore, the defective passage can be edited as follows: gTsang du rje bla ma sku gong ma pan chen dGe 'dun grub kyi yang srid dGe 'dun rGya mtsho la 'bul chen phul/ "In gTsang province, he (bLo gros mchog Idan) made a great offering to the incarnation, (dGe 'dun rGya mtsho, ) of the former Savant dGe 'dun grub pa."

Tshe dbang rNam rgyal I

Several dates have been suggested for Tshe dbang rNam rgyal I. Cunningham dates his reign as c. 1580-1600, while Francke gives c. 1532-1560, Petech c. 1575-1595, and Rabgyas c. 1530 to 1560. Yoseb places his death in c. 1569. Of all of these suggestions, Cunningham and Petech seem most likely. There is a solid evidence placing the death of his successor, 'Jam dbyangs rNam rgyal, sometime within 1614 and 1615 C.E. met Lama Stag tshang ras pa in the Zanskar valley.


**Jam dbyangs rNam rgyal**

Cunningham puts his reign at c.1600-1620,\(^{23}\) while Petech gives c. 1595-1616 and Francke c. 1560 to 1590,\(^{24}\) which Tashi Rabgyas agrees with.\(^{25}\) Corroborating Cunningham and Petech's view, it is recorded that when the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang Ras pa arrived in Ladakh, he did not find the king at all, but met only the queen, the Princess of Balti, and her two sons, Seng ge rNam rGyal and Nor bu rNam rgyal, at Basgo in circa 1616 or 1617 C.E.\(^{26}\)

We know that Tshe dbang rNam rgyal was succeeded by his younger brother, 'Jam dbyang rNam rgyal, sometime in the late 16th or early 17th century. Moreover, a meeting of King 'Jam dbyang rNam rgyal and the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang Ras pa (1574—1651 C.E.) is documented sometime within the Water Bull year (1613 C.E.) and the Wood Rabbit year (1615 C.E.) in the Zangskar valley. In those years sTag tshang started his journey to Uddiyana from central Tibet and from Zangskar, respectively,\(^{27}\) and, when he returned from Uddiyana to Zangskar and eventually arrived in Basgo, he did not see the King 'Jam dbyang rNam rgyal, who had presumably passed away. After his death, Seng ge rNam rgyal probably became king, around 1616 C. E.. When the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang arrives in Basgo, he bestowed an empowerment of the integration of Hayagriva and Amitayuh to the Queen Khatun and the King, Seng ge rNam rgyal and his brother, Nor bu rNam rgyal, at the Basgo Castle. Lord sTag tshang then stays on in Ladakh for four years before returning to central Tibet in 1620.\(^{28}\)

**Seng ge rNam rgyal**

Various dates have also been put forth for Seng ge rNam rgyal. Cunningham places his reign c. 1620 -1670,\(^{29}\) Francke c. 1590

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23. Cunningham, p.322.
25. Rabgyas, p. 162.
27. Kun dga' Lhun grub, ff. 24b and 25b.
29. Cunningham, p.324
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Yoseb from 1567 to 1596, Snellgrove and Skorupski 1570-1642, Petech, c. 1616-1642, and Tashi Rabgyas from 1590 to 1620. Although Cunningham is more accurate about the beginning of his reign, he is not correct about the end, whereas Snellgrove and Skorupski give his date of death correctly. Although his date of birth remains hard to establish, evidence suggests Seng ge rNam rgyal might have died in his late 30s or early 40s. Seng ge rNam rgyal passed away in 1642, according to the Life of Ngag dbang rGya mtsho. This occurred during a campaign in which he led his army to the highlands of Western Tibet, a rugged journey no aged person would ever consider making.

Consistent with this view is the fact that there is no mention of his bride in the Life of Tag tshang. When he first time arrived in Basgo in 1616 or 1617 C.E., he just met the Queen Khatun along with her sons, the two prince- brothers. This would suggest that he may have been in his teens then, and thus too young to have yet married.

THE FIRST MAITREYA IMAGE

The main Maitreya temple is the most ancient of these buildings and is very important from the standpoint of its artistic beauty. Historians have different theories about the time and patron of its construction.

