

BONPO TANTRICS IN KOKONOR AREA

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The Kokonor area is a region where the Bon religion has flourished very strongly. Apart from Reb-gong¹, which is the chief centre of the Bon religion in the area, there are also sTong-che² and Ser-gya³ in Khri-ka⁴, Se-bza⁵ in 'Ba, 'Brog-ru'i⁶ sTong-skor⁷ in Mu-ge-Thang⁸, Shar-steng⁹, To-shes¹⁰ in Ba-yan, Bon-tshang-ma¹¹ in rDo-sbis, Dung-dkar¹² in Chab-cha¹³, Che-rji'i sTong-skor in Che-rji¹⁴ pasture west of Chab-cha, and Bon-brgya¹⁵ in the pasture north of Kokonor. There are many traces of the early Bon religion to be found everywhere in Amdo, even in predominantly Buddhist areas. Bon was also involved in the history of the later spread of Buddhism in the 10th century.

¹ Reb-gong is the original Tibetan name of the place, whose official name is Tongren in Chinese. It is a county of rMa-lho (Huang nan in Chinese) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

² sTong-che is the original name of a long valley in Chu-nub (He xi in Chinese) Xiang (an administrative region below county) of Khri-ka (Gui de in Chinese) county of MTsho-lho (Hai nan) Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³ Ser-gya is the name of a village in Shar-lung (Dong gou in Chinese) Xiang of Khri-ka County of mTsho-lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁴ Khri-ka is the original name of the county (Gui de) in MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁵ Se bza' is the name of a village in 'Ba'-chu (Ba shui) Xiang of Tong de County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁶ 'Brog-ru means nomadic tribe, and refers to the nomadic tribes radiating from the sTong-che valley, as compared to farming tribes in the sTong-che valley.

⁷ sTong-skor is a large tribe in the Kokonor area to which the author belongs. There are several sTong-skor in the area such as sTong-skor in the sTong-che valley, the 'Brog-ru'i sTong-skor, Che-rje'i sTong-skor, etc.

⁸ Mu-ge-thang is a plain in 'Go-mang Xiang of Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

⁹ Shar-steng is the name of a village in gSer-gzhung (Jin yuan) Xiang of Ba-yan (Hua long) County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁰ To-shes is the name of a village in gSer-gzhung Xiang of Ba-yan County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹¹ Bon-tshang-ma is the name of a village of rDo-sbis, the name of a place in Xun hua Sala Autonomous County of Hai dong Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹² Dung-dkar is the name of a Bonpo monastery in Ur-rti Xiang, Gong he County of MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹³ The capital of MTsho-lho prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁴ Che-rji is the name of a pasture and a Xiang of Gong he County of MTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

¹⁵ Bon-brgya is the name of a large nomadic tribe which is divided into three counties, rTse-khog County of rMa-lho Prefecture, and Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture, and Tong de of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province. It is also a small village in Chu-khog Xiang of Reb-gong, which is mentioned in the present paper.

When we think of religious professionals in Tibet, we usually think only of monks in monasteries. But in the Kokonor area in Amdo, there is another kind of professional group of Bonpo Tantra who in the local tradition are called dPon¹⁶ as individuals and Bon-mang¹⁷ as a group. They are lay people in daily life but are simultaneously also Tantrics in their temples called gSas-khang. They have families, and do the normal work of farmers or nomads. They gather in the gSas-khang for regular religious activities on some special days. Besides their own religious activities, they visit Bonpo families to perform rituals for driving away evil spirits tormenting and hurting people, especially when the spiritual life of the patient is very weak and vulnerable. They have gathering places for their religious activities called gSas-khang, and there is a complete system for their regular gatherings of tantric rituals as well.

In the Bonpo sources, I have not been able to find any record describing the regular activity of Bon-mang in history as it occurs in the Kokonor area nowadays, but the activity of individual Bonpo Tantrics existed in history and continues still. There are two types of rituals they do, Yi-dam rituals for the benefit of their own enlightenment, and rituals that serve the goals of other people. From the beginning of the later spread of the Bon religion, especially in the time of gShen-chen klu-dga' (996-1035), many students gathered around him and his disciples and they studied and practiced Bonpo Tantra together, so that there must have been some group activities. This method of learning in groups became the main way of transmitting Bonpo teachings over the centuries, but it is difficult to relate it to the regular activities of Bon-mang in the Kokonor area without any clear historical statements. Some Bonpo sources mention the lives of many famous Bonpo masters, for example Zhu-ye legs-po, an important student of gShen-chen klu-dga', called in the Bonpo historical sources dBangldan phur-thogs 'dzin-pa¹⁸. He was one of the four great scholars (mKhas-bzhi)¹⁹ and a lay person. The majority of Bonpo masters and scholars were Zhu-ye legs-po were lay people up until the time of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (1356-1415). After that, Bonpo monks and monastic Bonpo teachings increasingly replaced lay Tantrics and their purely tantric teachings in Tibet, although these latter have remained very active. Anyway, although there are not many written sources describing the activities of lay Tantrics, apart from a few famous masters, they have been quite active for centuries now. For example, we

¹⁶ In the pronunciation of the Amdo dialect, dPon is pronounced as Hon.

¹⁷ In the pronunciation of the Amdo dialect, Bon is pronounced as Won, so Bon-mang is called Won mang.

¹⁸ ZTLR, p. 254.

¹⁹ Bru rGyal-ba g.yung-drung, Zhu-Ye legs-po, sPa-ston dPal-mchog and rMeu dPal-chen.

may mention the dPon in the Kokonor area, the dBal²⁰ in dGe-bshes-Khog of rGyal-rong, and the gShen-po²¹ in Khro-skyabs. The first are the main topic of this paper; the second are lay Tantrics in dGe-bshes-khog in rGyal-rong called dBal, or A-khu-dBal. Their dress is called dBal-chas, the flags on their hats are called dBal-dar. There are always some dBal in every village active as family priests and every dBal has some families as permanent clients. The families that patronize a dBal usually offer food to their dBal in as great quantity and as often as they can, especially on certain traditional festivals, such as the new year. A dBal has to visit each client family to conduct ceremonies when the family requires, even if no offering is made. They usually conduct sTag-la, dBal-gsas, Ge-khod or rNam-'joms rituals for families. Some rituals are done regularly and some only on occasion. A dBal lineage is called dBal-brgyud; the title is hereditary. Not every member of a dBal lineage family can be a dBal and inherit the tradition. A dBal and his family enjoy respect from the whole Bonpo community. Although there are some monks in the villages they remain at peace with the dBal, because the responsibilities of a dBal and a monk are very clear and different, in that dBal perform rituals for all the problems of one's present life, such as disease and disaster, etc, while monks perform rituals only for the next life, such as the death ritual or giving empowerment (dBang-bskur-ba). The third group are the gShen-po. In Khro-skyabs in rGyal-rong, the situation is quite different. The king of Khro-skyabs used to appoint nine gShen-po as lay Tantrics, mainly for the royal family. However they also performed rituals for ordinary people, especially when a family of ordinary people conducted a group ritual. There has to be at least one gShen-po among the Tantrics, and the gShen-po has to be the head-guide of the ritual. There were also some Mo-pa (fortunetellers) appointed by the Khro-skyabs King. They were official Mo-pa for the royal family but also served ordinary people in Khro-skyabs. Both gShen-po and Mo-pa had a good position in their society, this tradition is still alive. No one appoints people to be gShen-po or Mo-pa nowadays, but their descendants may inherit the tradition. Anyway, there are many Bonpo Tantrics in the Tibetan cultural area and they continue to be active, but I have found that only in the Kokonor area does there exist a complete system of regular ritual activities for the wider group of Bonpo Tantrics.

