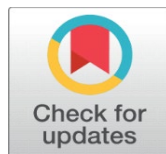
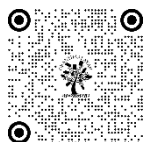


ROLES OF DZONGPON IN MONYUL REGION OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2659](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.2659)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The Mon region which includes modern-day Tawang and West Kameng, has a similar culture and adheres to Tibetan Buddhism. Only in 1951 did Indian Army official Major Bob Khating stop tax collection among the Monpas. Prior to 1951, Tibetan officials known as dzongpon used to collect various types of taxes from the region. Under the Dzongpon system, monks were appointed as Dzongpons to run the administration based on their managerial ability and strong administrative acumen. The Dzongpon were the Dzong's highest administrative authority, appointed by the appropriate authority from Tibet's monasteries. These dzongpons were in charge of collecting various types of taxes in the form of grain and other important edible items. The tax collected in the region was used in the monastery, and a portion of the tax was imported to Lhasa. Aside from Tawang, the Tibetans built two more dzongs at Dirang and Khalegteng (present-day west kameng) to collect taxes from the Monpas. The main idea of this paper is to discuss the roles and functions of Dzongpons in Monyul region. There were four dzongs in Monyul during Dzongpon period i.e. Gyang Khar Dzong, Senge Dzong, Dirang Dzong and Taklung Dzong. Except Senge Dzong each dzongpon has its own administrative unit and were appointed mostly from Tsona Dzong. This paper also explains why dzongpons were able to hold power over the Monyul region despite the signing of Mac Mohan line in the year 1914 between the representative of Tibet, British India and China

Keywords: Mon, Tax, Dzongpon, Dzong, Monyul

1. INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh covers a geographical area of 83,743 sq. km which is roughly 2.55% of the total area of India. Part of the eastern Himalaya, the state of Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the extreme north-eastern India. It is the largest Arunachal Pradesh state areawise in the North-Eastern region, stretching from snowcapped mountains in the north to the breathtaking beautiful valley in the south. It is the land of lush green forest and rivers, valleys and mountain ranges. The state is the homeland of some twenty-five major vibrant tribes of Indo-mongoloid stock with more than 100 sub tribes each having distinct culture and customs. Among these tribe the Monpa are a tribe who are found residing in the western highlands of Arunachal Pradesh mostly in the district of Tawang and West kameng. On 1st June 1980, West Kameng district was formed. Earlier it was combined with East Kameng which was then together known as Kameng district because of its location on the western side of Kameng River. On 6th October, 1984 again the West Kameng district was bifurcated and Tawang district was formed out of its administrative convenience. The two districts are bounded by

Tibet on the North, Bhutan on the West, Sonitpur district of Assam and East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh on the east.

2. DEFINING THE TERM MON

According to Neeru Nanda in her article, "Monpas in their borderland-A historical review" she stated that the Monpas have a local saying that; "We are neither of Gyasar(Tibet) nor of Gyagar(India), we are the Mon". The Monpa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh represents the dominant ethnic group of the region. The term Monpa meaning someone from Mon, is used either for people living in the region of Mon or for someone who is of Mon, irrespective of region. The term Monpa or Mon are hence used as a blanket terms by Tibetan to designate certain neighbouring region or people situated to the south. In many Tibetan writings, Mon, Monyul, Lho Mon or Shar Mon refers to a region, specifying a location mostly to the south of Central Tibet. According to early Tibetan sources, Monyul is situated in South Tibet, it was also known as Lho Mon, the southern belt of Tibet before the emergence of Kingdom in Bhutan and Sikkim Lho Mon was referred to the people who lived in south Tibet. According to the historical sources of Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet Lho-Mon is referred to as the inhabitant of south Tibet which includes Bhutanese and Monpa. Lho means south in Tibetan and Mon means people inhabiting in the region. Old Mon is largely connected to an area, which includes the whole of Sikkim state, Bhutan and the Mon region i.e. the Tawang and West kameng district in the westernmost tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

Old Mon even included the southernmost counties of Lhoka and Shigatse Prefectures, such as Mon Tsho sna and Mon Gro mo in the TAR, which are adjoining border areas to Sikkim, Bhutan and Tawang district. Besides the description of the Monpa people of the Mon region as a "Scheduled tribes" in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, the term Mon is also widely used in other parts of the Himalayan region. Presently from the eastern Himalaya to the western Himalayas, Mon or Monpa is used as an unspecific meaning of an ethnic group. In the case of the eastern Himalayas, it is used in Bhutan, Sikkim and adjoining district of the west Bengal state. The trend of differentiating these regions as being not referred to Mon prior to the eighteenth century is strong in contemporary writings from the region.

