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The Seventh Dalai Lama's residence in Kham: Gartar Monastery interactions with indigenous chiefs and the Qing court

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Abstract

The Seventh Dalai Lama's residence at Gartar Monastery, which began in 1730, greatly affected the relationship between the Kham region and the Tibetan government as well as the Qing court's control over Kham. The Dalai Lama's interactions with various indigenous leaders, local monasteries, monks and lay people increased the influence of the Geluk school in Kham, and also inspired their support for the Dalai Lama. Measures adopted by the Qing court to protect the Dalai Lama, such as stationing troops and inspecting checkpoints, also strengthened Qing control of Kham. After the Dalai Lama left for Tibet in 1735, Gartar Monastery continued to serve as a religious and cultural centre of northern Kham, with the purpose of "civilizing" and "enlightening" the neighbouring regions that were far away from the political centre. Successive abbots of Gartar Monastery – right up to 1920 – came from Drepung Monastery in Lhasa; they and the Gartar monks influenced, interfered with and controlled the local affairs of Gartar and other regions in Kham. In particular, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gartar Monastery, together with the Tibetan commissioner in Nyarong, was able to assist in the Tibetan government's efforts to extend its sphere of influence in Kham.

Keywords: Gartar Monastery; Seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso; indigenous leaders of Kham

Introduction

Gartar Monastery in present-day Tawu County was a resident monastery especially built for the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso (Bskal/Skal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708–57) by the Qing court in 1730. He lived there for over five years. Later, the Eleventh Dalai Lama Khedrup Gyatso (Mkhas grub rgya mtsho, 1838–55) was born in a village near the monastery. Throughout its history, the monastery was greatly valued and supported by both the Qing court and the Tibetan government. To date, most research on the Seventh Dalai Lama has focused on his activities in Central Tibet,¹ with little attention paid to his influence in Kham, specifically in light of his residence at Gartar Monastery. Nor has there been much discussion about his interactions with the indigenous leaders in the region, thereby overlooking his influence in Kham. In particular, there is little research in English devoted to the history of Gartar Monastery itself, especially concerning its construction and renovations, its detailed situation during the Seventh Dalai

¹ For the significance of the Seventh Dalai Lama's moving to reside at Gartar Monastery in Tibet's history, see Petch 1972: 18; Liu 2004: 92–101; Xing 2005: 13–6; Zhang 1994: 90–9.

Lama's stay and its daily management by the successive abbots dispatched by Drepung Monastery. Also neglected has been Gartar's influence in Kham after the Seventh Dalai Lama left for Tibet in 1735.

This article mainly draws on primary Tibetan sources, supplemented by folk stories collected in the region. Due to the limited nature of the sources available, we have to acknowledge our reliance on *The Biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama Lobzang Kelzang Gyatso* by Changkya Rölpe Dorjé for the Seventh Dalai Lama's interactions with indigenous leaders in Kham. We are fully aware that his account in this biography naturally privileges the Qing court and, to a lesser degree, the Tibetan government, due to his status as a high-ranking Gelukpa hierarch serving as an adviser to the Qing court. Thus, to balance and corroborate these accounts, we have also consulted *Rgyal dbang thams cad mkhyen pa bskal bzang rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* [*Biography of the Omniscient Gyelwang Kelzang Gyatso*] by an anonymous author.²

At a crucial period in Tibetan history, turbulent politics forced the removal of the Sixth Dalai Lama. This raises the following questions, which we will consider in this article. Why, then, did the Qing court decide to have the Seventh Dalai Lama move to the Gartar (Ch. Taining) region in the 1730s? Why did the Qing choose Gartar Monastery to be his resident monastery? How was the monastery constructed? How did Gartar relate to other local monasteries and the indigenous chiefs in the neighbouring areas? Why did the Qing court later prohibit Gartar Monastery monks from propagating the Geluk teaching in Chuchen (Jinchuan) and Tsenlha (Xiaojin) after these two regions were pacified by the Qing in 1776?

Also discussed below is Gartar Monastery's involvement in the local affairs of Kham after the Seventh Dalai Lama left for Central Tibet in 1735. In particular, this article considers the role of Gartar Monastery in obstructing Han Chinese traders from engaging in gold mining in Gartar in 1905. Exploring answers to these questions enables us to better understand the Qing court's policy towards the Mongols and Tibetan regions during the reign of Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1722–35). It will also shed light on the Tibetan government's effort to contend for the control of Kham via Gartar Monastery.

The Seventh Dalai Lama's exile in Kham (1728–35) and civil strife in Tibet

In 1707, Lhazang Khan (1677–1717) deposed the Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso (Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho, 1683–1706), and named his own son, Ngawang Yeshé Gyatso (Ngag dbang ye shes rgya mtsho), as the Dalai Lama. This caused a political crisis in Central Tibet. In 1710, Emperor Kangxi formally recognized Yeshé Gyatso as the Sixth Dalai Lama, but this was rejected by numerous Mongol tribes, including the various Khoshot (Qoshud) tribes of Kokonor,³ as well as the Three Great Monasteries of Lhasa (Drepung, Sera, Ganden) and others. Soon after, in the region of Litang, a local monk became possessed by the protective divinity Öden Karpo ('Od ldan dkar po) and declared that a child called Kelzang Gyatso – born in Litang in 1708⁴ – was the reincarnation of the Sixth Dalai Lama.⁵

This news spread gradually, and in time it drew attention from different Mongol and Tibetan groups. In 1712, Prince (*qinwang*) Baturtaiji, the Khoshot Mongol chieftain of

² There are 12 versions of the biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama in existence, but apart from the one by Changkya Rölpe Dorjé and the other by an anonymous author (consulted in this article), the rest are brief and compiled by scholars from the 1980s onwards.

³ For details, refer to Gu 1982, 1: 186–7.

⁴ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 20, 23; Anon. 1977: 11, 15–16.

⁵ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 24; Anon. 1977: 18.

Kokonor, dispatched officials to pay homage to the reincarnated boy, showing that his tribe formally recognized his status as the Dalai Lama.⁶ Around this time, many *geshes* (*kalyānamitra*) from Songtsenling in Gyeltang (Zhongdian) also came to pay homage and performed the rite of longevity for him.⁷ Lhazang Khan twice sent his messengers to enquire about the child.⁸ Worried that he would be harmed, his parents took him into exile in Dergé at the beginning of 1714.⁹ En route from Litang to Dergé, he was warmly received and venerated by Washül Duram *teiji*,¹⁰ Washül Dezhungma and Washül Tromtar under the Litang *depa* (governor).¹¹ He was venerated and presented with a great number of presents by the local monasteries in Dergé and the Dergé king, Tenpa Tsering (Bstan pa tshe ring, 1678–1738), who invited the child and his entourage to Lhalung in Dergé. In Lhalung those who came to welcome the child included lamas and chiefs of five Hör regions in northern Kham, and the chief of Den Chökör in present-day Jomda county in the Tibet Autonomous Region.¹² In particular, Hör *chöjé* Ngawang Püntsock Jampa (1668–1746), a disciple of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobzang Gyatso, paid homage and presented many gifts,¹³ thus establishing a long-lasting relationship between the two of them.

In 1715, Khoshot Mongol tribesmen welcomed the child to Kokonor,¹⁴ and, by the order of Emperor Kangxi, they escorted him to stay at Kumbum Monastery.¹⁵ On his way to Dergé and Kokonor, as well as during his stay in Kumbum, monks and lay people from many Tibetan areas venerated Kelzang Gyatso “just like a deity” (Ch. *youru shenming*),¹⁶ and numerous tribes, indigenous chieftains, headmen and monasteries of Mongol and Tibetan regions dispatched envoys to worship and make offerings to the boy.¹⁷

Kumbum, for a short while, became a centre for such worship. In the name of escorting the reincarnated boy, in 1717 the Dzungar Mongols invaded Tibet. At the time, large numbers of Tibetan monks and lay people revolted and opposed Lhazang Khan, and the Khoshot tribes of Kokonor provided no military assistance to him. Consequently, Lhazang Khan was killed and Yeshé Gyatso deposed.

