

THE *GDUNG* LINEAGES OF CENTRAL & EASTERN BHUTAN – A REAPPRAISAL OF THEIR ORIGIN, BASED ON LITERARY SOURCES

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The ethno history of early Bhutan is a complex subject that will require much effort to piece together.¹ The oldest population strata predate the spread of Buddhism and literature. By the time writing began, their origins were long forgotten. Many later immigrants also arrived without much recorded fanfare. Other than a few family histories, such as the *Hūmral Dungrab*, Buddhist historians do not customarily go deeply into genealogy.

The late 17th century book called the *Gyalrig* is the single important exception.² It deals with the ethnic origins of leading families from central and eastern Bhutan who traced their pedigree to various Tibetan progenitors, both human and of the gods. The author's main purpose was to document and glorify the family ancestry of various petty ruling chiefs whose territories had been lately conquered and incorporated into the emerging nation state, centered in western Bhutan, by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Michael Aris and Dasho Tenzin Dorje first introduced this work to modern western and Bhutanese readers (Aris 1979, 1986, Dorje 1985).³

Chapter three of the *Gyalrig* is devoted to the complex genealogical myths of an interesting group of families from Bumthang, Mongar, Zhemgang, and other parts of east-central Bhutan, called *Gdung* (pron. *Dung*). They formed a small though note-worthy local population stratum, including powerful lords of the 14th-16th centuries, who rose and faded into obscurity beneath the rising tide of Buddhist religious aristocracy, and were finally eliminated as a political force by the Zhabdrung Rinpoche. Legends about the strongmen *Gdung* Nag-po of Ura, Shingkar *Gdung*, and *Gdung* Dkar-po of Mongar are still told. Their ruined castles at Pangkhar, Zhongar Dzong, and elsewhere stand witness to an era of Bhutanese history that, unfortunately, was not well

¹ A useful introduction to this topic is found in Pommaret (1998). In the interest of readability, I have adopted a simplified spelling of common Tibetan / Choekey words.

² The full title of this work is *Rgyal rigs 'byung khungs gsal ba'i sgron me*, "The Lamp which Illuminates the Origins of Royal Families." It has been extensively studied in Aris (1979): 60-146, and translated in Aris (1986).

³ See also John ArduSSI, "Notes on the rGyal-rigs of Ngawang and the Clan History of Eastern Bhutan and Shar Mon" (in press). In this article, I have prepared a concordance to the four available editions, and argued that the work was written in 1668, rather than 1728 as proposed by Michael Aris.

preserved in writing. An important, peripheral version of the *Gdung* genealogy is recorded in the biographies of the Nyingmapa cleric Tenzin Legpei Dondrup (1645-1726) and his nephew the tenth Druk Desi Mipham Wangpo (1709-1738), who belonged to a branch of this lineage established at Bemji (Ch. *Bon-brgyud* / *Bon-sbis* - a village along the upper Mangdechu river north of modern Trongsa).⁴ The surviving, often inconsistent, fragments of these *Gdung* family ancestral myths were collected and recorded in the *Gyalrig*.

There were also people called *Gdung* living in several parts of western Bhutan, not discussed in the *Gyalrig*. During his tour of Paro valley in 1433-34, the Tibetan saint Thangtong Gyalpo visited a certain "Mon king" named *Gdung* Glang-dmar and his neighbours from upper and lower Ha, who made him gifts of iron that became the raw material for his famous bridge at Chuwori, Tibet.⁵ According to the 1747 enthronement record of Gyalse Jigme Dragpa I (1725-1761) sixty nomadic families called *Gdung 'brog* paid taxes under Lingzhi Dzong. The same document lists 212 tax-paying families within a sub-district of Paro called *Gdung Yul-bzhi*.⁶

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The *Gdung* were thus a population stratum wielding local power in several valleys of Ha, Bumthang, Zhemgang, Merak, and other parts of eastern Bhutan, prior to the 17th century. Although the surviving *Gdung* families are not so prominent today, our main interest in them stems from their centrality to three interrelated historical and linguistic puzzles from the pre-17th century era: 1) Their possible relationship to a community known as *Dung* (without prefix -g) or *Dung Reng* in 14th century Tibetan histories, having two branches: Southern (Ch. *Lho Dung*) and Eastern (Ch. *Shar Dung*). They were the target of an extensive military campaign launched by the Sakya government to halt their raids and plundering within settled areas of central Tibet; 2) The unusual similarity between the spoken languages of Bumthang, Mon Yul in Tibet, and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh; 3) The connection between the Bhutanese *Gdung* of east and west.