Francke credits the building of the temple itself to King Tshe dbang rNam rgyal I on the basis of his inscribed portrait and those of his two brothers on the wall murals of the temple. If Francke is correct, then it would have been constructed sometime in the late 16th century. Snellgrove and Skorupski also agree with Francke about the date and patron of this temple's construction.

30. Francke, p. 108
31. Yoseb, pp. 359, 386.
32. Snellgrove and Skorupski, p. 86.
33. Rabgyas, p. 178
34. Kun dga' Lhun grub, fa. 40.
35. Kun dga' Lhun grub, fb. 40.
37. Snellgrove and Skorupski, p. 93.
But in the Chronicles there is no mention of constructing any temple by Tshewang rNam rgyal. However, it does say that he objected to his ancestors having placed the Buddha-relics on a hilltop which did not have an easy access for people who wanted to worship and circumambulate the relics. Therefore, he said, "I will build a temple for the benefit of sentient beings and will make the Buddha's teachings known, as did my ancestorRal pa can". Thus he had a good thought, but unfortunately he passed away without fulfilling his wish. But the mural paintings of the Maitreya temple of Basgo were certainly painted in the time of his reign, and it shows his royal retinue at the bottom of both the right and left sides when one enters the temple.

Cunningham certainly misunderstood the passage of the Chronologies about King Tshe dbang rNam rgyal when he wrote that the king resolved to erect a temple of Buddha, which contradicts the passage of the Chronicles of Ladakh. But Cunningham's dates regarding this king were more accurate than the dates suggested by later scholars.

Francke interprets this passage fairly well, except for the last phrase, which is in Tib. sems can gyi las zad pas / rgya; po de sku bde bar gshegs so // He translates this: "as his work on earth was finished, he went to heaven." This should be corrected to: "due to exaustion of the good karma of people, the king died peacefully."

The learned Ladakhi historian Shri Tashi Rabgyas disagrees on both points of Francke. In his monumental work, the History of Ladakh, he states that when King Grags pa 'bum lde had the Maitreya of gTing mo sgang constructed, he simultaneously made the Maitreyas of Basgo and Leh, too.

Yoseb and Rabgyas do not agree about the identity of the patron of the construction of Tingmosgang Maitreya. Yoseb says that it was constructed by Grags pa 'bum according to Tsongkhapa's advice, while Rabgyas claims that it was constructed by Grags pa 'bum

38. Ral pa can is known as Khri ral pa can (866-896? C.E) and he was one of the three best ancestor kings of Tibet.
39. Francke, pp. 38, 105
40. Cunningham, p. 319.
41. Francke, pp. 38, 105.
42. Rabgyas, p. 122.
lde according to Tsongkhapa's advice, (Yoseb, pp. 346-7 and Rabgyas, pp. 121-2.

The former statement is disproved and latter is proved by the Chronicles of Ladakh itself, which says that when the ascetic messengers from Tsongkhapa arrived in Nubra valley they asked for an audience with Grags pa 'bum. He did not see them, but in Leh, his elder brother, Grags pa 'bum lde, received them with great respect and honor. (see Francke, pp. 38, 99). However, the messengers were not from Tsongkhapa, but from dGe 'dun grub pa, as shown above.

If Tashi Rabgyas is correct, then this Maitreya temple was constructed over a century earlier than that proposed by other scholars.

Furthermore, Tashi Rabgyas tells us:

"In the early part of life, Grags pa 'bum lde reigned in both upper and lower Ladakh, but in the later part of his life, his reign in lower Ladakh was usurped by his younger brother, Grags pa 'bum. Although some ministers of upper Ladakh objected to this usurpation, Grags pa 'bum lde was quite tolerant and both brothers successfully reigned in different parts of the country. Then, Grags 'bum, with great faith and respect, served the Maitreya image, erected by Grags 'bum lde, as well as the image of Avalokiteshvara, which was received by Grags 'bum lde."

Tashi Rabgyas' statement is supported by the Chronicles of Ladakh, which states that when the two ascetic messengers arrived in Ladakh, Grags pa 'bum was in the Nubra valley, instead of in lower Ladakh, c.1559 C.E.