In order to drive out the Dzungars from Tibet, in 1720 Emperor Kangxi decided to rely on the reincarnated boy for support, and formally conferred the title of Dalai Lama on him.¹⁸ In addition, he dispatched his fourteenth son, Prince Yin Ti (1688–1755), to escort the incarnation to Lhasa, where he was enthroned in the Potala Palace.¹⁹ In the same year, the Fifth Panchen Lama Lobzang Yeshé (Blo bzang ye shes, 1663–1737) ordained the boy as a novice monk and gave him the monastic name Lobzang Kelzang Gyatso.²⁰

The future career of Kelzang Gyatso would be strongly influenced by Manchu concerns about the threat to Qing rule posed by the Mongols – especially Dzungar Mongols – as well as worries regarding internal struggles and the stability of Central Tibet. Following this theme, the Qing armies drove the Dzungars out of Tibet and the court appointed

⁶ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 29; Anon. 1977: 23.

⁷ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 30; Anon. 1977: 4.

⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 26, 30; Anon. 1977: 20, 24.

⁹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 30; Anon. 1977: 24.

¹⁰ *Teiji* is a title for a third rank official in the Lhasa government.

¹¹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 31; Anon. 1977: 25.

¹² See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 31–2; Anon. 1977: 25–6.

¹³ Yangchen Nyepé Langtso 1983: 23b; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010: 9/1, 32; Anon. 1977: 26.

¹⁴ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 33–50; Anon. 1977: 27–44.

¹⁵ See Gu 1982, 1: 192; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 50; Anon. 1977: 44.

¹⁶ Gu 1982, 1: 210–11.

¹⁷ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 30–2, 50–104; Anon. 1977, 44–77.

¹⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 102–03; Anon. 1977: 76–7.

¹⁹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 104–19; Anon. 1977: 77–85.

²⁰ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 123–4; Anon. 1977: 86.

Khangchené Sönam Gyelpo (Khang chen nas Bsod nams rgyal po, d. 1727), Polhané Sönam Topgyé (Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas, 1689–1747), Ngapöpa Dorjé Gyelpo (Nga phod pa Rdo rje rgyal po, d. 1728), Lumpawa Trashi Gyelpo (Lum pa ba Bkra shis rgyal po, d. 1728) and Jarawa Lodrö Gyelpo (Sbyar ra ba Blo gros rgyal po, d. 1728) as *kalöns* (ministers) to be jointly in charge of the Tibetan government. These ministers, however, were divided into three factions: the lay aristocratic faction of Tsang, represented by Khangchenné and Polhané; the lay aristocratic faction of Ü represented by Ngapöpa and Lumpawa; and the Dalai Lama faction represented by Jarawa.²¹ In August 1727, Ngapöpa, Lumpawa and Jarawa killed Khangchenné,²² after which the war between Ü and Tsang broke out. When Polhané led his troops on a punitive expedition against Ngapöpa, the Qing court supported him.²³ After nearly a year of fighting, in May 1728 Polhané reached Lhasa. Soon the *ambans* (Imperial Residents) Mala and Sengge convicted the three ministers who killed Khangchenné and had them executed.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Qing court conferred the title of *beizi* (prince of the fourth rank)²⁵ on Polhané and placed him in charge of the political affairs of Tibet.²⁶

The Qing court's purpose in moving the Dalai Lama to Kham

As soon as the war between Ü and Tsang ended, Emperor Yongzheng ordered Polhané to take charge of Tibet's political affairs and he also instructed his representatives to have the Seventh Dalai Lama moved to Kham. There were three main reasons for the emperor to do so. First, in 1723–24, Gushri Khan's grandson, Lobsang Danjin, the Khoshot prince, led Mongol tribesmen to rise up against the Qing in the region of Kokonor.²⁷ After his defeat by Qing troops, he took refuge with the Dzungar Mongols.²⁸ These Dzungar Mongols, comprising a major danger always lurking in the background, posed a threat to Central Tibet and this caused the Qing court to be anxious about a possible further Dzungar invasion of Tibet. The Qing recognized clearly the Dzungar purpose for invading Central Tibet: to abduct and manipulate the Dalai Lama. For the Dzungars, such success – controlling the Gelukpa leader – would have given them decisive influence in both religion and politics, thus assuring popular appeal and dominance among the Mongolian and Tibetan people.²⁹

When the Dzungar leader Tsewang Rabtan died in 1727, his son, Galdan Tseren (d. 1745), succeeded to the khanate. While declaring his intention to send back Lhazang Khan's captured son, Galdan also sent a memorial to the Qing court requesting permission to travel to Central Tibet to hold a memorial service for his father and to offer tea, butter and money to local monasteries. This further deepened the Qing court's concern that the Dzungars would again attempt to invade Central Tibet. Thus, transferring the Seventh Dalai Lama to Kham would take him far from the danger posed by the Dzungar Mongols and secure him firmly under the control of the Qing court.³⁰

²¹ For details, refer to Huang 2013: 1–6; Petech 1972: 114.

²² See Gu 1982, 1: 316–17; Dokhar Zhapdrung Tsering Wangyel 2002: 392–6.

²³ See Gu 1982, 1: 318–19.

²⁴ See Gu 1982, 1: 324–5.

²⁵ The full title in Manchu is *gūsai beise*.

²⁶ See Gu 1982, 1: 328–9.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of Lobsang Danjin's rebellion, see Naoto 1993: 50–80.

²⁸ The Qing court worried that Ngapöpa and Lumpawa, who had killed Khangchenné, would “collude with” Lobsang Dajin and pose a threat to Qing rule. See Gu 1982, 1: 329–34.

²⁹ See Qi 1884, 17: 13, cited from *Huangchao fanbu yaolue* 1993: 259.

³⁰ See Gu 1982, 1: 361.

Next, as one of the measures taken by the Qing court to deal with the aftermath of the 1727 internal struggle in Tibet, sending the Dalai Lama into exile paved the way for Polhané Sönam Topgyé to take charge of Tibetan affairs. During the war between Ü and Tsang, the Seventh Dalai Lama's father, Sönam Dargyé (Bsod nam dar rgyas), also became involved. He himself was originally from Chongyé Dzong in Ü and had taken Lumpawa's daughter as his concubine;³¹ he was the maternal uncle of Ngapöpa³² and it was natural for him to ally with Ngapöpa and his faction. Sönam Dargyé was considered to be the mastermind behind this struggle – the nobles from Ü believed him to be a serious interference in the government affairs of Tibet.³³

Because the Seventh Dalai Lama was young, Tibet's political affairs were controlled by his father and several ministers, and the Qing court worried that Polhané would have conflicts with the Seventh Dalai Lama. To prevent this, they “discussed moving the Dalai Lama to Litang so as to put an end to the cause for a dispute”.³⁴ This decision was to reduce any obstructions for Polhané to be in charge of Tibetan affairs, and also to prevent the Qing from once again involving itself in the power struggles of Tibet.³⁵

Finally, one of the real purposes motivating Emperor Yongzheng to send the Dalai Lama into exile is clearly revealed in “The Chinese Inscription of Gartar Monastery Made by the Emperor's Order”.³⁶ This inscription reads as follows:

...and *fanyi* (referring to local Tibetans) in the nearby regions are far away from Tibet, and all set their mind on taking refuge with Buddhism, ...Widely spreading the Geluk teachings. ...Since [Buddhism] is conducive to the imperial dynasty's enlightenment of [the local people], it is indeed beneficial...³⁷

The statement in the inscription shows that one of the reasons for Emperor Yongzheng to have the Dalai Lama moved to Gartar was for him to propagate Buddhism among the local people so as to facilitate the Qing dynasty's effort to enlighten them.

This sentiment is reflected in another edict issued by the emperor, ordering Qing troops – with 2,000 officials and soldiers – to be stationed in Litang to protect and support Gartar.³⁸ In this spirit, Emperor Yongzheng meant to use Tibetan Buddhism to control the local people in the western frontier. If the Qing court intended to use Tibetan Buddhism to restrain and rule Mongols and Tibetans, they had to first handle their relationship with the leader of Tibetan Buddhism carefully. They did this by having the latter settled in a thoughtfully designed residence with adequate support and the protection of the Qing.³⁹

Choosing Litang and Gartar: sites in Kham for the Seventh Dalai Lama

At the beginning of 1729, the Dalai Lama and his party arrived in Chamdo and Drayap, where the former was carefully looked after and supported by three prominent Gelukpa *rinpoches* (reincarnate lamas) in Kham: the Sixth Pakpalha Tenpé Gyatso

³¹ See Gu 1982, 1: 315.