These issues were all discussed earlier by Dr. Michael Aris (1979: 119-123), based on the *Gyalrig* and a few other documents. Professor Petech took up the first question in a later article, citing important additional Tibetan sources (Petech: 1990). I also touched on it in my own

⁴ *Bstan 'dzin legs pa'i don grub*: 22.a-26.a. Cf. also *Mi pham dbang po*: 5.b-6.b.

⁵ *Thang stong rgyal po*: 84.b.

⁶ John Arduis & Karma Ura (2000): 68, 72.

1977 Ph.D. thesis (published revision forthcoming), though I had no access to the *Gyalrig* at that time. Lopen Pema's recent history follows the account from the *Gyalrig*.⁷

Aris concluded, in essence, that the *Gdung* were a people of Tibetan racial stock indigenous to Bhutan and Mon Yul, and that they were indeed the same as the people known to Tibetans as *Dung* responsible for the depredations (burning of farms, killing of animals, destruction of homes, etc.) throughout southern Tibet. He further identified the *Gdung* people of Bumthang with the *Lho Dung* of Tibetan sources, and the *Shar Dung* with the Mon-pa people of Tibetan Mon Yul and Tawang, based on the commonality of Bumthangkha and Northern Monpa dialects, and symmetry between the territorial names *Lho Mon* (which to him meant Bhutan, more specifically Bumthang) and *Shar Mon* (the Tawang region).

Thus, by Aris's theory, one of the largest military campaigns during the era of Sakya government, whose victorious commander Phags-pa Dpal-bzang went on to found the dynasty of kings at Gyantse, was fought against a formidable enemy emerging from the southern valleys of Bumthang and Mon Yul. He acknowledged the difficulty in explaining how today's relatively few and isolated Bhutanese *Gdung* families could be all that remains of a much larger, more wide-spread population during the 14th century (Aris 1979: 120), or how the *Gdung* of western and eastern Bhutan were related.

Looking afresh at all the evidence now available, I would like to offer a reinterpretation that I believe credibly explains all of these matters. In the brief time available for this paper, I can only touch on the main points, and show where my conclusions differ from those proposed earlier by Dr. Aris.

We are focused on the following three problems:

1. The Identity of the Bhutanese *Gdung* with the *Dung* or *Dung Reng* of Tibetan Sources

Besides the *Gyalrig*, the known written works touching on this problem include the following (see bibliography for full details) of which only b) and d) were used by Aris:

a) *Rgya bod yig tshang* (date: 1434). A rare Sakya chronicle now accessible in two published editions, including one issued in Bhutan

⁷*Brug kyi rgyal rabs*: 96ff .

during the 1970's; it provides the most graphic details on the campaigns against the *Dung*.⁸

b) *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (date: 1481). A once rare biographical study of the kings of Gyantse, now available in several printed editions. Aris knew it only from the summary provided by Tucci (1949: 662ff) under the title *Gyangtse Chronicles*. It offers first-hand detail on the Sakya campaign against the *Dung*, although not as authoritative as a).

c) *Kun dga' seng ge* (date: 1350). A biography of the Drukpa hierarch of Ralung who was commissioned by the Sakya authorities to mediate the *Dung* threats, before the military expedition. It is virtually an eye-witness account to the campaign's prelude, as he married the daughter of a Bhutanese chieftain during his peace mission, and their son succeeded him on the throne of Ralung as the ninth hierarch 'Jam dbyangs Blo gros Seng ge (1345-1390).

d) *'Ba' ra rnam mgur* (date: 1500). The biography with interspersed songs of Choeje Barawa (1310?-1391?) who traveled and lived in western Bhutan during the period 1362-1391, and witnessed the civil strife in Paro during this era just after the campaign.

e) *Myang chos 'byung* (17th century?). A once rare local history of southern Gtsang, now available in a reprint from Lhasa; briefly mentions the *Dung* depredations on monasteries of southern Gtsang.

f) *Dpyid gyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (date: 1643). The well known history of Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama, a late account that briefly mentions the deeds of the Gyantse princes.