The Chronicles of Ladakh particularly do not mention the Maitreya construction at Basgo and Tingmosgang by Grags pa 'bum lde. However, it does mention that he constructed many temples and Maitreya? (Maitreyas):

"Grags 'bum lde built many temples (red temple, sic) and in them [put] Lord Maitreya? (Maitreyas) the size of eight year olds [boys in the future eon], and by his right and left

43. Ibid. p. 127.
45. The London MS. of the reads mang po instead of dmar po. I take the meaning of the former one.
46. Here I use plural, because having constructed many temples, it is unreasonable to say constructing one Maitreya.
47. Tibetan Buddhists believe that in the future, when Maitreya will become Buddha, the people will have enormously huge body and will live for many thousands years. Thus the people say that the Maitreya at Basgo, Tingmosgang and Leh are eight years old boys, sized as in the good future eon.
sides two bodhisattvas, Manjushri and Vajrapani, which are one storey high, on the mural the portraits of Sugatas (Buddhas), worldly displays (jig rten brtan bzhag48) and complete tutelary deities. Thus, the three storey high temple? (temples)49 were erected on the model of mTho gling.50

In the present reading of the Chronicles, the word 'red', (Tib dmar po) is certainly a corrupted form of 'many', (Tib. mang po) which is correctly read in the L. MS (London MS).51

This Basgo Maitreya temple exactly corresponds to the Maitreya temple, built by Grags pa 'Bum Ide as described in the Chronicles, in the above passage. The Maitreya temple is three storeys high, on the right and left sides of the main Maitreya image are two one-storey high bodhisattvas. When one enters the temple on the left wall there are three portraits of Sugatas, representing the Buddhas of the past, present and future. The display of King Tshe dbang rNam rgyal's retinue corresponds to the worldly display as stated in the Chronicles. The portraits of Tsongkhapa, Vajrasattva,52 the white and green Taras, as well as others, represent the tutelary deities. On the eastern side wall the painting of Padma dkar po and others are significantly different from the paintings on the other walls in their style and painting colors. Therefore, we can conclude that they are products of a later time.

This Basgo Maitreya temple has survived better than the temples at Tingmosgang and Leh, thanks to the additional buildings surrounding it, except for the southern front part. These additional buildings were constructed much later, as Nell Howard has suggested.

As a result, we can surmise that Grags pa 'Bum Ide constructed this Maitreya temple too, but could not complete the mural paintings, or in time his paintings were damaged by dripping water

48. A.H. Francke has misinterpreted the phrase, jig rten brtan bzhag as follows, of the preserver of the universe, Francke vol. II p. 99; he tried to make the phrase as adjective to the Sugatas, Buddhas. But this phrase is an independent one in the list of things.

49. Yoseb thinks that three storey high temple is separate from the Maitreya temple at Leh Chu fyi.

50. mTho gling in Zhang zhung, erected by Lha bla ma Ye shes 'od (The Blue Annual, p. 83.)


52. Here Snellgrove and Skorupski mistakenly recognized Tsongkhapa as Atisha and Vajrasattva as Vajrapani. Snellgrove and Skorupski, pp. 95, 96.
from the roof, as was usual in mud building. Then, in Tshe dbang rNam rgyal's time, it was painted or repainted in the present form on the model of the paintings of the Maitreya temples at Tingmosgang and Leh, which no longer exist due to the deterioration of the walls.53

After the ancient Maitreya Temple at gTing mo sgang fell into decay a new one was reconstructed during the mid 1940s.54 There is no ancient mural left to view, only the image of Maitreya and some pleasing floral and circular patterns on the ceiling of lower temple hall.55 Nevertheless, the Maitreya image and the paintings on the ceiling of the lower shrine of the Maitreya Temple at gTing mo sgang are comparable in artistic style to the images and the designs on the ceiling of the Maitreya Temple at Basgo.

There is reasonable evidence to date the murals. Snellgrove and Skorupski describe the Maitreya and its temple at gTing mo sgang:

"It is one of the most beautiful representations we have seen of this very popular divinity. The ceiling of the lower temple with its pleasing floral and circular patterns is reminiscent of the Maitreya Temple at Basgo."56

THE SECOND MAITREYA IMAGE

Above the main gate of the castle, a small old Maitreya Temple stands (very precariously and can fall at any moment!). The outer structure of this temple is in the shape of a Balti mosque.57 According to Yoseb, in his History of Ladakh, the Balti Princess, Khatun, had three mosques built at some important sites in Ladakh: one below the gTing mo sgang Castle, one below the Leh Castle, and one in Hundar in the Nubra valley. He then asserts that she remained a life-long follower of Islam.58 This last statement could not be true.

