



The Chong Pa Ache Lamo Troupe and related information

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The Chong Pa Ache Lamo Troupe was one of the four well-known Ache Lamo troupes, having unique characteristics not only with respect to its rNam Thar (song), performance, and the beating of drums and the striking of cymbals, but also having extremely pleasant traditional songs, dances and music. For this reason, they were well received in Lhasa, performing during the Lhasa Shoton Festival before 1959. However, for many reasons, they could not come to Lhasa to perform during Lhasa Shoton Festival for the past forty years. And as there are very few documents and articles about the Lamo troupe, I had a strong desire to go to the place of the Ache Lamo troupe. I went to there to do some field-work and record video in October of this year.

The Chong Pa Ache Lamo troupe resides in one of the six Shangs in Shi ga Tse Ngam Ring County – the Shang named Chong Ri Wo Che Shang. The name of the Lamo troupe arose from the name of this Shang. The area is located in the eastern part of Ngam Ring County, and more than 80km from the county seat to the Shang itself. It has an average sea level of 4500 km, and is both cold and has very thin air. Local people told me that the road from the county seat to their Shang is in its worst state from July to September of each year. It is difficult to drive any automobile on the road, and admittedly, I was terribly frightened by such a dangerous and difficult mountain.

In 2001, there was a total population of 4470 people in Chong Ri Wo Che Shang, mainly dealing with agriculture, but also rearing many sheep, goats, cattle, chickens, etc. Local people, including the elderly and youngsters, very much enjoy singing and dancing local traditional songs and dances. In particular, they are very interested in seeing Ache Lamo performances. For example, although we knew that they were, day and night, very busy with their harvest work, one day we requested the Ache Lamo troupe to perform traditional lamo, and surprisingly, within a short amount of time, all the performers were gathered and ready to perform for us. At that time, not only did local people come to see the lamo performance, but also some old people with Chang (barley beer) and their children came from nearby villages.

There is a ruined monastery of the traditional Ache lamo founder – Drob Thog Thang Thong Gyalpo – and a very special stupa in this Shang, having a structure very similar to Gyang Tse Bal Gun Chob Den in Gyang Tse of Shi Ga Tse. It is said that Gyang Tse stupa was copied from the stupa in Chong Ri Wo Che. Moreover, there can be seen four chain bridges that were built by Thang Thong in this general area: Pa Ding Bridge in Do Pe Shang, Ta Sur Bridge in Ba Gug Ling Gas Ga Town, Rin Ding Bridge in Rin Chen Ding Do Pe Shang and Ri Wo Che Bridge in Ri Wo Che Shang. Several of them have been repaired and are still well used.

Thang Thong was born in Rin Che Ding Do Pe Shang in Ngam Ring county, where his caves and footprints, etc., can still be seen. Local people told us that Thang Thong was named Kro Wo Pal Den when he was a child, and was then given the name Tson Drun Sang Po after he became a fully-ordained monk. Subsequently, he was given the names Drob Tob Thang Thong Gyal Po and Drob Tob Cag Zam Pa after he started to build the bridges in Tibet. The Rin Ding Cag Zam is in Thang Thong's hometown, where there is a placid river upstream from the bridge. It is said that the river was listening to the teaching of Thang Thong.

He stayed in the area named Aen Nas Thar Pa Ling for six years. Some of the local people recited his story as follows:

- To build the Kangyur and Tengyur for his father:
- To build Ma Ni Ka Bum for his mother;
- To build bridges for humans and animals:
- To teach doctrine for six years in Thar Pa Ling.

I felt very sad to hear that Thang Thong's body, and those of his sponsor, Chang Dag Tashi Tob Gyal, and his abbot Tob Den Bal Byor, were taken out from the Kyi Nal Gor Mo ("like dog sleeping") in Thang Thong's monastery by some people from a nearby village during the Cultural Revolution. The other two bodies were thrown in Yarlung Tsangpo whole, while Thang Thong's body was cut down small pieces and thrown in same river.

Information about Chong Pa Ache Lamo's history, characteristics, structure, activities relating to the Lhasa Shoton Festival, etc., are detailed in my paper.