

The Rulers of Bhutan c. 1650–1750

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The purpose of this short paper is to establish the succession and approximate chronology of the heads of the Bhutanese state during the first hundred years or so of its existence. I am quite aware that my study has a mere preliminary character, as it taps only a few of the numerous sources, which are known to exist but are not yet available in the West. Thus it is hoped that it may be superseded in a near future by more thorough and complete research. Such as it is, I trust it may serve to some useful purpose.

The standard source¹ for Bhutanese history of the early period is represented by *LCB*. It is an authoritative work, whose value, however, is impaired by confusion and mistakes in the dates; some of them can be corrected with the help of other Bhutanese texts and of Central Tibetan and Chinese sources.

Till the beginning of the 20th century Bhutan (Lho-'brug or 'Brug-yul) enjoyed the doubtful blessing of institutions that where as unique as they were cumbersome. The nominal head of the state was an incarnate lama, while secular administration was entrusted to a regent, who could be either a monk or a layman. Their titles were respectively *rgyal-tš'ab* (more commonly but improperly: *žabs-druñ rin-po-c'e*) and *sde-srid* (in full: *sde-srid p'yag-mdzod*), the *Dharma Raja* and *Deb Raja* of British Indian authors². However, this set-up was not finally established until a fairly late period. In the beginnings the mode of selection of the *rgyal-tš'ab* wavered between heredity, incarnation and election by the ecclesiastic and lay dignitaries; and the lists in *LCB* are only an attempt at systematize a matter which escaped any consistent frame. As for the *sde-srid*, who later came to be elected for a period of three years, his rule was at first the result of victory or compromise in the rivalries of the regional chiefs. Foremost among them were the *dpon-slob* (or *spyi-bla*) of sPa-gro (or Rin-spuñs), Dar-dkar and Kroñ-sa, and the *rdzoñ-dpon* of bKra-sis-c'os-rdzoñ, sPu-na-k'a (or sPuñs-t'añ) and dBañ-'dus-p'o-brañ. Civil war, or at least severe latent strife, was a quite normal condition in Bhutan; central

¹ The following abbreviations will be used: *LCB* = *Lho'i c'os 'byuñ*, written between 1731 and 1759 by the 10th *mk'an-c'en* bsTan-'dzin-c'os-rgyal (1700–1767) (for a table of its contents see *Catalogue of the Toyo Bunko collection of Tibetan works on history*, Tokyo 1970, pp. 159–162); *L7DL* = *Life of the Seventh Dalai Lama* (1703–1757) by the 2nd lCañ-skya Qutuqtu (1717–1786); *MBTJ* = *Mi dbañ rtogs brjod*, biography of the Tibetan ruler P'o-lha-nas (1689–1747) by mDo-mk'ar Ts'e-rin-dbañ-rgyal (1697–1763); *PTD* = *Pandita bstan 'dzin c'os kyi rgyal po'i rtogs pa brjod pa sgyu ma c'en po'i yar stabs*, biography of the 10th *mk'an-c'en* bsTan-'dzin-c'os-rgyal (1700–1767) by the 13th *mk'an-c'en* Nag-dbañ-yon-tan-mt'a-yas (1724–1783); *TSM* = *mTs'uñs med c'os kyi rgyal po rje rin po c'e'i rnam par t'ar pa bskañ bzañ legs bris 'dod pa'i re skoñ dpag bsam gyi sñe ma*, biography of the 1st *rgyal-tš'ab* Nag-dbañ bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638–1696), written in 1720 by the 6th *mk'an-c'en* Nag-dbañ-lhun-grub (d. 1729–30). I owe heartfelt thanks to Mr. E. Gene SMITH, who lent to me the last two works.

² The last *žabs-druñ* died in 1933 and no reincarnation was allowed. The last *sde-srid* had died in 1903 and his functions lapsed with the foundation of hereditary monarchy in 1907.

authority made itself felt only when a strong personality imposed his hold upon the clans of the several valleys.

The foundation of the state was contemporary, and partly connected, with the climax and rapid fall of the kingdom of gTsañ, whose rulers supported the Karma-pa sect in Central Tibet. They did not refrain from oppressing other Red sects, such as the 'Brug-pa, although their main enemy were the dGe-lugs-pa (the Yellow Church), who in the end contrived the downfall of the kingdom. The formation of the present Bhutanese state had its beginning in 1616, when Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal (1594—1651), also called bDud-'joms-rdo-rje, migrated to the South. This move was due to inner contrasts within the 'Brug-pa subsect of the bKa'-bryud-pa. Here too, as generally in Central Tibet, a trend had arisen to substitute incarnation as the mode of succession in the place of the earlier hereditary rule of great religious families. The rGya house of Rva-luñ, the main seat of the 'Brug-pa, had put up Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal as their candidate to the succession of the scholar and saint Padma-dkar-po (1527—1592); but the struggle that ensued led to a decision by the ruler of gTsañ in favour of the son of the prince of 'P'yoñs-rgyas. and Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal eventually retired to the unknown South³. Gradually he established his overall authority in the western portion of that ill-defined and almost savage region, pushing into the background the Lha-pa Lamas of gÑos, a branch of the 'Bri-guñ-pa, who had been paramount till that time. Spiritual teacher, builder of monasteries, statesman, warrior, Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal was a true nation builder; practically unknown outside Bhutan, he certainly would deserve a special study, which, however, lies beyond the scope of the present paper⁴.