The *Dung* were among the mix of peoples, including Bhutanese proper, that Tibetans lumped under the pejorative label 'Southerner' (*Lho-pa*). The eastern group or *Shar Dung* inhabited redoubts in the hills above Lake Yardrok, near Lhobrak. Tibetans perceived the southern faction or *Lho Dung* as most active in the area around Phari and the foothills along the North West Bhutan frontier, once known as '*Gos yul tsho bzhi*. The impression is thus of a somewhat scattered people based in upland strongholds ranging from Lhobrak in the east to Phari and Ha valley in the west, exactly along the northern and western borders of Bhutan.⁹ A Mongol military battalion had been stationed in 1281 near

⁸ In 1975 I used an unpublished MS in the possession of the University of Washington, Seattle, copied for the explorer Joseph Rock from an original in the collections of Rai Bahadur Densapa of Sikkim.

⁹ *Rgya bod yig tshang*, pt. 2: 53.a-b.

Lhobrak to suppress them, but in subsequent decades they continued to harass the Tibetan peasants.¹⁰

In 1335, the Drukpa hierarch of Ralung, Jamyang Kunga Sengge was apparently viewed as the Tibetan cleric with most influence among these people. Responding to an order by his own teacher to mediate the destructive feuds and raids, he sent gifts and commands to “the southern lamas and *lopen*” to desist from looting castles, killing herds of domestic animals, and committing acts of arson.¹¹ It is unclear, however, exactly where these Southerners lived. But the *Dung Reng* did not stop their raids. In 1338 Kunga Sengge was again petitioned to intervene in the civil strife, this time by officials from Sakya and headmen from ‘*Gos yul tsho bzhi*, whose property was being plundered.¹² This time, he went personally to Phari to settle down his wild disciples, and the *Du* (i.e. *Dung*) *Reng* indeed vowed to quit. Kunga Sengge remained there during the tranquil autumn months.

Then in 1345, and again two years later, the *Dung Reng* were back causing trouble. Sakya’s military chief instructed Kunga Sengge that if he, as their lama, or his local patron chiefs could not pacify these people then a Sakya-led army would be launched against them. On this occasion the feuding clans included southerners from the Phari area as well as the Jowo Pön lineage (*jo bo dpon [b]rgyud*) and the Yardrok Tshatsen (*yar ’brog gi tsha btsan*), who would have lived near Lhobrak. Kunga Sengge toured the districts of western Bhutan for several months and found the local chiefs in heated internal conflict. He negotiated the release of some forty condemned men being held prisoner by Lopen Drelakhapa.¹³ Kunga Sengge then traveled on to Phari and again negotiated a peace, this time at Nyingro, north of Chumbi.

What is interesting in these accounts, none of which were available to Michael Aris, is that the people with whom Kunga Sengge associated during these visits did not refer to themselves as *Dung* or even as *Gdung*, which lends some credence to the theory that the term may have served as a kind of epithet rather than a formal lineage name, or at least not the

¹⁰ *Rgya bod yig tshang*, Pt. 1: 209.a.

¹¹ *Kun dga’ seng ge*: 18.a. “*Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa’i gsung gis lho phyogs su ’khrugs pa chen po lang nas / yul mkhar rnams ’phrog pa’i ’thab rtsod lha ma yin g.yul ngor zhugs pa lta bu / dud ’gro’i tshogs rnams gsod gcod dang / btso sreg dmyal ba’i gnas lta bu byed kyi yod par ’dug pas / ’khrug pa’i bsdums la sng gsung nas / lho’i bla ma rnams dang slob dpon rnams la gsung shog gnang sbyin dang bcas pa bskur nas / lho phyogs kyi yul khams bde ba la bkod do //*”

¹² *Kun dga’ seng ge*: 19.b.

¹³ *Kun dga’ seng ge*: 35.b-38.b; *Blo gros seng ge*: 2.a - 4.b. Drela (Tib. ‘*Bras-la*) was a pass between Paro and Thimphu. During this visit, also, Kunga Sengge’s young Bhutanese female disciple *Lopenma* Tashidan gave birth to his son and successor on the throne at Ralung, Jamyang Lodro Sengge.

main title by which they were known. In any case, there is no doubt that those whom Tibetans knew as *Dung* or *Dung Reng* included people from Chumbi valley, western Bhutan, and the Yardrok/Lhobrak area. But there is not a bit of written evidence that any of the *Dung* came from Bumthang or Tawang.