Several records indicate her acceptance of Buddhism. Had she not accepted Buddhism, sTag tshang, who was free from the eight...

53. Snellgrove and Skorupski, p. 102.
54. As I was then a novice, I was fortunate to be able to join in the consecration ceremony.
55. There are still some people who can tell us about the ancient mural paintings of the Maitreya temple of Tingmosgang.
56. Snellgrove and Skorupski, p. 104.
57. Rabgyas, p. 167.
worldly concepts, would not have allowed her to sit in the tantrika secret mandala, for this would have transgressed the rules of esoteric Buddhism. At the time, he performed this kind of empowerment for very few people. Another point is that she also was a patron of the gilded Maitreya image at Basgo Castle.

Furthermore, it seems that not only was she a Buddhist, but she was a patroness of the dGe lugs pa sect. There are two reasons to state that she had faith in the dGe lugs pa sect. First, in the Life of sTag tshang there is no mention of the death of the royal mother, the Balti Princess, or of any posthumous offerings by King Seng ge rNam rgyal, despite mention of posthumous offerings for some royal relatives, including Senge Namgyal wife's brother. Second, Seng ge rNam rgyal, who did not have much faith in the dGe lugs pas in his later life, made a large posthumous offering to the great dGe lugs pa Lama, Pan chen Chos kyi rGyal mtshan (1570-1662 C.E.). Therefore, we can surmise Senge Namgyal made the offering according to his mother's own wish.

Although it is not mentioned anywhere that the Balti Princess built a mosque in Basgo, if she built three mosques at other places in Ladakh, she should surely have built one in Basgo where she spent nearly her entire life. So it is conceivable that the building of the small Maitreya temple was originally built as a mosque and then turned into the Maitreya temple when the Balti princess later embraced Buddhism. Then it must been completed by the early beginning of the 17th century. The mural paintings in this small temple and those of the upper old Maitreya temple are stylishly quite similar, especially the portraits of Tsong kha pa, although the countenance and the hat of the Tsongkhapa portrait in the small Maitreya temple are much

59. Nagarjuna, Suhrllekha (verse. 29) states the eight worldly concepts:  
O knower of the world, the eight worldly concepts — gain, loss; happiness, unhappiness; sweet words, harsh words; praise, and blame — should be regarded equally as not worthy of your mind.

60. Kun dga’ Lhun grub, F 42b


62. In 1974/75, Snellgrove and Skorupski found an inscription which informs that it was dedicated by bskal bzang sGrol ma on the 25th day of the 2nd month of the Water Horse year (= C.E. 1642). This summer, 1994, we looked for this inscription, but could not find it. Instead we found a new inscription about donations and voluntary works for a renovation done ten or fifteen years ago. Unfortunately, they probably destroyed the ancient inscription and wrote a new one over it.
distorted at a later time by an unskillful repairer. Thus, we can guess that both the mural paintings of the biggest and the smallest temples were done under the guidance of the same person or by different persons in the same tradition.

Snellgrove and Skorupski mistakenly mentioned that the Balti princess and bsKal bzang sGrol ma are same person. This is incorrect. The Balti princess was the mother of Senge Namgyal while bsKal bzang sGrol ma was his wife.

**The Third Maitreya Image**

In the year of Water Dog (1622 C.E.) Lama Stag tshang ras pa returned to Basgo from central Tibet. Senge rNam rgyal and his royal family consulted to restart the late King Jam dbYang rNam rgyal's project of constructing of Maitreya. The image is called either gSer zangs or gSer sbyangs, made of gold and copper or made of purifying gold, respectively. King 'Jam dbyang rNam rgyal probably had been able to finish the image only in copper, its gold work was interrupted by the war with the Balti Muslims. The gilding process and the work were recommenced in the Water Dog year, 1622 C.E. The Princess Khatun offered all the jewels that make up the ornaments on the crown, necklaces, and bracelets of the image.63 This very radiant image of Maitreya, the deity of loving kindness, and its beautiful surroundings were completed in 1623, and the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang made the consecration of the image and its temple.64