gSas-khang

In the history of the Bon religion, there have been three kinds of places used for Bonpo religious gatherings, 'Dus-gnas, gSas-mkhar

²⁰ dBal is the name of individual Tantrics in dGe-bshes-khog, which is a valley of Rong-brag (Dan pa) County of dKar-mdzes (Gan zi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

²¹ gShen-po is the name of individual Tantrics in Khro-skyabs (Jin chuan) county of Rnga pa (A ba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

and gSas-khang. According to Tibetan sources, King Mu-khri bTsan-po, invited one hundred and eight Bonpo from Zhang-zhung to Tibet to spread the Bon religion. They built thirty-seven 'Du-gnas, religious centers, in Tibet. Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan compiled important records about and made a long list of all of 'Du-gnas and the masters who were in charge of the centers²². Ever since King gNya'-khri btsan-po, the first King of Tibet, almost every King had a sKu-gshen, and built a center for religious gatherings. The commentary of *Yang-rtse* and some older texts called the centers gSas-mkhar²³, but in some later texts²⁴ like *Legs- bshad-mdzod* they are called gSas-khang²⁵, the later texts obviously following DGSG. We do not know exactly how those centers were built, but perhaps, we can judge the architectural forms from the meaning of 'mkhar' (castle, fortress) and 'khang' (hall) in Tibetan language, gSas means deity in the Zhang-zhung language. Although both gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have existed in the Tibetan cultural area until now, in the sources mentioned above, it is often difficult to distinguish them. It seems that there was no great difference between gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang at the King time. But, today, gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have become two different things in the Tibetan cultural area. Usually, "gSas-mkhar is a wooden storehouse or small house made of stone or of mud on top of which the horns of a stag or a wooden spear or a wooden sword or some branches of the auspicious trees like juniper are placed; on these are hung some threads of wools of different colors and they are adorned with a rLung-rta; inside the gSas-mkhar there are various kinds of Bum-gter, as in the case of Spo-se. Inside the big gSas-mkhar there is the receptacle of the god, Lha-yi rten-mkhar; other varieties; pho'i-lhai dgra-lhai Yul- lha'i rten-mkhar"²⁶. The kind of gSas-mkhar just mentioned is to be found in Khams. A similar gSas-mkhar exists in Rgyal-rong, consisting of four small wooden storehouses on top of a house, with a small bSang-khang in the center of the gSas-mkhar. Only the dBal, the Bonpo Tantrics in Rgyal-rong, perform rituals on top of the house for families. Furthermore, when people construct La-btsas, they always make a gSas-mkhar in which to keep the deity. This ritual is found all over Tibet. In a word, gSas- mkhar have existed and exist now in many forms, but they were and still are for keeping some kinds of deities to whom offerings are made. One difference between the gSas-mkhar of the past and those of today, is that the present ones are kept in family houses, and in La-btsas in the mountains, while in the past, they had to be in a public place, because it was for people to

²² LSRT, p. 167.

²³ BLNP, p. 79.

²⁴ DGSG, p. 158.

²⁵ LSRT, pp. 130-132.

²⁶ Tibetan Folk Songs from Gyantse and Western Tibet, the text by Prof. Namkhai Norbu, summaries and notes by G. Tucci, *Artibus Asiae*, Ascono, Switzerland, 1966, p. 188.

make offerings. Gradually gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang have been changing their form and content. Particularly, since the spread of Buddhism and the Bonpo monastic system in Tibet, gSas-mkhar have become much less common than before, and are left only in some family homes, and at La-btsas; gSas-khang seem always to have been religious centers for Tantrics of the Bon religion, but they are numerically much fewer than before, too. 'Du-gnas means only a place for a religious gathering, without implying whether there is or not any other kind of center. Gsas-mkhar or gSas-khang could obviously be a kind of center in which people may gather for religious activities, so there could not have been a big difference between gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang in the past, at least in a literal sense. gSas-mkhar and gSas-khang are frequently confused even in some historical records.

Although the records concerning gSas-mkhar or gSas-khang mentioned above refer only to Central Tibet, from Brag-dgon-pa's great work²⁷, we can be certain that this kind of center was built in other places of Amdo as well as the Kokonor area. Many of them were destroyed by Buddhists or converted to Buddhist uses in the past. With a Japanese project on Bonpo monasteries, I visited every Bonpo monastery and gSas-khang in the Kokonor area in 1996. The Kokonor area perhaps the only place where the old gSas-khang remain and are still in use for religious activities. There are fifteen gSas-khang, mostly confined to Reb-gong, in addition to some other gSas-khang in surrounding places such as Ba-yan, gCan-tsha²⁸, Khri-ka, Chab-cha, 'Go-mang²⁹ and rTse-khog³⁰. Reliable Bonpo texts tell us that there were no monks in the Bon religion, strictly speaking, while the Kings were building the gSas-khang. Bonpo monasteries appeared very much later. The difference between a gSas-khang and a monastery is that the holders of a gSas-khang are lay Tantrics, and of a monastery, of course, monks. In a monastery, they learn both Sutra, Tantra, and rDzogs-chen, but in a gSas-khang, they learn and practice only Tantra and rDzogs-chen. It seems that the gSas-khang and its religious function preserve a tradition from the time of the Kings, while the monastery and its system are much newer in Tibetan history. They have affected Tibetan society, especially the Bonpo community, as two religious systems in the Bonpo tradition until now. According to oral history³¹, Phrom gSer-thog lce-'byams, a Bonpo scholar among the six great world scholars ('Dzam-gling rgyan-drug), who came from the Kokonor area, spread the Bon religion in that area; "At the place in Phrom of Ge-sar, there is Khri-gshog rgyal-mo (Ge-sar Phrom-khyi

²⁷ DMCB, p. 661.