His relations with his homeland Tibet were stormy. In 1639 Karma-bstan-skyoñ (1622—1642), the last ruler of gTsañ, sent an army against Bhutan; the successful repulse of the invasion was attributed, as always afterwards in similar cases, to magic worked by the Bhutanese ruler⁵. Only three years later, Karma-bstan-skyoñ was overwhelmed by the Qośot chief Guñri Khan, who gave the temporal sovereignty upon the whole of Central Tibet to the Fifth Dalai-Lama. This meant the beginning of bad days for the 'Brug-pa; some learned lamas of that sect fled to Bhutan⁶. War broke out, and during three years (1644—1647) Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal resisted the pressure of the Mongol-Tibetan army. Shortly later he supported the ill-starred revolt that broke out in gTsañ in 1648⁷. In its wake another invasion of Bhutan took place, to be repelled as usual (1649)⁸. Afterwards Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, although remaining on half-hostile terms with the Dalai-Lama, gave up

³ See E. Gene SMITH, Preface to *Tibetan chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, ed. by Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi 1968, pp. 1—4.

⁴ Such a study should be based mainly on his biography: *dPal 'Brug pa rin po c'e ñag dbañ rnam rgyal gyi rnam par t'ar pa c'os kyī sprin*, written in the second half of the 18th century by 'Jam-dbyaṅs-bśes-gñen.

⁵ Biography of Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, II, f. 99a; LCB, ff. 37b—38a; TSM, ff. 21b—22b.

⁶ TSM, f. 24a; LCB, f. 39a.

⁷ TSM, f. 31a—b; LCB, ff. 41a—b, 43b—45a; G. TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Rome 1948, p. 68.

⁸ Biography of Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, II, ff. 135b—136b; TSM, f. 47a.

active interference in Tibetan affairs and dedicated himself to organizing his dominion. He decreed that sovereignty was to be vested in his successors; control of the 'Brug-pa clergy was entrusted to a chief abbot (*gnas-brtan c'en-po*; usually styled *rje mk'an-c'en*); secular government was the task of the *sde-srid dbu-mdzad*, later called *p'yag-mdzod*)⁹.

Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal retired from state affairs into mystical seclusion in 1651, after which no further information on him is given by the texts; almost certainly he died in the same year. His succession was not simple. He had a son, Ñag-dbañ 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje, born in 1631¹⁰, who by rights ought to have succeeded him. But he was sickly and weak¹¹ and was practically passed over. There is a sort of conspiracy of silence about him in our sources; but it seems that he lived on as a sort of outwardly respected prisoner of state. He married, but only a daughter was issued from his marriage; and he died in 1680 or 1681¹².

Already upon the death of Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal a party had pushed forward as the future ecclesiastic ruler Ñag-dbañ bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas (1638—1696), the third son of Mi-p'am Ts'e-dbañ-bstan-'dzin, alias rTa-mgrin-rgyal-mts'an (1574—1643), who descended in the second generation from the rGya family of Rva-luñ. bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had been tonsured at the age of 8 by Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal himself, who gave him the religious name¹³ and considered him as a second son¹⁴. This helped to establish his claim to the succession. A preliminary recognition was given already in 1651¹⁵. But it was only in 1680 that a faction led by dGe-'dun-c'os-'p'el caused him to be formally proclaimed as the 1st *rgyal-tsab*¹⁶. It was probably on this occasion that the rightful heir 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje was quietly removed from the scene. bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas was invested not only with the spiritual sovereignty, but also with actual government; accordingly, he is also reckoned as the 4th *sde-srid*. His activity, as described in his biography, seems to have centered upon religious ceremonies and the building of new monasteries; his main work was the cloister of rTa-mgo, decorated by Nepalese artists and consecrated in 1690¹⁷. Nevertheless, he also consolidated Bhutanese suze-

⁹ LCB, f. 54a—b.

¹⁰ Biography of Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, II, f. 87b; LCB, f. 33b.

¹¹ LCB, f. 54b.