Presently in Bhutan, Mon refers to an ethnic group living in the south-central districts and to a cluster of villages in Monmola Trashithangyed, Chiwog of Serthi Gewog region in the Samdrup Jongkhar district. In Sikkim and in the adjoining district, Mon is referred to the region as well as to the Lepcha tribe and other ethnic group in the region. In the western Himalayas, the region of Ladakh and Kargil of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Lahaul, spiti and Kinnaur areas of Himachal Pradesh, Mon and sometimes Mon pa represent group of sedentary musicians who are situated low in the social hierarchy. This lower social status of Mon is further recorded in Baltistan of Pakistan. The usage of term mon is also found in Central Himalayas region, where the upland hill people called or named their southern valley neighbours Mon.

The historical understanding of the different key term Mon, in its ancient and original term Man, is applied by the Chinese to several 'barbarian' groups related to the ch'iang including the people of rGyal rong. The term is found in Tibetan text of the eighth and ninth centuries in the forms of Mon and Mong, and thereafter it is applied to all kinds of groups throughout the Himalaya with whom the Tibetan come in contact. The term lost any specificity it might once have had and came to mean little more than 'southern or western mountain-dwelling non-Indian non-Tibetan barbarian'. The present range of term must have had its first impetus in a movement from the east to the south-east, and the affinities noted above incline one to look for the main point of secondary diffusion in the centre and east of 'proto-bhutan'; not only the language but also some of social institution peculiar to the area may have served to link it in Tibetan eyes to the true Mon of rGyal rong. The old towers and fortresses in the Sino-Tibetan marches, the mong-dzong of the Nam text, are paralleled by many such building which have disappeared or lie in ruins in central and eastern Bhutan and in Kameng.

In comparison to the other tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, in respect of evolution of indigenous form of self-administration, the Monpas are found in a different situation. In respect to the other tribe it is found that they were cut off from the relation with a developed society having organized administrative system for a long time. The Arunachal tribes began to migrate from their land of origin due to very many factors from the beginning of the Christian era; yet, it may be said the major chunk began their movement from seventh century AD, a few already wandering in this area like semi nomads. From their migration to this area till the British introduction of administrative system in the foothill areas from the last part of the nineteenth century these tribes, remained independent in the truest sense of the term-no power or developed nation was to rule them with some administrative system evolved by such power or nation.

3. DZONG AND DZONGPON

The literal meaning of Dzong is a “fortified place”. This distinct type of fortress architecture is found in the Buddhist state of the Himalayas both in the Bhutan and Tibet. The architecture of Dzong is massive in style with towering exterior walls, surrounding a complex of courtyard, temples administrative offices and monk’s accommodation. In general the Dzong has high inward sloping walls of brick and stone painted white with few or no windows in the lower section of the wall. But unlike other forts or fortress and building around the world, the Dzong is Multifunctional even today. It has been said that Dzongs in the Himalayan states were used for political and administrative purposes.

It was provincial administrative centre through which these Himalayan states used to control the local people .The areas of Monpa were divided into different provinces called Dzong in local terminology for administrative convenience. The Dzongs were established to administer the Monpa villages by the Tibetan. With the establishment of Dzong, the Tibetans took control over the administrative and judicial function of the village level. The Dzong was something of an administrative centre, each was governed by two monks for a period of three years and they were called ‘Dzongpon’. There were total four Dzongs in the Monyul regions. These were

- 1) Gyangkhar Dzong
- 2) Senge Dzong
- 3) Dirang Dzong
- 4) Talung Dzong

Prior to the establishment of Dzong the whole region of Tawang and major portion of West Kameng was traditionally divided into seven divisions of thirty tsos. According to Lobsang Tenpa in his book, “An Early History of Mon region (India) and his relationship with Tibet and Bhutan” he states that with the formation of Mon region in 1680, the Ganden Phodrang (Tib. Dga’-ldan pho-brang) government to Tibetan gradually started to enforce its administrative system. As the 1680 edict shows it was initially left to Tawang Monastery to implement and collect tributes from the various region. However, from the text of the above book we may assume that Dzongpon were functional after 1680 or after the establishment of Tawang Monastery by Merag lama Lodoe Gyamtso. Prior to 1680 Mon were traditionally divided into thirty-two tsos. These were