²⁸ gCan-tsha (Jan zha) is a county belonging to rMa-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

²⁹ 'Go-mang is the name of a Xiang of Gui nan County of mTsho-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³⁰ rTse-khog (ze ku), a County of Rma lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³¹ BGLG, p. 5.

yul-gru-na, khri-gshog rgyal-mo'i mtsho-mo-yod")³². During the time of Khri-srong lde-btsan, Dran-pa Nam-mkha' was in Reb-gong and built a huge monastery in A-ba ngos-bzang of Reb-gong³³). During the time of King (Dar-ma) U-dum-btsan, because of religious persecution, three brothers of Grub-thob, all Saints, escaped from Central Tibet to take refuge in Reb-gong. The first place where they stayed is called Chad-lung-thang, which means "the place of exhaustion", is in front of Bon-brgya monastery³⁴. Then, these three brothers took up their residence in three villages in Reb-gong, 'Khor-lo bsgyur-rgyal in Spyrting village, Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal in Ngo-mo village, and Khyung-dkar tshang-ba in Khyung-bo village. They spread the Bon religion not only in Reb-gong but also in some more distant places and built many gSas-khang, too. The spiritual inheritance and the descendants of the three Saints cover the whole of Reb-gong and even some other places in the Kokonor area. Since Reb-gong is a place where the Bonpo culture is still strongly alive, they are still using the expression gSas-khang for their gathering hall, but in other places, Buddhist expressions such as Lha-khang, Ma-ni-khang, or commonly Spyi-khang are used, because they are isolated very much as Bonpo and are surrounded by Buddhist monasteries, Lha-khang and Ma-ni-khang.

A gSas-khang usually consists of a single one-storey hall, sometimes there is a second, smaller storey, just to contain more statues and thangkas). Usually, to catch the daylight, the building of a gSas-khang faces south, and there is a walled enclosure in front where people can gather. There may be some simple houses within the wall such as a storehouse and a kitchen used to hold rituals, and a dormitory for the guardian of the building. The material and workmanship of a gSas-khang and the statues and thangkas inside depends on the local economic situation, but the traditional order and location of statues was important, at least until forty years ago. Nowadays, most gSas-khang have been rebuilt, with the result that the statues are in disorder. However the oldest order of statues observed by the Bonpo is to have the Sangs-rgyas³⁵ of three times with their backs to the back wall and facing the door of the hall, while right and left of them should be the eight Sems dpa', and nothing else. For historical reasons, almost all of the new gSas-khang were rebuilt in the eighties of this century. The excitement of the political upheaval after the cultural revolution made the traditional order of statues less important than before. Since all the holders of a gSas-khang are Tantrics concerned with the different

³² BGLG, p. 5.

³³ BGLG, p. 5.

³⁴ The only Bonpo monastery in Reb-gong, about 30 Km South-West of Rong-po (Long wu) town, the capital of rMa-lho Prefecture.

³⁵ gTo-rgyal ye-mkhyen as the Sang-rgyas of the past, gShen-rab mi-bo as the Sang-rgyas of the present, and Thang-ma me-sgron as the Sang-rgyas of the future. The eight Sems-dpa' are gTo-bu 'bum-sangs, dPyad-bu khri-shes, Yid-kyi khye'u-chung, Lung-'dren gsal-ba, brGyud-'dren sgron-ma, rGyal-sras 'Phrul-bu-chung, rKang-tsha g.Yung-drung dbang-ldan, gDung-sob Mu-cho ldem-drug.

wrathful deities they mostly rebuilt statues of those deities whose ritual they practice in their daily life. Besides gShen-rab mi-bo, such Tantric deities as sTag-la, dBal-gsas, Byams-ma, Ge-khod, 'Bum-pa, Rams-pa etc., are found instead of the older ones. Of course there are a few gSas-khang still attempting to keep the traditional order of statues, for example, dPon-tshang Lha-khang of sTong-che in Khr-ka, where they keep the Sangs-rgyas of the three times facing the door, but have added Byams-ma and aMra-seng on two sides of the three Sangs-rgyas, and where they keep the eight Sems-dpa' on the two sides but have added two different sTag-la. As we know, the tradition of Bon-mang is a kind of continuation of Bonpo Tantra from a very early time in which the Bon religion was not influenced by Buddhist Sutras as much as the Bonpo monastic teachings are. Yet, although Bon-mang have always observed only the tantric deities, the gSas-khang could not withstand completely the influence from the Sutras and monastic systems. After the theoretical revolution of the Bon religion in the fourteenth century by Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan from sMan-ri monastery³⁶, his influence has been growing more and more in Tibet, and his statue also was added by Bonpo people to the gSas-khang although he is purely a monastic figure. In the gSas-khang, we can see clearly the position of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan in the local people's esteem. For instance, in some gSas-khang, Shes-rab rgyal-tshan's statue is set up in the second place to the right or left of the main statue, as at Ngo-mo gSas-khang. In other gSas-khang, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan has even become the main statue as at Gad-pa skya-bo gSas-khang in Reb-gong, To-shes gSas-khang in Ba-yan, and Ser-gywa gSas-khang in Khri-ka. But in a few gSas-khang such as Hor-nag gSas-khang in Reb-gong and Shar-steng gSas-khang in Ba-yan, his statue is not found at all. This does not mean that the local people have no faith in him but less. Usually, most figures of the old gSas-khang are old deities instead of historical figures, but in the new gSas-khang, one starts to find historical figure such as Dran-pa nam-mkha'. After the fourteenth century, because of the influence of Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan and sMan-ri monastery which was under intensive Buddhist influence, Bonpo monasteries and monks have gradually replaced gSas-khang and lay Tantrics in most areas of Tibet, leaving just odd corners such as the Kokonor area in Amdo. Even in the gSas-khang there, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan, a monastic figure, appears as the main statue as we have noted. Dran-pa nam-mkha', another important historical figure of the eighth century, sometimes also appears even as the main statue such at rKa-gsar³⁷ gSas-khang of Chab-cha, but his influence is much less, and one may see few places with his statue. Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, who corresponds to dPal-ldan lha-mo in Buddhism, is an

³⁶ An important Bonpo monastery founded by Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan in the fourteenth century, in 'U-yug (wu you) Qu of rNam-gling (Nan ling) County of gZhis-ka-rtse Prefecture in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

³⁷ rKa-gsar is the name of a village belonging to Gong he County of mTsho-lho prefecture.

indispensable deity for gSas-khang, monasteries, and most Bonpo families as a guardian deity. rNam-par rgyal-ba, a deity of victory, is appearing more and more in gSas-khang and monasteries, and some single Lha-khang in the countryside, and not only those places. More and more mChod-rten of rNam-par rgyal-ba have been built, usually for subjugating some negative spirits and cursed places, but sometimes also for stopping the spread of Islam in the Tibetan cultural region, especially in Amdo.

