

Rma lho sog rdzong gi mched khongs la dpyad pa (The origin of Malho Mongolian County)

Kalsang Dargay

Malho Mongolian county is so called because it is located on the southern side (*lho*) of Machu in Tshongon. Early Tibetan histories refer to it as Maphari Sogpo, which is said to be derived from Mongolian *The ru tha ra*. In any event, this group of Mongolians influenced the politics, economy and culture of the surrounding minorities, and gained an important position in Tibet-Mongolian history. This paper discusses the origin of Malho Mongolian County in three sections: during the Yuan dynasty, during the Ming dynasty and during the Qing dynasty.

1. Development during the Yuan Dynasty

Based on the Waka Tsering's *Mes po'i gtam rgyud mu tig phreng ba* and Trhungyik Wangchenkyap's *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*, this section discusses the origin of the Mongolians in Malho. Trhungyik Wangchenkyap writes in *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung* that:

In 1256 Mongolian king Hipali sent his army to Cangyul and ruled the place; in 1257, the Mongolian army attacked Song from three directions: Hubei was attacked from one direction, from another direction Hunan was attacked, and Sichuan was attacked from a third direction. Although the Mongolians could not conquer the areas, Nansong lost most of the power, and half of Sichuan was conquered. At that time, the Machu area in the southern part of Tshongon was a place for Mongol horse herders to camp. This is where the Thu med dar bao'i tribe, the first Mongolian tribe originated (Trhungyik Wangchenkyap's *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung*: 91).

The Mongol Thumed tribe originated later, and Thumed therefore does not seem to be the name of a tribe. However, it might be mixed with the second group of Mongolians: Thuman, a term meaning "ten thousand" in Mongolian, and Dara Khach, the term for a post-station rank in Mongolian, were used as tribal names. In short, a tribe named Thumed Darbho originated with a group that had been sent to set up a station together with the horsemen who accompanied them. But this hypothesis needs further investigation. According to *A History of Malho Mongolian Tribe* (pp. 27- 28), "a Mongolian tribe established a station where the tribe distributed clothing and horses to its army. This depot became the first phase of the Mongolian population in the area, located in Gyakhar Rato of Serlungshang."

2. Development during the Ming Dynasty

In 1559, Altan Khan moved to Tshongon and established relations with the Third Dalai Lama. At the same time, the Ming Dynasty, through the Third Dalai Lama, sent Altan Khan to his homeland. But a group of people from the Thumed tribe led by Holochi were left in Tshongon.

The Cultural History of Malho County records that: "When Mongolians in Tshongon came into conflict with the Yuan dynasty in 1591, a group of people of the Holochi tribe moved to Malho and joined the Thumed" (P. 99). During the Ming Dynasty, around middle of 17th century, a group of people in Thumed Holochi tribe moved from southern part of Thalan Byethang to Malho.

3. Development during the Qing Dynasty

Due to the conflict among the Mongolian tribes, Gushri Danzin Chogyal moved to Tshongon in 1636. He established relations with the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and conquered most parts of Tshongon, which later became the main base for the Mongol population. More detailed information will be given with references from *Deb ther mes po'i zhal lung* (pp. 221- 222) and *A History of the Malho Mongolian Tribe* (pp. 13).