³² See *Zangzu xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 1984: 182, cited in Zhang 1994: 90–9.

³³ See Gu 1982, 1: 318–19.

³⁴ See Gu 1982, 1: 325–6; *Xizang zhi. Weizang tongzhi* 1982, 13/1: 352.

³⁵ See Kapstein 2013.

³⁶ See Zhang 1994: 96.

³⁷ See “Yuzhi Huiyuan miao bei”, cited in *Sichuan sheng Daofu xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui* 1998: 573.

³⁸ See Mao 1897, cited in Song Yun with Feng, Shike and Elehebu 1982: 233.

³⁹ See Chen 1957: 40.

(‘Phags pa lha Bstan pa’i rgya mtsho, 1714–54) of Chamdo Jampaling Monastery,⁴⁰ the Fourth Drayap Chetsang Lobzang Namgyel (Brag g-yab Che tshang Blo bzang nam rgyal, 1693–1750) of Trashi Chödzong Monastery⁴¹ and the Third Drayap Chungtsang Lobzang Tenpa (Brag g-yab Chung tshang Blo bzang bstan pa, 1683–1739).⁴² In order to have the Dalai Lama safely settled in Litang, Emperor Yongzheng ordered several vice-generals (*fu dutong*) to command 2,000 soldiers to “go forward to welcome the Dalai Lama”.⁴³ In March 1729, the Dalai Lama arrived in Litang, and during his temporary year-long stay there he received many gifts from Emperor Yongzheng.⁴⁴ Around this time, Emperor Yongzheng ordered the Dalai Lama’s father to Beijing to have an audience with him, and conferred on the latter the title of *fuguogong* (the “bulwark duke”).⁴⁵ Later, while Polhané, the unified ruler of Tibet, dispatched people to present 400 taels of silver to the Dalai Lama,⁴⁶ the Dergé king, Tenpa Tsering, also sent people to offer gold, satin, horses and yaks to the Dalai Lama.⁴⁷ As a paramount regional power in Kham at the time, the Dergé king was fully aware of the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the Dalai Lama so as to enhance his authority and status in the region, where the influence of the Geluk school was widespread. In addition to this tactic, the king of Dergé maintained close ties with *üla* (*dbu bla*, chaplains) from *ügon* (*bdu dgon*, head monasteries), which included the Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyü monasteries. In particular, the warm reception and assistance provided by the Dergé king to the young Dalai Lama in 1714, as stated earlier, had already enabled the king to make initial contact with the Dalai lama. The king naturally took this as a good opportunity to promote the relationship. Similarly, Litang Depa Abum Trashi, the great *khenpo* (abbot) of Muli Lobzang Tutop (Blo bzang mthu stobs), together with monks from Muli;⁴⁸ monks from Pengyeling of Batang, Sampeling of Chatreng, Yangteng of Dabpa, Gangkarling of Dabpa, Drakar temple at Nangzang of Derong, Ganden Döndrupling of Porak, Dechenling of Jol (Adunzi, Dechen), Songtsenling of Gyeltang; and other individuals and institutions offered lavish gifts to the Dalai Lama and prayed for his longevity.⁴⁹ Several times the Dalai Lama blessed thousands of monks and lay people, including the locals and those coming from afar, by placing his hand on their heads; he also gave public teachings.⁵⁰

The military and trading status of Gartar

Gartar, located in a flat oval basin surrounded by a chain of mountains in the Minyak Rapgang Range – one of the six ranges of Dokham – was a town with a long history: written records of the region date back to 1265,⁵¹ when the Yuan court established Gartar (Ch. Hada, Xiada or Heda) town to strengthen its regional military presence to control Eastern Tibet. In time, Gartar became a “vital hub controlling access to various Tibetan regions”.⁵² Gartar was close to Litang along the southern Sichuan–Tibet trade route

⁴⁰ See Jetsün Jampa Chödrak 1994, 335; Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 224; Anon. 1977: 139.

⁴¹ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 225; Anon. 1977: 140.

⁴² See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 225; Anon. 1977: 139–40.

⁴³ See Gu 1982, 1: 327.

⁴⁴ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 228. Anon. 1977: 142.

⁴⁵ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 231; Anon. 1977: 145; Gu 1982, 1: 336–7.

⁴⁶ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 230; Anon. 1977: 144.

⁴⁷ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 230.

⁴⁸ See Ngawang Chenrap 1992: 143–4.

⁴⁹ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 227; Anon. 1977: 141–2.

⁵⁰ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 233, 236; Anon. 1977: 148.

⁵¹ See *Yuan shi*, cited in Zhang 1994: 93.

⁵² See Yun 1985: 89.

and Dartsedo (Dajianlu, Kangding), and also functioned as the transition station connecting the southern and northern Sichuan–Tibet trade routes. Under the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors, the Qing court had dispatched punitive military expeditions to Tibet to drive out the Dzungars and to settle internal strife among Tibetan ministers. After the Qing court conquered Litang in 1719, and firmly controlled Gartar and other areas along the southern trade route, Yue Zhongqi recounted the following in his memorial: “Tibetans in the vicinity [of Gartar] all belonged to territories which submitted [to our dynasty] long ago and knew quite well that they should abide by the law.”⁵³ In 1724, when a rebellion reached northern Kham, led by Gushri Khan’s grandson, Lobsang Danjin, the Khoshot prince, Nian Gengyao, the Border Pacification general-in-chief (*fuyuan dajiangjun*), was ordered to suppress it. At the time he had massive forces garrisoned at Gartar.⁵⁴ The next year, Sichuan’s governor ordered the construction of the “earthen town” of Gartar, based on the original plan, and the building of barracks.⁵⁵ With the Nyachu River (Ch. Yalong jiang) as its natural cover for defence, Gartar could reinforce its advantageous position with the three ferry stations on the Nyachu.⁵⁶ In addition, its open terrain suited the garrisoning of massive forces.⁵⁷ Gartar was thus the ideal place to provide a safe haven for the Dalai Lama.

Establishment of the Dalai Lama’s resident monastery in Gartar

Upon receiving the imperial decree in 1729 to build a new resident monastery for the Dalai Lama, the officials and eminent monks in charge of the project set out to select a proper site. According to local legend, a Chinese geomancy master and an eminent Tibetan diviner both identified the place where the monastery was to be built as a treasured site with a good geomantic omen.⁵⁸ Located to the northwest of Gartar town, the site of Gartar Monastery was praised as an auspicious and perfect holy land in *The Biography of the Seventh Dalai Lama* by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé;⁵⁹ locally, it was known as “treasured land of the lotus”.

The topography and location of the land were also conducive to building monasteries: flat in the middle and surrounded by mountains shaped like an eight-petalled lotus, endowed with rich forests. In the centre of the “holy land”, there used to be an “evil” lake;⁶⁰ following the precedent of establishing the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa in the mid-seventh century, the lake here was filled in with earth to create a foundation upon which the main assembly hall of Gartar Monastery could be built.⁶¹

Monastery buildings: Tibetan and Chinese styles

Building a grand monastery in Gartar showed that the Qing court attached great importance to the Dalai Lama’s trip eastwards, and it also displayed the Qing’s strength and intention that the Dalai Lama would stay there permanently.⁶² The Qing court dispatched emissaries, together with officials stationed in Dartsedo, to construct the monastery; they

⁵³ See “Yue Zhongqi zoufu yuchou Taining difang xiujian miaoyu bei dalai lama yizhu zhe” 1994: 431.

⁵⁴ See Sichuan sheng Daofu Xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 1998: 2.

⁵⁵ See Cao 1969: 4.

⁵⁶ See “Yue Zhongqi zoufu yuchou Taining difang xiujian miaoyu bei dalai lama yizhu zhe” 1994: 431.

⁵⁷ See “Yue Zhongqi zunzhi zouchen nizai Chamuduo dengchu shebing yingyuan shi zhe” 1994: 375.