So-nag is a large nomadic tribe in the pasture of rTse-khog, where So-nag gSas-khang is situated. Since they do not have a monastery, some Bonpo monks who came from this tribe and area are living in the gSas-khang as in a monastery so that lay Tantrics and monks are mixed together. This looks like a temporary situation, but it could also be considered the beginning of a change of the gSas-khang system into a monastic one in the area, because many gSas-khang historically changed into a monastic system in the same way. Buddhism has always had a strong influence on the gSas-khang system. For example, Kra-grong gSas-khang and Nyin-lta gSas-khang in Reb-gong, and Zhwa-khra gSas-khang in gCan-tsha, have already been divided between the two religions, Bon and Buddhism. Buddhists have set up their statues in one side of these Bonpo gSas-khang. Both religions are practiced separately, but together in the same gSas-khang. Of course they were Bonpo gSas-khang first, and then the first group of people in the village was converted to Buddhism. In the beginning, they only had the Bonpo gSas-khang to practice in, but later, when the Buddhist group became stronger, they attempted to convince the Bonpo people to share the gSas-khang to a greater extent, because they also wanted space for their statues. After that, when the Buddhist group became strong enough, the gSas-khang could be converted to Buddhism, and renamed as a Ma-ni-khang or an 'Du-khang of a monastery of some school of Tibetan Buddhism. This religious situation shows us the evolution of the Bon religion toward Buddhism in Tibet, and why gSas-khang are disappearing into the history of Tibetan religion. This change of Bon into Buddhism is still going on. The gSas-khang in the Kokonor area could be the last group remaining in the Tibetan cultural region at present.

At every gSas-khang, two gNyer-pa, or store-keepers, are responsible for looking after the gSas-khang's property and keeping the environment clean, and organizing all the religious activities of the year. The two take turns staying in the gSas-khang to offer prayers. Usually the two gNyer-pa hold office for one year. Continuing the tradition, many Buddhist families invite Bonpo Tantrics to their homes to continue Bonpo rituals for their family members even if they have already become Buddhists, but, usually, they do not invite them to perform rituals for people's deaths, because they are still lay people. The difference between the Tantrics and the monks, is that the former help people mostly in this life, while the latter help people for the next life. Normally there is a hereditary system for being a Tantric. One

must be a Tantric in case one's father or uncle used to be. This is called dPon-rgyud, the family lineage of the Bon Tantrics. A family which has dPon-rgyud always intends to continue this tradition in the family. Similarly, if a family sends one boy to a monastery to be a monk, they also intend to keep this tradition in the family. This is called as Grwa-rgyun, the family lineage of a monk. Tantrics perform practices as individuals, small groups, or all together. They are free to go to families for rituals alone or in a small group, but regular rituals must be in gSas-khang.

Reb-gong Bon-mang

In the Kokonor area, there are three sizes of Bon-mang. Reb-gong Bon-mang is the largest group with fifteen gSas-khang; of middle size are sTong-che Bon-mang with four gSas-khang in Khr-ka, and To-shes and Shar-steng Bon-mang with two gSas-khangs in Ba-yan. The remaining Bonpo gSas-khang perform rituals in groups at their individual gSas-khangs.

Reb-gong is a quite large agricultural area. It is surrounded by many mountains forming a good microclimate for agriculture. Since many villages are located in the hills, it is not very convenient for traveling. Three religious groups, Bonpo, rNying-ma-pa and dGe-lugs-pa comprise the religious community of Reb-gong. The Bonpo group consists of Bon-brgya monastery, the fifteen gSas-khang and their disciples. According to my statistics of 1996, during the field-work of the Japanese project of Bon research, there were 681 Bonpo families in 46 large tribes, each including several branch tribes, and 617 Tantrics in a Bonpo population of 4368 in Reb-gong.

The gSas-khang of Reb-gong are divided into four groups, strictly speaking, but two in general:

Yar-nang Bon-mang are:

Bon-brgya gSang-sngags dar-rgyas-gling (at Bon-brgya village),
Mag-sar g.Yung-drung bstan-dar-gling (at Mag-sar village).

Tantrics in these two gSas-khang are descendants of Khyung-po bsTan-pa dar-rgyas, a famous Tantric in their history. These two villages traditionally do not participate in the dPyid-chos and sTon-chos of Reb-gong Bon-mang. The last Bon-brgya Tulku attempted to bring them under the order of Reb-gong Bon-mang but without great success. There used to be a gSas-khang for the gDung-nges tribe called gDung-nges Grub-pa kun-'dul-gling in mDo-ba village where the Bon-brgya valley opens, and together with Bon-brgya and Mag-sar it used to be called Yar-nang Bon-mang or Yar-nang Bon-sde khag-gsum, but as most people of the gDung-nges tribe have already converted to Buddhism, only a few Bonpo Tantrics and their families are left in the village.

Five gSas-khang in the eastern part of Reb-gong comprise Stod-phyogs Bon-mang:

1. Theg-chen bon-'khor lhun-grub-gling (at rGya-mtsho-dpal or A-rga- steng village)
2. gSang-sngags rig-'dzin dar-rgyas-gling (at Gad-pa skya-bo village)
3. Theg-chen smin-grol rgya-mtsho-gling (at gDong-mgo vil- lage)

These three gSas-khang are the seats and their Tantrics are spiritual descendants of Grub-chen 'Khor-los bsgyur-ba'i-rgyal po, one of those who first in history to come to Reb-gong to spread the Bon religion.

4. rGyal-bstan ye-shes rgya-mtsho-gling (at Ngo-mo vil- lage)
5. Rig-'dzin thugs-rje byang-chub-gling (at Gyang-ru vil- lage),

The Tantrics of these two gSas-khang are the spiritual descendants of Grub-chen Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, also one of the first to come to Reb-gong to spread Bon. People say that Gyang-ru Rig-'dzin thugs-rje in the thirteenth century defeated an evil spirit protecting the continuation of monks in Ra-rgya monastery so that it could continue to receive monks and be respectfully honored by gTsang Pandit as the source of his Rus- dpon (family priest).

Five gSas-khangs in the Northeast of Reb-gong comprise sMad-phyogs Bon-mang:

1. mDo-sngags phun-tshogs dar-rgyas-gling (at Gling rgya village)
2. Kun-'dus g.yung-drung 'gyur-med-gling (at Zho-'ong nyin-tha village)
3. Sgrub-pa'i rgyal-mtshan mi-'gyur-gling (at Dar-grong village)
4. Khyung-dkar rig-'dzin smin-grol-gling (at Khyung-bo- thang village)
5. gSang-sngags bdud-'dul lhun-grub-gling (at sDong- skam village).

rTogs-ldan Kun-bzang klong-grol and his son sNang-gsal lhun-grub in the fifteenth century were born there and made a great contribution to the Bon religion as the spiritual descendants of Grub-chen Khyung- dkar tshang-ba, who was a famous Tantric.

Three gSas-khangs in North of Reb-gong comprise Snyan-bzang Bon- mang:

1. gSang-chen smin-grol dpal-ldan-gling (at Hor-nag village)
2. Rig-'dzin kun-'dus rnam-rgyal-gling (at sTong-che village)

Since sTong-che village has the same origin as sTong-che village of Khri-ka, all the Bonpo of sTong-che are disciples of Khyung-mo Tulku of Khri-ka, and there is a seat for him in this gSas-khang.