At that time the two princes were competing for the royal throne. The Lama Stag tshang raspa made the two princes compromise: the younger prince, Nor bu rNam rgyal, would become the king of Ladakh, and the older prince, Seng ge rNam rgyal, would practice Dharma and live in the monastery of Wanle. Both princes agreed, but later, due to the advice of cunning ministers, prince Norbu rNam rgyal died65 and prince Seng ge rNam rgyal began to reign in the year of the Wood Mouse (1624 C.E.).66

Snellgrove and Skorupski describe the ruined castle and the temples as follows:

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63. Many of these jewels were taken to Jammu during the Dogra invasion of Ladakh, Yoseb, p. 594.
64. Kun dg' Lhun grub. f. 30b.
65. Ibid. f. 31a.
66. Ibid. f. 30a.
"This is certainly the most impressive of Ladakhi citadels despite its ruined state. In earlier times it must have been also well-nigh impregnable, as was illustrated by the three-year siege that it withstood in the late 17th century (see p.870). It is first mentioned in the Ladakhi Chronicles in the early 15th century as the capital of Grags pa 'bum, whose descendants were to become the Namgyal Dynasty of Ladakh (p. 82). Here it is known by its Tibetan name of Rab brtan lha rise, 'Divine Peak of Great Stability'.

Amidst the ruins of the fort there are two large temples and adjoining one of them is a small shrine. They all contain images of Maitreya in due proportion to their size. The most beautiful one is the higher one, which is known as the Chamba Lhakhang (Maitreya Temple) and which was built by Tshe-wang Namgyal, son of [sic] Tashi Namgyal, about the middle of the 16th century ... This is probably the only temple in Ladakh to have survived with some of its murals intact from the 16th century. Thus after Alchi, which is exceptional ... the Basgo Maitreya Temple is likely to be the oldest available to us for comparative study."

In conclusion I would like to ask the people of Ladakh, and especially the authorities of Hemis monastery, who own these temples, to continue to strive to rescue these beautiful images and paintings from further deterioration by the strong wind, rain, and snow. These historic and irreplaceable monuments are national treasures not only of Ladakh, but also of India, as well as ancient art treasures of world class stature. They are now in a state of ruin and near-destruction. Although the people of Basgo have volunteered their labor and money, there is not much that such poor farmers can do without help.

In 1982 my friend, Maurice Lowe, Professor of Art at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, offered a generous contribution to save these ancient monuments. This enabled the building of a passage in the steep cliff, for otherwise it would remain difficult to reach even the main hall of the Maitreya Temple. Later I myself made a small contribution to secure the roof of the temple. Last year Professor Lowe again sent a contribution to the Basgo Welfare Committee to try to save the Bya rgya mchod rten erected by Seng ge rNam rgyal. Also this year Mrs. Hideko Wayman, Miss Keiko Nakayama and Drs. Philip and Natalie Hauptman sent their help to the committee to preserve the Maitreya temples and other ancient monumental stupas in Basgo. It is difficult to imagine how, without outside help, the Basgo people can succeed in rescuing and preserving these exquisite ancient monuments.

Appendix I

Some Events related to Seng ge rNam rgyal from the Life of Ngag.dbang rGya. mtsho

In the Iron Horse year of the 11th Rab 'byung Era (1630) Venerable Yogi sTag tshang founded He mi Monastery. In the same year, there was a revolution in Chu mu rti, which brought the nomadic state of Gu ge into Seng ge rNam rgyal’s kingdom.88

In the Water Monkey year of the eleventh Rab 'byung Era (1632) the great Venerable Yogi sTag tshang, at the age of fifty-nine, wanted to return to Central Tibet; but Seng ge rNam rgyal insisted that he remain in Ladakh.

In the Water Horse year of the eleventh Rab 'byung Era (1642), Seng ge rNam rgyal led his troops to Western Tibet. Fulfilling his mission successfully, he returned to Ladakh and halted at Wan le, where Venerable Yogi sTag tshang was residing. Seng ge rNam rgyal received some Dharma teaching and blessings from his Lama. Then he passed away to the divine state; and his retinue secretly brought back his body to the great royal castle at Leh.89