⁵⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010: 9/1: 238; Anon. 1977: 151.

⁵⁹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 238; Anon. 1977: 151.

⁶⁰ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 238; Anon. 1977: 151.

⁶¹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 239; Anon. 1977: 151–2.

⁶² See “Yue Zhongqi zoufu yuchou Taining defang xiujian miaoyu bei dalai lama yizhu zhe” 1994: 431.

took the Drepung Monastery as their model in terms of the design and architectural style.⁶³ The construction of Gartar Monastery started in May 1729 and was completed in early 1730.⁶⁴

With a total area of over 500 *mu* (33 hectares; 82 acres), the monastery's compound consisted of over a thousand rooms.⁶⁵ Its buildings were magnificent and imposing, with architectural styles that combined Tibetan and Chinese traditions. The main assembly hall was a three-storey earth-and-wood building with unique architecture, lying in the west and facing the east.⁶⁶ It was built by Sichuan craftsmen.⁶⁷ The corridors of the assembly hall were also like those of the Jokhang Temple, and its gigantic pillars required 30 people to move them.⁶⁸ While the central roof of the main assembly hall was a Chinese-style gabled roof, the surrounding buildings had Tibetan-style flat roofs. The name of the monastery in Tibetan is “Gartar *jampaling*” (literally meaning “the continent of Maitreya of Gartar”).

In the second month of 1730, the Seventh Dalai Lama left Litang for Gartar on an imperial order. He was guarded by 2,000 soldiers led by the commander-in-chief of Chongqing, Sichuan Province. To ensure the stability of areas close to the Dalai Lama's resident monastery, in 1729 the Qing court carried out its large-scale plan to install indigenous leaders in such areas as Litang, Batang, Drango, Tawu, Nyarong (Xinlong), Kardzé (Ganzi), Dergé, Pelyül (Baiyu), Denkhok (Dengke), Sershül (Shiqu) and other polities in Kham; the Qing conferred titles on 67 such leaders.⁶⁹ This was the second time the Qing court had installed indigenous leaders in Kham. The aforementioned areas, in most cases, contained important mountain passes and their control and oversight by these indigenous leaders was of great importance for Gartar and the entire Kham region. Furthermore, to ensure protection, the Qing court abolished the Hualin *xie* (Hualin regiment) in Chakzamkha (Luding county) and established the Taining *xie* (Taining regiment) in Taining (Gartar), where 1,800 soldiers were stationed. The headquarters of the Taining regiment were located in Gartar, with its left battalion and right battalion garrisoning the surrounding areas; to further protect Gartar and neighbouring areas, three new battalions were established. While Fuhe battalion was established in Dartsedo, Dejing battalion was set up in Zhongdu (Nyachukha) and Ning'an battalion was founded in Tawu.⁷⁰ An additional 100 soldiers were stationed in Choyingbuk (? Ch. Chuiyinbao) to the west of Gartar. Together with nearly 800 soldiers under the command of Litang and Batang “grain officers” (*liangtai*), over 2,500 soldiers protected Kham.⁷¹ This marked the greatest number of soldiers permanently stationed in Kham. The Qing also set up checkpoints at the three ferry stations on the Nyachu River, and undertook strict checks on passengers travelling through the region.⁷² In 1731, the Qing court established a special governor-general of Sichuan in Chengdu to deal with Tibetan affairs and to handle the military provisions needed to destroy the Dzungars.⁷³

⁶³ See “Yue Zhongqi zoubao yu Taining jianzao Dalai Lama yizhu miaoyu donggong riqi ji liaogu yinliang zhe” 1994: 438; Deng and Feng 2015: 166.

⁶⁴ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 238; Anon. 1977: 150.

⁶⁵ See “Yuzhi Huiyuan miao bei” 1998: 573.

⁶⁶ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 239; Anon. 1977: 151.

⁶⁷ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 239.

⁶⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 239; Anon. 1977: 151–2.

⁶⁹ See “Tusi”, in Cao 1969: 289–97.

⁷⁰ See Yun 1985: 86.

⁷¹ See Ganzi Zhouzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 1997, 1: 721–2.

⁷² See “Sha'anxi zongdu zoubao Gada tianbo guanbing fenshe xunfang zhe” 1979: 223–6.

⁷³ See Qing shizong shilu 1985, 110: 469.

The Dalai Lama's residence at Gartar Monastery

From 1730 to 1735, while residing at Gartar Monastery, the Seventh Dalai Lama devoted himself to study and meditation. He received initiations and many teachings – mainly on tantric topics – from his tutor Ngawang Chokden (1677–1751), who later became the fifty-fourth Ganden *tripa*.⁷⁴ During this period, the Seventh Dalai Lama earned a reputation as a great tantric master of the Geluk tradition. His commentary on the mandala and initiation rites of the Guhyasamāja Tantra are the most extensive of his works and have earned a place among the leading masterpieces of Geluk tantric exegesis.⁷⁵ In addition to the Dalai Lama resettling at Gartar, the centre of Tibetan Buddhism also moved there.

The Dalai Lama taught and wrote on behalf of those who gathered to receive his blessing, and a great many people did come to study and pay homage to him. These Buddhist followers, as well as their donations, formed an additional source of support for Gartar Monastery. For instance, indigenous leaders from Litang, Batang, Dartsedo, the five Hör regions in northern Kham, Dergé,⁷⁶ Lingsang (Lincong), Yülshül, Gyeltang, Gyarong and other areas arrived at Gartar Monastery to pay homage to the Seventh Dalai Lama and offered him many valuable presents.⁷⁷ So did Qing officials and monastic and lay officials from Central Tibet.⁷⁸ Further still, monasteries from different Buddhist schools in Kham – including Chamdo Jampaling; Trashi Chödzong Monastery in Drayap; Muli Ganden Shedrup Namgyeling (commonly known as Muli Göichen);⁷⁹ Songtsenling in Gyeltang; Kardzé Monastery; Nyintso and Zigön monasteries of Tawu; Drango Ganden Namgyeling (Shouning si); Gepan Ritro of Drango; Samdrup and Drajör monasteries in Drakhok of Kardzé; Dargyé Monastery of Kardzé; Guwa, Kazhi, Rikhü and Lhagang monasteries of Minyak; Ganden Tupchen Chökhörling in Litang; Den Chökhör Monastery in present-day Jomda county; Nangzang Monastery of Derong and two Bönpo monasteries in Trehör, among others – revered the Dalai Lama and supported him materially.⁸⁰ In particular, the aforementioned Hör *chöjé* Ngawang Püntso Jampa, an old monk who used to be the Fifth Dalai lama's attendant, also travelled to pay homage and present gifts to the Seventh Dalai Lama after the latter was enthroned in the Potala Palace in 1720.⁸¹ He maintained his close relationship with the Seventh Dalai lama during this period, visiting him in 1730 and 1735, and received many presents, including a monastic robe worn by the Dalai Lama himself.⁸²

The Seventh Dalai Lama frequently provided alms and support for monasteries, and expounded exoteric and esoteric Buddhist teachings to monks and laymen. In 1730, 1732 and 1734, the Dalai Lama performed religious rites and distributed alms to all the monasteries near Litang, Gyeltang, Minyak and areas of the five Hör chiefs in northern Kham, and elsewhere.⁸³ The Dalai Lama also wrote a text for Ganden Songtsenling in

⁷⁴ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2015: 96, 100–03, 111–15, 117–19; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 239, 240–1, 252, 257, 260, 266–7, 269–70; Anon. 1977: 152, 153–4, 161, 163–4, 167–8. Jarikpa Lobzang Namgyel 2008: 85; Jampa Tubten 1991: 378.

⁷⁵ See Kapstein 2013, the entry entitled “The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelzang Gyatso”.

⁷⁶ Tsewang Dorjé Rikdzin 1994: 146; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 243, 256, 270; Anon. 1977: 155.

⁷⁷ Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 240–3, 250–1, 254–6, 260, 262, 270–2, 285–6; Anon. 1977: 154, 156, 161, 164, 169, 178.

⁷⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 240, 241, 246–9; Anon. 1977: 157, 159–61.

⁷⁹ See Ngawang Chenrap 1992: 139.