¹² The main sources for this statement are as follows. A passage of the biography of Se'u-la Byams-mgon Ñag-dbañ-rgyal-mts'an (1647—1732) by the 9th *rje mk'an-c'en* Sakya-rin-c'en (1710—1759) (*sKu bži'i dbañ p'yug rje btsun Nag dbañ rgyal mts'an gyi rnam l'ar l'ams cad mk'yen pa'i rol mo*, f. 61a) refers to an encounter between Se'u-la Byams-mgon and an aging and helpless 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje in about 1680. The biography of the 2nd *rje mk'an-c'en* bSod-nams-'od-zer (1613—1689; in office 1672—1689) mentions the marriage of 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje and the rituals performed to ensure the birth of a male heir; no date is given, but the event occurred when bSod-nams-'od-zer was on the see. 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's daughter was born in 1680 and he died shortly after. The materials on which this note is based were supplied to me by Mr. E. Gene SMITH. I may add that TSM, f. 148a, mentions under the date of 1682 "the former residence of *bla-ma* 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje", which means that he was already dead.

¹³ TSM, f. 28b; LCB, f. 55b.

¹⁴ TSM, ff. 25b, 52b.

¹⁵ TSM, ff. 52b—53a.

¹⁶ TSM, ff. 123b, 131a; LCB, ff. 56a (where the date is wrong), 60a.

¹⁷ TSM, ff. 214a—229a.

rainty over Ghaṭaka, i. e. Cooch-Bihar (1683)¹⁸. Another threat of Tibetan invasion was averted by negotiations, and a formal treaty was concluded in 1687¹⁹. A menacing move by the Tibetan regent Sañs-rgyas-rgya-mts'o was met in 1691 by a firm assertion of the validity of the treaty concluded four years before²⁰.

Slowly bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas grew sick of the bickerings and factions between the various *rdzoñ-dpon* and *spyi-bla*; being moreover in indifferent health, he decided to retire²¹. And thus on the Tibetan New Year of 1695 he formally abdicated and retired to the rTa-mgo monastery²², where he died in the 5th month of 1696²³.

bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas had married, but had no male issue²⁴; this second failure of the hereditary principle led to its abandonment. The new *sde-srid* dGe-'dun-c'os'p'el thought for a moment of putting on the see 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje's daughter mTs'o-skyes-rdo-rje²⁵. But the idea was dismissed at once; and the *sde-srid*, acting in concert with the *rje mk'an-c'en*, selected as the 2nd *rgyal-ts'ab* Ñag-dbañ Kun-dga'-rgyal-mts'an, born in Eastern Bhutan in the Earth-Snake year 1689²⁶. He was given a careful education, and at the age of 14 (i. e. in 1702) was tonsured and given his religious name, whereupon he was installed as religious head²⁷. His tenure of the seat, such as it was, was brought to a ruinous end by the conflict between the *sde-pa* P'a-jo (who became the 8th *sde-srid*) and the *rdzoñ-dpon* bsTan-pa-dbañ-p'yug; he had to retire to the temple of bKra-śis-c'os-rdzoñ, where he stayed for three years. In the end the *sde-srid* declared him illegitimate and the officials deposed him (probably in 1712) and imprisoned him at dBañ-rdzoñ²⁸. Soon after he fled secretly and took refuge in a mountain ravine; but he was caught again and imprisoned in the g-Yuñ-druñ-skyid, where he died of poison at the age of 25 on the 27th day of the 12th month of the Earth-Snake year²⁹. This date, being the same as that of birth, is impossible on any count and is probably a mistake for Water-Snake; thus his death would have taken place in January or February 1713.

The 3rd *rgyal-ts'ab* Ñag-dbañ P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal was early rumoured to be an incarnation of Ñag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, and was recognized as such by the 8th *sde-srid*. At the age of six he was conducted with great solemnity to dBañ-'dus-p'o-brañ, where he was educated by the *sde-pa dge-bśes*, who later became the 9th *sde-srid*. In the Water-Dragon year 1712 he took the vows of *dge-ts'ul* and in the same year he was given his religious name. At once the 9th *sde-srid* installed him on the see, his residence being the new

¹⁸ TSM, ff. 161b—163a.

¹⁹ TSM, ff. 187b—191b.

²⁰ TSM, ff. 248a—250a.

²¹ TSM, ff. 314b, 320a—321a.

²² TSM, f. 329a—b.

²³ TSM, f. 335a; LCB, f. 57a.

²⁴ Birth of a daughter: TSM, f. 109a.

²⁵ LCB, f. 61b.

²⁶ LCB, f. *goñ* 62a.

²⁷ LCB, f. *goñ* 62a—b.

²⁸ LCB, f. 62a—b.

²⁹ LCB, ff. 62b—63a. He is the Ba-dan-rnam-dkar of MBTJ, f. 344b.

temple of Zab-lhon-lhun-rtse³⁰. Of course his fortunes were closely knit with those of his protector, and when rebellion broke out against the *sde-srid* he had to flee for his life. He absconded in various places and eventually took refuge with the Ka-spe *bla-ma* 'Brug-don-grub, the *dpon-slob* of sPa-gro. There he fell ill and died at the age of 29, on the 21st day of the 4th month of an unknown year³¹, probably 1729 or 1730. In spite of his misadventures, his quality as incarnation of *Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal* was not denied. Only, to explain the existence of rival claimants, the Bhutanese clergy offered a "theological" explanation: P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal was reckoned as the embodiment of the Word (*gsuñ-sprul*) of *Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal*, while at a later time the 6th *rgyal-ts'ab* was recognized as the embodiment of the Mind (*t'ugs-sprul*)³²; thus from that time there were in Bhutan two parallel series of incarnations of the founder of the state.