3. Khyung-dkar bstan-pa rgya-mtsho-gling (at Khyung-po la-ga village)

This is a very old gSas-khang in Reb-gong, although we do not know when it was built or by whom.

sNyan-bzang Bon-mang joins sMad-phyogs Bon-mang for all the religious activities of Reb-gong Bon-mang.

All the above are together called the one thousand nine hundred of Bon-mang of Reb-gong who hold Phur-pa (Reb-gong Bon-mang phurthogs stong-dang dgu-brgya). Bon-brgya dGe-legs lhun-grub rgya-mtsho is the master of the whole Bon-mang of Reb-gong. sTod-phyogs and sMad-phyogs are the main groups of Reb-gong Bon-mang, the other two groups being smaller.

In Reb-gong Bon-mang, the largest group of Bon-mang in the Kokonor area, there are mainly four types of rituals, dPyid-chos and sTon-chos being the two largest. The whole Reb-gong Bon-mang gather twice a year for the rituals, 5th to 8th January for dPyid-chos (the ritual of spring), and 8th to 10th October for sTon-chos (the ritual of Autumn). The full three days of the rituals must be practiced, so the Tantrics must gather one day before. The Tantrics, especially elders who live in remote villages must come one day before and stay with families near the gSas-khang where the event takes place. They practice mainly dBal-gSas in addition to short 'Bum-pa and sTag-la. All the gSas-khangs in Reb-gong take turns to be the place for these rituals. In the people's eyes even in practice, Reb-gong Bon-mang is considered a whole, rather than individual gSas-khangs. There is a complete system for regular practices. For Reb-gong Bon-mang, there are two dGe-bskos every year, one dBu- mdzad every three years, one Khri-pa and one gNyer-pa every year, and one gYung-drung slob-dpon every three years. Two dGe-bskos are holders of the discipline of the Bon-mang. One of them must be from sTod-phyogs Bon-mang, the other from sMad-phyogs Bon-mang, because those two are the largest groups of the four in Reb-gong Bon-mang. dBu- mdzad is the chant guide of the ritual. The Khri-pa is the head of the whole Bon-mang, but at the same time he is also responsible for organizing dPyid-chos, the ritual of spring, as the gNyer-ba is for sTon-chos, the ritual of autumn. The Khri pa has a high position in Reb-gong Bon-mang, and there is special throne for him on the same level as the master, Bon-

brgya Rinpoche, when the Bon-mang gather for rituals. Any kind of ritual in Reb-gong Bon-mang must honor the Khri-pa of the year with his throne even in his absence to show their respect. The g.Yung-drung slob-dpon is responsible for all the practice.

The second size of ritual is that of Yi-dam kun-'dus (Yi-dam kun-'dus kyi chos-thog). This is a more serious ritual and Tantrics who intend to participate in it are limited to those older than twenty-nine. It takes place from 10th to 13th May, rotating once a year among all the gSas-khangs in Reb-gong. One dBu-mdzad of this group takes responsibility for three years. The g.Yung-drung slob-dpon and the Khri-pa are the same people as for Reb-gong Bon-mang. The gNyer-pa is different from that of Reb-gong Bon-mang, because he must organize the whole ritual, which involves much work.

The third size of ritual are those of mKha-'gro gsang-gcod and of Zhi-khro. The former is from 1st to 4th April, and the latter from 1st to 4th May. They have been separately held by two groups of Reb-gong Bon-mang, namely sTod-phyogs Bon-mang and sMad-phyogs Bon-mang (see below). The three year dBu-mdzad of Yi-dam Kun-'dus ritual must be the dBu-mdzad of the Reb-gong Bon-mang ritual group he belongs to, and the remainder of the group have to find someone else to be their dBu-mdzad. There are two new gNyer-pa for the two groups. There is neither a Khri-pa for either group nor a g.Yung-drung slob-dpon for the rituals, but the Khri-pa of Reb-gong Bon-mang must be honored by a throne, and two good Tantrics who take the first seat of the front table must take the responsibility of g.Yung-drung slob-dpon.

The fourth size of ritual is held by individual gSas-khang. Tantrics must gather in their own gSas-khang for the ritual of Tshe-dbang rig-'dzin or Kun-bzang rgyal-ba 'dus-pa on 10th of each month in which there is no common ritual in Reb-gong Bon-mang.

The position of Tantrics in the rituals of Reb-gong Bon-mang is very important. I visited the dPyid-chos of 1998 in the gSas-khang of Hor-nag la-ga village, so I will try to describe the position of Tantrics there. The two rows of the front dais are always very attractive when a ritual is going on. There are two Bang-kha on the two seats at the head of the front dais in the gSas-khang during a ritual. People say that Bang-kha is Zhang-zhung word for the master of the Mandala (dKyil-'khor gyi bdag-po) they made in front of the main statue in the gSas-khang when a ritual is going on. One of them must be the sGrub-dpon, the consultant of the ritual. Until the middle of this century, the two Bang-kha had to be guardians of the gTor-ma of Yi-dam and Bon-skyong of the ritual, which is on the main dais directly between the two seats of Bon-brgya Rinpoche and the Khri-pa, even at night till the end of the ritual, but nowadays they follow the ritual only in the day time. The two Bang-kha must be Tantrics with full experience of Tantric practices, so that they are usually very old Tantrics who have practiced for a lifetime, with the result that they enjoy universal respect in the Bonpo community. The seats of the dBu mdzad and the

g.Yung drung slob dpon are in the middle of the two rows of the front dais, with the seat of the dBu mdzad higher than all the Tantrics but lower than the seats of the master and the Khri pa. The seats between the two Bang kha and the dBu mdzad and g.Yung drung slob dpon are for old Tantrics who used to be officials of Reb-gong Bon-mang. They are considered to be very powerful in Tantric practices. The seats between the g.Yung drung slob dpon and the dBu mdzad and the musicians at the end of the rows are for some Tantrics who are good at chanting. Then, there are musicians up to the ends of the rows. The back rows are for other Tantrics who follow the rituals, and some new Tantrics who have to be in the backmost rows to learn by observation.

After the ritual of Reb-gong Bon-mang, there is an activity called sDe-'bod (invitations from the village), when village people invite the Tantrics to their dwellings to perform rituals for the family. They do some simple rituals of purification for the past year and for invoking fortune and happiness for the coming year. The family welcomes the Tantrics by blowing trumpets and Chinese bamboo flutes and setting off some firecrackers. The Tantrics come in to the houses and sit, then perform rituals under the guidance of the dBu-mdzad for about ten or fifteen minutes, before going to another family. A family usually offers only an apple or other single fruit as a symbolic offering. Since there are many procedures to follow in the three day rituals, it is very late when they finish, sometimes already dark, but the village people wait for this opportunity for years, so that sDe-'bod must be carried out although it is late afternoon or even evening.