⁸⁰ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 240, 242–3, 250, 253, 254–5, 259, 262, 264, 285–6; Anon. 1977: 154, 156, 165, 178.

⁸¹ Yangchen Nyepé Langtso 1983: 24a.

⁸² Yangchen Nyepé Langtso 1983: 24b; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 241, 246, 285; Anon. 1977: 159, 178.

⁸³ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 249, 257–8, 275.

Gyeltang and Degönpo Temple under the Khangsar chief,⁸⁴ stipulating the number of circumambulations required and recounting the merit of circumambulations; he also composed the monastic rules for Genden Namgyeling of Drango and Shultang Monastery of Nashö (present-day Nachu). In 1730, Basé Lama Gyurmé Zhanpen Lhündrup from Sa-nyen reported to the Dalai Lama that the people of Sa-nyen requested the Dalai Lama to issue an order to stop bandits and robbers from harming the local area. When the Dalai Lama did as requested, the bandit disturbances in the border areas subsided.⁸⁵

The Dalai Lama had always maintained a close relationship with Litang Monastery, particularly after Gawa Sanggyé Chömpel (Dga' ba Sangs rgyas chos 'phel), a lama from Litang, went to study in Central Tibet and became one of his disciples. After the Gawa lama returned to Litang, he reported back to the Dalai Lama about serious problems and inconveniences related to the abbots – who were appointed by the Tibetan government in Lhasa. To begin with, it was tiresome and expensive to arrange for their send-off from Lhasa, and also to welcome them to Litang Monastery after the long journey. In addition, after each successive abbot finished his term and returned to Central Tibet, he would abscond with all the offerings and gifts that he had received. This took away wealth and left no benefit at all to Litang Monastery itself. Therefore, Gawa Sanggyé requested that the Dalai Lama allow Litang Monastery to appoint its own abbots in the future. The Seventh Dalai Lama agreed to this; the monastery itself, from that time onwards – from the appointment of the sixteenth abbot – would be responsible for selecting its own abbots.⁸⁶ Furthermore, during the Dalai Lama's stay at Gartar Monastery, he became close with Sanggyé Rinchen (Sangs rgyas rin chen), the third reincarnated lama of Gewakhar Monastery in Minyak. He issued an official document (*kayik*) expressing his veneration for this reincarnated lama, and also granted him the title of “one of the four *zhap-drungs*” (*zhapdrung* usually referred to a monk who had served another eminent, high-ranking monk).⁸⁷

In addition, the Seventh Dalai Lama's interaction with Tekchok Pema Tendzin (Theg mchog Pad ma bstan 'dzin), the lama of Bané Monastery in Minyak, a branch monastery of the famous Nyingma monastery known as Dorjedrak in Lhokha, also enabled Bané Monastery to maintain a close relationship with Gartar Monastery until 1951. In 1735, when the Seventh Dalai Lama was about to leave for Central Tibet, Tekchok Pema Tendzin was ordained by the Dalai Lama and granted the *dharma* name Kelzang Pema Tendzin (Bskal bzang pad ma bstan 'dzin). At the time, it was acknowledged that the lama also carried the name Tsanyak Sherap (Tsha nyag Shes rab), as he came from Tsanyak, a place under the jurisdiction of Gartar Monastery. The Seventh Dalai Lama thus had all the monks in Gartar Monastery who came from the lower Tsanyak area transferred to Bané Monastery. In return for the Dalai Lama's kindness, Bané Monastery provided an annual gift of four large bricks of tea, wrapped in a bamboo container, and a single *khatak* (ceremonial scarf) to Gartar Monastery until 1951.⁸⁸

Interactions with indigenous leaders in Kham

The Seventh Dalai Lama had always remained close with the Dergé king and his family. The Dergé king's family had a marriage alliance with two generations of the Seventh Dalai Lama's family, and they were treated as close kin. In the summer of 1732, with

⁸⁴ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 255, 272.

⁸⁵ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 243; Anon. 1977: 155.

⁸⁶ See “Dga' ldan thub chen chos 'khor gling gi lo rgyus” 1995, 2: 10.

⁸⁷ See “Lha mo rtse dgon gyi lo rgyus” 1991, 3: 48–9; “Mi nyag 'ge kha dgon pa'i lo rgyus” 1991, 3: 69.

⁸⁸ See “B'aH gnas dgon pa'i lo rgyus” 1991, 3: 22–3.

the approval of Emperor Yongzheng, the Seventh Dalai Lama's sister Tsering (Tshe ring, d. 1751) married Sönam Gönpo (Bsod nams mgon po), the son of the Dergé king, Tenpa Tsering.⁸⁹ Emperor Yongzheng granted 3,500 taels of silver and several hundred bolts of brocade to the newly wedded couple.⁹⁰ Much later, in 1756, the Seventh Dalai Lama arranged for his niece Trashi Wangmo (Bkra shis dbang mo) to marry the Dergé king, Lodrö Gyatso (Blo gros rgya mtsho, 1722–79).⁹¹ Just before his niece left for Dergé for her wedding in the same year, he granted an audience with her, which included a party sent by the Dergé king's family to escort the bride to the groom's home.⁹²

The Seventh Dalai Lama maintained close relationships with the Chakla king and his subordinate headmen, including Saké Gopa (Sa skas 'go pa, Ch. Dayuanba Luoia *guozhuang*);⁹³ these local leaders worshipped, venerated and supported the Dalai Lama. As early as 1712, the Chakla king and his headmen had taken good care of Kelzang Gyatso, jointly dispatching Saké Gopa Yaru Tadrin Tsewang (Ya ru rta mgrin tshe dbang) and others to go to Dergé to pay homage to the Dalai Lama.⁹⁴ In 1731, the Saké Gopa family asked the Dalai Lama to perform the rite of salvation for Akyā Gönpo (A skya Mgon po), the head of the family, who had passed away. As the Dalai Lama was in meditation, he dispatched his tutor, Trichen Ngawang Chokden, to perform the rite.⁹⁵

In 1732 and 1734, during the Tibetan New Year, Saké Gopa and the Chakla king's steward paid homage to the Dalai Lama. Later, the Chakla king and other headmen also offered presents and listened to the Dalai Lama's teachings.⁹⁶ In 1733 and 1734, the Dalai Lama performed the rite of salvation, respectively, for the Chakla king, Gyeltsen Dargyé (Rgyal mtshan dar rgyas, d. 1733), and the mistress of the Saké Gopa family.⁹⁷ In 1734, the Chakla queen, Aga (A ga), together with 40 servants, presented a great many gifts to the Dalai Lama, and he in turn performed the rite of longevity for them.⁹⁸ At the beginning of 1735, when the Chakla queen, the monks from Ngachö Monastery in Dartsedo, the Chakla king's steward, Namgyel Tsering (Rnam rgyal tshe ring) and others offered a great number of presents to the Dalai Lama, he gave them important holy objects, including Buddhist relics.⁹⁹

After the Dalai Lama moved to Gartar Monastery, Emperor Yongzheng was very pleased with his actions. The emperor granted his tutor, Ngawang Chokden, the title of "Achitu Nominhan" (meaning the benevolent dharma king).¹⁰⁰ The emperor also continued to take very good care of the Seventh Dalai Lama. In 1730, when Yongzheng heard that the Dalai Lama was sick, he immediately dispatched two imperial physicians to treat the latter at Gartar Monastery.¹⁰¹ In 1732, to reward their great service and support for the Dalai Lama, the emperor granted the Seventh Dalai Lama's father and the Dergé king, Tenpa Tsering, 3,500 taels of silver each.¹⁰²

⁸⁹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 256; Anon. 1977: 164–5; Tsewang Dorjé Rikdzin 1994: 145.

⁹⁰ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 256; Anon. 1977: 164–5.

⁹¹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 371; Anon. 1977: 162–3; Tsewang Dorjé Rikdzin 1994: 308.

⁹² See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/2: 371; Anon. 1977: 162–3.

⁹³ The headman's name is written as Sa dkar 'go pa in Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 30; Anon. 1977: 24.

⁹⁴ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 30; Anon. 1977: 24.

⁹⁵ See "Lha mo rtse dgon gyi lo rgyus" 1991, 3: 48–9; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2015: 46.