The 4th *rgyal-ts'ab* Mi-p'am-'jigs-med-nor-bu was the incarnation of *Nag-dbañ 'Jam-dpal-rdo-rje* and therefore was also called the *rGyal-sras sprul-sku*; the adversaries of 'Brug-rab-rgyas and P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal put him forward as their candidate³³. He was placed on the throne at the age of 13, but died at 18 after a short reign of 6 years³⁴, probably in 1735. His rule was marked by the war with the Ka-spe *bla-ma*, in which P'o-lha-nas intervened (see later).

The 5th *rgyal-ts'ab* Mi-p'am-dbañ-po was the elder brother of the deceased and hitherto he had been the 10th *sde-srid*. His career as such will be dealt with below. After his return to Lhasa in 1736 he was recognized as the *rgyal-ts'ab*; or at least this is how the *LdGR* describes his position. We are, however, under the impression that his tenure was more in the nature of a regency, and the circumstances of the instalment of his successor give some ground to this suspicion. Anyhow, he was poisoned by his enemies and died at the age of 30 on the 16th day of the 5th month of the Ox year 1745³⁵.

The 6th *rgyal-ts'ab* *Nag-dbañ 'Jigs-med-grags-pa* was the incarnation of the Mind of *Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal*. He was born in Central Tibet, and when still a child the fame of his miraculous marks spread to Bhutan. Thus *goñ-sa* Mi-p'am-dbañ-po (i. e. when he was still *sde-srid*) sent the 7th *rje mk'an-c'en* *Nag-dbañ-p'rin-las* (on the see c. 1730—1737) to fetch him to Bhutan, where he was installed on the see³⁶. Thus it appears that he was recognized as spiritual ruler long before the death of Mi-p'am-dbañ-po. He was responsible for the great restoration carried out in 1754 at Rva-luñ, the mother-convent of the 'Brug-pa in Tibet³⁷. He was still reigning when the *LCB* was written, and died in 1761³⁸.

³⁰ *LCB*, ff. 63b—64b.

³¹ *LCB*, ff. 65b—66a. His taking refuge with the Ka-spe *blama* is mentioned also in *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih*, 15.9a, and in *PTD*, f. 42b.

³² *LCB*, f. 67a.

³³ *MBTJ*, f. 346b.

³⁴ *LCB*, ff. 67b—68a. He is called *sprul-sku* Rin-po-c'e Mi-p'am-dbañ-po in *PTD*, f. 43a—b. The title of Mi-p'am-dbañ-po is used promiscuously for both brothers, which makes for some confusion.

³⁵ *LCB*, ff. 68a—69a.

³⁶ *LCB*, ff. 69b—70a. Cf. *PTD*, ff. 78a, 83b.

³⁷ *L7DL*, ff. 439b—440a.

³⁸ *PTD*, f. 87b.

We shall deal now with the office of *sde-srid*, which was filled mostly (but by no means always) by laymen.

The 1st *sde-srid* bsTan-'dzin-'brug-rgyas (1591—1656), of the 'Ob-mts'o family, entered holy orders at 11. He was one of the closest collaborators of Ņag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal, who before retiring appointed him head of the civil administration (1650). After six years he in his turn retired (Wood-Sheep year 1655) and died at lCags-ri in the following year³⁹.

The 2nd *sde-srid* La-sñon-pa bsTan-'dzin-'brug-grags (1607—1667) was a bastard brother of Ņag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal. In 1651 he was appointed *spyi-bla* of sPa-gro⁴⁰, and four years later he became *sde-srid*, being the first to bear the title of *p'yag-mdzod*. He took care of the building of Ņag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal's tomb and quenched the hostility of the other sects⁴¹. Under his rule Bhutan had to meet another invasion from Tibet, led by the Shigatse *sde-bdag nañ-so* Nor-bu and the gTsañ *mda'-dpon* bKra-sis-sgañ-nas. Fighting lasted till the 9th month of 1657, the critical points being sPa-gro, mK'ar-sa and the Bum-t'añ pass. Peace was concluded thanks to the mediation of the Sa-skya prince-abbot⁴². Nevertheless, the Bhutanese supported the revolt which broke out in gTsañ late in 1657 and lasted two years⁴³. Having governed the country for 12 years, bsTan-'dzin-'brug-grags died in the Iron-Sheep year 1667⁴⁴.