The most important things for a Tantric who is practicing supreme Tantra are the four natural conditions (Ma-bcos-pa bzhi): natural hair like a weeping willow (sKra ma-bcos-pa lchang-lo), a natural container such as a skull cup (sNod ma-bcos-pa thod-pa), a natural white cloth (Gos ma-bcos-pa dkar-po) and a natural mind like an innate mind. You must have long hair as a basic precondition, then you must receive the four transmissions of long hair (Ral-dbang bzhi) of a Yidam which you mainly practice from a master. The four transmissions are: the outer transmission of the pot (phyi bum-pa'i dbang); the inner transmission of wisdom (Nang ye-shes kyi-dbang); the mystical transmission of special sense (gSang-ba khyad-par don-gyi dbang); the absolute mystery transmission of words (Yang-gsang don-gyi dbang). As a preparation for the transmission, a Tantric who has already received the transmissions of long hair must braid the applicant's hair, and the latter then can receive the transmissions from a master. After that, they must always wear the hair in braids instead of cutting, and furthermore, they usually put some yak's hair in their braids to make them bigger and longer. Usually they wind their hair into a coil and cover it with a Ral-shubs, a black cloth, which they take off only when they prostrate themselves before a statue or pay respects to a master or some one else they meet. We can not be sure how far back this long hair tradition goes, but we can see from some

Bonpo thangkhas that many early Bonpo masters wore long hair. The great master sPa-ston dPal-mchog wanted to be a monk in his later life, and went to Khro-tshang 'Brug-lha, but the latter refused to cut his hair because he saw that there were a couple of Khro-bo, a wrathful deity, on every braid (DGSG p.214). Secondly, they use a human skull for drinking, because it is natural, not manufactured thing. Thirdly, white refers to the color of the hat, dKar-mo rtse-rgyal. From the remote past, Bonpos have always called themselves Zhwa-dkar bstan-pa or Zhwa-dkar Bon which means "the religion of white hat" or "Bon of the white hat". Bon-pos say that this is because a great master of Bon called Li-shu stag- ring used to wear a dKar-mo rtse-rgyal. Fourthly, the natural mind is considered by Bonpo as the foundation of the mind, especially in rDzogs- chen teachings. During the rituals of Bon-mang, every Tantric must hold a cymbal in the left hand and a Da-ma-ru (handdrum) in the right, putting on the Bonpo hat, dKar-mo rtse-rgyal, and a rosary of Rag-sha (a tree of India). A few Tantrics, who are considered to be powerful in Bonpo Tantra, put on a kind of hat called Dom-lpags (bear skin) with a bronze mirror in the middle. Two sGom-thag of red silk cross the Tsha-ru, winter clothing made of lambskin. They drape a cloak of Tibetan woolen cloth over their shoulder, which must have leopard skin collar. They must wear traditional Tibetan boots.

Since the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area is small, there have always been only a few important Bonpo Tulkus who guide all or most gSas-khang and monasteries. Bon-brgya Dge-legs Lhun-grub rgya-mtsho is the most learned and important Bonpo Tulku in north Amdo at the present. He usually lives in Bon-brgya monastery, the only Bonpo monastery in Reb-gong. Bon-brgya monastery is located in the Bon-brgya valley in Chu-khog Xiang of Reb-gong, about 30 Km south west of Rong- bo town, the capital of Reb-gong.

The Cham of Reb-gong Bon-mang is quite simple: there are several single dances such as Zhwa-nag, A-bse rgyal-ba, Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, rMa- chen bom-ra, sTag-ri-rong, gShin-rje, dMu-bdud, dMag-dpon, and mChod-'bul gyi lha-mo.

The Remaining Bon-mang

Besides Reb-gong Bon-mang, sTong-che Bon-mang of Khri-ka is the second largest Bon-mang in the Kokonor area. sTong-che is a big valley in Khri-ka in which there are about a hundred tribes in nine big Tibetan villages. The valley people are mainly engaged in farming but half of many families graze animals in the mountains which surround the valley. Since many nomadic tribes surrounding the valley spread from sTong- che, they still have the same name as sTong-che tribes, and share many relatives. Both the farmers and nomads have preserved the name sTong- che up to now but the expressions sTong-che for the farmers in the valley and 'Brog-ru (nomadic tribes) of sTong-

che for the nomads in the pasture, or sTong-che'i ru yul-'brog gnyis, the tribes outside and at home of sTong-che, are used to make a distinction. Bon, rNying-ma-pa and dGe-lugs-pa are the three religious groups comprising the religious community in sTong-che. For the Bonpo group, there is one monastery, Khyung-mo, and four gSas-khangs, sPyi-khang of sKa-rgya sTong-skor village, lHa-khang of dPon-tshang village, lHa-khang of sBra-ser village, and lHa-khang of Khyung-mo village. In the sTong-che valley, the names of the gSas-khang have already been changed to Buddhist forms such as lHa-khang or sPyi-khang instead of being called gSas-khang. They do not use the expression gSas-khang any more but continue to practice Bonpo Tantra. There is a Bonpo Tulku called Khyung-mo sprul-sku sTobs-ldan dbang-phyug who has been honored as the principal master of both Khyung-mo monastery and sTong-che Bon-mang in Khri-ka and sTong-che of Reb-gong. As a part of sTong-che, the nomadic tribes have been coming to sTong-che gSas-khangs to participate in all the rituals, and many Tantrics of the four gSas-khangs in sTong-che come from the nomadic tribes. But since they are always moving about the pasture, where some places are very remote and not convenient for coming to sTong-che, the two big groups among the tribes, 'Brog-ru'i sTong-skor and 'Brog-ru'i dPon-tshang, have been using two temporary gSas-khangs in tents for rituals. They are about 150 Km west of sTong-che. Stong-skor consists of sTong-skor and Mar-nang, two large tribes with more than a hundred families altogether. In recent decades, the sTong-skor tribe has built a small brick and cement gSas-khang in their pasture, and their tent gSas-khang finished its moving life. It is called sTong-skor spyi-khang in common language, and officially g.Yung-drung gsang-sngags gling. The other one, dPon-tshang tshogs-ras in the common language and g.Yung-drung bstan-dar gsang-sngags gling in the official, still follows the moving nomadic tribes in the pasture. For obvious reasons, Khyung-mo Tulku of sTong-che holds both gSas-khang and Tshogs-ras as master.

There is another tent gSas-khang, Bon-brgya'i tshogs-ras, in Bon-brgya pasture, about 150 Km south west of sTong-che. Since this nomadic Bon-brgya tribe in Ba-shi-thang and Bon-brgya village in Reb-gong have the same origin, Bon-brgya Rinpoche holds Bon-brgya tshogs-ras as master. Tshogs-ras of 'Brog-ru'i dPon-tshang and Bon-brgya are very likely the only two tent gSas-khang of the Bon religion in Tibetan cultural area at present.

