

THE HISTORY OF GALEN MONASTERY

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The History of Galen Monastery
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GALEN MONASTERY

A HISTORY

The monastery sits in the Khorlo Valley¹ in the district of Dege. Initially, after killing the Tibetan King Lang Darma (r. 838–842),² Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje (early 9th cent. – mid 9th cent.)³ fled to Do Kham in the year 1005/6⁴ and built a square meditation building without a central pillar. Later, Lord Ling Repa (1128–1188)⁵ of the Kagyu [order] came and restored that meditation building. Then, while Ga Anyen Dampa (1230–1303)⁶ was traveling to China, he constructed a protectors' temple called *Utter Victory Over Mara*.⁷ At a later time during the eleventh calendrical cycle (1600), the dharma lord Tenpa Tsering (1678–1738)⁸ established an entire monastery, primarily building *The Completely Victorious Teachings of the Buddha Assembly Hall* along with its sacred objects and shrine rooms.

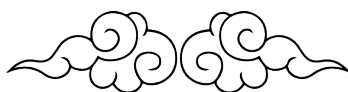
Ga from the name Ga Ling⁹ is a sub-category of the six principal Tibetan clans. In ancient times,

there was a region that was cut off from the Ga clan and was known as the Land of Asha.¹⁰ Due to the fact that the people [in that region] were not able to [properly] pronounce Ling, the word corrupted to Len.¹¹

Legend has it that when Anyen Dampa was travelling to China, he removed his saddle [to rest] at Galenteng and over time, the meaning of Galen¹² was said to derive from this [anecdote].

However, concerning this statement, Namkhai Norbu (1938–2018)¹³ comments, “Since Anyen Dampa was riding a horse while traveling to China and while returning to Tibet, he would have unsaddled his horse every day. If [it is like the legend asserts], then all those areas in China and Tibet would be called Galenteng!”

Consequently, since this place is in the center of the Land of Asha, the principal area of the



ancient Ga descendants, it is conventionally known as Galing.

After Lang Darma was set upon the throne the Buddha's doctrine greatly diminished, and it was at this time that Lhalung Pelgi Dorje murdered him and then rode out in the direction of Do Kham [to escape].

When he [arrived and] set his lotus feet upon Galingteng, he saw that it was a marvelous place and constructed a square meditation building without a pillar. There he practiced for a few months. Since the families of the Asha [region] were well-disposed toward the teachings, they paid great respect and service toward Lhalung Pelgi Dorje.

However, he did not continue to reside in the area, and he travelled to the nearby cave of the Secret Lord, which had been blessed by Guru Pema. This place is in the central mountain of the supreme secret site of the peaceful and wrathful deities of the three families. This is where he spent the rest of his life, later passing into a body of rainbow light.

[In a later period], Lord Ling Repa (of the Pakdru Kagyu) arrived at Galingteng and restored the meditation building of Lhalung Pelgi Dorje. It is also where he taught the excellent teachings to the people of that land for a few months and built an additional square meditation building equal in size to the [other] meditation building. In that place, he accepted a few disciples, and their lineage holders resided there until [very] recently.

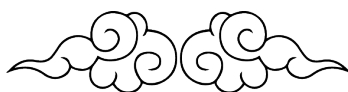
Thereafter, when the teacher Ga Anyen Dampa was travelling from China to Tibet, he set his lotus feet upon Galingteng in Do Kham,

arriving at the meditation building of Lhalung Pelgi Dorje. There he constructed a protectors' temple called *Utter Victory Over Mara*. It was from that period that the transmissions of the secret mantra of the Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya [traditions] were continued without partiality. These teachings became the tradition of Lhalung Pelgi [Dorje] of Galing.

At a later time when the dharma lord Tenpa Tsering was building twenty-five temples¹⁴ in Derge, he built Galingteng's *Completely Victorious Teachings of the Buddha Assembly Hall*. [At that time] there were Lhalung Pelgi Dorje's meditation building and the outer and inner meditation [sections] of the lord of adepts Ling Repa's meditation building. Frescos of the Kagyu and Nyingma [traditions] could be seen in the central and left shrine halls of the temple. Up until recently the shrine hall to the left, in particular, was set with statues of the peaceful and wrathful guru as well as the twenty-five disciples consisting of the lord and his subjects.¹⁵ That shrine hall was widely known as *The Nyingma Shrine Room*.¹⁶

Following the example of the prayer festival¹⁷ in Lhasa, the king of Dege inaugurated the practice of *The Great Six Assemblies of the Convocation*¹⁸ at Lhundrubteng's Gonchen Monastery¹⁹ and its seven subsidiary monasteries within which Galing Monastery is included.

Later, the tradition of appointing an abbot from Ngor Tartse, [a guru's residence at Ngor Ewam Choden Monastery],²⁰ at [Galingteng Monastery] flourished. This abbot was known as Rongpo Yarmar.²¹ Many excellent and great beings came including: Sanggye Lhundrub²² a guru of scholars and adepts, Ronpo Sherab Chozang,²³ and guru Nawang Pelden.²⁴ As the



teachings from the previous tradition of Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje diminished, the people there considered it to be a monastery of the glorious Ngor [tradition].

More recently, many gurus of the *Nyingtik*, or *Heart Essence*, lineage came including the teacher-student pair of Galing Guru Kunga Pelden²⁵ and Khyentse Chokyi Wangchuk.²⁶ Once again the teachings of Dzogchen, or the Great Perfection, spread.