The 3rd *sde-srid* *p'yag-mdzod* Mi-gyur-brtan-pa (1613—1680), also called Dam-c'os-lhun-grub, belonged to the sMin-k'yud family and was born in Central Tibet. Later he came to Bhutan and was appointed Kroñ-sa *dpon-slob*, from which post he ascended to the office of *p'yag-mdzod*; on this occasion he assumed the style of *c'os-rgyal* Mi-gyur-brtan-pa. It was a rather agitated period. In 1675 he pacified the Mon-pa, i. e. Eastern Bhutan⁴⁵. In the following year there was another Tibetan invasion, by five different routes. It ended with a serious defeat of the column operating toward sPa-gro, about 30 Tibetan officers and 360 petty officers and soldiers being made prisoners; the other columns retreated⁴⁶. Peace was concluded in 1678, once more thank to the efforts of the Sa-skya prince-abbot and of the treasurer of the Pañ-c'en⁴⁷. Already in that year the *sde-srid* had expressed a wish to retire⁴⁸. Two years later he carried out his intention, and this energetic regent, who had given Bhutan its present shape by the annexion of the eastern districts, retired to lCags-ri, where he died in the same year⁴⁹.

Following the unanimous decision of the lamas and monasteries, the *sku-žabs rin-po-c'e*, i. e. the first *rgyal-ts'ab*, took full political powers (1680);

³⁹ TSM, ff. 58b—59b; LCB, f. 93a—b.

⁴⁰ LCB, f. 50b.

⁴¹ TSM, ff. 59b—60b.

⁴² TMS, f. 64b; LCB, f. 51b. The Pañ-c'en too had some hand in it; autobiography of the 1st Pañ-c'en, ff. 157b—158b.

⁴³ LCB, ff. 51b—52a; G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, pp. 71—72.

⁴⁴ TSM, ff. 67b—68a; LCB, ff. 93b—94a.

⁴⁵ TSM, p. 94b.

⁴⁶ TSM, ff. 98b—104b.

⁴⁷ TSM, ff. 107b—108a.

⁴⁸ TSM, f. 107a.

⁴⁹ TSM, ff. 115b—116a; LCB, ff. 94b—96a.

he is therefore counted as the 4th *sde-srid*. As we have seen, he retired at the beginning of 1695.

The 5th *sde-srid* dGe-'dun-c'os-'p'el had a long and distinguished career. In 1667 he was *rdzoñ-dpon* of dBañ-'dus-p'o-brañ⁵⁰, and shortly after he became *spyi-bla* of the capital sPuñs-t'añ, an office which he held for 21 years till 1688⁵¹. When bsTan-'dzin-rab-rgyas retired to rTa-mgo, he was elected *sde-srid*. He is said to have been a man of warlike and cruel disposition; soon he made himself thoroughly hated; hostility against him mounted high and the fame of his cruelty spread even outside Bhutan. But of course this may also mean simply that he led a faction disagreeable to the author of the *LCB*. He died after a rule of 7 years (c. 1695—1702)⁵².

The 6th *sde-srid* Ñag-dbañ-ts'e-riñ was usually called *sde-pa druñ-yig*, because in 1692—93 he had been secretary (*druñ-yig*) of the first *rgyal-ts'ab*⁵³. Later he was *rdzoñ-dpon* of dBañ-'dus-p'o-brañ. Being elected regent, he introduced the bsTan-'gyur into Bhutan and ruled for three years (c. 1702—1705)⁵⁴.

The 7th *sde-srid*, *dbu-mdzad* dPal-'byor, governed the country rather weakly during three years (c. 1705—1708)⁵⁵.

The 8th *sde-srid* 'Brug Rab-rgyas, also called *sde-pa* Wañ P'a-jo, was the most forceful personality of this period of Bhutanese history. He was at first *mgron-gñer* of the government, then *rdzoñ-dpon* of bKra-'sis-c'os-rdzoñ. After a short conflict he defeated the sPuñs-t'añ *rdzoñ-dpon* bsTan-pa-dbañ-p'yug and seized the office of *sde-srid*. The deposition of the 2nd *rgyal-ts'ab* was his work; and P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal, whom he installed in his place, was practically a mere puppet in his hands⁵⁶. There was perhaps some connection between this coup and the invasion by Lajang Khan, the Qośot ruler of Tibet, who had to retire having accomplished nothing (1714); but it seems that the occasion for the heated exchange of letters that preceded the war was the *sde-srid's* hostility against the dGe-lug-pa governor of rTa-wañ⁵⁷. After 13 years of rule, during which he founded many chapels and temples, 'Brug Rab-rgyas retired formally (c. 1720), and for another ten years (till c. 1729) he stayed at Zab-don-lhun-rtse as the de facto ruler of the land; during this period he compiled a new code of laws. However, the weight of his personality lasted heavily upon Bhutan and eventually his rule, indirect though it was, aroused plenty of discontent. A civil war broke out, complicated by border frictions with the Lhasa government; and in its course he was murdered together with his ministers⁵⁸.