⁹⁶ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 254, 255, 271–2.

⁹⁷ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 264.

⁹⁸ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 275.

⁹⁹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 293–4.

¹⁰⁰ See Thu'ukwan Chöknyi Nyima 1989: 155; Jampa Tubten 1991: 376–9; Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2015: 52. The title is Tibetan phonetic transcription of the Mongolian phrase "Ačitu nom-un qayan".

¹⁰¹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 248; Anon. 1977: 160.

¹⁰² See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 256.

Return to Central Tibet

By 1735, the Dalai Lama had resided at Gartar Monastery for over five years. Since his “disciples and followers had left their homeland for a long time, they all wanted to return”.¹⁰³ At the time, the Panchen Lama was old and ill. Moreover, the Mongol threat to Central Tibet had been largely eliminated. The Dzungar Mongols, having already dispatched envoys to sue for peace, “fixed the boundary and ceased the fighting”. Also, the Qing court – in order to save the annual expenses of supporting the Dalai Lama and his followers – encouraged an end to the Dalai Lama’s long residence in Kham. In the previous summer of 1734 Emperor Yongzheng issued an edict ordering the Seventh Dalai Lama to return to Central Tibet.¹⁰⁴

Towards the end of 1734, Emperor Yongzheng dispatched the imperial tutor Changkya Hutuktu and his own brother Prince Guo, director of the Board of Managing Outer Regions (*lifan yuan*), to travel to Gartar Monastery to arrange the Dalai Lama’s return to Central Tibet. The prince’s 40-day stay at the monastery lasted until the third day of the second month of 1735. During that time, Prince Guo presented the emperor’s edict, conferred gifts and held feasts for the Dalai Lama, his followers and local indigenous leaders.¹⁰⁵ In addition, as a disciple of the Seventh Dalai Lama, Prince Guo performed the rite showing respect. He had listened to the lama’s teachings many times, received initiations from him and they had established a deep friendship.¹⁰⁶

In the fourth month of the same year, the Third Changkya Hutuktu, the deputy commander-in-chief Fu Shou and other officers led 500 soldiers to escort the Dalai Lama back to Central Tibet. Along the way, taking the opportunity to reinforce their relationship with the Seventh Dalai Lama, indigenous leaders and lamas – as previously – welcomed and venerated the Seventh Dalai Lama and his entourage. In particular, in the fifth month, when the party reached Drayap and Chamdo, they were received by the aforementioned Fourth Drayap Chetsang Lobzang Namgyel¹⁰⁷ and the Fourth Zhiwalha *rinpoché* Pakpa Gelek Gyeltsen (Zhi ba lha rin po che ’Phags pa dge legs rgyal mtshan, 1720–1799) of Chamdo Jampaling.¹⁰⁸ The party arrived in Lhasa during the leap seventh month, finally ending the Seventh Dalai Lama’s five-year residence in Gartar.

Gartar Monastery in Kham: impact and developments

After the Dalai Lama left for Central Tibet in 1735, the monastery no longer enjoyed the same degree of glory and prosperity. Immediately after his departure, the Taining (Gartar) regiment was abolished, and its left and right battalions were transferred to the garrison at Hualinping in Chakzamkha. The two new battalions, known as Dejing and Ning’an, were also abolished and reorganized. Because Gartar Monastery was established by imperial order, and because some monks still resided there, Qing authorities decided to establish Gartar *xun* (company), and Fuhe battalion in Dartsedo dispatched only one squad leader (*bazong*) to lead 30 soldiers to garrison the site.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, by imperial order, the Seventh Dalai Lama appointed Pabongkha Hutuktu Lobzang Gelek (Pha bong kha ho thog thu/hu thug thu Blo bzang Dge legs) to be the abbot (*khenpo*) of Gartar Monastery. In addition, he established a new monastic college (*dratsang*)

¹⁰³ See Wei, 27, cited in Zhang 1994: 90–9.

¹⁰⁴ See Gu 1982, 1: 361; Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 276, 284; Anon. 1977: 170–1, 177.

¹⁰⁵ See Yun 1985: 86–9.

¹⁰⁶ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 278, 281, 283–5.

¹⁰⁷ See Rinchen n.d., 76a–82b; Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 303–05; Anon. 1977: 187.

¹⁰⁸ See Changkya Rölpe Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 305–07; Anon. 1977: 187, 88.

¹⁰⁹ See Gu 1982, 1: 363.

at Gartar, with over 70 monks.¹¹⁰ These monks would be supported by money allocated from the national treasury. Twenty of them would be responsible for taking care of the abbot, and the other 50 were selected to be members of the new monastic college. Originally from the neighbouring areas, these monks had studied and received *kachu* or *rapjampa* degrees from the Three Great Monasteries in Lhasa (Sera, Ganden, Drepung).¹¹¹ Monks originally in Gartar Monastery were supported with money allocated by the lieutenant-governor (Ch. *buzhengshi*) of Sichuan each year. In addition, per imperial order, fifty households under the Chakla king continued to provide corvée labour for the monks who remained in the monastery.¹¹² From then until 1920, the Tibetan government extended the practice of dispatching a high monk of Drepung Monastery to serve as the abbot of Gartar Monastery. This only ended when the abbot was accused of running off with monastic money; he did so out of fear, and to protect his interests, after the boundary demarcation between Kham and Central Tibet. After this, the monks of Gartar Monastery began to choose the abbot from among their own community, thereby breaking ties with Drepung Monastery.¹¹³

Gartar Monastery: interference in local affairs

Various government and religious entities accused successive abbots and monks of Gartar Monastery of attempting to influence, interfere in and control local affairs in Gartar and other areas in Kham. In 1749, for instance, the governor-general of Sichuan, Celeng (d. 1756), and others submitted a memorial to report an incident. Pelgön (Dpal mgon), the indigenous leader of Nyarong (Ch. Zhandui), had seen that the chieftain of Chuchen (Jinchuan) Lopön (Slob dpon, d. 1760) submitted to the Qing and was promptly pardoned by Emperor Qianlong. Pelgön immediately dispatched his subordinates to Gartar Monastery to request that the *darhan khenpo*¹¹⁴ plead on his behalf for the grace and similar pardon of the emperor. Soon Pelgön himself entreated the abbot, and even sent his son to become a monk at Gartar.¹¹⁵

We can see from this affair that the abbot of Gartar Monastery enjoyed exalted status in the eyes of local leaders and headmen in Kham; they believed he could make requests to the Qing emperor on their behalf. Qing provincial magnates, including the governor-general of Sichuan, held that the abbots of Gartar Monastery and others “had relied on the power and authority of Central Tibet, and were self-conceited...”.¹¹⁶ In 1750, they

...gradually became violent, and forcibly seized land of the indigenous leaders. They requested to give [Gartar monastery] 126 households in the three places, i.e. Upper and Lower Gyadro (? Ch. Jiazuo) and Gartar, as well as three indigenous centurions (Gyapön, Ch. *baihu*). These households were responsible for corvée labour, such as sweeping the floors, transporting things, providing firewood and supplying water for the monastery. The grain taxes paid by local people would be changed and

¹¹⁰ See “Tā la’i bla ma sku phreng bdun pas gong ma’i bka’ phebs pa bzhin Lha sar log rjes tha’i ning dgon par zhabs brtan zhu mi ’jog dgos skor gong mar phul ba’i snyan zhu” 1997: 486.

¹¹¹ See Changkya Rölpé Dorjé 2010, 9/1: 283; “Tā la’i bla ma sku phreng bdun pas gong ma’i bka’ phebs pa bzhin Lha sar log rjes tha’i ning dgon par zhabs brtan zhu mi ’jog dgos skor gong mar phul ba’i snyan zhu” 1997, 486–7.

¹¹² See “Tā la’i bla ma sku phreng bdun pas gong ma’i bka’ phebs pa bzhin Lha sar log rjes tha’i ning dgon par zhabs brtan zhu mi ’jog dgos skor gong mar phul ba’i snyan zhu” 1997: 487.

¹¹³ See Sichuan sheng Daofu xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 1998: 503.

¹¹⁴ *Darhan khenpo* is the abbot with the title of *darhan*.

¹¹⁵ See Gu 1982, 3: 1097–8.