In the Iron Tiger year of the eleventh Rab 'byung Era (1650), King bDe Idan rNam rgyal, his wife, and a small retinue visited the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang to ask him to name their infant. The Lama named their son Prince bDe legs rNam rgyal.90 After a few days, Queen sKaI bzang sGroI ma, wife of Seng ge rNam rGyal, visited the Venerable Yogi sTag tshang to pay homage to the Lama before leaving for the Mountain of Snow. "This year some obstacle to your life will arise, do not go to any distant place. It is better to stay at He mi or Ma gro," the Lama said to her. But the Queen did not obey his advice and went through dByi gu, Nyo ma, and Wan le to Zangskar. The Lama told his disciples, "I have had a bad dream. This year she will die." And indeed she did, passing away at Zangla. Her body was cremated at the royal palace of Shel dkar.91

Appendix II

An Event in the Life of Nono bSod nams, hero of Basgo

The Basgo Fort was surrounded in vain by the Mongols and the Tibetan troops of dGa' Idan Tshe dbang between 1680 and 1684.92

The Dogra invasion (1834) destroyed all the manuscripts and many other religious objects of Basgo’s temples. The invaders gathered all the precious things, including the jewels on the gilded Maitreya image, loaded them onto many horses and

88. Kun dga' Lhun grub, F. 33a.
89. Ibid. F. 40a.
90. Ibid. F. 48a.
91. Ibid. F. 48b.
sent them to Jammu. They also took books to cover the ceilings of the Kila fort at Leh. 73

Nono bSod nams was a hero among the Basgo people. (A legend of the Tashilunpo monastery states that the Panchen Lama said to Nono bSod nam: "If you prevent the invasion, I will pray to ensure that you are reborn in Shambhala." This message was accompanied by a painting of Shambhala.)

Nono bSod nams, looking for a chance for revenge, obeyed the Dogra general, Zorawar Singh, but inwardly hated him. When Nono bSod nams got his chance, he did not waste time putting Zorawar Singh on the road to face the Five Elements. He was captured by later Tibetan armies and taken to Tibet. Of course, this story was kept secret from the Dogra invaders for many reasons, but the fact was known by the high Tibetan officials and was rumored among the monks of Tashilunpo monastery.

I also heard other legends about Nono bSod nams and Zorawar from many elderly monks of Tashilunpo during the 1950s. It is hard to believe them, but there is some evidence. Nono bSod nams became cherished (spyan gsal) in the eyes of the Panchen bsTan pa'i nyo ma (1781—1888) who constructed the Shagaran polo ground for Nono bSod nams and planted apple trees at Kun skyob gling, the summer residence of the Panchen Lama, in order to dispel Nono's nostalgia for his homeland.

Furthermore, the Tibetans considered Nono bSod nams a hero and did not even confiscate his gun and sword. He kept them with him until his death. After he died his gun and sword went to his countrymen's college at Tashilunpo, dPe thub Khams tshan, as did his other wealth. The college kept the weapons in the temple of the Protector Deity (mGon khang) in memory of Nono bSod nams for more than 150 years, until 1960. I have seen the gun and the sword: the gun was called topidar in Ladakhi, rang 'bar (self-igniting) in Tibetan; in the sword's handle there was small gold ball which moved up and down when the sword moved.

Historians of Ladakh have introduced Nono bSod nams to the reader in different ways. Cunningham recognized him as the brother of Tshe dbang Rab brtan, the Kalon of Basgo. Francke identified him as "the Ladakhi (chieftain) Nono Bsd nams," not related to the Kalon of Basgo; bSod namsTshe brtan's Account of the Dogra Wars 74 does not mention Nono bSod nams, but does mention "the astrologer" Tshe dbang Rab brtan, the chief sGo lam khan of Chu shod, the minister of Basgo . bSod namsTshe brtan's text does not clearly recognize him as the minister of Leh or of Basgo due to lack of precise punctuation. Several pages below, he mentions "ga ga bSod nams from Basgo." In short, in his history book, it is not clear whether Nono bSod nams and the minister of Basgo were one and the same person or not. bKra shis Rab rgyas unequivocally recognizes Nono6 bSod nams as the minister of Basgo, but who then was Tshe dbang Rab brtan? There is no word about Tshe dbang Rab brtan in the history book of bKra shis Rab rgyas, but he was recognized as the minister of Basgo by Cunningham and Francke.

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73. Yoseb, p. 594.
74. It is included in Francke, Vol. II, p 255.
75. I think that the spelling of dpon po, chief, was mistaken for dbon po, astrologer.
phreng ba, 1978.
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