⁵⁰ TSM, f. 70b.

⁵¹ TSM, ff. 107b, 124b, 178b, 201b; LCB, f. 96b.

⁵² LCB, f. 96b; cf. f. 61b.

⁵³ TSM, ff. 273a, 310a.

⁵⁴ LCB, ff. 96b—97a.

⁵⁵ LCB, f. 97a.

⁵⁶ Cf. MBTJ, f. 344b.

⁵⁷ MBTJ, f. 101a. Actually in the relevant passages (MBTJ, ff. 101b—102a) the *sde-srid* is called by the title of king (*rgyal-po*) of Bhutan. But another passage of the same text (MBTJ, f. 345a) proves that it was Wañ P'a-jo who clashed with Lajang Khan. — For an account of this war see L. PETECH, *China and Tibet in the early 18th century*, Leiden 1972, pp. 29—30.

⁵⁸ LCB, ff. 97a—b, also 62a, 65a. For a résumé of this war see L. PETECH, *China and Tibet in the early 18th century*, pp. 161—162.

Upon his retirement (c. 1720) 'Brug Rab-rgyas had set up as the 9th *sde-srid* his own nephew (*žañ-dbon*) Ņag-dbañ-rgya-mts'o; he was also called the *sde-pa dge-bśes* because he had been the spiritual teacher of P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal. He held office for ten years (c. 1720—1730), without playing (it seems) a serious role at the side of his energetic uncle. In all likelihood we have to identify him with the 'Brug *sde-srid* with whom the 2nd Pan-c'en entertained a lively correspondance in 1726⁵⁹. He too was killed during the civil war⁶⁰.

After the death of both uncle and nephew, their adversaries installed a new *rgyal-ts'ab* as well as a new *sde-srid*⁶¹. They were brothers. The elder was the 10th *sde-srid* Mi-p'am-dbañ-po, who was called originally bsTan-'dzin-'brug-rgyal and was an incarnation of the first *rgyal-ts'ab*. He entered holy orders at 10, receiving the tonsure from P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal. During the war he was chosen as *sde-srid*, and on this occasion his name was changed to Ņag-dbañ-bstan-'dzin Mi-p'am-dbañ-po⁶². Almost at once he fell out with the Ka-spe *bla-ma* 'Brug-don-grub⁶³, who was the chief supporter of P'yogs-las-rnam-rgyal, and a new war ensued. The Ka-spe *bla-ma*, being the weaker party, asked for the help of the Tibetan ruler P'o-lha-nas, who sent an army into Bhutan. Mi-p'am-dbañ-po was worsted and came to terms⁶⁴; late in 1730 he sent his uncle Dam-pa Ts'e-rin-dbañ-c'en to Lhasa to sign the peace treaty⁶⁵. Both brothers, *rgyal-ts'ab* and *sde-srid*, pledged loyalty to P'o-lha-nas and to the Chinese emperor through their representatives⁶⁶. Their and the Ka-spe *bla-ma's* declarations of allegiance and tribute were duly transmitted to Peking⁶⁷. But as internal strife continued, two officials were sent to Bhutan (1731); their efforts, however, met with no success⁶⁸. Then in the 10th month of the same year the ambans sent a Manchu officer, the major Ho-

⁵⁹ *Autobiography of the Second Pan-c'en*, ff. 356a, 362b.

⁶⁰ *LCB*, ff. 97b—98b.

⁶¹ *MBTJ*, f. 346b.

⁶² *LCB*, f. 68a—b.

⁶³ The Ka-spe were a noted family of the T'ed district in East Bhutan. They had become *spyi-bla* of sPa-gro in 1687 (*TSM*, f. 194b), and Ka-spe P'un-ts'ogs, *spyi-bla* since 1690, played an important role during the last years of the 1st *rgyal-ts'ab*, *TSM*, ff. 230b—231a, 266a, 273a, 276a, 278b, 306b, 321a. He may have been the Ka-spe *dge-slon* who in 1701 sent an embassy to the Dalai-Lama; *Life of the 6th Dalai-Lama*, f. 512b.

⁶⁴ For this war see L. PETECH, *China and Tibet in the early 18th century*, pp. 162—163.

⁶⁵ *MBTJ*, f. 348b. Ts'e-rin-dbañ-c'en visited Lhasa again in 1736; *L7DL*, f. 203b. He cannot be identical with the other uncle, the *sde-srid* dPal-'byor, because the latter was already at the head of the government when 'Brug *a-ku* (uncle) Ts'e-rin-dbañ-c'en had another audience with the Dalai-Lama in the 7th month of 1737; *L7DL*, f. 233b.

⁶⁶ *MBTJ*, f. 349a.