¹¹⁶ See “Zi Sichuan zongdu chengsong fagei Huiyuan si xianpai yinzhao you” 1961: 19.

transferred to the fund used to renovate the monastery, and the local people in these places would still provide corvée labour, together with the subjects under the Chakla king.¹¹⁷

This written document was recorded and officially presented by Sichuan governor-general Celeng and the provincial commander-in-chief Yue Zhongqi. In 1755, “this monastery (Gartar) again fought for the control of subjects originally under the jurisdiction of the Chakla king, and the sub-prefect of Dartsedo made the judgement to give 188 households to the monastery”.¹¹⁸ The above quotations show that Gartar Monastery had become increasingly powerful and that it had brought many households – formerly controlled by the Chakla king – under its own jurisdiction. All of Gartar’s actions were officially recognized by the Chinese authorities. Yet the influence of the abbot and monks of Gartar Monastery continued to grow in the region. Their reach and power had become greater as they brought more subjects under their jurisdiction, and they steadily controlled and interfered with local affairs.

When the second reincarnated lama Künzang Chödrup Gyatso (Kun bzang chos ’grub rgya mtsho), also known as Jikmé Chochök Gyatso (’Jigs med chos mchog rgya mtsho), became abbot of the present-day Nyingma monastery of Gunu, Gartar Monastery’s abbot – dispatched by Central Tibet – issued an order forbidding any expansion or renovation of Gunu Monastery; he even imprisoned the monks under Künzang Chödrup Gyatso. Records of the monastery document show that at this moment everybody witnessed the lama miraculously transform himself into a tiger. Quickly, the abbot of Gartar ordered the monks to be released, and he also agreed to allow them to renovate and expand the monastery. He also permitted the monastery to recruit monks from the Nyangtsa tribe under its jurisdiction.¹¹⁹ This also reflects the power enjoyed by Gartar Monastery and its abbot.

After Emperor Qianlong pacified Chuchen and Tsenlha, he successfully dispersed the many Bonpo monks of the region. These monks and the indigenous leaders of Chuchen and Tsenlha had united together to resist the Qing troops; and therefore “to civilize and enlighten” the local people, Emperor Qianlong issued an edict to establish Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the area.¹²⁰ In 1776, A Gui (1717–97), the Qing general suppressing the Tsenlha–Chuchen rebellion, sent a memorial reporting that the abbot of Gartar Monastery, Ngawang Dargyé (Ngag dbang dar rgyas), together with two of his disciples, had arrived to recite Buddhist scriptures in the military camps. The Qing general held that the abbot and his entourage had offered to move their monks to Chuchen and Tselha in an effort to propagate the Geluk teachings. The Qing court maintained that if the monks of Gartar Monastery were approved to reside in Chuchen and Tsenlha, these two places would gradually fall under the jurisdiction of the Dalai Lama. It “feared that the regions of Chuchen and Tsenlha would eventually become united; such a unification might cause disturbances in future”.¹²¹

When the Qing authorities refused the request regarding the monks of Gartar Monastery, they cited the following reasons: the local monks had followed the leaders of Chuchen and Tsenlha to rise up against Qing rule; all these local monasteries failed to be members of “The Pure Land”; after the pacification of Chuchen and Tsenlha, all liveable rooms in the abandoned monasteries had been allocated to officers and soldiers, and

¹¹⁷ See “Zi Sichuan zongdu chengsong fagei Huiyuan si xianpai yinzhao you” 1961: 19.

¹¹⁸ See “Zi Sichuan zongdu chengsong fagei Huiyuan si xianpai yinzhao you” 1961: 19.

¹¹⁹ See “Sku nub dgon gyi lo rgyus” 1991, 2: 587.

¹²⁰ See Gu 1982, 6: 2806–07.

¹²¹ See Gu 1982, 5: 2474.

thus it proved inappropriate for monks to reside in these monasteries; and as the indigenous leaders had all been killed because of their support for the rebels, the only survivors were poor locals who lacked the means to offer alms and support to the monks of these monasteries.¹²²

There were two resident *tulkus* in Gartar Monastery. One of them, known as Kuchar (Sku bcar) *rinpoché*, belonged to a reincarnation lineage that began with Lobzang Rapgyé (Blo bzang rab rgyas), a close attendant of the Eleventh Dalai Lama. He was granted the title “Kuchar Khenpo” which usually refers to the attendant who looks after the affairs and daily life of a Dalai Lama; he enjoyed a status similar to that of *khenpo*.

The other *tulku* was referred to as Kyapjé (Skyabs rje) *rinpoché*. The first Kyapjé – Lobzang Kelzang Yönten (Blo bzang bskal bzang yon tan) – was deemed to be an emanation of the “body, speech and mind” of the Eleventh Dalai Lama.¹²³ The second Kyapjé *rinpoché*, Kelzang Yönten (Bskal bzang yon tan), a learned scholar, concurrently the resident *tulku* for Kyilek Monastery of Minyak and Kazhicha Monastery of Minyak (Ch. Muya Gao'er'qiao si), was also recognized as the reincarnation of Gyatso Samten (Rgya mtsho bsam gtan), once the guru of Gönpö Namgyel (Mgon po rnam rgyal, famous chieftain and warrior, 1799–1865). In addition, the Gyarong people considered him to be the reincarnation of Geshé Sherap (Dge bshes Shes rab) of Tronang (Ch. Zhonglu) in Rongdrak (Ch. Danba), thereby greatly strengthening the influence of Gartar Monastery in the local region and its relationship with neighbouring monasteries.¹²⁴

Renovations of Gartar Monastery

Frequent earthquakes in the region hastened the decline of Gartar Monastery, but renovations also showed the degree of importance the Qing court had attached to the monastery. An earthquake in 1785 caused most of the halls and monks' living quarters to collapse. Since the Dalai Lama was no longer in residence, the Qing authorities held it should not be rebuilt to its earlier scale. Thus, at the time of rebuilding, the Main Assembly Hall was changed into a four-storey building. Altogether, over 300 rooms of the main assembly hall as well as the first and second gates were rebuilt as before, and rooms for monks were reduced to 200, rather than the original number of 263.¹²⁵

Another earthquake in 1793 caused most of the halls and walls in the monastery to collapse. Not long after it was renovated for the second time, a more serious earthquake in 1811 caused further great damage to the monastery: the halls, the inscription courtyards, the monks' living quarters and the walls were all destroyed. This inspired the governor-general of Sichuan Province, to send a memorial to Emperor Jiaqing, requesting that only the pavilion of inscriptions made by imperial order and three shrine halls worshipping the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) be rebuilt. He also suggested reducing the number of resident monks to only two; the rest of the monks were to be dispatched to practise in various monasteries nearby.¹²⁶ But Demo Hutuktu Lobzang Tubten Jikmé Gyatso (De mo ho thog thu/hu thug thu Blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho), the regent at the time (r. 1811–19), requested the restoration of the monastery to follow past precedents. He argued that Gartar Monastery had been especially built as a residence for the Dalai Lama, and it had been granted to the latter upon his return to Central Tibet. Thus, the two parties debated for four years whether or not to restore the

¹²² See Gu 1982, 6: 2805–10.

¹²³ See “Mgar thar byams pa gling gi lo rgyus” 1991, 2: 626–31.

¹²⁴ See Drölma Chömtso 2012: 24–5.

¹²⁵ See Gu 1982, 6: 3046–47.

¹²⁶ See Sangji Bamu and Kun Shan 2002: 375.

monastery. Finally, in 1814, Emperor Jiaqing issued an edict that allowed Gartar Monastery to be restored to its past glory, though the monastery itself was required to pay for the restoration, which it did after collecting funds widely.