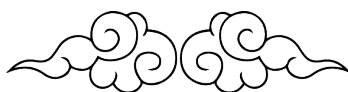
Thus, for over nine-hundred years since the founding of this monastery, excellent and great beings who continued to come to [Galingteng] built many sacred objects and shrine rooms. Yet most importantly, during the time of the previous Galing Khyentse, a list was arranged containing names of the [sacred buildings and objects] that had been [at the monastery]. As mentioned beforehand, there is the four-pillared *Completely Victorious Teachings of the Buddha Assembly Hall* constructed by the dharma lord Tenpa Tsering, Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje's meditation building, the lord of adepts Ling Repa's meditation building that has outer and inner [sections], the temple of Rongpo Yarmar, the temple shrine room which is of the Nyingma, Kagyu, and Sakya [traditions], Ga Anyen Dampa's protectors' temple called *Utter Victory Over Mara*, a giant prayer wheel, another shrine room, Galing Khyentse's palace, and living quarters for over eighty monks. When it comes to the principal sacred objects, they include a pair of statues of the Buddha about a cubit high made of the Indian alloy called *li khra*,²⁷ a statue of the Mahakala's Warm Bird²⁸ handcrafted by teacher Ga Anyen (It is widely known that at the heart of this statue remains the warmth of a bird.), three statues of a

peaceful guru, a wrathful guru, and a lion guru, a statue of Vajrabhairava, a statue of Derge's protector *Nyenchen Getok Buzik Je*,²⁹ a golden reliquary inlaid with precious stones, and cymbals called *Dzamling Yezhag*, which were famously brought by a garuda (These are said to be imprinted with the beak of the garuda.).

Concerning the source of offerings such as the expenditure for conducting practices at this monastery: Previously, the followers³⁰ of the monastery were from six settlements—three settlements of *Gyachu* and three from *Lezil*.³¹ Now, there are only the three settlements of *Lezil* (The other set of three does not exist.). They present offerings such as grains, butter, and cheese. The local Tibetan governing regimental commanders known as Khyung and Ton³² respected Galing Guru Kunga Pelden as their main guru. As such, there are many taxed farmlands from places such as Korlo Valley, Khar Sum Valley, and Mar Rongnang,³³ which have been collected together.

This monastery has four main administrators and around twenty service workers. Each of the main administrators hold their responsibilities for seven years. However, during the Cultural Revolution, the monastery's sacred objects and shrine rooms were completely destroyed, and only the name remained.

These days the temple, the statues of the Buddha and his principal retinue as well as the statues of Guru [Rinpoche] and his principal retinue have been newly constructed. More than forty monks [currently] reside at the monastery.



BIBLIOGRAPHY – EDITION USED

'Jigs med bsam grub. 1995. *Sga len dgon pa (sde dge rdzong)*. In Dkar mdzes khul gyi dgon sde so so'i lo rgyu gsal bar bshad pa, vol. 1, pp. 240–241. Beijing: Khrung go'i bod kyis shes rig dpe skrun khang. BDRC W19997

1 'khor lo mdo

2 glang dar ma or u'i dum bstan/u dum bstan (Tri Üdum Tsen), BDRC P2MS13219

There are various dates put forth concerning the time period of Lang Darma, but here we are presenting from Dates in Tibetan History and Key Events in Neighboring Lands in The Tibetan History Reader, edited by Tuttle Gray and Schaeffer Kurtis R., Xv–Xxiii. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

3 lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje, BDRC P6986

4 The script in the text is unclear if it is 1005 or 1006. Regardless, these dates need to be taken into consideration with the proposed dating of Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje and Lang Darma. See note above.

5 gling ras pa pad+ma rdo rje, BDRC P910

6 sga a gnyan dam pa kun dga' grags pa, BDRC P2612

7 bdud las rnam rgyal.

8 sde dge rgyal po 10 bstan pa tshe ring, BDRC P4095

9 sga gling

10 'a zha'i yul

11 len

12 sga len

13 nam kha'i nor bu

14 The clause here is: dus phyis chos rgyal bstan pa tshe ring gis sde dge las dgon nyi shu rtsa lnga bzhengs pa'i duḥ. We have consulted a handful of Tibetan and Western Tibetologists concerning las dgon and have not yet come to a definitive answer. According to Jann Ronis' work The Deeds of the Derge King in Sources of Tibetan Tradition edited by Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, 607–614. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, Tenpa Tsering constructed

seventeen temples during his reign. There are, additionally, twenty-five major Sakya temples in Dege; however, the translators have not found a corroborating list. It has also been suggested that these are statues of the Raven-Faced Mahākāla (las mgon, Kakamukha Mahākāla), a retinue protector figure of Catubhuja Mahākāla. If you are able to provide any help in this matter, please contact Tib Shelf.

15 rje 'bangs nyer lnga

16 snying ma'i lha khang

17 smon lam

18 'dzoms pa'i drug 'du chen mo

19 lhun grub steng, BDRC G193

20 ngor thar rtse and Ngor e waM chos ldan, BDRC G211

21 rong po yar mar

22 sangs rgyas lhun grub

23 rong po shes rab chos bzang

24 ngag dbang dpal ldan

25 kun dga' dpal ldan, BDRC P6963

26 mkhyen brtse chos kyi dbang phyug

27 This is said to be made from gold, silver, zinc, and iron.

28 mgon po byi'u drod ma

29 gnyen chen gad thog bug zig rje

30 lha sde

31 brgya chu shog and Le zil shog

32 khyung, BDRC C11MS134 and ston

33 'khor lo mdo, mkhar sum mdo, and dmar rong nang





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