Ser-gywa is a small village in sTag-rig valley in Khri-ka. Ser-gywa Bon-mang is also a small group, and they practice by themselves in their gSas-khang.

In Ba-yan, people call the Bon-mang as To-shes Bon-mang and Shar-steng Bon-mang separately, instead of using Ba-yan Bon-mang for both, but they always practice together in the two gSas-khang in turn under the guidance of bsTan-'dzin Rinpoche who lives in To-shes village.

Zhwa-khra Bon-mang of Mi-'gyur dbal-mo gsang-chen gling in Zhwa-khra village of Snang-ra valley in gCan-tsha county, is north of Reb-gong. Because Zhwa-khra Bon-mang spread from rKa-bar-ma village of sDong-skam in Reb-gong, and because sDong-skam Tulku sNang-gsal Lhun-grub, their master, was, and his reincarnation, sDong-skam dKon-mchog bstan-'dzin lhun-'grub, is, a student of Bon-brgya Tulku, the former and the present, Zhwa-khra Bon-mang's rituals are the same as Reb-gong's, as I mentioned before, Buddhists have already joined the Zhwa-khra gSas-khang, both rituals and statues. Bon-mang and sNgags-mang (Tantrics of rNying-ma-pa) perform rituals in turn in Zhwa-khra gSas-khang. Both Bonpos and Buddhists have set up some of their statues in the gSas-khang. Furthermore, Shakyamuni is the main statue, and there is also Padma-sambhava. The only remaining Bonpo statue is rNam-par rgyal-pa, meaning that the Bon religion in this area and their gSas-khang will last no longer than one generation.

So-nag Bon-mang is in rTse-khog county, sKa-gsar Bon-mang in sKa-gsar village of Chab-cha. Zhwa-khra³⁸, So-nag, rKa-gsar, sTong-che and Ser-gywa Bon-mang highly honor the Bon-brgya Tulku as their the principal master. Since Ba-yan, where To-shes and Shar-steng Bon-mang are, is north of Kokonor, and they have a master³⁹ there to lead their religious activities, they do not have close relations with the Bon-brgya Tulku.

Another sTong-skor is in Che-rji pasture, 118 Km west of Chab-cha. It spread from sTong-skor of sTong-che valley, and has already become a large nomadic tribe called A-rig sTong-skor. Most people of this tribe have already converted to Buddhism but they still keep the tradition of having some Bonpo rituals at home. The few Bonpo families of the tribe have a small gSas-khang for Bonpo rituals which they call Ma-ne-khang.

Furthermore, there are some Bonpo villages where there are no longer gSas-khang or monastery, like the three villages of Mar-nang called Mar-nang bon-sde Khag-gsum, which are Bon-tshang-ma, Balung (or dBal-lung) and Lho-ba villages in rDo-sbis. These three villages are said to have spread from Spyi-tshang village of Reb-gong. Bon-tshang-ma was the gZhi-dpon (or Rus-dpon), the family priest of sBis-mdo dpon-tshang, the chief family of sBis-mdo in which the Tenth Panchen Lama was born. There is still a small gSas-khang and

³⁸ Zhwa-khra is the name of a village in sNang-ra Xiang of gCan-tsha County of rMa-lho Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

³⁹ The present master of Ba-yan Bon-mang is bsTan-'dzin dbang-rgyal, son of rTse-dbus-tshang bSod-nams g.yung-drung dbang-rgyal (1893-1949), who was very powerful at the beginning of the twentieth century and held the seal as master of Bon-mang and the monasteries and people in the East (Shar-phyogs sngags-bon dgon-grong-spyi'i bla-ma rTse-dbus-pa'i tham-ga) given by Ma Bufang, the Islamic warlord in Qinghai in the first half part of the twentieth century. The present master was born in 1932 as the reincarnation of Kun-bzang rin-chen of sNang-zhig monastery in rNga-pa.

some Tantrics there except for Lho-ba village which is already completely converted to Buddhism.

The people of a village called Se-bza' in Tongde county, south of Kokonor, are Bonpos and they rebuilt a small gSas-khang very recently.

Some related points

The gSas-khang in the Kokonor area are obviously a continuation of the gSas-khang or gSas-mKhar which have existed in Central Tibet since even before King Srong-btsan sgam-po in the seventh century A.D. In the eighth century A.D, Bonpos suffered persecution from King Khri-srong lde-btsan, and fled from Central Tibet to remote places such as Amdo and Khams. Nowadays, many of the gSas-khang and monasteries in Amdo and Khams have their history in both written and oral records, which always mention someone who came from Lhasa, or elsewhere in Central Tibet, and built their gSas-khang or monastery. For example, we may cite the records of gSas-khangs in Reb-gong⁴⁰ and Khyung-mo monastery⁴¹ in Khri-ka. There are many traditions of ritual in Bonpo Tantra including the forms of gShen, Bru, Zhu, sPa and rMe'u, all of which come from Central Tibet. Most gSas-khang of Reb-gong and Khri-ka still practice the Bru tradition (Bru-lugs)⁴². In the monastic system, "Gwra-sa"⁴³ is the most important tradition for Bonpo monasteries in the Kokonor area. These facts are enough to prove that the Bon-mang and their rituals in the Kokonor area are a kind of continuation of the Bon religion of Central Tibet,

⁴⁰ According the oral history, Dran-pa nam-mkha' came to Reb-gong first, practiced at Gong-mo gur-khang in North Reb-gong and built A-ba ngos-bzang monastery. Then three brothers from the Khyung family of dBus (Central Tibet) took refuge from religious persecution in Reb-gong, and spread the Bon religion in Reb-gong, so that Reb-gong Bon-mang descended from them.

⁴¹ Khyung-mo monastery is the only Bonpo monastery in sTong-che valley of Khri-ka. According to the Autobiography of Khri-ka Kun-bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan (gShen-gyi dge-sbyong Khri-ka ba Kun- bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan gyi rnam-thar) (unfinished manuscript), Sog-btshun sTon-pa Ye-shes rgyal- mtshan, the founder of Khyung-mo monastery, was from Sog-sde of Nag-chu-kha and became a monk of gYas-ru dben-sa monastery of gTsang. He then came to Khri-ka in Amdo to spread the Bon religion.

⁴² Bru is for Bru rGyal-ba g.yung-drung (1242-1290), who was one of the four important students of gShen-chen klu-dga'. Because of his achievement in spreading Bon, his teaching and its tradition became an important one in the Bon religion. Because of the birth of the fifth and eighth Panchen Lamas in this family, it disappeared from Bonpo history, but his teaching tradition is still alive in the Bon religion.