⁶⁷ Document of 14th March 1731, in *Shih-tsung Shih-lu*, 103.4b. Cf. *Fan-pu yao-lüeh*, 17.25a—b; *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih*, 15.9b; *Hsi-tsang-chih*, 3.10b. — It is curious to note that the Chinese give a different set of names for the Bhutanese chiefs. The *rgyal-ts'ab* is called Cha-êrh-sa (*hsi, sê*)-li-pu-lu-ke-ku-chi *qubilghan*; the first three characters stand for rGyal-sras; *li* is obscure; *pu-lu-ke* is 'Brug; *ku-chi* cannot be reconstructed. The *sde-srid* is given (also by the Tibetans) the title and name of *noyan Rin-c'en* P'rin-las-rab-rgyas.

⁶⁸ *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih*, 15.9b (= *Hsi-tsang-chih*, 3.11b). The History of the chiefs of sTag-luñ, f. 402a (on which work see *China and Tibet in the early 18th century*, p. 4), shows that the envoys were sPol-goñ Darhan and sMan-t'an-pa.

shang, accompanied by the Tibetan minister (*bka'-blon*) 'Broñ-rtse. They succeeded in patching up an agreement of general peace, as well as a promise of tribute from both factions⁶⁹. It appears that at that time real power lay with the Ka-spe *bla-ma*; but when he died in 1735, "the people summoned back to power" the *sde-srid*⁷⁰. After 7 or 8 years of rule he went to visit Central Tibet⁷¹. This happened in the 2nd month of 1736 and he was received with great deference by the Dalai-Lama, to whom he brought as present an elephant⁷². This visit too was duly communicated to Peking⁷³. He left Lhasa, but remained in Tibet for some months more, and it was only in the 7th month that he was finally complimented out⁷⁴. Upon his return home he took over the position of *rgyal-tsa'ab*, left vacant by the death of his younger brother⁷⁵.

The 11th *sde-srid* dPal-'byor was the paternal uncle of the two brothers. He had been the real power behind the scene, and it was he who after the civil war had placed his nephew on the seat of *rgyal-tsa'ab*, remaining at his side as chamberlain (*gzims-dpon*). He took over the office of *sde-srid* when Mi-p'am-dbañ-po went to Tibet, i.e. in 1736. Among his activities we note the restoration of the lCags-ri monastery, which had been destroyed by fire⁷⁶. Envoys sent by him were received at Lhasa in 1737, 1738 and 1739⁷⁷. He is said to have retired after about three years⁷⁸. Actually his tenure lasted a little longer, because his retirement took place in 1740 and is registered by the Central Tibetan texts along with the full name of his successor⁷⁹. At the time of the final redaction of LCB he was still alive in the hermitage of Šar-bon-spi-ri.

The 12th *sde-srid* Nāg-dbañ-rgyal-mts'an was at first *rdzoñ-dpon* of brDa-liñ-k'a, then of bKra-šis-c'os-rdzoñ, and distinguished himself at the time of the Tibetan invasion of 1730. Later he was a minister (*blon-po*) and was

⁶⁹ *Op. cit.* Ho-shang is the Go lao-yeh who, according to the *History of the sTag-luñ chiefs* was stationed at Gyantse when the two envoys went to Bhutan. Ho-shang and the minister were the bearers of letters from the Pañ-c'en to the 'Brug gzuñ and to the Ka-spe *bla-ma*; autobiography of the Second Pañ-c'en, f. 396b.

⁷⁰ *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih* and *Hsi-tsang-chih*, loc. cit. The new Ka-spe *bla-ma* Nāg-dbañ-'brug-pa visited Lhasa after the *sde-srid* in 1736 and again in 1737; *L7DL*, ff. 204b, 235a. He sent his complimentary mission to the New Year festival of 1739, and again visited the Dalai-Lama in 1742; *L7DL*, ff. 252a, 277b. In 1746 it was his nephew who had an audience with the Dalai-Lama; *L7DL*, f. 328a.

⁷¹ LCB, f. 69a; *PTD*, ff. 43b—44a.

⁷² *L7DL*, ff. 196a—197a; *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih*, 15.9b.

⁷³ Document of 7th June 1736, in *Kao-tsung Shih-lu*, 17.21b—22a. Two very submissive memorials of the *sde-srid* and of the Ka-spe *bla-ma* to the emperor, both dated 9th September 1736, are included in *Wei-tsang t'ung-chih*, 15.9b—10b (= *Hsi-tsang-chih*, 3.12a—14a).

⁷⁴ *L7DL*, f. 205b; *PTD*, f. 44b.

⁷⁵ LCB, f. 69a. An important event of his rule which is difficult to date is his promulgation of the Bhutanese code of law (actually conduct rules for the ruling class), which took place in the *rañ-byuñ* Earth-Bird year; LCB, f. 115a. The two terms are in contradiction: *rañ-byuñ* would be 1747 and Earth-Bird 1729. And neither is compatible with Mi-p'am-dbañ-po's period of rule (1730—1745), in which-
ever form it was.