- 1) **Shar Nyima Tsosum:** these tsos consists of Serub tso, Lhou tso and shar tso.
- 2) **Lepo Tsoshe:** Consists of four tsos viz Lepo Shinmo, Ghomni tso, Gyipa tso and shinle tso.
- 3) **Pangchen Dhingduk:** Consists of Upper, Middle and Lower shoktsen, Lumpo, Mu-chot and Kharman.
- 4) **Dhagpa Tso-Gyeth:** consists of Mu-Khob-Shaksum tso, Sanglung tso, Kharbong tso, woongla tso, Sakpret tso, thrillam tso, Thonglek tso, and Pamakhar tso.
- 5) **Shauk Rho-jangda tso:** consists of three villages viz.,Shau(now under Tibet), Rho-Jhangdak.
- 6) **Dangnang Tsoduk:** Consists of six tsos viz., Seng-Nyuk Tsos, Chug Tso, Lish Tso, Sangti Tso, Dirang Tso and Namshu-Thembang tso
- 7) **Rongnang Tsoshe:** Consists of four tsos viz., Toeh(upper) tso(Morshing, Domkhok and Phudung Villages), Sheir tso, Tukpen tsos, rahung Tso and Khuldham tso

Mago, Thingbu and Luguthang were then under Jora .

The whole administration of the thirty two Tsos was a joint Tibeto-Mon administration in which the primary administration of the region was under the core council, which was headed by the manager of the ecclestical office. The headquarter of the administration and the council was always based at Tawang Monastery, but the Dzongpon and the Dzal ngo administration were based at the respective Dzong. The district Commissioners were appointed directly by the council except the Dzongpon of Rgyang mkhar rdzong. The rdzong pon of sde rang rdzong and stag lung rdzong were usually appointed among the monks of Tawang Monastery or sometimes were former tsorgan of the respective region. With the exception of Tawang Bla gnyer and Rgyang mkhar Rdzong dpon , who were usually Tibetan, the rest of the officials were native Monpa .

Under Sde rang Dzong, there were two other dzong, which were without any official and were administered by the Dzong dpon. The Dzong were Them spang rdzong and bde skyid rdzong. While the latter is completely ruined, the former is presently in poor condition. These are the oldest fortresses in the region, but the non-functional Bde skyid rdzong was

destroyed during conflicts with neighbouring tribes and was abandoned in favour of Them spang rdzong, probably in the sixteenth century. Until the foundation of sde rang rdzong, Them spang rdzong thus became the administrative centre of the them spang and Namshu regions. Senge Dzong was located in between Dirang Dzong and Gyangkhar Dzong, it was used mostly for the accommodation of Dzongpon. These Dzong is located above 3000 metre from the sea level on the way to sela pass. These Dzong was not used for Tax collection, instead it was used for lodging and people around it used to take care of the Dzong.

4. POWER, FUNCTIONS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE DZONGPONS

After the establishment of Dzongs in Monyul region, Dzongpons were usually given the responsibilities of collecting Khrai from the region, but they also enjoyed the judicial and executive power in the region. The Dzongpons used to collect different types of khrai from the region, these were usually in the form of grain, vegetables, woods, bamboos, fruits and rice. The people of Hrebla gangsum i.e. Mogto, Mirba and Gomkyaleng were given the task of collection eight pairs of bamboo from each individual household to maintain the dzong, the collection of bamboo was in the alternate manner. Likewise different kinds of vegetables were collected from Dakpaneng people, dried fruits and wooden containers from Zemitang and Tsok Sum areas. Tax collected from Gyangkhar dzong was transported to Tsona dzong via Bumla Pass by a party led by the Dzongpon. Another important tax to be delivered for the ceremonies was that of rice, which was meant to meet the demand for the official ceremony of Lhasa and its surrounding monasteries. The Rice taxation was not subject to the local officials rather, it was a monopoly of the government; Tsona Rice official was directly responsible to and was appointed by Lhasa.

