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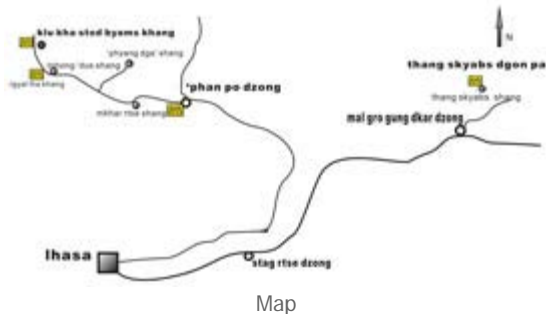
[HOME](#) | [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) | [INTRODUCTION](#) | [ABSTRACTS](#)

A study on the history and development of the chapel Klu Kha Stod Byams khang ('Phan Yul)

by Shawo Khacham

Summary translation by Amy Heller

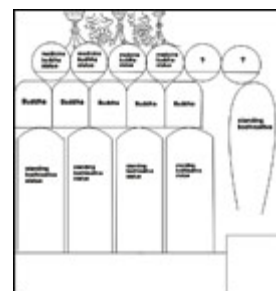
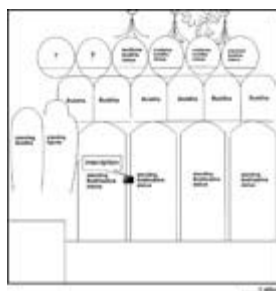
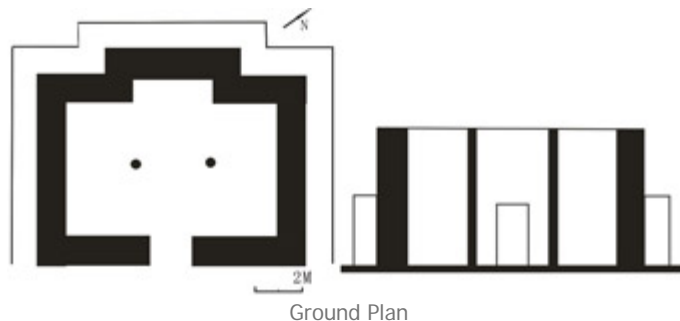
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This is a preliminary study of the ancient culture and development of the temple Klu Kha Stod Byams Khang, also known as the sPyan legs byams khang temple, both names in relation to an icon of Maitreya (Byams pa) as an essential feature of this sanctuary. This study aims to provide some basic information about this ancient Buddhist sanctuary's architecture, mural paintings and the ancient inscriptions in Tibetan language which describe the history of the temple's foundation at the start of the Buddhist revival period in Central Tibet in the region north of Lhasa. This was a period of great cultural activity in 'Phan yul which had been initiated in 1012 with the construction of the rGyal lha khang by sNa nam rdo rje dbang phyug (976-1060), a disciple of Klu mes, who was the instigator of the revival of Buddhism in central Tibet prior to the arrival of Atisa in 1045; the construction of the Klu Kha Stod Byams Khang, just six kilometers distant from the rGyal lha khang is part of this chapter on the ancient history of

Buddhism in the vicinity of Lhasa. (see Map). This region has two temples which were traditionally counted among the geomantic foundations by Srong btsan sgam po, the Katse (sKa tshal) temple and the Thang skyabs temple which was restored by Klu mes roughly at the same time as the foundation of rGyal lha khang[1]. Initial results of the analysis of the photographs of the historic inscription in Tibetan language yield the information that the foundation of this temple is related to the students of early bKa' gdams pa master 'Brom ston (1004/5-1064), roughly in the second half of the 11th century. The historic inscription is written in Tibetan print (*dbu can*) letters, with some words having characteristic archaic letters and orthography (see Inscription) (see mural photograph of inscription and detail photograph). [2]