⁴³ After the flood-destruction of gYas-ru dben-sa monastery in 1386, Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan and his sMan-ri monastery became the most important master and monastery in the Bon religion, especially in the monastic tradition. In the Kokonor area, many Bonpo monks have gone to sMan-ri monastery to receive their vows and they call it "going to the Grwa sa".

even if we know very little about the latter. The gSas-khang system is a complete system different from the monastic one, and the origin of the gSas-khang was much earlier than that of the monastery. We know for certain that Bonpo Tantrics were active in ancient Tibetan society before the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet, but we cannot be sure when the system was formed.

In the Kokonor area, there is another group called sNgags-mang collectively and sNgags-pa or dPon-individually, who are rNying-ma-pa Tantrics and have their own system of rituals. Their system of rituals and their dress are similar to those of Bonpos, but the rituals, of course, are different. One important thing is that their sNgags-khang or Ma-ni-khang, the gathering place, is also very similar to the Bonpo gSas-khang except for the statues and Thangkas inside. Some of them have stories of their origin related to Bonpo gSas-khang. It is hard to estimate how many of them used to be Bonpo gSas-khang, but I would like to venture the hypothesis that there must be an evolution from Bonpo gSas-khang to sNgags-khang or Ma-ni-khang of rNying-ma-pa. Furthermore, if you broaden your field of vision, even the 'Du-khang or main hall of any Tibetan monastery could be considered a variety of Bonpo gSas-khang, thus in Ba-yan, the Bonpo people still call their gSas-kang as 'Du-khang. If you build a monastery, a 'Du-khang, a gathering place, is a prerequisite. The remainder consists of additions to the-'Du khang. Of course, from gSas-khang, you can easily find influence of the monastic tradition of the Bon religion, even that influence of rNying-ma-pa or dGe-lugs-pa, but the gSas-khang was the first kind of constructed hall for religious gatherings in Tibetan history. Basing ourselves on Tibetan sources, we can trace its origin back to the time of gNya'-khri btshan-po, the first King of Tibet. Until the time of Srong-tsan sgam-po, in the seventh century, there were several gSas-khang in Central Tibet, even in Lhasa. So when Tibetans built the first monastery in Tibet, there was no better model to choose than the gSas-khang.

With the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, particularly the later spread in the eleventh century, Buddhism has gradually become the main religion, so that Bon is only able to survive in some remote or isolated corners. Reb-gong is one corner where the Bon religion is still alive in its ancient form, especially with the Bon-mang and the ritual system of Tantrics. Of course, individual dPons, the Tantrics of Bonpo Tantra, not only in the Kokonor area but also in rGyal-rong, have continued their tradition since the time of the Kings. Although they do not use the same names, they are practicing the same Bonpo Tantra and they have the same religious function in society. But the formation of Bon-mang as a group and their system still poses a problem. Is it a continuation of the ancient Bonpo tradition or a creation of Bonpos in the Kokonor area?

According to the information I have provided above, the Bonpo community in the Kokonor area is small, and it is divided into several even smaller groups which are isolated very much by surrounding

Buddhist groups. Many of them are very likely to come to an end except for a few relatively stable ones such as Reb-gong, sTong-che and Ba-yan. Even those groups which are well established, are still undergoing change. Bonpo families and their Tantrics are getting fewer and fewer. There may be two reasons for this: firstly, religious faith among the young generation is gradually fading away, and they are more and more interested in modern life; secondly, to be a Buddhist rather than being a Bonpo is popular and even a source of pride. This is because the Bon religion has been considered a bad faith in Tibetan society in general so that many Bonpo reluctant to acknowledge their religious faith in Bon, especially when they are outside their own community. In the Kokonor area, Reb-gong is the center of the Bonpo community. According to Bonpos, this is not only because it is the largest community and because the most important master is there, but even more importantly because Reb-gong Bon-mang strictly preserves the tradition in most aspects. Other communities are smaller as well as less strict.

The Bon-mang in the Kokonor area could be a key to research not only on the present Bon-mang themselves but particularly on the ancient Bon religion, Tantrics both as individuals and as groups and their function in society.

Abbreviations

BLNP *'Bel gtam lung gi snying po* by bsTan-'dzin rnam-dag, published by the auther, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Community, Dolanji, Dist. Solan, (H.P.).

CBPJ *Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljong shing* by Sum-pa Ye-shes dpal-'byor, Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992, Lanzhou.

DGSG *bsTan pa'i rnam bshad dar rgyas gsal ba'i sgron me* by sPa stan rgyal bzang po, Krung-go bod-kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1991, Beijing.

DMCB *mDo smad chos 'byung ngam Yul mdo smad kyi ljongs su thub bstan rin po che ji ltsr dar ba'i tshul gsal bar brjod pa deb ther rgya mtsho* by Brag-dgon-pa dKon- mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas, Kan-su'u Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982, Lanzhou.

DTNP *Deb thar sngon po* by 'Gos-lo gZhon-nu-dpal, Si chuan Mi-rigs dpe-skrun- khang, 1984, Chengdu.

KPGT *mKhas pa'i dga' ston nam Dam pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba rnam kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa mkhas pa'i dga' ston* by dPa'-bo gTsug-lag phreng-ba, Mi- rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1985, Beijing.

LGRN *Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal gyi rnam par thar ba mdo tсам brjod pa thub bstan khang bzang mdzes pa'i tog*, (pp.489-513 of rJe 'jigs-med rigs-pa'i blo-gros kyi gsum-rtson pod-bzhi-ba) by Tshe-tan zhabs-drung, mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dpe-skrun- khang, 1992, Ziling.

LSRT *Legs bshad rin po che'i gter mdzod dpyod ldan dga' ba'i char* by Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan, Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1985, Beijing.

NMCB *rNying ma'i chos 'byung ngam bstan pa'i snying po gsag chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho* by Thub-bstan 'od-gsal bstan-pa'i nyi-ma, Bod-ljongs Mi-dmangs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992, Lhasa.

NTMP *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* by Ne'i Pan-di-ta Grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros, in *Bod-kyi lo-rgyu deb-thar khag-lnga* (Gangs-can rig-mdzod 9), Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun-khang, 1990, Lhasa.

SKGN *Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar ram rje btsun bla ma dam pa nges pa don gyi g.yung drung 'chang dbang dpal Shar rdza ba chen po bKra shis rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba thar 'dod mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan* by dBra-ston bsKal-bzang bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan, Krung-go'i bod-kyi shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1990, Beijing.

TTKT *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* by Tshe-tan zhabs-drung, mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1982, Ziling.

ZTLR *Zhang bod kyi bstan 'byung lo rgyus lha rgyud rin chen phreng ba ma bcos gser gyi yang zhun* by Kun-bzang blo-gros, in manuscript of G.yung-drung gling monastery of Tibet.

BGLG *Bon-brgya dgon sman ri bshad sgrub smin grol gling gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* by Bon-brgya dGe-legs lhun-grub rgya-mtsho, manuscript.