⁷⁶ LCB, f. 98b.

⁷⁷ *L7DL*, ff. 232b, 239b, 252a, 261a.

⁷⁸ LCB, f. 98b.

⁷⁹ *L7DL*, f. 267a.

elected to the office by the laity of Bhutan. He ruled for about three years⁸⁰. In 1741 he sent envoys to the Paṅ-c'en at bKra-sis-lhun-po⁸¹, in 1742 he re-established the sPa-gro sTag-tś'an-dpal monastery and the *lha-k'añ* at sKyer-c'u, giving notice of it to the Dalai-Lama⁸². He died in 1743 and his funeral rites were performed in Lhasa during the following New Year's festival⁸³.

The 13th *sde-srid* Śes-rab-dbañ-p'yug had been a *mgron-gñer* and had been out as military commander (*k'a-lo-sgyur-pa*) in East Bengal; probably he acted for a time as rGya *spyi-bla*, i. e. as Bhutanese agent in Cooch-Bihar⁸⁴. When the second civil war broke out, he appears with the name of *mgron-gñer* Sri-t'ub as the organizer of the Ka-spe troops⁸⁵. Shortly after he became *spyi-bla* of sPa-gro. Then he retired, but was brought out of his retirement to become *sde-srid* (1743 or 1744)⁸⁶. He sent a special embassy to Lhasa in 1746 to announce the accession of the new *žabs-druñ*⁸⁷, then again in 1747 and every year from 1752 to 1757⁸⁸. In the Fire-Ox year 1757, when the narrative of *LCB* comes to an end, he had been in office for about 13 years and his rule had brought happiness and peace to the country⁸⁹. He retired in 1762⁹⁰ and was still alive in 1767⁹¹.

For the sake of completeness we shall carry on the tale for a few years more.

The 14th *sde-srid* 'Brug-p'un-tś'ogs (1762—1764) died in office after only two years⁹².

The 15th *sde-srid* bsTan-dzin-rnam-rgyal took the seat in 1764⁹³ and retired (or died?) in 1767⁹⁴.

The 16th *sde-srid* bSod-nams-lhun-grub, appointed in 1767⁹⁵, retired in 1770.

The 17th *sde-srid* bŽi-dar was at first *mgron-gñer* of the government, then *dpon-slob*⁹⁶. He was at the helm of the state during the Bhutanese invasion

⁸⁰ *LCB*, ff. 98b—99a.

⁸¹ *Life of the Third Paṅ-c'en*, f. 33b (full name given).

⁸² *L7DL*, f. 293b.

⁸³ *L7DL*, f. 306a.

⁸⁴ *LCB*, f. 99a.

⁸⁵ *PTD*, f. 37a—b. The identity of Sri-t'ub with Śes-rab-dbañ-p'yug is established by the passage of the *L7DL* quoted below.

⁸⁶ *LCB*, f. 99b. The Dalai-Lama sent presents for the accession of *dpon-slob* Sri-t'ub as *sde-srid* of Bhutan; *L7DL*, f. 311a.

⁸⁷ *L7DL*, f. 331b.

⁸⁸ *L7DL*, ff. 339b, 404b, 409b, 429a (repairs to the *gtsug-lag-k'añ* of sPuñs-t'añ), 440a (important repairs at Rva-luñ), 468b, 476a, 521b.

⁸⁹ *LCB*, f. 99a—b.

⁹⁰ *PTD*, f. 94b.

⁹¹ *PTD*, f. 107a.

⁹² *PTD*, ff. 94b, 98a, 102a.

⁹³ *Life of the 8th Dalai-Lama*, f. 38a, where the full name is given; *PTD*, f. 103a, calls him simply *sde-srid* bsTan-dzin.

⁹⁴ The Central Tibetan texts state that he died in 1767; *Life of the 3rd Paṅ-c'en*, f. 275b (full name given); *Life of the 8th Dalai-Lama*, ff. 45a, 53a. But *PTD*, f. 107a, mentions two former *sde-srid* (*gdan-zur*) alive in 1767; one was Śes-rab-dbañ-p'yug and the other 'Gyur-med-bstan-dzin. The latter cannot but be identical with *sde-srid* bsTan-dzin[rnam-rgyal]. I cannot solve the contradiction at present.

⁹⁵ *PTD*, f. 104b.

⁹⁶ *PTD*, f. 84a.

of Cooch-Bihar, which in 1771 the Paṅ-c'en had tried in vain to avert⁹⁷ and which led to British intervention. bZi-dar was deposed at the end of 1772. With him we may close our list.

⁹⁷ Life of the 3rd Paṅ-c'en, ff. 307b, 311b. Cf. L. PETECH, "The missions of Bogle and Turner according to the Tibetan texts", in *T'oung Pao* 39 (1950), pp. 339—341. bZi-dar is the Deb Judhur of George Bogle's account.