The Fifth Dalai Lama's history of Tibet describes the two *Dung* factions as "warriors armed with [bows and] arrows."¹⁴ Though his account is late and often takes poetic license, a picture of the *Dung* as perceived by Tibetans comes through.

2. The Dispersal of the *Dung* from Southern Tibet into Bhutan and Mon Yul

Religious mediation apparently did not produce sufficient results. Sakya appointed a military champion to put down the *Dung Reng* by force, Pönyig Phagpa Palzang (1316-1370) who later founded the fortress of Lhun-grub-rtse at Gyantse.¹⁵ After some preliminary skirmishes within Tibet proper, he assembled a body of troops from throughout central Tibet and in 1352 he engineered the slaughter of a group of western Bhutanese chiefs at Phari, at the head of the Chumbi valley. According to the *Rgya bod yig tshang*, the only source recording the event in detail, Phagpa Palzang enticed some 160 feuding chiefs (*mi-drag*) and *lopen*¹⁶ from Paro, Ha Taklung (*Stag lung*), and elsewhere in Bhutan to gather there for a feast. Their leader was named Lopen Tag Ö (*Stag 'od*) of the Paro Banphrang (*ban-'phrang-pa*) faction. Having arrived in Phari, and while being plied with food and drink, the Sakya soldiers killed them all and buried their heads and limbs beneath the paving stones of a temple to the protective deities.¹⁷

Either before or just after this event (the sources disagree), the *Dung* in the east led by their chief named Dondrub Dar were defeated at Lhobrak and submitted themselves and all of their property to Sakya

¹⁴ *Dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*: 176 "mda' kha dpa' rtsal dang ldan pa'i"

¹⁵ On the temples and monasteries founded by the kings of this new 'dynasty' at Gyantse, see Franco Ricca & Erberto Lo Bue (1993: 11ff).

¹⁶ The word *slob-dpon* in Bhutanese usage is a term of respect for grown men of good standing within society, heads of family, not strictly a 'teacher' as in Tibetan.

¹⁷ *Rgya bod yig tshang*, Pt. 2: 56.a-b. *Lho dung 'dul ba la dgongs nas / phag ri rin chen sgang du phebs / lho spas [i.e. spa] 'gro ban 'phrang pa'i / slob dpon stag 'od zer bya ba 'jam 'gros kyi [b]kug / zhwa gos la sogs ster sbyin bzang po rim par byas pa la / gzhan yang 'gran 'dug pas / lho dung gi slob dpon drag tshad mang po phag rir bos / zas chang gi kha brid nas / mi drag btus brgya drug cu tsam bsad / mgo lag gnad che ba rnams / rin chen sgang gi mgon khang dang / sgo rnams kyi them 'og na yod /*. The date when "the *Lho Dung* were eradicated (*tshar bcad*) at Phari Rinchengang" was 1352 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*: 8), a passage that seems clear evidence that the people known to Tibetans as *Lho Dung* included these chiefs from Paro and Ha.

authority. They were assigned government posts (*las 'dzin la bcug pas*) under Sakya. Their strongholds throughout Lhobrak were destroyed and their families were relocated elsewhere in Nyang Tö.¹⁸ As for the *Lho Dung* referred to in Tibetan records, they clearly included the *Gdung* chiefs of western Bhutan. But the slaughter at Phari stalled the attempt of western Bhutanese chiefs to control the upper Chumbi valley, and may also explain the low state to which the *Gdung* fell within western Bhutan itself during later centuries. Phari became the southern outpost of the Sakya realm, effectively the border trade mart with Bhutan beyond which armed escorts were needed to proceed.¹⁹

In summary, the Sakya campaigns of 1352-1354 destroyed the *Dung* forces from east and west. There is no exact record of the battles or number of victims along the eastern front. At least some of the enemy commanders surrendered rather than fight, were relocated and given subservient positions under Sakya. But it seems evident that a portion of the *Shar Dung* chiefs and their families, perhaps the majority, did not submit at this time. My theory is that they must have fled south and east to escape the Sakya troops, in rather substantial numbers, becoming the ancestors of the *Gdung* lineages of Ura and Ngang, and in the Tshona or Tawang area of Mon Yul. From there, at a later date, one branch apparently came south along the Nyamjang river into eastern Bhutan, in accord with the ancestral *Gdung* legend of Dungsang.