In terms of the architecture, the temple is very simple structure (see Ground plan of temple and photograph of facade). It is now in the center of the village, but to the left (in east), there is a high mountain which is traditionally identified as the *bla ri*, "soul mountain" of Khri srong lde brtsan, the Tibetan btsan po of the late 8th century. The entrance to the sanctuary faces south, it is roughly square. There are two ancient tall pillars and three principal ceiling beams, 27 rafters. The principal cult statues are the Buddhas of the Three Times, and on the east and west, there are the thrones and the prabha of mural paintings which surrounded the places where formerly there were the 8 great Bodhisattva sculptures, as well as the Buddha of Medicine, four protectors, and the mural paintings of 35 Buddhas of Confession (identified according to the research of bSod nams chos dar, 'Phan yul monuments, 2009: 35). The second and third story have other icons which are later than the most ancient paintings.



In terms of history, three sanctuaries dedicated to Maitreya were recognized in



Foundation Inscription

'Phan yul, referred to as the "Three Maitreya Brothers of upper 'Phan yul"; which are the Rvag ma lha khang, the rGyal lha khang and this temple is the third foundation among the three.[3]

In 2011, from July 27th until September 13th, I was able to visit and study this temple in a systematic research project. On the East wall, beside the Bodhisattva Sgrib pa rnam sel, there is the inscription, which shows in particular the ancient spelling of archaic mya and some special archaic terms, as well as relating the historical data (see photograph of the foundation inscription).

The transliteration of this inscription in Tibetan reads:

ra/ xsnong gtings kyi 'og/ / bdal ba khod snyoms dog mo ljongs kyi stengs/ / phrig shas don mtshon lho'i dzam bu gling// bzhus brgyan pa'i x/ bzhi bcom drug ldan dge bshes spru ston gyis// gzhan las dpags te dpyan yas gser khang bzhengs// /x gtong gi rbyud// yig tshang gser g.yu'i bdag po pha bdun 'brom gyi bu// sras grabs rgya x pa'i bshom gyi ba spu la// / x pa'i snying po bzhengs pa gzugs sku rin po che// na bza' gser la gyis pa xrin po che // snying po x rin po che// mtha' yas sems can ma lus kun// bla myed byang chub myur thob shog// he he xskye x

Although fragmentary, it is clear that there is a reference to Geshe Spru ston, who is specified as the founder (dge bshes spru ston gyis gzhan las dpags te dpyan yas gser khang bzhengs), and he is referred to as "'Brom ston's son" ('brom gyi bu) probably an indication that he was a student of 'Brom ston, and possibly also his kinsman. This is highly significant in terms of the chronological framework, because previously it was widely accepted that in this region, rather than 'Brom ston's disciple, it was his teacher Na nam rdo rje dbang phyug (976-1060)[4] who was the founder of this temple. Thus the foundation year would be within the second half of the eleventh century, while the actual writing of the inscription in correlation with recent studies of chronology of Tibetan manuscripts and handwriting may be attributed to early twelfth century at latest.

In this inscription, the temple name is spelled dbyan yas gser khang (the gold chapel of dByan yas), which is close homonym for sPyan (literally, "the eye"), but it is clearly the sPyan legs temple which is discussed here.

In terms of the development of the temple, it is considered to be in the Spyan legs sgang (district), which is mentioned in a liturgical passage of the text entitled "Chos rgyal gsol mchod lag bris ma" (praise to the Dharma raja, handwritten), which describes the history in a cryptic passage mentioning the temple:

"This chapel is genuinely like the land of the gods, it is the Buddha's Naga temple of the upper valley (rgyal gyi klu kha stod), it is the Golden chapel Dpyan yas (gser khang dpyan yas)".

In this case, it seems important to investigate further the meaning of the name dPyan yas, which in my opinion may be an archaism, or a term whose original meaning is unknown at present.

