

# DENTIK MONASTERY A HISTORY



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Dantik Monastery: The Sacred Place Where the Ashes of  
Dharma Rekindled in Domé  
By Various Authors  
Translated by Dr. Nicole Willock



## DENTIK MONASTERY

THE SACRED PLACE WHERE THE  
ASHES OF DHARMA REKINDLED  
IN DOMÉ

Dentik Shelgyi Yang Monastery<sup>1</sup> is located about thirty miles east of Bayan [County Seat] and is under the jurisdiction of Sershung Township, Bayan County in Domé.<sup>2</sup> Dentik Monastery is situated on the northern side of the Ma River, amid the majestic and precipitous Ama Drakmoché Mountain.<sup>3</sup> This monastery is one of the oldest in Tibet, having been constructed in the latter part of the ninth century. Dentik's monasterial estate encompassed the three villages of Ché, Pa, and Kha as well as the twelve villages of Upper and Lower Kho Yan.<sup>4</sup>

When King Langdarma suppressed Buddhism in the ninth century, Tibet's famous Three Great Scholars came and stayed at the Palchen Chuwori Meditation Center, where they engaged in study and meditation.<sup>5</sup> Being aware of the suppression of Buddhism [in Central Tibet], the Three Great Scholars: Mar

Śākyamuni, Yo Gejung, and Tsang Rabsal, brought the Vinaya Scriptures to Dentik Monastery on the back of a mule and resided there for a long time.<sup>6</sup> Today, the meditation building where these three excellent ones practiced is known as Gomchen (Main Meditation Hall).

One day, due to merit acquired through Buddhist practice in former lives and karmic imprints, a child called Müsu Salwar from Gyazhu Village turned up at Dentik Monastery.<sup>7</sup> He developed a strong faith in Buddhism and asked to take monastic vows. So, Tsang Rabsal acted as abbot and Yo Gejung presided as master to administer vows to the young boy. He was given the ordination name Gewa Rabsal, taken from the names of the abbot and master.<sup>8</sup> Since the boy's heart was so generous, he became known as Gongpa Rabsal.



[Years later] he was given full ordination with the name Lachen Gongpa Rabsal.<sup>9</sup>

Ten men from Central Tibet, including Pakhor Yeshé Yungdrung, came to Dentik to pay homage to the Great Lama Gongpa Rabsal.<sup>10</sup> They wore monks' attire, took full ordination vows, and listened to teachings, such as those on the Vinaya. When the ten men returned to Central Tibet, [they shared all they acquired], beginning the Later Transmission of the Dharma. Consequently, it is said that the rekindling of the Dharma started in Domé. Today in Dentik Monastery's Gomchen, there are many statues and images of the Three Great Scholars, Lachen Gongpa Rabsal, and the ten men from Central Tibet.

In the sixteenth century when the Third Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Sönam Gyatso, was forty-one years old in the Water Sheep Year (1583), he went to Kumbum and Jakyung Monasteries on the invitation of the leader of a local tribe called Shingkyong Nang So.<sup>11</sup>

From there, he went to the power place of Dentik to practice meditation in a cave for some time. While dwelling in this cave, which is now called Drubchen or "The Cave of Spiritual Accomplishments," he composed a few sections of teachings on The Five Deities of Cakrasaṃvara,<sup>12</sup> after a vision of Śrī Cakrasaṃvara. Physical imprints left after his meditation sessions can still be seen today. These imprints, which look like prints left in clay, are in the shape of his hat, the back of his body, and his head. On the cave ceiling, there are many impressions left from poking his finger into the clay above. There is also a hoofprint from Palden Lhamo's donkey in the rock.

In the eighteenth century, the great master Arik Geshé Gyaltzen Öser lived at Dentik Monastery and performed many spiritual accomplishments in the retreat hut.<sup>13</sup> In the thirty-first year of Emperor Qianlong's reign, the Fire Pig Year, (1767), Tseten Khenpo Palden Gyatso and Shabdrung Jamyang Drakpa commanded the construction of the main assembly hall, Sang-ngak Darjeling.<sup>14</sup> [In the nineteenth century,] the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Tubten Gyatso, bestowed great blessings when he consecrated many religious objects over a seven-day period and left handprints on many religious paintings in the assembly hall.<sup>15</sup> Over ten of these blessed religious paintings can still be seen today.

Famous sites which can be visited today include Rāza Cave,<sup>16</sup> where Prince Siddhārtha stayed for twelve years engaging in the arduous intention of a bodhisattva, Amnyé Lügyal Temple, naturally manifesting religious images of Maitreya, and naturally manifesting images of the Twenty-One Tārās and the Sixteen Arhats. In addition, Buddha images painted in the Dunhuang style, said to date back to the Tibetan Imperial period, are visible on the rocks above [Amnyé Lügyal Temple] and the path from the main temple to [Yangtik] at Tapa.<sup>17</sup>

Approximately seventy monks currently reside at Dentik Monastery. The Fourteenth Incarnation of Tseten Khenpo, the Honorable Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyaltzen, and the Seventh Tseten Shabdrung, the Honorable Lobsang Jampal Norbu,<sup>18</sup> both oversee the three main tasks ensuring the proper running of Dentik Monastery: adhering to laws and customs, carrying out seasonal prayer



obligations, and following monthly religious practices. Hence, Dentik Monastery is a practice center praised by all in all aspects of its function.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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1 dan tig shel gyi yang dgon, BDRC G314

2 ba yan; Ch. Hualong zhen; gser gzhung; Ch. Jinyuan xiang

3 Ma chu; Ch. Huanghe ; a ma brag mo che; This is part of the southern branch of the Tsongla Ringmo Range (Ch. Laji shan).

4 dpyid, pa, kha; kho yan stod smad; The original Tibetan document reads kho yar, which has been revised to kho yan/ya.

5 rgyal po glang dar ma, BDRC P2MS13219; mkhas pa mi gsum; dpal chen chu bo ri sgom grwa

6 dmar śākya mu ne, BDRC P4643; g.yo dge ba'i 'byung gnas, BDRC P4339; gtsang rab gsal, BDRC P4642

7 mu gzu gsal bar; rgya zhu sde grong (now Xunhua County)

8 dge ba rab gsal

9 bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal, 832?–915?, BDRC P1523

10 dbus gtsang; spa khor/pa gor gong ye shes g.yung drung, BDRC P3899

11 rgyal ba bsod nams rgya mtsho, 1543–1588, BDRC P999; sku 'bum dgon pa, BDRC G160; bya khyung dgon pa, BDRC G161; zhing skyong nang so

12 bde mchog lha lnga

13 The original Tibetan states that he arrived in the seventeenth century, however, this individual was born in 1728. a rig dge bshes rgyal mtshan 'od zer, 1728–1803, BDRC P4235

14 mkhen po dpal ldan rgya mtsho; zhabs drung 'jam dbyangs grags pa, BDRC P1893; gsang sngags dar rgyas gling

15 ta la'i bla ma 13 thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876–1933, BDRC P197

16 rwa dza/rA dza

17 yang tig; this pa

18 ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan; tshe tan zhabs drung 07 blo bzang 'jam dpal nor bu





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