If this hypothesis is correct, it provides a definite time frame and motive for these population movements, and a credible explanation for the linguistic affinity between Bumthang and Mon Yul. Indeed, the turmoil of this period continued on into 1358, when Sakya itself was overthrown by the forces of Phagmodru. Social upheaval was often perceived as a sensitive topic for Buddhist authors, and political criticism was generally avoided except in cryptic discourse. And so these events are mirrored in a famous prophetic text discovery of Pema Lingpa dated 1484, in which is described the social chaos attending the defeat of Sakya by forces of Phagmodru,

“Armies will turn the temples of Sakya into forts,
The Pig [Phagmodru] will reduce all [Tibet] beneath his power,
Men will be enslaved, robbery and banditry will spread,

¹⁸ *Rgya bod yig tshang*, Pt. 2: 55.b-56.b. The briefer account in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*: p. 8, attributes the defeat of the *Shar Dung* to Phagpa Palzang's younger brother Phagpa Rinchen (1320-1376), “for which all of Ü and Tsang were most grateful.” The text also refers to defeat of the *Lho Dung* at Lhobrak, but I believe this is a simple error for *Shar Dung*.

¹⁹ See the account of *Choeje Barawa's* travel to Paro ca. 1362, under armed escort of his Bhutanese host (*'Ba' ra rnam mgyur*: 107.a, 125.a).

Murder will be praised and worn as a badge of valor,
Most of central Tibet will flee to Lho Mon, Tsari and Kongpo...."²⁰

Although it does not specifically mention the *Gdung*, the same prophecy goes on to foretell subsequent periods of strife among contending chieftains in the valleys of Bumthang.

3. The *Gdung* Ancestral Myths based on the *Gyalrig* and *Bstan 'dzin legs pa'i don grub's Namthar*

If the Bhutanese *Gdung* arrived in the country in substantial numbers during the 14th century, and not in antiquity as supposed, one would expect to find some evidence of this in their ancestral myths. The *Gyalrig* presents three versions of the *Gdung* ancestral myth, gathered from separate family lineages. We have insufficient time to review these complex stories in detail in this oral presentation.²¹ The consistent themes among them are the elements of divine origination, somewhere in Tibet, in a manner recalling archaic Bon legends, followed by one or more distinct breaks in the line and subsequent regeneration through capture of a divine child from Yarlung valley or some other place in Tibet. The regenerative child is brought to Bhutan and, when grown, assumes the title *Gdung*. He becomes a strongman able to defend his community against outsiders. In one case he takes a bride from the traditional ruling family of the Choekhor valley. The timing of this is unstated, but could have been the 14th century.

In the case of the Ngang *Gdung*, the origin myth looks back to a side branch of the Tibetan royal dynasty. After a few unspecified centuries, three brothers in this line leave their ancestral estates in Lhobrak, come south to Bumthang, assume the title *Gdung*, and become leaders of the three Bumthang valleys. Another break in one of the lines occurs when a certain *Gdung* Lhathar leaves Ngang valley for Bemji, to the west. In the case of the Zhongar *Gdung*, the lineage begins with the progenitor's miraculous birth near Tshona, north of Tawang, later making his way south along the Nyamjang river into eastern Bhutan, and thence to Merak and Dungsam. This myth is the most complex, and contains several distinct phases.

²⁰ *Lung bstan kun gsal me long*, a section of the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*, in *The Rediscovered Teachings of Padma Gling pa*. Thimphu, 1975, vol. 1, 11.b, 24.a-b: *Sa skya'i gtsug lag dmag gis so mkhar byed / stod med bar gsum phag gis dbang du bsud / mi mgo bran byed jag dang chom rkun dar / mi gsood pa la mngon bstod dpa' rtags 'dogs / dbus gtsang phal cher lho mon tsa kong 'bros /*.

²¹ For details, refer to Aris (1979: 115-139); Aris (1986: ff.32.a-40.a); Dasho Tenzin Dorje (1984: 64-78).