Preliminary analysis of the iconographic program



Buddhas of confession

On the east and west walls, within prabha of ca. 160 cm in height, there are the mural paintings which had been devoted to the full cycle of the 35 Buddhas of confession, each approximately 100 cm in height. (see photograph with detail of two of the seated Buddhas within their prabha). There are also the dharma guardians the two wrathful Acala and Hayagriva. In the Vairocana liturgy of the mandala of the Kun Rig ("The Omniscient Vairocana" Sarvavid) cycle, there is close correspondence with the figures represented here, which correlates with the chronological period of the 11th century as paramount popularity of Kun Rig in mNga' ris, followed by the spread and popularity of Vairocana liturgical cycles in central Tibet during the second half of the 11th century, such as at Grva-thang monastery, on the southern banks of the gTsang po. [5] Indeed in the Bodhisattva of the Klu kha stod byams khang, there is also some aesthetic correlation of the very short dhoti, body proportions, notably the high Indian crown model, with 11th century mural paintings of the bodhisattva attendants of the Buddha at Yemar (see photograph of standing Bodhisattva), and the geometric and circular mural paintings of the ceilings present in both Zha Lu

and Grathang in relation to the ceiling motifs of Klu kha stod byams khang (see ceiling motif of kLu kha stod and see the comparative examples from Zha Lu Yum chen mo lha khang and the Gra thang murals).



Standing Bodhisattva



Standing Buddha



Standing Bodhisattva



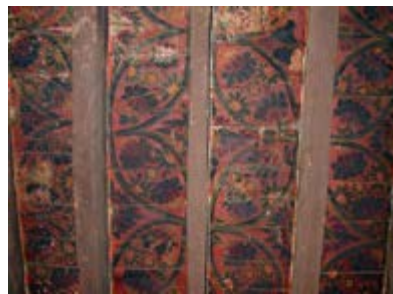
Standing Buddha



Grathang Mural



Ceiling motif



Ceiling motif



kLu kha stod byams khang temple

We hope to pursue this research in a future more detailed aesthetic and historic analysis of the kLu kha stod byams khang temple.

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Footnotes:

1. www.tbrc.org/#library_place_Object-G2067

2. See the studies by Sam van Schaik "[Beyond Anonymity: Palaeographic Analyses of the Dunhuang Manuscripts](http://www.thlib.org/tid=T3106)" (with Tom Davis and Jacob Dalton) in *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 3 (2007) <http://www.thlib.org/tid=T3106>.

3. See bSod nams chos dar, 'Phan yul monuments ('phan yul gnas bshad) 2009: 31-35; see Chos legs, Lhasa monuments of the Land of Snows (gangs can kyi gnasa bshad lam yig gsar ma las lha sa khul gyi gnas yig, vol 2. 2004: 18; see mkhar gdong pa, 'Phan yul klu kha stod spyang legs byams pa'i lo rgyus (history of the 'Phan yul klu kha stod spyang legs byams pa chapel), 2011: vol. 2.

4. See Dun mkhar tshig mdzod chen mo, 2002: 1761 for the biography of this teacher. For his reputation as founder of this temple, see for example, under the phonetic spelling "chenleg jamkhang" <http://places.thlib.org/features/16908/descriptions/729>, which quotes the 2004 description by Chos 'spel, *Guide to the places of the Lhasa district*, for this attribution of foundation by sNa Nam rdo rje dbang phyug.

5. See Ka thog Si tu's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet, for the analysis of Grathang monastery in relation to the Vairocana cycles and the two guardians Acala and Hayagriva, 1999: 197. (this guidebook and analysis of the Vairocana cycles has been discussed by A. Heller, 2002, "The Paintings of Gra thang: History and Iconography of an 11th century Tibetan Temple." In *Tibet Journal* 27(1/2), pp.39-72. See R. Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet*, London, 1990 for discussion of Yemar, its iconography and archival photographs.

[HOME](#) | [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) | [INTRODUCTION](#) | [ABSTRACTS](#)

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