

Primary study on the early history of the Nenyng Monastery

Tsering Norbu

gNas snying, literally means “the essence of place”, is located on the southern bank of the upper part of the Myang River near Gyantse in Tsang District. At the present time, it is under the jurisdiction of the Khangmar Dzong, yet under the control of Gyantse Dzong in old Tibet. According to the historical records, the whole place where the Nenyng monastery is situated was called “skyegs” and belonged to the territory of the ‘Gos clan during the Tibetan Kingdom.

Nenyng monastery was first established during the King Khri-gtsug-lde-btsan’s rule. It was founded by rGya ‘Jam-dpal-gsang-ba, one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava, in the favour and support of the minister ‘Gos, and its original name is known as “rgyags grong”. In the beginning of the second diffusion, Nenyng was developed into a monastic teaching centre along with the establishment of monastic communities (tsho) by the “men of dbus gtsang” after their return from Kham. In the later historical development, Nenyng was turned into an eclectic Buddhist teaching centre. First of all, due to the fact that Yol Drangsong, the “three brothers of Yol family” and close disciples of Atisha, took over the abbotship, the Nenyng monastery was not only expanded but also became an important Kadampa centre. Then, Lato Konchokhar, one of the close disciples of the founder of Shangpa Kagyu Khyungpo Nejor, became the abbot and brought Shangpa Kagyupa teachings to the monastery. In the 15th century, Nenyng monastery was converted to Gelugpa tradition in the course of the successful patron and priest relationship between the King of Gyantse and Khedrupje. Later on, with the success of developing teachings of the Gelugpa tradition and gaining political power of Tibet, Nenyng became a significant Gelugpa centre. In the 17th century, Sangye Gyatsho, the regent of Tibet, gave a brief account of Nenyng monastery in his famous book of the census of the Gelugpa monasteries named “dGa’ ldan chos ‘byung Vidhurya ser po”.

In the process of historical development, it is also undeniable that Nenyng monastery had experienced a great deal of tragic and sufferings from wars in different periods of time in the history. In accord with relevant dates, it was firstly damaged during the first Mongol’s invasion in the 12th century, and once again seriously destroyed by the British intruders in 1904.

By and Large, Nenyng monastery is one of the most famous Buddhist teaching centres in the river valley of Myang and has played an important role in both preaching and prevailing Buddhism in Tibet in general and in the Myang area in particular, and it has been enjoying a great reputation of being “bhodagaya” of the Myang river valley. In spite of the significance of the monastery, there was only a few scholars touch in this monastery, for instance, Kathog Situ and Giuseppe Tucci, and what they provided is the

information relevant to situation of the monastery in their time. In this point, it is essential and necessary to carry out a more specific study in order to provide a vivid early period of the monastery. Thus, this paper will try to give a clear picture of the early history of the monastery based on the fragmentary information obtained from both historical records and field studies.