Dzongpons also enjoyed several judicial powers under their jurisdiction, the overall administration as well as judicial function were kept at the disposal of the Dzongpon. However, the Tsorgan had administrative, developmental and judicial powers too. The Dzongpons never visit any Dzong at their own cost except for collecting Khrei. The Dzongpons were invited to settle the cases or disputes as and when required by the respective Dzong at their own cost, which includes back and forth journey for expenditures. The Tsopa of the concern Dzong under the hand and seal of the Tsorgan had to send delegates to the monastery in order to invite the Dzongpons whenever their presence is required. Any civil or criminal cases and local disputes had to undergo a local trial headed by the Tsorgan. However, the inter-village disputes though rare, were always referred to the TsoTsorgan. The Tsorgan always try to settle the cases amicably within his jurisdiction. Nevertheless, during that period the Tsorgan had little role in major cases. They only settle the cases of minor theft, property, divorce, mischief, adultery and house trespassing etc. After the trial of the cases by the Tsorgan, if the parties were not satisfied, they referred the case before the Tso-Tsorgan for trial with prior permission from the Tsorgan. The party cannot sue their case to the higher authority without a prior permission from the Tsorgan or Tso-Tsorgan, which is called 'Gonglen'. If the party to the case was again dissatisfied, then only the matter was referred to the respective Dzongpons.

5. DISCONTINUATION/REMOVAL OF DZONGPON SYSTEM

Since 1944, especially at the beginning of Indian Independence in 1946, British-ruled India tried to abolish taxation by Dzongpon in the Dirang and Kalaktang requesting that the Dzongpon either remain in the Dzong or return to Tawang. However, since the taxation contributed to Tawang Monastery or to locally former officials, the local people themselves continued this practice until 1951. Because both the Dzongpon of Dirang Dzong and Taklung Dzong were appointed from the office of Tawang Monastery, they were mostly natives of Monyul. Therefore, the Dzongpon remained at the Dzong as caretakers, moved to the Gonpa of the Dzong, or return to their respective villages in the Tawang district or to Tawang Monastery. However, the dominance of the Dzongpon and the Tibetan administrator Kungo la-nyar at Tawang monastery continued in the Tawang area until 1951. Well before Indian independence and the creation of the McMahon line in 1914, Tibet had ceded the Monpa area to British in return for a "supply of British weapons" and their services as mediators in the china-Tibet talks in the Kham/Amdo region. However, owing to concerns that Tibet might be occupied by China, it was British India's boundary policy to create a buffer state with natural boundaries between Tibet and British India.

Therefore, Major Khating traveled from Dirang to the village of Jang in the Tawang region in 1951 and assembled the Tsorgen (Shar tso, Lhou tso and Seru tso) of the Shar Nima Tsosum region, which was then Tawang Monpa area. These villages covered wideareas and contained settlements that were the equivalent to contemporary villages. Those settlements sent Gomi and Thumi (assistants to the Tsorgen) to the assembly. Major Khating instructed Pema Gombu,

Tsorgen of the Lhou Tso and others to see the Dzongpon at Gyankhar Dzong and encourage him to accept the Indian delegation's visit. Pema Gombu and others had a meeting with Ngyerpa Konchock La, the assistant officer of the Dzongpon Of Gyankhat Dzong, and informed him of the intention of the Indian delegation. After that meeting, Pema Gombu returned to the village of Jang and reported what had happened to Major Khating. On february 6, 1951, 2 days after Pema Gombu's return to Jang, the delegation moved to Lebrang Tsangbu (BLa Brang Tsang bu).

On February 9, Major Khating and the Tibetan officials began discussion territorial issues. The Tibetan official, Lanyer Thubten Choephel (1988), and representatives from Tawang Monastery informed the Indian delegation that they had sent a messenger to Lhasa to inform the Tibetan government about the current station affairs. On February 14, the Dzongpen and his assistants visited Major khating in Tawang. They demanded the delinquent taxes be paid and that the services of 20 people per day be provided free of charge; however, these proposal were rejected. Pema Gombu stated, "India is our nation, and Tawang is a part of India. We shall respect Indian Laws". Shortly afterward, the India administrative assistant officer took over governance left the area. After that incident, the tax burden on the inhabitant of the Tawang area was reduced to that of Tawang Monastery. As well as Pema Gombu, Tsorgen of the village of Gyankhar and of the village of Surbi played important roles throughout this process.

6. CONCLUSION

Although the Dzongpon System in Monyul has been abolished but Khrai which is some kind of voluntary donation by the villagers is still prevalent in the region. Now the whole system in Monyul region is been in lieu with the central and State government, still several minor cases are solved among the villagers by taking references from the case solved by Dzongpon.

Problems in my research pepers:- relevation of gyangkhar Dzong

Ethnographic studies of monyul.

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