Aris looked closely at the details of these genealogical myths, drawing interesting parallels from elsewhere in the Himalayas, but never addressed what seems to me to be their most striking common element, namely the occurrence of distinct phases of lineage termination and renewal. I have shown this in Table 2. These phases, I believe, could represent real sequential segments in the ancestral history, during one of which the attribution of the title *Gdung* came to apply to a quasi-divine man or youth from Lhobrak or Yarlung, the source of the family's renewal and strength. It is tempting to locate this symbolically critical event within the tumultuous decade of the 1350's.

Conclusions

There is sometimes a temptation to view the core population of Bhutan as more or less fixed since antiquity, or at least since the time of the Tibetan monarchy, when royal princes and their followers are said to have entered the country from the north and met up with Bhutan's primordial Monpa inhabitants. In reality, however, there is much evidence of ongoing immigration and population movement during all periods, a topic only touched on in this paper.

I would argue from the evidence presented that the *Gdung* were not primarily an aboriginal people of Bhutan, but rather a somewhat scattered 'southern' (Ch. *Lho-pa*) population occupying the highlands of south-central Tibet, from Phari in the west to Lhobrak in the east, living off the land and by hunting. Branch families may have inhabited parts of Bhutan, but they were not the main body. They defended their communities from the safety of rock forts, perhaps similar to those whose ruins are still found in Lhobrak.²² Based on their origin myths they may also have been 'Bonpo' or animist religionists who, during the 14th century, were only then coming under the Buddhist influence of the Drukpa from Ralung. Their depredations finally resulted in the campaigns against them during the two decades before Sakya's own defeat in 1358 by the forces of Phagmodru.

²² See Victor Chan (1994). *Tibet handbook*, p. 688f.

Table 1: Legendary Phases of the Gdung Ancestry from Central and East Bhutan

Variant	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
1. Bemji and the Ngang Gdung	Dechung Döndup of Laya, son of king Trhi Songdetsen	Khye'u Dorje of Ngang valley and his 'Dorje brothers'	Gdung Lhathar and descendents at Bemji
2. Ura Gdung	Servants of Chikha Rathö invoke Gdung Lhagön Pelchen, son of the deity Gusey Langling	Gdung Lhawang Drakpa, descendant of king Lang Darma, captured in Yarlung	Gdung families of Chumey, Gyatsha, Domkhar, Dur, Ngang, and Ura
3. Gdung of Zhongar & Dungsam	The deity Gusey Langling, among the people of Tshona Sewakhar	Barkye from Dungsam, child of a Nāga father and human mother	Ralpa Tobchen of Ura and Molwa Lung Phase IV Gdung Lhawang Drakpa from Yarlung

Notwithstanding the documented destruction of *Dung* forts in Tibet and the defeat and surrender of *Dung* chieftains at Phari Rinchengang (the *Lho Dung*) and at Lhobrak (the *Shar Dung*), the Sakya campaign must have driven the remaining *Dung* peoples both southward into Ha and the Bumthang valley, and eastward into Mon Yul and Tawang. The combination of written evidence, the *Dung/Gdung* reputation in both Tibetan and Bhutanese tradition as rugged strong-men ruling from castles and forts, and the evidence of linguistics, testify to the identity of these peoples and to such a north-to-south movement. No recorded episode of Bhutanese or Tibetan history explains a contrary, south-to-north migration sizeable enough to produce the language anomaly described by Aris and others.

If this thesis is correct, then the *Gdung* people of Bhutan, including the *Ngang Gdung* ancestors of the Bemji Chöje and those of Gdung Glangdmar would have left Lhobrak and Chumbi and settled in Bhutan not during some vague era of the 8th – 11th centuries, but during the climactic events of 1335-'58. Their dispersal between east and west would have occurred not in Bhutan but earlier in Tibet where they were known as *Shar Dung* and *Lho Dung*.

The fragmented nature of the *Gdung* ancestral myths, containing discrete episodes of lineage termination followed by renewal from Yarlung and Tshona in Tibet may be indirect evidence of this diaspora, and perhaps of later merger with other population segments during the 300 years of subsequent history during which these legends were polished and handed down from generation to generation, prior to being written up in the *Gyalrig*. Those myth segments predating the 14th century would, of necessity, relate to their earlier existence in a Tibetan, possibly Bonpo cultural setting in the highlands of Yardrok and southern Gtsang.

Thorough field research on remnants of the *Gdung* in both eastern and western Bhutan would be an excellent research programme for researchers at the Centre for Bhutan Studies or a team of history or anthropology students at the Royal University of Bhutan

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