Unfortunately, an even worse earthquake occurred in 1893. Nearly all the buildings in the monastery were destroyed once again. The second Kyapjé *rinpoché*, Kelzang Yönten, was actively involved in the post-earthquake disaster relief and reconstruction. The Tibetan commissioner stationed in Nyarong (Nyarong *chichap*) and the officials of Dartsedo sub-prefecture reported Gartar Monastery's situation to the Tibetan government and the Qing court respectively. The Thirteenth Dalai Lama himself donated 1,000 taels of silver; "Shö Lekhung" (the office in charge of lay affairs of the Tibetan government and thus the Potala Palace's financial affairs as well as the political and legal affairs of Lhasa's suburbs) allocated 500 taels of silver; and Loseling *dratsang* of Drepung Monastery donated 2,000 taels of silver to Gartar Monastery. In addition, officials of Dartsedo sub-prefecture distributed a great amount of post-earthquake relief money and goods allocated from the national treasury.¹²⁷

Continuing influence of Gartar Monastery

The "Gartar Incident", which occurred in 1905, also attests to the influence of the monastery in the local region. In the past, Han Chinese gold miners would band together to travel to the region to engage in gold mining. They would secretly hand over taxes to the monastery. In 1904, Han Chinese merchants, via the Sichuan Bureau of Mines, petitioned Xi Liang (1853–1917), the governor-general of Sichuan, to order the sub-prefect, Liu Tingshu, to allow them to exploit the gold mines in the region. Both Xi Liang and the assistant *amban* Feng Quan (d.1905) ordered Liu to recruit miners and established a gold mine at Gartar.

Once the gold mine began operations in 1905, local Qing officials seized the right to tax the miners in the region, thus interrupting the practice of handing in taxes to Gartar Monastery in secret. The monks of Gartar deeply resented this intrusion by the Qing officials. Supported by the Tibetan commissioner in Nyarong, the abbot of Gartar Monastery claimed that mining gold had destroyed the geomantic balance in the region and offended the deities. This would lead to disasters falling on the common people.

The monks tried to expel the miners and this led to violent clashes, resulting in the deaths of several miners.¹²⁸ When Major Lu Mingyang (d.1905) led his company into the area to try to control the situation, he and his soldiers were ambushed and killed by monks from Gartar Monastery. To support the Gartar monks, the Tibetan Commissioner in Nyarong dispatched a detachment of cavalry to protest against such actions in Tawu. During the turmoil, the gold mine was destroyed, the temple enshrining and worshipping Guan Yu, the god of war, was ravaged and havoc was wreaked on three hundred houses owned by common people. Local people were robbed of their possessions and money. Han Chinese in the region were particularly targeted and suffered greatly.

In response, Xi Liang immediately dispatched the provincial commander-in-chief, Ma Weiqi (1846–1910), to embark on a punitive expedition. With the support of the Chakla king, he soon put down the rebellion and ordered Gartar Monastery to pay compensation for all the losses caused during the incident.¹²⁹ The monastery, however, chose not to pay the common people right away. In 1908, Zhao Erfeng (1845–1911), commissioner in charge of Sichuan and Yunnan Borderlands Affairs, issued a proclamation ordering the monks of

¹²⁷ See Drölma Chömtso 2012: 83.

¹²⁸ See Zha 1990, 1: 201–05.

¹²⁹ See Zha 1990, 1: 201–05.

Gartar Monastery to compensate the common people who had suffered such great losses. However, only in 1909 did the monastery finally return the goods they had seized and compensate the local people.

During the Republican period (1912–1949), Gartar Monastery continued to be a cultural centre in northern Kham and a holy land for Tibetan Buddhist followers. Since the Seventh Dalai Lama had stayed at Gartar Monastery for a period of time, and the Eleventh Dalai Lama had been born nearby, local people continued to revere the monastery. In 1928, 200 monks resided at Gartar Monastery, a sizeable population that made it the second largest monastery in Tawu.¹³⁰ Furthermore, in the 1940s the abbot of Gartar Monastery, Kelzang Dorjé (Bskal bzang rdo rje, 1909–?), together with other reincarnated lamas and indigenous leaders, were elected councillors of the Provisional Consultation Bureau of Xikang Province (*Xikang linshi canyihui*). In 1947, these men were further elected as members of the Xikang People's Congress.¹³¹ These actions fully reflected the importance of the monastery.

During the “democratic reform” carried out in Gartar in 1956, Gartar Monastery was among the few monasteries selected to be kept intact; however, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the monastery ceased to function as a religious institution, and scriptures and statues of the Buddha were destroyed. In 1982, Gartar Monastery was designated as a key monastery to be opened to the public. All its seized properties were returned, and the Chinese government allocated a special fund in the amount of 230,000 yuan to renovate the monastery.¹³² At present, Gartar Monastery is home to over 200 monks and continues to function as a major monastery in Kham.

Conclusion

As the resident monastery of the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gartar Monastery was also the only monastery in Tibetan regions established by an imperial order and with special funds allocated by the Qing emperor. The Eleventh Dalai Lama's birthplace was near the monastery. Recognition of its fame and prestige was not limited to Kham and other Tibetan areas in northwestern Sichuan. It also spread far and wide in Central Tibet and other Tibetan regions. Qing authorities had always attached great importance to the monastery and had always supported it by renovating it repeatedly after it was damaged in frequent earthquakes. The Qing did this because, in addition to the monastery's prestigious religious status, Gartar Monastery served the important function of “civilizing” and “enlightening” the neighbouring regions, which were far away from the political centre.

One reason Emperor Yongzheng sent the Seventh Dalai Lama into exile in Kham was to force out the Dalai Lama's father – Sönam Dargyé – who had been deeply entangled in the internal struggles of Central Tibet; his removal would pave the way for Polhané to rule Central Tibet. Another factor was the threat posed by Mongols, especially Dzungar Mongols, to the stability of Central Tibet and even to Qing rule. On the surface, sending the Dalai Lama into exile was for the sake of the lama's safety. In reality, doing so provided a way to ensure the stability of the frontier by harnessing the capacity of Tibetan Buddhism to influence and pacify the widely dispersed Mongol and Tibetan political and military forces.

Gartar's strategic location, far away from Central Tibet, and the fact that it was an important town firmly under Qing control, made it an ideal choice to establish a new resident monastery for the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama's “triangle journey” – the trips from

¹³⁰ See “Xikang tequ zhengwu weiyuanhui huibao geshu lama simiao diaochabiao” 1990, 324–30.

¹³¹ See Wang 2006: 78–84.

¹³² Ganzi Zhouzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui 1997, 1: 363.

his birthplace of Litang to Dergé, from Dergé to Kokonor, from Kokonor to Central Tibet, from Central Tibet to Kham and back to Central Tibet – expanded the scope of his religious activities. Such travels enabled the Dalai Lama to be in contact with a wide range of Mongol and Tibetan monks as well as lay followers, and greatly raised his religious prestige among these groups. Furthermore, the Seventh Dalai Lama's interactions with various indigenous leaders, local monasteries, monks and lay people strengthened his relations with them and increased the influence of the Geluk school in Kham. Gartar Monastery became not only an important centre of the Geluk school, but also played a dominant role in inspiring indigenous leaders to support the Dalai Lama.

The Seventh Dalai Lama's residence in Gartar enabled the Qing court to move the military centre of gravity from Hualinping in Chakzamkha to Gartar. In addition, measures for protecting the Dalai Lama, such as stationing troops and inspecting mountain passes and checkpoints, objectively strengthened the Qing court's control of Kham. Furthermore, the establishment of a special governor-general for Sichuan in 1731 to deal with Tibetan affairs showed, in the eyes of the Qing court, the vital supporting position of Sichuan, and more specifically of Kham, in administering Central Tibet. These developments affirmed present and later strategies of “having to stabilize Kham first so as to administer Central Tibet” and of “consolidating Sichuan to protect Central Tibet”.¹³³

After the Dalai Lama left for Tibet in 1735, Gartar Monastery continued to serve as a cultural centre of northern Kham and remained a holy place in the eyes of Tibetan Buddhist followers. Since the successive abbots of Gartar Monastery were dispatched by Drepung Monastery until 1920, the influence of these abbots and their monks grew steadily over time, and the subjects under the jurisdiction of the monastery increased. The monastery was thus able to influence, interfere and control the local affairs of Gartar and other regions in Kham. In particular, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gartar Monastery, together with the Tibetan commissioner in Nyarong, was able to assist the Tibetan government's efforts to extend its sphere of influence in Kham. We see that both the Qing court and the Lhasa government capitalized on the special situation of Gartar Monastery.

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¹³³ See Wang and Zhu 2019.

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